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Decoding the Components of Audience-Centricity in Art; A Novel Approach to Identifying and Refining Indicators Using Fuzzy Logic

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Abstract

The present research aims to systematically identify and refine the components of audience-centricity in the field of art. This study, employing a sequential exploratory mixed-methods approach, was executed in two main stages. In the qualitative stage, using the qualitative content analysis method and purposeful sampling, 19 credible scientific articles were deeply reviewed. The coding process, utilizing NVIVO software, resulted in the extraction of 39 open codes, 9 axial categories, and 4 core components. In the quantitative stage, to refine these components within the specialized context of art, the fuzzy screening technique was employed, utilizing the opinions of 12 experts. Data were collected and analyzed using a researcher-made questionnaire. The research findings indicated that out of the initial 39 indicators, 11 were confirmed as the final components of audience-centricity in art. Among these, three indicators—"Investing in Continuous Learning and Capability Development," "Respecting Privacy and Ethics in Data Usage," and "Transparency in Actions and Communications"—received the highest importance scores. This framework, by transitioning from "production-centric art" to "trust-centric art," opens a new horizon for sustainable and meaningful interaction between artists, cultural managers, and audiences in the face of future uncertainties and complexities.

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Extended Abstract

Introduction

In today's hyper-competitive world, brands strive to increase their share of their target customers' minds, their share of customers' wallets, and ultimately, a larger percentage of customer lifetime value (Faraji et al., 2025). Within the marketing toolkit of these brands, audience-centricity and the precise and deep identification of the needs, desires, and behaviors of target customers are considered among the most important effective tools for achieving these brand objectives. Target audiences in different industries possess distinct and unique characteristics. Due to the special nature of artistic products and considering artists as personal brands, the target audience in art differs significantly from that of non-artistic brands. This includes brands active in the art scene such as gallerists, curators, or art exhibition organizers. Understanding these audiences and meeting their needs and desires requires a different perspective. On the other hand, in the contemporary world, art, as a dynamic and multidimensional phenomenon, is constantly evolving in interaction with social, cultural, and technological contexts. One of the key pillars of this transformation is the shift in the "audience's" position from a passive element to an active agent, interpreter, and participant in the process of creating and perceiving the artwork (Wald-Fuhrmann et al., 2026). The main issue here is that the prevailing paradigm in the scientific examination of audience behaviors, attitudes, desires, and needs is still influenced by the paradigms governing marketing science in conventional manufacturing or service industries, and it does not precisely consider the fundamental differences within the art domain. This is while traditional survey methods and static analyses are no longer sufficient for the needs of brands active in the field of art. The necessity of revising the indicators of audience-centricity is increasingly felt due to the diversity in message reception and the mismatch between source encoding and receiver decoding within the context of art (Sampah et al., 2025). Accordingly, the present paper seeks to answer two main questions: First, what are the components of audience-centricity through in-depth exploration and content analysis of credible scientific texts and articles? And second, which of these components hold greater importance by employing the fuzzy screening technique and expert opinions in the field of art?

Theoretical Foundations

Ontological Transformation of the Concept of Audience; From Mass Passivity to Active Subjectivity

The concept of the audience, throughout the history of communication theories, has transformed from a mere receiver to a central actor (Ghorbannezhad et al., 2024). In classical and linear perspectives, the audience was positioned at the end of the communication chain, playing a passive role in message reception. However, with the emergence of new paradigms, the audience is considered an active subject who selects and interprets the work based on their needs, cultural backgrounds, and lived experiences (Abdou, 2025).

Audience-Centricity as a Strategic Paradigm in the Communications Age

Audience-centricity, in its broadest sense, is not merely a marketing technique; rather, it is a philosophical paradigm whose core is the transition from "production-centricity" to "human-centricity." This approach is based on the principle that true value lies not in the commodity or message itself, but in the experience and meaning created for the end-receiver (Hegen, 2017).

Audience-Centricity in the Specialized Arena of Art; Aesthetic and Economic Layers

In the realm of art, audience-centricity acquires deeper dimensions that distinguish it from other fields. This concept in art is analyzed at three levels: the aesthetic-philosophical level, which emphasizes the "semantic openness" of the work, allowing the audience to complete the work through their own interpretation (James, 2024); the communicative-experiential level, which focuses on the quality of interaction and the creation of inclusive pathways for understanding art, where participatory and interactive art transforms the audience's presence into an essential element of the work (Kasiyan, 2019); and the economic-organizational level, which is shaped by new

models such as “crowdfunding” and the “sharing economy,” turning the audience into a creative and material stakeholder of the work (Ersöz, 2015)

Research Methodology

The present research is philosophically based on the pragmatism paradigm, emphasizing the applicability of knowledge. This research is developmental in terms of its objective and exploratory-analytical in nature, conducted with a mixed-methods approach of the exploratory sequential type. In the first step, dedicated to identifying components (qualitative part), the qualitative content analysis method with an inductive approach was used to extract the components of audience-centricity. The statistical population for this section included all documents, scientific records, and research articles published in reputable domestic and international databases within the timeframe of 2015 to the present, addressing topics of audience and art. The sample consisted of 19 articles selected using purposive sampling. Data analysis was performed using NVIVO software through three stages of open, axial, and selective coding. In the second step, component screening (quantitative part), the aim was to refine the components identified within the specialized context of art, utilizing the fuzzy screening technique. The statistical population for this step comprised art experts, including university faculty members, distinguished artists, and senior cultural managers. A sample of 12 individuals was selected using snowball purposive sampling and analyzed via a researcher-made fuzzy screening questionnaire. The content validity of the questionnaire was reviewed by professors and 5 prominent experts (outside the main sample). Furthermore, for reliability in the fuzzy section, instead of Cronbach’s alpha, the method of agreement and consensus among expert groups was used.

Research Findings

A qualitative content analysis, through an in-depth study of 19 articles, resulted in the extraction of 39 initial open codes. These codes were key sentences, concepts, or phrases that directly or indirectly referred to dimensions of audience, interaction, technology, economy, or the future of art. In the axial coding stage, these 39 codes were categorized into 9 general themes based on semantic and conceptual similarities. The results of the fuzzy screening indicated that out of the initial 39 indicators, 11 components were selected as the “golden components” of audience-centricity in art. The three components “Investing in continuous learning and capability development,” “Respecting privacy and ethics in data usage,” and “Transparency in actions and communications” received the highest degree of importance from the experts. Additionally, the component “Personalization of product features” received the lowest level of importance, suggesting a different approach to audience-centricity in art compared to other fields.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study, beyond merely presenting a refined list of indicators, propose a profound paradigm shift in the philosophy of contemporary art: a transition from an instrumental view of the audience toward an **“ontological co-creation.”** Within this emerging framework, the audience is neither a “target” for marketing nor even a simple “participant,” but becomes **an inseparable component of the very being of the artwork**.

The fuzzy refinement of the initial 39 indicators into 11 golden indicators—ultimately distilled into three core criteria (“investment in continuous learning,” “data ethics and privacy,” and “transparency”)—outlines a roadmap in which the future of art is fundamentally tied to **trust** as its most valuable intangible asset. This implies that, in the artistic ecosystems of tomorrow, the success of an artwork will not be measured by the number of viewers or sales, but by the depth of the **existential bond** formed between the artwork and its audience within an ethical and transparent environment. While the results of this study reinforce and validate previous research, they also open new theoretical horizons. The alignment between the final fuzzy-filtered components and the existing literature can be analyzed at three levels:

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- **First**, the confirmation of foundational theories such as *market orientation* (Wut et al., 2026) and *value co-creation* (Ranjan & Upadhyay, 2025). Indicators such as "understanding the needs and preferences of the target audience" and "designing for multisensory and immersive experiences" directly emphasize the need for systematic information gathering and the creation of unique experiences—fully consistent with Ersöz (2015) regarding participatory arts and the stimulation of the five senses.
- **Second**, the extension of these theories within the domain of art. For example, the finding of Bruen et al. (2025) regarding the influence of audience awareness of AI technologies on the valuation of artworks appears in this study as the highly significant indicator of "utilizing digital platforms and social media"—reflecting the acceptance of technology not merely as a tool, but as a component of the artwork's ontology.
- **Third**, and most importantly, the study introduces **innovative ethical-strategic indicators**. While domestic research (e.g., Fallah et al., 2023) emphasized "message source credibility" and "avoiding biased perspectives," fuzzy screening in this research highlights indicators such as "investment in continuous learning," "respect for privacy and ethical data use," and "transparency in actions and communications" as golden priorities. These findings not only bridge gaps in previous fragmented case studies (such as Leow & Ch'ng, 2021 in virtual reality, or Mokhtari Dehkordi, 2023 in multimedia art), but—drawing on theories of the *experience economy* (Esagala & Ntale, 2026) and *relationship marketing* (Madruga et al., 2024)—provide a comprehensive and integrative framework applicable across all artistic fields.

A key point is the strong alignment with Wald-Fuhrmann et al. (2026) regarding the influence of performance formats on audience experience, as well as Zuo & Au's (2026) theory of "media richness," where the highly significant indicator "offering products/services through multiple channels (physical, online, hybrid)" reinforces the necessity of multi-modal artistic engagement in the digital era. Thus, by combining qualitative content analysis with fuzzy logic, this study not only consolidates previously scattered elements into a coherent system but also advances beyond existing theories by introducing **data-driven ethics** and **continuous learning** as foundational pillars of audience-centricity—thereby offering a roadmap for transitioning from **mass-oriented art** to **trust-oriented art** in the future.

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Conflicts of Interest
The authors declare that they have no financial or non-financial, personal, professional, or institutional conflicts of interest relevant to this work.

Data Availability Statement
The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

AI Use Statement
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Ethics Approval
All procedures performed in this study were conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the responsible institutional and national research committee.