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Motivations in the Fine-Art Market: A Self-Determination Theory Approach

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Abstract - The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate the theoretical value of incorporating constructs from self-determination theory (SDT) into the analysis of the motivations within the fine-art market. The motivations of buyers and artists are examined in light of a controlling-informational event gradient. Moureau's and Sagot-Duvauroux' (2012) artist business-model framework is used to provide the context for marketing's role in facilitating communication along the various motivational interactions of the gradient. Opportunities for further research are presented.

Keywords - Art marketing, Self-determination theory, Informational events, Controlling events

Relevance to Marketing Educators, Researchers and Practitioners - This paper provides a new framework for explaining the interaction between buyers and sellers of fine art. It extends the applicability of self-determination theory to fine-art marketing.

Introduction

Fine-art marketing research experiences friction that other arenas for marketing research do not. The product moved within this arena has subjective value with many drivers that can be difficult to quantify: The motivations of sellers and buyers may be different from what other marketing arenas experience (Marshall and Forrest, 2011). The end price of fine art may have no relationship to the cost of inputs relying more on the demand driven by the artist's reputation (Throsby, 1994). Due to such challenges, the Academy has struggled in its contemplation of the marketing concept within this arena.

This paper will investigate the marketing concept in the fine-arts arena by deploying self-determination theory (SDT). To demonstrate the value of SDT constructs within fine-art marketing, a brief discussion of fine-art research is presented articulating the focus of this paper on buyers and artists. The constructs of controlling and informational events from SDT will be reviewed. These constructs will be applied to buyers and artists relative to their respective motivations. The business models evident in the art market are reviewed in the context of informational and controlling motivations. All of the above are synthesized into a model specifically addressing fine-art marketing. Opportunities for further research are presented.

Fine-Art Research

The research that exists for fine-arts marketing typically occurs within a similar paradigm. The researchers deconstruct the marketplace into the players, the motives of players, and either a market or production orientation. The players within the marketplace are generally broken into three categories: the artists, the end buyers, and organizations acting as intermediaries between artists and buyers (Butler, 2000; Crossland and Smith, 2002; Jurevičienė and Savičenko, 2011; Khaire and Wadhvani, 2010). The various motives and considerations of each group of participants are contemplated. This paper will address only two categories of participants in the fine-arts marketplace. For the purposes of parsimony, only the end buyers and the artists will be investigated. In addition to brevity, much of what will be articulated relative to the end buyer is applicable by extension to the intermediaries. In addition, this paper will investigate fine art primarily in the context of physical objects rather than performances. Much of the motivations discussed may be applicable to performance art; however, the art of physical objects is the primary orientation.

Self-Determination Theory

Deci and Ryan (1985) articulated SDT as a basket of sub theories. In general, SDT explains human motivation as a function of assuaging psychological needs. One of the primary desires is the need for autonomy (Martin and Hill, 2013). One of the sub theories, cognitive evaluation theory, demonstrates that the attainment of autonomy is determined by the influences of informational or controlling events on the part of an actor: Informational events are those which actors perceive as informing their behavior but not controlling it (Deci and Ryan, 1985). Controlling events are those which create a sense of compulsion on the part of an actor (Wong-On-Wing, Lan and Lui, 2010). For example, an individual that works at a job she hates, but feels the need to support her family would be working in response to a controlling event. While she may choose of her own volition to go to work each day, she feels compelled to support her family: Her work is a means to an end and not for its own sake. Should the same worker change jobs to one she loves, one which she

might work even if she were independently wealthy; such a change would represent working motivated by informational events. Deci and Ryan reduce this concept to activities that are performed for the sake of the action, intrinsically motivated, and not in response to some extrinsic motivation.

Much of the literature on fine-arts marketing addresses the motivations of the actors in the marketplace. However, very little, if any, of the research addresses the motivation of participants from the standpoint of SDT. The categorization of motivations along the informational and controlling spectrum may enlighten the dynamics at play. Such a paradigm offers a theoretical framework for both researchers and marketers. Before addressing the motivations of each player, a brief description of the players under review is warranted.

Artist

The artist is any producer of a good which is deemed to be art (Hagtvedt and Patrick, 2008). Such a definition separates an artist from a commercial producer whose goods have value that are not primarily aesthetic in nature. Often the artist produces goods on a one-off basis. The interest of the artist is truly in the art itself (Butler, 2000). Volume of production is not a primary concern (Marshall and Forrest, 2011). The motivations for artists range from simply engaging in the medium for the sake of creating something new to trying to meet market demand for a particular style or subject matter (Fillis, 2006). It is at this nexus where SDT becomes powerful. For, whether an artist is creating for the enjoyment of the act or acting as a means to some ends (meeting a market demand), SDT identifies whether the activity is intrinsically or extrinsically motivated (Wong-On-Wing, Lan and Lui 2010).

Business Models

The business models of artists are likely as myriad as the personalities and media manifest in the art world. However, Moureau and Sagot-Duvaurox (2012) articulate four models that may summarize the chaos: salon artist, artisan entrepreneur, 360° artist, and the art-fair artist. Each of these models demonstrates the motivations of the artist to some degree on the informational-controlling continuum. A brief recounting of their models sets the stage for the marketing roles presented at the end of this paper.

The salon artist may be the most informational in motivation. As Moureau and Sagot-Duvaurox explain the context, salon artists are less dependent on market concerns as these artists have their own studios with a developed reputation. They tend to be driven more toward a particular medium enjoying their productions with an autotelic orientation. These artists may supplement their income with instruction or ancillary products which may be where controlling events come in to play for them. It is not with the actual art where their controlling influences lie.

The artisan entrepreneur may be as much a project manager as an artist. Funding is secured prior to engaging in projects. They align themselves with

sources of projects, e.g., larger firms or the government. As they are project-driven artists, their motivations will be largely in reaction to controlling events; though they may take great joy in their work. Communication for these artists involves becoming aware of projects, securing funding, and either generating the work or delegating the production to other artists.

Moureau's and Sagot-Duvaurox' 360° artist is distinguished from the artisan entrepreneur only in media deployed. For example, less traditional media, such as video or non-traditional performances may be deployed for this type of artist. For this paper, there is no distinguishing between the 360° artist and the artisan entrepreneur in terms of motivation. Each category aligns itself with sources of work and attempts to create art to meet precise specifications of clients. As such the 360° artist is reacting primarily to controlling events much like the artisan entrepreneur.

The art-fair artist is similar to the salon artist; although, Moureas and Sagot-Duvaurox make a distinction with respect to innovation. The art-fair artist is less innovative, focusing on media that are suitable for art fairs and shows. Like the salon artist, income is mostly from the sale of their works, supplementing their income with peripheral activities such as art instruction. Thus, the motivations of the art-fair artist are more informational with respect to the actual art, deploying tangential activities as a response to the controlling stimuli of income needs.

Buyers

Art buyers are any consumers acquiring what they perceive to be art (Hagtvedt and Patrick, 2008). Nytech (2013) articulated the extrinsic and intrinsic values associated with art consumption. Although focusing on art as performance, Nytech's categorization is valuable in context of SDT. Buyers' motivations can be viewed on a spectrum from buying for the simple aesthetic quality of a piece (or an emotional reaction it creates) to the utility a piece has extrinsically. Some buyers are buying purely for investment purposes (Jurevičienė and Savičenko, 2011). They may find a particular piece aesthetically pleasing; however their primary driver is that of an investment medium. Some buyers may find most of an artist's output appealing, but may not find every output from that artist appealing. However, collectors may purchase the output of a particular artist for the sole benefit of having as many pieces from that artist as possible (Marshall and Forrest, 2011).

Informational and Controlling Considerations

As stated above, the motivations for an artist are generally placed on a spectrum from engaging in artwork for the sake of the art to attempting to meet a market demand. On the SDT spectrum, the art-for-art's sake motivation aligns closely with an informational stimulus; whereas, meeting a market's demands aligns closely with controlling stimuli. Artists may engage in creating readily marketable products for the purpose of acquiring revenue to fund their more autotelic interests. SDT generally postulates that extrinsic incentives reduce intrinsic motivation (Allison et al., 2015). This parallels Fillis' (2006) notion that extrinsic rewards for

artists may generally reduce the quality of the art produced. While there is a distinction between the motivations of artists, the motivations are related if the response to controlling events is seen as funding the ability to produce works in response to informational stimuli.

Much like the artist, buyers engage in the art market as reactions to informational and controlling events. When a buyer buys for enjoyment alone, such a motivation may be seen as being informational. When a buyer buys for investment or to supplement a collection of a particular artist, such motivations may be seen as being in reaction to controlling events. For, some motivations of buyers are autotelic and others are the means to an end of either gaining profit on a piece or ensuring that as many pieces as possible of a particular artist are acquired.

As artists consider the marketing context of their artistic economy, the SDT framework presented offers a strategy for them to pursue their autonomous aims. Artists are well familiar with their need to produce marketable products to fund their autotelic projects. However, they should realize that their buyers have motivations stemming from informational and controlling events as well. Even as artists have to fund their projects which may be less marketable, buyers have to fund their purchases as well. Additionally, buyers may be motivated to buy anything the artist produces: In such cases the production of any piece may be a controlling event for these buyers. Some buyers are driven by investment goals: Those extrinsically motivated purchase decisions are controlling events as well. These motivations should inform the business model and marketing approach of the artist.

Buyers of fine art should consider the motivations of the artists. Many artists desire to work for the sake of the artistry but may have to subordinate that motivation for such pecuniary pursuits as rent. If buyers truly desire fine art that is produced by intrinsically-motivated artists, they should seek to ensure that controlling events on the part of the artisan are reduced. Buyers should seek to create environments that offer supportive feedback and financial support for artists. While such support may include commissioned pieces, buyers should realize that commissioned pieces represent a controlling event for artists. While the artists may enjoy fulfilling the commission, the rewards associated with such reduce intrinsic motivation from the perspective of SDT (Allison et al., 2015). Buyers should recognize that art developed for specific market demands may not be the primary driver of the artists. Those market-oriented pieces, many times, may be developed to fund the art-for-art's-sake projects that artists truly enjoy.

The Marketing Role

The object of marketing research and praxis in this context should concern the interactions between the controlling interests and the informational interests of buyers and artists. While researchers sometimes view the marketing function as

beginning subsequent to the production of the piece, Fillis (2006) stated that the marketing concept should begin with the inception of the artistic idea. Moving the marketing concept to an even earlier position in the time line, the following model assumes that marketing has a role even before the inception of an artistic concept in the mind of the artist.

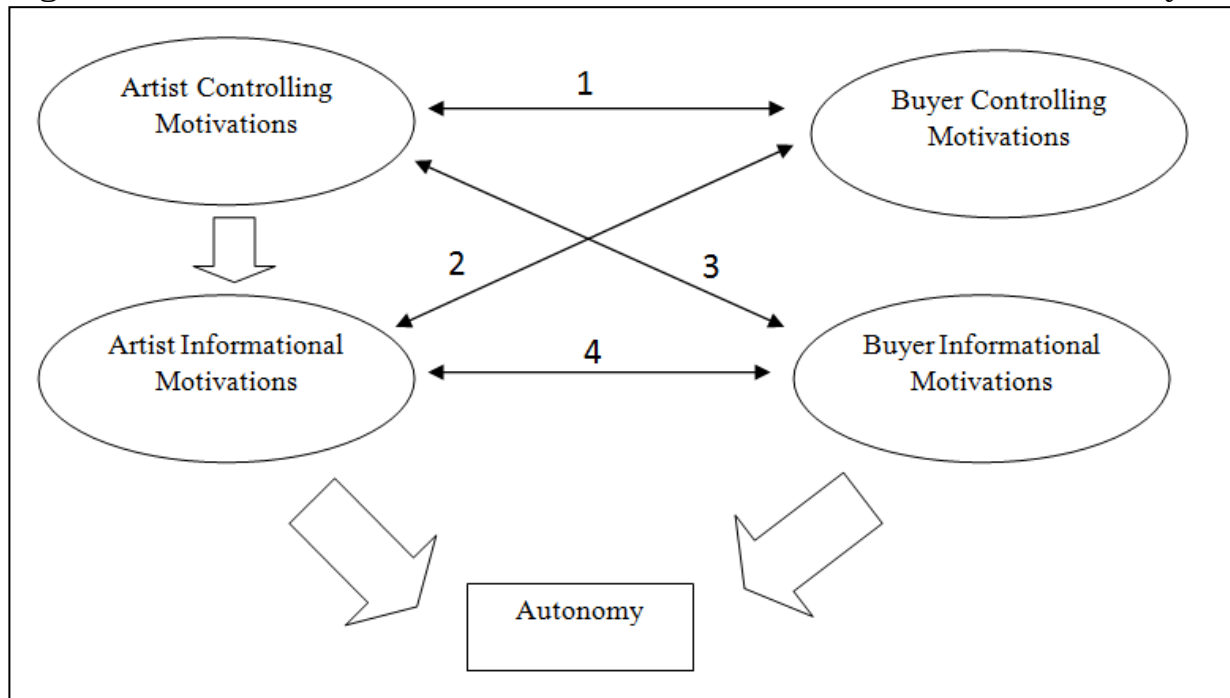
Assuming a flow of motivation from controlling to informational is logical from an artist's perspective. The stereotype, at least, is that artists must take time to build their brand sufficiently before they are free to engage in more informational-oriented behavior than in control-oriented behavior. Thus, making pieces designed for sale may be required until they have a sufficient brand and revenue base. Then, they may engage in their art for more in itself purposes.

For the buyers, there may not be a logical flow from controlling to informational motivations strictly within the art-market context. While a buyer must have a source of funds with which to purchase art, those sources may not be related to the art market. Additionally, an investor may be responding to controlling motivations when investing in art. Such investments may be projected to fund a child's college education, for example, which may be outside of the art realm.

Figure One displays the opportunities for interactions between artists and buyers. The figure assumes a flow from controlling motivations to informational ones for the artists. Buyers do not share that same progression. The ultimate goal for both buyers and artists is autonomy which can only be realized in an informational context. The arrows between the motivations demonstrate the opportunity for marketing to facilitate interaction between buyers and artists.

The role for marketing within this framework is mediating the relationships between the buyers' and sellers' controlling and informational motivations. With the advent of electronic communications channels, the practice of marketing should contemplate ways to leverage electronic media to align the controlling and informational stimuli of buyers and sellers (Clarke III and Flaherty, 2002). Interaction 1, for example, indicates an interrelation between an artist's and a buyer's controlling motivations. The artist must make pieces for the purpose of selling to the art market to generate revenue. For this relationship, the buyer seeks to either buy all output of a particular artist or is looking for art as an investment. The role of marketing is to connect the artist and buyer in this context. Reputation of an artist can contribute to the investment potential of a particular piece (Bennett and Kottasz, 2013). Marketing praxis should facilitate the dialogue between the buyer segments that seek investment and the artists seeking to produce for the sake of funding.

Figure 1. Flow and interactions of motivations between artists and buyers



Interaction 2 relates to the dynamic between a buyer’s controlling motivations and an artist’s autotelic motivations. When an artist has produced a work within an art-for-art’s-sake paradigm, and is willing to part with the piece, the marketing function is to ensure that the artist’s motivation is known. Such information may enhance the investment quality of such a piece. There is significant uncertainty when buyers contemplate art as an investment (Jurevičienė and Savičenko, 2011). This uncertainty presents an opportunity for the marketing function. Additionally, the buyers’ seeking all the output of an artist may add to the demand and investment benefit of such a piece.

Interaction 3 describes the situation where a buyer’s autotelic purchase behavior aligns with an artist’s control-oriented motivations. The artist may be able to produce pieces for specific buyers that are aesthetically pleasing to those buyers. Communications through social media may enhance the information exchange in such contexts. If artists are aware of what is an informational stimulus for a buyer segment, then those artists can more readily reap the benefits of their control-oriented behaviors. Efficiency in this exchange will increase their ability to respond to their more informational stimuli and provide faster financial returns on their efforts. Artists should realize that committed buyers are less price sensitive (Slater and Armstrong, 2014). This lack of sensitivity should enable them to maximize the amount of funding they can receive from committed buyers. Artists should consider such issues as mood-congruity for potential buyers. Research has shown that individuals seek out aesthetic experiences that align with their moods

or sentiments tied to particular memories (Slater and Armstrong, 2014). Artists should seek to leverage this phenomenon in their non-autotelic production. The marketing role for interaction 3 is to facilitate this exchange of information.

Interaction 4 indicates alignment between the informational motivations of the buyers with the informational motivations of the artists. It is in this arena where buyers may facilitate the artist's journey towards autonomy; and artists may facilitate the buyer's journey. Even when buyers are not interested in the autotelic works of a particular artist, being sensitive to the artist's efforts will enhance their productivity for other pieces as informational-oriented feedback supports an artist's efforts in a positive way (Johnson, 2013). Buyers should be involved in the art-critical process. Additionally, artists should be sensitive to the self-enhancement that buyers may experience by acquiring the artists' works (Bennett and Kottasz, 2013). The marketing function should facilitate this interaction between the buyers' and artists' informational motivations.

Marketers leveraging the opportunities above need to be conscious of the environments in which that marketing occurs. Moureau's and Sagot-Duvaurox' (2012) business models offer a synopsis of those environments. For the salon and art-fair artists, the marketing will take place in anticipation of and during specific events focused on art. As the marketer creates messages to align the informational and controlling motivations of both artists and buyers, the environment in which those messages are presented should be contemplated. For the 360° artist and the artist entrepreneur, the marketing environment may be more of a lead-generating atmosphere. The updating of the client with work progress may present opportunities for marketing messages. Thus, in addition to the motivations of buyers and artists which marketing should consider, the marketer must also ensure that messaging aligns with the environment in which it is delivered. These considerations provide significant opportunity for further research.

Opportunities for Further Research

Research within fine-art marketing should contemplate the relationships between the differing motivations of buyers and sellers. Informed by the constructs from SDT, researchers should investigate how motivations in reaction to informational and controlling events affect the production, pricing, and promotion of fine-art within the various business models. Using the framework presented above, researchers should investigate the dynamics at work when the influences are controlling or informational for both parties. Research should investigate how these dynamics differ when there is disparity between parties on the informational-controlling spectrum. The role for marketing research is to discover whether these dynamics can be facilitated by marketing praxis to improve the functioning of the fine-art market on macro- and microeconomic levels.

Conclusion

Marketing research in a fine-art context has challenges that differ from marketing research in other arenas. The motivations of producers and consumers of fine art differ from the motivations of those producing and consuming in the marketing contexts that are more broadly studied. SDT provides a paradigm through which to investigate those motivations within the various business models deployed in the fine-art market. Based on the proposed model, marketing's role is to facilitate the interaction between the producers and consumers. That facilitation should align with the informational and controlling context of each party in the interaction. The framework presented offers marketing researchers the opportunity to study the marketing dynamics of the fine-art market through a paradigm not widely deployed in this context.

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