

Public engagement in virtual tours: a case study of the United Nations digital solutions during COVID-19

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People around the world have been affected dramatically by Covid-19. The pandemic has been a challenging period not only for public health, it caused profound economic recession in various countries. That is why business entities and governmental bodies addressed to practices of digital and virtual engagement of public as survival strategies to overcome crisis during lockdown. “Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, digital technologies have enabled governments to connect with people and to continue to deliver services online,” said UN DESA’s Under-Secretary-General Liu Zhenmin [1]. Digital technologies nowadays are used as information sources, remote communication and interaction facilities.

The UN being an international organization offered its own digital solutions to the problem of public engagement and supporting cultural heritage sector. The Headquarters of United Nations (in New York and Vienna) have launched various individual or group virtual tours, excursions and exhibitions, designed special online content websites, offered online lectures, courses and study trips, applied streaming services to attract general public and promote its image [2].

The study examines digital tools used by the UN to design and introduce virtual tours and other online practices for public. These technologies are part of virtual public engagement practices, they allow to visit various places and explore the UN from the comfort of home (i.e., without physical presence) as safety issues. Initially, virtual tours were created using technologies that support graphics and multimedia such as photos or videos with 360° image navigation. Guided tours are presented in two ways. One of the formats is to explore the website and its sections designed with up-to-date photos, fascinating images supported with experts’ comments. Thus, you are able to study the history of the UN or to get acquainted with the interior of the General Assembly. Another format is viewing a series of short online videos or attending video tours created with the use of modern video processing applications. Besides, the UN provides nowadays live meetings with personal multilingual tour guides via digital technologies (e.g., Travel UN online). The organization have posted special rules and guidelines for those who wish to attend virtual tours. Meeting sessions are scheduled in Microsoft teams.

A link to the meeting will be provided to you as soon as you confirm your booking. It also can be done via Zoom platform where you can ask questions using chat section. The UN has also a flexible discount system to attract the visitors.

The UN has adapted unique experience to promote public engagement during Covid-19 relying on the assets of modern digital technologies. This is an example of professional vision and policy implementation.

Источники и литература

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