
How does Google Cultural Institute Affect the Collections of Museums? The Case of Turkey

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Introduction

In recent years, progress on information and communication technology (ICT) has affected the management of cultural heritage. While ICT plays a key role in the accessibility and informed experiences of the public, it is also becoming more apparent in creating participatory platforms for people who manage and enjoy cultural heritage (Lekakis and Chrysanthi, 2011). Thus cultural memory institutions use this technology for creating digital content about their collections and making this content available from all over the world. Increasing the value of collections using sophisticated and innovative new media also affects the economic development of countries and provides more integrated awareness about cultural identity and cross-cultural communication (Brizard, Derde, Silberman, 2007).

ICT has provided a wide range of tools for cultural heritage management. Implementing these new tools also provides many advantages for both memory institutions and users. Memory institutions can manage their collections more easily with support for image processing, advanced publishing systems, and etc. Furthermore, while open access to public involvement in cultural heritage objects improves the public awareness and sense of belonging to the society, it also develops the content of the objects with crowdsourcing from all over the world. In order to benefit from these advantages of new media tools, cultural memory institutions have opened their collections to the global public regardless of geographic location. Thus, memory institutions also benefit from increasing their promotion and advertising among other countries and institutions (Myat, 2012).

One of these new media platforms is Google Cultural Institute, which has been applied to the cultural heritage area in recent years, especially in museums.

The purpose of this institution is to provide broad public awareness, use and augmented access online for cultural heritage objects. It offers a range of tools that make it easy for memory institutes to put the collections online. With the online exhibitions, memory institutions can create stories about their collections. People can reach these collections all around the world using a wide range of platforms, and can share the images they like with friends using their social media accounts (Google Cultural Institute, 2016). In his 2016 TED talk, the head of Google Cultural Institute, Amit Sood says “The world is filled with incredible objects and rich cultural heritage. And when we get access to them, we are blown away, we fall in love. But most of the time, the world’s population is living without real access to arts and culture.” This new platform allows users to experience the world’s cultural heritage objects, and to add comments about them as well.

Method

There are ten museums in Turkey putting their collections on Google Cultural Institute. All of these ten museums are private. They are as follows:

1. Salt
2. Rezan Has Museum
3. Elgiz Museum
4. Sakıp Sabancı Museum
5. Borusan Contemporary
6. Murat Istanbul Festival
7. Masumiyet Museum
8. Istanbul Museum of Modern Art
9. Istanbul Research Institute
10. Pera Museum

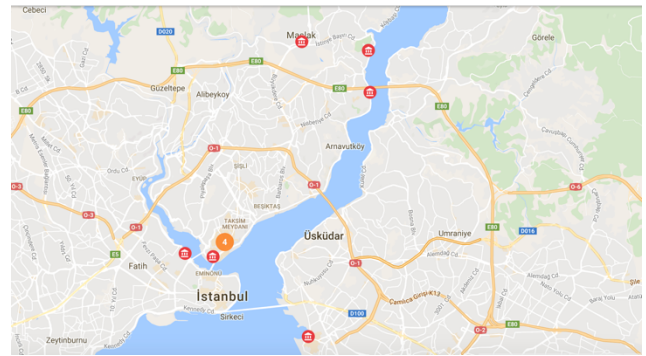


Figure 1. The partners of Google Cultural Institute from Turkey (accessed on Google Cultural Institute, 2016).

In this study, the data about visibility and access of these ten museums is analyzed looking at the previous and next data of the collections that are added to this online platform. For detailed analysis of this issue, interviews were conducted with curators and managers

of these ten museums regarding their observations of this new platform. The web activities of the museums -before and after- are also visualized. In addition, the data about the social media usage of these museums and its effect on increasing visibility and access of the collections are discussed. To understand the data in this study, these research questions are answered.

1. How does this online platform affect the visibility of these collections?
2. Does it affect the diversity of visitors being national or international?
3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of this new platform?

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