

How does audience segmentation benefit and complicate museum outreach, as demonstrated through the case studies of *The Citi Exhibition Manga* and *Grayson Perry: The Tomb of the Unknown Craftsman* at the British Museum?

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Marketing in the arts shifted from promoting artists and performances to prioritising audience engagement. Driven by rising competition, changing societal expectations, and digital innovation, this audience-centric approach helps arts organisations increase attendance, foster diversity, and build lasting loyalty (Genc & Okan, 2022).

At the heart of this strategy there is audience segmentation—dividing broad audiences into targeted groups based on demographics, geography, psychographics, and behaviour (Hadley, 2021). By tailoring campaigns to specific needs, organisations can enhance engagement and optimise resources. For example, younger audiences may respond to interactive digital content, while loyal patrons often prefer traditional experiences (Gryllakis & Matsiola, 2022).

However, segmentation brings challenges: it demands significant resources, risks oversimplifying audience behaviours, and may alienate traditional supporters (Fillis & Lehman, 2022). This essay explores the benefits and complexities of audience segmentation through two case studies: *The Citi Exhibition Manga* and *Grayson Perry: The Tomb of the Unknown Craftsman* at the British Museum, showcasing its role in attracting new audiences and redefining institutional relevance.

Audience segmentation offers several advantages to arts organisations, including enhanced engagement with underrepresented groups, optimised resource allocation, greater inclusivity, and strategic repositioning within the cultural sector.

One major advantage is the ability to attract traditionally underrepresented demographics. The barriers such as cost, accessibility, and perceived irrelevance often hinder engagement from these groups. Targeted marketing strategies address these barriers by tailoring campaigns to resonate with specific segments (Rhine & Murnin, 2018). For instance, younger audiences often engage with interactive, multimedia campaigns aligned with their digital habits, while families may prefer accessible, child-friendly programming. By addressing these distinct audience

needs, arts organisations can foster inclusivity and expand their reach to previously excluded groups.

Segmentation also optimises resource allocation which is critical for organisations operating with limited budgets. Rather than employing broad and unfocused strategies, segmentation allows organisations to prioritise high-potential segments, such as frequent attendees or high-value supporters, to ensure a greater return on investment (Dietrich et al., 2022). For example, targeting loyal members with tailored experiences often yields better results than general campaigns aimed at undefined, diverse audiences. This focused approach enhances impact while improving resource efficiency.

Additionally, segmentation fosters inclusivity by engaging traditionally excluded communities. Culturally relevant programming, multilingual campaigns, and partnerships with community groups can help overcome participation barriers (Pitts et al., 2020). By reflecting a broader range of cultural experiences, arts organisations become more accessible and representative. This approach strengthens the relevance of the arts within diverse communities.

Segmentation enables arts organisations to reposition themselves to meet evolving societal expectations. Tailored programming and targeted campaigns can redefine institutional identities and attract new demographics (McGowan et al., 2019). For instance, organisations traditionally associated with classical art can engage younger audiences through innovative programming and digital campaigns, presenting themselves as contemporary and dynamic while maintaining artistic integrity.

Despite its advantages, audience segmentation can also present significant challenges. Ie, segmentation is resource-intensive, requiring substantial investment in data collection, audience research, and campaign development. While large institutions often have the capacity to manage such initiatives, smaller organisations may lack the resources and expertise needed to compete effectively (Cocker et al., 2018). Hencewhy, scalable segmentation approaches are essential to ensure accessibility for organisations of all sizes.

Another challenge is the risk of oversimplification. Segmentation typically categorises audiences based on shared characteristics, which can overlook the complexity of individual behaviours and preferences. Psychographic segmentation may fail to capture overlapping interests across demographic groups, leading to narrow or ineffective strategies (Vos et al., 2020). Therefore, over-reliance on rigid audience segments can limit opportunities to engage broader, more diverse audiences.

Finally, segmentation can inadvertently alienate traditional supporters, who most of the time form the backbone of arts organisations. Efforts to attract new demographics can sometimes neglect loyal patrons or weaken established programming, which can lead to dissatisfaction (Ulker-Demirel et al., 2018). For example, a theatre introducing experimental performances might alienate long-standing visitors who prefer classical productions. Hence, balancing audience diversification with the retention of core supporters needs careful planning and transparent communication in order to maintain loyalty while engaging new groups.

The British Museum's *Manga* exhibition in 2019 serves as a significant example of how audience segmentation can effectively attract new audiences and reposition cultural institutions. As the largest display of manga outside Japan, the exhibition sought to engage underrepresented demographics, including young adults (18–35), families, and manga enthusiasts, while continuing to cater to its traditional audience base. This strategic targeting aligns with contemporary marketing theories that highlight the importance of psychographic and behavioural segmentation in enhancing audience engagement and experience (Walmsley, 2019).

To achieve its objectives, the museum focused on the Stimulation and Entertainment segments—audience groups identified as prioritising engaging, contemporary experiences. The marketing campaign incorporated innovative outreach methods, such as graffiti murals in Shoreditch, a trendy area popular among young adults. This approach proved highly effective, as 10% of visits were generated from the Entertainment segment, a notable increase compared to the typical 2% for British Museum exhibitions (Waller & Waller, 2021). The murals' informal and vibrant aesthetic directly appealed to younger audiences who value immersive and visually

impactful campaigns, showcasing the effectiveness of psychographic segmentation in aligning with audience motivations.

Social media emerged as a critical tool in reaching manga enthusiasts, a group traditionally overlooked by mainstream cultural institutions. By investing heavily in targeted digital campaigns and collaborating with influencers, as well as events such as Hyper Japan and Comic-Con, the museum effectively resonated with manga fans. As a result, 15% of visitors from the *Specialists* segment cited social media as their primary reason for attending the exhibition. This outcome underscores the increasing importance of digital platforms in contemporary arts marketing, particularly when appealing to younger, tech-savvy audiences who seek interactive and personalised experiences.

The exhibition's success in achieving demographic shifts further demonstrates the impact of targeted segmentation. Remarkably, 43% of visitors were aged 25–34, marking the youngest-ever audience for a paid exhibition at the British Museum. Additionally, Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) representation increased to 34%, reflecting the museum's commitment to fostering diversity and inclusivity. These results highlight the potential of segmentation strategies to engage underrepresented groups and position arts organisations as accessible, contemporary spaces that reflect societal diversity.

However, the exhibition also faced significant challenges, particularly in balancing contemporary appeal with the historical authenticity expected of a cultural institution. Some visitors expressed concerns that the museum's interpretation of manga risked oversimplifying or misrepresenting the art form (Walmsley, 2019). This reflects a broader tension within segmentation strategies as targeting specific audience groups can attract new demographics, that can lead to criticism from traditional patrons who expect thorough cultural representation and historical framing.

Furthermore, the reliance on high-budget campaigns and strategic partnerships can raise questions in relation to the sustainability of such initiatives. The exhibition's success depended on substantial financial investment in digital advertising,

influencer collaborations, and off-site promotional activities like the Shoreditch mural. Smaller arts organisations, which may lack similar resources, would find it challenging to replicate this model effectively (Walmsley, 2019). This highlights the disparity in access to segmentation tools between large, well-funded institutions and smaller organisations that operate under financial constraints.

Therefore, combining targeted marketing strategies with innovative programming, the museum successfully broadened its appeal and engaged previously underrepresented groups. However, the challenges of balancing contemporary appeal with historical authenticity and ensuring the sustainability of high-cost campaigns highlight the need for strategic planning in the segmentation efforts.

Furthermore, the British Museum's *Grayson Perry: The Tomb of the Unknown Craftsman* serves as a compelling case study of how cultural institutions can leverage segmentation to attract diverse audiences while repositioning themselves as venues for contemporary art. Curated by Turner Prize-winning artist Grayson Perry, the exhibition intertwined Perry's modern works with historical artefacts, appealing to a broad spectrum of visitors who valued both craft narratives and contemporary artistic commentary. This duality aligns with findings by Radermecker (2020), who highlights the increasing importance of an artist's narrative in shaping audience perceptions and engagement, often holding as much weight as the artistic merit itself.

The museum employed the Culture Segments psychographic model to identify and target three distinct audience groups (Essence, Expression, and Stimulation) with tailored marketing strategies that addressed their motivations and preferences. For the Stimulation segment, which prioritises contemporary and trend-driven experiences, the museum implemented a creative and participatory marketing strategy through a "stunt teddy bear" competition. Visitors were invited to submit teddy bears as stand-ins for Perry's childhood toy, Alan Measles, which fostered a sense of playful engagement while generating significant online interaction. This approach reflects the growing importance of digital media in cultural marketing, particularly in engaging younger, trend-conscious audiences (Waller & Waller, 2021).

By encouraging participation and creating a sense of novelty, the museum successfully appealed to a group that values interactive, unconventional experiences.

For the Expression segment, characterised by community-focused audiences, the museum launched the *#CraftDebate* campaign on Twitter in collaboration with the Crafts Council. This initiative facilitated meaningful discussions around craft and tradition, enhancing community involvement and fostering dialogue about the themes explored in the exhibition (Gryllakis & Matsiola, 2022). The success of this strategy highlights the role of institutional partnerships in shaping audience engagement, allowing cultural organisations to extend their reach while creating opportunities for shared experiences (Fillis et al., 2022). By leveraging digital platforms, the Museum demonstrated how online tools can encourage active audience participation and extend engagement beyond physical exhibition spaces.

The exhibition achieved remarkable results, underscoring the effectiveness of psychographic segmentation and targeted marketing strategies. It attracted 112,194 visitors, nearly double the original target of 60,000, and generated a significant increase in merchandise sales, reflecting the exhibition's ability to align with audience interests and preferences. This success demonstrates how contemporary art exhibitions can revitalise traditional institutions (Walmsley & Meamber, 2017), positioning them as relevant and accessible to modern audiences. Additionally, the museum's strong social media engagement—marked by a notable increase in Facebook likes and Twitter followers—illustrates the growing significance of digital platforms in reaching and connecting with new audiences (Gryllakis & Matsiola, 2022).

However, the exhibition also faced challenges, particularly regarding the reliance on Perry's celebrity status. While Perry's profile undoubtedly helped attract trend-driven visitors, it divided opinion among more traditional audiences and critics. Some perceived the exhibition as overly focused on Perry's fame rather than the artistic significance of the works on display, raising questions about the balance between contemporary appeal and artistic integrity (Radermecker, 2020). This tension reflects

a broader challenge within cultural marketing: while leveraging celebrity influence can draw new audiences, it also risks alienating loyal patrons who expect a more conventional curatorial focus.

This essay has demonstrated that audience segmentation is essential for arts organisations to remain competitive and relevant in today's cultural landscape. By attracting new audiences, optimising resources, and fostering inclusivity, segmentation allows institutions to adapt to evolving expectations and connect with diverse groups.

The British Museum's Citi Exhibition Manga showcased how tailored strategies, such as digital outreach and graffiti murals, can engage underrepresented groups like young and culturally diverse audiences. This highlights segmentation's ability to break down traditional barriers to participation. Similarly, *Grayson Perry: The Tomb of the Unknown Craftsman* illustrates how creative programming, such as the #CraftDebate campaign and audience-driven competitions, can reposition institutions as contemporary and accessible. However, both examples reveal potential limitations: resource-intensive strategies may challenge smaller organisations, and reliance on celebrity-driven initiatives raises concerns about maintaining artistic integrity and core audience trust.

These findings demonstrate that audience segmentation is most effective when it balances innovation with tradition. While it revitalises engagement and expands reach, it oversimplified approaches risk alienating established audiences or undermining authenticity. Therefore, arts organisations need to employ segmentation as a strategic and nuanced process leveraging creative, inclusive, and data-driven approaches to ensure long-term audience loyalty while also embracing new opportunities.

Hencewhy, audience segmentation is not merely a strategy but a necessity for arts organisations seeking to thrive. By balancing innovation, inclusivity, and authenticity, these organisations can position themselves as dynamic, accessible, and culturally significant spaces in an increasingly diverse and changing world.

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