Giving La Traviata a Contemporary Twist?
How Market Identity Shapes Hybridity in Italian Opera

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ABSTRACT:

In this paper we examine how the extent to which organizations' market identities embody dominant audiences' expectations and coalesce into well-defined exemplars affects their ability to recombine the expectations of audiences' driven by divergent goals through category spanning. Focusing on the case of major Italian Opera Houses and the tension between divergent audiences' expectations that challenges their programming strategies, we hypothesize that a steadfast adherence to the codes of a category that incarnates prevailing audiences' prescriptions in the past creates incentives for organizations to contaminate it with oppositional normative expectations. In addition, we hypothesize that organizations' efforts to eclipse the emblematic and recognizable exemplars of a category imbued with dominant prescriptions positively influence their willingness to pursue hybrid strategies as well, in particular when organizations benefit from a high status positioning. This study contributes to literature on market identity and category spanning by offering a novel theorization of the identity-based determinants of category spanning under conditions of audience heterogeneity.

Keywords: hybridity, (un)conventionality, identity, status, opera and arts.

INTRODUCTION

Categories have traditionally been defined as the boundaries of markets, allowing producers to identify their rivals (Porac et al., 1995) and consumers to evaluate different groups of offerings (Shrum, 1991). Membership in categories defines organizations' market identity by clarifying what to expect from organizations and their products (Jensen, Kim and Kim, 2011). Whether focused on horizontal product categories or vertical status categories (Jensen, Kim and Kim, 2011), research on categories suggests that by conforming to well-accepted standard categories firms enhance the legitimate and purist traits of their identities (Zuckerman, 1999; Hsu, Hannan and Koçac, 2009). Conversely, firms may sometimes decide to mix the characteristic features of existing categories, a phenomenon called category spanning.

Research in this tradition has pointed to the lack of incentives for organizations to span categories, convincingly showing that spanning leads to social and economic penalties as it creates blurred market identities and confuses the audience (Zuckerman, 1999; Hsu, 2006). Most of the existing studies on category spanning, however, have investigated this phenomenon under conditions of audience homogeneity (Durand and Paolella, 2012). When dominant audiences' prescriptions are challenged by competing ones (Glynn and Lansbury, 2005), the satisfaction of heterogenous audiences' tastes (Scott and Lane, 2000; Durand and Paolella, 2012) represents a powerful incentive for firms to merge categories infused with divergent normative prescriptions (Rao, Monin and Durand, 2005), giving rise to hybrid products. However, the investigation of how firms' willingness to recombine divergent categorization systems through hybridity is influenced by specific traits of their past and present market identites is still under-examined.

In this study, we focus on a particular form of spanning that occurs when a category imbued with dominant normative prescriptions is contaminated with the codes of a divergent category that reflects oppositional sets of expectations. We analyze how the extent to which firms' past identities are centered on that category and their current identities eclipse its emblematic exemplars affects their ability to undertake hybrid strategies. We then examine *whether* and *how* the latter relationship is altered by organizations' vertical status positioning. A central argument in market identities studies is that straddling different categorical systems hampers firms' ability to reconcile different audiences' tastes because by mixing categories firms risk satisfying neither of their audiences and therefore being evaluated negatively (Kim and Jensen, 2011; Zuckerman, 1999; Hsu, 2006). Thus, firms have scarce incentives to recombine categories imbued with divergent audiences' expectations.

In this paper we shift focus from what constraints the blending of categories infused with conflicting audiences' expectations to what enables firms to recombine heterogenous tastes through hybrids. First we argue that a steadfast adherence to the codes of a category that incarnates prevailing prescriptions in the past creates incentives for firms to pursue hybridity in the future. Indeed, it confers organizations enough legitimacy (Hannan, Polos and Carroll, 2007; Hsu, Hannan and Koçak, 2009) to protect hybrid practices from the sanctions of dominant audiences. At the same time it makes category spanning be perceived by divergent audiences as organizations' attempt to exploit their taken for granted membership in a category infused with dominant prescriptions to satisfy conflicting interests and expectations (Rao, Monin and Durand, 2003). As a result, hybridity is perceived as responding to the need of different audience segments which in turn drives organizations' willingness to pursue it.

Second, we contend that organizations' efforts to de-emphasize the conventional, emblematic aspects of a dominant category (Durand and Kremp, 2015) positively affect their ability to merge it with divergent social codes. Indeed, by subtracting clear benchmarks of comparisons that render the category recognizable in the eyes of different audiences, organizations make the hybridization process less subject to external criticism and social penalties. Finally, we posit that by enhancing the external perception of quality of organizations that display unconventionality (Durand and Kremp, 2015), an increased organizational status confers these organizations more opportunities to gain positive rewards and success from hybridity which in turn reinforces their incentives to span divergent categorization systems.

This study contributes to research on market identities and category spanning in the arts, cultural and creative industries (Jensen, Kim and Kim, 2011; Jensen and Kim, 2013; Durand and Kremp, 2015; Durand, Rao and Monin, 2007), by shedding light on how the extent to which organizations' market identities embody dominant audiences expectations and coalesce into well-defined exemplars affect their ability to recombine the expectations of audiences driven by conflicting goals through spanning. In this regard, our study goes beyond the blanket assumption of audience homogeneity that pervades much work on category spanning, (Durand and Paolella, 2012). Although spanning categories violates the prototopycal dimension of what being a member of a category is, organizations still have incentives to pursue it when their identity and status enable them to reconcile conflicting societal expectations through hybridity.

We test our hypotheses with data on the Italian opera market from 2004 to 2011. We begin by theorize how hybridity is shaped by the degree to which organizations' past and present market identites are infused with dominant prescriptions and focused on exemplars of categories that embodie these prescriptions. We finally theorize how the latter relationship varies according to organizational status. We end our study by discussing the implications of our findings for research and practice, examining limitations and making suggestions for future research.

IDENTITY-BASED DETERMINANTS OF CATEGORY SPANNING IN THE OPERA FIELD

The empirical setting of this study is the Italian opera market from 2004 to 2011. Italy is the birthplace of opera and opera is part of the cultural heritage of the country. Not surprisingly, Italian opera houses' programming strategies mainly revolve around the preservation of historically established Italian operas. Table I shows the most frequently represented operas in Italy from 2004 to 2011: the masterpieces of Puccini and Verdi, the most important composers of the Italian opera tradition, are at the top of the ranking. As well-expressed by Martorella (1977, p.358) and Jensen and Kim (2013), *La Bohème* and *Madama Butterfly* continue to be the "Opera ABC" for commercial success, as their inclusion in the repertoire satisfies the taste of a wide audience for "opera warhorses".

Insert Table I around here

However, as tax-exempt, government-funded organizations, Italian opera houses have an obligation to society to design their programs not only on the basis of the audience's actual tastes (i.e., the box office), but also on the basis of what experts regard as 'good' or 'necessary' for cultivating audience tastes, for future generations of spectators and for the development of the opera field itself. Opera houses, therefore, find themselves in a difficult balancing act and experience a trade-off between oppositional normative prescriptions (artistic originality, experimentation *vs*. commercial accessibility). These prescriptions are embodied in the codes of the antagonist categories of modern and traditional operas. Indeed, modern 20th century operas define themselves as a divergent and oppositional genre whose intent is to challenge the conservativism inherent in traditional operas through disruptive and innovative aesthetic canons (Lindenberger, 2007; Jensen and Kim, 2013).

Opera houses can recombine conflicting audiences' tastes by offering productions characterized by both artistic originality and commercial accessibility, bridging elements of traditional and modern operas. For example, theatres can offer modern staging of traditional operas of the past by merging pre-20th century music and contemporary visual experiences. By putting 'old wine in new bottles', opera houses can add a modern meaning to a traditional music (Heilbrun and Gray, 1993). This gives rise to hybrid staging experiences: giving a contemporary twist to the 19th century opera *La Traviata*, by setting the opera in the present and making the protagonists feel contemporary (Loomis, 2013) is an example of hybrid strategy. The aim of hybrid strategies in the opera field has been clearly expressed by Stephane Lissner, the former chairman of La Scala theatre in Milan: "setting side by side the repertoire and the modern day is part of the Scala's mission, not repeating the same show as the conservatives would like" (Biennie, 2013). In a similar vein, the former chairman of Teatro dell'Opera in Rome noted "we're trying to merry traditional Italian opera with a more modern vision of what a theater can be, recovering our credibility and searching for different audiences in the meantime" (Povoledo, 2013).

On the one hand, merging traditional and modern operas enables opera houses to achieve novelty through the recombination of different categorization systems. On the other hand, it is also particularly risky for organizations whose identity revolves around the codes of a well-established market category of traditional operas. Hybridity implies a violation of tradition which in turn may expose opera houses to social and economic penalties. Indeed, conservative audience segments condemn modern staging of traditional operas as a disrputive attempt of theatres' managers and stage directors to violate the code of the Italian operatic tradition searching for a *succès de scandale* that will fill the opera house. Not surprisingly modern stagings are often negatively received by the most conservative fractions of the audience who are reluctant to accept contemporary visual reinterpretations of a classic repertoire.

Despite the potential negative effects of hybridity, opera houses still pursue this strategy. What therefore enables opera houses to perceive the blending of categories infused with divergent prescriptions as a less risky and more rewarding strategic path? Strenghening their compliance with conservative audiences' expectations by reaffirming their link to tradition is a source of legitimacy in front of conservative audience segments that functions as a driver for actions that embrace divergent prescriptions (Jensen and Kim, 2013). In this respect, enhancing their legitimacy by steadfastly adhering to the purity of the codes that defines traditional, pre-20th century operas provides theatres with a source of unquestionable consensus (Cancellieri and Turrini, 2016) that empowers their future ability to redefine the boundary of tradition by incorporating modern features inside traditional repertoires.

The higher opera houses' commitment to a traditional opera category in the past, the higher their willingness to establish the acceptance of hybrid practices in the future by making hybrids be perceived in a positive way from multiple perspectives: on the one hand, they are created by theatres whose legitimacy is unquestionable (Poisson and Normandin, 2009; Sicca and Zan, 2005) which in turn defends opera houses from the potential criticism of dominant audiences.

On the other hand, opera houses' reinforced loyalty to tradition in the past makes the future production of traditional operas in a hybrid form be perceived by divergent audiences as a more shocking and provocative attempt to exploit a traditional music patrimony for experimental and innovative purposes. In this regard, opera houses' legacy rooted in tradition can be put at the service of the innovation-oriented audiences' prescriptions of artistic originality. Although these prescriptions are embodied in modern 20th century operas (Jensen and Kim, 2013), they can be even better satisfied when opera houses leverage their traditional identity to put the spotlight on their future ability to infringe its foundamental attributes. Similarly, in the realm of french haute cuisine, nouvelle cuisine activists celebrated their differences with the dominant orthodoxy of classical cuisine but also exploited its classical foundation for their attempt to challenge old rules (Rao, Monin and Durand, 2003; Rao, Monin and Durand, 2005).

Reinforcing their legacy rooted in tradition and their reputation as quintessential forms of tradition-based companies enables theatres to inject innovativeness in the production of traditional operas. In this regard tradition is not an innovation-depressing factor but a starting point for the renewal of the repertoire. For example, the increased emphasis on tradition that characterized the 2002-2003 artistic seasons of La Scala theatre was followed by a boom of innovative performances that mixed tradition and modernity over the successive two artistic seasons. Similarly, Arena di Verona is now able to deliver modern staging of traditional operas thanks to its historical reputation for being the guardianship of traditional repertoires.

In sum, we contend that when opera houses' indentities are more rooted in tradition, they contain the seeds for these organizations to instill innovation within tradition through the blending of traditional and modern repertoires.

We argue:

Hypothesis 1: *the higher opera houses' commitment to traditional operas in the past, the higher their ability to contaminate traditional operas with the codes of modern operatic repertoires in the future.*

Studies on classic music programming suggest that although an increased repertoire conventionality confers companies more opportunities to be recognized as high-quality producers, it also enables them to stand out which makes mistakes more egregious and exposure to the risk of failure higher (Durand and Kremp, 2015). As repertoire conventionality implies an increased focusness on highly salient and easily assessable music pieces (Espeland and Sauder, 2007) it confers external audiences increased opportunities to judge these products which in turn reinforces the potential sanctionability of attempts to bastardize the codes of these repertoire through hybridity.

In the opera field, theatres that conform to the conventional aspects of tradition can potentially accrue their reputation for quality (Boerner, 2004). However, precisely because their artistic choices can more easily be evaluated by the external audience, any attempt to contaminate the codes of tradition can be detected and punished. For example, when an opera house's programming strategies focus on the most frequently performed operas of the traditional repertoire such as *La Traviata, La Bohème* or *Aida,* blending traditional and modern operas becomes particularly challenging. *La Traviata*, *La Bohème* and *Aida* are the backbone of the Italian 19th century operatic tradition, widely known and familiar to both conservative and innovation-oriented segments of the audience. By focusing their programming strategies on these exemplars, opera houses emphasize their role of guardianship of a traditional repertoire which in turn exposes them to the possibility of receiving negative external evalutations for violating its codes.

By contrast, by programming *Il Fidelio* or *La Finta Giardiniera*, under-performed traditional operas instead of the over-represented *La Traviata* or *La Bohème,* theatres raise the unconventionality of traditional repertoires which allows them to more easily achieve success when these repertoires are contaminated with modernity. For example, La Scala's choice to open its 2014 artistic season with a modern staging of *La Traviata* was negatively received by critics and the general audience (Loomis, 2013, Biennie, 2013). By contrast, its decisions to open the following seasons with modern stagings of the under-represented operas *Il Fidelio* by Beethoven and *Giovanna D'Arco* by Verdi were acclaimed even by the most risk-averse segments of the audience (Maddocks, 2015). Highlighting the unconventional features of tradition, enables opera houses to subtract clear benchmarks of comparison that make hybrids more punishable in the eyes of different audiences. This in turn confers theatres increased leeways to reinterpret these operas through modern aesthetic canons. In sum, de-emphasizing the emblematic features of tradition decreases constraints to hybridity. This in turn confers opera houses increased leeway to recombine divergent normative prescriptions through hybrid practices.

We argue:

Hypothesis 2a: *the higher opera houses' willingness to increase the unconventionality of traditional operas, the higher their ability to contaminate traditional operas with the codes of modern operatic repertoires.*

Raising the unconventionality of traditional operas protects from the external sanctions that stem from hybridity which gives theatres leeway to blend the codes of modern and traditional operas. However, unconventionality is also conducive to an excess of distinctiveness that may obstruct their search for quality gains (Espeland and Sauder, 2007; Durand and Kremp, 2015). As an increased unconventionality makes it difficult for the external audience to recognize a producer's competence and quality (Sgourev and Althuizen, 2014), raising the unconventionality of traditional operas can toughen the difficult task of establishing the quality of hybrids in the eyes of different audiences. Signaling their quality would in fact contribute to their potential success by reducing the uncertaintites that may prevent different external audiences to certify their value.

We argue that raising the unconventionality of traditional operas is more conducive to hybridity when accomplished by high status theatres. Studies on the advantages and disadvantages of occupying a high vertical status position suggest that the products of firms in high vertical positions are perceived of higher quality and less risky than those of firms in lower vertical positions (Jensen, 2006; Jensen, Kim and Kim, 2011). In this respect status further encourages theatres that raise the unconventionality of traditional operas to pursue hybridity because it reduces their quality gap, providing them with enhanced possibilities to achieve rewards from hybrids. In other words, being unconventional and high status protect the firms from the sanctions that stem from hybridity while also increasing opportunities for possible rewards, boosting incentives to undertake category spanning. Thus, we argue that when opera houses raise the unconventionality of their traditional repertoires, occupying a high status position cements their freedom and leeway to pursue hybridity.

We argue:

Hypothesis 2b: *the higher opera houses' willingness to increase the unconventionality of traditional operas and the higher their social status, the higher their ability to contaminate traditional operas with the codes of modern operatic repertoires*

METHODS

We constructed a panel data set containing information on 42 opera institutions from the 2004-2005 artistic season to the 2010-2011 artistic season. As most of the time Italian opera houses' artistic seasons do not coincide with the solar year, we have decided to adopt the artistic season as the reference time frame. This allows us to maintain the integrity of all the seasons in the database. Using seasonally updated data from 2004 to 2011, our final sample includes 42 professional opera companies and festivals, which, given our lagged repertoires (discussed in the next section), results in 200 observations. [1]

Variables:

Dependent variable:

Category spanning (hybridity): We measured theatres' willingness to create hybrid operas that mix the codes of traditional and modern operas as the percentage of modern stagings. Following Jensen and Kim (2013) we define modern staging as traditional, pre-20th century operas whose stage design and visual attributes are borrowed from modern and contemporary repertoires (e.g., Peter Sellar's 1990 staging of Mozart's Don Giovanni as a New York City drug dealer)

Independent variables*:** *Past commitment to tradition.* This variable is a proxy of opera houses' willingness to focus their repertoires on traditional operas brought to stage in their purest form (staged by respecting the visual attributes and stage designs typical of pre-20th century operas). We measured this variable by calculating the average percentage of purist-traditional operas programmed by theatres over the two previous artistic seasons. *Unconventionality of Traditional Repertoires.** We measured this variable as the inverse of the conformity index (Di Maggio and Stenberg, 1985; Jensen and Kim, 2013; Kim and Jensen, 2011; Pierce, 2000), which is calculated as the average number of times the traditional opera titles programmed by a given theatre are also programmed by the other theatres in the sample. The unconventionality of traditional repertoires captures the extent to which an opera house programs unpopular, unfamiliar traditional operas instead of focusing their attention to over-performed traditional works. The higher the index, the higher the innovativeness of a theatre's repertoire within tradition. The lower the index, the higher the theatre's propensity to most famous traditional works (Jensen and Kim, 2013; Martorella, 1977, p.358). As operatic seasons are programmed two or three years in advance, to

[1] Nine observations have been dropped due to missing financial data.

measure the conventionality of the traditional operas programmed by a theatre over a given artistic season we first counted the number of times each opera in that season was produced by all the opera companies in our population over the last two artistic seasons (prior to the current one). We then calculated the average conventionality of these operas. The first season in our statistical analysis is 2006-2007 (conventionality based on the 2004–2005 and 2005-2007 artistic seasons) and the last one is 2010-2011 (conventionality based on the 2008-2009 and 2009–2010 artistic seasons). *Relational measure of status.* We calculated status scores based on Bonacich's (1987) centrality measure, a standard measure for relational data on status, to determine each organization's status relative to that of other organizations. According to this measure, an opera house's status is a function of the number of opera houses that hire the same artists and of the status of these opera houses (which in turn derives from the number and the status of opera houses with whom they share artists and so on). Since an opera house's artistic season in the time period *t* is programmed over the previous two artistic seasons, we believed it was more appropriate to include the status of an opera house as a lagged variable *t-2* . This allows us to measure the status of an opera house at the time in which the programming decisions for a given artistic season were actually made.

***Control Variables*. ***Structural holes:* we relied on the Burt's measure of structural holes (2004) to account for the effect of brokerage on opera houses' willingness to innovate through hybrids. As a matter of fact, organizations occupying the position of brokers are more open to pursue hybridity due to their ability to collaborate with previously unconnected alters and to recombine knowledge coming from different actors in the network (Burt, 2004). *Opera houses' funding sources.* We controlled for opera houses' funding sources by computing the share of total revenues accounted for by national government grants, private funds and box office revenues. *Time dummies.* We also included dummies for each artistic season in the model. *Size*. We used the *total number of programmed runs* to control for an opera house's size. We measure this as the number of performance runs an opera house set up in the artistic season *t. Coproductions.* We measured theatres' propensity to coproduce operas with other theatres as the percentage of coproduced operas in the repertoire. *New productions.* A new production includes new cast, set designs, costumes, and stage directions that had not been previously used by the opera house. We measure theatres' willingness to mount new productions as the percentage of new productions staged by a theatre seasonally.

Descriptive statistics and correlation matrix are presented in Table II.

Insert Table II around here

RESULTS

Table III presents the fixed-effects ordinary least squares (OLS) regression results (a Hausman test indicated that the fixed-effect model was more appropriate than random-effects) (Stock and Watson, 2007). Model 1 in Table III is a baseline model that contains only the control variables. In Model 2 (Table III) we added the opera houses' past commitment to tradition, the degree of unconventionality of their traditional operas and status as independent variables. In Model 3 (Table III), our *full model*, we added the two-way interaction effect between the unconventionality of opera houses' traditional operas and their status. All the variables have been standardized in order to guard against multicollinearity (Aiken, West and Raymon, 1991).

Insert Table III around here

Hypothesis 1 suggests the higher opera houses' commitment to traditional operas in the past, the higher their ability to contaminate traditional operas with the codes of modern operatic repertoires in the future. Model 3 (Table III) provides strong support for this hypothesis. As shown in model 3 there is a positive and significant relationship between opera houses' commitment to tradition and hybridity ($\beta = 0.420$, $p < 0.001$). In hypothesis 2a we posit that the higher opera houses' willingness to increase the unconventionality of traditional operas, the higher their ability to contaminate traditional operas with the codes of modern operatic repertoires. As shown in models 3 the relationship between the degree of unconventionality of opera houses' traditional operas and hybridity is positive and significant ($\beta = 0.248$, $p < 0.05$), thereby supporting our hypothesis 2a. Finally, in hypothesis 2b we argue that the higher opera houses' willingness to increase the unconventional traits of traditional operas and the higher their social status, the higher their ability to contaminate traditional operas with the codes of modern operatic repertoires. As can be noted, in model 3 the interaction effect between the level of unconventionality of traditional operas and status is positive and significant ($\beta = 0.272$, $p < 0.05$). This result confirms our hypothesis 3. We graph the interaction following procedures proposed by Aiken,West and Raymon (1991) (Figure 1).

Insert Figure I around here

Figure 1 shows that for low levels of traditional operas' unconventionality, high and low status theatres have almost the same proportion of hybrid operas in the repertoire. However, as the unconventionality of traditional operas increases, the propensity to stage hybrid operas significantly raises for high status opera houses and slightly decreases for low status houses.

CONCLUSION:

Our objective in this article was to understand how organizations' willingness to recombine divergent categorization systems is influenced by specific traits of their past and present market identites. We explore this relationship within the context of the Italian opera scene, where the tension between conservative vs. innovation-oriented external prescriptions challenges opera houses' programming decisions. First, we argue that a steadfast adherence to the codes of a traditional category that incarnates prevailing prescriptions in the past creates incentives for opera houses to contaminate that category with the codes of modernity. The legitimacy-conferring action of establishing an unquestionable membership in tradition provides theatres with protection from the possibility for their hybrid strategies to be criticized by dominant audiences. At the same, it confers theatres the possibility to make category spanning be perceived by divergent audiences as a provoquing and transgressive attempt to put their traditional identity at the service of experimentation and innovation, boosting their attractiveness in the eyes of this audience.

Second, we argue that opera houses' efforts to de-emphasize the conventional, emblematic aspects of tradition positively affect their ability to merge it with the codes of modernity. Indeed, by removing clear benchmarks of comparisons that render the category easily assessable by different audiences, opera houses make the hybridization process less subject to external criticism and social penalties. Finally, we posit that by enhancing the external perception of quality of organizations that display unconventionality (Durand and Kremp, 2015), an increased social status confers them more opportunities to gain positive rewards and achieve success from hybridity which in turn reinforces the incentives to pursue it.

Our statistical analyses provide strong support for our theoretical arguments. Specifically, our analyses show that a reinforced commitment to respect the codes of tradition in the past, boosts theatres' willingness to merge tradition with modernity. De-emphasizing the conventional traits of tradition increases theatres' willingness to blend traditional and modern operas as well. This holds particularly true when high status theatres increase the unconventionality of traditional operas. Theatres that are simultaneously unconventional within tradition and high status may in fact benefit from being protected from the criticism that stems from hybridity while at the same time increasing their reputation for quality which enhances opportunities for their hybrid products to achieve market and artistic success.

This study contributes to advance research on market identities and category spanning in the arts, cultural and creative industries (Jensen, Kim and Kim, 2011;Kim and Jensen, 2013; Rao, Monin and Durand, 2007) by shedding light on under-examinined traits of an organization's market identity that are conducive to hybridity. In this respect we challenged the argument that organizations have scarce incentives to recombine categories imbued with divergent audiences' expectations, by shifting focus from the identity-constraining to the identity-enabling factors to the enactment of hybrid strategies.

We not only go beyond the assumption of audience homogeneity that pervades much work on category spanning but we also provide evidence of the possibility for organizations to manipulate category meaning and boundaries strategically according to their interests and to where they think audiences' focus might be. In this respect, our studies shed light on this mechanism by showing how a firm can leverage its adherence to the codes of a category infused with dominant prescriptions in the past and its level of conventionality within that category to create hybrid products that recombine divergent expectations. The ability of firms to merge heterogenous audiences' interests is contingent on how they can make the meaning of hybrids being favourably received by divergent audiences by accentuating different identity-traits. Adhering to the codes of a category infused with dominant prescriptions in the past and ecplipsing its conventional traits contribute to form specific audiences' view of hybridity in the future which strongly affects firms' ability to recombine different audiences' expectations through hybrids.

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Table I. Mainstream Italian operas.
Top 30 operas in Italy and number of productions. 2004-2011

Ranking	Title	Composer	Number of productions
1	*La Bohème*	Puccini	50
2	*Madama Butterfly*	Puccini	50
3	*Tosca*	Puccini	49
4	*La Traviata*	Verdi	48
5	*Il Barbiere di Siviglia*	Rossini	42
6	*Rigoletto*	Verdi	41
7	*Carmen*	Bizet	36
8	*Turandot*	Puccini	36
9	*Aida*	Verdi	31
10	*L'Elisir d'Amore*	Donizetti	31
11	*Pagliacci*	Leoncavallo	29
12	*Don Giovanni*	Mozart	28
13	*Il Trovatore*	Verdi	28
14	*Cavalleria Rusticana*	Mascagni	25
15	*Nabucco*	Verdi	25

Table II. Descriptive statistics and correlation matrix

Significance: †*p* < .10

	Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1	Hybridity	0.418	0,256	1										
2	Past commitment to tradition	0.478	0.230	-0.182†	1									
3	Unconventionality of traditional operas	-27.228	14.985	0.3473†	-0.276†	1								
4	Status	0.416	0.275	0.070	-0.239†	0.054	1							
4	Structural holes	0.286	0.134	-0.183 †	0.325†	-0.218†	-0.521†	1						
5	Private funding	0.091	0.085	-0.038	0.018	0.053	0.067	0.034	1					
6	Box office	0.151	0.126	-0.105	0.139†	-0.283†	-0.025	0.128†	0.001	1				
7	State funding	0.347	0.177	0.083	-0.029	0.011	0.157†	-0.187†	-0.286†	-0.127†	1			
9	Coproduction	0.464	0.360	0.197†	-0.203†	0.114	0.272†	-0.262†	0.057	-0.042†	-0.284†	1		
10	Repertoire size	5.799	2.846	-0.020	-0.066	0.087	0.458†	-0.279†	0.055	-0.000	0.345†	-0.163†	1	
11	New Production	0.389	0.296	0.137†	-0.145†	0.272†	-0.134†	-0.037	-0.009	-0.152†	0.193†	-0.303†	0.136†	1

Table III. Model Estimation. The effect of Market Identity on Hybridity

	***Dependent variable*: Hybridity**		
	Model 1	**Model 2**	**Model 3**
Independent Variables			
Past commitment to tradition	-	0.492*** (4.32)	0.420*** (4.17)
Unconventionality of traditional operas	-	0.441* (4.32)	0.248* (2.48)
Status	-	0.151 (1.20)	0.189* (1.51)
Unconventionality of traditional operas*status	-	-	0.272* (2.50)
Control variables			
Repertoire Size	0.149 (0.95)	0.036 (0.24)	-0.002 (-0.02)
New Production	0.135 (1.33)	0.082 (0.85)	0.088 (0.93)
Structural Holes	0.078 (0.40)	0.242 (1.15)	0.235 (1.14)
State Funding	-0.065 (-0.32)	-0.187 (-0.97)	-0.198 (-1.05)
Private Funding	0.135 (0.86)	0.203 (1.36)	0.210 (1.43)
Box Office	-0.255 (-1.38)	-0.223 (-1.28)	-0.280 (-1.62)
Coproduction	-0.032 (-0.23)	-0.094 (-0.72)	-0.119 (-0.92)
Time dummies	*Included*	*Included*	*Included*
Constant	-0.172 (-1.10)	-0.161 (-1.09)	-0.164 (-1.12)
No. of observations	201	201	201
R-sq	0.061	0.19	0.22
F	0.88**	2.48**	2.81***

Significance:
****p* < .001; ***p* < .01; **p* < .05; †*p* < .10; t-statistic in parenthesis. Standardized regression coefficient