

# MARKETING – A WAY TO INCREASE THE VALUE OF THE PERFORMING ARTS

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## *Abstract:*

*Several studies have focused on the marketing mix of goods, but it shouldn't be neglected that services, through its characteristics, cause major problems for marketers, when adopting appropriate marketing strategies. This problem is prevalent in the field of cultural services, where marketers face the lack of funds to implement appropriate marketing strategies, either an internal system that restricts the possibilities for action, or simply a lack of experience and marketing information applied within cultural services. The purpose of this study is to compress information regarding the characteristics of cultural services and the specific marketing actions used in the field of performing arts, providing thus several directions in knowing and understanding it. Many cultural institutions are still adopting traditional marketing strategies but this approach is not sufficient. New approaches and strategies are required in order to ensure their survival on the cultural market. This paper offers for the reader a literature review of arts marketing and the main issues approached in specialized literature regarding marketing in performing arts. Several ideas based on this survey are formulated in order to improve the marketing strategies adopted by cultural institutions.*

*Keywords: arts marketing, cultural services marketing, characteristics of cultural services, marketing mix in performing arts, customer experience in performing arts.*

## **Introduction**

Certain specialized authors considered arts marketing (theatre, music, dance, visual art) as being the marketing of "difficult" products due to their role in educating the audience and perpetuating beliefs and values throughout generations, by using submission at various cultural stimuli. In this situation, the marketers have offered to the audience an intangible aspect, a service that is quite difficult to promote. Thus, for performing arts as services offered by theatres – which are non-profit cultural institutions with cultural and educational role assuming the cultural perpetuation in a stiff competitive environment and without

clearly defined specific marketing strategies - is difficult.

The services promoted by theatres are distinguished through a series of characteristics that make harder the marketers' mission. A performing art show is considered a cultural service rather than a cultural good, due to its characteristics – intangibility, inseparability, perishability and heterogeneity. For this reason, the marketing mix used in cultural services differs to the marketing mix used for goods. This paper proposes a literature review of arts marketing and a personal contribution considering some ideas revealed in the literature. First part of the paper comprises issues related to the evolution and the importance of

marketing in cultural field and also presents the specific characteristics of cultural services. Then follows a description of theatre marketing mix and the final part of the paper emphasizes the concept of cultural service as a consumer experience. The methodology includes a brief analysis of the arts marketing literature emphasizing the particular elements of cultural services and offering a new approach for cultural marketers concerning the marketing mix of cultural services and the way in which they could improve cultural activity.

### **Cultural Services Marketing**

Diggle (1976) in "Marketing the Arts" recognizes the authority of the artists as a starting point of arts marketing: "the end product is what the artist decides it will be...The essential freedom of the artist...is what makes the product worth marketing in the first place..."(Diggle, 1976, pp. 10-11). At the beginning the artist was the core of marketing strategies. All strategies were developed in accordance with his artworks and the audiences received what the artist suggested. The willingness of the consumer had no priority and no relevance for those responsible.

The period after 90`s represents a period of development in arts marketing field, new approaches were analysed and the role of marketing has become consolidated. Marketing was recognize as a tool for organisations development and adopted in individual art organisations. This period brings also an increasing supply of marketing books and surveys, the proliferation of experts and consultants in arts marketing and the expansion of relevant training courses, seminars and conferences (Lee, 2005). The old approach, according to which the consumer needs had no priority, was changed, and now is observed a prioritization of customer needs due to the competition. Encouraging arts organisations to view from the customer's perspective and to

put customer needs as a priority in their decision-making seems to consist the means of survival in the market. A product should be created according to what customers demand and all marketing strategies regarding the price, place and promotion have to be adapted to consumer's needs in order to maximise the customer's satisfaction (Lee, 2005).

As it was specified by Gombault (1997) and Tobelem (1997), the marketing was introduced in cultural institutions due to: the willingness to spread culture, the increasing need to financial resources, the increasing level of competition intra- and extra-sectoral relative to leisure time industry, and, finally, a better understanding of the audiences. Essentially through their need for funding and under the government influence, cultural institutions have been forced to adopt business models of operating (O'Reilly, 2005). Even if there is a strong need of implementing marketing strategies in all arts organisation in order to ensure the existence of cultural providers on the market, many of them do not implement the new marketing approaches. Due to the lack of specialised marketing personnel, to the old perception about what marketing means for a cultural organisation or to the deficiency of financial resources to implement new ideas, they go further with traditional marketing strategies. The passive and traditional marketing strategies performed by European cultural institutions compared to the strategies performed by commercial institutions was also revealed in a survey concerning the marketing activities (Wöber, Grabler and Jeng, 2001).

It is considered that the different objectives settled by cultural institutions are the main cause for the different marketing strategies required to be implemented in these institutions. The main objective of the cultural institutions is not to obtain profit while commercial

institutions always perform activities in order to obtain financial advantages. Thus, there is a big difference between marketing strategies applied in cultural institutions and marketing strategies applied in commercial institutions. Many marketing academics have shown their interest in the application of marketing to the arts and cultural sector, and some of them view this as a branch of non-profit marketing (Lee, 2005). Marketing tools used for services represent vital components in many strategies adopted by non profit organisations such as: schools, churches, hospitals, museums (Kotler and Keller, 2006). Several authors sustain that the role of non-profit organizations is very important in communities due to the provided services considered essential for the society, such as health, social welfare, and education (Duque-Zuluaga & Schneider, 2006). So, the theatres as non-profit institutions have the specific mission to spread the cultural values to a wide range of audiences.

For cultural institutions marketing represents a way to provide a framework for analysing and implementing educational activities and programs for organising membership and financial support, increasing internal revenues and establishing public relations (Courvoisier and Courvoisier, 2007). As stated by some authors in arts marketing writings it is suggested that customers of an art organisation include peer artists, critics and funding bodies as well as a paying audience (Lee, 2005). In some arts marketing studies, marketing is seen as being in conflict with the achievement of artistic mission. Interestingly, the idea is that arts organisations have two different aims – to fulfil artistic vision and to satisfy market needs. It is also considered that the job of arts marketers is to seek a “balance” between artistic vision and marketing needs (Lee, 2005, p. 13). Thereof, some authors consider that arts marketers should explore and

discover a mix that benefits both arts organisations and their customers, finding a harmonious balance between arts and market-centred perspectives. As a “middle-man” between artists and audience, the marketer is concerned with the “way” in which artistic products would be brought before a paying audience (Diggle, 1976, pp. 5-9).

### **Specific approaches and particularities in cultural field**

In comparison with other sectors, marketing research applied in theatre has been limited (Bennett, 2002). In her study “What role for marketing the arts? An analysis of art consumption and artistic value”, Botti points out that “marketing in art is marketing of artistic services”(p.38). Cultural services are activities performed by cultural agencies for consumer benefit in order to satisfy spiritual needs and to produce desired effects (entertainment, relaxation, education, moralization and sensitization). The cultural contribution can not be considered by its tangible nature as the products can be. The intangible nature of activities developed in cultural field is frequently responsible for insecure attitude of the consumer, especially in quality assessment of the provided services. Thus, the personnel and the physical premises in cultural institutions have a strategic importance for consumer confidence and intermediate the relationship between consumers and institution (Courvoisier and Courvoisier, 2007).

It is known that in the case of cultural field the marketing approach is not taken into account, so artistic production attracts a certain audience. The marketing approach aims to identify and to reveal customer’s needs in order to offer the proper product or service that maximizes his satisfaction. Thus, problems within the cultural approach and the marketing approach may appear (Courvoisier and Courvoisier, 2007). Maybe an Art Director of a

theatre pretends that a certain show is able to gather a significant number of participants by taking into account only the artistic perspective. This approach may prove to be wrong, if the audience participate at the show and for the majority of them the message of the artistic vision is not understood. If previously, using specific marketing tools, an analysis of the audience is performed, there can be implemented different marketing strategies (for instance, promotion materials with performance description in order to facilitate the understanding of artistic vision). We consider that marketing could solve this problem, by identifying the right audience for a specific performance and by using marketing tools in order to minimize the risks faced by the audience. Consumer of performing arts services faces different kinds of risk categories, because the nature of the product is unknown for him before consumption (Colbert, 2003).

Because of these features, in cultural sector it is required the implementation of specific marketing techniques in order to attract new potential audiences and the retention of existing customers.

### **Services features**

Agreeing with other authors Benito (2011) suggest that instead of creating material products, cultural institutions create intangibles ones as education, experiences, emotions, that are hard to be measured. It is also stated that the majority of non-profits offer services rather than physical goods. Moreover, it is known that a cultural offer has an ephemeral nature, by unique nature of the work (Courvoisier and Courvoisier, 2007). A required issue is that always to be considered the fact that the customer cannot be completely separated from the service (Kalenskaya et al, 2013). The attendance of a live performance supposes the consumption of a service (Bouder-Pailler, 2008).

Services have some features that products have not. Hoffman and Bateson (1999) establish the difference between goods and services using 4 key points:

- Intangibility
- Inseparability
- Heterogeneity
- Pherisability

*Intangibility* refers to the fact that services have not physical evidence and therefore they cannot be touched, held, smelled or tasted. This is the essential feature through which services differ from goods.

The statement of Lurry (1996) that consumption of artistic products are expressed certain aspects of one's personality and one's belonging to a particular culture or sub-culture is presented also in Botti's study „What Role for Marketing in the Arts? An Analysis of Arts Consumption and Artistic Value”. Through the consumption of artistic products the attainment of a specific social status is suggested (Botti, 2000). Douglas and Isherwood (1979) and Lurry (1996) consider that communicating one's personality and values through the things one buy is linked to symbolic needs (Botti, 2000). Often, consumers express this type of needs in decision of choosing a cultural service and the marketing positioning of the cultural service for this need emphasizes the differentiation by non-participation.

Glynn, Bhattacharya and Rao (1996) demonstrate that intangible benefits (particularly psychological benefits) are an important approach of a powerful relationship with cultural institutions. Thus, marketers have the opportunity to develop actions in order to retain the customers organising councils and committees which allow some facilities for the members (the most loyal customers).

The potential customers have not the opportunity to know a performing art show before buying it, because of this

feature of services. For instance, a theatre show cannot be tested before buying it, in the same way of testing a perfume. Thus, the perceived risk of an intangible purchase is bigger than the risk involved by a product purchase (which can be returned or modified after purchase). Ancillary products, such as posters with theatre schedule, video and audio recorders or books, are called in arts marketing semi-tangibles because of how they make the connection between the nature of tangible goods and intangible values of service (Hill, O'Sullivan & O'Sullivan, 1995).

*Inseparability* refers to the fact that services are produced and consumed in the same time. The purchasing and consumption of the products is after the production process while for the services the production and the consumption overlapping. In the performing arts (Hill, O'Sullivan & O'Sullivan, 1995), the artists perform a show close abroad from audience. The moment of performing and the moment of consuming is the same and the cultural consumer is facing with a direct experience.

*Heterogeneity* – considering the nature of service, each provided service is unique and it cannot be offered identically, even if it is provided by the same company. Opposed to services, goods are homogeneous and mass produced.

The quality and essence of artistic experiences may vary depending on who produces. For example, for a performing art show, the scenes are not identical and are influenced by the mood of the artists, by the technical team (sound, light and scene). In the performing arts are generally involved more people in providing experience (Hill, O'Sullivan and O'Sullivan, 1995). Each theatre member contributes in a specific manner to the uniqueness of the experience lived by the customer in the theatre (Hill, O'Sullivan & O'Sullivan,

1995). There is the main reason why two performances are not identical.

*Perishability* – according to this characteristic, services are not able to be stored, returned or resold, once that had been used. Once those services were provided and consumed, transferring them to other consumer is impossible.

Between products (can be stored) and services (required concomitant consumption) exist a main difference. The unsold tickets of a show, at certain time, lose their opportunity in providing incomes, even if the cultural institution will support all the cost of providing service (Hill, O'Sullivan & O'Sullivan, 1995).

Several authors state that intangibles are always based on something tangible (Benito, 2011). Although theatres promote intangibles as education, research or interpretation as their core services they are based on tangibles, tangible goods that can be touched and seen such as a building, staff or tickets that help the audience to understand those intangibles promoted. Benito (2011) takes Kotler and Andreasen's statement that there is a huge difference between selling intangibles and tangibles. Due to their own characteristics, in theatres is needed the application of specific marketing techniques.

### **Cultural marketing mix**

As Cîntec (2010) states, the marketing mix in cultural field is "any set of tactical elements, practical actions which aiming the promotion of a product or a service in order to sell it". Marketing mix in cultural field, as Otilia Cîntec outlines, consist in: "product, price, place, promotion, personnel, processes, physical evidences". Other authors consider that marketing mix in arts refers to 6 P's: product, price, place, promotion, personnel and processes (Dickman, 1997). We consider that in performing arts due to the specific

characteristics of these services, the most appropriate marketing mix is that of 7 P's (product, price, place, promotion, processes, personnel and physical evidences).

*Product* includes any experience of the audience in the theatre. Several authors state that is a huge difference between the two levels of the cultural offers: the central or basic offer which meet the utilitarian function that consumer expects to find in specific institution and auxiliary offer that meet and add more value to basic offer (Courvoisier and Courvoisier, 2007). So, the product offered by a theatre to its audience includes everything experienced by the audience in the theatre, including the basic offer and also auxiliary products. For adding value to their offers, theatres may provide for its audience: parking facilities, hospitality of the staff, maybe the opportunity to participate at one rehearsal before the premiere or even organising contest for the public and the prize consisting in a meeting with the favourite actor of the theatre. All these experiences involves the customer directly and so it can be established a relationship with it. In the case of performing arts, if we analyse the service offered by the theatre to its audience, it can be established that: the basic offer includes the show or the performance, while auxiliary offer includes for example the parking facilities, the accessibility to information concerning the performance, the personnel ability to manage the problems of the customer, offering him a better experience. The product will differ according to the institutions that provide it. Some theatres may provide for their customers season schedule, calendar of shows, actors resident and special guest actors, printed programs and other commodity (Dickman, 1997).

In arts marketing literature is sustained that arts experiences of the audience can be provided by the arts

organisation without changing its core products such as actual performances or exhibitions. Then the satisfaction of the customer is maximised changing or modifying augmented products which add value to the core activities (McLean, 1997). In other words, the customer orientation is applied only to the augmented products while core products remain intact. Bhrádaigh (1997) submits that „marketing of culture and arts needs to safeguard the core product, while modifying the non-core elements of the augmented product” (p. 208). Changing the augmented product means to modify the way in which the cultural product is communicated, presented and packaged (Kolb, 2000). It is assumed that customer satisfaction with a theatrical show result from the perceptions of both core service and augmented service (Boerner et al., 2011). Agreeing with the statement that the core products remain intact and the customer satisfaction is maximised changing or modifying augmented (auxiliary) products, we consider that conflicts between both artistic and management side are minimised. Then appear another issue – the ethics of cultural field. We consider also that artistic vision provided by artistic team gives the uniqueness and the originality of the basic offer. In the case of products is simple to adjust the products implementing some attributes required by customers in order to fulfil their needs, surely assuming some cost production. For a theatre to change the basic offer in accordance with customer needs means to suppress all the originality and the artistic motivation behind the act. Kerrigan et al. (2004) take the statement of John Drummond in the book “Arts Marketing” according which “if you let the public decide what you do you will become both repetitive and lacking in imagination”. As a subjective opinion, it is considered that in arts marketing, specifically in the services offered by theatres, the

influence of marketing must be resumed to the augmented products, thus adding value to the core services.

*Price* has an essential role in cultural marketing mix and often is not fully understood by those responsible for cultural institutions. The price as a powerful component in marketing mix must be analysed taking into account each public, separately (Kelly, 1993). Châtelain (1997) recommends analysing this concept from two perspectives: entry fees and the prices of ancillary products. In the process of price-fixing is taken into account the direct competition from the market and the availability of the substituent and is fixed within the limits that the visitor is willing to pay. For obtaining regular flow of visitors, attracting new audiences, increasing customer loyalty, reducing cultural inequality, facilitating the access to culture the tariffs are diversified and for certain audiences are established free entries (Courvoisier and Courvoisier, 2007). To increase their audience, theatres groups offer discounts on subscription series (d'Astous et al., 2004). Dynamic pricing technique which consists in adjusting the ticket prices based on the demand for that production and the time remaining until the show is another pricing strategy adopted by some cultural organisations. As a show approaches, the ticket prices can be increased (Colbert, 2009). Prices of a cultural institution comprise the prices for the general entry for specific audiences prices for services or different kind of provided facilities, or prices for product elements (the printed schedule, food or drinks, parking or souvenirs) (Dickman, 1997).

The price has a huge importance for the consumers. Several studies highlighted that the arts consumption is not so sensitive to the price. An explication is that price is a „psychological variable” which is perceived by consumers as an indicator of the value. Thus, a high price will not

necessarily lead to a decrease in quantity demanded Colbert (2003).

*Place* refers to the way in which services are presented and delivered to the customers. Some items concerning „the place” in theatre are: the location, the building, number of seats, parking facilities, amenities (heating or air conditioning, the comfort of the seats), maintenance, scene, the sound quality, visibility of the scene (Dickman, 1997). The influence of cultural institutions extends beyond its location through partnerships with other institutions (Kelly, 1993). Châtelain (1997) asserts that for the accessibility of the service offer to wide audiences exists two complementary strategies: The first one the „pull” strategy - to attract audiences to the theatre promoting the image features and reputation and the second one „push” strategy– active promotion of the products through different promotion techniques, which will facilitate the access to the market without losing the identity.

*Promotion* refers to the way in which information is provided to the audiences and includes advertising, direct selling, publicity, public relations (Dickman, 1997). It is shown that the promotion techniques are selected according to the target market. According to the main objectives of a theatre and the promotion budget, the marketers adopted different strategies in order to promote their services in a suitable manner to harmonize with the image provided by the institution to its public (Kelly, 1993). As Châtelain (1997) points out, public relations are frequently implemented by cultural institutions due to the fact that is a variable element in the marketing mix. Informing and attracting supporters (both downstream – clients and upstream - sponsors) using public relations as a tool seems to be the most efficient strategy, in the opinion of some authors. An important approach concerning the marketing communication for the theatre visitors is

pinpointed by Watchel (1980) – a friend recommendation of a theatre show or the reviews of the show are the main factors that influence attendance, cited in (Slack et. al, 2007).

*Personnel* – intermediate the relation with customers through direct interactions and influences the quality of provided cultural service. Friendship, the knowledge and the courtesy of the ushers and gatekeepers but also the ability to face the complaints or to solve specific problems (e.g. the loss of a child) entail a better experience than theatre shows (Dickman, 1997). Personnel is the most valuable and the most important resource and technology plays a marginal role (Bagdadli, 2003). Kotler and Kotler (1998) as cited in Lee (2005) consider that customer decision making process is frequently influenced by the personnel in areas of promoting offerings, designing communications and communicating with audiences. Providing front-office service and the contact with the consumer are actions reflected in the core attributes and in the additional attributes of service (Lovelock, 1992). The personnel (the theatre personnel) has an important role and influences the consumer perception of the provided service.

*Processes* – providing a high quality of service depends not only by the personnel efficiency but also by the methods used. For providing information or tickets for the customers are developed a series of procedures such as box office procedures and the use of commercial external ticketing services. The customer attitude towards the whole event can be affected by the customer's experiences during the processing phase (Dickman, 1997). To streamline the entire processes performed in an art institution the use of a system that integrates tickets office data (single-ticket purchasers and subscribers) is requested in order to facilitate relationship marketing and to develop special programs for the

subscribers, for instance. The behaviour of each customer is compared and the audience preferences are forecast and thus is developed the customers loyalty (Colbert, 2009). Customers expect an excellent service as a result of modern and rapid methods of acquiring tickets, of the information updates available on the website or of the amiability of the personnel. Concerning the modern technology adopted by many of arts institutions it can be stated that younger market segment is not the only one that can be reached with the use of a new technology, is also the case of high art audience with higher level education (Colbert, 2009). Taking into account the operation of converting a single-ticket customer into a subscriber or a donor without using an integrated data base, all the processes will be hampered. Specialised systems represent a tool which facilitates tracking the sales over time, setting area prices according to the willingness to pay of the customer or simply applying dynamic pricing techniques (Colbert, 2009).

*Physical evidences* – emphasize how the environment is administered and services organised and provided to cultural consumers (Courvoisier and Courvoisier, 2007). Physical evidence refers to the space in which the service consumption occurs and comprises all the environmental conditions, the design, the functionality of the space, the signs, the symbols and the artifacts (Zeithaml 2003). Rentschler and Gilmore (2002) consider that the service quality perceived by the customer, comprises everything from a warmly „welcome” received from the personnel by telephone or directly in the theatre, to the parking facilities or the accessibility to public transport or simply to the manner of resolving complaints as cited in Colbert (2009). Physical evidences such as environment design, décor, stationery, staff clothes are elements that provide a certain experience

outlining an overall image in the mind of consumer.

### **Tangibility of the service**

Because services are intangible and can't be tested before buying, consumers look out physical evidences for their future experiences when interacting with a service provider (Langeard et al. 1981; Shostack 1977). Satisfied participants intensify their experience during the service, purchasing different objects or materials connected to their experience. This constitutes the materialized experience of the customer and art marketers should consider and select the appropriate materials to sell in the place where the experience of the customer is taking place. Some examples of tangible materials that offer a great experience to the customer are: souvenirs, prints or gifts. An innovative, personalized and customized material will enhance its value and also increases the value of the customer's experience (Petkus, 2004). Theatres also may earn money from the bar, from the sale of coffee and ice creams (Kerrigan et al., 2004). Each performing art show represents a singular combination of the artistic and the technical team's work and is a unique performance due to the reactions of the audience which affect its quality (Urrutiaguer, 2002). There are possible two levels of involvement in providing cultural service, by audiences: at the core of the offer (helps to define cultural offer and its positioning through the participation of the spectator in the process of creation offer – for example through participation of the public to an open rehearsal) or at the ancillary offer (instead to participate in the work, the spectator received the means to create its own experience) (Pulh et al., 2008). After entering the building, participants from the community understand different anthropological remains from their own culture, if the building has a history. For those who come from different social groups this constitutes a great subject of

debate which will promote understanding and cohesion between different people (Benito, 2011). Some authors highlight the need to brand the venue in order to obtain rental incomes from those interested in organising different activities in the theatre's location (Kerrigan et al., 2004). Embracing the issue that customer may be seeking social contact, the theatres can promote its services as a opportunity to develop social contact with other participants. The theatre may proceed to improve new ancillary services in order to promote the conviviality (Pulh et al., 2008).

### **Cultural services as a customer experience**

Collin-Lachaud (2003) states that provided service is materialised in an experience which determines the level of customer satisfaction. It is also pointed by Collin-Lachaud (2003) that the customer satisfaction increases when the customer is involved in the production of the service through interaction, compared to an impersonal and objective evaluation of the result. It is stated that the benefits deriving from cultural products (theatre, exhibitions, opera and literature) are quite different from products deriving from entertainment providers. (Guitcheva and Passebois, 2009). The notion of experience has become a key element to understand consumer behaviour and it's the basis of experiential marketing (Carù and Cova, 2006). Experiential marketing is developed (Schmitt, 1999) proposing differentiation with experiences rather than commoditized goods and services.

The consumer contributes to the success of the event as he produces part of his satisfaction. His implication in the process of creation and production of the service determines his level of satisfaction. It is known that actively participation in an action develops incentive experiences for those

involved, determining self fulfilment and attachment for all the participants. This approach is available also in the case of cultural services, which are made up of shared experiences. The customer decisions in cultural matters are based on the symbolic elements and their effect on the consumer will be felt in terms of aesthetic enjoyment and emotions aroused (Courvoisier and Courvoisier, 2007). Several authors consider that in some instances, emotional desires dominate utilitarian motives in the choice of products (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982; Maslow, 1968). In the interaction between consumer and organisation it is stated that the consumption experience is a response to a corporate stimulus taking sensory, affective, creative cognitive, physical and social identity forms (Zarantonello, 2008). A forth category of offering adapted to customer needs is represented by the customer experience and is actually a new category of offering which is added to goods, products and services (Carù and Cova, 2006). Schmitt (1999) points out that it can be possible to build a fourth level around the core, the actual and the augmented product as "experienced product", which consist in customer experiences which are sensory, affective, creative, cognitive, physical and social identity experiences. The decision process of buying services is quite different by the decision process of buying goods, because the services are more intensive in experiences unlike products (Dirsehan and Yalçın, 2011).

Creating and managing the experiences are essential management tasks for service organizations, because the customer experience is the heart of services marketing (Zeithaml et al., 2009). Several researchers consider that satisfaction is a significant antecedent for the post-purchase attitude, the intentions of repurchase and other good behavioural intentions (Dirsehan and Yalçın, 2011). In a study

carried out by Andreassen and Bilk in 1980 is showed that lifestyle, attitudes and developmental experiences are better predictors of attendance at performing arts than socio-economic variables (Larsen, 2008). The age of consumers does affect the taste in the way that older people are less likely to choose comedy or drama than youth (Willis and Snowball, 2009). It is also considered by some authors that experiential marketing focuses on the emotional sides in addition to the customers' rational sides in order to create positive and memorable customer experiences (Dirsehan and Yalçın, 2011). As a competitive advantage, theatres can create new experiences for its audiences using as a tool experiential marketing.

Results provided by this research highlight the way in which marketers could reduce the perceived risk of buying cultural services, facilitating in the same time the access of customers to culture. It is also emphasized the fact that personal involvement of customer in the service production process will lead to strong relationships and commitment with service provider. Considering the fact that older people are less likely to choose comedy or drama than youth, marketers can schedule the performances in different ways, offering the opportunity for each target audience to see the desired performance. To materialize the customers' experiences in theatres and to earn additional financial resources, a souvenir shop opened in the main hall of the theatre selling books related to performances or personalised objects with the actors' signature can be a solution. Looking in performing arts field, tickets purchasing for the shows, all the processes faced by the customers for viewing that show, the personnel attitudes regarding customers, the price of provided services, the information accessibility concerning the show, the performers, facilities and service packages offered

to the customer, induces an individual and subjective experience for each customer. Thus, the customers' experiences analysed throughout its decisional process determines his satisfaction level.

### Conclusions

Any opportunity available in the market should be considered by marketers in order to maximize customer satisfaction and the institution benefits. Knowing the market needs is an important requirement for marketers. Lack of information about market needs and consumer profiles induces a new orientation of consumer to another products offered in the market. No cultural institutions will receive public recognition and appreciation from their customers if their needs are not satisfied. Intense competition in entertainment services market and in leisure time market determines a customer oriented approach. The variety of opportunities available in leisure time market hampers the marketers' mission – to attract new audiences in performing arts. A customer orientation and specific marketing programs developed by non-profit institutions bring new financial benefits, increasing self-financing capacity.

Another important approach that needs to be outlined is that marketing should not affect the core service offered to the customer. In the case of performing arts the core services include the artistic vision and from an ethical point of view it must remain intact. The marketers should implement proper strategies for the rest elements of marketing mix: price, promotion, personnel, processes, physical evidences. For example: developing a survey that outline the preferences and the needs of cultural consumers concerning the type and the details of a performing art show and then implement those ideas in the artistic service will generate a gap between artistic part and management part. Thus, the artistic vision of a performing art is affected and the role of theatre to spread culture, perpetuating cultural values and offering educational projects is minimised. As a subjective belief, it is considered that the public cannot be educated giving what it requires, due to the fact that education comes from external sources, shared by others.

The experiences lived by the customer in different moments of decisional process involves an individual and serious approach from all the theatre staff, maximizing customer satisfaction.

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#### Acknowledgement

This work was cofinanced from the European Social Fund through Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources Development 2007-2013, project number POSDRU/159/1.5/S/142115 „Performance and excellence in doctoral and postdoctoral research in Romanian economics science domain” .