

How much would you pay for it? Measuring cultural impacts at the point of experience: The Au Culture Platform

Sendy Ghirardi, Pau Rausell Köster and Francesco Molinari (ECONCULT, Universitat de València)

Highlights

- Experiential marketing aims at creating a brand experience in people through their repeated exposure to a product or service. Mobile applications are helpful to capture the user or consumer experience while it is being generated, thus when the memory of it is still fresh and unbiased.
- Our web platform and mobile application - Au Culture - adopts a similar approach with a different purpose: to measure the impacts of cultural events (such as art exhibitions, theatre plays etc.) on people, right at the point of their experience.
- The solution requires individual profiling of the respondent and needs the provision of individual incentives to ensure a wide and recurrent engagement of registered users of the application. However, it has shown potential of providing new and unique data and information to policy makers and cultural operators, who normally ignore if their initiatives have had any impact, above and beyond the sheer number of attendees.
- The results of experiments carried out in the Valencia region show that psycho-social factors (alongside economic ones) are relevant to build enjoyment on top of the fruition of a cultural experience.
- A model of impact generation has been developed, and tested, which is characterized by the co-presence of cognitive, emotional, aesthetic and relational dimensions in three distinct phases of cultural experience.
- The Au Culture platform is available at: <https://aucultur.eu/>

Rationale

The latest EU Agenda for Culture (European Commission, 2018) has for the first time raised the issue of identifying and evaluating (if not measuring) the societal outcomes and impacts of cultural policies, events and initiatives.

The underlying reflection is that there are more potential benefits from cultural activities than those belonging to the economic sphere; and that they unavoidably pass through the enjoyment (in the case of cultural consumption) and/or the engagement (in cultural amateurism or co-production) of the people who participate in those initiatives and events.

However, little is known about the psycho-social factors that may ignite, enhance, or at least influence individual and collective enjoyment of (say) an art exhibition or a theatre play. Even less known are the mechanisms through which a successful event or initiative generates impacts in the local community or in society as a whole.

Background

Marketing science and practice have been familiar for quite a long time with the difference between an immediate and a mediated feedback on a certain product or service (De Keyser et al., 2015). Be it for impulse buying (Iyer et al., 2020) or to help profile a brand's characteristics (Motta-Filho, 2021), the

collection and analysis of consumer experience has gained a prominent importance, particularly when it can be captured in real time.

Our web platform and mobile application - named Au Culture - adopts a similar approach, although with a different purpose: to capture the feedback of cultural consumers, right at the point of their experience, in order to gain insights on the success of a certain event or initiative, and particularly to evaluate its outcomes and impacts on the attendees.

Au Culture can be used on mobile and smart phones as well as through any web browser. It requires registration and asks for a preliminary profiling of the individual respondent, against the promise of defining his or her predominant "cultotype" – typology of cultural consumer – also by the help of the evidence gathered after the fruition of an event experience.

This promise constitutes an example of personal incentive – others in the future may be added, for example through the so-called "gamification" – that has proven indispensable to ensure a qualified participation in the first evaluation rounds carried out experimentally in the City of Valencia. These, one should remember, relied solely on people's availability to respond to a post-event survey, excluding the involvement of professional interviewers.

Model

The underlying theoretical framework focuses on 3 distinct phases of cultural experience: pre-, during and post- fruition, as the Table below shows.

Phase	Focus	Relevant variables
Pre-Consumption	Motivation	Cultural habits Socio-demographic data Cultural interests
Consumption	Perceived impacts	Cognitive impact Emotional impact Aesthetic impact Relational impact Identitarian impact
Post-consumption	Satisfaction	Experience satisfaction Willingness to pay

Source: Elaboration of the authors.

Before fruition, the profiling survey mentioned above leads to the definition of the "cultotype" that person belongs to. During consumption, five typologies of perceived impacts (cognitive, emotional, aesthetic, relational and identitarian) are defined and translated into evaluative questions, based on a scale between 1 and 10. Finally, after the end of the event, another group of questions focus on global satisfaction from the experience and validate the coherence of previous replies through the analysis of "willingness to pay" for a new replica of that cultural experience.

The model has been tested for the first time in the region of Valencia in 2021. Another similar activity is ongoing in the City of Lublin in early 2023.

Evidence

Based on the first test results our model seems robust, in the sense that all its variables are statistically significant and they together explain at least 69% of the underlying phenomenon (see the Table). In Valencia, where cultural experiences were mostly related to cinema and performing arts, aesthetic impact has materialised as the key dimension of enjoyment, followed by emotional, cognitive and finally relational impact.

Variables	Coeff.	Signif.
<i>Aesthetic Impact</i>	0.34	***
<i>Emotional Impact</i>	0.26	***
<i>Relational Impact</i>	0.11	***
<i>Cognitive Impact</i>	0.18	***
R^2	0.70	
R^2 Adjusted	0.69	

Source: Own elaboration. Notes: Signif. Codes: '.' .1 '*' .05 '**' .01 '***' .001. The identitarian impact has no significant effect in the data sample available.

Respondents add their questions to a privacy protecting database that allows to understand, at an aggregated level, how the degree of satisfaction from cultural experience varies across different cultural events or (thanks to the “cultotypes”) to analyse the reactions of different segments of audience.

The platform is available at this link: <https://aucultur.eu/>. We are looking forward to building additional alliances with European Cities and cultural actors and organisations, to extend the scope of experimentation to other territories and cultural domains.

Policy implications

This paper aimed to present a comprehensive approach to measuring the impacts of cultural experience, combining psycho-social factors with economic ones, such as those associated to the “willingness to pay” concept and the use of contingent valuation techniques (Cuccia, 2003).

The availability of data on cultural experiences and their likely impacts on audiences can give support to evidence based policy-making at regional and local levels, including for:

- Understanding the process that generates people’s satisfaction from cultural experiences.
- Measuring the impacts of cultural activities and events beyond the sheer number of attendees.
- Improving the quality and inclusiveness of cultural programmes and initiatives.
- Introducing elements of true cost-benefit analysis to discriminate between alternative cultural event proposals for public investment.
- Shaping a battery of evaluative impact indicators across arts and culture domains, as well as across different territories.
- Developing intelligent, transparent & user centred recommendation algorithms that contribute to the EU's sovereignty against the dominance of global cultural and entertainment platforms.

The proposed approach and the new algorithms associated to it can also contribute to broadening the diversity and to improving the sustainability of Cultural and Creative industries.

References

- Bourgeon-renault, D. (2014). Consumer Behaviour Evaluating in the Field of Arts and Culture Marketing. *Journal of Arts Management* 3(1): 4-18.
- Brown, A. S., Novak-Leonard, J. L. (2013). Measuring the intrinsic impacts of arts attendance. *Cultural Trends* 22(3-4): 223-233.
- Carnwath, J. D., Brown, A. S. (2014). Understanding the value and impacts of cultural experiences: A literature review. Arts Council England
- Colbert, F., St-James, Y. (2014). Research in Arts Marketing: Evolution and Future Directions. *Psychology and Marketing*, 31(8), 566-575. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.20718>
- Cuccia, T. (2003). Contingent valuation. In *A Handbook of Cultural Economics*, Ruth Towse (Ed.). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 494.
- De Keyser, A., Lemon, K., Klaus, P., Keiningham, T. (2015). A Framework for Understanding and Managing the Customer Experience. Marketing Science Institute Working Paper Series Report No. 15-121.
- European Commission (2018) A new European Agenda for Culture. https://ec.europa.eu/culture/sites/default/files/2020-08/swd-2018-167-new-european-agenda-for-culture_en.pdf. Accessed 03 Mar 2023.
- Falk, M., Katz-Gerro, T. (2016). Cultural participation in Europe: Can we identify common determinants? *Journal of Cultural Economics* 40: 127-162
- Ghirardi S., Rausell Köster, P. (2020). An innovative and technological way to collect data about users’ behaviour in the cultural sector: The Au Culture platform. International Workshop on “Rethinking Culture and Creativity in the Technological Era”. Florence, 20th-21st February.
- Iyer, G.R., Blut, M., Xiao, S.H., Grewal, D. (2020). Impulse buying: a meta-analytic review. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 48, 384–404. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-019-00670-w>
- Motta-Filho, M.A. (2021) Brand experience manual: bridging the gap between brand strategy and customer experience. *Review of Management Science* 15, 1173–1204. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11846-020-00399-9>
- Rausell Köster, P., Ghirardi S. (2021). "A comprehensive approach to measure the impact of cultural participation on individuals: the Au Culture Platform". ACEI2020+1 Online (Lille, France) 6th - 9th July 2021. Retrieved at <http://culturaleconomics.org/wpcontent/uploads/2021/07/Abs tract-Booklet-ACEI20201.pdf> (pp 110)
- Rausell-Köster, P., Ghirardi, S., Sanjuán, J., Molinari, F., Abril, B. (2022). Cultural experiences in the framework of «cultural cities». *Measuring the socioeconomic impact of culture in urban performance. City, Territory and Architecture* 9: 40

Acknowledgments and disclaimer

This project has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under Grant Agreement No. 870935, and from the Valencian Innovation Agency (expression of the Regional Government of Valencia). However, the opinions expressed here are solely of the authors and do not engage any of the granting institutions.

Methodological notes

The Valencian sample was composed by 226 people that participated in 28 cultural experiences. The adapted statistical analysis technique was the simple least squares regression model. All Impact factors, except the relational one, are significant in explaining overall satisfaction with an $R^2= 0.69$, which is significant in explaining willingness to pay (although naturally conditioned by other variables such as income, duration of the event, and age).