



Marketing art museums using social networking services: An identity salience model

Te-Lin Chung and Sonali Diddi, Iowa State University

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Marketing art museums is crucial in promoting the art and history of textiles whereby may indirectly support the research and conservation of textile arts, since many art museums possess historic textile collections. With the growth of social networking services (SNS) marketing, it seemed intuitive for art museums or other nonprofit organizations to adopt SNS as one of communication channels. Such growth can be evident by examples such as the utilization of Twitter, Facebook, and Foursquare on the 2012 national Art Museum Day (Association of Art Museum Directors, 2012). For organizations with smaller budget like many art museums, SNS is a direct and cost effective way to connect and building up relationships with visitors, which is considered essential for art museum marketing (Garbarino & Johnson, 1999) and may lead to higher satisfaction, trust, and future commitment (Camarero & Garrido, 2011). However, the impact of SNS has rarely been evaluated in the contexts of nonprofit organizations like art museums. The purpose of this study, therefore, was to examine the role of an effective SNS in building up the relationship between an art museum and its audience. Specifically, we investigated perceived benefit of art museums' SNS and its relations with visitors' behavioral loyalty and their identity as a member/fan of the art museums.

This study applied the identity salience model of relationship marketing success (Arnett, German, & Hunt, 2003). This model suggests that the success of the relationship between an organization and its members depends on relationship-inducing factors, such as the prestige of the organization and member participation. However, instead of direct influences, the effects of relationship-inducing factors is mediated by the salience of a member's identity (e.g. a frequent visitor of an art museum considers him/herself as a fan/member of this art museum) (Arnett et al., 2003; Laverie & Arnett, 2000). Based on the identity salience model, we proposed that prestige of the art museum, visitors' frequency of visits, and perceived benefits of art museums' SNS as the antecedents of visitor's identity salience. In addition, the identity salience will lead to higher satisfaction with overall experience and perceived social performance of the art museum, which will consequently lead to visitors' intention for future visits and willingness to donate to the museum.

Data were collected with a web-based survey from visitors to eight art museums accredited by American Alliance of Museums in the Midwestern region. An invitation of the survey was sent to these museums' visitors via their electronic communication channels, such as Facebook, Twitter, and e-mail newsletter. A total of 967 responses were collected, with a usable sample size of 608. All measurement scales were adapted from previous studies. The Cronbach's

alpha and correlations between variables all met the requirements; and an analysis on the measurement model suggested acceptable model fit.

The results of a structural equation modeling analysis supported the proposed model with good model fit (CFI=.919, $\chi^2(df)=1042.516$ (308), RMSEA=.063). The results showed that prestige ($\beta=.320$, $p\text{-value}<.001$), perceive benefit of SNS ($\beta=.449$, $p\text{-value}<.001$), and frequency of visit ($\beta=.292$, $p\text{-value}<.001$) all significantly contributed to identity salience, which, in turn, led to satisfaction with the overall experience ($\beta=.313$, $p\text{-value}<.001$) and perceived social performance of the museum ($\beta=.328$, $p\text{-value}<.001$). Perceived social performance was positively related to willingness to donate ($\beta=.502$, $p\text{-value}<.001$), and future visits ($\beta=.345$, $p\text{-value}<.001$); and satisfaction with the overall experience was positively related to future visits ($\beta=.241$, $p\text{-value}<.001$) but not with willingness to donate.

The findings yielded several implications: (1) the results supported the identity salience model that suggested identity salience as a mediator between identity inducing factors (i.e. the prestige of the museums, perceive benefits from SNS, and visitor's participation) and relationship outcome (overall satisfaction, and perceived social performance, and behavioral loyalty). It is worth noticing that the feeling of being a fan/member of the art museum is an important antecedent to overall satisfaction and perceived social performance. While art museums can spontaneously attract visitors through well curated exhibitions and collections, acknowledging visitors' identity as part of the museum community will help enhancing visitors' overall experiences; and (2) this study identified satisfying SNS as a key antecedent to visitors' identity salience. Thus it is important that art museums use SNS strategically not only to send out information that visitors want to know but also carry out the art museums' prestige and continuously engage the visitors to the community of the art museums.

References

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