

“Democratization of Cultural Capital through Social Networks Sites – The influence of Human Values on cultural audiences” by C. Milano*

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Abstract

According to the Digital 2020 Global Report, more than 4.5 billion people were using Internet while social media users had passed the 3.8 billion's mark. This faster growing landscape had pushed arts and cultural organizations to explore the possibilities offered by Social Networks Sites (SNS) for their marketing objectives (Hausmann, 2012). Despite the surging use of these tools aiming for cultural participation and audience development (Stevenson et al., 2017; Hadley, 2017), no empirical research had focused on the 'cultural capital' concept (Bourdieu, 1984) as far as the change in consumer's behavior. Our purpose is to shed light on opportunities and limitations of SNS as "democratization" tools of arts and cultural consumption. Our findings show that *YouTube* is more used to conform audience knowledge in music and cinema, while *LinkedIn*'s profile stimulates the reading of books and the participation in electronic arts events and drama. On an operational level, this study offers suggestions to arts managers on the strategic use of SNS.

Keywords: *SNS, Cultural capital, Art & Cultural Consumption, Consumer Behavior*

Introduction and Objectives

At the start of the year 2020 (Kemp, 2020) nearly the 60% of the world's population were already online, without even counting the latest trends due to COVID-19 crisis. That's a clear fact that none marketing practice nor scientific research can ignore, in facts an ever-growing number of manuals, guidelines and well-founded studies (e.g. Haenlein, 2010; Meerman Scott, 2010; Weinberg, 2009) have seen the lights while cultural managers pushed on the surging use of these tools with the aim to increase the cultural participation and the audience development (Stevenson et al., 2017; Hadley, 2017). But despite of the above proliferation of efforts, no empirical research had focused on the 'cultural capital' concept (Bourdieu, 1984) as far as the influence of new technologies on the knowledge, behaviors, and habits that push cultural audiences to behave then consume in a certain way. In our research, we will provide new evidence concerning the system of beliefs, attitudes, actions and reactions that explain and motivate consumer behaviors in the cultural context. Our findings will be useful for cultural managers in order to better understand the attitudes of their public.

Literature Review

The starting point of our research was the concept of cultural capital defined by Bourdieu in 1984 as 'the accumulation of knowledge, behaviors, and skills that one can tap into to demonstrate one's cultural competence, and thus one's social status or standing in society'. The traditional cultural research assumed that the main axis of the space of lifestyle is constituted by the opposition between highbrow culture and popular culture (Bourdieu, 1984). Following this theory and according to Holbrook (1995), similar findings have appeared not only in France but also in the USA which explains how highbrow (lowbrow) tastes appear to reflect a higher (lower) level of formal education. The discussion of the social relevance and distinctiveness of highbrow culture has continued, sparked particularly by the concept of the cultural omnivore introduced by Peterson (2005). He argued that this traditional axis of lifestyle is in the process of being replaced by the distinction between the cultural omnivore

and the cultural univore. But in more recent times, several authors (McEwan & Sobre Denton, 2011; Prieur & Savage, 2011 and 2013) have pointed out on a new axis of distinction between an open cosmopolitan cultural capital versus a more local and less open cultural capital (Chen, 2015), so it seems that the evolution is not finished.

Research Question and Conceptual Framework

Our research questions are the following:

- Does the use of SNS influence the cultural capital of consumers?
- Does the system of human values moderate this relationship?

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework of our study and the related research hypotheses.

H1: The frequency of use of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and/or LinkedIn's profile influences the level of cultural capital of the audiences

H2: Socio-demographic covariates (gender, age, level of education and occupation) influence the relationship between the frequency of use of SNS and the cultural capital of audiences

H3: The system of human values (Lindeman & Verkasalo, 2005) moderates the relationship between the frequency of use of SNS and the cultural capital of audiences

Our choice to focus on the human values of cultural audiences is motivated by their use in research as to characterize cultural groups and individuals (Schwartz, 2012).

Methodology and Dataset

As per the theoretical framework above cited and in order to test our hypotheses, we first needed to measure the cultural capital level of respondents using two different scales. The first one is commonly used in the arts and cultural consumption literature and it considers the sum score of different items indicating the frequency of respondents' participation in cultural venues (DiMaggio and Mukhtar, 2004; Kaufman & Gabler, 2004).

At the end, we have designed an online survey composed by 10 closed questions and we have launched our study on February 2019 as a multi-language standardized questionnaire. We have collected 554 valid replies in which we take into consideration some of the most known platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and LinkedIn.

Our dataset is mainly composed of women (63,5%) aged between 18 and 34 years old (52%) with high educational level (bachelor's and master's degree 69.4%) and employed with a wage (40,1%). Of the total sample, they accede daily to their SNS' accounts - Facebook (80,5%), Instagram (58,1%) and YouTube (51,6%), while they use less than once per month their Twitter's (60,7%) and LinkedIn's (65,3%) profiles. Table 1 summarizes the main demographic and behavioristic aspects of the current sample.

Main Findings and discussion

After running several kinds of analysis such as FA and CFA, more than SEM applied to multigroup clustering with the support of the SPSS and AMOS logistics, we can confirm our hypotheses and present the following results.

As expected, the participation in cultural activities and the cultural awareness of respondents are positively correlated to the SNS frequency of YouTube and LinkedIn (Figure 2). That means that the more cultural audiences use SNS profiles on YouTube and LinkedIn, the more they will participate in some specific cultural venues - music and cinema, reading of books, electronic arts events and drama. Furthermore, the above results confirm our third hypothesis as the main relationships are moderated by the value of conformity for YouTube and stimulation for LinkedIn.

Some more interesting information could be raised thanks to the use of control variables. In particular: the older (>54) and less educated (high school level) are the respondents, the more they seem to trust LinkedIn for electronic arts events and drama venues. Rather than, the

cluster of 25-34 with university level of education use LinkedIn' profile to stimulate their readings. As per the YouTube's frequency of use, our outcomes show that youngers (18-24) tend to conform their knowledge in music and cinema through the "power of images".

Limitations and Conclusions

Despite of these interesting reflections, we are aware that an empirical limitation could be raised for the reverse causality in the model. Our analyses are based on the assumption that the use of SNS influences the cultural capital of audiences. In order to be less affected by this issue, we have worked on a dataset collected directly using SNS platforms managed by *visit.brussels.com*. It implies that given different level of cultural capital, our respondents have a common basic knowledge that allow them to understand and behave properly on SNS (Yates et al. S., Kirby, 2015).

Another limit of this study is that we have taken into account only the frequency of use of some selected SNS without collecting any other information. Those data could concern new platforms that are gaining more and more spaces such as Tik Tok or Snapchat. Neither we have data concerning the motivations, the attitudes and/or behaviors' characteristics like the active or passive role of respondents on SNS, nor any information about their personalities.

As the end, we can argue that our outcomes represent an open window on the mind of cultural audiences, but this study solely represents a starting point for the research on the influence and consequences of the use of SNS in the arts and cultural field.

Managerial Implications and Further Research

Our research support cultural managers in discussions about the strategic use of SNS. Furthermore, we suggest to cultural institutions to consider LinkedIn more as stimulator, a sort of 'discovery media' for cultural activities like drama, books and electronic arts events. At the contrary, cultural managers should limit their use of Facebook that seems preferred by audiences that tend to be less creative and independent.

A particular interest in future's development is suggested, especially in such a context as the fast-changing world evolving in an actual post-pandemic era in which SNS are massively used by cultural organizations.

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ANNEXES

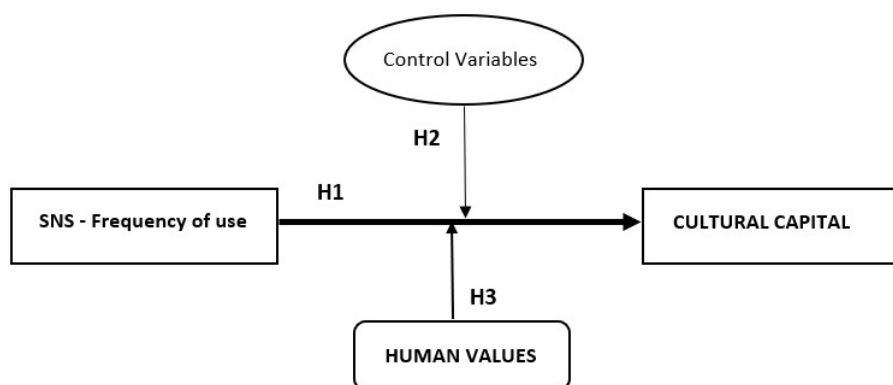


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

AGE	%	OCCUPATION	%	EDUCATION	%
18-24	24,9	Employed for wages	40,1	Middle school	3,3
25-34	27,1	Self employed	21,3	High school	14,8
35-44	19,9	Student	28,9	University/Bachelor	54,2
45-54	10,1	Homemaker	7,6	Postgraduate/Master	15,2
>54	18,1	Retired	2,2	Vocational technical college/more	12,3
Total	100,0	Total	100,0	Total	100,0
SNS FREQUENCY %	FACEBOOK	TWITTER	INSTAGRAM	YOUTUBE	LINKEDIN
Less frequently	10,8	54,9	31,4	26,7	52,7
Every month	1,4	5,8	3,6	6,1	12,6
Every week	7,2	11,2	6,9	15,5	21,3
Every day	52,0	20,9	37,9	41,9	11,9
Every hour	28,5	7,2	20,2	9,7	1,4
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0

Table 1 – Composition of dataset - percentages

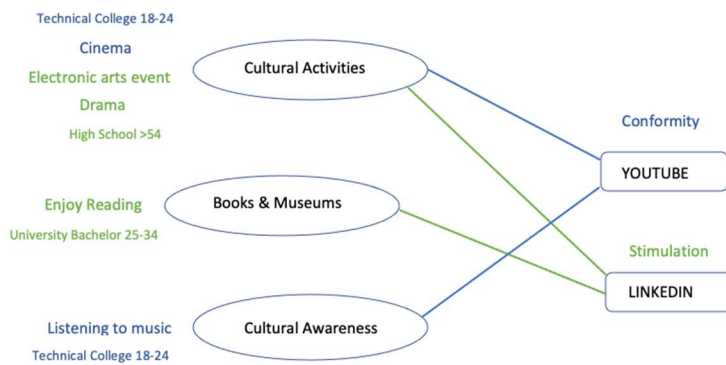


Figure 2. Main findings