

## THE INTERNET PRESENCE OF BELGRADE MUSEUMS IN THE SERVICE OF CULTURAL TOURISM

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### Abstract

*Statistics show that the number of tourists visiting Belgrade has been increasing in recent years. Considering the city's rich cultural and historical heritage and abundance of museums, there is a significant percentage of cultural tourists among them. When exploring a specific destination, cultural tourists search for information on the Internet. Therefore, the presence of Belgrade museums on the Internet through their websites and profiles on social networks is important for attracting cultural tourists. The aim of this paper is to evaluate websites of several Belgrade museums and their Facebook pages. A comparative analysis of selected websites will be presented in detail, and suggestions concerning their improvement will be given. A special attention is paid to social media marketing. The author has investigated Facebook pages of the selected Belgrade museums, and this analysis will also be presented in the paper.*

**Key Words:** *the Internet, museum websites, Facebook, cultural tourism, Belgrade*

**JEL classification:** *Z10, Z30, M15*

### Introduction

The number of tourists visiting Belgrade has been increasing in recent years. According to the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (2019 & 2018), Belgrade had 1,160,582 arrivals and overnight stays in the period from January to December 2018 (comparing to 1,035,205 in the same period the previous year), of which 971,942 stays were generated by foreign tourists (comparing to 863,162 the previous year). Belgrade is the centre of culture and art of Serbia, and therefore many tourists have cultural motivation to visit it. Since there are many attractive cultural

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tourism destinations all over Europe, Belgrade should do everything in its power to promote its culture, including its museums. Since many cultural tourists, when choosing and planning their next trip, intensively use the Internet, and museums (as it would be discussed in the next section) are the most important attraction for them, the presence of the Belgrade museums on the Internet through their websites and profiles on social networks is important for attracting such tourists. This motivated the author to choose five Belgrade museums and do a comparative analysis of their websites and Facebook pages.

### **Cultural tourism and cultural tourists**

Although there is no unique definition of cultural tourism, many authors mention the definition formulated by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in 1985 (Ćamilović, 2018b). In its "narrow definition", UNWTO describes cultural tourism as the "movements of persons for essentially cultural motivations such as study tours, performing arts and cultural tours, travel to festivals and other cultural events, visits to sites and monuments, travel to study nature, folklore or art, and pilgrimages" (Richards, 2003). Cultural tourism is, therefore, an area of tourism concerned with a tourist's engagement with a country or region's culture, including their art. It includes tourism in large cities and their cultural facilities, such as museums and theatres (Singh, 2008).

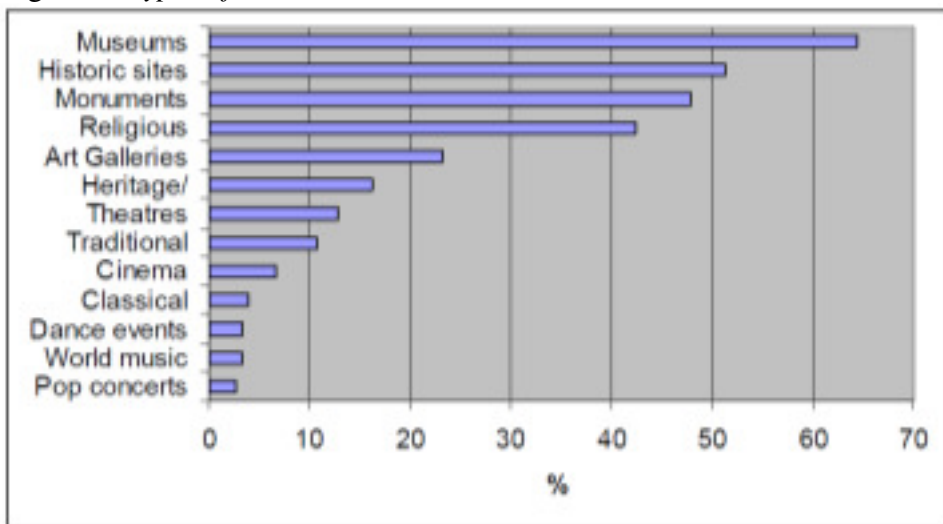
Cultural tourism has a great potential for growth. UNWTO forecasted that global cultural tourism would grow at a rate of 15% in the coming years (Goss, 2016). The Tourism Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia for the Period from 2016 to 2025 also recognized an upward trend in visits to the most important segments of cultural heritage, whether mobile, immobile or immaterial (Government of the Republic of Serbia, 2016).

What is the profile of a cultural tourist? According to Silberberg (1995) and ATLAS Cultural Tourism Survey 2007 (Richards, 2007), cultural tourists are more highly educated than the general public, they tend to have higher level occupations (and therefore earn more money), spend substantially more than standard tourists, are more likely to shop, and usually like to stay at hotels. Silberberg (1995) noted in his paper that cultural tourists tend to be in older age categories. CBI (2018) came to a similar conclusion. They revealed that the segment of middle-aged people (between the ages of 40 and 54) is the largest cultural tourist segment and

that cultural holidays are the most popular holidays among older generation (between the ages of 55 and 70). However, the young travellers' segment is also becoming important for cultural tourism. Reduced costs of air travel (caused by an increasing number of destinations covered by low-cost flights) and the availability of cheap accommodation (hostels, etc.) influence young people to travel more often. According to CBI (2018), around a third of this segment are interested in holidays with an emphasis on culture. The segment of young people is important for cultural tourism for one more reason: the experiences that tourists acquire in their youth can greatly influence their tourist behaviour later in life (Ćamilović, 2018b).

ATLAS Cultural Tourism Survey 2007 (Richards, 2007) showed one more interesting finding: In terms of the types of cultural sites and attractions visited, museums are the most important for cultural tourists (as illustrated in Figure 1)

Figure 1: *Types of cultural attractions visited*



Source: Richards G. (2007) *ATLAS Cultural Tourism Survey 2007*, [http://www.tram-research.com/atlas/ATLAS Cultural Tourism Survey 2007.PDF](http://www.tram-research.com/atlas/ATLAS_Cultural_Tourism_Survey_2007.PDF)

Cultural tourists are increasingly finding information about cultural sites and attractions over the Internet. Therefore, the presence of Belgrade museums on the Internet through their websites is the imperative. The

author selected five Belgrade museums and conducted a comparative analysis of their websites.

### **Comparative analysis of Belgrade museums' websites**

A website should be a starting point of a museum's interaction with its customers. Before making a list of museums to visit, a cultural tourist usually searches them on the Internet. In fact, most of the Internet users rely on search engines (such as Google, Bing, Yahoo, etc.) to look for travel information (Qian et al., 2015). Therefore, it is not only important for a museum to have a good website, but it is also extremely important that its website appears at the top of the search engine results. Therefore, a special attention should be given to the search engine optimization (SEO). SEO should bring potential cultural tourists to the museum's website (Ćamilović, 2018b).

A website needs to be functional, simple, and aesthetically pleasing (Lončarić et al., 2015). Functionality and content of the website are critical success factors that help attract tourists (Lončarić et al., 2015). It should provide tourists with access to the relevant general information that they might want to know in advance when planning a visit (Welie & Klaasse, 2004). These include the address, email, telephone and fax number, opening hours, home rules, etc. It is advisable to add a Google Map to the contact page, since many tourists use this application on their mobile phones. Tourists need a mobile-friendly museum website that works well on smaller screens, is easy to navigate, and does not take much time to load. There are several features that indicate wheatear a website is mobile-friendly or not (Kelly-Barton, 2018): responsive design (automatically displays the website properly on whatever type of device a visitor is using), readable fonts and proper text formatting, optimized media display, mobile-friendly navigation, short page load time, etc.

Besides general information, the website should provide additional information about ticket prices, exhibitions, guided tours, etc. All the events can be presented on a calendar. Online booking and ticket purchase are preferable. The museum website could also have an online shop, since visitors might want to buy museum-related products online (Welie & Klaasse, 2004). Since the collection is the main asset of a museum, it should also be clearly featured on the website in the form of information about the pieces, but also in the form of a photo gallery (Welie & Klaasse, 2004) or even a virtual tour. The museum website

could also have a news section, newsletter sign-up plugin, guestbook and comment space, and a chat option. Among other functionalities, it should have good navigation, search button or search box, and a sitemap if possible. Since one of the purposes of a website is to attract foreign tourists, the website should be at least bilingual: English and Serbian (of course, the more foreign languages, the better).

The website and social media platforms should be working together to maximize museum’s online exposure. Therefore, the social media buttons should be visibly displayed on the website. They can be added on the top, bottom, or along the side of the home page. Social media sharing links/buttons to some pieces of the content can be added as well.

Website personalization is one of the important additional functionalities of a website, since it enhances visitors’ experience and, on the other hand, gives the museum a chance to collect important data that could be used for marketing purposes. It requires visitors to register and login in order to get additional functionalities on the website. Customer data could be imported in a data mart or a data warehouse (a data mart design and development, with a special focus on data modelling, is discussed by Ćamilović et al., 2009), or they could be stored in a data lake. These can be analysed by employing different data mining techniques. Ćamilović (2018a) researched this topic and presented some important data analysis applications in marketing. Kotler and Keller (2017) also emphasized personalization as one of the important elements of an effective website.

As noted previously, there are many museums in Belgrade, but for the purpose of this study, five are selected by the author. The list of the museums that are covered by the study and their official websites are presented in Table 1. The study was conducted in November and December 2018.

Table 1: *Belgrade museums and their websites*

Museum	Museum website
National Museum	<a href="http://www.narodnimuzej.rs/">http://www.narodnimuzej.rs/</a>
Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade	<a href="http://www.msub.org.rs/">http://www.msub.org.rs/</a>
Nikola Tesla Museum	<a href="https://nikolateslamuseum.org/">https://nikolateslamuseum.org/</a>
Museum of Yugoslavia	<a href="https://www.muzej-jugoslavije.org/">https://www.muzej-jugoslavije.org/</a>
Military Museum, Belgrade	<a href="http://www.muzej.mod.gov.rs/">http://www.muzej.mod.gov.rs/</a>

Source: *Author*

Considering the importance of SEO, the author has analysed the Belgrade museums' websites by using a free online tool called SEO Web Page Analyzer (available at <http://www.seowebpageanalyzer.com/>), that assesses the built quality and the content quality from an accessibility, usability and search engine point of view, and gives the overall score. The scores of the museums' websites are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: *The overall SEO scores of Belgrade museums' websites*

Museum website URL	Overall score
<a href="http://www.narodnimuzej.rs/">http://www.narodnimuzej.rs/</a>	51
<a href="http://www.msub.org.rs/">http://www.msub.org.rs/</a>	57
<a href="https://nikolateslamuseum.org/">https://nikolateslamuseum.org/</a>	48
<a href="https://www.muzej-jugoslavije.org/">https://www.muzej-jugoslavije.org/</a>	53
<a href="http://www.muzej.mod.gov.rs/">http://www.muzej.mod.gov.rs/</a>	51

Source: *Author*

These results show that most websites have scores of around 50. The Museum of Contemporary Art has performed a slightly better SEO and its score is 57. Other famous world museums' websites usually have a better score (for example, the Louvre website has 65, the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) website has 68, etc.). In general, there is room for improvement. Fortunately, for each URL (Uniform Resource Locator) provided, the SEO Web Page Analyzer suggests what should be upgraded in order to improve the website's optimization for search engines.

General information availability was analysed next. This was done by the content analysis of both Serbian and English versions of the museums' websites. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: *General information availability*

Museum	General information						
	Address	Email	Phone	Fax	Google Map	Opening hours	House rules
National Museum	√	√	√	√	√	√	×
Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade	√	√	√	×	√	√	×
Nikola Tesla Museum	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Museum of Yugoslavia	√	√	√	×	√	√	×
Military Museum, Belgrade	√	√	√	√	√	√	×

Source: *Author*

At the Serbian version of the National Museum's website, the link to opening hours is available at contact page, but that is not the case with the English version of the website. It would be helpful if this information were included. Although, in both Serbian and English versions, opening hours can be found at "Visit us" section. The Museum of Contemporary Art, on the other hand, shows the information about opening hours on its homepage, so they are found instantly. The Nikola Tesla Museum's website has separate pages for contact information, address and map, and opening hours. The website navigation makes this information easy to find. This is the only website among the analysed ones that has listed the house rules as well. The Museum of Yugoslavia shows most general information on their homepage, but they also have a separate page called "Visit us" where the Google Map is available. The Military Museum's website has a separate contact page available. It can be accessed from the main menu on the website, and it contains all the necessary information.

The author also investigated whether the websites listed in Table 1 are mobile-friendly by accessing them on a mobile phone. It is very surprising that two of them are not. That is the case with the website of the Museum of Contemporary Art and the website of the Military Museum. These two websites should be improved, since many cultural tourists search the information about museums on their mobile devices to plan a visit.

As far as the additional data is concerned, all the websites contain the information about the ticket prices. Most of them also show guided tours terms. The exception is the Military Museum in Belgrade that requires advanced reservations by phone for guided tours (the telephone number is provided on the website). The Museum of Contemporary Art's website provides scheduled tours time and date information for several exhibitions, but there is no daily or weekly schedule of the tours. The Nikola Tesla Museum's website has a pop-up window with the schedule for several days. As presented in Table 4, only two websites have an event calendar: the National Museum and the Museum of Yugoslavia websites. Information about the events on the other websites is not presented in the form of a calendar.

The Museum of Yugoslavia is the only among the analysed ones that has a contact/reservation form on its website. Other museums usually provide a telephone number and/or an email address for this purpose.

Table 4: *Additional information and online purchase availability*

Museum	Additional information & online purchase					
	Ticket prices	Guided tours schedule	Event calendar	Online contact/reservation form	Ticket purchase	Online store
National Museum	√	√	√	×	×	×
Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade	√	√	×	×	×	×
Nikola Tesla Museum	√	√	×	×	×	×
Museum of Yugoslavia	√	√	√	√	×	×
Military Museum, Belgrade	√	×	×	×	×	×

Source: *Author*

Unfortunately, visitors cannot purchase the tickets for any of these museums online. This is not the case with the famous world museums, since many of them enable this option. Furthermore, visitors also like to buy gifts or souvenirs online. None of the websites included in the study has an online store. They should consider these options.

All analysed websites provide the information about museums' collections, illustrated with photographs of some pieces. The Nikola Tesla Museum is the only one among the analysed that offers a mobile application which includes a virtual tour preview, among other things. The application is available on Google Play Store, and this information, with the link to download page, is available on the website.

The news section could be implemented in a news box that could be integrated in the homepage (Welie & Klaasse, 2004). A website menu can also lead to news. Almost all analysed websites have a news section. Only the Museum of Yugoslavia's website does not contain an explicit news section (although it does show information about exhibition and programs, but not in the form of news). A newsletter sign-up plugin is available on the Museum of Contemporary Art and the Museum of Yugoslavia websites.

The author has also examined some important websites functionalities that allow a visitor to easily and quickly find the information on the



website: the presence of a search button or a box and a sitemap. The results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: *Search button/box and sitemap functionalities*

Museum	Museum website functionality	
	Search button/box	Sitemap
National Museum	√	×
Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade	√	√
Nikola Tesla Museum	×	×
Museum of Yugoslavia	×	×
Military Museum, Belgrade	√	×

Source: *Author*

All the museums analysed have bilingual websites in the English and Serbian languages. Most offer both Serbian Latin- and Cyrillic-letter versions, except for the Nikola Tesla Museum that has only a Cyrillic-letter version. They should consider adding other foreign languages versions as well (for example, on the Louvre’s website visitors can choose among more than 20 languages).

As already noted, it is very important for a museum’s website to have social media buttons visibly displayed. This analysis is illustrated in Table 6.

Table 6: *Social media buttons availability*

Museum	Social media buttons				
	Facebook	Twitter	Instagram	YouTube	Pinterest
National Museum	√	√	√	√	√
Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade	√	√	√	√	×
Nikola Tesla Museum	×	×	×	×	×
Museum of Yugoslavia	√	√	√	×	×
Military Museum, Belgrade	√	×	×	√	×

Source: *Author*

Unfortunately, the Nikola Tesla Museum does not use the opportunity to connect their website with social media profiles. On the other hand, in addition to social media profiles, the Museum of Yugoslavia also has a

blog. The author noticed that the Military Museum's website has social media sharing buttons, as well.

### **Marketing potential of social networks**

A very large number of people use social networking sites, and those numbers are constantly increasing. One study conducted in Australia shows that visitors to museums are using social media in larger numbers than non-visitors (Kelly, 2013). Thus, it is very important for a museum to be active on social networks. This gives a museum the opportunity to develop productive relationships with its existing and potential visitors, and to gain insights into their perceptions, likes and dislikes.

Some important aspects of engaging on social media sites are:

- *Getting information about the fans' preferences and opinions.* Since social networks encourage a two-way communication, the valuable insights can be gained from this. Sometimes, this is the way to avoid conducting expensive marketing researches about customers' sentiments and opinions (Ćamilović, 2018c). As Ryan and Jones (2009) point out, "Knowing your customers is the key to effective digital marketing" (p. 156).
- *Online word-of-mouth.* Online word-of-mouth is a kind of word-of-mouth that uses the Internet, particularly social networks, but in this case the word can travel much further and much faster (Ryan & Jones, 2009). Marketers can perform activities to create and spread commercial messages as part of viral marketing, and online word-of-mouth can be one of the effects of viral marketing strategy (Petrescu, 2014). This means that consumer-to-consumer communication can be influenced by managers and marketers (Petrescu, 2014).
- *Brand advocacy.* Positive interaction with people who already have a positive attitude toward a brand can create the biggest brand advocates, who will happily recommend and support the organization all over social networks for free (Ryan & Jones, 2009).
- *Promoting events.* This can help increasing both registration and attendance.
- *Advertising on social networks.* This type of advertising allows reaching a huge community of online users, supports a wide segmentation (which means advertising to specific users with predetermined characteristics), and increases overall market visibility (Cyberclick).

Facebook is a social network with the largest number of active users. According to Statista (2019), Facebook was the first social network to surpass one billion registered accounts and had 2.27 billion monthly active users in January 2019. Facebook can stimulate new travel ideas of cultural tourists, and this is why it is important for museums to create a Facebook page and manage it in a proper manner. The comparative analysis of Facebook pages of the five selected Belgrade museums is presented in the next section.

### **Comparative analysis of Belgrade museums' Facebook Pages**

As discussed earlier, most museum websites have social media follow buttons that connect the website to museum's profiles on social media platforms. All five Belgrade museums selected for the purpose of this analysis have Facebook pages, as presented in Table 7.

Table 7: *Belgrade museums and their Facebook Pages*

<b>Museum</b>	<b>Facebook Page</b>
National Museum	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/narodnimuzej">https://www.facebook.com/narodnimuzej</a>
Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/MSUB.MoCAB">https://www.facebook.com/MSUB.MoCAB</a>
Nikola Tesla Museum	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/teslamuzej/">https://www.facebook.com/teslamuzej/</a>
Museum of Yugoslavia	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/MuzejJugoslavijeBeograd/">https://www.facebook.com/MuzejJugoslavijeBeograd/</a>
Military Museum, Belgrade	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/vojnimuzej">https://www.facebook.com/vojnimuzej</a>

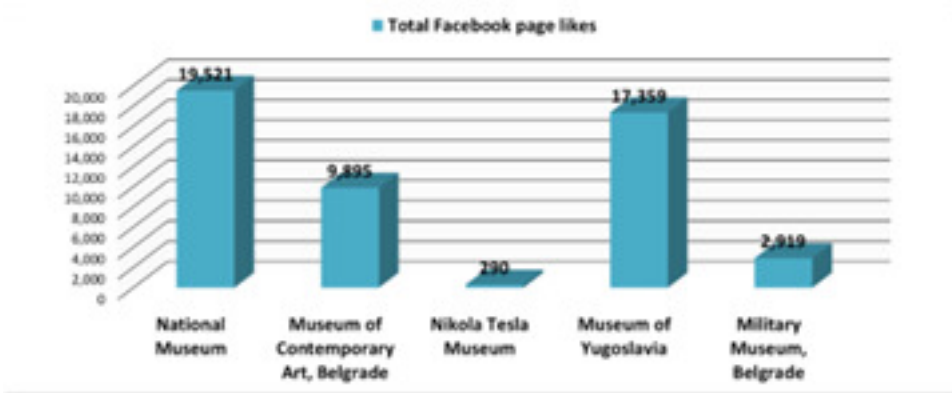
Source: *Author*

These pages were analysed with Facebook Pages to Watch feature in Facebook Insights (Facebook's tool for page analysis). This feature enables monitoring of several Facebook pages and their comparison by activity, engagement and audience growth (Miller, 2014). The analysis was conducted on the 18th of January 2019, at around 11 pm.

The Facebook pages were compared by total page likes, as illustrated in Figure 2. The National Museum has the largest fan base with about 19,500 page likes. It is followed by the Museum of Yugoslavia with almost 17,400, and the Museum of Contemporary Art with almost 9,900 page likes. The other two museums have fewer fans. It is easily noticeable (in Figure 2) that the Nikola Tesla Museum has an extremely small number of page likes – 290. The reason for this is the fact that the page is

created just recently (their very first update was done on December 6, 2018).

Figure 2: Comparing Facebook pages by the total page likes



Source: Author

The audience growth is one of the indicators that are very important to track over time, and this information is shown in Table 8. The data show that the Nikola Tesla Museum has the largest audience growth (5.5%). Among other museums, only the National Museum has the increment in total page likes from the previous week close to one (more precisely 0.8%). Others have 0.1% or less.

Table 8: Comparing Facebook pages by the total page likes growth from the previous week

Museum	Total page likes growth from last week
National Museum	0.8%
Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade	0.1%
Nikola Tesla Museum	5.5%
Museum of Yugoslavia	0.1%
Military Museum, Belgrade	0%

Source: Author

In order to retain the existing fans and attract new ones, and also to encourage their interaction with the Facebook page, it is important to pay attention to the frequency of posting and the quality of content. Choosing the right measure in the number of posts per day is important for managing the Facebook page in a successful manner. Excessive posting

can lead to the risk of losing followers (i.e. them clicking the Unfollow button). Posting too little can also damage fan engagement and result in losing followers (Ćamilović, 2018c). Facebook Pages to Watch feature gives the information about the number of posts from the previous week. These are presented in Figure 3.

Figure 3: *Comparing Facebook pages by the number of posts from the previous week*



Source: *Author*

Figure 3 shows that the National Museum, the Museum of Contemporary Art and the Nikola Tesla Museum had four posts in the previous week, while the Military Museum had one post. The Museum of Yugoslavia did not post at all in the previous week, and this should raise a red flag – they should be continuously active in order to engage their fans.

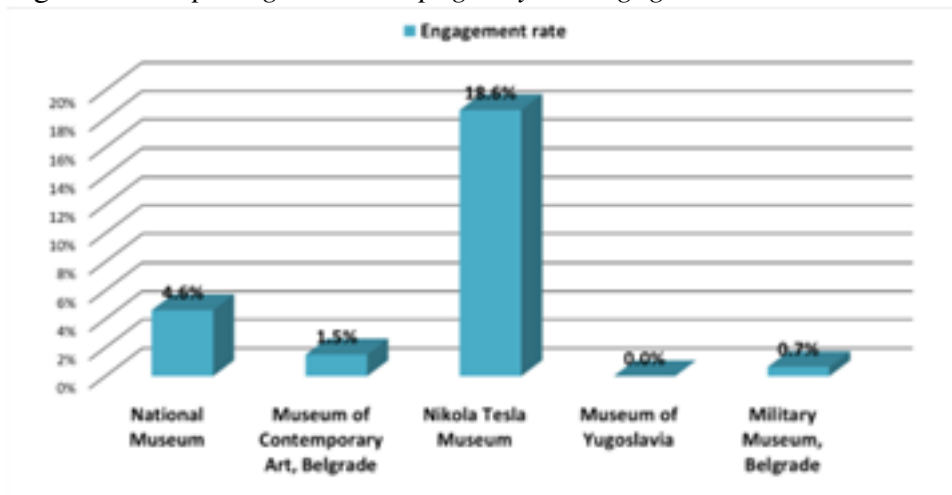
The question is: What is the optimal number of posts? According to Social Report (2018), it depends on the number of fans. If a Facebook page has less than 10,000 followers, the ideal number of posts is one or fewer per day. However, if a page has more than 10,000 followers, posting one or two times per day leads to the most clicks per post (Social Report, 2018). Nevertheless, this cannot be a general rule, and every museum should experiment with the time of posting and the number of posts in order to get the best results.

Every Facebook page strives to get the right eyes to its content and not just to grow its audience, but also to improve fan engagement. User engagement is a parameter representing the sum of reactions, comments and shares. Facebook reactions allow the user to react to posts with six

different animated emotions, and in this way, users can express their sentiments to posts (Russel, 2017). Comment represents the reaction of a user to a post that reveals their opinion on it. Facebook allows a user to share a post with other users. Shares are very important since they multiply certain post on this social network.

The analysed museums' Facebook pages have had different user engagement in the previous week, from around 900 (National Museum) to zero (Museum of Yugoslavia). Since the number of likes of each of the analyzed five pages has varied wildly (from around 19,500 to just 290), user engagement is not a proper parameter for their comparison. To really compare them, the percentage of followers who engage should be determined (Gingold, 2017). Engagement rate is calculated by dividing engagement by the number of total page likes and it is illustrated in Figure 4. The figure clearly shows that the Nikola Tesla Museum fans were very active, with 18.6% engagement rate. The National Museum had 4.6% engagement rate, while other museums had less than 2% engagement rate. Since the Museum of Yugoslavia had no posts in the previous week, their fans did not make any interactions.

Figure 4: Comparing Facebook pages by the engagement rate



Source: *Author*

The numbers show that the National Museum and the Nikola Tesla Museum manage their Facebook pages better than the other museums. However, since the latter became active on Facebook in December 2018, it is still early to make general conclusions and it would be interesting to

study their Facebook statistics in the future to check whether they will manage to grow their fan base and still keep their fans active on Facebook.

### **Conclusion**

For the first time in history, more than half of the global population is online. The Internet has changed not only the way people communicate and use their free time, but also the way they search for information and get ideas for their next trip. Since the ATLAS Cultural Tourism Survey has shown that cultural tourists are generally more educated than average tourists (Richards, 2007), they certainly use the Internet and social networks to a larger extent. The research conducted in Australia supports this conclusion, since it has shown that visitors to museums are using social media in larger numbers than non-visitors (Kelly, 2013). On the other hand, it has also been shown that cultural tourists consider museums most important in terms of the types of cultural sites and attractions visited (Richards, 2007). Therefore, it is necessary for museums to be present on the Internet through their websites and profiles on social networks, especially Facebook, since it has the largest number of active users.

European countries recognize the importance of cultural tourism. Given its rich history, Europe has many traditionally attractive and highly visited cultural destinations and Belgrade needs to engage in a race to attract cultural tourists. For this reason, the author has chosen to conduct a comparative analysis of websites and Facebook pages of several Belgrade museums in order to estimate the extent to which they are beneficial to cultural tourists. The analysis shows that websites, unfortunately, only have versions in Serbian and English, but not in other foreign languages. Therefore, foreign tourists who do not speak English have no use of them. Generally speaking, all the useful and necessary information is available on the websites. However, it turns out that not all websites are mobile friendly, which is a problem for those who access them from their mobile devices, and many tourists do. But the biggest limitation is the absence of option to make any kind of online purchase: It is not possible to buy tickets online, nor is it possible to buy souvenirs and other gift shop products online.

The analysis also shows that museums have their Facebook pages, but some were created just recently (Nikola Tesla Museum became active on

Facebook in December 2018). There are significant differences in the number of Facebook fans, and the comparative analysis also shows differences in the number of posts and engagement rates. This means that some museums run their Facebook pages more successfully than others. Certainly, there is room for improvement.

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