Chapter 4  
Ethnic Consumers of the Arts: Extending the MAO Model

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ABSTRACT

This chapter covers the perceptions of ethnic consumers about attending elite arts events using Wiggins’ (2004) model of Motivation, Ability, and Opportunity (MAO). Six focus groups and 20 in-depth interviews with ethnic audiences (Italian, Greek, Chinese, Vietnamese, Indian, and African) and five interviews with arts managers were conducted. The findings indicate that main motivating factors for ethnic audiences were attending culturally relevant art events, socialising with friends, and involvement in the art form. The major ability barriers for attending high-arts events were cost and time, a lack of understanding of high art forms, and language difficulties. The major opportunity barrier was lack of information. The MAO model was extended by introducing seven new segments and proposing related marketing strategies.

INTRODUCTION

Audience development is ‘a planned process which involves building a relationship between an individual and the arts’ (Maitland, 2000, p. 6). An ethnic group is defined as any minority group in the population that differs from the main population in terms of language or culture. Examples include Asian, African and European (non-English speaking) groups in Australia. An elite, mainstream ‘high arts’ event is any performance, cultural event, or exhibition intended to represent the aesthetic values of any culture, e.g. theatre, modern dance, fine art, classical music, ballet, and opera (DiMaggio & Useem, 1978). In contrast, attendance at non-elite (popular) arts satisfies many motives, enjoyment being primary among them (Cawelti, 1996). Examples include jazz, blues, big bands, and folk (Peterson, 1992),
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and leisure forms such as YouTube videos, popular music and movies. Ethnic arts (also referred to as ethnic and community arts) are normally attached to specific ethnic groups, and are sourced from the many immigrants to developed countries such as Australia. Ethnic arts may be either professional or amateur.

Consumption of the mainstream elite arts by ethnic groups is poorly understood, despite considerable research into ethnic consumer behaviour (Jamal, 2003; Pires & Stanton, 2000). Further, arts marketing research has overlooked ethnic groups because its main audiences ‘are educated, have been exposed to the performing arts as children, have a specific income range, and work in certain professions …’ (Huntington, 2007, p. 128). In Australia, the domain of this study, ethnic groups are likely to be poorer and less educated than mainstream groups since they or their families are likely to be recent immigrants of a non-English speaking background seeking better economic conditions or educational opportunities for their children. There has been a concerted effort to foster social inclusion and cultural diversity through attendance and participation in the arts (Australia Council & Kapetopoulos, 2004; Globalism Institute & VicHealth, 2006; Rentschler, 2006). Yet people whose language and cultural heritage are non-Anglo continue to have low representation in arts audiences (Australia Council, 1998, 2010). Given this, Hayes and Slater (2002) argued that arts organisations need to reach participants who have not attended arts events; especially ‘hard to reach’ ethnic audiences, to counter limited resources and reduced government funding (Hughes & Luksetich, 2004).

While many aspects of arts marketing have been discussed in the literature, such as relationship marketing to retain arts consumers (Conway & Whitelock, 2007), and the perception of satisfaction and value by those who attend (Hume & Mort, 2008), the focus of this chapter is on the marketing of the elite mainstream arts to ethnic audiences. The goal of the chapter is to understand their motivation, ability, and opportunity to engage with these arts. Using the MAO (motivation, ability and opportunity) model (Wiggins, 2004), we examine ethnic arts audiences and investigate what accounts for differences between European and non-European ethnic groups in their inclination to attend. We also test whether the MAO model should be extended for ethnic audiences in general. This study contributes to the literature on arts and cultural consumption and ethnic consumers by extending the MAO theoretical model of audience development by adding new segments to reflect motivation, ability and opportunity for arts attendance of ethnic groups.

THE MAO MODEL

Originally developed by MacInnis et al., (1991), the model was then modified for social marketing by Rothschild (1999). Wiggins (2004) further adapted this model for arts audiences, segmenting them by their motivation (desire to act), ability (skills needed to act) and opportunity to participate (the absence of environmental barriers to act). Figure 1 shows the eight segments of the MAO model.

Motivation

Psychological and demographic factors are precursors of the various arts attendance motivations. They include personal interests and desires to act (Wiggins, 2004; Wohlfeil & Whelan, 2006). For example, Kolb (2001a) found in the USA that the majority of general audiences attend classical concerts because of their love of music or due to their curiosity. However, ethnic groups were largely uninterested in attending classical music and/or high arts (Kolb, 2001b, 2002). Similarly, students in the Slovak Republic expressed a lack of interest in opera and ballet (Tajtakova & Arias-Aranda, 2008).
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