

## PaintInc.

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We have created an online portal, PaintInc., which offers an opportunity for people to make money through a Multi-Level Marketing (MLM) scheme. MLM schemes are highly controversial because of the issues of legality and legitimacy associated with this business model.

In the capitalist world of today, greed is the strong driving force that leads to rapid economic expansion. Although we often attach negative associations to this concept of greed, we cannot escape from the fact that the capitalist system governs the way we lead our lives today and it has brought its own benefits to us. Perhaps greed is tolerable as long as the money is obtained through legitimate means. But there will always be those few who will strive to push the boundaries, to test the law, in a bid to satisfy their insatiable desire for ever-increasing wealth. We have intentionally created an MLM model that treads on this thin line between what is considered legal and illegal, and we aim to use our online platform to explore the problematic issues of this scheme. At the same time, we plan to conduct a separate social experiment on this same platform, which we will elaborate on below.

First of all, the content in our “Home” page has been purposely crafted to resemble many of the advertisements we see in the media everyday, which offer quick returns with minimal effort and risk. Advertisements like these fill us with suspicion and doubt, but it is evident that a significant number of people believe in the promises that they make and end up getting sucked into the schemes. Through our website, we aim to find out how many people will be sucked in by the promise of quick profits, despite the fact that our sales pitch has effectively conveyed the dubious nature of our scheme. Famous MLM schemes have succeeded by appealing strongly to the emotions of people who are desperate to make a quick buck. These people often make the decision to join the organisation without doing background research on the credibility of the organisation or understanding the MLM business model clearly.

Our social experiment also aligns with the concept of transactional art. Specifically, we witness the conversion of social capital (as our members recruit new participants) into economic capital (money). We also see how cultural capital (worth of the art) can be translated into economic capital (again, money).

The target group that we are marketing our MLM scheme to is a specific group of people who are strongly motivated by money, with little or no real interest in art. This is where our interesting social experiment comes in. Through the repeated process of choosing paintings on our portal to reserve and sell to others, we are interested to find out whether it is possible for these members to gradually

develop a keen interest in art over time. In other words, we want to change their behaviour first by getting them to sell paintings, and then see if we can change their attitude towards art in the process. We believe that this is possible because of a psychological theory called cognitive dissonance, which proposes that human beings try as much as possible to align their attitudes with their behaviour to reduce the amount of cognitive dissonance, which is the uncomfortable feeling they experience from holding conflicting ideas simultaneously. In our case, the conflicting ideas would be selling art while having no interest in it. Hence, we expect that they will inadvertently develop an increase in art over time to reduce any cognitive dissonance they may be experiencing.

We can track how our members' tastes in art change over time, by looking at the paintings they choose to reserve in our "marketplace". Another interesting issue that we can explore from our marketplace is how members value individual works of art. How do they decide whether a piece of art is worth the price we have quoted on the website? In other words, how do they decide how much a piece of art is worth? It is easy to determine the price of a Picasso or Monet because there are experts who value such works of art. However, our art will come from young promising artists who are less well-known in the public eye, and it will be interesting to study how our members attach a monetary value to such art.

We aim to use PaintInc. as a platform to explore contentious issues regarding MLM schemes, as well as conduct our own social experiments to observe attitude changes in people as well as decision-making behaviour. It will be interesting to see how it turns out.