

Cultural Diplomacy and Museums: Their Role in Promoting Universal Values and Establishing Solidarity Between Different Cultures

Abstract

This research examines the role of cultural diplomacy in fostering international relations and promoting sustainable development through the lens of cultural institutions, such as museums. By integrating cultural and public diplomacy with tourism, this study examines their collective impact on global peace and understanding. Museums, recognised as pivotal platforms for cultural diplomacy, provide unique opportunities for cross-cultural exchange and education, thereby enhancing international understanding through their exhibits. The methodology combines a comprehensive literature review with detailed case studies of museum exhibitions to uncover both theoretical insights and practical implementations of cultural diplomacy. This dual approach enables a thorough examination of how museums not only preserve cultural heritage but also actively engage in international dialogue, shaping cultural perceptions and promoting global cooperation. The findings aim to provide policymakers and cultural institutions with actionable insights, emphasising the strategic use of cultural assets to foster global peace and sustainability. Through its focus on the role of museums in cultural diplomacy, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of their potential in shaping international relations. It highlights the importance of cultural exchange within the global diplomatic framework. This research highlights the evolving role of cultural diplomacy in contemporary international relations and its significance in promoting global cooperation and understanding.

Keywords: cultural diplomacy, cultural tourism, sustainable development, museum exhibitions

1. Introduction

Cultural diplomacy remained on the sidelines and was considered inadequate until the end of the 20th century, when it was revived and activated on both practical and theoretical levels (Walden, 2019). Combining cultural diplomacy with tourism diplomacy can foster a positive interaction between individuals from diverse regions by facilitating cross-cultural exchanges and mutual understanding. This interaction is not only about the economic aspect of tourism but also about the cultural enrichment experience (Zhu et al., 2022). Tourism and cultural diplomacy are tools that can contribute to the creation of global peace and sustainability, which require cooperation, understanding and open dialogue between nations, shaping positive experiences and strengthening relationships between communities globally (Levy & Hawkins, 2009).

While cultural organisations used to cater mainly to the local community's requirements, the growing demand from visitors for cultural experiences has necessitated a shift in their approach. Cultural organisations, such as museums, today recognise the importance of enticing visitors and crafting engaging experiences for

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them (Davidson et al., 2019). Museums possess abundant soft power assets due to their extensive collections, which showcase the pinnacle of cultural accomplishments in the visual arts. Museums enhance the persuasive impact of public diplomacy by evoking emotions such as amazement, pride, and admiration through their efforts to make their collections accessible to everyone (Muscat, 2020).

Cultural diplomacy and museums share a symbiotic relationship wherein each enhances the reach and impact of the other. Cultural diplomacy, by its nature, seeks to foster mutual understanding, respect, and cooperation among nations and cultures. Museums, as repositories and exhibitors of cultural heritage, serve as tangible platforms for cultural diplomacy, offering immersive experiences that can transcend linguistic and geographical barriers. Cultural diplomacy initiatives often leverage the universal language of art, heritage, and cultural expressions to bridge divides and build empathy among people from different backgrounds (Sandell & Janes, 2007). Museums, in this context, play a pivotal role. They not only preserve and display artefacts of cultural significance but also curate narratives that reflect the shared experiences and values of humanity. By showcasing the diversity and richness of global cultures, museums contribute to a more inclusive understanding of universal values (International Council of Museums [ICOM], 2017). Museums play a crucial role in fostering solidarity among diverse cultures by facilitating intercultural dialogue and promoting appreciation. Through carefully curated exhibitions that highlight the interconnectedness of human experiences, museums can challenge stereotypes and counter prejudices (Luke, 2002).

In the 21st century, the importance of cultural diplomacy and museums has been magnified by the global challenges of social fragmentation, conflict, and misunderstanding. The mobility of people and the digital revolution have created unprecedented opportunities for cultural exchange and dialogue. Museums have adapted to these changes by embracing new technologies and approaches to engage with a global audience. They now serve as dynamic platforms for cultural diplomacy, extending their reach beyond their physical locations to connect with people worldwide (Arndt, 2005). To effectively serve as agents of cultural diplomacy, museums must implement high operational standards that ensure accessibility, inclusivity, and engagement. This involves embracing digital technologies for virtual exhibitions, offering multilingual resources, and curating exhibitions that resonate with diverse audiences (Milutinovic & Gajic, 2010; Winter, 2013).

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of cultural diplomacy in fostering international relationships and promoting sustainable development through the activities of cultural institutions, such as museums and heritage sites. This research aims to analyse how these institutions can serve as platforms for cultural diplomacy initiatives, thereby fostering intercultural dialogue, economic sustainability, and global peace. By examining the interplay between cultural diplomacy, public diplomacy, and tourism, the study seeks to understand the impact of cultural exchanges and collaborations on achieving broader geopolitical and socio-economic objectives.

1. **Intersection of Cultural and Public Diplomacy:** How do cultural diplomacy and public diplomacy intersect, and what are the distinct roles each plays in international relations?
2. **Role of Cultural Institutions:** What role do cultural institutions such as museums play in the practice of cultural diplomacy, and how do they contribute to intercultural dialogue and international understanding?
3. **Sustainable Development in Tourism:** How does cultural diplomacy contribute to sustainable development, particularly within the tourism industry?
4. **Enhancing Global Peace:** In what ways can cultural diplomacy be leveraged to strengthen global peace and security?
5. **Impact of Digital Technologies:** How do digital technologies and new media influence the practice of cultural diplomacy by cultural institutions, and how do they expand their global reach and impact?

These research questions aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the strategic use of cultural diplomacy in contemporary international relations, underscoring its importance in promoting global cooperation and understanding. The results of this study could offer valuable insights for policymakers, cultural institutions, and diplomatic entities aiming to utilise cultural resources to achieve diplomatic objectives and promote global sustainability. The uniqueness of this study lies in its emphasis on the activities of individual national museums, which serve as cultural representations of their respective nations.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Cultural tourism and sustainable development

The late 1970s marked a critical period for tourism, as it was undergoing a transformation into a significant global industry. This growth has resulted in an increased focus on assessing both the positive and negative effects of tourism development (Mathieson & Wall, 1982). Governments have recognised the economic potential of tourism, leading to more serious consideration of tourism policy issues. Tourism-related income generation and job creation were recognised, while concerns were expressed about the negative impact of mass tourism on local culture and the environment. Individual tourists began to look for more sparsely populated destinations. Often, their preference was focused on urban areas with cultural attractions. This shift in tourism preferences has led to the emergence of a "new" market for short holidays in urban restrictions in Europe (Hanafiah & Awang, 2024). This holiday was often centred around cultural attractions, reflecting the growing demand for more enriching and diverse travel experiences. This trend has been particularly evident in cities seeking to revive their economies by replacing lost manufacturing jobs with tourism-based opportunities. Thus, there is a convergence of tourist demand for cultural, short breaks with the need of cities for economic revitalisation through tourism (Poulaki & Rachiotis, 2024; Rachiotis & Poulaki, 2022).

The concept of sustainable development has traditionally focused primarily on economic objectives, using indicators such as gross domestic product (GDP). However, in the mid-1990s, a significant shift was observed with the introduction of the "human development" approach, particularly supported by regions such as Africa and Latin America. This new approach broadens the concept of sustainability by incorporating non-economic factors, such as social, cultural, and political objectives, as development measures, thereby creating a link between development and human rights. In its 1996 report, UNESCO's World Commission for Culture and Development explicitly identified culture as a component of development, specifically mentioning the intangible cultural heritage. This change marked a more comprehensive understanding of sustainability that considers factors beyond purely economic dimensions (Carbone, 2017).

The UN 2030 Agenda aims to steer Member States towards achieving sustainable, people-centred development, to avoid the exclusion of anyone. To strengthen the social dimension of sustainable development, during the 53rd session of the UN Commission for Social Development in February 2015, Member States emphasised the importance of enhancing policy coherence in social areas. This means completing the social policy and perspectives on broader and more complex policymaking processes. In this way, countries can approach the various social goals outlined in the 2030 Agenda, thus promoting a more integrated and holistic approach to sustainable development (Ubertazzi, 2022; Rachiotis & Poulaki, 2024b).

The discussion on sustainable tourism has evolved in tandem with conversations on sustainable development, with a particular emphasis on environmental impacts. The increasing recognition of the social consequences of tourism activities and their connection to heritage and local communities has become more prominent. The notion of "dynamic interaction between tourism and cultural heritage" was officially embraced in 1999. The United Nations Millennium Development Goals and subsequent UNWTO endeavours emphasise the significance of tourism in achieving the global development goals. Academic study further enhances the

discourse by investigating topics in cultural tourism studies and examining the harmonisation of sustainability and competitiveness in destinations. The proposal suggests a transition from '3-S' Tourism to '3-L' Tourism (Leisure, Landscape, and Learning) as a conceptual application of Socratic philosophy to address current challenges in culture, tourism, and sustainability. The "literacy approach" to heritage management, as described by Carbone et al. (2013), involves a multi-stage strategy. The first stage focuses on "communicating heritage" to the local population to boost self-esteem and foster a sense of identity. The second stage involves promoting exchange and intercultural understanding through tourism (Rachiotis & Poulaki, 2024a).

2.2. Tourism as a means of achieving global communication

The UNGA resolution on culture and sustainable development emphasises the connection between culture and peace and security. Acknowledges that culture plays a crucial role in promoting sustainable development by acting as a valuable asset in preventing and resolving conflicts, as well as facilitating reconciliation, recovery, and resilience processes (Cuccia & Rizzo, 2020). The United Nations (2019) acknowledges that culture plays a vital role in the development of societies that are both sustainable and peaceful.

Although the slogan 'tourism as a passport to peace' may have initially provided broad social legitimacy to the growing international tourism industry of the postwar period, recent research suggests that the relationship between tourism and peace is complex. Enhancing mobility and tourism in Europe has undoubtedly strengthened peaceful relations through increased economic interdependence. However, whether tourism can effectively bridge cultural differences and promote peaceful relations in more volatile environments remains an open question (Pedersen, 2020). For the first time in our history, humanity is facing a combination of multiple crises, which are not related to a single racial or ethnic group, but each has a global scale. To address the challenges of these international crises, a historic shift is needed that requires a shift away from using war as a means of conflict resolution, focusing on global harmony and peace as necessary to address unprecedented global issues. The travel and tourism industry, as the world's largest industry encompassing almost every nation, is poised to play a vital role in this paradigm shift. Positioned as the central pillar of the "Peace through Trade" movement, the industry has experienced impressive growth over the last 60 years (D'Amore, 2009; Grincheva, 2022).

Starting with the emergence of "Ecotourism" in the late 1980s, today there are growing segments of the tourism market that fall into a broad category that can be called "Peace Tourism" and are classified in a context that includes peace within, peace with others, peace with nature, peace with previous generations, peace with future generations and peace with our Creator. The International Institute for Peace through Tourism (IIPT) has been at the forefront of promoting these values within the tourism industry. He envisions travel and tourism as the first "Global Peace Industry," arguing that every traveller can be an "Ambassador for Peace." This "higher purpose of tourism" encompasses the central role of tourism in promoting international understanding and cooperation, protecting the environment, preserving cultural heritage, contributing to sustainable development and poverty reduction, and healing the wounds of conflict (D'Amore, 2009).

Tourism diplomacy and cultural diplomacy are emerging as essential means of creating engaging and positive relations between people. The interconnection of tourism with diplomacy is expressed through "Tourism Diplomacy", which concerns the use of tourism as a means of dialogue and understanding between different communities and countries. In particular, tourism diplomacy aims to leverage the potential of tourism to foster international relations and promote peace through personal contact and mutual understanding (Levy & Hawkins, 2009). Furthermore, cultural diplomacy highlights the importance of cultural exchange and cooperation in fostering understanding between diverse communities. The exchange of information, art, language, and other aspects of culture helps create bridges rather than walls between different communities (Carbone 2017).

2.3. Museums and cultural diplomacy

Recent developments in museums are closely tied to technological advancements and shifts in communication. The use of digital technologies, including virtual tours, augmented reality, and interactive exhibitions, has transformed the way visitors engage with collections. In addition, museums have shown an increased interest in cooperation and exchange with other cultural organisations and countries. Exhibitions involving the loan of works of art from various museums worldwide are a common practice, enhancing dialogue and communication of cultural heritage. Ultimately, museum practices have expanded the boundaries of cosmopolitanism, fostering the exchange of ideas. Many museums strive to cater to the diverse needs and expectations of a global audience by presenting exhibitions and programs that reflect the diversity of contemporary culture (Bennett, 2006).

Museums often rank higher than media and government institutions in terms of reliability, positioning them as reliable sources of objective information. The public perceives their efforts as being free from an international political agenda, thereby bolstering their legitimacy. They employ classic methods of public diplomacy, allowing visitors to draw their own conclusions through engagement with exhibitions and interpretive materials. The narrative is subtly dictated by the objects and their presentation, making the museum a perfect factor of soft power. Museums such as the Guggenheim and the Louvre have become globally recognised brands by establishing satellite locations around the world. Exhibitions and programs mark specific values, such as creativity and sophistication, contributing to a museum's global influence. Museums engage in "informal political relationship building," a practice similar to diplomatic interactions between states, thereby contributing to international political capital. The recommendations include involving cultural professionals in policymaking and promoting cultural institutions in priority countries for political and economic interests (Muscat, 2020).

Museums, as conservators of cultural heritage, play a vital role in addressing global concerns related to the destruction and looting of cultural property. Museums independently address issues of international concern, such as the destruction of cultural heritage related to terrorism. Their efforts complement international institutions, demonstrating their unique comparative advantage in soft power and subject expertise. They contribute to the overall balance of influence in the global system through strong networks, international relations and public trust. Harnessing the soft power of museums could open new avenues for international collaboration, communication, and addressing global issues such as social justice and climate action (Barreira & Cesário, 2024; Muscat, 2020). As culture increasingly enters the market, the success of cultural institutions is no longer measured solely by aesthetic criteria. Art exhibitions, museum exhibitions or theatrical performances must prove their success in quantitative terms, such as the number of visitors or the revenue they generate (Rachiotis & Poulaki, 2024c).

3. Methodology

To address the research questions and achieve the objectives outlined in the study on cultural diplomacy, the research methodology will be designed to encompass both a comprehensive literature review and detailed case studies of museum exhibitions. This approach will provide both the theoretical underpinnings and practical insights needed to explore the multifaceted role of museums in cultural diplomacy.

The literature review will serve as the foundation of the research, providing a critical examination of existing studies and theoretical contributions related to cultural diplomacy, public diplomacy, and the role of cultural institutions, such as museums, in international relations. The review will focus on:

- Theoretical Frameworks: Exploration of key theories and models that define and contextualise cultural diplomacy and public diplomacy, with a focus on the differentiation and intersections between these fields.

- Role of Museums: Analysis of scholarly articles, books, and reports that discuss how museums function as agents of cultural diplomacy, including their contributions to intercultural dialogue and international understanding.
- Digital Influence: Examination of contemporary literature on the impact of digital technology on cultural diplomacy practices, especially within museum operations and outreach.
- Sustainable Development and Peace: Insights from academic sources that link cultural diplomacy through museums with sustainable development goals and peace-building efforts.
- Effectiveness and Impact Measurement: Review of methodologies and findings from studies that have attempted to measure the impacts of cultural diplomacy initiatives.

This extensive literature study will facilitate the identification of deficiencies in current research and assist in structuring future case studies by providing essential background material and theoretical support.

The case studies will offer empirical information to enhance comprehension of the practical execution and effects of museum displays as a means of cultural diplomacy. The selection of each case study will be based on its pertinence to the topics of cultural diplomacy and its capacity to offer insights into the research issues. The case studies will focus on museums that have actively participated in international exhibitions, particularly those recognised for their dedication to cultural exchange and interaction with global audiences. Each case will focus on specific exhibitions that have aimed to promote cultural understanding, peace, or sustainable development. The analysis will consider the exhibition's goals, design, execution, and reception. This methodology, which integrates a thorough literature review with detailed case studies, establishes a strong foundation for understanding the evolving role of museums in cultural diplomacy. It provides valuable insights for museums and cultural policymakers on optimising the role of exhibitions in cultural diplomacy endeavours, ensuring that the study's findings are grounded in comprehensive secondary research and practical case studies.

4. Case study results

In 2008, the Louvre announced a significant cultural movement with the exhibition "The Louvre in Tehran", held at the National Museum of Iran. Its opening coincided with the celebration of the 80th anniversary of the National Museum of Iran, created at the request of Iranians by French archaeologist and architect André Godard. The exhibition featured 50 works from the collections of the Louvre and the Musée Eugène Delacroix, presenting a detailed map of the museum's evolution from 1793 to the present day through Greek, Roman, and Persian artefacts. This initiative is an essential event for the culture and diplomacy of the two countries (Louvre, 2018).

The exhibition "Paris – Athens, the birth of modern Greece (1675-1919)" was also held at the Louvre in 2021, marking the 200th anniversary of the beginning of the Greek Revolution. The exhibition includes works from various museums, including the Benaki Museum, the Byzantine and Christian Museum and the National Gallery. The exhibition highlights the deep friendship and cultural relations between France and Greece, being an essential part of museum diplomacy. The exhibition aims to promote and strengthen ties between the two countries on many levels, including culture, art, politics, diplomacy and society. The exhibition is an interesting example of the strengthening and mutual cultural relations between France and Greece, dating back to the 17th century. In addition, the influence of the Greek Revolution, following the French Revolution, and its decisive contribution to Greece's cultural identity are highlighted. Finally, the exhibition pays homage to the entrance of the "Venus de Milo" to the Louvre 200 years ago (Hellenic Cultural Diplomacy, 2021; Louvre, 2021).

The Acropolis Museum presents a new temporary exhibition entitled "MEANINGS - Personifications and Allegory from Antiquity to the Present". The exhibition is essential not only because of the presentation of

leading works from antiquity and the modern period, but also for the fact that it brings to the city works from international institutions and museums, such as the Museum of Naples, of the Vatican, the Uffizi Museum and the Gallerie dell' Accademia, the National Archaeological Museum of Florence, making Athens a center of cultural interest. The exhibition focuses on the personification of gods and deities from antiquity to the present day, presenting works that represent the human representation of gods, myths and allegories in various periods and cultures. The trust shown by leading museums in the Acropolis Museum is a recognition of the museum's role and importance in promoting and preserving cultural heritage. The British Museum's decision to lend eight of its treasures reflects a positive approach and mutual respect between the two museums. It is essential that this agreement was formed based on the concept of lending works of art, rather than requiring primary ownership of them. In particular, the reference to the Parthenon Sculptures and the request for reunification demonstrate a willingness to engage in dialogue and negotiation without arbitrary demands. This approach enhances the prospects for collaborative initiatives and open dialogue between the two museums, contributing to mutual understanding and appreciation of cultural heritage (Acropolis Museum, 2023).

An agreement on cultural cooperation between Singapore and France has been reached between the National Museum of Singapore (NMS) and the Louvre. The collaboration was manifested in the exhibition "Greek masterpieces from the Louvre", held at NMS in 2008. The exhibition featured 130 objects from the Greek and Hellenistic Galleries of the Louvre. The primary aim of the exhibition was to give Singaporeans information about the various aspects of life in ancient Greece. The objective is to introduce them to the rich cultural heritage of ancient Greece, which is celebrated as one of the oldest and most beautiful civilisations in human history (Cai, 2013).

The British Museum has achieved successful engagements with China and Iran through high-profile object exchanges, following reciprocal agreements on the exchange of cultural objects. These initiatives created opportunities for dialogue and cooperation, even at times when political relations between the UK and China, or Iran, were not prosperous. This cultural collaboration reached its peak with two major exhibitions at the British Museum: *The First Emperor: China's Terracotta Army* in 2007, showcasing China's famous terracotta army, and *Shah 'Abbas: The Reconstruction of Iran* in 2009, highlighting Iran's cultural history and heritage. Both exhibitions drew significant attention and traffic, underscoring the importance of fostering intercultural understanding among nations through cultural exchanges (Cai, 2013).

The exhibition "On the Nalanda Trail: Buddhism in India, China, and Southeast Asia" was held in 2007 at the Museum of Asian Civilisations in Singapore, showcasing artefacts on loan from the National Museum in New Delhi. The exhibition marked Southeast Asia's historical connections with India and China. This exhibition played a symbolic role in highlighting the historical ties and cultural exchanges between the Southeast Asian region, India and China (National Heritage Board Singapore [NHB], 2007). The exhibition showcased a remarkable collection of Buddhist art, including an inscribed plaque from Nalanda that conveyed the positive bilateral relations between the kings of the Pala dynasty in eastern India and the Shailendra rulers in Southeast Asia. In addition, the exhibition showcased rare sutras and paintings from the caves of Dunhuang, providing visitors with information on the rich cultural and historical connections between different regions influenced by Buddhism.

Street Art: from the Victoria and Albert Museum, London and Libya is the first international exhibition to take place in Libya since the 2011 revolution. The exhibition explores the visual language and techniques of street art, while examining its social and political significance. The spontaneity and immediacy of street art provide artists with a platform to express opinions outside conventional channels of political debate. The exhibition showcased contemporary Libyan works alongside pieces from the V&A's extensive collection of street art prints, posters, and stickers (British Council Libya, 2012).

5. Discussion

The findings from the case studies presented in this research offer substantive insights into how museums utilise cultural diplomacy to foster intercultural dialogue, promote sustainable development, and contribute to global peace and security. Each museum's approach to exhibitions and partnerships highlights distinct strategies for engaging with diverse international audiences, underscoring the pivotal role that cultural institutions play in the broader context of public and cultural diplomacy.

Museums have an agency in shaping their international commitments, as evidenced by partnerships that precede cultural diplomacy initiatives. In this context, museums often pursue their goals independently and may allow government participation for cultural diplomacy purposes, leveraging it as an additional source of funding. The studies also highlight the active role of museums in cultural diplomacy, questioning the notion that they are passive tools waiting for government directives (Nisbett, 2013). Museums can lead and influence cultural diplomacy by strategically aligning with government ambitions for soft power to advance their own agendas. While cultural diplomacy practitioners often express concerns about the instrumentalisation of the state, studies suggest a more complex relationship. This approach proposes an active involvement of museums in shaping their international relations and activities, taking into account their own values and priorities. This allows museums to showcase their own diplomacy, regardless of whether it coincides with the state's goals. In this way, museums become active actors in shaping the global cultural landscape, rather than being seen as limited to mere tools that serve the diplomatic efforts of the state. To sum up, the "new diplomacy" in the museum sector promotes an integrated and autonomous approach to its international activities, based on its own priorities and values. The recognition of the full representation and diplomatic capacity of museums paves the way for a more dynamic and diversified presence in the global field of cultural diplomacy (Priewe, 2021).

Museums, by hosting internationally recognised exhibitions such as "The Louvre in Tehran" and "Paris – Athens, the birth of modern Greece (1675-1919)," actively participate in a form of public diplomacy that extends beyond traditional governmental engagements. These exhibitions are not merely artistic endeavours but are profound acts of cultural exchange that serve diplomatic functions. They illustrate the ability of cultural diplomacy to complement and extend public diplomacy by forging connections that traditional diplomatic channels might not reach. By providing a platform for cultural expression and historical narratives, museums help to cultivate a shared understanding and mutual respect among diverse populations (Arndt, 2005; Muscat, 2020).

The role of museums in practising cultural diplomacy is evident in their efforts to preserve and present cultural heritage in a way that transcends national and cultural boundaries. Exhibitions like "MEANINGS - Personifications and Allegory from Antiquity to the Present" at the Acropolis Museum demonstrate how museums can facilitate a deeper understanding of shared human experiences and values across different epochs and civilisations. These initiatives not only attract international visitors but also encourage dialogue and reflection on common human themes, thereby promoting global solidarity and understanding (ICOM, 2017; Luke, 2002).

Museums play a crucial role in fostering sustainable development and peace by promoting cultural sustainability and understanding through their exhibits. The British Museum's interactions with China and Iran exemplify how cultural exchanges can foster ongoing communication and collaboration, especially during times of tense political relations. These initiatives highlight the importance of cultural diplomacy in fostering connections and maintaining open communication channels, which are essential for preventing and resolving conflicts. In addition, museums contribute to economic sustainability and community development by supporting heritage conservation and cultural tourism. This aligns with larger sustainable development goals as stated by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2000 and Winter in 2013 (Cai, 2013; Rachiotis & Poulaki, 2024d).

Museums have undergone a revolutionary transformation in their interaction with worldwide audiences via the integration of digital technology and new media. Museums may employ virtual tours, digital exhibitions, and online educational programs to connect with people worldwide, overcoming geographical and economic barriers to access. The adoption of digital technology not only enhances the accessibility and inclusivity of museum displays but also facilitates the broader dissemination of cultural and educational materials, thereby broadening the reach and influence of cultural diplomacy (Bennett, 2006). Evaluating the efficacy of museum exhibitions in achieving the objectives of cultural diplomacy requires continuous communication with visitors and the use of metrics that measure engagement, educational outcomes, and the advancement of intercultural understanding. The case examples demonstrate that museums must consistently innovate and adapt their approaches to remain relevant and influential in an ever-evolving global context. Feedback loops and visitor engagement indicators are crucial for understanding and enhancing the effectiveness of cultural diplomacy projects undertaken by museums (Holo, 2021). Ultimately, museums serve as more than just guardians of cultural history; they actively engage in the realm of cultural diplomacy. By organising exhibits and engaging in international partnerships, they foster intercultural dialogue, promote mutual understanding, and make valuable contributions to global peace and sustainability. The convergence of cultural and public diplomacy in museum activities illustrates the intricate and ever-evolving role of cultural institutions on the global stage. With the ongoing evolution of cultural diplomacy, museums are expected to have a growing influence in defining international relations and fostering global collaboration and understanding.

6. Practical implications

This study contributes to a deeper understanding of how museums operationalise cultural diplomacy through curated exhibitions. By analysing case studies of international museum exhibitions, the research delineates the processes by which museums not only exhibit art but also facilitate diplomatic conversations and cross-cultural understanding. This practical focus highlights the museums' capabilities in navigating and influencing the diplomatic sphere through cultural exchange. The research enhances the theoretical frameworks of cultural diplomacy by incorporating insights from museum studies and public diplomacy, thus introducing a more nuanced perspective. The proposal suggests a paradigm in which museums function as nodes within cultural diplomacy networks, enhancing soft power through the strategic use of cultural assets (Bennett, 2006; Ubertazzi, 2022).

This study examines the utilisation of digital technology by museums to expand their global reach and impact in the context of the ongoing digital transformation. The research offers fresh insights into the effective utilisation of virtual exhibits and digital outreach initiatives to engage audiences worldwide. It explores how cultural diplomacy methods have been adapted to the digital era. This research also establishes a connection between the functions of museums in cultural diplomacy and larger global objectives, such as sustainable development and peace-building. The study demonstrates how museum exhibitions address issues such as international cooperation, environmental sustainability, and social justice. This indicates that museum practices align with the objectives of the UN 2030 Agenda. The study provides a comprehensive understanding of how cultural institutions contribute to global policy goals. Through its case study methodology, the research provides empirical evidence of the impact of museum exhibitions on public perceptions and international relations. This contribution is vital for policymakers and cultural leaders as it substantiates the role of cultural diplomacy in shaping international agendas and public opinion. The study demonstrates how museums facilitate cross-cultural dialogues and work towards mitigating stereotypes and prejudices (Holo, 2021).

This study distinguishes itself from previous works by focusing specifically on the role of museum exhibitions in executing cultural diplomacy initiatives. Unlike existing studies that may broadly cover cultural diplomacy without delving into the specific mechanisms through which museums operate within this sphere, this research provides detailed case analyses of museum exhibitions and their direct implications for international relations

and public diplomacy. This focused approach enables a deeper understanding of the strategic utilisation of cultural assets in diplomacy, providing new insights that bridge the gap between cultural heritage management and international geopolitical strategies (Giannini & Bowen, 2022).

7. Conclusions and limitations

The relationship between cultural diplomacy and public diplomacy remains a crucial topic in the field of International Relations, with various views and approaches underscoring the complexity of the issue. Cultural diplomacy emphasises the significance of cultural exchanges and cooperation as a means to foster understanding among diverse communities. The exchange of information, art, language and other aspects of culture emerges as a means of creating bridges rather than walls between different communities. In addition, cultural diplomacy highlights the role of tourism in shaping interesting and positive relations between people. The UN 2030 Agenda aims to address factors that contribute to violence, insecurity, and injustice, emphasising the importance of transparent, effective, and accountable institutions. Integrating culture into this process recognises culture as a valuable resource for conflict prevention and resolution, as well as the process of reconciliation, recovery, and resilience.

Museums play a central role in connecting with global audiences, attracting tourists and fostering online interactions. They enhance the image of a city or state, helping to attract investment and trade. This development is attributed to the impact of increased global interactions, transforming the diplomatic field. The proposed approach is for museums to actively participate in shaping their international activities, regardless of whether their actions align with the state's goals. This new museum diplomacy promotes an integrated and autonomous approach to their international activities, considering their own priorities and values. In this way, museums become active actors in the global cultural landscape, rather than being mere tools used for the state's diplomatic efforts.

The limitations of this work concern the scarcity of case studies related to the current issue of our research, as well as the absence of relevant qualitative or quantitative research on the subject, given its specificity. This is a survey whose results could be extrapolated more widely through the use of weighted questionnaires or interviews with relevant bodies.

8. Suggestions for future research

The domain of cultural diplomacy, namely focusing on museum displays and cultural legacy, offers fertile ground for future investigation. Based on the knowledge gained from studying museum displays as tools for cultural diplomacy, numerous essential topics can be explored in the future to enhance our understanding of how cultural institutions contribute to international relations and global peace. First, create and refine techniques for measuring the effects of cultural diplomacy efforts, particularly in the context of museum displays, utilising both quantitative and qualitative methods. These factors may encompass measurements related to tourist engagement, shifts in public opinion, and the influence on international relations. Explore the evolving role of digital technology in cultural diplomacy, including virtual exhibitions, digital archives, and the use of social media by museums to engage global audiences. Also, it would have been helpful if anyone had investigated the practices and effectiveness of cultural diplomacy in non-Western countries, comparing them to Western models and exploring unique strategies that may not yet be widely recognised in academic literature, to diversify the understanding of cultural diplomacy practices and to uncover culturally specific approaches that contribute to global diplomacy efforts.

Examining the influence of cultural diplomacy on international policymaking, particularly in the realms of cultural heritage protection, international trade, and peace-building, reveals how cultural diplomacy efforts through museums can shape global policy agendas and contribute to conflict resolution and peacekeeping.

Additionally, by investigating the role of cultural diplomacy in regions experiencing political instability, conflict, or humanitarian crises, and focusing on how cultural initiatives can contribute to recovery and reconciliation, you can explore the potential of cultural diplomacy to foster resilience, promote peace, and rebuild cultural identity in crisis-affected areas. These potential research directions not only highlight the need for continued and expanded analysis in the field of cultural diplomacy but also underscore the importance of museums as active participants in the global dialogue on peace, understanding, and sustainable development.

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