

AUDIENCE RESEARCH FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS: ROMANIAN MUSIC FESTIVAL

Case
studies

Keywords

Arts marketing
Festival management
Audience research
Romanian Music Festival

JEL Classification

Z11, L82

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the strategic marketing tools (instruments) such as segmentation and targeting for a better understanding of current and potential audiences of classical music festivals. Arts administrators need to locate and address the audience segmentation, enhancing communication with audiences of all segments. The marketing strategies for music festivals should include improving music festival branding as well as developing diverse programs and engaging with the community on multiple levels.

The study incorporates a literature review of the recent sociological research dealing with the consumption of arts products and a case study approach on the fifteenth edition of Romanian Music Festival in Ia i, involving an audience survey. The research can be used as a tool to inform marketing and audience development plans for the organisers of Romanian Music Festival and other arts organisations. It also contains insights that organisations might find useful in the development of an arts activity itself.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years arts organisations have focused their attention to audience development, to reaching and engendering the loyalty of a wider cross-section of the community.

This paper presents firstly a review of the literature regarding the marketing tools for performing arts, such as segmentation, and then it focuses on the case study of the *Romanian Music Festival* from Iasi. The festival, which was one of the highlights of Romanian musical life for more than four decades, has managed, since its inception in 1973, to gain national and even international recognition, and is the only major festival focused exclusively on Romanian music. Its organizers, primarily representatives of “George Enescu” University of Arts and “Moldova” State Philharmonic from Iasi, with the support of the Romanian Composers and Musicologists Union and the Ministry of Culture, have presented each year a wide variety of contemporary works by Romanian composers from different parts of the country, balanced by concerts of old Romanian music.

2. MARKETING AND PERFORMING ARTS

The objective of marketing in the arts world is to increase audiences without sacrificing artistic credibility, creativity and innovation. This can be a difficult balancing act. Getz (1997) states that marketing is about building relationships not only with customers but also with staff, volunteers, stakeholders, and suppliers (p. 249). Arts organisations obviously need financial stability to ensure long-term viability. However, survival should not be a goal but a prerequisite for accomplishing artistic goals (Larry Morrison, quoted in Mintz, 1990).

Marketing of (performing) arts is different in its application than the traditional commercial marketing (Fraser, 2004).

“Unlike concerts, where individuals are generally drawn to hear and view a live

performance of a specific artist, music festivals often involve a myriad of talent and may or may not follow a particular genre” (Bowen, 2005, p. 155).

3. SEGMENTING THE PERFORMING ARTS AUDIENCES

Audience development is a long-term, staged process of encouraging and assisting in the life of an arts organisation, as it appears as a central point in A.R. Andreasen (1991). Since potential audience members differ in their progress through these stages, arts organisations must identify where various target audiences are at and what motivates them. Segmentation of performing arts audiences, as one of the most fundamental techniques of targeted marketing, has been widely discussed in literature (e.g. Kotler&Scheff, 1997; Bernstein, 2007). The relevant literature then concentrates mostly on describing the markets (audiences) in terms of variables applicable to segmentation. Among the most relevant variables used in research studies are age or geographical factors (Kotler&Scheff, 1997; Favaro&Frateschi, 2007), while other researchers concentrate around one or more components of social class, such as income, education or occupation (Solomon et al., 2010), which also compose variables most often suggested for performing arts audience segmentation (Kotler&Scheff, 1997).

More recent research then confirms the former findings. Masters, Russell, and Brooks (2001) and Borgonovi (2004) show that higher overall education and higher income leads to a more complete art education of consumers which then increases the performing arts attendance frequency. At the European level, Falk & Falk (2012) find all the traditional components of social class, e.g. income, education and occupation to be significant in predicting consumers’ performing arts attendance.

According to Gibson and Connell (2005), while classical music, jazz, and opera

festivals are associated with higher-educated and upper-class audiences, popular and folk music festivals are targeted to middle-class audiences (p 215).

4. CONTEXT AND METHODOLOGY

Using a case study approach on the fifteenth edition of the Romanian Music Festival, involving a survey, the research identifies the audience profile, the loyalty for the classical music, as well as the satisfaction and the expectations of the public regarding all aspects of the festival. Research goal was to build an adequate strategy of the Romanian Music Festival to changing consumer needs. To achieve the proposed goal we conducted a survey on the participants in Romanian Music Festival, the fifteenth edition, aiming to outline the festival participant's profile, his satisfaction level and his preferences for the next editions (symphonic, vocal-symphonic, choral, opera and chamber concerts, jazz). In the quantitative and qualitative analyses conducted in this context, we identified categories of consumers to which the festival organizers should focus and a number of marketing techniques appropriate for these categories, information that can be used both in the management plan for the new editions, as well as in future research.

4.1. Research hypotheses

- a) in outlining the consumer profile the general studies, the music education level of the participant at the festival and the frequency of participation to cultural events have a particular importance. It started from the premise that the Romanian Music Festival participants are generally highly educated people, of average age, with specialized musical education and a high level of culture;
- b) the Romanian music festival consumer is generally satisfied with the programs offered at the festival;
- c) consumers want more varied programs and better quality;

d) consumers want a more intense marketing;

e) the culture level and the musical education level have a significant impact on consumer preferences for Romanian classical music;

f) consumers would prefer to attend a larger festival where Romanian music is presented in the context of international repertoire.

The method used to collect data was survey based on a questionnaire with 17 closed questions and one open question. Data were entered and processed statistically using a specialized computer program, SPSS 17.0 for Windows. It should be mentioned that it was the first time in the festival history when it was used such research methodology, so this work is pioneering. Since there was no questionnaire model designed for this type of festival or for another festival in the country, it was necessary to adapt models of questionnaires used at other festivals worldwide.

The average time necessary for completing the answers was about 3-4 minutes.

4.2. Study scheme

The questionnaire consisted of 18 questions. The evaluation was made differently depending on the question: with a 5-point scale depending on the degree of appreciation (very good = 5, very poor = 1), or simple answers (Yes or No), the multiple responses, or open questions. Eight questions were used for outlining the consumer profile, but certain characteristics can be derived from the other answers.

In order to assess consumer satisfaction another five questions were used.

Other questions referred to consumer needs, evaluation of marketing strategy and evaluation of the product and festival venues.

The questionnaire also contained questions about socio-demographic descriptors, such as gender, age, education level or place of residence.

At the end of the questionnaire an open question was introduced, asking the respondents to offer suggestions for future occurrences of the festival.

The sample consisted of 120 respondents.

5. FINDINGS

In terms of age, we observed that a relevant proportion of the sample (42.5 %) was represented by the young, 21-35 (Figure 1). The sample contained 55% of women and 45% of men. More than a half of the sample (55.8%) were university educated, followed in number by the group of high-school educated consumers, where precisely these groups of consumers are the more frequent classical concert goers. Also an important proportion (52.5 %) has a basic level of musical knowledge, while 19.2 % have a bachelor degree in music, and 17.5 % have graduated a college of music.

Most of the respondents (71.7%) were residents of Iasi, while 28.3% were just visitors. As regards the loyalty for classical music, 39.2% of the sample were usual participants of the concerts organised by „Moldova” State Philharmonic and „George Enescu” University of Arts.

An important criterion was the satisfaction level, therefore we found out that more than a half (55%) considered the festival program as Good, while 20% considered it Very good and 21.7% classified it as Medium.

A considerable proportion (50.8%) of respondents were determined to attend the festival by the special repertoire, 40% for leisure, 25.8% for the atmosphere of the festival, 25% for new experiences, 24.2% for performers, and 10.8% came for socializing (Figure 2). Respondents could check more options for this item.

For an event organiser it is very important to know which marketing tools are most effective. As seen in Figure 3, a great proportion of respondents (60%) found out about the festival from posters, 2.5% from newspapers, 1.7% from radio or television, 20.8% from the organisers websites, 2.5%

from other sites, 14.2% received personal invitation and 33.3% found out in free discussions with others.

Regarding the comfort level of the audience in the concert hall, on a scale of 1-5, 44.2% considered it as good, 29.2% - average, 23.3% - very good, and 3.3% - weak.

We also analysed the relationship between two variables, one of which is the effect (output, dependent) and the other is the cause (factorial, independent).

Correlation analysis involves measuring the intensity of the link between numerical variables and testing the significance of the relationship. This can be done by following these steps: *Analyze - Correlate - Bivariate*. In the two numeric variables studied (Age and Loyalty for Romanian music) gives the following output:

Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Subject's Age	32,69	16,592	120
Loyalty for Romanian music	3,4917	,85745	120

Correlations

		Subject's Age	Loyalty for Romanian music
Subject's Age	Pearson Correlation	1	,304**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,001
	N	120	120
Loyalty for Romanian music	Pearson Correlation	,304**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,001	
	N	120	120

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The mean age of the subjects is 32.69 years, but the standard deviation is very high (16,592), which tells us that the group is very scattered (from very young to very old). We observe that we have a Pearson Correlation coefficient of 0.304, which means that the two variables are directly correlated, the coefficient being close to one. The level of Significance is less than 0.005, which means that we have a very significant correlation, namely: as the age

of the subjects is higher, the loyalty for Romanian classical music is higher. This could be explained by the fact that, as people get older, they gain experience and a higher level of culture and, therefore, are more willing to attend Romanian classical music concerts.

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Analyses applied by using SPSS program allowed achieving the goals this study, namely the segmentation of the Romanian Music Festival audience, creating a profile by age, place of residence, level of general education, level of music education, and also determining the consumer's needs, preferences and satisfaction, measuring the marketing tools efficiency.

We can conclude that the marketing department of the festival should consider a division of consumers based on their particular motivations to attend the festival. As our results show, such variable may yield better results and may also be more context sensitive, as it can be easily adapted. This can be done through a process similar to the one described in this paper. The marketer should first consider what are the benefits that consumer draws from the offered artistic experience. Knowing what benefits are sought by different groups of consumers, it is possible to target particular segments with a specific offer.

Knowing, for instance, that frequent attenders are generally interested in vocal-symphonic concerts, while regular visitors prefer opera, can offer interesting material for specifically targeted offer.

Similarly, this kind of information can also provide valuable insight for a targeted communication campaign.

The audience is one of the most accurate barometers, because, with all due respect, a concert that is heard only by critics is a show that can get a lot of prizes that can get plenty of laudatory notes in journals of various types, but eventually loses vigour. The musicians are used to perform for the audience, but not for a handful of

people, regardless of the difference in value between the general public and that small group of elite.

From this close relationship with the audience, the music in particular and any artistic phenomenon generally draws its lifeblood and substance, its essence and motivation to create art on.

The results of this study can still be used for further research, by comparing, combining or correlating the data resulted from the analysis.

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Appendices

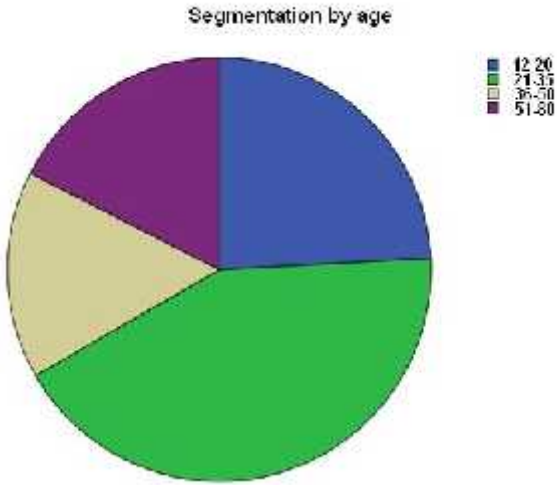


Figure 1. Segmentation by age of the festival audience.

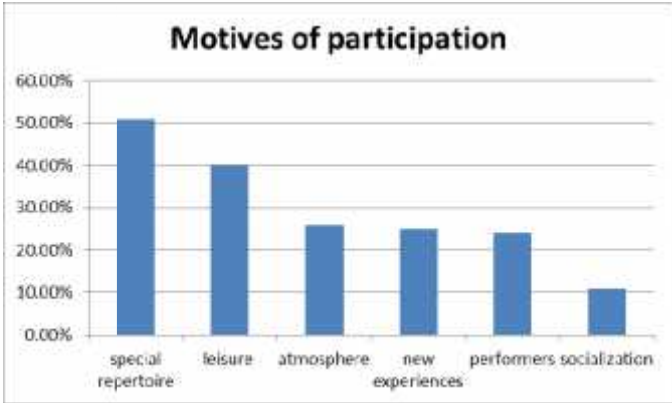


Figure 2. Motives that determined participation in festival



Figure 3. Evaluation of marketing tools.