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# **European Journal of Marketing**

**Accepted Version**

**User participation and valuation in digital art platforms:  
the case of Saatchi Art**

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## **Abstract**

**Purpose** – The purpose of this paper is to examine the impact of digital platforms on the contemporary visual art market. Drawing on the theoretical insights of the technology acceptance model (TAM), the meaning transfer model (MTM), and arts marketing literature, we conceptualise the role of user participation in creating the meaning and value of contemporary artworks in the online art market.

**Design/methodology/approach** – We conduct a qualitative study of Saatchi Art as an instrumental case for theorising. It is an online platform for trading visual artworks created by young and emerging artists. The data for this study were collected through direct observation and documentary reviews as well as user comments and buyer reviews from Saatchi Art. We reviewed 319 buyer comments and 30 user comments. The collected data are supplemented with various secondary sources such as newspapers, magazines, social media texts, and videos.

**Findings** – The growth of digital art platforms such as Saatchi Art provides efficiency and accessibility of information to users, while helping them overcome the impediments of physical galleries such as geographical constraints and intimidating psychological atmosphere, thereby attracting novice collectors. However, users' involvement in the process of valuing artworks is limited and still guided by curatorial direction.

**Originality/value** – User participation in the online art market is guided by curatorial direction rather than social influence. This confirms re-intermediation of marketing relationships, highlighting the role of new intermediaries such as digital platforms in arts marketing.

**Keywords:** technology acceptance model, meaning transfer model, online art market, young and emerging artists, user participation

**Article Type:** Research paper

## **Introduction**

While consumers have benefited from new products or services with improved technological functions, at the same time, extra commitment for consumers is often required before adopting and using such products or services (Moreau et al., 2001). In market research, consumer adoption of technology is practically important for marketing managers of firms because of the close linkage between consumer attitudes about technology and their purchase intentions (Arts et al., 2011). Thus, previous research has attempted to conceptualise the determinants and process of new technology adoption and acceptance, proposing the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989), TAM2 (Venkatesh and Davis, 2000), and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) (Venkatesh et al., 2003).

In this article, we focus on electronic commerce in the contemporary visual art market. Although online user attitudes towards new technologies based on the TAM have been actively researched for more than a decade (e.g. Gefen et al., 2003; Gillenson and Sherrell, 2002; Klopping and McKinney, 2004; Pikkarainen et al., 2004), research on digital platforms for trading visual artworks (henceforth, digital art platforms) has had little attention from both mainstream marketing and arts marketing researchers. This is probably because of later adoption of e-commerce in the art market, when compared to other markets such as those of books, fashion, and electronic goods. Indeed, the rapid growth of internet usage and the emergence of new digital platforms have transformed the conditions of trading in the art market tremendously. Without physical or temporal constraints, the usage of the internet has created new opportunities for both insiders and newcomers in the art world.

On the one hand, stakeholders in the conventional art world can access a new channel that not only promotes and distributes artworks but also helps them to exploit a new source of profit. While many museums use websites to release rich information and offer interactive contents

to prospective visitors, producers and artists can take advantage of multiple media channels such as personal blogs or social media for inducing transactions by making direct contacts with prospective buyers. For dealers, benefits of the internet include new forums for meeting potential buyer, and an additional means to make a profit by selling artworks via JPEG images on their websites (Velthuis, 2014). On the other hand, new types of online-based digital platforms and business models have emerged in the art market. These include innovative platforms not found in offline markets, such as those for crowdfunding and creative commons. In addition, some digital platforms sell artworks via online galleries in a similar way to conventional dealers and auctioneers to overcome the limitations of offline galleries. They then charge a commission for such transactions.

Indeed, online trading of art is not a new phenomenon, as many websites were founded during the “dot.com boom” era in the 1990s (Adam, 2014, p. 121). However, the majority of these sites have disappeared because trading artworks requires “proximity and physical, tactile interactions” between consumers and artworks (Velthuis and Curioni, 2015, p. 18). Moreover, at that time, the aesthetic experience of users was often disturbed by technical difficulties (Horowitz, 2012). Despite these significant changes in the art market, the adoption of the internet for trading artworks has been much slower than in other product markets.

Today, however, users are more accustomed to using the Internet for trading goods and services. With the advancement of computer vision, computer graphics, and data visualisation, it is now possible to display high-resolution digital images in a relatively short time, enabling proper appreciation of visual artworks in the online space. The rapid development of virtual reality and augmented reality technologies allow content and service providers to design highly immersive and interactive user interface. These changes have led to the proliferation of second-generation websites selling artworks, as evidenced by the steep growth in online sales of

artworks. According to Hiscox's 2014 report, estimated online sales of artworks were \$1.57 billion, 1.6% of the entire art market. With an annual growth rate of 19%, online sales will reach \$3.76 billion by 2018.

Nevertheless, existing research pays little attention to the online market for transactions of artworks (henceforth referred to as the online art market), with the exception of Khaire (2015) who has analysed the functional characteristics of online firms by analysing the operating systems of firms rather than their users. In this current study, we will address this gap by examining user participation in the online art market with respect to the valuation system of contemporary art. Given the challenge of evaluating artworks for their uncertain value (Hirsch, 1972), the examination of the process by which the value and meaning of visual artworks are generated in the online market could provide valuable insights to scholars working within the field of arts marketing and branding (Hewer et al., 2013; Kerrigan et al., 2011; Lee et al., 2018; Lee and Lee, 2016; Muñiz et al., 2014; Preece et al., 2016; Preece and Kerrigan, 2015; Rodner and Preece, 2015; Schroeder, 2005).

To extend this line of research with a socio-cultural perspective, we aim to conceptualise the role of user participation in creating the meaning and value of contemporary artworks in the context of the increasing adoption of e-commerce. Our analysis will be guided by the following research questions, drawn from a critical review of the TAM, the meaning transfer model (MTM), and relevant research in arts marketing: 1) to what extent users intend to use a digital art platform based on its usefulness and ease of use; 2) to what extent users contribute to co-creating the meaning of artworks in the online art market; and 3) to what extent the emergence of digital art platforms impinge on other established intermediaries in the art world.

In order to address these questions, we conduct an instrumental case study using Saatchi Art, a leading digital platform for trading contemporary visual artworks. Saatchi Art offers

unparalleled selections of approximately 500,000 artworks, created by over 50,000 young and emerging artists from across the globe (Garton, 2015). The platform records approximately 800 sales a day and the collectors represent 80 different countries (Thompson, 2014). The data for this study were collected through direct observation and documentary reviews of users' comments. On Saatchi Art, there are three types of users; 1) buyers who purchase artworks and leave reviews (B<sup>1</sup>); 2) hedonic users who might be potential buyers, appreciators, and other intermediaries of artworks and leave comments (U<sup>1</sup>); and 3) young and emerging artists who display their artworks for sale. As our study focuses on user participation in terms of consumer behaviour, artists are excluded from our sample of respondents. Furthermore, such online data are supplemented with various secondary data such as video clips, newspaper and magazine articles, texts on social media, and official publications by Saatchi Art.

## **Theoretical Background**

Drawing on the theoretical insights of the TAM and MTM, this study expands the scope of previous research on arts marketing into user participation and curatorial direction in the digital environment in terms of conceptualising the valuation of artworks.

### *Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)*

Based on the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975), Davis (1986) initiated the TAM, which conceptualises the determinants of consumers' behavioural intention to use a technology (Davis et al., 1989). In the TAM, perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEOU) mediate the effect of external variables such as "objective system design

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<sup>1</sup> In the case analysis, the letter B refers to buyer reviews about Saatchi Art and the letter U refers to user comments about curatorial practice on Saatchi Art.

characteristics, training, computer self-efficacy, user involvement in design, and the nature of the implementation process” on the intention to use (Venkatesh and Davis, 1996, p. 20).

The TAM has been widely used as a conceptual framework to analyse not only the acceptance of information systems by employees in various organisational settings (Agarwal and Prasad, 1999; Igarria and Iivari, 1995; Karahanna and Limayem, 2000), but also the process of students’ adoption of Web 2.0 technology in the learning environment (Chow et al., 2012; Lowe et al., 2013), as well as consumers’ acceptance of new technologies. In particular, the TAM is frequently applied to the context of e-commerce (Gefen et al., 2000; Gefen and Straub, 2000; Gillenson and Sherrell, 2002; Klopping and McKinney, 2004; Lederer et al., 2000; Pikkarainen et al., 2004). In this context, PU is defined as “the extent to which a consumer believes that on-line shopping will provide access to useful information, facilitate comparison shopping, and enable quicker shopping” (Vijayarathy, 2004, p. 750).

With regard to PEOU, Gefen, Karahanna, and Straub (2003) integrate consumers’ applicability of online shopping and e-vendors’ construction of trust. They insist that both technology and trust are imperative for increasing consumers’ intended use of e-commerce by identifying the variables associated with trustworthiness of websites such as “situational normality (i.e., having a typical interface)”, structural assurance, and familiarity (gained through articles or advertisements in press) (Gefen et al., 2003, p. 75). In addition, individuals’ acceptance of new technology is influenced by correlated social factors (Venkatesh and Davis, 2000) such as subjective norm, defined as “a person’s perception that most people who are important to him think he should or should not perform the behaviour in question” (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975, p. 302), and image which enhances an individual’s status in the group by using technology.

Research Question 1: To what extent do users intend to use a digital art platform based on its usefulness and ease of use?



As previous research has applied the TAM to cultural fields such as music (Amoroso and Guo, 2006; Kwong and Park, 2008) and visual arts, especially museums (Chen and Huang, 2012; Hume, 2015; Kang and Gretzel, 2012; Pianesi et al., 2009), the model is applicable to the analysis of user behaviour in the online art market, constructed by the adoption of e-commerce technology. However, in explaining individuals' intention to use digital art platforms, the TAM does not embrace the societal level perspective on their motivation for purchasing artworks. Although the TAM considers social influence with subjective norm and image, it only represents the voluntary force of individual perceptions and choices rather than the social meaning of individual consumption.

#### *Meaning Transfer Model (MTM)*

McCracken's (1986) model of the movement of meaning is widely cited in consumer research, explaining the transfer of cultural meaning from a culturally constituted world to consumer goods. According to McCracken, consumer goods go beyond their utilitarian nature and economic value with their capacity to deliver embodied cultural meaning to consumers: "Meaning first resides in the culturally constituted world. To become resident in consumer goods, meaning must be disengaged from this world and transferred to goods" (McCracken, 1986, p. 74). Although McCracken's model is significant in situating consumption within the socio-cultural context, it has been criticised for the following points. First of all, McCracken hardly addresses political aspects in his cultural analysis, but the meaning structure might be influenced by the cultural dominance of a group or "competing segments within a society" (Joy, 1989, p. 289). Secondly, consumer groups or communities are ignored, but they mediate interactions between individual consumers and individual producers (O'Reilly, 2005). Thirdly, McCracken's model fails to embrace non-Western cultures as it is inspired by individualism dominant in the Western culture (Belk, 1989).

More importantly, while McCracken's model presents a unidirectional flow of meaning from the world to customers, several critics highlight flow disruption, opposite flow, and dynamics by other parallel competitive flows (Fournier, 1998; Holt, 2002; McKechnie and Tynan, 2006; O'Reilly, 2005; Thompson and Haytko, 1997). Although McCracken allows the possibility of personifying the meaning of goods in the meaning transfer from goods to consumers, these scholars conceptualise consumers as active meaning-makers by highlighting reciprocal exchange of meaning between goods and consumers. That is, the cultural meanings of goods or brands are not simply accepted or rejected by consumers, but emerge out of negotiation, manipulation, revision and engagement with consumers. Therefore, consumers become "not only the author of his/her unique understanding, but also, thorough extension, a partial author of the brand" (Allen et al., 2008, p. 787).

In the context of the creation of the meaning of products, the focus moves on to the consumer collective in the online community. Indeed, consumer collectives — those groups of consumers who share knowledge of particular products or brands and create content about them (Närvänen and Goulding, 2016) — play the role, on an industry level, of co-creating the meaning and value of products. In this case, it is consumers themselves who become marketers. For instance, the Newton brand community, abandoned by Apple, has been supported by consumers' "magical, mythic and religious, or gnostic" narratives about brands (Muñiz and Schau, 2005, p. 745). By creating its meanings and myths, consumers collectively revitalised the brand of Apple's Newton.

Research Question 2: To what extent do users contribute to co-creating the meaning of artworks in the online art market?

McCracken's MTM is applicable to the context of visual art. Artists deliberately or subconsciously discover concepts associated with cultural principals in the world. They then

embed this meaning in their artworks. Artists reside between the world and goods in the meaning-making process, creating meaning at the beginning of the process. In other words, artworks embody cultural meanings from the world, and artists use these as mirrors to reflect on or criticise society (Alexander, 2003). The particular meaning of a piece of contemporary art is hard to understand or deliver to consumers. Therefore, gatekeepers are necessary for transferring meaning from artworks to consumers in the art market (Currid, 2007; Hirsch, 1972). This is akin to the role of journalists in the fashion field, as McCracken (1986) points out. However, the role of gatekeepers or intermediaries is more complex in the art market than that of journalists in the fashion system. This is because conceptual art stresses the idea behind the artist's intention, rather than its actual appearance (Danto, 1997). In other words, the product (artwork) in the visual art market has symbolic and intersubjective meaning. Therefore, it requires a translator to interpret the meanings fixed within the artwork in order that it might be conveyed to consumers.

The consideration of consumers as active meaning-makers by the critics of McCracken's model (Fournier, 1998; Holt, 2002; McKechnie and Tynan, 2006; O'Reilly, 2005; Thompson and Haytko, 1997) is also questionable in the context of the art market. Indeed, consumers are situated in a rather passive position in the field of visual art. There are two types of consumers in the visual art market: appreciators and buyers. On the one hand, appreciators might experience art for its own sake and self-justify the intrinsic aesthetic value and meaning of artworks (Bradshaw et al., 2010). On the other hand, buyers might personalise the meaning resident in artworks, depending on the purpose of their purchase. For instance, they might seek social value, economic interests, or individual satisfaction of possessing exclusive cultural goods. In the context of the contemporary art market, however, consumer activities hardly influence the meaning and value of artworks in terms of negotiating, manipulating, and

recreating what is mainly drawn from the network of market intermediaries. The rise of digital platforms as a new intermediary significantly alters the relationships among artists, consumers and intermediaries in the art market. However, McCracken's model hardly considers the role of technology in mediating between consumer goods and individual consumers in terms of constructing and disseminating cultural meanings in the online art market.

### *Meaning and Value of Contemporary Art*

The arts marketing literature addresses the mediation between artists and consumers by focusing on the role of intermediaries in the contemporary art market. Indeed, the close connection between visual art and branding has inspired previous scholars in the marketing field to seek cross-fertilisation of ideas (Schroeder 1997, 2005, 2010; Lehman and Wickham, 2014). By acknowledging the limitations of applying conventional branding theory to the art market, recent researchers have adopted a socio-cultural approach to studying the marketing of visual art (Kerrigan et al., 2011; Lee and Lee, 2017, 2016; Muñiz et al., 2014; Preece and Kerrigan, 2015; Rodner and Preece, 2015). These researchers mainly draw on cultural branding theory (Holt, 2004) in conceptualising intermediaries' commitment to discovering, introducing, instructing, and selecting the meaning of artworks, while partly appropriating sociological perspectives on art (Becker, 1982; Bourdieu, 1996).

The meanings of artworks are conveyed to consumers via an instrument, called the art world (Danto, 1964). The art world is conceptualised as a collective network (Becker, 1982), in which powerful intermediaries are legitimating the meaning of artworks. These intermediaries include art dealers, gallery owners, curators, critics, and the media. They bestow the status of art upon certain artworks (Dickie, 1974), whereby their meaning and value are legitimised. In the process of legitimisation, the meaning and value of artworks are refined, negotiated, and co-

created through the interactions of inner members (Preece et al., 2016; Preece and Kerrigan, 2015).

Bourdieu (1993) also argues that insiders in the field of art contribute to constituting the ideology of art and acknowledges that the ideology enables the legitimacy of artworks. More importantly, Bourdieu (1993) points out that the degree to which the ideology of artists or artworks supported by particular intermediaries is considered as a consensus in the field of art is varied. According to Webb, Schirato, and Danaher's (2002, p. 171) interpretation of Bourdieu's works, the legitimation of artworks depends on the stories surrounding the artist and "the status (the capital) of the storytellers". Newman, Goulding, and Whitehead (2013, p. 460) also support this view, as "[l]egitimacy in the field of contemporary visual art is defined by those who have dominant field positions, such as certain artists, curators and critics". That is, the influence of the stakeholder's status upon the legitimation is not nebulous in the field of art. Rather, the legitimation of art depends on the differences in the power of intermediaries drawn from their social and economic capital in the wider system of social class. Therefore, struggles (Bourdieu, 1996) or collaborations (Becker, 1982) among intermediaries is rampant in the art world, since intermediaries are considered instruments for conveying selective meanings to consumers.

Research Question 3: To what extent does the emergence of digital art platforms impinge on other established intermediaries in the art world?

The re-organisation of the social structure underlining the role of intermediaries in constructing, disseminating, and transferring the meaning and value of contemporary art is inevitable in the online art market. This is because of the increasing shift of trading environment from offline to online, rather than the changing characteristic of goods in the market. Thus, the conceptual emphasis on the role of intermediaries in arts marketing (Lee and Lee, 2016; Preece et al., 2016;

Preece and Kerrigan, 2015; Rodner and Preece, 2015), based on the uncertainty of the meaning and value of artworks, is certainly applicable to the online art market. However, the arts marketing literature has not explored the changing dynamics of the online art market and the impact of digital art platforms on traditional intermediaries, also paying little attention to consumers' involvement in the process of creating the meaning of artworks, which may be facilitated by the development of technology.

The theoretical arguments on PU and PEOU in the TAM allow us to analyse users' intentions to adopt online technology for the transaction of artworks. However, such analysis remains incomplete as the TAM hardly explains the social causes of selecting a particular website or a platform among various alternatives and users' motivation for purchasing a particular artwork. The MTM provides a useful lens to explore users' participation in the online art market with respect to the movement of the cultural meaning embedded in artworks. In conceptualising the meaning transfer with a socio-cultural framing, the arts marketing research provides a valuable insight on the role of intermediaries within the valuation structure of artworks. While research questions of this study are articulated from these theoretical perspectives, we try to extend them by examining the changing relationship between digital art platforms and other established intermediaries.

### **Research Design and Method**

In this paper, we conduct a qualitative study of Saatchi Art as an instrumental case for theorising user participation in the online art market. It is an online platform for trading visual artworks created by young and emerging artists. Working from the philosophical assumption of constructivism, we use the logic that Stakes (1995) developed when conducting a case study. Therefore, our qualitative case study can be characterised as holistic, interpretive, and empathic.

According to Stake (1995, p.171), an instrumental case is “research on a case to gain [an] understanding of something else”. Saatchi Art provides an online space to connect sellers and buyers. We do not examine individual artists’ activities on the digital platform, but focus on Saatchi Art — viewing it as a singular entity — with the aim of understanding user experience and participation. Due to lack of generalisability of results, some researchers often misunderstand the single case study as a non-scientific study (Flyvbjerg, 2006). However, overemphasising the generalisability issue can lead to underestimating the strength of a single case study. The phenomenon under exploration can be richly delineated in a single case study (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007; Siggelkow, 2007). Our case is selected by purposive sampling, with “the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (Merriam, 1998, p. 61). Thus, we aim to understand the uniqueness and complexity of Saatchi Art in investigating user participation in the digital art market.

The data for this study were collected through direct observation, and documentary reviews, as well as user comments and buyer reviews from Saatchi Art. The data from Saatchi Art is supplemented with various secondary sources such as newspapers, magazines, social media texts and videos. Firstly, we observed the website for over three months in order to provide “episodes of unique relationship to fashion a story or unique description of the case” (Stake, 1995, p. 63). During the observation, we could not only discover the patterns of user interface in Saatchi Art but also grasp and select important contents on the website for further analysis. In addition, we selectively captured various screen images on Saatchi Art for illustration. The images, as a visual type of field notes, “are a form of capturing the researcher’s “perspective” on a phenomenon, conserving it in a particularly rich way” (Meyer et al., 2013, p. 503). The captured images contribute to the richness of our findings for the analysis of questions such as

“what is the ‘meaning’ of this particular design motif on” Saatchi Art? (Banks, 2002, p. 8). We also scrutinised main curatorial practices of Saatchi Art, called ‘One to Watch Artists’, ‘Inside Studio’, and ‘Collections’. To some extent, Saatchi Art is a social website which allows users to express their opinions by leaving comments. During the observation, we selectively collected 30 meaningful user comments (U) about the curatorial practice.

With regard to collecting buyers’ opinions, Qu, Zhang, and Li (2008) point out that previous research was mainly based on experiments with students (McKinney et al., 2002; Sirkka et al., 2000) or online surveys with representative samplings (Devaraj et al., 2002; Szymanski and Hise, 2000; Wolfinbarger and Gilly, 2003). While acknowledging the limitations of such methods, Qu, Zhang, and Li (2008) used data drawn from real customers, using the review website, Yahoo Merchant. Likewise, we obtained reviews about Saatchi Art from a consumer review community<sup>2</sup> (www.trustpilot.com). As Saatchi Art is an active website, the review pages are continuously updated. In other words, the quantity of potential data gradually increases over time. Therefore, this study extracted buyer reviews posted for a period of 12 months from 19 August, 2015 (the 1<sup>st</sup> review is still available on the website) to 19 August, 2016 for our data.

We initially found 12 up-to-date reviews at the bottom section of the page on Saatchi Art. By clicking on the section, the viewer navigates to a new screen with a customer review community in which 319 comments written between August, 2015 and August, 2016 were available. The loaded page shows customer reviews about the services provided by Saatchi Art. The page also contains brief information about the company, the pie-figure for overall ratings,

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<sup>2</sup> Trustpilot is an online community in which consumers post reviews about the services provided by several firms from different fields (Barrett, 2015).



and user IDs. The comments section is open to everyone to write and read. Although, the page does not allow communication between consumers, the company being reviewed is able to reply to buyers' comments.

In this community, users are able to share their experiences with others by rating Saatchi Art's service from one star (lowest) to five stars (highest). They can write text about the company's service using a title. Even though the rating is considered important for gauging consumer satisfaction in previous research (Qu et al., 2008), the rating seems to be nebulous in our data; consumers seem to be generous in giving five stars (80%). Moreover, the rating of five stars does not represent a consumer's real view about the website. Thus, the rating is not the focus of our consideration. Rather, our focus is on the actual content written by real customers. We narrowed the data down by removing very short reviews (less than five words). The final data include 253 reviews (B) about Saatchi Art and the average length of each comment is 77 words.

In addition, the collected data are supplemented with the following secondary sources: (1) a video clip of an interview in the form of public conversation between Forbes Magazine and the chief creative officer and chief curator of Saatchi Art in 2013, which was transcribed; (2) official publications by Saatchi Art; (3) transcripts of interviews with Rebecca Wilson (chief curator of Saatchi Art) by various media such the BBC, the Telegraph, and the Guardian; and (4) 65 published comments of the chief curator replying to users' questions on social media.<sup>3</sup>

Analysis of the data was carried out to clarify and identify users' intentions to use Saatchi Art and their roles in creating the meaning that resides in presented artworks in Saatchi Art. To do so, we systematically analysed the collected data by a qualitative content analysis. In this article,

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<sup>3</sup> Saatchi Art annually offered opportunities for anonymous users to interact with their curator between 2014 and 2015. The time for asking questions of Saatchi Art was limited to an hour on a particular date. In 2014, there were 35 tweets by Saatchi Art responding to users' various questions, while Saatchi Art's 30 replies to questions were available via Instagram and Twitter in 2015.

the content analysis rests primarily on the authors' subjective or direct interpretation (Stake, 1995) of underlying meaning of the content (Graneheim and Lundman, 2004). Indeed, there are three perspectives on qualitative content analysis – conventional, direct, and summative – according to their ways of developing codes in research (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). Our research follows the deductive category application (Mayring, 2000) or the direct content analysis which allows us to “[use] existing theory or prior research to develop initial coding scheme prior to beginning to analyse the data” (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005, p. 1286). Accordingly, the following categories were identified by consulting the existing literature: the usefulness and ease of use of Saatchi Art, users as active meaning makers, and meaning transfer from artworks to users. We also point out that the process of analysing the data was iterative (Eisenhardt, 1989) to compare the conceptual categories and data systematically. Lastly, we address triangulation with multiple data sources to enrich the credibility of our analysis (Baxter and Eyles, 1997).

### **The Case of Saatchi Art**

Saatchi Art has led the online art market for young and emerging artists' artworks. Saatchi Art is ranked sixth place in the digital art platform ranking (Hiscox, 2016). The online gallery presents artworks without any limitations in terms of quality and genre so as to encourage young and emerging contemporary artists. As a result, in 2015, there were over 60,000 young and emerging artists and around 500,000 original and contemporary artworks on the platform. A *commerce*-oriented business model (Wirtz and Lihotzky, 2003) is adopted by Saatchi Art: artists are charged 30% commission on their sales. In terms of the quantity of artworks sold, the online gallery has had a lead on most brick-and-mortar galleries (Hudson, 2013).

The platform was launched in 2006 by Charles Saatchi, the influential art collector who owned the Saatchi Gallery. This platform was initially a form of artists' community (Crow 2007). At

that time, 120,000 artists presented their artworks on the non-commercial website (Hatton and Walker, 2003). By allowing any artists to present their works and sell the artworks direct to buyers without commissions, Saatchi wants to “break [the offline market’s] deadlock” (Saatchi 2012, p. 68). In 2008, this platform was re-launched under a new name, *Saatchi Online*, with added commercial functions and, in 2014, was sold to *Leafgroup*<sup>4</sup> for \$17 million and rebranded *Saatchi Art*. Despite changing ownership, the platform continues to use the name of the powerful brand, Saatchi, in the art world

To help buyers make a decision, Saatchi Art provides various types of curations through their curatorial team. This is called ‘Features’ and is devised to offer valuable advice on purchasing artworks for buyers. The curators on Saatchi Art select artists to feature on their website. This takes place as either an individual artist’s online exhibition or a group artists’ exhibition. The two types of features introducing artists are called ‘One to Watch Artists’ and ‘Inside Studio’. Both features give weekly attention to individual artists, showing their works and interviews (‘One to Watch Artists’), and presenting their working process and inspirations (‘Inside Studio’). Moreover, as we can see on image C in Figure 1, rising artists are presented and recommended via the channel ‘Invest in Art’ in which 5 to 7 artists are annually recognised by the chief curator of Saatchi Art.

[Insert Figure 1]

The ‘Collections’ is an editorial practice by curators on Saatchi Art in which curators display several different images by different artists within a certain theme such as locations, colours, inspirations, etc. Indeed, Saatchi Art highlights its curation, which is a distinctive feature of the website. Sean Moriarty, CEO at Saatchi Art, describes the importance of curation as, “the

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<sup>4</sup> Demand Media changed their name to Leafgroup at the end of 2016.

cornerstone of creating a captivating online experience in which to discover art” (Garton, 2014). There are, thus, large numbers of the ‘Collections’ available on this page organised by curators at Saatchi Art in accordance with defined concepts. For example, the collection ‘Mid-Century Living’ is curated by Katherine Henning, associate curator at Saatchi Art, featuring 53 artworks selected for fitting in with the concept of her collection.

#### *Users’ Intention to Use Saatchi Art*

The technological usefulness and ease of use of Saatchi Art reinforce users’ intention to use the digital platform. (See Appendix). Without geographical restriction, the online environment allows consumers to purchase artworks from any country. Indeed, SAATCHIART (2015) reports that they have sold artworks to consumers in 70 different countries. The increasing accessibility is emphasised by a curator at Saatchi:

If you’re interested in finding out what’s going on in different cities over the world... It would never happen if you relied on going to exhibitions and galleries and you would never, you know, sitting here you would never find amazing artists in Dubai or you know, you just don’t, some people are lucky to travel the art world circuit and others most of us don’t...(Wilson 2013: 17:57)

Echoing the expectation of Saatchi Art (Beugge, 2014), users also highlight the availability of discovering emerging and young artists, and artworks that they would not be able to find in a physical setting. For instance:

[I] am thrilled to have found original pieces from literally all over the globe, to which I would not otherwise have gained access [B21]

This is an equivalent outcome from a survey by Hiscox (2015) in which participants stated that discovery is a considerable benefit of trading art online.

Moreover, the further accessibility of information on the web results in attracting more users in the online art market. While there is information asymmetry between artists, intermediaries, and consumers in the traditional (offline) art market (Moulin, 2003 cited in Noël 2014), the Internet helps to democratise information (Horowitz, 2012). Traditionally, artists and collectors heavily relied on intermediaries, particularly dealers, for seeking information about price fluctuations, market trends, and evaluation of artworks. For instance, financially, the price of artworks in galleries is hardly displayed. In particular, it is difficult to trace the sales prices of artworks in the primary art market (Velthuis, 2005).

Apart from lacking data on selling prices, the information about artworks or artists is very limited in the art market. In this sense, Wilson (2013, 11:57), the chief curator of Saatchi Art, describes the traditional market as “very murky, not just from the financial side...”. With the democratic features of the web, this information is available on the Internet. Unlike the offline art market, Saatchi Art underlined its transparency by publicising various information such as the price of artworks set by artists, the description of works, and biographies of artists. Saatchi Art also highlighted the effect of making the symmetric information about arts:

That’s all part of this mission that I feel really passionately about. That we should break down those traditional hierarchies that exist in the art world, and bring more people in, open it up and make it this much more transparent world. (Wilson 2013, 11:52)

More importantly, the traditional art market consists of powerful individuals and institutions from different fields, with a high degree of interdependence. There is a close linkage between members in the art world, including artists, intermediaries (critics, galleries and museums), and even serious collectors. For instance, dealers need support from critics in order to convince an audience or place their artists within a certain artistic movement (Wijnberg and Gemser, 2000). The complex and close relationship between them makes the art world “seem [an] esoteric and

intimidating” market (Khaire, 2015, p. 117). As a result of this interdependence between key actors, there is a high barrier to entry for fresh buyers. Unlike the traditional art market, there are three actors in our case: the artists, Saatchi Art, and the collectors. Disintermediation in the online market allows buyers to overcome the high barrier and enter into the acquisition of visual artworks:

I would very much recommend this as a way of buying art, especially if you are inexperienced and perhaps intimidated by and not terribly familiar with the process but would like to have lovely things... [B7]

As a result, Saatchi Art attracts many buyers who have never bought artworks in brick-and-mortar galleries. Our findings show that the reviewers believe themselves to be novice collectors.

Using the TAM, Gefen, Karahanna, and Straub (2003, p.72) conceptualise the online consumer’s acceptance of e-commerce, highlighting the mechanism through which they build trust in the e-vendor and stating that “...familiarity and situational normality contribute to customer assessments of the ease of use of the Website”. In this sense, the interface design on Saatchi Art appears similar to that of a typical online shopping website, reinforcing ease of use. At the same time, Saatchi Art shows an attempt to make its website look like a real gallery, which assures situational normality — “a shared understanding among members of the social system” (Mcknight et al., 1998, p. 479) — in Saatchi Art.

As such, Saatchi Art offers experience of a space similar to a physical gallery. It does not mean that Saatchi Art provides a virtual tour of a gallery for immersing users through the interface. Rather, Saatchi Art sets an atmosphere that enables users to have a proper aesthetic appreciation of artworks. Indeed, the typical space of a brick-and-mortar gallery is referred to as a white cube which is “directed at making works of art look expensive, difficult, and exclusive”

(Velthuis, 2005, p. 33). Likewise, Saatchi Art address the exclusiveness of artworks by differentiating the virtual space of trading artworks with other websites of trading general goods. In this sense, the chief curator of Saatchi Art mentioned Amazon's entrance into the online art market,

Does anyone want to buy a piece of art while they're buying an iron or a toaster? [...] there's no feeling you're buying work from a carefully thought out environment which is very particular to the "product" as Amazon would call it. Buying art and dealing with artists is a very particular thing with all kinds of subtleties, and it just doesn't sit easy with me the idea that you're going to pick up a piece of art while you're shopping for cups and saucers or cushions [...] (Wilson, 2013, 46:30).

Moreover, the curators of Saatchi Art are involved with providing a proper environment for users to appreciate artworks. In addition, Saatchi Art does not display any online advertisement which might disturb the aesthetic experience of users.

#### *Users as Active Meaning-makers*

Although previous research considers the consumers of general goods as active meaning-makers (Muñiz and Schau, 2005; Närvänen and Goulding, 2016), we argue that the buyers on Saatchi Art are hardly involved with co-creating the meaning embedded in artworks. In this sense, our findings show that buyer reviews about Saatchi Art focus on service quality and experience with the delivery procedure, rather than reviewing the value or meaning of acquired artworks (See Appendix).

Buyers' reviews on acquired artworks are usually about technological failures, for instance, the colour difference between a real painting and its image on the screen. In the context of trading visual art on an online platform, the similarities or differences between screen images and real artworks are more important than in other sectors. Unlike general goods, artworks are

considered as “nonmaterial goods directed at a mass public of consumers, for whom they serve an aesthetic, rather than a clearly utilitarian purpose” (Hirsch, 1972, p. 641). That is, aesthetic appreciation of artworks is the main concern, rather than their utility. As a result, in the online trading of visual arts, more emphasis is placed on the accuracy of digital images when compared to the actual goods. Our data confirms that the similarities contribute to a positive user experience.

Although the advanced technology allows artists to provide high-resolution images of their artworks on the platform, the differences between the images on the screen and the actual products delivered to buyers depends on various factors such as lighting, colour balance, and parallel angles. In particular, colour is a very sensitive issue for appreciating visual artworks in digital images sometimes cannot match real artworks. On such occasions, buyers are highly dissatisfied upon receiving the artwork they have ordered:

... I have discovered there is a significant disadvantage to viewing and buying art online...The image online was super-saturated in color, with deep/dark blues (nearly black) and dramatic contrasts. The actual artwork arrived and shows a much less dramatic, more pastel-like palette, with some areas on the canvas appearing nearly white (as compared to those same areas in the online image that appeared light turquoise in color) [B204].

I think it's expected that the original colors of a painting might be slightly different to the online photo.....Painting one had a middle blue sky as background. The original painting came with a turquoise ('swimming pool blue') type of color. I decided to keep it, but I would have most likely not bought it if I had seen this color in person. [B132]

Despite the influence of such an issue on users' satisfaction with regard to using the website, this type of buyers' participation rarely displays any knowledge or considered opinions about the meaning and value of artworks.



[Insert Figure 2.]

There is some utility in examining the platform as a representation of users' preferences about artworks and artists. However, such utility does not influence the construction of meaning of artworks. For instance, the 'Favourites' tool in Saatchi Art enables collectors to mark and show their preference for certain artworks. Items marked as favourites are stored in a user's personal space; users are able to retrace the images they favour later on. Moreover, the 'following' and 'followed' tools — as with Twitter and Facebook — allow users to automatically receive up-to-date information with respect to selected artists. Such interface tools allow users to reveal their preferences, thereby increasing the number of 'Favourites' for artworks or 'Followers' for artists (see figure 2). However, this numeric value does not contribute to co-creating the meanings that reside in artworks.

The digitally mediated environment allows hedonic users for visual arts to publicise their opinions by leaving comments. However, the analysis of user comments shows that users do not participate in the process of constituting the value of artworks. Thus, they still conform to the conventional consumer behaviour that is seen in the offline art market. Indeed, the curatorial content on Saatchi Art commonly provides a section for comments, allowing users to write comments on the content (See Figure 3). In the case of the curation of individual artists, presented as 'One to Watch Artists' and 'Inside studio', users' comments are usually positive, complimenting artists and their works. For instance, one user left a comment, stating "Extraordinary artworks...very beautiful" [U30], or briefly, "Beautiful Works!!" [U2] and "Wow!" [U25]. Some users expressed their emotional reaction, such as "Hey [the name of artist], Congratulation, always loved your work, great stuff" [U10] and "Very excited to have this emerging artist on our site!" [U5]. In addition, there were some critical opinions about

artworks but without clear aesthetic judgment. For example, one user said that “[this artist] has a beautiful studio, unfortunately her artwork is subpar!!!” [U27].

[Insert Figure 3.]

More comments on ‘Collections’ are made than those on ‘One to Watch Artists’ and ‘Inside Studio’. As such, on average there are 30 comments available on each collection. Similar to the comments on individual artists, most users write positive comments by using the following expressions — “good”, “nice”, “superb”, “beautiful”, and “great”. Although most users endorse ‘Collections’ by leaving positive and complimentary comments, some users criticise them because some artworks or artists are repetitively presented in the curatorial practice. For instance, one user criticises not only other users’ comments but also the collection itself, for giving “regular diplomatic comments, even if there are five to six repeat artists, over and over again every week in two or more collections” [U23]. In a similar vein, “I wonder why it's almost [sic] the same painters' paintings displayed most of the time, i [sic] have seen many beautiful pieces of art, and they are never advertised or promoted” [U4]. Another user also complains that their opinions are ignored [U9]. However, some users are more understanding about the recurrences in the ‘Collection’: “See again that some people complain that some are selected more than others... Understandable complaint, but curationism is not the battery that makes art tick [sic]...” [U11].

In Saatchi Art, user comments are trite and highly diplomatic. The partial reason for such diplomatic comments is that Saatchi Art does not guarantee anonymity — it requires users to log in to leave comments. Although critical opinions are occasionally available, their criticisms concern ‘Collections’ rather than the artworks within the curatorial practice. Therefore, user avoidance of mentioning particular artists and artworks in their comments indicate their reliance on intermediaries who have privileged expert knowledge about contemporary art.

### *Meaning Transfer from Artworks to Users*

In the offline art market, our theoretical background elucidates that the group of various intermediaries is considered as an instrument which transfers the meaning of artworks to consumers. With the changing environment from offline and online, then, who are considered as playing the role of such an instrument?

We assert that the transference of the meaning of artworks to users occurs through the curatorial practice in Saatchi Art. There are two reasons for highlighting curation. Firstly, the uncertain value of artworks (Hirsch, 1972) contributes to strengthening the curatorial selection in Saatchi Art. There are no objective standards for judging contemporary artworks in terms of their appearance. In the offline market, collectors usually require translators to measure the quality of artworks (Pettersen, 2014). In other words, contemporary art needs an explanation in order to convince the collectors. Although Bradshaw, Kerrigan, and Holbrook (2010) insist that aesthetic appreciation of confronting physical artworks is available for consumers by referring to Holbrook and Hirschman's (1982) experiential consumption, we follow the view that the meaning and value of artworks is instrumentally constructed by various intermediaries (Becker, 1982; Currid, 2007; Danto, 1964).

Secondly, uncertainty regarding the quality of artworks is more evident in Saatchi Art than in the offline art market because the artworks are created by young and emerging artists at an early stage of their career with a low reputation. Moreover, Saatchi Art's democratic entry system allows everyone to upload artworks for sales without limitation. This becomes a challenge for potential buyers, since aesthetic discourses concerning the value of artworks is lacking in Saatchi Art. Therefore, large quantity of artworks offered by young and emerging artists on Saatchi Art calls for the necessity of curation. As Becker (1982) insists that the distinction among artworks is drawn from accepting artists and artworks in the art world, the

inclusion or selection of artists by Saatchi Art's curatorial practice contributes to distinguishing selected artworks from the rest.

[Insert Figure 4.]

We can also link the reason for deeming curators to be a main player of transferring meaning with the issue of identity in a broader sense. Indeed, the identities of intermediaries play an important role in the process of rendering unaccepted artworks or artists accepted (Bourdieu, 1996). In this sense, the identity of the experts, such as curators in Saatchi Art, contributes to strengthening the legitimacy of the selected artworks and the transfer of their meaning to users. For instance, Rebecca Wilson's social status, accumulated through her working experience in the art world (at ArtReview and the Saatchi Gallery, for example) helps to convince users or other intermediaries of the quality of selected artworks in her 'Collection'. Acknowledging such an impact, as shown in Figure 4, Saatchi Art highlights who selects the artworks by displaying the profile pictures of the curators.

### **Discussion, Conclusions and Research Implications**

Four main points of discussion are raised as a result of our analysis of Saatchi Art. Firstly, empirical findings of our case study in view of the TAM suggest that users' intentions to use digital art platforms are reinforced by their usefulness and ease of use. Saatchi Art proves to be useful in overcoming barriers to transactions, such as geographical distance, asymmetric information and the intimidating cultural atmosphere of the offline gallery. With regards to users' perceived ease, Saatchi Art builds trust by assuring situational normality which is drawn from its interface (the adoption of a typical interface of e-commerce website) and the atmosphere of fostering users' appreciation of artworks. While such technological functions are important drivers for users' intentions, the TAM cannot fully explain why users select

Saatchi Art among many platforms. According to Gefen, Karahanna, and Straub (2003), increased familiarity of a website through exposing e-vendors in advertisements and articles contributes to building trust in it, which corresponds with users' perceived ease of using the website. Similarly, in the online healthcare community, doctors' professional articles contribute to increasing users' satisfaction (Johnson and Lowe, 2015).

Saatchi Art builds familiarity and trust with users based on the power of the brand, Saatchi. The chief curator of Saatchi Art says, "If you can find a site with the right environment with a name you can trust, it is very appealing" (Thorpe, 2014, para. 4). Indeed, Charles Saatchi has accumulated his symbolic capital based on his wealth and social network, consecrating young British artists (YBA) successfully, and thereby positioning himself in a dominant position in the art world (Rodner and Kerrigan, 2014). Some buyers mention that the brand of Saatchi is an initial reason for using Saatchi Art. Acknowledging such influence of brands, the online gallery has kept its original name of "Saatchi" in their brand despite the change of ownership. Therefore, the intended use of the online gallery is determined by not just technological usefulness of the website but also the credibility of the information provider.

Secondly, the empirical findings of this research contribute to identifying an instance where the meaning of goods is not explicitly co-created by consumers. That is, users' passive role in making aesthetic judgments in Saatchi Art leads to entrenching a unidirectional flow of meaning from the world to consumers in view of McCracken's (1986) model. In the general consumer market, the participatory culture of users (Jenkins, 2006) in e-commerce and online communities (Chevalier and Mayzlin, 2006; Muñiz and Schau, 2005; Närvänen and Goulding, 2016) is paramount in terms of co-creating, refining, and recreating the meaning that resides in consumer goods. This shows the reciprocating flow of cultural meanings between products and consumers (Fournier, 1998; Holt, 2002; McKechnie and Tynan, 2006; O'Reilly, 2005;

Thompson and Haytko, 1997). In the case of Saatchi Art, however, the online art market does not appear to exhibit a reverse flow of cultural meaning from goods to consumers.

Thirdly, similar to Khaire's (2015) analysis of e-commerce platforms for visual art, empirical findings of this research confirm the significant role of intermediaries in shaping the collective meaning in the online art market. This study goes beyond Khaire's finding about the online art market because of its exploration of 1) the online market for artworks created by young and emerging artists; 2) user participation in the digital art market; and 3) the symbolic capital of the information provider. Both the uncertain value of contemporary art and overwhelming quantity of artworks by young and emerging artists on Saatchi Art pose challenges to inexperienced buyers. With the avoidance of reviewing displayed artworks in Saatchi Art, the buyers and users tend to rely on instrumental factors of the artworks for judging its value such as the status of merchants or the identity of curators. This is because the selected artworks from curatorial direction can offer "a guarantee with all the symbolic capital the merchant has accumulated" (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 167). Therefore, the curatorial practice can be considered as an instrument of transferring the cultural meaning embedded in selected artworks to users.

Therefore, the online art market follows the valuation system of the offline art market, wherein intermediaries, rather than users, co-construct the cultural meaning and value of artworks (Becker, 1982; Lee and Lee, 2016; Preece et al., 2016; Preece and Kerrigan, 2015; Velthuis, 2005). In comparison to other types of markets, such as music, film, and publishing industries, the finding shows that digitalisation has barely transformed the art market in terms of the mechanisms of valuing artworks. The online art market rests on the symbolic capital of a few actors in the new platform who already hold a high position in the stratified structure of the art world (Bourdieu, 1996). Hence, the hierarchical structure of valuation in the market is hardly

subverted by digitalisation and the new intermediaries, like Saatchi Art, can be interpreted as a medium for reproducing the power of the established actors of the offline art market.

Lastly, empirical findings of this research show that the emergence of digital art platforms like Saatchi Art impinges on the power and strategy of other intermediaries. Indeed, the layer of intermediaries in the field of contemporary art is in flux because of the repositioning of the status of its inner members (Bourdieu, 1996; Giuffre, 1999; Heinich, 2012; Lee and Lee, 2017; Velthuis, 2012), due to the appearance of new styles of artworks and the emergence of new players. The selected artists by Saatchi Art get more opportunities for involvement with other intermediaries<sup>5</sup>. Similar to the role of dealers in the offline market, the online gallery can selectively insert “[artworks] into art world’s taste-making machinery” (Velthuis, 2005, p. 41). Although the influence of Saatchi Art in the art world is relatively low at this early stage, there is potential for strengthening its influence and status due to the advancement of careers of selected artists through curatorial programmes. As the chief curator of Saatchi Art expects of the art market in 50 years, the “[t]raditional art world [is] increasingly irrelevant as [a] huge new audience become tastemakers” (SAATCHIART, 2014a). However, this research reveals that Saatchi Art can become a crucial tastemaker by mediating the relationship between such a new audience and the art world. Samdanis (2016) insists, in a similar vein, that the online medium of trading artworks will gain more power across both online and offline arts markets. Although such a new medium aims to blur the highly stratified structure of the art market, it will become a powerful intermediary that paradoxically reinforces the hierarchical order of the market.

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<sup>5</sup> SAATCHIART (2014b) announces that the artists on the platform get an offer of exhibitions from various galleries.

The purpose of this research is to examine the impact of digital platforms on the contemporary visual art market. Relying on the theoretical insights of the TAM and the MTM, and the arts marketing literature, we analyse user participation and curatorial direction in digital art platforms in terms of conceptualising the valuation of artworks. The growth of digital art platforms such as Saatchi Art provides efficiency and accessibility of information to users, attracting novice collectors, while users' involvement in the process of valuing artworks is limited and largely guided by curatorial direction rather than social influence. This confirms re-intermediation, rather than disintermediation, of marketing relationships, highlighting the role of new digital intermediaries in arts marketing.

The usefulness of digital art platforms and their ease of use in terms of technological functionality and user interface contribute to actual usage behaviour of users in Saatchi Art. However, users' unwillingness to discuss the aesthetics of specific artworks in their comments and reviews implies that their activities hinge on the symbolic capitals (Bourdieu, 1996) of information providers. Put differently, user participation in digital art platforms may not necessarily result in motivation to purchase artworks, as the symbolic value of cultural goods generates the unique structure of constructing such motivations (Becker, 1982; Khaire, 2015; Lee and Lee, 2017; Preece, 2014; Preece et al., 2016; Preece and Kerrigan, 2015; Rodner and Kerrigan, 2014; Rodner and Preece, 2015).

The structure of social influence in the online art market could be explained by reference to the MTM (McCracken, 1986). This research considers Saatchi Art's curatorial programmes as an instrument for transferring meaning of selected artworks. In other words, curatorial selections contribute to the construction of the meaning and value embedded in artworks, thereby legitimising the artworks through curatorial programmes. Moreover, the direction of moving meaning from the world to consumers in McCracken's (1986) terms is maintained in the online



art market. The participation of users and buyers in the online gallery does not reflect negotiation, refinement, and co-creation of the meaning of artworks. Rather, their passive manner of evaluating artworks confirms that users remain the last terminal in the trajectory of moving meaning.

The key implication of our study is the necessity of developing a multidisciplinary approach to the analysis of user motivation and behaviour in the online art market. The TAM is useful in explaining users' intentions to use digital arts platform while the MTM allows us to conceptualise users' passive attitude toward co-creating the meaning of artworks. However, both conceptual models are limited in explaining users' reliance on the symbolic capitals of intermediaries, thus failing to uncover the social forces behind users' selection of a particular information provider in terms of the TAM and users' avoidance of evaluating selected artworks by an expert in terms of the MTM. The arts marketing literature provides more insights on the relationship between user participation and intermediary influence in the valuation system of artworks. The current online art market shows a distinctive institutional structure drawn from an imponderable value of artworks which underscores the role of intermediaries, rather than consumers or producers. However, the rapid technological development affecting platforms will inevitably enable users to form collective a knowledge community and to participate in co-creating the meaning of artworks. Thus, we need to revisit this issue when the online art market becomes more mature.

Two important limitations of this research and related research implications need to be stated. Firstly, the data in this research cannot capture interactions between users, though users' intention to use Saatchi Art is affected by the social influence of other users. Therefore, further reflection is required on the close linkage between users' technology adoption behaviour and their cultural consumption in the online art market. Further research could address the issue by

designing a systematic survey including the social variables in the TAM such as subjective norm and image (Venkatesh and Davis, 2000), as well as variables capturing direct interactions between users. Secondly, this research has not examined artists as users of digital art platforms and their interactions with other types of users. Although artists' primary motivation for using digital arts platforms might be to sell their artworks efficiently through e-commerce, their choices might be underlined by other motivations such as enhancing their status in the peer group or seeking legitimacy in the field by following other artists and getting recommendations from important referents. The exploration of artists' intentions to use digital art platforms by shifting the analytic focus from buyers and hedonic users to artists, thus, could provide additional insights into marketing theory.

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