

An Abstraction Theory: A Bravery Perspective on Examining Effectiveness of Arts and Heritage Marketing Dimensions and Customer Value in Art Museums, Exhibits and Galleries in Egypt

**Reem Essam
Cairo University**

**Wael Kortam
Cairo University**

**Alaa Tarek
Cairo University**

The purpose of this research is to gain insight into the abstract marketing themes to make use of the best possible practices of the marketing departments at museums, illuminating the way for other researchers to establish additional studies that look deeply into the relationships among abstraction theory, art & heritage dimensions and customer value. The results of this research may start a debate on how and why the art and heritage field might move towards a stronger focus on abstract marketing throughout measurable results.

INTRODUCTION

Artists have viewed art as an individual entity that is not involved with business; marketers have seen that it is their task to get rid of the distinction through using marketing's promotional mix in the visual arts (Fillis, 2011). Horowitz (2011, cited in Preece, et al. 2016) argues that the art market is both a historical and hierarchical institution that is based on social relations. Also, Parmentier et al. (2013 cited in Preece, et al. 2016) argue that there is a need to look beyond just the person or product to understand the relationship between them due to their inextricable link. The complex art consumer is different from the traditional consumer acknowledged by the traditional marketing theory (Chen, 2009). The marketing theory must move on from measuring the normal measurable to take into account the instability of value to develop stronger conceptualizations of it (Preece, et al. 2016). The traditional marketing theory lacks presentation of any clear conceptualization of how creative art and cultural outputs comply with the classical marketing concept (Lehman, et al. 2016). Thus, there is a requirement to use the abstraction concept when examining the relationship between art & heritage and the customer value, leading to the choice of the topic of this research.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The theoretical background covers abstraction, art marketing, heritage marketing and customer value as the variables concentrated on.

Abstraction

Abstracting is a pervasive activity in human perception, conceptualization and reasoning. It can be described as a fundamental mechanism for saving cognitive efforts, by offering a 'higher' level view of the physical and intellectual environment (Zucker, 2003). There are two levels of abstraction as per Korzybski (2000) arguing that the less precise the information or data is available, the higher is the level of abstraction while more precise information or data reflect a lower level of abstraction.

Abstraction comes from Latin and means a withdrawal, or a removal. It is used to mean abstraction from unnecessary details, from the "how" to the "what", from instance-level to type-level...etc. Abstraction is the principle by which irrelevant things are ignored and relevant things to understanding some problem of interest are uncovered (Leppänen, 2007). Abstraction is used to manage the complexity. This implies that some information is always lost; meaning that if no information is lost there is no abstraction. Then, it will be just a transformation (Leppänen, 2007).

Art Marketing

Chartrand, (1990, cited in Kerrigan, et al. 2004) describes art as "the representation of the underlying nature of reality, the manifestation of pleasure or emotion and direct intuitive vision".

The art world can be visualized as a social-economic network involving artistic and business-based activities, organizations and individuals. Art and the art market can be positioned within a wider network involving social actors engaged in competitive exchanges (Fillis, 2009). The art world and the marketing environment are visualized as a mutually beneficial permeable boundary where multi-directional connections can be made between marketing theory with its practices and arts marketing theory with its practices (Fillis, 2004). Both art and marketing are concerned with reflecting, reproducing and transmitting values, meaning and beliefs (Fillis, 2009).

Art can be viewed as a commodity traded in the international marketplace and is therefore subject to the same market forces and consumer influences as with other products (Fillis, 2009).

Artists are used to treading the fine line between artistic conventions and market demands in order to innovate in the marketplace (Rodner & Kerrigan, 2014). Rodner and Thomson's (2013) through their "art machine" metaphor describe the art market as an "interlocking framework of legitimation made up of several functional cogs including arts schools, galleries and dealers, art critics, auction houses, fairs and art events, (private and public) collectors, and lastly museums, each of which acts as an essential tastemaker in the cooperative construction of value in the arts."

Consumption of art differs from many other products, with aesthetic pleasure playing a large part of the process. Art is seen as a communication carrier of a variety of qualitative, intangible messages which conventional marketing frameworks cannot interpret. Art marketing research needs to focus on the product centered nature of entrepreneurial creativity where the personality, attitudes, beliefs and behavior of the artist as owner/manager are central to practicing visual arts marketing (Fillis, 2010).

An arts organization can develop and maintain a mutually satisfactory relationship with its customers even if it is not purely market-led, through personalized customer services, provision of incentives or improvement of mutual knowledge (Lee, 2005). As the relationship progresses, customers are expected to go through a ladder of loyalty (Rentschler, et al. 2002). The relationship approach seems to contradict the societal interpretation of arts marketing. In self-oriented marketing, the creator may serve as the initial consumer of that which he/she creates (Lee, 2005).

A goal of arts marketers is seen as to "find consumers who are likely to appreciate the product" (Colbert, 2001, cited in Lee, 2005) and develop a good relationship with them. Another important goal is to nurture people who are currently indifferent to the arts into becoming arts consumers (Lee, 2005).

Heritage Marketing

Heritage is a broad and elusive concept. Park (2010) argues that heritage is understood as “a material and socio-psychological testimony of identity” while Balmer (2011) argues that it provides “existential anchors” for consumers.

Since cultural heritage is both tangible and intangible, it is a public good that has its economic value calculated using non-market techniques (Fonseca & Rebelo, 2010). Intangible cultural heritage is transmitted from generation to another and is recreated by communities and groups due to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history (Blake, 2015). This provides them with a sense of identity and continuity which promotes respect for cultural diversity and human creativity.

Heritage is treated as a vehicle linking past, present and future (Balmer, 2011). Heritage has a dual local/global character. Major museums characterize themselves as constituting a form of ‘heritage of humankind’ since they hold uniquely extensive collections from all over the globe (Blake, 2015). In museums many important tangible aspects of heritage are curated, displayed, and preserved (Smith, 2006, cited in McDonald, 2011). Consumption of heritage as an experience (McDonald, 2011) requires consumers to be kept at a distance from the heritage object as ordinary audience are viewed as inexperienced, uncritical and passive consumers (Mason, 2004).

Customer Value

The customer perceived value is considered as a trade-off between customers’ evaluation of the benefits gained through the use of a service and the sacrifices that can be made to use the service (Boksberger & Melsen, 2011).

Art marketing is viewed as the “value exchanges” between an arts organization and its consumers. Customers get aesthetic, social and psychological benefits from their visit to the arts organization at the expense of their time, money and energy; meanwhile, the arts organization obtains income, recognition and emotional support from the visitors at the cost of its artistic and managerial efforts and expenditure (Lee, 2005).

The customer’s ability to create value is accomplished according to the amount of information available, the knowledge gained previously through past experiences, the customer's own skills and other available resources that are gained access to and used.

Value is not limited only to the functional aspects but it may also include the social and emotional value components (Sanchez, et al. 2006) as the value's concept is abstract including various meanings that vary according to context.

The functional dimension of perceived value is based on what the customer considers as good investment when the positive value or benefits are higher than sacrifices born. The functional dimension is a valuation almost equivalent to the quality/price ratio, but including a component of non-monetary sacrifices (Callarisa Foil, et al. 2009).

The emotional dimension of perceived value represents the capacity of a product/service to arouse feelings or emotions affecting the purchaser. It is not based on functional or rational valuation but on customers' feeling of trust through benefits from the product/service. Their positive feelings towards product/service itself or producer/service provider reduce their uncertainty (Callarisa Foil, et al. 2009).

The social dimension of perceived value explains why individuals make purchase decisions based on the assumption and expectation that it adds to their social image. It is based on reputation, credibility and their social results (Callarisa Foil, et al. 2009).

The art and heritage product does not normally follow the traditional measurement of value of gain and cost. Artists have mostly rejected the view of their works as materialistic products, putting them above any measurement method. This leads to the assumption that marketers should shift from their traditional methods using new innovated abstraction themes in order to be able to evaluate the art and heritage product value. They should gain from artistic knowledge which can encourage them to understand the art, culture and heritage world in other perceptions by exploring beyond the confines of traditional, conventional, bounded, rational thought, following the abstracting concept.

EXPLORATORY RESEARCH

The exploratory study includes secondary data analysis and qualitative analysis.

Secondary Data Analysis

In this study, the secondary data has been collected from the websites of the Ministry of Culture, Sector of Fine Arts, State Information Service (SIS) and Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA). Al-Gezira Museum, Mohammed Mahmoud Khalil and his Wife Museum, Mahmoud Mokhtar Museum, Mohamed Nagi Museum and the Museum of Modern Egyptian Art are chosen from the different museums in Egypt. The chosen five museums are believed to represent the different types of museums displaying pieces of fine art in Egypt.

Qualitative Analysis

As exploratory research, there was an in-depth interview with some museum visitors and art practitioners. The sample covered ten art museum visitors/art practitioners. The interview had 19 questions to make sure of getting the real response and reach the actual opinions as per the visitor's/practitioner's answers to the questions. The interview took 30 to 60 minutes to get through. The nineteen questions covered the understanding of the art, heritage and customer value

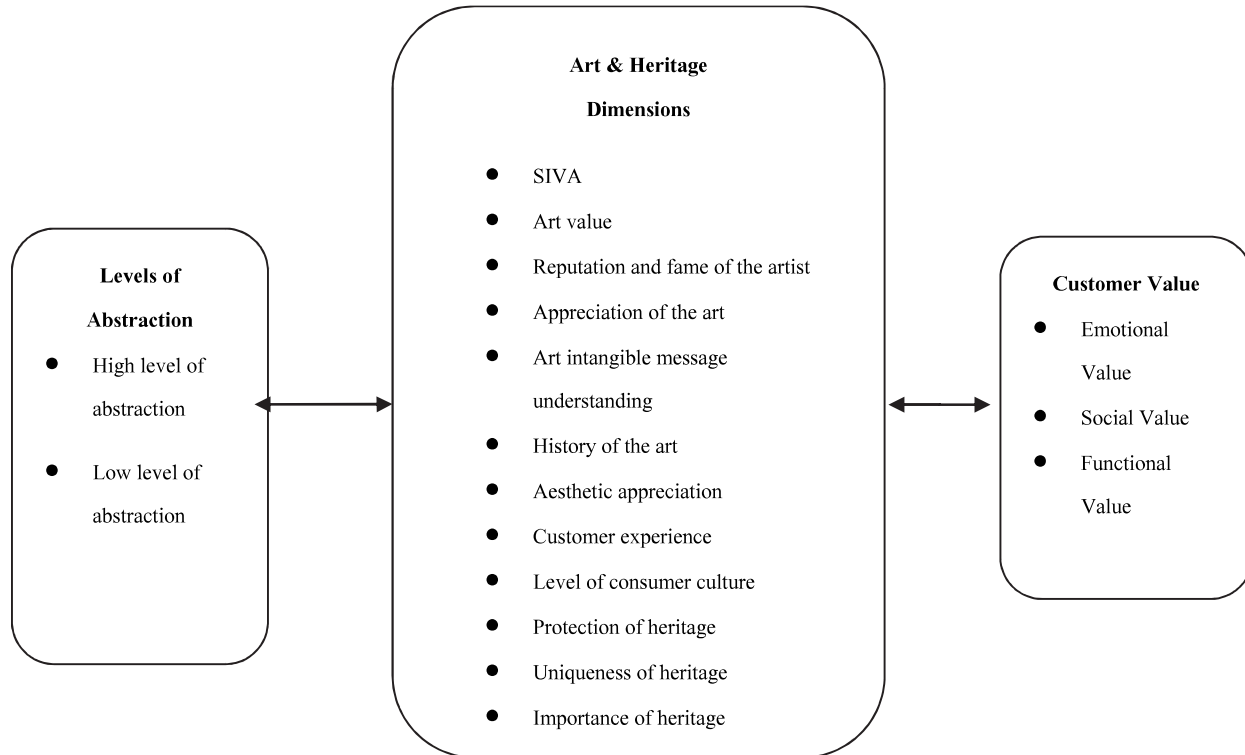
THE NEED FOR FURTHER RESEARCH AND CONCEPTUAL MODEL

As the current art market is rapidly changing, it is becoming more depending on the marketing techniques to adapt to the rapid change in society as well as the whole world. Although art marketing does bring some aesthetics, emotional, symbolic and social values, most art organizations still use only traditional marketing methods.

Despite the art market's recognition of the importance of marketing, there are minimal publications in the art marketing field and almost no publications of the abstraction theory in marketing. Any extensive research on the possibility of any relationship between an abstraction theory perspective and art & heritage marketing dimensions does not exist.

Due to this, there is a need to prove that the abstraction themes can be applied to measure customer value and vice versa. There is a need for moving beyond experience based marketing and more towards abstract based marketing to examine the relationship between abstraction and customer value in the art museums, exhibits and galleries in Egypt.

RESEARCH MODEL



RESEARCH PROPOSITIONS

H1: *There is a significant and positive relationship between art and heritage dimensions and customer value*

H2: *There is a significant and positive relationship between the high and low levels of abstraction and art and heritage dimensions*

H3: *There is a significant and positive or negative relationship between the high and low levels of abstraction and customer value*

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To shed light on the factors proving the relationships among customer value, art & heritage marketing and abstraction themes
2. To contribute to the development of the use of abstraction themes in marketing
3. To explore how marketing concept can be applied in the visual art marketing
4. To understand how the art museums in Egypt apply the marketing methods
5. To explore how the abstraction themes can be used in the art and heritage marketing in museums, exhibits and galleries in Egypt

PLANNED RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The scarce amount of research on this topic, especially in an art and heritage context, has led the researcher to the foundation of this research. After the secondary research has been collected and reviewed, a primary research is to be completed on both a quantitative and qualitative level, including two surveys, one intended for art and heritage consumers and another for art professionals and in-depth interviews with both art professionals and art consumers from art museums, exhibits and galleries in Egypt. This survey is aiming to obtain a general outlook on abstraction themes application in marketing of the art and heritage in museums, exhibits and galleries and observe the relationships between such applications and art & heritage customer value.

The research is designed to use exploratory research design in the secondary data analysis and in-depth interview to explore the topic on which little research has been conducted. A consecutive research design is a descriptive research design through a quantitative study, seeking the responses of individuals that compose the sample of this study, collecting such responses at one point of time using multiple-cross-sectional design.

The population from which the sample will be drawn is art consumers and art professionals in Egypt. A non-probability judgment sample type is chosen for the art professionals in Egypt, and a non-probability snowball sample type is chosen for the ordinary art and heritage consumers in some art museums, exhibits and galleries in Egypt. The sample size will be what is suitable for adequacy for analysis as a reflection for heterogeneity of the population in the art and heritage field. The sample unit will be art professionals and art consumers of all ages over 18, both males and females. This research is designed to have 4 main constructs; namely art, heritage, value and abstraction. The research variables are Interval-Scaled variables to examine the relationships among abstraction, art & heritage and customer value.

These four variables are measured by a 5-point Likert-type scale. The measurement used in this research, to measure the art and heritage dimensions as well as abstraction and customer value, is deduced from the answers of the sample of the in-depth interviews as well as the previous studies of different scholars.

Data analysis is conducted using SPSS and Amos software for determining sample characteristics through descriptive statistics, exploratory factor analysis, cronbach's alpha reliability assessment, Pearson correlation; and cluster analysis.

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