

“CULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND SOCIAL NETWORKS – THE ROLE OF HUMAN VALUES IN AUDIENCES’ BEHAVIOR” by Carmela Milano*

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ABSTRACT

According to the Digital 2020 Global Report, media users had passed the 3.8 billion’s mark. This faster growing landscape has 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 has yet focused on the relationship between SNS’ usage and the participation in cultural activities nor the role played by the system of human values (Schwartz et al, 2012) in the audience's behavior. Our purpose is to shed light on strategic opportunities and limitations of SNS in the field of arts and cultural consumption. Our findings show that YouTube is more used to *conform* audience knowledge in cinema and street arts display, while LinkedIn’s profile *stimulates* the participation in electronic arts events and drama.

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

Introduction

At the start of the year 2020, nearly the 60% of the world’s population were already online with an annual increase of 7 percent (298 million new users). On the same path, Social Networks Sites users were increased by more than 9 percent (321 million new users) compared to January 2019, without even counting the latest trends due to COVID-19 crisis (Kemp, 2020). Global Web Index reports that the average Internet user was online for more than 6 hours each day, with more than one-third of that time spent using Social Network Sites. Among these huge landscape and various challenges, Facebook still dominates the global floor followed by YouTube and then, at a European level, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn (Statista, 2022).

In fact an ever-growing number of manuals, guidelines and well-founded studies (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; ENTACT, 2017) have seen the lights with the objective to push the implementation of these tools in the cultural and creative sector. SNS became a marketing strategic channel in arts’ institutions (Kolb, 2005; Rentschler et al, 2006) especially due to its characteristics, such as the communication scope and the interactivity aspect (Hausmann, 2012). Public authorities promoted networking and online communities while playing a facilitating role in the meeting between the public and the cultural product (Maresca & Van de Walle, 2006).

That is clear evidence that none marketing practice nor scientific research can ignore.

Research studies present the situation under different points of view: on one hand, cultural managers opted on the surging use of the Social Networks Sites with the aim to increase the cultural participation and the audience development (Stevenson et al., 2017; Hadley, 2017). On the other hand, the consumer behavior’s literature tried to understand the audiences’ expectations and their changes in relationship with the practices of artists, creators and curators (ENCATC, 2017; Martinez & Euzéby, 2010, Turrini et al, 2012).

Following this trend that promotes the implementation of the SNS’s use by cultural organizations, the academic research focused on the main idea that technological changes influence the cultural consumption (Potts, 2014). However, the scientific research has slowly shifted from early exposition of the merits of SNS towards more discursive consideration linked to the strategic decisions (Kho, 2011; Simon, 2010). Moreover, empirical research had not yet focused on the relationship between SNS’ use and the participation in cultural activities nor the role played by the system of human values (Schwartz et al, 2012) in the audience's behavior.

This is where the originality of our research lies and with the aim to contribute to this body of literature, it seems relevant to explore the relationship between the frequency of SNS' use and the audience's participation in different cultural activities as strategic reflection for better targeting and positioning SNS's campaigns and investments. The present research has a high significance for cultural actors that should reflect on the values of different targets of audiences, The objective is diversifying the existing audiences and/or better understanding underrepresented groups. Then, public authorities should be aware of the practical extend of SNS in improving or even supporting certain cultural sectors or activities instead of others.

In this study we will provide new evidence concerning the system of beliefs, actions and reactions that explain and motivate consumer behaviors in the cultural context. This will be considered in some specific outlooks such as the system of human values (Schwartz et al, 2012) of the cultural audience. To do so, this paper will revolve around four parts: a first critical review of the existing literature on the topics, then the development of the conceptual model and the description of the methodology used, the presentation of the dataset and the analysis run plus the discussion of the main results, and at the end, the limitations and the direction for future research.

Literature Review

Social Networks Sites

Due to the increasing number of SNS users, more and more cultural organizations adopted the use of SNS for spreading their messages, engaging audiences and raising public awareness towards culture. That was with the objective to market their offers, but it came to a point where the content makes it a tedious procedure (Poulopoulos et al., 2018). According to the above cited article focusing on the personality of SNS influencers in cultural fields, it seems that contact the appropriate audience and the consumers that would really be stimulated by cultural information is becoming more and more ambitious. So, establishing conversations of high impact is suggested to guide the cultural venues to audiences that can benefit more (Poulopoulos et al., 2018).

In facts, audience development is the aim on the top of the agenda of several venues and networks acting in the field of arts and culture (ENCATC, 2017) This is suitable for extending the access to culture works specially to underrepresented groups, but it also seeks to help artistic and cultural organizations diversify audiences. It means that reaching current “non audience” and improving the experience for both existing and future audience is conceived as the way to deepen the relationship with them (ENCATC, 2017).

Following these patterns, the academic research focused on the main idea that technological changes influence the cultural consumption, inducing substitution of offers and increasing the demand (Potts, 2014). In seems that in all cases, the final aim is to increase the welfare of cultural audiences and this is studied considering the ultimate beneficiaries of technological change as the consumers. According to the position of Potts (2014), technological change can also impact dynamically, inducing increased variety supplied both by professionals and amateurs, and facilitating the exploration of new cultural consumption experiences.

The result is that over the last decade, cultural institutions like theatre companies, orchestras, and art museums have sought to develop SNS for drawing audiences plus than provide deeper context around art. However, the scientific research has underlined the lack of guidance about how to effectively evaluate performance (Fleming & Damala, 2016, Arriagada & Concha, 2020). The literature has slowly shifted from early exposition of the merits of SNS towards more discursive consideration linked to the strategic decisions (Kho, 2011; Simon, 2010). Furthermore, social changes in the time had an impact on academic discourse on SNS as they gave more influence to the users (Flores 2014).

Institutions now believe that technology has changed audience expectations and put pressure on them to participate in SNS, especially at a time when budgets and resources are limited (Thomson et al., 2013). Sometimes the challenge is not whether to use SNS, but in deciding which other objectives or targets of audience have to be dropped to accommodate it (Kho, 2011). Simon (2010) argues that it is not enough to use social media just because visitors enjoy it, because it “trivializes the mission-relevance” of the interactions without even count the results of our previous studies. Here we have focused on the consumer behaviors' perspective and we have shown some vulgarization effect of the use of SNS by theatres (Milano, 2014) more than some annoyance (Tamborini et al. 2010) attitudes toward the Facebook's use (Milano & Rothenberger, 2018).

Human Values

Human values have been a central concept in the social sciences for explaining social and personal organization and change. They are used to characterize cultural groups and individuals, even more to explain the motivational bases of attitudes and behavior that trace changes over time (Hitlin, 2003).

The most recent basic human value theory (Schwartz et al. 2012) identifies ten motivationally distinct types of values. The work of professor Schwarz offers empirical evidence on the similar structuration of human values across culturally diverse groups, he suggests there exists a universal organization of human motivations (Schwartz & Boehnke, 2004). Although individuals differ substantially in the relative importance attributed to the values, it is generally accepted that groups share human value “priorities” or “hierarchies” (Schwartz et al., 1997).

The concept of value conceived in the Schwartz’ theory (Schwartz et al., 2012) consider human values as beliefs linked inextricably and referred to desirable goals which motivate action and serve as standards. In other words, it seems that human values drive the evaluation of policies, people and events by individuals, even if the impact of them is rarely conscious (Deci, 1975).

The criteria of distinguishing of the human values is the type of goal or motivation that each of them expresses, so it exists ten: self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, power, security, conformity, tradition, benevolence and universalism.

Self-Direction derives from the needs of control and mastery (Bandura, 1977) and it is linked to the requirements of autonomy and independence (Kohn & Schooler, 1983). *Stimulation* comes from the need of variety in order to maintain a positive level of activation (Berlyne, 1960), while *hedonism* is associated to the need of pleasure demanded for the satisfaction’s feeling (Freud, 1933).

Both *power* and *achievement* values focus on social esteem. However, achievement values (ambitious) emphasize the active demonstration of successful performance in concrete interaction, whereas power values (authority) emphasize the attainment of a dominant position within the more general social system (Lonner, 1980).

Security values derive from basic individual and group requirements (Maslow, 1965), while *tradition* and *conformity* values are especially close motivationally. The goal they are sharing is the subordination of the self to the socially imposed expectations. In particular, conformity entails subordination to persons with whom one frequently interacts in a current, possibly changing expectations as parents, teachers, and bosses. Tradition entails subordination to more abstract objects that are coming immutable from the past, religious and cultural customs and ideas for instance.

Benevolence values emphasize the concern for others’ welfare such as honesty, responsibility, loyalty and/or friendship (Kluckhohn, 1951). At the contrary, *universalism* contrasts with the in-group focus of the benevolence. In facts, universalism comes from the survival needs of both individuals and groups; here we encountered two subtypes of concern - for the welfare of those in the larger society and for the nature.

According to the Schwartz’ theory (Schwartz & Boehnke, 2004), human values are organized along two bipolar dimensions: the first one contrasts ‘openness to change’ and ‘conservation’ values. Here the is conflict between values that emphasize independence of thought and readiness for change (*self-direction, stimulation*) against values that focus on the preservation of the past and the resistance to changes (*security, conformity, tradition*). The second-dimension contrasts ‘self-enhancement’ and ‘self-transcendence’ values. Here the conflict is between the concern for the welfare of others (*universalism, benevolence*) and the pursuit of one’s own interests and the dominance over others (*power, achievement*).

Hedonism shares elements of both openness to change and self-enhancement. This organization of human value relations is well represented as a circular motivational structure that implies that the whole set of ten human values relates to any other variable (behavior, attitude, age, etc.) in an integrated manner. (Schwartz & Boehnke, 2004).

Conceptual Model and Methodology

The above theoretical sources represent the background on which we built our research question and the consequent conceptual model. As our purpose is to shed light on opportunities and limitations of SNS in the field of arts and cultural consumption, we have fixed our research question as the exploration of the relationship between the frequency of SNS’ use and the audience’s participation in different cultural activities.

Even if several authors (O’Keeffe, 2009; Solaroli, 2015; Lee & Chen, 2017) argued that the rise of new digital technologies has destabilized and challenged the participation in cultural activities, no evidences nor researches focus on that point. In other words, academic contributions had only suggested that the use of SNS may influence the cultural participation. Some other authors could argue that it is the use of SNS a consequence of a specific knowledge of respondents that allow them the possibility to understand and behave properly on these profiles (Yates et al. S., Kirby, 2015).

In our study we have conceived a model to test and confirm a possible relationship under the assumption that there is no causality in the model between the two variables. Therefore, in the first hypothesis (H1) we have selected a limited list of well-known SNS and most used by cultural institutions (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and LinkedIn) and a set of cultural activities to test the following:

H1: There is a positive relationship between the frequency of use of SNS’s profile (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and/or LinkedIn) and the participation of audiences in cultural activities.

For testing this first hypothesis, we take also into account some control variables like gender, age, level of education of respondents and their occupation. This is done with the idea to deeper check if these dimensions support in increasing or decreasing the main relationship between the frequency of SNS’s use and the participation of audiences in cultural activities.

Then, the above relationship will be considered in some specific outlooks such as the system of human values as categorized by Schwartz’s theory (Schwartz, 1992). In conceiving this hypothesis, we were inspired by very interesting research of Hitlin (2003). Here it is proved that human values play a crucial role in shaping the attitudes and behaviors of individuals. Basically, they refer to the different motivational factors towards various aspects of life. Following this approach, several researchers such as Van Dijck & Poell (2013) more than Lin & Lu (2011) have implemented them as significant predictors of cultural activities choices and social media usage (Van Dijck & Poell, 2013; Lin & Lu, 2011).

We embrace this point of view thus we have formulated the second hypothesis (H2) considering the implementation of the system of human values (Lindeman & Verkasalo, 2005) as moderator.

H2: Human values (self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, power, security, conformity, tradition, benevolence and universalism) moderate the relationship between the frequency of SNS’s use and the participation of audiences in cultural activities by audiences.

Here we clearly are referring to the participation of audiences in cultural activities as the outcome of the interaction between human values of audiences and their frequency of SNS use.

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

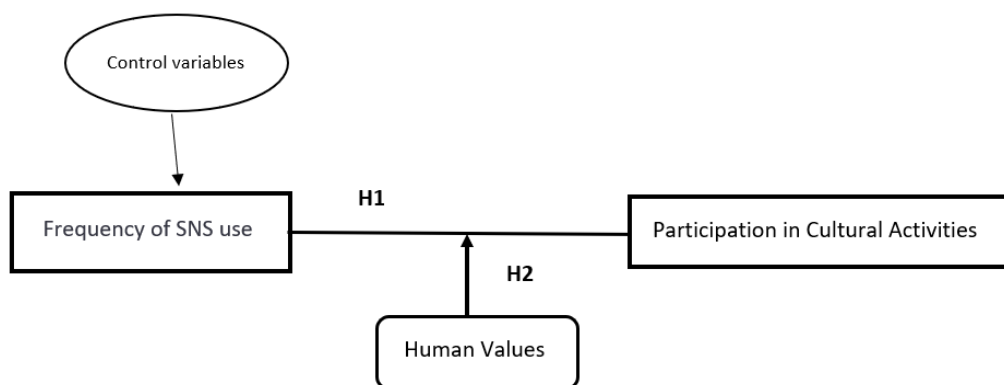


Figure 1 – Conceptual model

With the aim to collect data on SNS, we have investigated the frequency of the use of SNS’s profiles of some of the most known platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and LinkedIn) using a classic 6-point Likert-type scale. Concerning the information on cultural activities, we have implemented a scale commonly used in the arts and cultural consumption literature (DiMaggio and Mukhtar, 2004; Kaufman & Gabler, 2004) that considers the frequency of respondents' participation in different cultural venues. These items are splintered into two main categories such as cultural activities (cinema, art exhibition, theaters and music show among others) and cultural awareness actions (such as buying and reading books, visiting museums or watching TV documentaries and radio programs, etc.).

Dataset and Main Findings

According to the above conceptual model, we have designed an online survey composed by 10 closed questions as a multi-language standardized questionnaire sent by the help of *visit.brussels.com* newsletters and all their social platforms - Facebook and Instagram among others. On February 2019 and we have launched our study and, after 3 months, we have collected 554 valid replies.

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.

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

We have applied Structural Equation Modeling analyses as multivariate technique for testing whether our conceptual model fits the dataset collected. Then, SEM was used to multigroup clustering (formed using socio-demographics covariates) with the objective to test the moderators' effects of human values. All these analyses were done through the support of the SPSS and AMOS logistics, thanks to we can present the following results.

Participation in cultural activities

We can start in confirming our first hypothesis (H1) thus it exists a positive relationship between the frequency of SNS use and the participation in cultural activities. Here below we provide some technicalities on the SEM analyses and his overall causal model that is satisfying supported by these indexes: the ratio of chi-square to degrees of freedom (CMIN/df = 2,622), the goodness-of-fit index (GFI = 0,94), the adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI = 0,906), the comparative fit index (CFI = 0,958), the normed fit index (NFI = 0,935), and the root mean squared error of approximation (RMSEA = 0,054).

Figure 2 show the positive relation between the participation in cultural activities and the cultural awareness of respondents and the frequency of use of some specific SNS, such as Facebook, YouTube and LinkedIn. Going deeper into details of specific SNS and cultural activities, we can affirm that the more respondents participate in street arts display and go to the cinema, the more they use their YouTube profiles (0,123***). Then, concerning the frequency of use of the LinkedIn's profile (0,206***), we show a relationship with the participation in electronic arts event and drama venues. For finishing, cultural audiences tend to watch as much TV news websites as much they more frequently use their Facebook's profile (0,144 ***).

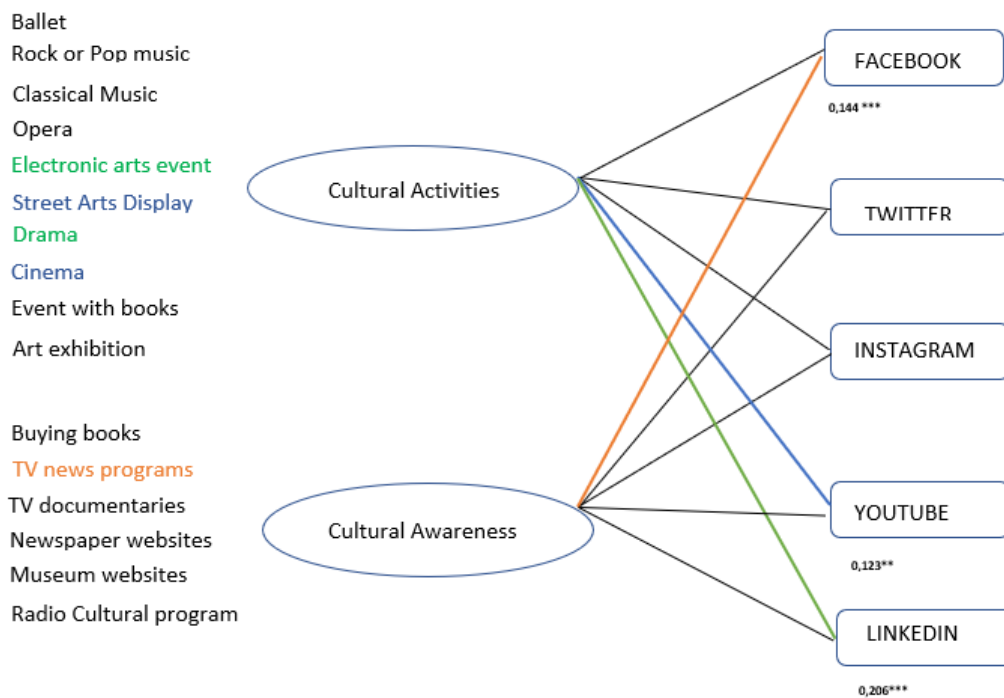


Figure 2 – SEM considering Cultural Activities and Cultural Awareness

In order to add more insights to our multi-group analysis based on socio-demographics data, we have provided also interesting information thanks to the use of control variables – such as gender, age, level of education and occupation. Firstly, it is observed that for youngest respondents aged (18-24 years old) the more positive relationship exists between their frequency of use of YouTube’s profile and cinema and street art display activities (0.311***). Furthermore, the group of respondents aged between 25 and 34 years old seems to watch as more TV news program as more they use their Facebook’s profile (0,415***), while whom is more than 54 years old tend to frequently use their LinkedIn’s profile (0,279***), as more as they participate in electronic arts event and drama (Figure 3).

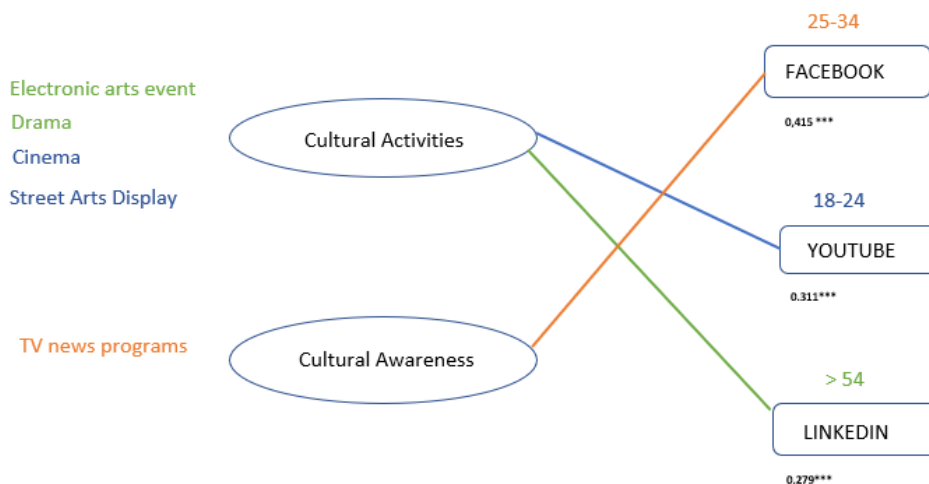


Figure 3 – Generational Effect considering Cultural Activities and Cultural Awareness – SEM Age control variable

Secondly, we would like to point out the attention on the respondents' level of education. It is detected that for audiences with ‘high school’ level, they tend to use more frequently their LinkedIn profile (0,424***) as more as they participate in drama and electronic arts event, while ‘technical college’ respondents use more frequently their YouTube's profile as more as they go to the cinema and to street arts display (0.454***). Furthermore, respondents with ‘high level’ of education such as university and

bachelor's degree frequently use their Facebook's profile (0,191 ***) as more as they visit TV news websites (Figure 4).

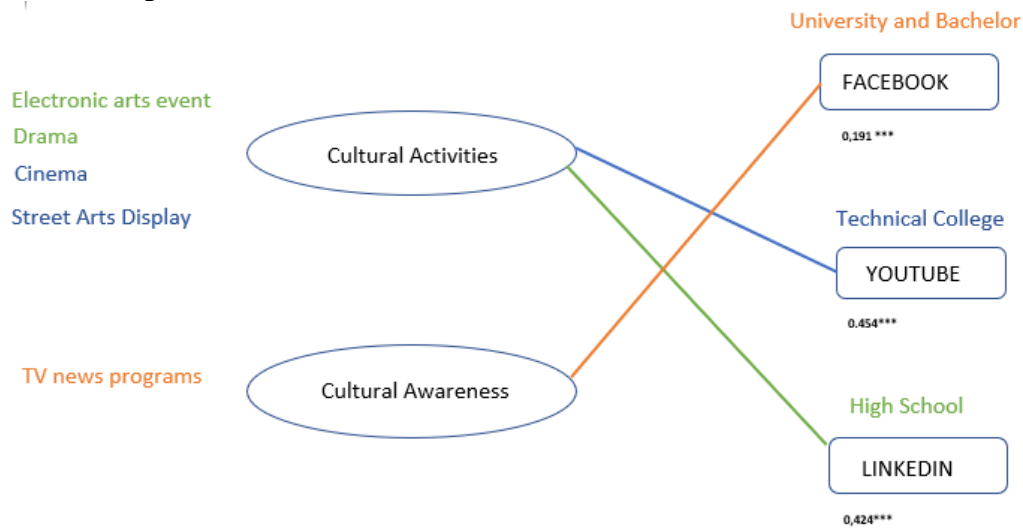


Figure 4 – Educational Effect considering Cultural Activities and Cultural Awareness – SEM level of Education control variable

Human Values and moderation effect

For going deeper in our understanding, we conclude this research with some moderator analysis for confirming our second hypothesis according to human values moderate the relationship between the frequency of SNS's use and the participation in cultural activities of respondents (H2). That means that we test if the ten human values (achievement, benevolence, conformity, hedonism, power, security, self-direction, stimulation, tradition and universalism) measured using the Schwarz scale (Lindeman & Verkasalo, 2005) interact the above relationship.

Considering the findings presented in Figure 5, we can argue that the value of conformity positively strength the relationship between the frequency of YouTube's use (0,163***) and the participation in specific cultural activities. This first result suggests that as much the respondents are sensitive to values like the obedience, the self-discipline and the politeness as much they tend to use YouTube and go to the cinema and participating in street arts display.

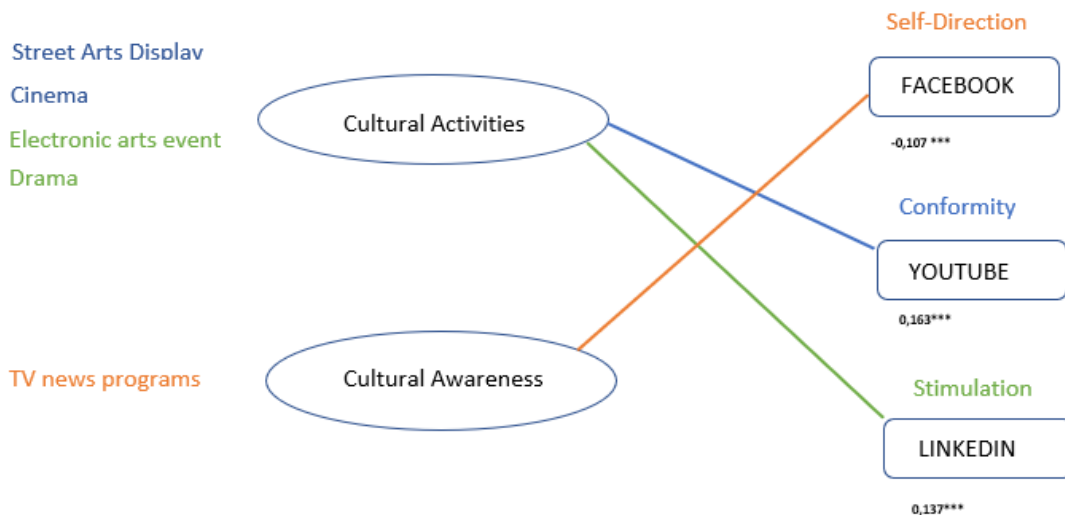


Figure 5 – Moderation Effect considering Cultural Activities and Cultural Awareness – SEM with conformity, self-direction and stimulation values

Furthermore, we show that the value of self-direction interacts negatively with the direction of the relationship already existing between the frequency of use of Facebook's profile (-0,107 ***) and the visiting of TV news websites. Therefore, we can state that as less the respondents are sensitive to

creativity, freedom, curiosity and independence as much they will frequently use of their Facebook profile and visiting TV news websites.

At the contrary, as much as they look for a varied and a challenging life as much as our respondents will frequently use their LinkedIn's profile (0,137***) as much they will participate in drama and electronic arts events. It means that the value of stimulation moderates positively the relationship confirmed in the first hypothesis (H1).

Discussion and Implications for Management

Based on the above outcomes, we confirm our first hypothesis and we can argue that there is a positive relationship between the frequency of YouTube and LinkedIn's profiles and some specific cultural activities as cinema and street arts display for the first pattern, the participation in drama and electronic arts event for the second pattern. Furthermore, the above result seems to confirm our second hypothesis as these relationships are moderated by the values of conformity and stimulation. This could suggest that YouTube is used as a tool that helps respondents to conform their knowledge, such as LinkedIn is used as discovery media. These last findings shed a light on the potential of some SNS linked to the cultural participation of audiences.

A last word is needed on the Facebook use as it seems not directly linked on the participation in cultural venues, but more on the cultural awareness of respondents as the relationship underlined is detected with the visiting of TV news program. The value of self-direction moderates negatively this link and it appears to us interesting to focus the attention on that point, especially considering their managerial implications.

Thus, in order to debate and challenge the previous findings, we have organized in November 2020 a focus group in which we have presented and discussed these outcomes with the help of 5 cultural consumers (Table 2).

Respondents	Age	Nationality	Profession
Wilson	49	Ireland	NPO Communication
Maria	38	Italy	Podcast Producer
Mike	62	USA	Music Entrepreneur
David	27	Germany	Interior Designer
Maria Luz	19	Spain	Student

Table 2 – Focus group panel description

According to the feelings and the experiences of respondents, the role played by YouTube could be justified by the ‘power of images’ (Wilson). Confirming this last suggestion, the latest data from the Digital Global Report suggest that more than half a of mobile data during 2020 was used to download video content (Kemp, 2020). YouTube seems to dispose of a strong communication attitude in using the association of pictures and colors with the sound and, as result, that would attract the mind of audiences for going to the cinema and participate in street arts events.

Going deeper on the debate with our focus group respondents, we state that in LinkedIn the central point of connection is the ‘trust’ in the professional circle (Mike). Exactly the contrary that could be said for Facebook that is perceived as ‘a bunch of trashy stuff’ (Maria) less serious and trustful than a LinkedIn profile.

As managerial implications, we can suggest to cultural institutions to prefer more the use of LinkedIn as stimulator tool, a sort of ‘discovery media’ especially for organization dealing with drama and electronic arts landscapes. At the contrary, cultural managers should limit their use of Facebook that seems preferred by audiences that tend to be less creative and independent.

Limitations and Conclusions

Despite of these interesting reflections, we are aware 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 in the field, such as Tik Tok or Snapchat. Neither we have data concerning the attitudes and/or the behaviors' characteristics like the active or passive role of respondents on SNS, nor any information about their personalities. These challenges represent possible avenues for future studies.

Another limit of this study could be more theoretical and linked to the concept of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984) of audiences that can impact or influence the relationship we have underlined. Our analyses are based on the assumption that there is no causality in the model even if cultural sociologists could raise the point by which the use of SNS in terms of functionalities, understanding and behaviors is a consequence of the cultural capital of audiences (Ignatow & Robinson, 2017). At the contrary and in a reverse causality scenario, some other authors could argue that it is the use of SNS a consequence of a specific knowledge being part of the cultural capital of respondents that allow them the possibility to understand and behave properly on these profiles (Yates et al. S., Kirby, 2015).

It is clear in our dataset is that we have no possibility to set a causality model between our dimensions, we basically identify three main groups of respondents with some specific characteristics. The first ones are young audiences (18-24) with technical level of education which frequently use (41% every day) their YouTube's profiles and participating in street arts display and cinema events to conform their knowledge. The second group is composed by more aged respondents (>54) with high school education that tend to use their LinkedIn profile as much as they are stimulated to participate in drama and electronic arts event. Finally, the third group is represented by audiences with university level of education and aged between 25 and 34 years old; they use their Facebook profile every day (52%) and as much as they use it as much as they visit TV news program. This pool of participant seems to be negatively affected in the above relationship by the value of self-direction. In other words, as much as they value autonomy and independence, as less they will frequently use their Facebook's profile nor visit TV news program.

As a conclusion, our outcomes are an open window on the mind-set and the behaviors of cultural audiences. We have contributed on the main literature that aim to help cultural managers to better understand the attitudes of their public, choose and use in a more strategic way the SNS. This study solely represents a starting point for the research on the use of SNS in the arts and cultural field. A particular interest in future's development is suggested, especially considering the impact and consequences of the SNS in this fast-changing context evolving in a post-pandemic era.

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