

**VISUAL ARTS AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT IN
SAUDI ARABIA: A CASE STUDY ON YOUTH IN
RIYADH**

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VISUAL ARTS AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT IN SAUDI ARABIA: A CASE STUDY ON YOUTH IN RIYADH

by

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
VAAD	Visual Arts Audience Development
VAE	Visual Art Exhibition
VAI	Visual Art Institution
MAO	Motivation, Ability and Opportunity
MOC	Ministry of Culture

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**PEMBANGUNAN KHALAYAK SENI VISUAL DI ARAB SAUDI:
KAJIAN KES TERHADAP BELIA DI RIYADH**

ABSTRAK

Pada tahun 2016, Arab Saudi mengumumkan Visi Arab Saudi 2030 yang memberi tumpuan kepada pembangunan negara dalam semua aspek termasuk meningkatkan sumbangan terhadap seni di bawah Program Kualiti Hidup melalui kehidupan sosial, pendidikan, hiburan, pelancongan, dan ekonomi dengan membina kemudahan seni seperti muzium, galeri, dan institusi seni serta menyokong perniagaan seni kecil dan sederhana. Walaupun kerajaan melabur banyak wang, usaha, dan masa untuk melaksanakan pelan yang dinyatakan di atas, tiada rancangan untuk membangunkan teras proses ini iaitu audiens. Pembangunan audiens — mengekalkan dan menambah jumlah pelawat— adalah isu serantau bagi organisasi seni dan budaya, dan sasaran audiens belia adalah lebih rumit. Kajian ini yang berpandukan dasar memberi tumpuan kepada pembangunan audiens seni visual dalam kalangan belia Arab Saudi. Ia menggunakan Model MAO Pembangunan Audiens Jennifer Wiggins untuk mengkaji faktor motivasi, kebolehan, dan peluang. Kajian ini menggunakan metodologi campuran, termasuk soal selidik dan temu bual separa berstruktur. Analisis kuantitatif melibatkan saiz sampel sebanyak 404 peserta belia dari Riyadh, manakala analisis kualitatif merangkumi peserta/ bukan peserta dan pakar yang terlibat dalam pameran seni visual. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa belia secara amnya tidak mempunyai motivasi untuk mengambil bahagian dalam pameran, dan berkemungkinan didorong oleh faktor hedonik yang menganggap ia sebagai aktiviti yang menyeronokkan daripada bermanfaat. Walau bagaimanapun, pengalaman lampau mereka menunjukkan kekurangan penglibatan dalam pameran seperti ini. Dari

segi kebolehan, responden menunjukkan bahawa mereka mampu secara kewangan, fizikal dan dari aspek anggaran masa untuk mengambil bahagian. Walau bagaimanapun, mereka mengalami kesukaran untuk memahami dan menilai karya-karya seni. Dari segi faktor peluang, kajian menunjukkan cabaran yang jelas dalam strategi promosi dan kesan institusi. Kebiasaan dengan institusi seni visual dan rasa kekitaan (*sense of belonging*) dengan audiens sasaran kurang berlaku dalam kalangan belia. Tambahan pula, walaupun belia menghargai produk tambahan dari institusi kerajaan, persepsi mereka terhadap produk teras seperti koleksi seni dan tema masih tidak memuaskan. Kajian utama ini memberikan maklumat yang diperlukan untuk membimbing sektor seni dan budaya di Arab Saudi. Melalui penerangan situasi perkembangan audiens dan menerangkan keperluan dan harapan audiens melalui motivasi, kebolehan, dan peluang (*Motivation, Ability and Opportunity (MAO)*), sektor seni dan budaya dapat menggunakan hasil dan cadangan untuk menyelesaikan misi mereka demi mencapai matlamat Visi 2030.

**VISUAL ARTS AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT IN SAUDI ARABIA:
A CASE STUDY ON YOUTH IN RIYADH**

ABSTRACT

This study investigates audience development within the visual arts sector among Saudi youth, contextualized within the broader framework of the 2030 Saudi Vision. Initiated in 2016, this vision aspires to elevate the country's social, educational, economic, and cultural facets. Notably, this study underscores a critical gap in the existing strategies, pinpointing a lack of emphasis on audience development despite significant investments in artistic infrastructure and enterprise support. The universal challenge of retaining and attracting audiences, particularly youth, becomes the central focus of this policy-driven investigation. Employing Jennifer Wiggins's MAO Model of Audience Development, the study employs a mixed methodology, combining quantitative and qualitative analyses. The quantitative facet involves 404 youth participants from Riyadh, while the qualitative dimension encompasses youth participants and non-participants in visual arts exhibitions, along with industry experts. The MAO Model scrutinizes Motivation, Ability, and Opportunity factors influencing audience engagement. In terms of Motivation, the study reveals that youth are generally not motivated to participate in visual arts exhibitions, perceiving visual arts exhibitions as entertaining rather than inherently beneficial. In addition, past experiences indicate a historical lack of involvement. When addressing Ability, respondents showcase strengths in financial, physical, and temporal resources for engaging in visual arts exhibitions. However, youth also exhibit limitations in certain mental abilities, particularly in evaluating and analyzing artworks. Opportunity factors pose significant challenges, as there is a prevailing uncertainty and limited awareness

regarding Saudi arts and cultural organizations among the youth. The absence of familiarity with visual arts institutions and a sense of belonging to the target audience exacerbates this issue. Youth preferences also emerge, favoring other cultural activities over visual arts showcases. While youth appreciate augmented products from governmental institutions, core visual arts offerings receive a less favorable perception. In conclusion, this study provides vital insights for the Saudi arts and cultural sector, offering a nuanced understanding of audience dynamics through the MAO model. The recommendations drawn from this research are designed to offer strategic direction to the sector in harmonizing its strategies with the 2030 Vision, thereby guaranteeing goal attainment and nurturing enhanced youth involvement in the visual arts field.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Art is not a mere demonstration of talent or an aesthetic interpretation of nature. Instead, it is considered one of the most significant aspects of people's evolutionary path as a species on intellectual and social levels. According to Schein (2013), art allows us to establish a more insightful understanding of the causes, nature, and consequences of all social changes that regularly occur. Moreover, art also plays a role in the formulation of a resilient culture that can adapt to such changes based on new behavioural patterns, social skills, and novel concepts that can be acquired by all individuals in society to grant them the ability to respond in a positive manner.

Through the representation of the social changes and unique characteristics of certain groups, art can strengthen the link between individuals and their cultures, along with also creating an environment where different forms of social activities and practices can be conducted by likeminded individuals who share similar interests in a variety of contexts. This elevates the quality of cultural capital and positive interactions between diverse social groups, regardless of their affiliations or the sub-cultures they adopt (DeMarrais & Robb, 2013).

Art can enhance society's awareness and create a long-term level of social stability by promoting freedom of expression and beliefs and interchangeable collaboration between different groups. Thus, art organisations can be encouraged to establish more events and support myriad artists to further enhance the role of communication and collaboration within society. In addition, art plays an important role in the development of socially aware individuals by introducing them to different

points of view that help them enrich their approaches and broaden their horizons in a way that serves the development of the entire society. Art also contributes to preventing the deterioration of a society's heritage across generations through the cooperative relationships that emerge between all populations groups in society (Hadji & Guedjal, 2021; Pagani, 2016; Özdemir, 2021; Rathwell & Armitage, 2016).

The word “art” designates at the same time an object or a collection of objects and the creative activity of which these objects are the result. Artists create works through their talent and technique. We call visual arts the arts which produce objects perceived essentially by the eye. They encompass traditional visual arts such as sculpture, drawing or painting, but also new techniques such as photography, cinema, video and new media. The visual arts sector is interdisciplinary and allows for numerous collaborations with other disciplines such as art history, design, theatre, music and even cinema (John, Joseph, & Peters, 2022; Kłeczek & Hajdas, 2024; Manners, Borstlap, & Saayman, 2016). Artists use their imagination, creativity and skills to achieve tangible and visually appealing expression. Art can be created, for example, through drawing a picture or carving a figure or a song or poem. Art is an essential form of human communication and a means of self-expression like the visual arts, music, literature, and poetry. More specifically, the visual arts are unique expressions of ideas, beliefs, experiences, and feelings presented in well-designed visual forms, such as painting, photography, and sculpture (Mittler, 2006; Priscilla, 2022). Visual artists form an integral part of society: we live in a world where we see, read, and hear about people and events that affect us continuously, and these things cannot be reached with words alone. According to Priscilla (2022), visual artists help us understand the world around us in different ways. First, they document historical events. Second, visual art contributes to preserving the cultural identity of society.

Third, visual art helps teach and transmit values. Finally, the visual arts can help people express emotions and personal problems. The visual arts not only provide fun and creative inspiration, but also help foster dialogue and bring important issues to the public (Srivastava, 2017). The field of visual arts embodies creativity, innovation, and transformative communication through imagery. Technological advancements significantly impact this domain, leading to rapid changes in practice. Visual art, essential to human experience, mirrors contemporary society, aiding in understanding historical narratives, cultural identities, and personal experiences beyond traditional means. It serves as a source of inspiration and reflection, enhancing comprehension and emotional satisfaction. The sustained vitality and importance of visual arts highlight its crucial role in enhancing the human condition across various cultures and historical periods, resonating profoundly with relevance. (Petrides & Fernandes, 2020; Porchaykina, 2012; Tyler & Likova, 2012).

One of the important factors that help strengthen the relationship between the artist or the director of the artistic event and the audience is the visual art exhibition, which allows the creation of positive feelings between the two parties through direct contact between them, and this will enhance the success of the artistic event and the delivery of the desired message from art (Manners et al., 2016). Engaging displays of visual art can be seen both indoors and outdoors. In addition, installation art is becoming more and more popular outside of museums, galleries, and other designated indoor locations, for aesthetic and other purposes in public and private areas. Furthermore, visual art exhibition is considered as catalyst for social unity (John, Ekwere, & Peters, 2022). Exhibitions give an intimate and immediate forum for artists to interact with their audience and showcase their work. In addition to providing more accurate colour representation, seeing art in person builds a closer, more intimate

contact with the creator's goals. School displays, for example, provide spiritual nourishment to students, fuel their creative drive, and help them prepare for their future careers. By boosting social media sharing and stressing the unique experience of viewing the exhibits in person, art shows can attract more people (Lippan-Art-Team, 2023). Visiting an art exhibition is a fantastic opportunity to unwind and fully appreciate the beauty of art. Engaging with art offers a captivating journey that excites the senses and offers a visually stunning experience. Encountering art in person provides a distinct perspective and fosters a deeper understanding and admiration of its essence (Elkins, 2001).

1.1.1 The Visual Arts Situation in Saudi Arabia Before and after the 2030 Vision

In 2015, Alsenan (2015b) documented the historical state of the visual arts in the Arab Gulf countries in general, and the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia in particular, by comparing common themes and identifying the factors that generate and motivate these artistic creations. To assess artistic movements in Arab countries in general, Shabout (2007) discussed the driving forces behind changes in aesthetics from Islamic to Arabic asked whether the transition from traditional arts to the more modern forms seen in Arab art was possible through the Western Post-Renaissance tradition or 19th-century modernity, stating, “It has been argued that learning and imitating Western Art was a necessary step to compensate for the lack of artistic creativity Arab Artist faced.”

The modern visual arts movement, as a new style emerging from the West, reached the Gulf in the middle of the 20th century but was initially rejected (Alsenan, 2015b). However, with the introduction of modern education systems and the

emergence of a “procurement culture” as a result of the cultural expansion of the local society, political security and the discovery of oil, the effectiveness of artistic practice has increased, providing an economic return (Alsenan, 2015b). As her Royal Highness Princess Jawaher Bint Majed Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud stated, “As a Saudi art takes its place on the international stage, I cannot think back on the long difficult road that we have traveled to get here” (Ayad et al., 2014). Thus, artistic movements, including visual arts, in the region cannot be called non-existent.

Alsenan (2015b) concluded that until 2015, the growth of visual arts in the Gulf countries in general and Saudi Arabia in particular could still be considered to be in its “teenage” stage, characterized by rapid growth, loud voices, mixed feelings, and unexpected behavior, or, as Kluijver (2014) remarked, “Saudi artists are truly themselves at the front line of this socio-cultural evolution and are, in the process, inventing a new 21st-century Saudi identity!”

The modern practice of visual arts for non-ideological or religious purposes, influenced by the Western two-dimensional art form, began in Saudi Arabia in the 1960s (Alsenan, 2007; Alsulaiman, 2000). In 2004, an exhibition of a group of visual artists (Abdulnasser Gharem, Ahmed Mater, Mohammed Khader, Abdul Karim Qasim, and Ashraf Fayyad) was held in Jeddah under the name of “The Earth Is Round, You Can Even Kick It.” This exhibition was a starting point in changing the artistic appreciation of the Saudi people and lead to a better understanding of the visual arts over the next decade (Ayad et al., 2014).

In the 1980s, modernists and traditionalists in Saudi Arabia developed conflicting cultural views. The clashes mainly related to poetry, as other literary genres, such as short stories and novels, were not popular and would only gain traction

later with the rise of Western cultural influence. The Saudi cultural scene did not welcome the visual arts at that time, as these arts were not considered valuable compared to the verbal arts. Saudi Arabia began its revolution to revive the value of cultural and artistic aspects and plan to reach the most benefits from them with the announcement on April 25, 2016 of the 2030 Vision, which was created by the young Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman Bin Abdul-Aziz Al Saud (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia [KSA], 2023). This vision focuses on the happiness of citizens and residents and their fulfilment through a set of axes that lead to the promotion of physical, psychological, and social well-being. From these axes comes the topic of “Promoting culture and entertainment,” in which the vision encourages the organisation of cultural events and partnerships with international entertainment companies and plans the establishment of a variety of cultural venues are offered, such as libraries, arts and museums (KSA, 2023). In addition, the government launched various programs to achieve the goals of vision 2030, including “The quality of life” program, in which visual art is present through various initiatives, such as (1) focusing on improving skills in this area, enhancing its production, quality, and culture content as found in other countries; (2) establishing cultural associations targeting the film sector, music, performance arts, and visual arts; and (3) developing arts appreciation in public schools students by covering many types of performance and audio-visual arts by developing the current arts education syllabus and updating teacher guidebooks and the teachers’ skills, preparing the necessary infrastructure at schools, and holding arts and culture contests (KSA, 2018).

One of the most important acts that followed this promised vision was the establishment of the new Ministry of Culture (MOC), which launched expansive arts projects aiming to improve the situation of the arts in the region. For example,

construction began on the Saudi Contemporary Arts Museum in Diriyah, Riyadh, in the first quarter of 2020, and 11 new cultural authorities were established, including the Visual Arts Authority and the Museums Authority (MOC, 2023). In addition, 11 specialized commissions were created under the purview of the MOC to manage, develop, and organize the cultural sector. Each commission is a corporate legal body and benefits from both financial and administrative independence; one of them is the Visual Arts Commission, which regulates and supports the field of visual arts in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (MOC, 2019).

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Saudi airports such as King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh, King Fahd International Airport in Dammam, King Abdulaziz International Airport in Jeddah, as well as other government buildings, were adorned with sculptures and murals. Despite this rapid expansion of the plastic arts, painting remained the dominant form of visual art until the 2000s (MOC, 2019). Since the early 2000s, a new generation of artists has emerged, producing work that differs in style and scope from that of their predecessors. Special exhibitions featuring their work have attracted the attention of the international art community, and the resulting media attention has led institutions of global stature, such as the British Museum, to acquire their works. One of the most prominent features of the current moment in the field of visual arts throughout the entire Kingdom is the substantial number of exhibitions and events, and the growth of interest in the arts. The report on the state of culture in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reported documented that about 255 art exhibitions were held in KSA in 2019 (MOC, 2019). This is not simply a response to the wave of contemporary art, but also to the growth occurring at the same time in other areas of culture. One indicator of this increased interest is the strong attendance at art events. For example, 27,000 people attended the the Prince Mohammed bin

Salman bin Abdulaziz Foundation (MISK) events that held from October 29 to November 2, 2019, featuring 240 artists. Youth who are still in school are the most interested in art because it serves as an outlet for self-expression and because they have grown up in the intensely visual world of social media. Data from the 2019 Cultural Participation Survey confirms this, with 41.64% of university students reporting interest in practicing art, compared to 34.64% of other groups. The exhibition scene in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia anticipates many more exhibitions and initiatives related to the visual arts. These include the “Al-Diriyah Biennale” and the “Contemporary Art Exhibition” announced by the Ministry of Culture.

1.1.2 Audience Development in Saudi Arabia

Having many new arts organisations, variety of programs, serious efforts, and vast budgets is not sufficient for achieving the long-term goals in visual art audience development; audiences are the core and most important factor that will lead to the success or failure of any artistic program (Waltl, 2006). Thus, for a successful arts organisation, the concept of “audience development” emerged, defined as “the process of reaching new audiences and retaining repeat visitors” (Waltl, 2006). According to the Arts Council of England, the term “audience development” describes the “activity that is undertaken specifically to meet the needs of existing and potential audiences and to help arts organisations develop ongoing relationships with audiences. It can include aspects of marketing, commissioning, programming, education, customer care, and distribution” (Arts Council England, 2016). The term originated in the United States before later becoming popular in Europe. Moreover, it is a complex concept whose application requires cooperation from all an arts organisation’s departments (Waltl, 2006).

In the KSA, no existing published research studies have addressed the subject of audience developments for arts activities. However, a report from the MOC (2019) describes efforts for audience development in the KSA. In the field of film production, and due to the absence of many professional disciplines in the Saudi labor market, which this sector requires, there is an urgent need to develop it in order to reach the local audiences. Regarding the library sector in the KSA, social media sites act as platforms allowing writers to reach a wider audience more quickly. In the field of visual arts, the number of art exhibitions and art-related activities, attests to the increase in participation in this field. Moreover, the Museums Authority in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia launched, in September 2021, its strategy to develop the museum sector in the Kingdom to achieve the goals of the Ministry of Culture and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 in its cultural aspects (KSA-Aleqtisadia, 2021).

1.2 Problem Statement

In general, the audience of "arts and cultural organisations," including visual arts, can be categorized into five groups: an audience that comes frequently; another that rarely comes; an absent audience; tourists; and, finally, youth (ICOM-Switzerland, 2019). The youth are a privileged group in art organisations because they are the public of tomorrow. However, Tait et al. (2019) reported that arts organisations sometimes lack a nuanced understanding of the diversity of youth audiences. Past research also indicated that youth should be a target audience for arts engagement efforts to encourage a lifelong love of the arts (Tait et al., 2019). Yet, despite the great efforts of many arts organisations and their funders, trend data indicates that youth participation in arts and culture is persistently flat and, in some cases, declining across many forms.

While private art institutions primarily use audience development as a tool to ensure increased visitor numbers and maintain their place in the cultural market, state art institutions should attempt to reach a diverse audience (Kawashima, 2006).

In Saudi Arabia, and due to the several circumstances mentioned earlier circumstances that affect the relationship between audiences and the arts and cultural sector, arts organisations in the Kingdom hold in their responsibility a bigger mission to attract visitors from all types of the public, especially youth visitors, and then develop their experiences in a way that assures that they will become audiences and repeat their visits. Black (2012) confirmed that arts organisations should know their existing and potential audiences and then change themselves in a way that will strengthen their relationships. He described their aim toward their audiences as “converting them from on-off visitors into regular users who see themselves as active partners” Furthermore, Davidson and Pérez-Castellanos (2019) and Zagrebelnaia (2021) pointed out the importance of art exhibitions in audience development in general. While Rosewall (2014) confirmed the importance of research in arts audience development as an integral part of the entire process of planning, measuring, and evaluating programs to improve current and future work.

As there is a lack of research regarding arts audience development in general and youth audience development in particular in KSA, and since all of Saudi society, including the youth, was separated from the visual arts for a long period before Saudi Vision 2030; the current research attempts to shed light on the issue of Saudi youth involvement in the field of visual arts by studying the audience development of this important group in society regarding this field of arts.

1.3 Research Objectives

This study aims to examine the young adult visual arts audience's development in Saudi Arabia by the following means:

- i) To identify the motivations that drive Saudi youth to participate in visual arts exhibitions.
- ii) To examine the abilities of Saudi youth concerning their participation in visual arts exhibitions.
- iii) To analyse the opportunities provided by arts institutions in Saudi Arabia for the Saudi youth participations in visual arts exhibitions.

1.4 Research Questions

The main question of the study is as follows:

What factors affect the extent of youth audience participation in visual arts exhibitions in Saudi Arabia?

Based on this primary question, the study also explores three sub-questions:

- i) What motivates Saudi youth to actively participate in visual arts exhibitions?
- ii) How do the abilities of Saudi youth influence their engagement in visual arts exhibitions?
- iii) What opportunities are offered by arts institutions in Saudi Arabia to facilitate and encourage the participation of Saudi youth in visual arts exhibitions?

1.5 Significance of the Study

By describing audience development situation in Saudi Arabia and explaining the audience's needs and expectations through their motivation, ability, and opportunity (MAO), this primary study will provide necessary information to guide the arts and cultural sector to complete their mission to clearly achieve the 2030 Vision goals. The study's findings and recommendations have the potential to inform policies for the Ministry of Culture and Arts in Saudi Arabia, as well as for entities such as the Authority of Visual Arts, Authority of Museums, and other major cultural and arts institutions in the country, including Misk Art Institute, Diriyah Biennale Foundation, The National Museum, and any institutions planned for future establishment. The data provided by the study can significantly enhance the strategies and programs aimed at engaging Saudi youth in an enduring relationship.

Designing these programs based on accurately collected quantitative and qualitative data from a large number of Saudi youth can lead to noticeable improvements in achieving the country's objectives in the arts and cultural sector. These strategies may encompass programs to enhance youth motivation, improve their skills, and develop their abilities, guided by the study's findings related to each sub-factor within these domains.

Furthermore, the findings and recommendations related to the opportunity domain can establish a robust database to inform strategies and programs concerning exhibition designs, services, and products, ultimately enhancing the visual arts experience for the youth. Data related to the opportunity domain can also contribute to effective promotion and marketing strategies, reaching broader audiences with profound impacts.

This policy-driven study may save time, money, and efforts by starting with the results of the countries that preceded Saudi Arabia in this field, passing through the stages of failure they went through, and improving their solutions to develop audiences. Mandel (2012) described the German experience in this regard: “Today, German audiences are being wooed more than ever before. The majority of cultural institutions find themselves facing the problem of how to hold on to their core audiences while attracting new—predominantly younger—audiences. So it is hardly surprising that audience development strategies are perhaps the most sought-after knowledge resource in the field of arts management today”.

In fact, any country interested in the arts and culture sector must ensure the quality of infrastructure and compatibility of the content with human outputs to achieve its long-term aims. This is what this study seeks to verify and help accomplish through examining the visual arts audience development in Saudi Arabia, taking the youth in Riyadh as a case study.

1.6 Scope and Limitations of the study

As audience development is a crucial parameter for arts and cultural organisations that helps them achieve their social, economic, and cultural goals in society—and as youth are considered the future audience of these arts institutions—this study focuses on youth aged 21 to 35 years who are capable of independence as a potential audience for the visual arts exhibitions (VAEs) in Riyadh (KSA). Saudi Arabia 2030 vision has emphasized human resources and the great expectations of the youth of the Kingdom in the attainment of its ambitious 2030 Vision. The Crown Prince, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense, HRH Mohammad Bin Salman, explicitly noted, “Our youth are conscious, cultured, and creative, with high

values.” These words encapsulate the extent of expectations of the Saudi leadership from Saudi youth about their contribution in the Saudi 2030 Vision.

The scope of this research is limited to three groups of participants: youth who have participated at least once in VAEs in Riyadh in the last five years, those who have not attended in VAEs, and experts who have planned, managed, or evaluated VAEs in Riyadh in the previous five years. The research uses the MAO framework to study the youths’ audience development through three domains: motivation to participate in visual arts exhibitions, ability to participate in VAEs, and opportunities to participate in VAEs. Under these three domains there are sixteen sub-domains that have been studied in this research which are: hedonic expectations, utilitarian expectations, special interest, cognitive indicators, past behaviour, financial resources, time budget, physical capacities, mental resources, price, place, core product, augmented product, cognition/promotion, conation/promotion and affect/promotion. To achieve the aims of this research, a mixed-methods design (quantitative and qualitative approach) is applied. The quantitative data were collected through a simple random sampling questionnaire, while the qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews using purposive sampling. Thus, the study used the triangulation strategy for data collections and data analysis.

The research is restricted to a sample of Saudi youth, where the results cannot be generalized to all the public in KSA. For the spatial limitation, this research is restricted to visual arts exhibitions in governmental and private institutions in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

1.7 The Chapter Summary

Chapter One lays the groundwork for the study by introducing the research area and providing a comprehensive background. It briefly explaining the visual arts landscape in Saudi Arabia before and after the 2030 Vision, with a specific focus on audience development. The chapter outlines the study's aims, emphasizing its importance in contributing to knowledge about Saudi Arabian visual arts. Additionally, it candidly acknowledges the study's limitations, ensuring transparency in interpreting the findings and inviting future research endeavors to build upon its foundations.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Visual arts have been addressed by all societies and communities since the dawn of civilization as an effective tool that can preserve their approaches, cultures, and belief systems. These aspects allow visual artists to formulate unique styles through which regular social activities can be told and reflected in an intriguing manner, rather than just documenting them (Özhancı et al., 2016).

Moreover, visual arts exhibitions present multiple thought-provoking artworks that provide a perfect opportunity for them to ponder specific social and cultural aspects and visualize different approaches that are reflected through paintings and sculptures (John et al., 2022).

Kubiak and Skjoldager-Nielsen (2015) indicated that audience development allows certain establishments to disseminate the significance of art within society and encourage more citizens to participate in attending and visiting visual arts organisations and exhibitions. As a result, audience development has been considered a crucial element in the establishment of art exhibitions.

This chapter will focus on visual arts terminology and history, actual visual arts organisations and exhibitions in Saudi Arabia, terminology and history of audience development, youth visual arts audience development in Saudi Arabia, the different models and paradigms for visual arts audience development, and the adopted conceptual framework in this current research.

2.2 Visual Arts

2.2.1 Visual Arts Terminology and History

Expressing one's views in a social setting can be conducted using a plethora of art forms, one of which is visual art. Moreover, this art form can be addressed as a term to highlight its notional scope and establish a conceptual basis upon which this current research can be constructed. Different definitions of "visual art" as a term was outlined by different authors. It can be defined as an artistic and social process or as performance art or expressive art through which the artist interprets different phenomena in reality using different visual symbols and techniques such as architecture, paintings, photography, and sculptures (Yazici , 2017; Ruth, 2021; John et al., 2022; Shukr & Mustafa, 2021; Dong & Sabran, 2022).

Based on the aforementioned definitions, the definition of "visual arts" used throughout the current research can be outlined as follows: "A form of art that utilizes an array of techniques that can be organized and collated within paintings, drawings, sculptures, films, architectural structures, and other visual compositions; given the fact that they all reflect psychological states and social phenomena in a manner that coincides with artists' views, approaches, and scopes."

The significance of visual art is mainly pertinent to its cultural characteristics, which help preserve societies' and individuals' legacies and values throughout history. This can be made possible by the establishment of several organisations, including art galleries that allow viewers and visitors to contemplate different forms of artwork that have been created by an assortment of artists, who in turn reflect the distinct period that each one of them grew up through. Moreover, visual art can be used as a tool to

protest against injustice and inequality that might affect certain groups, communities and environment in a negative manner (Cherry, 2016; Saad, 2017; Benear et al., 2019).

In addition to its cultural significance, visual art is also characterized by its cognitive significance. Art, in general, enhances cognitive capacities. Visual arts, in particular, aid in the development of creative, critical thinking, and imaginative abilities (Hadji & Guedjal, 2021). It is reported also that visual art assists organisations and communities in disseminating enough knowledge about certain issues and events that affect people's lives on different levels, such as of establishing a community where people feel unselfish enough to work toward accomplishing the common good of their community rather than adopting an opportunistic and extremely individualistic approach and focusing on self-interest. Accordingly, visual art raises awareness about challenges that can be detrimental to mankind's survival, such as climate change and global warming, to find effective measures to respond to these challenges in the future (Özer, 2022; Patrix & Luberti, 2023). Furthermore, art can teach us how to live, it may be even better at this task than science, as the Latin poet Virgil noted, "Art is capable of revealing to us what no science can ever reveal to a human mind" (Pagan, 2016).

Visual art is also beneficial within educational contexts, where it allows students to better comprehend the complexity of several scientific concepts and theories, which they might not otherwise be able to visualize in a proper manner, in order for them to understand their characteristics and the manner through which they can be implemented in a real-life setting to benefit society with numerous applications (Dhanapal et al., 2014; Rusu & Chandrinou, 2015). Furthermore, visual art can aid to create a ritual setting by separating ritual space from everyday circumstances; art can also help to set the atmosphere by referencing liturgical narratives (DeMarrais & Robb, 2013). Özdemir (2021) emphasized that society-oriented local art events and

organisations are supporting the art and society link rather than focussing the economic value of art and artists as the actors of a commercial art industry. In addition, Rathwell and Amitage (2016) reported that artistic and technical processes can connect knowledge systems via six pathways, enhancing societal and ecological resilience in the face of change and uncertainty. These mechanisms include (1) the incorporation of knowledge, practices, and beliefs into artistic objects; (2) the sharing of knowledge through the language of art; (3) the sharing of art-making skills; (4) art as a contributor to monitoring socio-environmental changes; (5) the role of art in promoting continuity over time; and (6) art as a site of knowledge co-production. According to Priscilla (2022), visual art is an essential component of civilization and must be protected at all costs, where it enables us to record and store memories, express ourselves, comprehend the world around us, and interact with others.

The emergence of the first attempt to create visual art can be traced back to prehistoric times, when human beings used a very limited palette to create cave paintings depicting their struggle against different natural catastrophes, primitive lifestyles, and theological approaches toward life and the universe (Li & van der Veer, 2017). Cave paintings and sculptures can be found dating from 30,000 to 25,000 years ago (Hadi, 2018).

Perhaps one of the earliest representations of the correlation of philosophy and visual art is known as the Chauvet Cave artwork, which is 30,000 years old (Abrams, 2019). During ancient times, various civilizations experimented with their own depictions of nature and theological views by creating paintings and sculptures that reflected the unique characteristics of their own environment such as ancient Egyptians, ancient Mesopotamians and ancient Greeks (Nyord, 2013; Duarte & Stefanakis, 2015; Hallett, 2015; Nadali, 2019). The Renaissance (1348 to 1648) was

an artistic movement in Europe that revamped the art of ancient Greece and Rome. Some of the most prominent figures of this era include Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, and Raphael (Eko, 2016). The Baroque period of visual art (between the 16th and 18th centuries) was characterized by a significant focus on politics, science, and faith, along with deep philosophical matters and the tendency to adopt a more rational standpoint toward life (Castro-Revilla, 2022). Then the classical period (late-18th and mid-19th centuries) began, which was characterized by its tendency to recapture the austerity and orderliness of classical paintings, it featured some very influential and important artists, such as Jacques Louis David and his apprentice and student Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (Marshall & Desborde, 2018). During the 19th century, the Romantic period of visual art focused more on emotions and feelings rather than figures and events, the most prominent of which included William Blake, Casper Friedrich, Turner, and Eugene Delacroix (Encyclopedia of Art History, 2023). The modern era of visual art introduced various forms of expression and depiction during a period that occurred during the 1910s, more than a century ago. Modern visual artists had a tendency to move toward multi-dimensional artwork and break through the traditionally adopted three-dimensional plane of the artists who had preceded them (Liu, 2020). Contemporary art consequently developed during the modern era of art, as it was popular during the end of World War II. Furthermore, contemporary art is characterized by the tendency to remain as current as possible by responding to the newest social, economic, and political events, along with the depiction of human elements that foresee their future using different tools than those that utilize information technology (Aerilia et al., 2021).

2.2.2 Visual Arts Organizations and Exhibitions in Saudi Arabia

Perhaps the first attempt to cultivate an art scene in the KSA dates back to the 1940s, which took form in the initiation of the first pioneering theatre in all of Saudi Arabia and the entire Gulf region, thus indicating that the artistic culture was deeply rooted within the Kingdom, as it has accompanied it since its inception. Although the emphasis on Saudi theater occurred in schools, the media in Saudi Arabia was not successful in capitalizing on this rich theatrical culture, and the overall emphasis on this form of art primarily remained unsupported (King Khaled University, 2023).

As a consequence, during the 1950s, other forms of art were introduced to Saudi society, and visual art was considered one of the first and most significant forms that was also introduced first in an educational setting along with other forms of performing arts, such as theater. This indicates that the 1950s witnessed somewhat of an artistic awakening that was associated with an overall cultural developmental approach that began with the enhancement of education and curricula in the KSA (Faisal, 2014; Messaoudi , 2017; Alkhudair, 2018; El-Wakeel, 2023).

One of the most pioneering visual artists in Saudi Arabia is Abdul-Halim Radwi, who studied fine arts in Italy. He came back to the KSA and established his first art exhibition in 1953. In 1958, he participated in the first national school-based art exhibition for secondary school students, where his painting “Qriya,” or “A Village,” came in first place on behalf of the Aziziyah Secondary School. Furthermore, Radwi established over 106 personal art exhibitions worldwide and produced hundreds of paintings and sculptures (Razavi, 2021). However, visual art suffered from a nationwide sense of neglect in Saudi Arabia, as many individuals did not attend art galleries and exhibitions that were considered pioneering at the time. For instance,

Abdul-Halim Radwi's first art exhibition was attended by only two people, whereas Abdul-Aziz Al-Hamad's exhibition did not have any visitors at all (Al Sulaymān, 2012; Lieske, 2017).

During the 1960s and 1970s, the Saudi visual art scene expanded in a noticeable manner and started to allow females to be part of this artistic community, which led to the emergence of different female visual artists, the most prominent of which was Safeya Binzagr, who was successful in breaking the rigid cultural mold that existed in Saudi Arabia at the time, due to the prevalence of conservative approaches toward Islam. However, she was successful in proceeding to become one of the most renowned visual artists in Saudi Arabia and was responsible for participating in an enlightening movement that changed people's perceptions toward women and their role in the Saudi community (Elgibreen, 2015; Albugami, 2019; Alqahtani, 2022).

In a more comprehensive manner, the evolution of visual art in the KSA can be demonstrated through the following prominent milestones (MOC, 2019):

- **1953:** The first school-based art exhibition in the history of public education in Saudi Arabia was launched by Abdul-Halim Radwi.
- **1957:** The Ministry of Education added “visual arts and crafts” as a subject into the Saudi curriculum for boys.
- **1958:** King Saud bin Abdul-Aziz launched the first nationwide art exhibition organized by the Ministry of Education.
- **1959:** The Ministry of Education added “visual arts and crafts” as a subject into the Saudi curriculum for girls.
- **1965:** The first Institute of Art Education became responsible for providing initial teacher training programs in Riyadh.

- **1968:** Safeya Binzaqr and Munira Mosli launched their joint exhibition in Jeddah, and Abdul-Halim Radwi participated in the “Restoration of Jeddah” project with first street artwork.
- **1979:** The Saudi Arabian Society of Culture and Arts was established.

Evidence of the emphasis on Saudi contemporary art can be traced to 1979, with the first “Saudi Contemporary Art Exhibition” in Riyadh (MOC, 2019). During the 1990s, the visual art movement attracted many visual artists who placed a stronger emphasis on the aspect of female representation, as more Saudi women visual artists seized the opportunity to exhibit their art and express their personal views (Alsenan, 2015a).

Moving forward, the 2000s featured a new generation of visual artists in Saudi Arabia, who were able to enhance their talent and artistic approach. The Ministry of Culture sponsored exhibitions and workshops for visual arts events and other cultural events (films / music / literature / theatre). The events are large and attract a large audience of those interested in Saudi culture. Statistics have shown that young people, regardless of gender, attend at the highest rates (MOC, 2019).

Saudi society has reaped the benefits of the contemporary art movement that has been evolving since the late 1970s; as of 2019, around 22.8% of individuals in the KSA were found to be participating, on amateur or professional levels, in various visual art-related activities, including painting and sculpting. Moreover, about 329 individuals work as “exhibition guides,” and more than 255 art exhibitions were launched during 2019 alone (MOC, 2019).

These facts all coincide with the developmental approach of the Saudi Vision 2030, as concluded within the “Quality of Life” program (KSA, 2018). To further elaborate, the Quality of Life program was launched in 2018 to introduce new measures and implement novel strategies that can help broaden the horizons of several governmental and non-governmental sectors and organisations serving in the KSA and that place more emphasis on culture, entertainment, and visual arts, among other things. The program also plans to accomplish this by investing heavily in the establishment of a number of exhibitions and museums that can host and exhibit cultural and artistic festivals and artwork respectively, along with cultivating future generations of talented individuals in a wide array of domains as part of the “Talent Development Program.” To date, the program has been capable of accomplishing the following achievements (Abd El Karim, 2020; Klingmann, 2023; KSA, 2023):

- More than \$256,000 was allocated as an investment to support Saudi game developers.
- The KSA came in third place in the “World’s Happiest Countries” ranking in 2022.
- The Unified Security Operation Center was launched in Mecca and Riyadh.
- More than 3,800 entertainment events were organized and attended by more than 80 million visitors.
- Six cultural properties were listed on the UNESCO World Heritage List.
- The tourism sector has been flourishing, as more than 67 million visitors chose the KSA as their preferred tourist destination in 2021.