

Digital Cultural Engagement of Elderly Audiences: Concepts, Perspectives and Examples within Academic Research

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Abstract

Digital technologies have transformed and continue to transform the way culture is produced, that is, the way it is presented, transmitted and consumed by the (inter)active audience. We consider it particularly important to examine and identify the concepts, perspectives and examples of digital cultural engagement of elderly audiences within academic research, given that the world population is aging and the elderly people are an important actor in socio-cultural processes, especially because younger generations are associated with new technologies by default. The main research question is: “What academic research has been done on the topic of digital cultural engagement of elderly audiences in the last ten years (2013-2023)?” As a research technique we used rapid literature review because our approach in this case is not analytical and critical as it comprises summarizing and synthesizing. The results show a noticeable solid presence of research papers that take into account the digital engagement of the elderly and the cultural engagement of the elderly as separate processes. However, there are few research papers that elaborate the topic of digital cultural engagement of the elderly from a communicological point of view.

Keywords: academic research, digital cultural engagement, digital culture, elderly audiences, interactivity

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Introduction

According to the 2022 World Population Prospects report by the United Nations (UN), in 2022, approximately 10% of the world’s population belonged to people aged 65 and older. That percentage is projected to increase in the period up to 2050: approximately 12% in 2030 and 16% in 2050, that is, the old population would reach 994 million by 2030 and 1.6 billion by 2050. As for 2022, Europe and North

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America had the largest elderly population – almost 19% belonged to those aged 65 and older. By 2050, one in four people in these two regions could be 65 years or older and other regions are also predicted to see significant increases in their elderly populations over the next few decades (United Nations, 2022).

The results of one conducted research show that there is an increasing number of elderly³ people who perceive the time after retirement as time for themselves. Thus, taking care of grandchildren and other family responsibilities is no longer a priority for them, but they want to devote their free time to themselves and their hobbies, something for which they did not have so much time before, given their work and professional responsibilities. In that context, cultural activities are also very important: “Being involved in cultural activities is a way to satisfy needs for self-realisation and self-development” (Koropetska in Jakubowska, Kłosiewicz & Mękarski, 2015: 55). Hence, cultural engagement and the promotion of cultural and creative aging are very important. This means education, as well as inclusion and participation of the elderly in socio-cultural processes and events, which would encourage active aging.

The COVID-19 pandemic showed that culture was a very important element during isolations and quarantines, when people through various cultural and creative content (photographs, drawings, writings, songs, etc.) and online events (online exhibitions, online book promotions, online concerts, etc.), through sharing and interaction, tried to distract themselves from the difficult reality and thus contribute to their own and others’ psycho-emotional health and general well-being. The pandemic has also shown how important new technologies and online platforms, digital tools and digital skills can be for socio-cultural participation, especially in specific times like the pandemic, when one of the measures to prevent the spread of the virus was to stay at home, whereby the usual daily interpersonal communication between people had to be mediated. This is especially significant with regard to the elderly population, for whom digital communication and digital tools need to be adapted and they should be adequately educated, engaged and involved, acquiring new skills and gaining new opportunities for interaction and active cultural aging.

Digital technologies have transformed and continue to transform the way culture and cultural contents are produced, that is, the way they are presented, transmitted and consumed by the (inter)active audience. Different types of cultural content are subject to different forms and to different degrees of digitization⁴. For example, one important feature of virtual museum tours is that they are interactive. Unlike a movie, which the audience sees as it is recorded, during a virtual museum

³ The UN defines elderly persons as those aged 60 or over. Very often it is defined as 65 or over. In 1916 the American sociologist Isaac Rubinow defined that “Age 65 is generally set as the threshold of old age since it is at this period of life that the rates for sickness and death begin to show a marked increase over those of the earlier years” (Scherbov & Sanderson, 2019).

⁴ Digitization: “[...] the technical process of converting analog signals into a digital form, and ultimately into binary digits”; digitalization: “[...] the manifold sociotechnical phenomena and processes of adopting and using these technologies in broader individual, organizational, and societal contexts” (Legner et al., 2017).

tour the audience can choose how to view certain content. The audience is an active participant in that process. Also, the relation between the educational aspect and the new digital possibilities is very important regarding the audience:

“With modern digital resources, museum learning surpasses traditional models (visits, borrowing of exhibits, lessons in museums, and narratives at exhibitions) and it becomes transformed into a modern learning process based on digital technologies which find their unique expression in the development of virtual museums” (Pavlović, 2021: 168).

Given the great progress of digital technologies, today cultural and artistic institutions/organizations can connect with the audience in new ways, through which closer relationships are built and a new digital culture is created.

The American futurist Alvin Toffler coined the term “prosumer”. Prosumer is a person who consumes and produces media content: “It applies to the fact that we can create our own media and contribute, generating our own audiences” (Fairbrother, 2015). The time in which we live today is a time of active audience, of interactivity, co-creation and sharing. New technologies offer new opportunities for both audiences and other stakeholders in the field of culture and art.

Therefore, we consider it particularly important to examine the concepts, perspectives and examples of digital cultural engagement of elderly audiences within academic research, which would open up many significant aspects for further in-depth research regarding the elderly as an active audience and digital opportunities in the field of culture. This is particularly significant given that the world population is aging and that the elderly are an important actor in socio-cultural processes, so it is necessary to focus the research on these elderly audiences and their digital socio-cultural participation, especially because younger audiences are associated with new technologies by default.

Elderly audiences and digital cultural engagement

When we talk about digitalization, new technologies and Internet platforms, we usually associate their understanding and use with the younger generations. Most often, the younger generations are the first to accept innovations and changes in the technological sense. But things are changing and older generations are starting to accept and actively use new technologies for communication and interaction. According to a research study by the Pew Research Center⁵, the degree of adoption and use of new technologies and tools by the elderly population has increased significantly compared to what it was a decade ago. From the analyzed results of a survey conducted in 2021 by the Center, it can be noted that 96% of those who belong to the age group of 50 to 64 years and 75% of those of 65 years of age and older use the Internet. The results of the survey also indicate that older generations in the USA are more present on social media compared to 2010:

⁵ Pew Research Center conducts different types of data-driven social science research and it is a nonpartisan fact tank (About Pew Research Center, n.d.).

“At the same time, presence on social media among Americans 65 and older grew about fourfold since 2010, while use by the youngest adults remained relatively constant in that time frame. Since 2010, the gap between adults under 30 and adults 65 and older shrank from 71 points to 39 points” (Faverio, 2022).

In view of the fact that older generations are increasingly active in using new technologies, more digitally literate, and their free time (after retirement) allows them to devote themselves to learning new things and practicing new activities, it is very significant to study them as an audience and as active stakeholders in the cultural processes and co-creators of them. Also, additional strategies are needed for their digital cultural engagement, given that “with more leisure time and a strong preference for culturally-enriching activities, retirees are integral to the member base of many museums, public attractions, and other cultural institutions” (“Seniors & SMS”, 2022).

As we mentioned in the introduction, the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated digitalization and given the specific conditions of living that it has imposed, many things from our everyday life have moved to the virtual space, online and within different screens. It was culture and various cultural contents and events online that helped us to get through the difficult periods of quarantines and isolations more easily. This was especially significant for the elderly, who, as one of the most vulnerable categories of citizens, had to be most careful not to expose themselves and stay at home. Such conditions created fertile ground for the creation of various forms of digital cultural engagement for the elderly audiences, which should continue to develop and improve as a benefit for the elderly, but also for the cultural and creative sector and other stakeholders, as well as for digital culture and the cultural system in general.

The results of a survey conducted by Culture Track⁶ in the USA in 2021 indicate that those over the age of 55 highly value culture and cultural content and events and see them as social bonding. According to the results, more than half of the elderly took an active part in various digital cultural events during the COVID-19 pandemic (“Untapped opportunity”, 2021). Participation in various digital cultural events, the engagement and the interaction, as well as the creation of a new digital culture, gives the elderly audiences motivation, fulfillment and connection with the community and culture, which affects their psycho-emotional health and well-being. All of this offers cultural institutions/organizations and other actors in the field of culture a special opportunity for communication and interaction with this interested audience with enough free time for new activities through the many advantages offered by new technologies, Internet platforms and digital tools, and at the same time it is a challenge that needs to be overcome.

⁶ Culture Track represents a national online survey. It examines behaviors and attitudes of the audience, as well as barriers to cultural participation. The survey has been conducted since 2001 by LaPlaca Cohen (“Untapped opportunity”, 2021).

Methodology of the research

Our research is exploratory and descriptive in its scientific aim, and as a research technique for data collection we used rapid literature review.

The main research question from which we started is:

“What academic research has been done on the topic of digital cultural engagement of elderly audiences in the last ten years (2013-2023)?”

Our goal is to identify the academic research on the topic, that is, what their subject of research interest was within this topic. This would mean understanding the research concepts and perspectives regarding the digital engagement of elderly audiences, as well as having in mind various examples of this kind of research.

This research represents one of the aspects of a more extensive research that we plan to carry out in the coming period, which will refer to the communication strategies of cultural institutions in Macedonia and selected countries in the region⁷ with regard to the elderly audiences, i.e., cultural engagement, involvement and inclusion of the elderly audiences. We will also examine the opinion and the perceptions of the elderly audiences in this regard.

Literature review

In May and June 2023, we conducted a rapid literature review⁸ of scientific publications from 2013 to 2023 in English. We used this type of literature review because we wanted to explore what research studies were conducted within our topic and subject of interest, in order to have an idea of what kind of research has been done and in what way before conducting more extensive research, whereby we would use a systematic literature review. Hence, our approach in this case is not analytical and critical, but comprises summarizing and synthesizing.

We used the following databases as information sources: Crossref, Google Scholar, Library Genesis, Semantic Scholar and ScienceDirect. The keywords we used to search were: “digital cultural engagement” (with a variation: “cultural institutions digital engagement” and “cultural and creative sector digital engagement”) and “elderly audiences” (with some variations: “older audiences,” “older adults,” “elderly,” “seniors,” “older people”). The criteria for inclusion were that the papers were from 2013 to 2023, that their main topic was digital cultural engagement of elderly audiences and that they represented original scientific papers. Hence, we excluded the literature reviews found within the given topic and the given subject of research interest.

⁷ By “region” here we mean the countries with which Macedonia borders and the countries of the former Yugoslavia.

⁸ Hamel and his associates suggest that rapid review should be defined as “a form of knowledge synthesis that accelerates the process of conducting a traditional systematic review through streamlining or omitting various methods to produce evidence for stakeholders in a resource-efficient manner” (Garrity et al., 2021, p. 15).

Research outcomes

According to the keywords, for the period of ten years (2013-2023), in the databases mentioned previously we did not find many research papers that correspond to the inclusion criteria (of course, from those materials that were available and open access), so the selection process was limited in the beginning. Hence, some of the selected papers include the subject of our interest, but not as the primary objective of their research. Nevertheless, it is still present as an aspect of the research and therefore we took them into account.

The papers we found in the keyword search were mostly linked to research related to either cultural audience's engagement in general or digital audience's engagement in general. The most common topics that included some of the keywords, but not as a connected whole that would be relevant to our research, were: digital public services for the elderly, COVID-19 and the cultural life of the elderly, digital video games and the elderly, and the digital divide in terms of availability and participation (age, income, country of residence, etc.). The basis of the research was the psychosocial condition of the elderly, their well-being and inclusion in social-cultural life, as well as digital (il)literacy of the elderly. Thus, from this rapid literature review we can note that there is a lack of research related specifically to the digital cultural engagement of the elderly audiences from a communicological perspective.

Afterwards, we approached a detailed study of the selected papers according to our subject of research interest, in order to determine: the topic, their subject of research interest and the methods used for data collection, as well as their main findings and conclusions. In the Table 1 below we present the selected papers, categorized according to the above categories. The research papers are arranged according to the year, i.e., the ones from the later year are the first, and the more recent ones are the last in the table.

Table 1

Selected papers from the rapid literature review by categories

<p>Name of the research paper: "Comparison of engagement and emotional responses of older and younger adults interacting with 3D cultural heritage artefacts on personal devices"</p> <p>Keywords: augmented reality, 3D, elderly people, young adults, emotion, cultural heritage museum artefacts</p> <p>Author(s): Alelis, G., Bobrowicz, A., Siang Ang, C.</p> <p>Journal/publication and year of publication of the paper: <i>Behaviour & Information Technology</i>, 34, 11, pp. 1064-1078, 2015</p> <p>Topic and subject of research of the research paper: Engagement with artefacts of older and younger participants in three modalities: 3D models on a laptop, AR on a tablet, and physical, and their emotional reactions to these artefacts in each modality</p> <p>Methods for data collection used in the research: Within-subjects study using counter-balancing; survey, statistical analysis method</p> <p>General findings and conclusions from the research: Regardless of age, the digital modalities were enjoyable and encouraged emotional responses – they were successful in creating enjoyable, emotional experience; even though the cultural heritage artefacts are digitised and viewed outside the museum, they can enable emotional connections; museums could consider presenting 3D models of their artefacts on their websites and make them available for downloading as an application for different devices</p>

Name of the research paper: "Using communication and visualization technologies with senior citizens to facilitate cultural access and self-improvement"

Keywords: ICT, visualization technologies, augmented reality, senior citizens, mass media, social well-being

Author(s): Meneses Fernández, M. D., Santana Hernández, J. D., Gutiérrez, J. M., Henríquez Escuela, M. R., Rodríguez Fino, R.

Journal/publication and year of publication of the paper: *Computers in Human Behavior*, 66, pp. 329-344, 2017

Topic and subject of research of the research paper: Social impacts and benefits of using digital visualization technologies with senior citizens with two main points of interest: access to cultural content and improved personal and social well-being

Methods for data collection used in the research: Controlled study; qualitative analysis based on satisfaction with the experience; survey, quantitative analysis

General findings and conclusions from the research: Senior participants are motivated to use digital technologies because that leads to better access to socio-cultural content and entertainment, easier communication and sharing experiences with friends and family and enhances their well-being; the technologies used in the study have enabled senior participants to digitally (re)visit cultural events and cultural locations that they wouldn't be able to visit in another way, and that was rated highly by the seniors that participated in the study regarding the emotional element; one very important aspect of the research is that the collaboration between the researchers and the SeniorCitizens Day Care Centre has yielded good results in terms of identifying ways to improve the personal and social well-being of the seniors through digital involvement in various activities, including cultural ones

Name of the research paper: "Active seniors perceived value within digital museum transformation" (case study)

Keywords: cultural heritage, digital transformation, active senior visitors, immersive technologies, level of engagement, perceived experience value

Author(s): Traboulsi, C., Frau, M., & Cabiddu, F.

Journal/publication and year of publication of the paper: *The TQM Journal*, 30, 5, pp. 530-553, 2018

Topic and subject of research of the research paper: Perceived value of active elderly visitors regarding the heritage sites and use of new technologies; opportunities for digital transformation, as well as risks in the tourism industry when it comes to active elderly travelers

Methods for data collection used in the research: Semi-structured interviews; observation

General findings and conclusions from the research: Extended knowledge on the perception of elderly audiences as consumers, i.e. active visitors, in terms of digital technologies used by archaeological museums; different dimensions of perception of the elderly audiences regarding the digital transformation of museums, namely: epistemological, functional, social and hedonistic; enabling an integrative framework to enhance the experience of digital technologies and cultural engagement in museums both before, during and after the visit by elderly audiences; a need for elderly to have access to interfaces that are easy to use and interesting for them, as well as a need for support regarding social media platforms

Name of the research paper: "Bridging the digital divide: Older adults' engagement with online cinema heritage"

Keywords: /

Author(s): Dibeltulo, S., Culhane, S., & Treveri Gennari, D.

Journal/publication and year of publication of the paper: *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities*, 35, 4, pp. 797-811, 2020

Topic and subject of research of the research paper: Elderly audiences' engagement with cinema heritage online; different strategies for engagement of elderly with the digital world within *Italian Cinema Audiences*

Methods for data collection used in the research: Mixed methods ethnographic approach; face-to-face video-interview (as an isolated case) and unstructured video-interviews, qualitative analysis

General findings and conclusions from the research: Collaboration between older and younger people could be very important for the digital literacy of the older generations and for them to be active online and share content; encouragement of heritage content production is needed that would be suitable and easily accessible for elderly audiences; the implementation of elements like seeking feedback on online content and rewarding active participation is a successful way for understanding elderly audiences interaction with digital tools and resources; an integrated multimedia strategy can be an effective solution to the digital divide (engagement and inclusion online)

Name of the research paper: "Creative ageing – cultural engagement instead of social isolation: Results of the Europe-wide survey"

Keywords: /

Author(s): Berlin Senate Department for Culture and Europe

Journal/publication and year of publication of the paper: *Creative ageing – cultural engagement instead of social isolation: Results of the Europe-wide survey*, 2022

Topic and subject of research of the research paper: Cultural engagement and participation of elderly and implementation of the topic of "cultural participation of older people" in various European cities

Methods for data collection used in the research: Interviews, qualitative analysis; survey, quantitative analysis

General findings and conclusions from the research: Most of the European cities do not officially define the group of elderly in guidelines that provide administrations guidance on topics related to culture; the promotion of cultural engagement and participation of elderly is in competition with that of other age groups and the promotion of cultural engagement and participation of elderly is expected to become more important in the future; the greatest barriers for cultural engagement and participation of elderly are: social isolation, digital content, and economic barriers; digital formats don't represent opportunities for everyone and should therefore not be seen as a universal accessibility tool; all stakeholders (cities, governments, practitioners) will need to think about implementing programs and funding and making inclusive and accessible offers for the elderly who might have limited digital knowledge and skills and limited financial possibilities

Name of the research paper: “Internet Use, Cultural Engagement, and Multi-Dimensional Health of Older Adults: A Cross-Sectional Study in China”

Keywords: internet use, multi-dimensional health, influence mechanism, older adults, cultural engagement

Author(s): Chen, W. C., Yang, L., & Wang, X. Y.

Journal/publication and year of publication of the paper: *Frontiers in public health*, 10, 887840, 2022

Topic and subject of research of the research paper: The effect of internet use on the multi-dimensional health of the elderly in China with the mediating role of cultural engagement

Methods for data collection used in the research: Statistical analysis method (logistic regression and a single-step multiple mediation model)

General findings and conclusions from the research: Internet use by the elderly has positive effects on their physical and mental health; in terms of elderly internet use and the questions about health, cultural engagement has a mediating role; it is necessary to encourage and nurture the use of the Internet by the elderly, as well as to engage them more culturally, and this should be one of the goals of the government, in order to improve the health and well-being of the elderly

Name of the research paper: “Direct[Message]: Exploring Access and Engagement With the Arts Through Digital Technology in COVID Times”

Keywords: grounded theory, methodologies, active interviews, interviewing, methodologies, new methods & methodologies, methodologies, qualitative research, methodologies, arts-based inquiry, methods of inquiry

Author(s): La Rose, T., et al.

Journal/publication and year of publication of the paper: *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies*, 22(6), pp. 641-653, 2022

Topic and subject of research of the research paper: Development of innovative digital technologies and digital platform for engagement with culture and arts of the elderly and making culture and arts more accessible for them through interactivity, taking into account the needs and desires of elderly, but also the barriers related to engagement and creation with the arts, culture and creative mediums

Methods for data collection used in the research: Interviews and focus groups (virtual); interactive online survey

General findings and conclusions from the research: Many seniors are not familiar with digital technologies and expressed a desire to learn more in order to enhance their digital skills so they can enjoy arts and cultural content; some of them highlight the financial problems regarding the purchase of appropriate devices through which they could use various cultural and artistic contents and be part of such kind of activities; for some of the included seniors in the research project, *cultural alienation* limited their engagement in online arts and culture activities; the researchers conclude that, with the project suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the interactive online survey format could be of great benefit to researchers conducting similar studies and those working with specific populations such as the elderly

In the table above, we have summarized the selected papers according to several categories. What we can see from these research papers is that there are different approaches to the broader topic of digital cultural engagement of the elderly audiences, both in terms of the narrower topic and the subject of interest, as well as in terms of the methodology used. In the context of the perceived value of elderly audiences regarding the use of digital technologies in museums and elderly audiences' engagement with cinema heritage online, Traboulsi, Frau & Cabiddu (2018) and Dibeltulo, Culhane & Treveri Gennari (2020) use qualitative methodology, while Chen, Yang & Wang (2022) use quantitative methodology in order to examine the effect of Internet use on the multidimensional health of the elderly in China with the mediating role of cultural engagement. Alelis, Bobrowicz & Siang Ang (2015), Meneses Fernández, Santana Hernández, Gutiérrez, Henríquez Escuela & Rodríguez Fino (2017), La Rose et al. (2022) and the researchers from Berlin Senate Department for Culture and Europe (2022), use both qualitative and quantitative methodology so they can: compare the emotional response of young and elderly interacting with 3D cultural heritage artifacts on personal devices; investigate the potential benefits of digital technologies for the seniors and their response towards those technologies; examine the attitudes and opinions of the elderly regarding the use of digital technologies and their cultural-artistic engagement and develop adequate digital platforms that can be used by the elderly; examine the implementation of the topic of cultural participation of the elderly.

Despite the quantitative approach in terms of methods, Chen, Yang & Wang's (2022) research is based on results from the Chinese General Social Survey (CGSS) of 2015 and 2017, taking into account the responses of elderly people over the age of 60. When we take into account the conducted interviews within the research papers of Traboulsi, Frau & Cabiddu (2018) and Dibeltulo, Culhane & Treveri Gennari (2020) and the survey questionnaires that were used in the researches of Meneses Fernández, Santana Hernández, Gutiérrez, Henríquez Escuela & Rodríguez Fino (2017), Alelis, Bobrowicz & Siang Ang (2015) and Berlin Senate Department for Culture and Europe (2022), as well as the virtual interviews and focus groups and the interactive online survey from the Canada based research project of La Rose et al. (2022), we can see that, regardless of the different methodologies (qualitative and quantitative), all authors take into account the opinions and attitudes of the elderly within their topics and subjects of research interest, which highlights a key element: in research involving elderly people, concerning digital cultural engagement, it is necessary to include a methodology that takes into account their opinion, their perception, as well as satisfaction and experience.

As for the results and general conclusions of the research, we can notice that what unites them all is the need for greater digital cultural engagement of the elderly audiences, that is, the application of various strategies, whether it refers to cultural institutions such as museums (Traboulsi, Frau & Cabiddu, 2018; Alelis, Bobrowicz & Siang Ang, 2015) and cinema (Dibeltulo, Culhane & Treveri Gennari, 2020), or the community and the institutions (Meneses Fernández, Santana Hernández, Gutiérrez, Henríquez Escuela & Rodríguez Fino, 2017; La Rose et al., 2022; Berlin Senate Department for Culture and Europe, 2022), as well as government authorities and other stakeholders (Chen, Yang & Wang, 2022; Berlin Senate Department for Culture and Europe, 2022). The need for cooperation and support in the context of the use of various digital tools, devices, etc. by the elderly, i.e., their digital literacy, with the aim of their greater involvement and engagement within the framework of digital culture and in the sharing, interaction and creation of cultural content, and thus cultural experience, is also something that all the research papers we considered point to. All this affects the psycho-emotional health of the elderly, their well-being and the degree of satisfaction with social-cultural inclusion.

All mentioned researchers offer a solid theoretical framework. Considering that and all of the above, this rapid literature review gives us a good enough insight into the problem and the subject of interest and reveals various perspectives and concepts for further in-depth research.

Final considerations and conclusion

Wanting to have insights of research concepts, perspectives and examples regarding the digital engagement of elderly audiences, that would light the way for our in-depth further research within cultural engagement, cultural institutions and elderly audiences, we conducted a rapid literature review, which we presented in

this paper. The goal was to identify the academic research focused on digital cultural engagement of elderly audiences.

What we can conclude is that on the topic of digital cultural engagement of the elderly audiences in the last ten years, there are not many research papers (at least from the sources and the literature that were available to us) that elaborate this topic from a communicological point of view and taking into account all above-mentioned elements, which we consider to be a lack within the academic research, considering the importance and the actuality of the topic, socio-cultural and demographic changes at the global level and the development of digital technologies and tools and their use in the cultural and creative sector. We would like to point out that there is a noticeable solid presence of research papers that take into account the digital engagement of the elderly, as well as the cultural engagement, but as separate processes and not as a combination, which is precisely the subject of our research interest – digital cultural engagement of the elderly audiences.

What is evident from academic research is that the elderly are actively involved (whether through interviews, whether through focus groups and surveys), which is one of the key elements when it comes to the elderly audiences (that is already mature, experienced and with clear opinions and attitudes and with specific needs, unlike the younger ones, who did not yet have firm attitudes and are in the process of developing, changing and gaining experience). Namely, in the context of research, it is necessary to include methodological techniques that would enable examination of the opinions, attitudes, perceptions, etc. of the elderly audiences. Given the increase in the elderly population and the extended life expectancy, as well as the need of the elderly to remain mentally active as long as possible, it is very important this audience to be adequately digitally educated, included and engaged, especially when it comes to culture, because “without men, no culture, certainly; but equally, and more significantly, without culture, no men. We are, in sum, incomplete or unfinished animals who complete or finish ourselves through culture...” (Geertz, 1973: 49).

Another very important aspect that emerges from the literature review that we conducted is that some of the researchers suggest that research involving the elderly presents a kind of challenge and that more innovative ways and methods are needed in order to achieve better results and more successful research. Namely, La Rose et al. (2022) point out that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, they had to “transfer” the initially planned research online, that is, they conducted the interviews, focus groups and surveys online and through interaction. They emphasize that this is a good practice when working in specific conditions and with the elderly population. However, given the limited digital capabilities of the elderly and the fact that a lot of work has to be done on their digital illiteracy and on reducing the digital divide, online methods still represent a great challenge despite their practicality. We believe that combinations and innovations are needed in order to have the most adequate and best methodology when it comes to the elderly population, that is, the elderly as an audience.

The limitations of our paper mostly relate to the small sample, i.e., the small number of research studies that we included in the rapid literature review, but those

were the available materials. In fact, that alone points to the fact that within our topic of interest, not many research studies, and therefore research papers, have been done, which points to a gap in academic research regarding this problem. Considering that this paper opens only one aspect of a more extensive and in-depth research that we will conduct in the near future, we believe that according to our main research question, this paper provides many important answers. As we indicate in the title of our paper, the concepts, perspectives and examples we have presented here open up many topics and questions that could be further explored and analyzed, and we consider this paper to be a contribution to a very significant topic within communication and sociological studies and a good starting point for future research into digital cultural engagement of elderly audiences.

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Digitalno kulturno angažovanje starije publike: koncepti, perspektive i primeri u okviru akademskih istraživanja

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Apstrakt

Digitalne tehnologije su transformisale i nastavljaju da transformišu način na koji se kultura proizvodi, odnosno način na koji se predstavlja, prenosi i konzumira od (inter)aktivne publike. Smatramo da je veoma važno ispitati i identifikovati koncepte, perspektive i primere digitalnog kulturnog angažovanja starije publike u okviru akademskih istraživanja, s obzirom da svetska populacija stari i da su stari ljudi važan akter u socio-kulturnim procesima, a posebno jer se mlađe generacije podrazumevano povezuju sa novim tehnologijama. Glavno istraživačko pitanje glasi: „Kakva su akademska istraživanja rađena na temu digitalnog kulturnog angažovanja starije publike u poslednjih deset godina (2013-2023)?“ Kao istraživačku tehniku koristili smo brzi pregled literature jer naš pristup u ovom slučaju nije analitički i kritički, već sumirajući i sintetizujući. Rezultati pokazuju uočljivo solidno prisustvo istraživačkih radova koji uzimaju u obzir digitalno angažovanje starijih i kulturno angažovanje starijih kao zasebne procese, ali na temu digitalnog kulturnog angažovanja starijih nema mnogo istraživačkih radova koji razrađuju ovu temu sa komunikološkog stanovišta.

Ključne reči: akademska istraživanja, digitalno kulturno angažovanje, digitalna kultura, starija publika, interaktivnost

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