

SURVEY ON ITALIAN MUSEUMS AND SIMILAR INSTITUTIONS IN 2020

SUMMARY

This essay contains a descriptive analysis of the data provided by ISTAT in connection with the survey of museums and similar institutions in Italy in 2020.

First the distribution by category in Italy is analysed, then I tried to zoom in on the three regions with more cultural sites and finally by province of these regions.

Secondly, I analysed how the COVID-19 situation impacted the openings in the year 2020 and how we can see a sharp decrease in the number of visits compared to previous years, characterized by a progressive increase.

In conclusion, I underlined how COVID-19 has favoured an increase in the number of online services made available to the visitor. Focusing on how social networks are increasingly used by museums to make cultural heritage more accessible to every type of visitor.

INTRODUCTION

During the year 2020 the entire world found itself struggling with a disease, the famous COVID-19, which caused 6.63 million deaths since the beginning of the infection. Governments around the world decided to take measures to prevent the infection of the citizens.

In Italy, the situation became increasingly dangerous due to the high number of infections and deaths that were occurring.

All the activities not defined to be necessary for the Italian production chain, were suspended. During the months, many limitations were introduced.

In March, April, May, October, and November, given the great danger of being infected, it was forbidden to leave the home, if not for proven reasons of need.

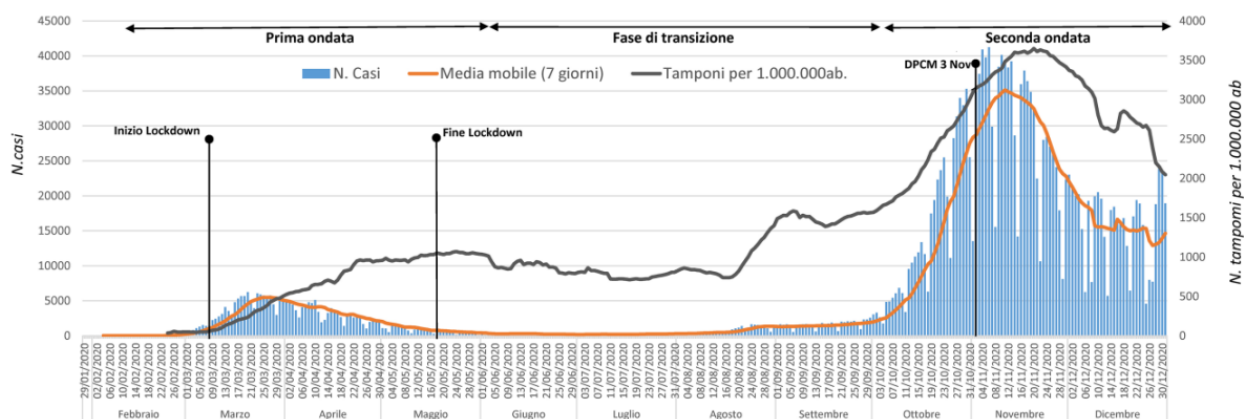
For the same reason, all the activities open to public were closed, including museums and similar institutions. These measures were applied from the 9th of March until the 3rd of April and extended then, until the 13th of April and then, another time, until the 3rd of May.

After this date, thanks to the falling of the epidemic curve, a loosening of the containment measures followed. Throughout the summer the containment measures were almost eliminated, and the population could return to a life about normal.

After the summer, following the rise of the infection curve, new restrictive measures were introduced from 8th of October to 5th of November, and newly museums and cultural sites were closed.

Since the 6th of November, containment measures were implemented based on the number of infections and in general there was a partial reopening of public and cultural sites.

Figura 1. Numero di casi di Covid-19 per data di prelievo/diagnosi e numero di tamponi (per milione di abitanti). Italia, febbraio–dicembre 2020



DISTRIBUTIONS OF CULTURAL SITES IN 2020 IN ITALY

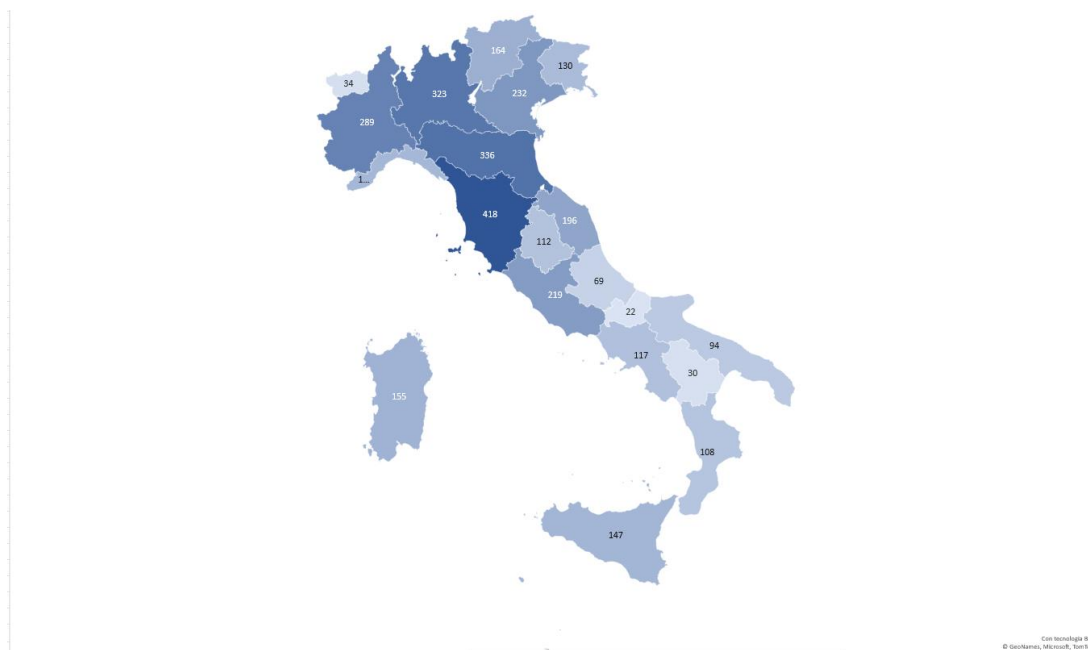
In 2020, in Italy, museums and cultural sites open or partially open are in all 4265, between public and private realities, distributed as follows: 3337 museums, 295 archaeological areas and 633 monuments or monumental complexes.

Museum, gallery and/or collection



Monument or monumental complex

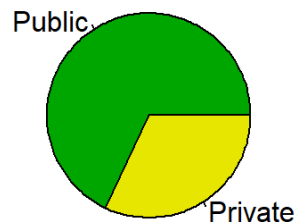
Archaeological area or park



More than the 30% of cultural institutions are sited in Tuscany (541), Emilia-Romagna (402) and Lombardy (387), but the capital of this region, apart from Tuscany, are not the capital with more museums.

In fact, the first three Italian capitals for most museums are: Rome (189), Florence (134) and Turin (128). Only these three cities together hold more than the 10% of the total cultural sites.

Most of the Italian heritage is publicly owned, in fact the 68% of the institutions are public, while the 32% belongs to private individuals.



It is possible to observe the total number of museums over the population. In fact, the people in Italy at the end of 2020, are about 59.45 million; dividing them by the number of cultural sites, there is one museum for every fourteen thousand inhabitants.

Analysing the museums by number of citizens for the three regions with the highest number of museums or similar institutions, it can be noted that, in Tuscany, there is one museum for every seven thousand inhabitants; in Emilia-Romagna, there is one for every eleven thousand inhabitants and in Lombardy, there is one for every twenty-six thousand inhabitants.

OPENINGS

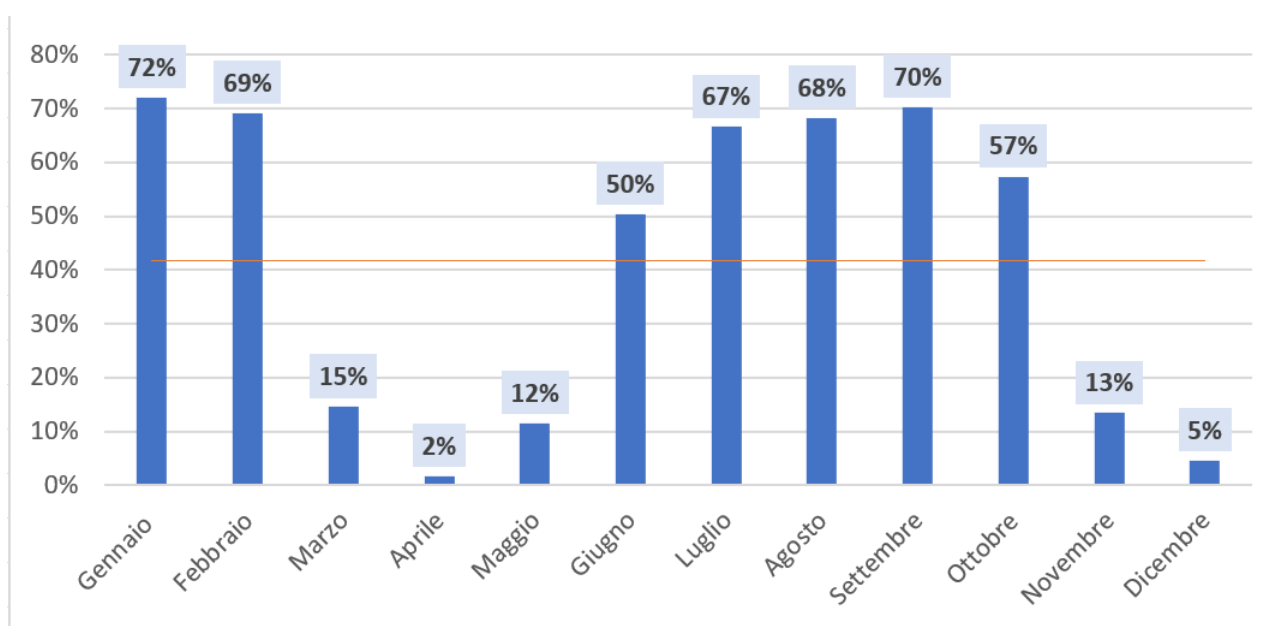
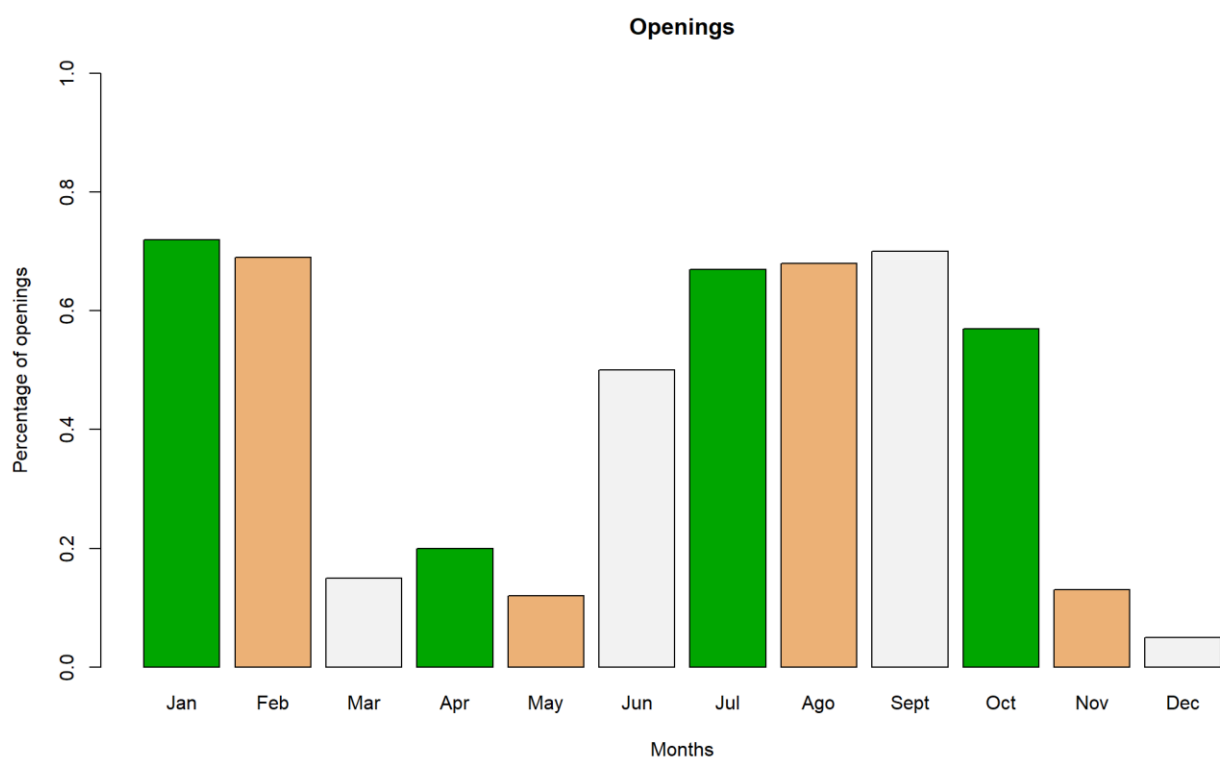
As said before and as we all know, during the 2020, the COVID-19 developed and obliged the government to adopt legislative decree-laws, to prevent the infection and to protect the citizens.

From March to May and in November and December, Italy was closed, and a total lockdown obliged people to stay home. For this reason, in the same period, also cultural sites were closed to the public.

As we can see from the dataset analysed here, from March to May only an average of 10% of cultural sites were open, the other 90% were closed and in some cases only workers were allowed to enter the sites.

When the situation was less dangerous, people could restart to live their lives, even with some limitation. Also, cultural sites were reopened. So as illustrated in the dataset, from the period to June to October, most of the institutions were opened to public.

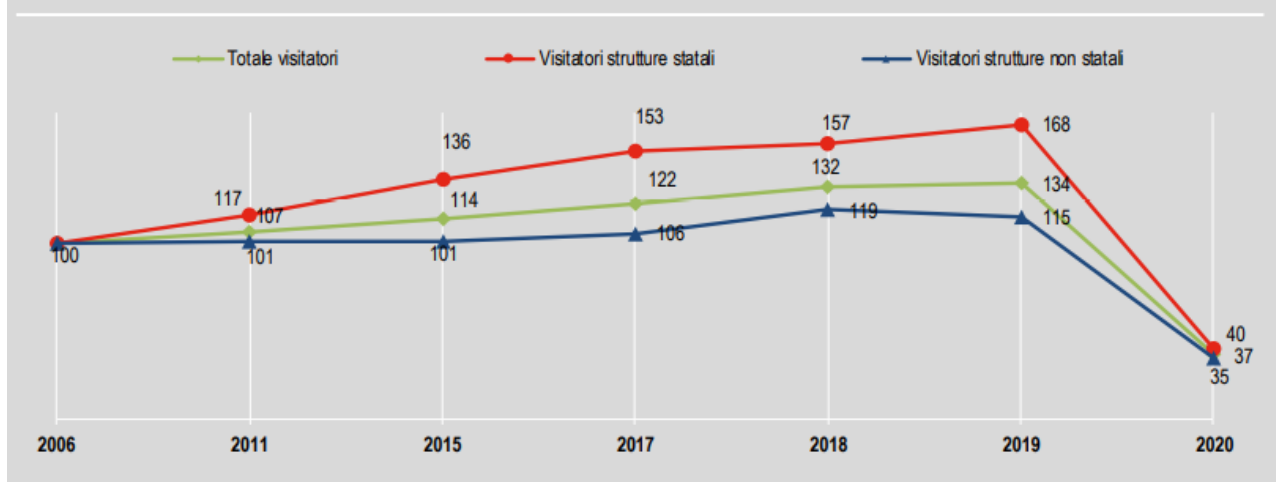
After the summer and with the approach of cold and winter, the virus restarted to infect lot of people and for this reason, a new lockdown was imposed. Newly, all the cultural sites were obliged to be closed to the public, only workers were allowed to enter, and only an average of 9% were opened.



On average, the access to the museums, were assured for 6 months. The average of the openings in 2020 was 116 days per museums, with a total of thirty-six million visits. According to the ISTAT survey of 2019, 128 million people visited the same museums in 2018, this number compared to the total number of visits in 2020 very well represents the stop of movement within the Italian cultural sites, there is a decrease of 72% in visits.

In the graph below it is possible to see a continuous increase in the number of visits until 2019, and then in 2020 a sharp drop.

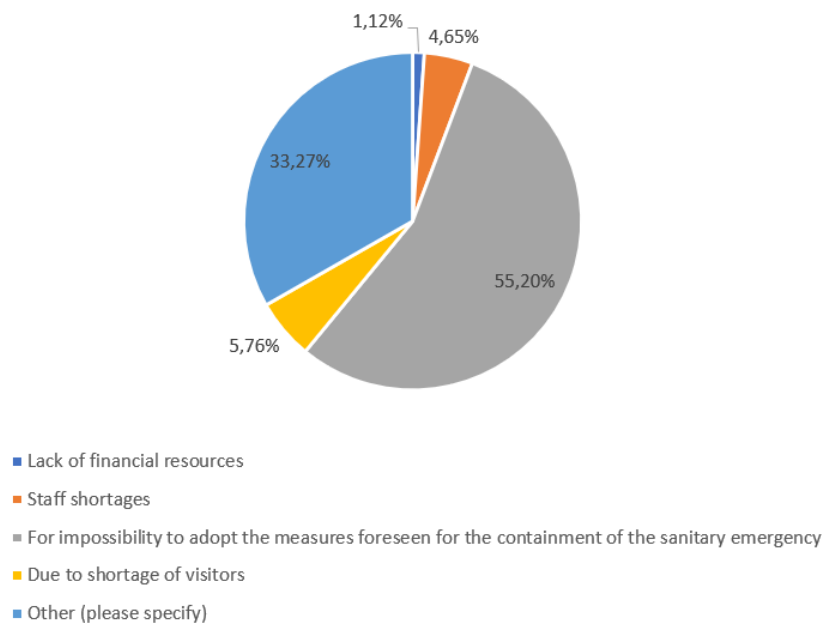
FIGURA 3. ANDAMENTO DEI VISITATORI DI MUSEI E ISTITUTI SIMILARI. Anni 2006, 2011, 2015, 2017, 2018, 2019 e 2020, numero indice, 2006 = 100



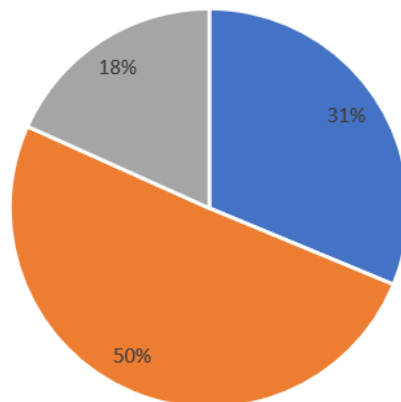
According to the data provided, the first three cities per number of visitors are Rome with 6.12 million visits, Naples with 3.21 million visits and Florence with 2.91 million visits. Rome and Florence are confirmed as the first two Italian cities by number of visitors.

After the lockdown, with the removal of some limitations, when the situation began to be better and the disease was no longer so contagious and dangerous, most cultural sites, as said before, reopened, nevertheless some of them, 538 institutions decided to stay closed.

The 53% of the cultural sites that have ceased or not reopened the activity, had to do so for lack of opportunity to take the preventive measures imposed.



The 31% of these cultural sites have reopened in 2021, the 18% do not know if they will reopen again and eventually when, while the half of them are supposed to reopen before the end of 2021.



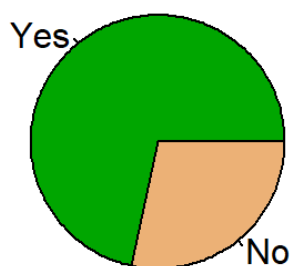
- Yes, the museum/institute reopened in 2021
- No, but it is expected to reopen before the end of 2021
- No and you don't know when and if reopen

SERVICES

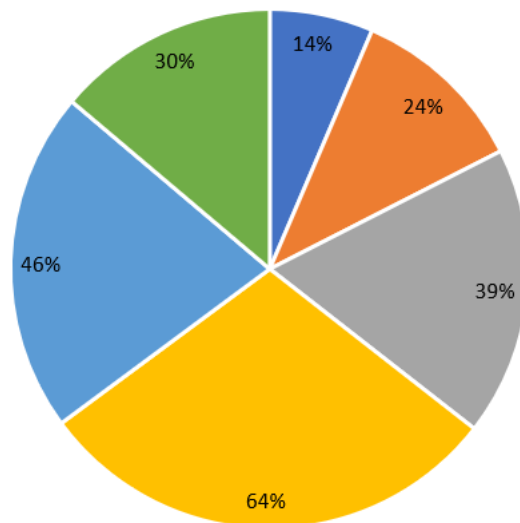
During the pandemic and especially during the periods of lockdown, people understood the importance of communicating with others and internet is the best ally to do so. Every day more businesses are committed to create new ways to stay in touch with their customers.

From 2018 the three-year plan for the digitization of museums is activated. "Thanks" to the pandemic, the number of cultural sites that use online services to stay in touch and make their cultural heritage known has doubled. There are many initiatives that, in the last period have been designed to make museums closer to the new generations and not, that seem to be less and less interested in the cultural heritage of our country.

72% of the cultural sites concerned have activated at least one tool that can make the site a little more innovative than the previous year.

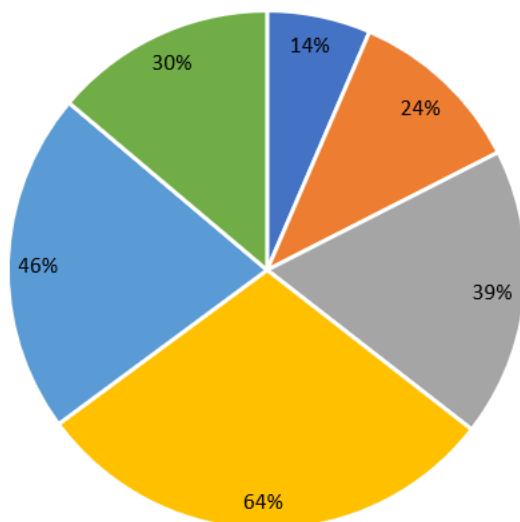


Of these, the 14% have decided to make available an online catalogue of available works, the 24%, started to do online labs, the 39% have arranged ways to meet online with visitors, the 64% have created a social profile and started sharing digital content, the 46% of them have created a web sites, the 30% of the institutions decided to create virtual tours and make them available online, the majority of the institutions, the 64% have decided to start to use social networks and the 46% have created a web site.



■ Online catalogue ■ Online lab ■ Online meetings ■ Social ■ Website ■ Virtual tour

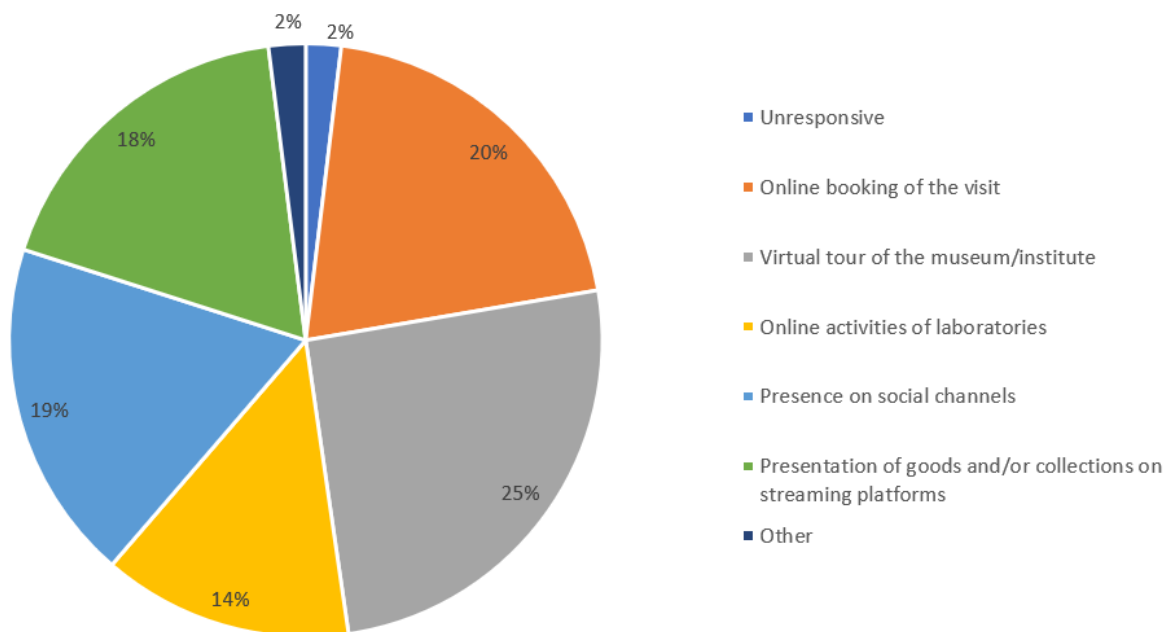
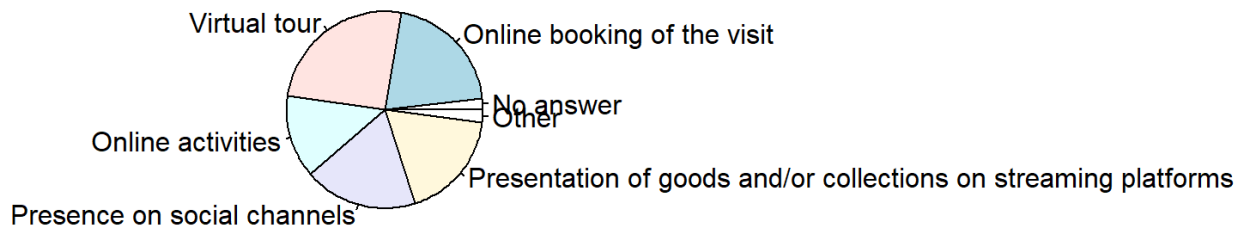
As it can be seen from the percentages, the most successful tool was the use and creation of a social profile. This may be because of the ease and speed with which the tool can be updated and for the greatest interest it generates. In fact, compared to an online catalogue, which attracts only those who actually know the museum and that are really interested in the works of art present in the cultural site, social media allow, through ad hoc advertising, to reach a much larger number of people and arouse interest even in who, does not consider art part of its interests.



■ Online catalogue ■ Online lab ■ Online meetings ■ Social ■ Website ■ Virtual tour

Of the respondents, 98% of respondents thought that, because of the emergency experienced in 2020, there are services on which the museum/institute should invest primarily.

The 20% believe it would be necessary to invest in the online booking of the visit, 25% think of having to invest in virtual tours of the museum, 13% in online activities, as laboratories or seminars, 19% in the presence on social channels, 18% in presentations of assets on streaming platforms and a 2% believe to invest in other.



CONCLUSION

In conclusion, thanks to the data collected and provided by ISTAT, it has been possible to see how cultural sites, as well as commercial activities, have suffered a lot from the obliged closures introduced, due to the spread of COVID-19. In fact, the progressive growth in the number of visitors recorded in recent years has suffered a sharp halt: in 2020 -72% visitors to museums, archaeological areas, monuments, and monumental complexes compared to the previous year.

Despite the terrible situation, which we faced in 2020, it can be said that a positive thing has been introduced.

COVID-19 has helped people understand how important innovation and digitalization is, leading to the creation of online content, accessible to everyone and everywhere.

It is hoped that, thanks to the spread of social and virtual content, people will begin to understand and rediscover the importance of the cultural heritage that our beautiful Italy offers us.

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