A Typology Consumption Practices in Museums - Implications for Market Communications of Museums

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Objectives of the presentation

- Proposing a museum consumption framework
- Getting a deeper understanding of how, why, and what people consume in museums
- A pilot study and working paper
- Collecting feedbacks and insights from you
Outline

- Introduction
- Framework of consumption practices in museums
- Managerial implications for museum
- Limitation and further research
Introduction

- Influences and changes affecting museums profoundly in the new era
- One main philosophy of museums: object-oriented to audience-oriented
- Perspective of consumer research on what consumption means to museum visitors
Theoretical foundation

- How consumers consume?
- Consumer culture theory (Arnould & Thompson 2005)
- Holt’s research (1995) on a typology of consumption practices
- Four distinct metaphors for consuming
METAPHORS FOR CONSUMING

PURPOSE OF ACTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Autotelic Actions</th>
<th>Instrumental Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CONSUMING AS EXPERIENCE</strong></td>
<td><strong>CONSUMING AS INTEGRATION</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CONSUMING AS PLAY</strong></td>
<td><strong>CONSUMING AS CLASSIFICATION</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

STRUCTURE OF ACTION

Object Actions

Interpersonal Actions
Metaphors for consuming

- **Consuming as experience**: examining consumers’ subjective, emotional reactions to consumption objects.
- **Consuming as integration**: how consumers acquire and manipulate object meanings.
- **Consuming as classification**: consuming as a process in which objects act to classify their consumers.
- **Consuming as play**: sharing mutually felt experiences with each other, and making use of experiential practices to entertain each other.
### Metaphors for consuming

#### STRUCTURE OF ACTION

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<tr>
<td><strong>Consuming As</strong> Classification Through objects</td>
<td><strong>Consuming As</strong> Play Communing Socializing</td>
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How about museums?

- Holt’s theory: materialism as a style of consuming
- Museums, different contexts with similarities in terms of purpose and structure of consumption
- Is museum consumption more likely individual rather than collective?
- Is materialism the only style?
Research method

The National Museum of History (NMH) as the case
# Example of the interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Knowledge of art &amp; history</th>
<th>Frequency of visits a year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>Housewife Volunteer</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yen</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>B.A.</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ting</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>B.A.</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>2-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eddie</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>B.A.</td>
<td>Business man</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>6-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jean</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>B.A.</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Museum consuming as experience

- Making sense (or accounting), evaluating and appreciating consumption objects
- Experiences in unordinary of daily life in museums
- Based on the audience’s physical, social, and personal contexts (Falk & Dierking 1992)
- Transferring between outside and inside of museums
Museum consuming as integration

- Meaning making and facilitating the symbolic use of the object
- Recalling prior knowledge, experience and memories
- Assimilating by developing requisite knowledge and specialized tastes
- Producing to enhance their perception and to participate in the production of consumption
Museum consuming as classification

- The museum is an agency of cultural classification (Fyfe 1995)
- Cultural classification: distinction, the projection of group, and control
- E.g. classified by sub-culture of youth as the projection of group
- E.g. ‘Terra Cotta Worriers’ exhibition - a symbol of most “in” stuff
- “The laity sees the fancy part of exhibits but the professional sees the inside stories.” ~ by Chinese slang
Museum consuming as play

- To share their mutually felt experiences and insights with each other through communing
- To make use of experiential practices to enjoy and entertain each other through socializing
- To improve relationships and the quality of life
- Spiritual feast and release
- The rest of the mind in particular
Museum consuming as learning

- Learning form objects
- Transferring abstract concepts into reification
- The nature of free-choice
- In a variety of ways
- With different motivations and purposes
- Learning in museum overlapping consumers’ experience, integration, enjoyment, and classification
Framework of museum consumption practices

**Objects**
- Consuming As Experience
  - Accounting
  - Evaluating
  - Appreciating
  - Transferring
- Consuming As Integration
  - Recalling
  - Assimilating
  - Producing
- Consuming As Play
  - Communing
  - Socializing
  - Improving
- Consuming As Classification
  - Distinction
  - Protection of group
  - Involvement

**Hedonic**

**Utilitarian**

**People**

**Consuming As Learning**
- Through objects
- By free choices
- In a variety of ways
Cultural issues on museum consumption

- Consumers’ personal and collective identities are strong factors
- E.g. the audiences as consumers in Taiwan
  - more utilitarian than hedonic
  - tend to be people-oriented than focused-on objects
  - learning is the most driven factor for different ages and levels of the audiences
Implications for museum marketing practices

- A clear picture of audience’s style and value of consuming in museums
- Humanism as a style and value of museum consuming
- Universal principles and indigenous considerations as well
Conclusion

- The more understanding of the consumer’s behavior universally and indigenously, the better communication with our audiences.
- Constructs need to be modified for further research.
- The generalizability of the research should be considered.
- Related consumer literatures and visitor studies need to be reviewed in breadth and depth.
Comment and insights are very much welcomed; and thank you for your attention.