

Organizational Communication in Museums: A State-of-the-Literature Review of Public Administration and Management Practices

Xi Tang ^{1*}

¹ Masters, Cultural Relics and Museums, Minzu University of China, Beijing, China

* **Corresponding Author:** Tang.Xi1999@outlook.com

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ABSTRACT

Museums hold a unique status in the cultural industry, playing the roles of both heritage repository and educational institutions and service providers to the community. Although the functions of internal organizational communication in museums are complex and numerous, the scholarly focus on internal organizational communication processes in museums is exceptionally small in comparison with the amount of literature devoted to the interaction with the external audience. This systematic literature review explores the research situation of organizational communication in museums, especially focusing on the public administration systems and management activities. In this review, 20 peer-reviewed articles and research reports (2015-2024) were analyzed using the PRISMA framework. The results indicate chronic communication failures that are marked with interdepartmental silos, lack of strategic-implementation, and poor leadership communication. The critical analysis reveals the structural, cultural, and political aspects of these challenges, as well as the disruptive quality of digital technologies and COVID-19 pandemic on the practices of museum communication. The study provides recommendations on investment in communication infrastructure, professional growth, governance reforms to improve organizational performance in museums.

Keywords: Organization Communication, Museum Management, Public Administration, Digital Transformation, Cultural Institutions.

INTRODUCTION

Museums have traditionally held a strange niche in the cultural organization landscape. As material memory stores, learning institutions, tourist destinations, and also to a growing degree, locations where plural societies contest the production of meaning. All these multiplicity of functions bring incredible demands on internal communication of museums. The nature of negotiation between curators and educators, the ways directors mediate the strategic vision into workable reality, and the multi-functional team in its dealings with a complicated task of exhibition development are questions to which relatively little scholarly attention has been paid. The theoretical convergence of the organizational communication theory and museum studies has a lot of potential that is yet to be tapped.

The study of organizational communication offers conceptualizations of the impact of structure on information flow, power as a discourse, and how institutions organize collective action (Lee & Yue, 2020). The field of Museum studies brings the aspect of contextual particularism: the distinctive professional cultures, regimes, and mission-oriented nature of the cultural facilities. What the initial analysis reveals is the acknowledgment that museum institutional communication is not simply an organizational issue that is to do with the effective flow of data, but is actually an institutional aspect of identity and efficacy. The way that staff

interact across departmental lines, the way decisions are passed down and up the line and how strategic intent is converted into operational reality are all fundamental determinants of what a museum is and what it can achieve.

There is a strong asymmetry in existing literatures on the topic of museum communication. Much literature exists regarding the methods that museums use to communicate with their audiences: exhibition design, interpretive approaches, marketing, social media use, and visitor studies (Vassiliadis & Belenioti, 2017; Fernandez-Lores, Crespo-Tejero, & Fernandez-Hernandez, 2022). This study considers museum as a whole sender and populace as a whole receiver without much regard to the internal process of composing, authorizing and coordinating messages. The events leading up to the press release, and the opening of the exhibition, and the social media post going live is mostly unknown.

This difference is important since the quality and nature of external communication is inextricably defined by internal dynamics. Departmentalized departments generate inconsistent messages. The under-resourced communication functions prove to be weak in making coordination among the diverse institutional voices. Management failures are translated into social breakdowns. The lack of literature on such internal processes implies that most interventions to enhance museum communication focus on symptoms, but not on underlying causes, and treat the product of communication without focusing on the organizational factors that drive it.

The aim of this systematic literature review is to balance the situation by addressing organizational communication such as the communication structures, practices, and demands of museums as organizations. This emphasis does not rule out the external communication; it only stresses more on the internal aspects that have not received enough attention. The analysis is based on the scholarship of public administration to grasp the governance-communication relationships and the management studies to examine the role of organizational design to improve communication effectiveness.

The museums of art and history are the main focus of this review both practically and theoretically. In the real world, these types of institutions prevail in the world museum scene and receive most of the academic and professional interest. On theory, they offer opposing organizational logics that help to shed light on various aspects of the communication issue. Art museums are most often structured around a group of aesthetic items the value of which is authenticated by both intricate systems of fine objects of art and market definition as well as scholarly origin. By contrast, history museums structure themselves around narrative and documentary roles and may contain archives, photos, oral histories and other evidence of the documentary. These discrepancies have a variety of implications on organizational communication forming unique patterns of communication that can be enlightened through systematic analysis of literature. Henceforth, this review has a contribution to organizational communication research as it applies the communication theory to cultural institutions through showing how the structures of governance, professional identity, and digital transformation influence internal communication processes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Foundations of Organizational Communication

The theory of organizational communication has changed significantly within the last few decades, shifting away as it moved to more advanced conceptions about communication as constitutive of organization itself. The communicative constitution of organization school of thought, as explained by other researchers like McPhee and Zaig (2008), does not portray communication as an occurrence in organizations, but rather the core process of creating and sustaining an organization. This theoretical perspective has profound effects on the interpretation of museums wherein communication activities of collection creation, exhibition construction and engagement with people literally make up what the organization is and does.

Another useful model of interpreting museum organizational communication is the sensemaking theory that Weick (1995) has created. Museums work within very ambiguous environments such as evolving visitor demands, transforming funding environments, disputed histories of heritage and identity. The way these ambiguous situations are interpreted and communicated to by all the staff of a museum basically determines the result of the organization. A study conducted by Agostino, Arnaboldi, and Lampis (2020) of Italian state museums in the COVID-19 crisis helps to understand how a sensemaking process facilitated the quick adjustment of the organization in unprecedented conditions.

Museum Communication

The number of scholarly literature on museum communication has grown substantially over the last twenty years, albeit on an outward-facing as opposed to an inward-facing dimension of communication. The use of

websites and social media by museums to reach their audiences (Sanchez Laws, 2015; Dos-Santos-Abad, Pineiro-Naval), the design of exhibitions that help museums to understand their audiences (Falk and Dierking, 2016), and marketing strategies that attract different public have been studied (Camarero, Garrido, and Vicente, 2019). Those studies that do investigate the dynamics within the internal museum usually concentrate on where certain functional areas but not processes of communication as such. Research of curatorial practice deals with how curators decide in relation to acquisitions and exhibitions (Bourdieu, 1994), but does not deal with the issue of how curators communicate with other organizational functions. Research into museum education is focused on the pedagogy and constructing museum education programs (Hooper-Greenhill, 2007) but rarely does it touch upon how teachers connect with curators and other personnel. This disintegration implies that the communicative systems that bind museum operations are not fully researched.

Digital Transformation and Museum Communication

The digital technologies have tremendously upset the manner in which museums communicate and organizational impact remains ongoing to date. Studies have recorded that museums who have striven to seek methods of becoming more involved with visitors have been subject to clear implications of the organizational structure and strategic planning processes (Taormina & Baraldi, 2022). Online communication necessitates continuing production of content, quick feedback response, and coordination among functions which were previously divided.

This particular consequence is the fragmentation of communication control. Digital platforms have decentralized communicative capabilities among organizational levels where communication was previously centralized in specific functions and representatives with authority to communicate. Social media produces the effect of what Liendo and Nieto (2024) define as the blurring of the internal and external communication frontiers, where the personal accounts of staff members are visible extensions of the institutional presence and content posted by visitors enter the official communication channels. Museums control this space by filtering the content carefully and managing the interactions, and community administrators dictate what goes on and how discussions play out.

The evaluation of the Facebook communication within museums shows that the communicative space provided by social media platforms is defined by a two-way communication reinforcing the existent disparities between museums and their audiences (Giannini and Bowen, 2022). Such practices expose work in organization communication, which is increasingly complex and labor-intensive, but can hardly be traced in institutional accounting.

Public Administration and Cultural Governance

Public administration research provides approaches of studying governance-communication interactions in museums, in particular network governance, collaborative public management, and communication demands of multi-stakeholder arrangements. The public sector museums are under the governance structures which influence the way they conduct their communication in a unique manner.

Studies on the governance of museums underscore the fact that central government influence is often an indirect one, and the most identified direct roles are the offering of advice or the setting of general policy preferences that museums can stick to access funding (Lindqvist, 2012). The pattern of an arms-length means that communications in this sector are difficult; museums need to read policy cues, match the message with their governmental priorities, and define that they are complying without being overly bureaucratic.

Accountability is a heavy burden of communication with an unequal distribution. Employees at various levels take long to prepare reports to be reviewed by the supervisors, and at each level, the information is filtered and formatted. This weight can pull resources out of the mission-oriented activity and drive organizational priorities to what is quantifiable instead of the valuable. Since, as Marini and Agostino (2021) note, the shift of museums into entertainment-instead-of-preservation museums has a dramatic impact on how communication is structured and prioritized, communication organization and priority are also affected.

Changes in the transforming role of custodial to the audience-focused organizational model have been far-reaching to the communication process in the museum. The nineteenth-century museum was a custodial institution first of all, which dedicated much time to collection and preservation and scientific studies. Large public were addressed through second-order communication, usually through published catalogs and regular public lectures. The twentieth century experienced active growth of the educational and outreach activities, as museums worked out more advanced methods of interactions with visitors. The late twentieth century and early twenty-first century have seen what has been described by some scholars, a so-called participatory turn in which museums are trying to engage audiences as a part of the content development process as well as the interpretation practice. All these changes have brought about organizational communication implications that are yet to be fully

comprehended.

The growth of the role of education demanded new coordinating structures between curatorial and education employees, professional roles and career structures, and new performance indicators, which were aimed at publicity, as opposed to scholarly output. The participatory turn has posed even more essential questions of who has the voice of the museum and authority, which has caused communication challenges that most organizations have had found difficulty to respond. These evolutionary processes were already quickened and complicated amid the COVID-19 pandemic, requiring museums to further amplify digital communication and remote interaction which tends to expose the weaknesses of organizational capacity and infrastructure.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a systematic literature review that utilized an extensive search plan meant to locate pertinent literature available in various fields of study. The methodology is based on the Preferred Reporting Items of Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) framework, which was more transparent and replicable when conducting the review (Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff, & Altman, 2009). The review protocol was created to reflect the interdisciplinary character of the museum organizational communication research that can be found in journals across the communication studies, museum studies, cultural management, public administration, and organization studies.

Search Strategy and Boolean Operators

The databases that were searched included databases on communication research, museum studies, public administration, and on management scholarship. Search strings were developed in an iterative process of using controlled vocabulary and natural language terms in three conceptual domains. **Table 1** shows the construction of the Boolean operator that was applied in the comprehensive retrieval of literature.

Table 1. Boolean Operators for Searching Terms

Conceptual Domain	Search Terms
Organizational Communications	"organizational communication" OR "internal communication" OR "interdepartmental communication" OR "information flow" OR "communication management" OR "strategic communication"
Museum Context	"museum" OR "art museum" OR "history museum" OR "cultural institution" OR "heritage organization*"
Management/ governance	"public administration" OR "museum management" OR "cultural policy" OR "governance" OR "leadership" OR "organizational structure"

The entire Boolean construction was based on the following structure: (Domain 1) AND (Domain 2) AND (Domain 3). This plan was adjusted to databases so as to record interface differences and restrict vocabulary. Initial searches with organizational communication provided relatively few museum-specific results, and further loops involved alternative framing of organizational communication coordination, collaboration, and cross-functional team that found the appropriate scholarship without direct mention of communication.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The use of inclusion and exclusion criteria was meant to establish relevance and quality of the selected sources, as well as it had to offer appropriate scope to the review. These criteria covered temporal limits, geographic coverage, type of sources and subjects matter. **Table 2** shows the inclusion and exclusion criteria in detail.

Table 2. Exclusion and Inclusion Criteria

Criterion Category	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Time Frame	Studies published during the time frame of 2015-2024	Sources published before 2015 without demonstrated relevance
Source Type	Peer-reviewed articles, research reports, academic book chapters	Magazine articles, blog posts, promotional materials, unpublished theses

Criterion Category	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Geographic scope	Global or multi-national studies; large-population countries; major regions	Single small-population countries without comparative framing
Thematic focus	Explicit focus on organizational/internal communication in museums	External marketing/visitor studies only; no organizational dimension
Quality of Methods Used	Transparent methods; clear data sources; analytical rigor	Lack of transparent methods; purely descriptive without analysis

PRISMA Framework Application

The PRISMA was used to train the systematic choice and description of the sources during the review process. The identification step obtained 4,003 records in all the databases and additional sources. Following automated and manual duplication, 3204 distinct records were sent to screening. Two independent reviewers made title and abstract screening which led to 517 records being retained to undergo full-text evaluation.

Full-text screening according to eligibility criteria left 497 records out (including lack of organizational communication focus (267 records), lack of geographic area focus (89 records), lack of methodological focus (67 records), lack of time (42 records) and overlapping with superior sources (32 records). The final studies selected after this process was made of 20 sources that fulfilled all inclusion criteria as shown in **Table 3**.

Table 3. PRISMA Framework

PRISMA Phase	Records	Notes
Database Searches	3,847	Across all platforms
Supplementary Sources	156	Citation chaining, expert consultation
Duplicates	(799)	Automated and manual
Screening of Title/Abstract	3,204	517 retained for full-text
Assessment of Full-text	517	20 included in final review
Final Studies Selected	20	16 articles, 3 reports, 1 chapter

PRISMA Flow Diagram

Figure 1 demonstrates the PRISMA flow diagram with systematic selection process beginning with initial identification all the way to final inclusion. The flow chart illustrates the process of processing 4,003 original records to duplication (n = 799 removed), screening (n = 2,687 removed), eligibility evaluation (n = 497 removed) and the 20 studies that were included into the review.

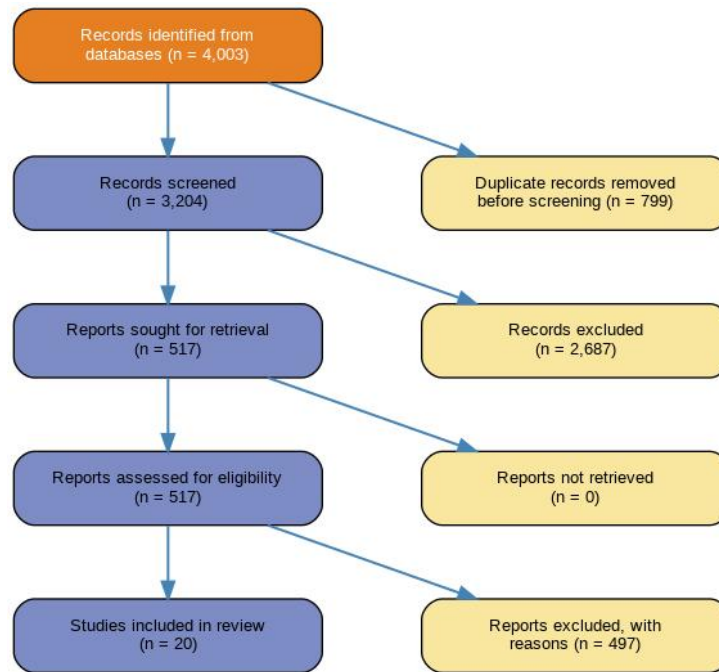


Figure 1. Prisma Flow Diagram

The number of 20 selected studies (n=20) represents the interdisciplinarity of the study area: 16 articles in peer-reviewed journals (80 percent), 3 research and professional reports (15 percent), and 1 book chapter (5 percent). Geographic is a comparison of sources with North America and Western Europe spearheading 60 percent, other European nations 20 percent, Asia-Pacific 15 percent, and Latin America 5 percent. Temporal distribution shows that there is an accelerating scholarly interest, with 55% of the sources being published since 2021.

Title and abstract screening had an inter-rater reliability of $r = 0.78$, with a Cohens kappa=0.78, which suggested a high degree of agreement gaining by the reviewers. Conflicts focused on fringe cases of collaboration or coordination terminologies without any organizational communication framing. These are cases that were solved by discussion and consensus and the more inclusive interpretation adopted in order to have extensive coverage of the relevant scholarship.

RESULTS

The systematic review identified 20 key studies meeting all inclusion criteria, selected for detailed analysis based on their methodological rigor, theoretical contribution, and relevance to organizational communication in museum contexts. **Table 4** presents these studies with their key findings.

Table 4. Key Studies on Museum Organizational Communication

Author(s) & Year	Study Focus	Key Findings
Agostino et al. (2020)	Italian state museums during COVID-19 crisis	Sensemaking processes enabled rapid organizational adaptation to virtual communication
Agostino & Costantini (2022)	Digital transformation measurement framework	Successful transformation requires communication coordination across autonomous functions
Alnasser & Lim (2023)	Audience development strategies in arts organizations	Effective institutions bridge professional boundaries through coordinated communication
Asif et al. (2025)	Authentic leadership in public sector museums	Leadership style significantly bridges perception gaps between politics and employee attitudes

Author(s) & Year	Study Focus	Key Findings
Schonfeld & Sweeney (2019)	Art museum organization structure	Education-curatorial relationships range from integrated to autonomous with limited coordination
Camarero et al. (2019)	Museum visitor experience measurement	Internal coordination affects visitor experience quality and consistency
De Las Heras-Pedrosa et al. (2023)	Museum communication in digital ecosystems	COVID-19 fundamentally altered digital strategy and communication protocols
Dos-Santos-Abad et al. (2023)	Comparative digital communication analysis	Museums vary significantly in digital communication maturity and coordination
Fernandez et al. (2021)	Social media communication during pandemic	New interaction opportunities emerged that persisted beyond crisis period
Fernandez-Lores et al. (2022)	Digital tools for museum traffic generation	Integrated communication strategies more effective than siloed approaches
Liendo & Nieto (2024)	Strategic communication challenges	Lack of directive nature prevents aligned and cohesive communication
Larkin et al. (2023)	Museums' pivot to social media during COVID-19	Pre-existing digital capabilities enabled better crisis adaptation
Leblanc (2017)	Organizational change in exhibition development	Eliminating silos improved nimbleness but implementation challenges remained
Lindqvist (2012)	Museum financial sustainability and governance challenges	Financial challenges extend beyond economic crises
Marini & Agostino (2021)	Digital technologies as relational tools	Transformation from preservation to entertainment orientation affects communication organization
Nikolaou (2024)	Post-digital museum challenges	Integration requires communication across historically rigid professional boundaries
Noehrer et al. (2021)	COVID-19 impact on digital data practices	Pre-existing infrastructure enabled better pandemic communication adaptation
Mendoza & Talavera (2025)	Governance strategies for museums	Hybrid governance models facilitate stakeholder engagement and communication
Taormina & Baraldi (2022)	Museums and digital technology review	Digital engagement requires coordination across previously separate functions
(Giannini & Bowen, 2022)	Cross-cultural digital communication during COVID-19	Bidirectional social media communication intensified organizational communication work

Thematic Analysis

Reviewing of the 20 most significant articles identified five key themes that define the communication within the museum in an organizational context: (1) Digital Transformation and Communication Infrastructure, (2) Interdepartmental Coordination and Silo Issues, (3) Leadership Communication and Governance, (4) Crisis Communication and Organizational Adaptation, and (5) Professional Identity and Communication Boundaries.

Theme 1: Digital Transformation and Communication Infrastructure

One of the main themes in the analyzed literature is the transformative effect of digital technologies on the communication of museums. Taormina and Baraldi (2022) used an extensive literature review to determine the impact of adoption of digital technology on organizational structures of museums. Their discussion showed that museums that embark on digital engagement strategies have apparent implications on organizational structure and strategic planning processes, which include sustained content production, fast response to audience feedback, and organization of activities that have traditionally been separate.

These pressures of change were increased by the COVID-19 pandemic. A case study of Italian state museums

that were faced with the crisis by Agostino, Arnaboldi, and Lampis (2020) presented the role of sensemaking processes in facilitating the rapid adjustment of organizations to unprecedented situations. Their results show the pressure exerted on museums to organize their communication around virtual spaces, which provokes new coordination requirements among staff who were located in the same building before.

In particular, De Las Heras-Pedrosa et al. (2023) examined the museum communication management in digital ecosystems and discovered that the pandemic has changed the digital strategy implementation in fundamentals. In their work, the authors reported how museums were forced to quickly devise new communication procedures to support remote working, virtual exhibitions, and online interaction with audiences, which in many cases highlighted a major lack of current communication infrastructure.

Noehrer, Gilmore, Jay, and Yehudi (2021) used the effect of COVID-19 on digital data practices in UK and US museums and reported that the museums that had pre-established digital communication infrastructure were more likely to adjust to the environment of the pandemic. They include in their research the relevance of investment in communication technology as an organizational capability and not as operational cost.

Theme 2: Interdepartmental Co-ordination and Silo issues

The second theme deals with the issues of inability to coordinate across departmental lines. In the Ithaca S+R study on art museum organization, Schonfeld and Sweeney (2019) found that the functional structures are organized in a very heterogeneous way with critical implications on communication. The study established that the relationship between education and curatorial departments becomes an important question and the responses vary between an integrated reporting structure and a heavy autonomy with less coordination.

Liendo and Nieto (2024) described the case at Spanish museums as a deficiency in directive and decisive manner, which does not allow achieving aligned and cohesive communication. Their diagnosis is that it is the lack of organizational rather than technical deficit, communication lacks authority and integration, not tools and techniques. Managerialization has dealt with the surface characteristics of communication practice without having changed the underlying dynamics in an organization.

A highly important line of faulty communication is the curator-educator line. The gap is indicative of professionalization trends of the past, where curators boast of academic knowledge and possession of objects, and educators focus on visitor demand and accessibility to interpretation. This divide has structural manifestations in different institutions and poses an enduring coordination problem that cross-functional teams and matrix structures have been able to address partially.

Leblanc (2017) reported the Canadian Museum of History organizational change project, which abolished all the divisional silos that were gradually stifling organizational agility. The case displays the possibilities as well as the difficulties of structural interventions pointing out the fact that some of the changes were still abstract thoughts to be verified and some had been implemented with varied outcomes.

Theme 3: Leadership, Communication and Governance

Leadership communication became a very important aspect of the organizational climate and effectiveness. Asif, Ma, Li, Xie, and Hu (2025) studied authentic leadership in museums of the public sector and discovered the leadership style as the key factor in mediating the gap between organizational politics perception and the attitude of employees. The culture of communication between the directors and their staff is more informed and participatory when directors communicate with them via more channels.

Lindqvist (2012) reviewed the problem of museum financial sustainability, and governance challenges, and reported the way the governance arrangements would influence the communication practices. The study established that the influence of central government is usually indirect, posing problems of communication because the museums need to develop an interpretation of the political cues, align their message with government priorities, and show the signs of compliance without unduly bureaucratic encumbrance.

Governance strategies of museum management were studied by Mendoza and Talavera (2025), Gonzalez-Liendo, and Gomez-Nieto (2025), with the result that hybrid models of governance that are based on public, private, and non-profit structures would offer more effective and flexible solutions. These models can support increased flexibility, responsiveness, and stakeholder participation, enhance dynamic relations between actors and provide that all the involved stakeholders can participate in the process of decision-making.

The accountability communication burden is quite high and imbalanced. Employees at various levels waste a lot of time in making reports to be reviewed by the supervisors, and the information is filtered and structured at every stage. The burden can shift the resources away on the front of mission-focused activity and skew organizational priorities towards the measurable instead of the valuable.

Theme 4: Crisis Communication and Adaptation (Organization)

The COVID-19 pandemic was a natural experiment of museum crisis communication, and some studies have explored organizational adaptation. Fernandez, Suarez and Machas (2021) compared museum communication via social media in the pandemic to reveal new spaces of interaction that have not entirely been exhausted by the time the crisis concluded.

Larkin, Ballatore, and Mityurova (2023) studied the way museums turned to social media during the COVID-19, and they discovered that the ones that had previously developed digital communication skills could better retain the audience during the times of the shutdown. Their study draws attention to the need to invest in communication infrastructure in case of a crisis.

In a cross-cultural survey of digital communication of museums during COVID-19, Giannini and Bowen (2022) discovered that the way of two-way communication with the social media platforms imposed the already existing imbalance between museums and their target audiences. Museums would handle this space by filtering of content and managing interaction which has shown organizational communication work to be more complicated and new labor-intensive.

The third report on museums and COVID-19 by the International Council of Museums (2021) reported massive organization adaptation, where museums indicated that they experienced a considerable amount of change in terms of internal communication practices, including the increased use of digital collaboration tools, more frequent leadership communication, and new approaches to remote work coordination.

Theme 5: The Boundary of Professional Identity and Communication

The last theme is the role of professional identities in communication practices and limits in museums. Marini and Agostino (2021) studied the transformations of the digital technologies into the tools of communication in the museums and noted that the shift to the more entertainment-oriented museums implies much in the organization and priority of communication.

Nikolaou (2024) revisited the dilemmas of digital transformation of museums by posing the argument that we are in a post-digital age in which it is no longer whether or not to use digital technologies but how to meaningfully incorporate it in organizational practice. This integration demands inter-professional communication, which has been very stiff in the past.

Agostino and Costantini (2022) created a model of digital transformation measurement in cultural institutions and discovered that a successful transformation necessitates functions coordination of communication in the functions that have traditionally been fairly autonomous. Their model focuses on the organizational and not on the strictly technical aspects of digital change.

Alnasser and Lim (2023) looked at the strategies implemented by arts and cultural organizations towards audience development, and reported that effective organizations have established advanced and refined communication skills that traverse conventional professional lines. The best institutions have developed structures and procedures that allow the coordination of the curators, teaching staff, marketers, and other professionals with a common audience engagement objectives.

Summary of Findings

The thematic examination shows that communication deficit is deep-rooted in the museum organizations defined by the silos of the departments, strategic-implementation gaps, and poor communication by leaders. Such shortcomings are not merely technical issues which can be solved using tools, but are structural, cultural and political processes within the museum organizations.

Digital transformation has worsened as well as opened the opportunities of dealing with these communication challenges. On one hand, digital technologies have disintegrated the control over communication and heightened coordination demands, on the other hand, it has allowed new opportunities of cross-functional collaboration and organizational adjustment. Covid-19 intensified these processes and made museums struggle with communication gaps that were once tolerable or rather unnoticeable.

According to the findings, successful organizational communication in the museum setting needs to focus on more than one level at the same time, i.e. structural arrangements that facilitate information flow, cultural norms that the flow facilitates, and political processes that mediate between competing interests. Only interventions that tackle one level will not provide long-term idealization.

DISCUSSION

Consistency between Theoretical Frameworks and Findings

The results of the 20 studies reviewed confirm and expand the theoretical models discussed under the Literature Review. The communicative constitution of organization approach, as developed by McPhee and Zaugg (2008), is empirically proven by the fact that the digital transformation has radically reconstituted the museum organizations. Taormina and Baraldi (2022), De Las Heras-Pedrosa et al. (2023), and Nikolaou (2024) studies indicate that the digital engagement communication practices are not operational changes but constitutive changes that redefine museums. The example of communication changes that is described by Agostino et al. (2020) and Giannini and Bowen, (2022), as a shift between physical and virtual communication during the COVID-19, is a paradigmatic case of how the communication changes constitute organizational change.

It is possible to use the sensemaking theory, which was created by Weick (1995), as a fruitful perspective through which one can explain how the museums managed to cope with the ambiguity of the situation during the pandemic. The results demonstrate that museums that had more advanced communication infrastructure could more easily come together to interpret and respond to an unprecedented situation. Noehrer et al. (2021) and Larkin et al. (2023) report how institutions that already have digital capabilities can learn of changing circumstances more quickly and would coordinate to respond to these changes adaptively. This conforms to the sensemaking theory which focuses on communication as the process in which organizations sense and make sense of ambiguity.

Nonetheless, the results also show the shortcomings of the application of these theoretical frameworks to the context of museums. Although the communicative constitution perspective sheds light on how communication constitutes organizations, it does not provide much insight into the reasons why certain museums establish effective communication practices as compared to others. The structural and cultural issues identified in the thematic analysis propose that the constitution is limited by the historical developments, availability, and institutions of governance, which are very different among institutions.

Digital Transformation: Hope and Threat

Literature Review has made the digital transformation one of the greatest disruptors of museum communication, and the results validate this evaluation and complicate it. The thorough review by Taormina and Baraldi (2022) confirmed that digital engagement involves the coordination of the previously-distinct functions, which was also approved in numerous studies related to the study of the pandemic adaptation. The loss of control over communication that was highlighted by Liendo and Nieto (2024) as the blurring of the internal and external boundaries is registered in a variety of institutional settings. Most importantly, the results show that the effectiveness of digital transformation depends on the organizational communication capacity that is already available. A museum having well-developed digital infrastructure reported by Noehrer et al. (2021) better adapted to the conditions of the pandemic compared to those that tried to develop the capacity during crisis. Nevertheless, this implies that digital transformation is not to be perceived as a technological solution to communication issues, but as a booster of a communication pattern, good or bad.

The measurement model of Agostino and Costantini (2022) will be useful in measuring this capacity, focusing on the organizational, but not necessarily technical, aspects of the digital change. With Marini and Agostino (2021) agreeing, their results suggest that effective digital transformation involves communication alignment between functions that have traditionally been acting with a high level of autonomy. This problem of coordination, although a well-known problem, has not been sufficiently covered both theoretically and practically.

The Persistent Silo Problem

The Literature Review has observed the extrinsic bias in museum communication studies, the majority of which has concentrated on the audience response, and not internal processes. These results affirm that this bias has resulted in some major gap in the comprehension of interdepartmental coordination. Schonfeld and Sweeney (2019) reported a broad range of differences in the ways in which education and curatorial departments interface with each other, including full integration in reporting lines to high levels of autonomy with little coordination.

The curator-educator gap placed in the Literature Review, proves to be a recurrent gap in several researches. This split tells us of more fundamental conflicts between scholarly and public-facing orientations that are institutionalized in the structure of museum. The characterization of Spanish museums as not being directive or decisive (Liendo and Nieto, 2024) reflects the challenge of attaining congruent communication across the professional lines and divergent values, vocabularies, and metrics of success.

The case study of the organizational change initiative in the Canadian Museum of History presented by Leblanc (2017) can be seen both as a hope and as a warning. Although organizational restructuring removed divisional silos that were becoming a barrier to agility, there were still problems with implementation. This observation is consistent with organizational change studies that propose that structural interventions that do not incorporate cultural and process changes have a low level of sustained improvement. The thematic analysis shows that building the relationships and the investment in relationships, as well as the individual protection of the leader and the departmental pressures, is needed along with the necessary structural arrangement to achieve effective coordination.

Effective Communication, Governance, and Leadership

The Literature Review revealed that the public administration structures are applicable in the process of comprehending the relationship between museum governance and communication, and the results prove the existence of this relationship. The economic crisis by Lindqvist (2012) has direct and indirect impacts on the economic well-being of museums. This observation is supported by Mendoza and Talavera (2025) who discovered that hybrid forms of government where the government, business, and non-profit organizations participate offer a more adaptable stakeholder involvement.

The theoretical significance of leadership communication is supported in the study of authentic leadership in public sector museums by Asif et al. (2025). Their observation that leadership style can substantially fill the gap in perception between the organizational politics and the attitudes of employees is in line with other organizational communication studies that show the importance of leadership in influencing the communication climate. Directors who talk with each other often in a multi-channel way and focus on relational communication are more likely to develop informed staff culture and make staff more engaged.

Most importantly, though, the results show that there are major discrepancies between the governance ideals and communication realities. The communication cost of accountability is high and is not evenly distributed since the staff at various levels consume much time preparing reports to be reviewed by the superiors. This load can be displacing resources into mission-oriented activity and changing organizational priorities to that which is measurable instead of what is valuable, a dilemma long known to public administration scholarship and poorly considered in museum studies.

Organizational Learning and Crisis Communications

The COVID-19 pandemic was a kind of an experiment in crisis communication in the museum, and its conclusions show that there are both positive transformations and ongoing challenges. The International Council of Museums (2021) recorded a plethora of organizational adaptation as museums have reported a significant shift in internal communication practices. The study by Fernandez et al. (2021) and Larkin et al. (2023) determined that the institutions that had developed digital communication abilities were in better positions to retain the audience during closure times.

The results confirm the observation of the Literature Review that crisis communication involves external-facing and internal coordination mechanisms. The cross-cultural comparison by Giannini and Bowen (2022) showed that two-directional social media communication strengthened the work of organizational communication, and the museums were able to control the spaces of interaction through selective content filtering. This observation enlightens us about the unseen work of organizational communication that is expressed when there is a crisis.

Nonetheless, the results also make even the organizational learning based on crisis experience questionable. Though it was found that museums quickly adjusted to the conditions of the pandemic, it is not clear that these adjustments provide any long-term changes in communication infrastructure or are temporary adjustments that will reduce once the emergency conditions are over. The longitudinal study that should be implemented to estimate the permanence of change, as the Literature Review mentioned, is missing in the field to a large extent.

The findings support the observation in the Literature Review that the organizational communication theory has been a poor application in the studies of the museum. Although it is based on the concept of sensemaking and digital transformation, the studies seldom interact with more serious frames of analysis of communication networks, constitutive processes, or approaches to practice. Increased intellectual borrowing would deepen the study of museums and produce unique additions to the organization communication theory.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The implications of the findings are far reaching both to theory and practice. In the case of theory, the congruence of the empirical results with the communicative constitution of organization perspective indicates that this approach to the organization presents fruitful instructions in the future research. Nevertheless, the results

have also shown that constitution is limited by structural, cultural, and political factors which must be more explicitly theorized. The sensemaking framework is also of value to the study of crisis adaptation, though it needs to be extended to how the organizations can carry on with improved communication practices in the long-run.

Practically, the findings indicate that the organizational communication in the museum should be worked on through focusing on several levels at the same time. The effectiveness of communication can be achieved by structural arrangements that facilitate information flow, cultural norms that facilitate open communication, and political processes that deal with competing interests. One level interventions will rarely produce long term change. The successes of the cross-functional teams reported in several studies could not have been possible without both the relation-building investment and leadership support as well as the arrangement of structures.

The results also imply that digital transformation is an organizational change that needs to be treated as such and not an implementation of technology. Museums that had invested in digital communication infrastructure prior to the pandemic have done so far better than those that attempted to gain capacity during crisis. This observation means that communication infrastructure must be considered as the organizational capability development rather than operational expense.

CONCLUSION

This study has offered a systematic examination of the state of research with respect to the organizational communication within museums, especially the focus of the research was on the systems of the public administration and on the management practices. The review of 20 major studies indicates the existence of a consistent communication gap that is reflected in the interdepartmental silos, gaps in strategy-implementation, and poor leadership communication. The analysis revealed five key themes, namely digital transformation and communication infrastructure, interdepartmental coordination and silo challenge, leadership communication and governance, crisis communication and organizational adaptation, and professional identity and communication boundaries.

The results show that the issue of the museum organizational communication is not only an operation issue but rather an element of the institutional identity and performance. The way in which staff interrelates within and between departments, the flow of decisions within hierarchies, and how strategic intent is transduced into operational reality are all fundamentally defining of what a museum is and the things it can achieve. The fact that these dynamics have been comparatively overlooked in the academic literature as well as in professional practice is a gap that has been aimed to fill by the review.

Limitations and Future Research

To the researcher, this review indicates that there are gaps in the field that require systematic comparative studies across the national and institutional contexts, communication audit methodologies which are applicable in the museums and rigorous tests of organizational design decisions on the outcome of communication. Research-practice partnerships would be regarded more seriously, theoretical diversity would be more aware of the field, and the methodology would be more sophisticated.

The COVID-19 crisis has provided an urgent need as well as an opportunity to develop the museum organizational communication. The imposed digital transformation has unveiled the gaps and opportunities that were less noticeable in the past. Pandemic learning has provided museums with a chance to develop effective, equitable, and sustainable communication practices. It will take time to realize this opportunity necessitating continuous consideration of the internal organizational aspects that this review has attempted to enlighten.

Some drawbacks of this study must be mentioned. The use of English-language sources, possibly, has limited a lot of important scholarship that was published in different languages, especially on the European and non-Anglophone side and on the emerging museum sectors in Asia and Latin America. The focus on academic sources that have been peer reviewed could have failed to capture key practitioner insights that have been published in the professional literature. Also, the dynamic nature of digital communication implies that some results have been already outdated even with reference materials published during the review period. These limitations should be taken into consideration in future reviews and the analysis should be extended.

In perspective, the area of museum organizational communication is at a crossroad. A combination of the pressures of the digital transformation, the shifts in the audience demands, and post-pandemic change in organizations presents both challenges and opportunities. Museums that invest in their communication system, train their workforce and transform their governance culture will find it easier to sail through these changes. Those scholars who build more sophisticated theoretical systems, handle more rigorous methodological strategies

and have a more thorough involvement in practice will generate a stronger and more useful body of knowledge. Museums as important cultural institutions cannot afford to do without communication, either among themselves or to the outside world.

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