

Doing more with less: Understanding the contributions of regional art gallery members

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Abstract

Past research has demonstrated the positive outcomes for organisations when their members feel a strong sense of identification with the organisation. These outcomes include purchase intentions, participation and promotion behaviours such as positive word of mouth (Arnett, German and Hunt 2003; Bhattacharya and Elsbash 2002; Madrigal, 2001). However, not all members engage in all of these behaviours. The findings of this research suggest that gallery members can be differentiated in terms of the way that they contribute to their art gallery. In particular, using a cluster analysis, three types of gallery members were identified: Promoters, Donators and Committee members. An understanding of the differences between each of these member types will allow galleries to use their finite resources better by targeting their offerings to specific members of their gallery to facilitate these positive behaviours and therefore achieve more with less.

Key Words: Identification, membership, segmentation, art, non-profit, relationship marketing

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Introduction

Regional art galleries, like other membership organisations, rely on the active participation of their members to function. Member's can contribute to the organisation in a variety of ways including donating their time, donating money and promotion through word of mouth. Research has shown that members who identify with their art gallery are more likely to renew their membership, participate in the organisation and engage in active word of mouth (Madriral 2001; Bhattacharya and Elsbash 2002; Arnett et al 2003). The purpose of this research was to examine whether or not gallery members could be differentiated in the way that they contribute to their art gallery.

This examination was conducted using in-depth interviews and a mail survey. Data was collected about the antecedents of identification, members' level of identification and the way that each member contributed to the gallery through their membership. The antecedents of identification were used to segment the respondents and the level of identification and means of contribution were used to profile the resultant segments.

Literature Review

Identification is *the degree to which a member defines him or herself by the same attributes that he or she believes define the organisation* (Dutton, Dukerich and Harquail 1994 p.239). This is demonstrated to result in positive outcomes for the organisation because the goals of the organisation can become the goals of the member (Dutton et al 1994; Madriral 2001; Bhattacharya and Elsbash 2002; Arnett et al 2003). Indeed the focus of much research into identification has been demonstrating the usefulness of identification. Researchers have illustrated the importance of encouraging identification in sports marketing, non-profit and relationship marketing (e.g. Bhattacharya et al 1995; Gruen 2000; Arnett et al 2003).

Based on facilitating the positive outcomes associated with identification a variety of past researchers have investigated the constructs that lead to identification. Constructs that have been found to influence identification in past research include: prestige, satisfaction, organisational culture, visibility of membership, contact frequency, contact quality, domain involvement (e.g. interest in art), length of membership, participation in events and membership in similar organisations (Bhattacharya et al 1995; Fisher and Wakefield 1998; Gruen 2000; Underwood, Bond and Baer 2001; Arnett et al 2003).

In order to characterise member's attitudes, five constructs related to identification drawn from the literature are examined in this research: satisfaction, prestige, visibility, contact quality and domain involvement. Past studies have provided empirical evidence that each of these constructs has a significant influence on identification; each is defined in Table 1.

In addition, four new constructs that influenced identification emerged from the in-depth interviews: self enhancement; organisation culture; social responsibility; elitism. These are outlined in the findings section below, following a description of the research methodology.

Table 1: Antecedents of identification

Construct	Definition	Empirical Links to ID
Satisfaction	Satisfaction in this instance is service expectation confirmation measuring both intrinsic aspects such as goal achievement and extrinsic aspects such as customer service related to the organisation (Hall and Schneider 1972; Stryker and Burke 2000).	Arnett et al (2003)
Prestige	Organisational prestige is relates to an organisations image which is considered through the combination of what an individual thinks added what they perceive others to think about it (Dutton et al 1994)	Bhattacharya et al (1995) Arnett et al (2003)
Visibility	Visibility of membership is how a person views the public recognition of their membership in a particular organisation (Bhattacharya et al 1995)	Bhattacharya et al 1995)
Contact quality	contact quality refers to the number of contacts between the individual and the organisation as well as the quality of the contact between the two (Bhattacharya and Elsbash 2002)	Bhattacharya et al (1995)
Domain Involvement	Domain involvement refers to a member's involvement with an organisations focal activity (e.g. art, or sport) (Fisher and Wakefield 1998).	Fisher and Wakefield (1998)

Methodology

A mixed method research design was employed in this study. First, 11 in-depth interviews were conducted (two with staff and nine with gallery members). Then a mail survey was conducted with of all of the members of four regional art galleries (N=896) (Bathurst, Dubbo, Orange and Wagga Wagga). Incentives devised in conjunction with each art gallery were used in the mail survey to encourage responses, 433 members responded equating to a response rate of 48%.

Interviewees were recruited using purposive sampling; this consisted of utilising respondents who could provide rich, in-depth information about identification (Patton 1990; Denscombe 1998). Two gallery staff were included in the sample as they could offer a gallery based perspective on the role of gallery members, their contribution to the gallery and how the gallery worked with their membership organisation. Interview transcripts were analysed using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006) utilizing NVIVO software.

Factor and cluster analysis were used to analyse the data. Factor analysis on each of the constructs provided the basis for clustering. Consistent with Malhotra et al (2006) a single item from each of the factors was used for the cluster analysis. Cluster analysis was conducted using Wards method which used a squared Euclidean distance measure.

The clusters were profiled on several behavioural and demographic variables. Behavioural variables included number of visits in the past 12 months, intention to continue membership, current volunteering, past volunteering, current committee membership, past committee membership, donation of time, donation of money, promotion of the organisation and positive word-of-mouth. While demographic variables included were gender, age, income and education.

Findings

Four new antecedents of identification emerged from the in-depth interviews: self-enhancement, organisational culture, social responsibility and elitism. Each is now detailed.

Self enhancement - refers to an increase in an individual's self-esteem as a result of feeling worthwhile, fulfilled or achieving personal goals as a result of membership. Respondents in the interviews discussed feeling worthwhile as a result of being able to share their skills, feeling fulfilled as a result of being able to facilitate events, to still be of use or to improve their knowledge. In each instance the respondents indicated an enhanced sense of self as a result of their interaction with the gallery and this related to their identification with the gallery. This was particularly evident in the discussion of fulfilling personal goals as a gallery member. This notion of self-enhancement differs from that in the organisational literature (Dutton et al 1994) and the "prestige variable" examined by Bhattacharya et al (1995). In these instances members felt an enhanced sense of self based on the organisations characteristics. In contrast the self-enhancement variable proposed in this literature is based on the characteristics/experiences of the member.

Organisational culture - can be defined as a framework of shared values, rituals, symbols and practices shared among people that have developed over time in the organisation (Collins 1993). While organisational culture had not linked to identification previously, Underwood, et al (2001) had indicated that history, traditions, physical facilities and rituals are all related to identification in an organisation. Feelings consistent with this were found to be present in the in-depth interviews. Respondents indicated that they felt a bond with the facility and that they shared relationships and bonds within the organisational framework. The findings also indicated that the commitment to the organisation was related to their identification. Thus organisational commitment was included.

Social responsibility - is another concept which was discovered in the qualitative phase. This refers to joining a gallery to support the arts, the community and the gallery itself. Each of the respondents indicated that social responsibility was a factor related to identification. Members could receive the gallery services for free, yet they choose to be members to support the organisation. This finding was supported by the theory that people identify with organisations that provide them with the opportunity for self expression (Dutton et al 1994) and by Hendon's (1979) finding that people are motivated to join galleries to support the arts; hence its inclusion in the analysis.

Elitism - was the final concept related to identification to be uncovered in the interviews. Throughout the interviews respondents commented that pseudo intellectualism; elitism and aloofness were present and related to their identification with the organisation and the negative impact this had on their sense of identification with the organisation. Fisher and Wakefield (1998) found that in the absence of success in the organisation, or competition in other organisations such as in sporting clubs, people would identify with an organisation based on the attractiveness of other members. Supporting this notion Underwood et al (2001) also proposed that group experiences influence identification. The findings from the interviews suggested that elitism was considered an unattractive element of experiences with other members that had negative impact on the members' sense of identification. Elitism was raised by every person interviewed and hence the relationship between elitism and identification was included in the mail survey for further examination. These constructs were used in combination with those constructs identified from the literature to segment the art gallery members.

Each of the seven constructs were measured using scales either derived from the literature (prestige: Ashforth and Mael 1992, identification and satisfaction: Bhattacharya et al 1995, organisational culture: Robins 1991, domain involvement: Fisher and Wakefield 1998) or developed based on in-depth interviews (visibility, contact quality, self-enhancement, social responsibility, elitism). These scales were subsequently analysed using SPSS. The reliability and validity of each scale was initially examined. Reliability for each of the constructs was tested using Cronbach alphas, with alphas scores for each scale of between $0.656 < \alpha < 0.90$. Exploratory factor analysis was conducted with principle component analysis using a varimax rotation. Each factor had a KMO above 0.60 and the Bartlett's test of Sphericity was significant for each. An additional exploratory factor analysis was run which included all of the scale items and it suggested that each of the constructs was distinct. The results claimed a KMO of 0.892 and a significant Bartlett's test of sphericity. In some cases items with low loading items and cross loading items removed. In addition to this the scales were tested for validity using confirmatory factor analysis, which indicated that items had acceptable loads (above 0.50) (Hair et al 2009) and were significant further suggesting construct validity.

Following the exploratory factor analysis cluster analysis was undertaken. Wards method and a Euclidean distance measure were used to try and find similar sized and homogenous groups (Hair et al 2010). The agglomeration schedule, dendrogram and frequencies were all used to identify the number of clusters. Three distinct clusters formed and ANOVA and cross-tabs (Chi-square) were used to examine the presence of significant differences between clusters. Using the continuous variables (e.g. satisfaction, identification and positive word of mouth) ANOVA indicated that each cluster was distinct. While the cross-tabs identified that some of the categorical variables (e.g. committee membership, previous arts education) were also distinct to each cluster. These findings suggest that different types of gallery member belong to each cluster or segment. Each type of member is now profiled.

Promoters – The first group to emerge from the cluster analysis was the smallest of the groups, representing 21.7% of the sample. Members classified as Promoters have the highest incomes, but fall in the middle of the clusters in terms of the number of females, their age and their level of identification with the gallery. They are also in the middle in terms of their attitude towards visibility, prestige, contact quality, social responsibility, culture and satisfaction. Promoters expressed the strongest anti-elitism sentiment and the weakest interest in the organisations culture and involvement in the domain (e.g. art).

This group had lowest donation rates, but were most likely to contribute to the gallery through promotion. They are the most likely member to promote the gallery and second most likely to spread positive word-of-mouth. While their participation in the last 12 months was average, their number of visits to the gallery was the lowest of the groups, as was their donation of money and time. Nevertheless, this group are most likely to renew their membership. Hence, while not the most engaged group, this group are more likely to remain members of the gallery and to actively promote the organisation.

Donators - The second type of member to emerge is the Donator, which incorporates 32.4% of the sample. This group has the least females, is slightly younger and has the second highest income. Donators are most likely to be retirees, are the most educated members, and are the least likely of all members to have taken an arts course. The group has the shortest average membership length but the highest level of identification with their gallery. This group were the highest on all of the attitudinal measures, with the exception of elitism where they were second.

Members of this type contributed to the gallery more often than any other through the donation of time and money. In addition, the cluster was second highest for volunteer

behaviours and committee related activities. In contrast to their support through donation, this group had the lowest positive word of mouth and promotion of the organisation have the lowest membership renewal intentions of any group.

Committee Members - The third group, Committee Members, was the second largest with 29.1% of the sample. This group were the oldest, with the lowest average income and education. They have the highest proportion of females, and the longest running membership, and interestingly the lowest level of satisfaction and identification; despite this they are most likely to renew membership. They also have the lowest value for all attitudes, with the exception of interest in the domain (i.e. art).

In terms of behaviour, this cluster has the lowest level of participation in the past 12 months, but the second highest number of gallery visits. Aside from the participation, they contribute to their gallery in a number of ways, but most significantly in their role as committee members. They are most likely to promote through positive word of mouth and are second for donation of time and money. They have the highest past and present volunteer behaviour and they also have the highest past and present committee membership activities.

Conclusion

In this research we have demonstrated that members of regional art galleries can be differentiated based on the antecedents and consequences of identification. We identified three distinct groups of art gallery members, who each contribute in their own way to the success of their gallery. As mentioned in the literature, the gallery/member relationship is characterised by the need for co-production (Gruen 2000); that is, neither the membership group nor the gallery can survive in isolation. The findings of this research demonstrate that increasing the success of co-production may be facilitated through galleries taking a targeted approach when trying to enlist the help of their membership.

In particular, instead of trying to encourage all members to be all things, galleries should provide opportunities for each group to contribute in their preferred way and in doing so to further develop their sense of identification with the institution. For example, by providing the opportunity for members to realise their own goals through their gallery membership (e.g. through promoting events, donating money or being a committee member) galleries can allow members to achieve a sense of self-enhancement, this would in turn facilitate increased identification with the gallery, which has a demonstrated link to ongoing positive contributions from the membership (Dutton et al 1994; Madrigal 2001; Bhattacharya and Elsbash 2002; Arnett et al 2003).

A targeted approach would also ensure that demands on members are spread around the various member types groups and not left to those Committee Members who contribute most often, but who identify least and are least satisfied with the gallery. While they may not attend often Promoters actively promote functions and in doing so provide an important advertising function for the organisation. Similarly, while Donators do not actively promote the gallery they contribute in terms of resources (funds and manpower) and hence are the members the gallery relies on in the co-production.

Overall, this research shows that by targeting members in different ways the gallery and their members can achieve gallery goals, such as increased patronage at events, an active membership willing to donate much needed time and funds and importantly an active membership committee. Each of these are vital to the continued success of not for profit organisations like regional art galleries which rely on the involvement of their membership.

In conclusion, by understanding how members differ the organisation can better utilise their membership base and as a result achieve more with less.

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