Recent thinking within arts philosophy has moved further and further away from the concept of autonomous art. Nowadays art is mostly seen as an intrinsic part of everyday human life. Artistic value is conceived of more and more as something that depends largely upon experiencing the works as they are encountered within general culture. This relational perspective on art has important implications for the future development of arts marketing as a discipline. This article argues that arts marketing should primarily aim to support and reinforce the artistic functioning of artworks. It proposes that art consumers should be seen as co-producers in the total art process and advocates that arts marketing should focus on the artistic experience as the core customer value.

KEYWORDS arts marketing; exchange; customer value; artistic experience; co-creation of value

Introduction

Since the 1980s, arts marketing practice has undergone rapid professionalization. Today’s arts managers are well informed about current marketing theory and acknowledge its strategic importance for the arts. Many of them have acquired their marketing knowledge by studying standard marketing textbooks as well as specialized publications on arts marketing and by following courses (Boorsma 1998). The proliferation of arts marketing has been accompanied by an increasing number of academic publications. Quite a few books have been published on this subject (e.g. Mokwa et al. 1980; Kotler & Scheff 1997; Boorsma 1998; Kotler & Kotler 1998; Kolb 2000; Colbert et al. 2001; Klein 2001) and an increasing number of articles are being published in leading journals (Rentschler 2002). Rentschler’s examination of these publications shows that the focus during the past decades has evolved from marketing as a functional tool to a focus on marketing as a business philosophy and strategy. During the past 25 years, arts marketing seems to have developed into a mature academic discipline (Rentschler 2002).

Rentschler (2002) identifies the publications of Kotler and Scheff (1997) and Kotler and Kotler (1998) as leading texts on strategic arts marketing that have helped to extend the interest in marketing as a business philosophy. According to these texts, arts marketing programmes should begin by addressing fundamental questions such as: “Who is the
customer? What does the customer value? And how can we create more value for the customer?" (Kotler & Scheff 1997, p. 31). The authors promote a “customer-centred” organizational mindset, which requires that the arts organization systematically studies consumers’ needs and wants, perceptions and attitudes, as well as their preferences and levels of satisfaction, and acts on this information to improve what is offered (Kotler & Scheff 1997, p. 34). They assume that the customer-value approach, which has proved to be successful in commercial business, is also the best approach for marketing the arts as long as it is applied within the constraints of the artistic mission. The basic principle of the customer-value approach is that the patronage of customers is best attracted by the creation of value for these customers.

This line of thinking seems plausible, but is not undisputed. There is some evidence that performance can also decline when arts organizations are too customer focused. Voss and Voss (2000), for example, measured the impact of product orientation and customer orientation on subscriber ticket sales, total income and net surplus/deficit in professional theatres, and found that customer orientation results in a negative association with these performance criteria. These findings indicate that the customer approach seems to have limitations. Other scholars, such as Caust (2003) and Nielsen (2003) go even further and postulate fundamental objections to the adoption of businesslike language and philosophies in the arts scene. They claim that this inevitably increases the risk of making artistic sacrifices. Caust (2003, p. 58) explicitly warns that a businesslike approach “will lead to the production of safe, consumer-oriented arts products which, in the end, may not be what the audience either wants or needs”. This unintended effect can be called the “arts marketing pitfall”.

The cases for and against the customer-value approach are both well thought out. Both views contain important truths. Therefore it is not wise to reject the customer-value approach prematurely, or to copy the marketing philosophy of commercial business indiscriminately. Also, there is no doubt that most artists and arts organizations need an audience and that audience building is one of the main tasks of arts management. The question then arises as to how to implement a customer-centred mindset at the strategic level of arts organizations without ending up facing the arts marketing pitfall. This article explores the question by combining arts marketing ideas with some recent insights from philosophical and psychological aesthetics and proposes a strategic concept for arts marketing that balances customer value with artistic value.

Evading or Bridging the Arts Marketing Pitfall?

Leading textbooks such as Kotler and Scheff (1997), Kotler and Kotler (1998), Colbert et al. (2001) and Klein (2001) offer systematic and practical overviews of how current marketing knowledge can be applied to the arts. The authors of these textbooks have recognized the arts marketing pitfall and have developed a line of thinking intended to evade it. Like most arts marketing scholars, they exclude the artistic product – the core product – from the arts marketing task. Kotler and Scheff (1997, p. 34) suggest that the customer-centred approach should not be applied to the artwork itself, but instead applied to the way the work is described, priced, packaged, enhanced and delivered. They define a customer-centred organization “as one that makes every effort to sense, serve, and satisfy the needs and wants of its clients and publics within the constraints of its mission and budget” (Kotler & Scheff 1997, p. 36). The role of arts marketing is considered to be one of
indirectly supporting the accomplishment of the arts organization’s artistic mission by increasing attendance and generating funds, but not one that defines that mission (Kotler & Kotler 1998, p. 322). Colbert (2003) states: “The artistic product does not exist to fulfil a market need … Instead of seeking to meet consumers’ needs by offering them a product they desire, the arts manager seeks consumers who are attracted to the product”.

These views on arts marketing and the solutions designed to evade the arts marketing pitfall are based upon the (implicit) assumption of a romantic conception of art as an autonomous phenomenon. With the assumption of autonomy, artistic creation and arts marketing can be defined as independent tasks, each maintaining its own logic and responsibilities. This ultimately presupposes that the arts marketing task of finding and building audiences can be undertaken without affecting or changing the artistic results. From a managerial point of view, this is a convenient stand, but unfortunately it is out of step with recent developments within philosophical aesthetics. Contemporary philosophers of art have become more and more critical of the concept of autonomous art.

The autonomy of art is a modernist concept. According to Novitz (2001), modernists tend toward the view that art is a self-contained phenomenon and it can be defined on the basis of intrinsic properties. They assume that there are clear boundaries that distinguish art from life. Since the postmodern turn, which took place during the second half of the twentieth century, the arts and philosophical thought about art seem to have moved further and further away from this view (e.g. Schaeffer 1998; Novitz 2001). Nowadays the arts are seen as a culturally and socially embedded phenomenon and considered the product of social interaction. This relational view has implications for the concept of artistic value. The assumption that artistic value can be realized autonomously, independently of the patronage of arts consumers, is no longer valid. Artistic value goes beyond the product in terms of its form. Shusterman (2001), for instance, advocates the pragmatist view within philosophical aesthetics – based on the legacy of Dewey – as representing an excellent point of departure for today’s aesthetic thinking. For this pragmatism, the experience of art – and not the artefact itself – is the final criterion of artistic value (Shusterman 2001, p. 101). The philosopher Schaeffer (1998, p. 47) also emphasizes the importance of the experience of art and claims that “in today’s world the relationship between art-making and reception can no longer be ignored or considered extrinsic to the core of art as art”.

Within the relational perspective, cognitivism and aestheticism can be distinguished as rival views on artistic value (Kieran 2001). These views agree on the notion that the value of art lies in its evocation of a specific response, but they work with different conceptions of this response. Aestheticists emphasize the distinctness of aesthetic pleasure and cognitivists point to a particular cognitive-affective response. According to Kieran both views contain important truths about the value of art and should be treated as complementary lines of thinking – the appropriateness of one or the other depends upon the particular art forms and genres, ranging from abstract art and pure music to representational art forms such as film and literature. Both views, however, purport that a work of art needs the confrontation with an audience to be able to function as art and to contribute as such to the achievement of the artistic objectives.

In this article, the relational perspective is adopted and it is presumed that art production and consumption are essentially communicative acts. Art production is understood as a specific form of language construction – the creation of new, authentic metaphors which break down existing aesthetic symbol systems and create new ones (Goodman 1976; Abbing 2002, pp. 28–29). The art consumer plays a crucial role in the final stage of this process. Art
consumption is the criterion – the touchstone – that determines whether a meaningful new metaphor is created (Boorsma 1998, 2002). Thus, artistic value emerges in the confrontation with an audience. The philosophical turn to the relational view of art implies that the art consumer has changed from a passive recipient into an active participant. Arts consumers provide a valuable contribution to the achievement of the artistic objectives. They complete the work of art by giving meaning to the new metaphor and by acknowledging its artistic value. The audience takes part in the “co-production” of artistic value.

The adoption of the relational concept of art has important consequences for the presuppositions of arts marketing theory. The idea of the arts consumer as a co-producer of art forces a redefinition of the role and scope of arts marketing as marketing activities aimed at influencing the behaviour of arts consumers, by definition, interfere with artistic performance. Under the relational view, arts marketing has a direct influence on the accomplishment of the artistic objectives and becomes responsible for the co-creative role of arts consumers.

The exploration and conceptualization of these new responsibilities is becoming an increasingly important academic challenge. The integration of the relational perspective into arts marketing theory does not undermine the groundbreaking work that has been done by arts marketing researchers in the last 25 years, but some parts of the framework need to be reassessed and additional concepts need to be developed. It is especially important to redefine the arts marketing objectives and to rethink the customer-value concept as a strategic logic for arts marketing. The maximization of audience numbers and the generation of funds are important marketing objectives. These objectives remain important, but they should be supplemented with an even more important objective – that of optimizing and supporting the consumer’s co-creative role in the artistic process. The latter requires arts marketing programmes to begin with a strategic logic that incorporates this co-creative role into a customer-value approach. This implies that the link between customer value and artistic value must be conceptualized. The challenge is to build a bridge over the arts marketing pitfall instead of trying to evade it. The construction of such a bridge must start with the foundations. Thus, the next section re-evaluates the first principles of marketing in the light of a relational perspective on art.

The above considerations are especially relevant to organizations that produce and/or distribute contemporary arts. To organizations that concentrate on the preservation and disclosure of historical works, the completion of the art process by the art consumer is no longer a major objective as the artistic value has already been established. The following discussion is focused on the role of marketing in relation to the contemporary arts, especially the performing arts as these cannot be preserved and their artistic objectives need to be completed by the audience in the present.4

**Back to First Principles: Exchange of Values**

Kotler and Scheff (1997, p. 31) define marketing management “as the analysis, planning, implementation, and control of programmes designed to create, build, and maintain beneficial exchange relationships with target audiences for the purpose of achieving the marketer’s objectives”. The key feature of this definition is the focus on exchange relationships. The focus on exchange has its roots in the 1970s, when Kotler (1972) proposed his much cited “generic concept of marketing” – the stimulation and facilitation of “the exchange of values between two parties”. The core idea is that the organization creates values for customers that satisfy their needs, while, in return, customers deliver values that
contribute to the achievement of the organization’s main objectives. Marketing’s primary task is to optimize these exchange relationships. Kotler claimed that the exchange model could be applied to all organizations that have customers and products. Since the publication of Kotler’s generic concept of marketing, the exchange model has become one of the foundations of marketing thought.

Marketing programmes must start with the identification of the exchange values by asking the following: What are the desired responses from customers and what do customers receive in return? Exchange of values has been traditionally conceived of as the market exchange of goods and services in return for money and other means that contribute to the economic success and survival of an organization. All organizations are engaged one way or another in market exchange relationships. Arts organizations do not constitute an exception. Audience numbers, earned income from customers and customer loyalty are desired market responses that enable arts organizations to survive and to build up the assets required to continue to create works of art in the future.

The general theory concerning how to optimize market responses is to create customer values that are “superior” to the values offered by the competition and to search constantly for new ways to satisfy the customers’ needs (e.g. Webster 1994). This view – which has become known as the customer-value orientation – has its limitations in its application to the arts. The pursuit of customer satisfaction and competitive superiority only applies to the arts on the condition that it does not compromise the artistic mission. As mentioned before, this limited version of the customer-value approach has become widely accepted within the academic literature on arts marketing strategy. The current position is that, in the ever more competitive world of leisure and tourism, arts organizations will have to compete by offering entire experiences, including recreational, social and learning experiences (e.g. Kotler 1999; Kotler & Kotler 2000; Radbourne 2002; Rentschler & Gilmore 2002). This view, however, needs to be reassessed.

The adoption of a relational perspective on art implies that arts organizations are not only engaged in market exchange relationships with their customers, but are also involved in artistic exchange relationships. Arts organizations also seek artistic responses from their audiences, for, as was explained above, the arts consumer plays a crucial role in the art process by giving meaning to the artistic metaphor. This co-creative response is vital to the achievement of the organization’s artistic mission.

Because the relation with customers belongs primarily to the realm of marketing, the facilitation and stimulation of artistic responses should also be seen as one of the primary objectives of arts marketing. The customer’s co-creative response is more than one of just buying or attending the work of art, it requires specific skills and efforts on the part of the customer. The questions then arise whether and how the customer-value approach can contribute to the optimization of these responses. Satisfying customers and competing within the entertainment industry are ways of raising attendance and revenue, but they do not necessarily generate the desired co-creative responses. Moreover, the arts marketing promise not to compromise the artistic mission does not go far enough. This promise must be replaced by the “obligation” to contribute to the artistic mission.

We may conclude that the adoption of the relational perspective has implications for the implementation of the customer-value approach. Before we can explore these implications, we must know how arts consumers should complete the work of art, and what kinds of customer values arts consumers receive in return for their co-creative efforts. These issues will be discussed in the next section.
Artistic Experience and Customer Value

Most contemporary thinkers in philosophical aesthetics see the arts as a specific source of knowledge; as a source of insight and fresh awareness that cannot be put into words, but which allows people to perceive the world in a new way. The arts expand cognitive horizons by challenging pre-existing beliefs and understandings, leading to more distinctive or broader perspectives on ourselves, others and the world (Kieran 2001, p. 221). To give meaning to a work of art – in the sense of creating a new metaphor – requires constructive, creative activity by the art consumer. To give meaning is not a matter of deduction, but is rather a matter of using imaginative powers. Deduction does not result in the creation of new meaning. This can only arise when the consumer resolves the tension between the sensory perception of the new metaphor and their own worldview by means of their imaginative powers in free play, which is to be free from a prejudiced determination based in pre-existing concepts and external interests. Constructing new meaning in this way is what provides consumers with an artistic experience (Van Maanen 1997, 2004; Boorsma 1998). In a sense this view corresponds in part to what Kant (1994 [1790]) described as the essence of aesthetic judgements. It is, however, not only the sensory stimulation by the form – by the aesthetic qualities – but also the interruption of the consumers’ perceptual system and the subsequent production of new meaning that touches the consumer and provides pleasure (cf. Schoenmakers 1992). The consumer will attach value to the cognitive outcome, but more importantly, the process of assimilation and the accommodation of the perceptual system arouse emotions such as excitement and admiration (Frijda 1986). Art challenges the cognitive, perceptual and emotional systems simultaneously as the artistic experience is characterized by the full engagement of these mental capacities and goes far beyond the experience of pleasure in the narrow sense (Goldman 2001, p. 188). The artistic experience is a rewarding value that consumers receive in return for their efforts to complete the work of art. This value is not created for the customer, but created in cooperation with the customer.

Monroe Beardsley – a well-known scholar in psychological aesthetics in the Deweyan tradition – describes the artistic experience as a willing surrender to the phenomenal object on which attention is fixed “with a feeling that things are working or have worked themselves out fittingly” (Beardsley 1982, p. 288). The core of Beardsley’s theory is formed by the proposition that an experience has artistic character if it has this feature of “object directedness” and at least three of four other features. One of these other features is called “active discovery”: “A sense of actively exercising constructive powers of the mind, of being challenged by a variety of potentially conflicting stimuli to try to make them cohere” (Beardsley 1982, p. 288). Beardsley (1982, p. 292) considers the experience of discovery to be one of the central components of the artistic experience. His theory is much cited, though not always without criticism. Nevertheless, it is still considered to be a relevant line of thinking in today’s philosophical discourse on the psychology of the artistic experience (cf. Fenner 2003), and can offer valuable clues for the empirical measurement of artistic experiences (e.g. Eversmann 2004). Beardsley claims that the artistic experience is unique to the arts, but he admits that some of its features also apply – to a certain degree – to other events such as religious experiences, sporting climaxes and scientific discovery.

The challenge of discovery and the highly focused state of consciousness that characterize the artistic experience are also characteristics of the so-called “flow” experience (e.g. Cskiszentmihalyi & Robinson 1990; Haanstra 1994, p. 102; Eversmann 2004). Flow tends to occur in activities such as mountain climbing, playing chess or performing complex surgery,
but also in activities such as reading, listening to music and watching a theatre performance. Flow occurs when the activity demands concentrated attention and challenges a person's skills. Flow experiences have been theorized and empirically researched exhaustively by the psychologist Csikszentmihalyi. The characteristics of flow are the deep and concentrated involvement in risky or difficult tasks that challenge and extend the person's capacity, an element of novelty and discovery, and the enjoyment of the activity for its own sake (Csikszentmihalyi 1996, Chapter 9). Flow experiences are quite the opposite of feelings of comfort and relaxation that people usually experience while they are engaged in passive entertainment such as watching a television quiz. Such forms of passive entertainment give pleasure without expending energy. They are found to be relaxing but relatively unchallenging activities (Csikszentmihalyi & Kubey 1981). Csikszentmihalyi found that flow experiences occur more often in situations where the challenge to achieve something, to solve a problem or to create something, is enhanced. Flow-producing activities require an initial investment of attentiveness before they begin to become enjoyable, and overcoming this initial obstacle requires discipline.

It is hard to draw a clear line between artistic experiences and flow experiences. The specific nature of the artistic experience is connected to the specific qualities of the stimulus – the new aesthetic metaphor – and the specific skills of the consumer to whom the stimulus appeals – the creative imagination. The artistic experience can be seen as a specific form of the flow experience, and it is the customer value that the art consumer receives in return for the completion of the work of art.

If the art consumer regards the artistic experience as a valuable, important customer benefit, then this could be a starting point for the implementation of the customer-value approach as a means to optimize artistic exchange. In that case, arts marketing programs must focus on the artistic experience as the core customer value. To find out whether the artistic experience is an important benefit sought by arts consumers or not, research is needed to examine the reasons why people attend the arts. Within the scope of arts marketing research, relatively few academic scholars have investigated these motives. The next section discusses the present state of these investigations.

What Does the Art Consumer Value?

Marketing research into the benefits of art consumption is still in the early stage of explorations (Colbert 2003). Two pioneering breakthroughs in behavioural research that inspired these explorations were: first, the conceptualization of hedonistic or experiential consumption (Hirschman & Holbrook 1982; Holbrook & Hirschman 1982); and second, the study by Bourdieu (1984) into the social factors that play a part in the judgement of taste. These investigations are discussed below.

**Hedonistic Benefits of Arts Consumption**

The hedonistic perspective analyses the choices of consumers not in terms of the product's utility, but on the basis of the pleasure, hedonistic fulfilment, emotional arousal, amusement, and imaginary and sensory stimulation experienced by the consumer. The focus is on the experiences that accompany product usage. Unlike the utilitarian perspective, the hedonistic perspective emphasizes the dynamic interaction between consumer and product. Arts and other leisure activities are typical examples of experiential products. They are consumed primarily for intrinsic rewards – for the experience itself. The extrinsic or
utilitarian rewards are considered of minor importance. The consumption of utilitarian products is generally studied using the rational problem-solving model for analyzing objective product characteristics in relation to their utilitarian value. In contrast, hedonistic consumption decisions are less rational and often based on explorative search behaviour and holistic impressions (Holbrook & Hirschman 1982).

The hedonistic perspective has inspired arts marketing researchers to identify emotions as one of the core benefits of arts consumption (e.g. Holbrook & Zirlin 1985; Woods 1987; Bouder-Pailler 1999; Botti 2000; Bourgeon-Renault 2000; Cuadrado & Mollà 2000; Colbert 2003) and to advocate a “total experience” approach to arts marketing management (e.g. Kotler & Kotler 1998, 2000; Kotler 1999; Kolb 2000). Some of these studies, in particular those that are psychologically oriented, attempted to conceptualize the emotional response to artistic stimuli and the motives for seeking these emotions using Berlyne’s (1971) arousal theory (Holbrook & Zirlin 1985; Woods 1987). According to Berlyne’s theory, people seek an optimal state of arousal, or stimulation, and experience pleasure from boosting or reducing arousal with the aim of reaching an optimal state. The optimal state differs for each individual and depends on the subject’s cognitive capacities. States of discomfort, such as boredom, sensory deprivation or stressful over-stimulation, are assumed to motivate the consumer to seek stimulating or relaxing hedonistic experiences (Woods 1987, p. 219).

Berlyne’s arousal theory still provides a useful point of departure for investigations into hedonistic aspects of consumption (e.g. Holbrook & Gardner 1998), but it also needs to be modified on the basis of new insights. Frijda (1986, § 6.3) argues, for instance, that seeking hedonistic experiences is hardly ever motivated by boredom or other internal states of discomfort; rather, the external attractiveness of products and activities is more important as a motivating force. People seek challenges to their capacities and are motivated by the mental anticipation of the expected experiences. Furthermore, the optimal level of arousal sought by consumers varies strongly with the consumption situation.

Generally speaking, there are two classes of hedonistic experiences: stimulating, exciting, surprising and/or challenging experiences; and relaxing, entertaining and/or comfortable experiences (Woods 1987; Mannel & Iso-Ahola 1987; Csikszentmihalyi 1996; Colbert et al. 2001, Chapter 5). The first class is motivated by a search for novelty, challenge and stimulation; the second is motivated by a search for an escape from stressful and over-stimulating life situations. Flow-producing experiences such as the artistic experience belong to the first category. Holbrook and Zirlin (1985) have conceptualized these two levels of hedonistic response to art, making a distinction between simple hedonistic pleasure and profound aesthetic experiences. They combined insights from philosophical aesthetics with Berlyne’s arousal theory to describe the arousal stages that culminate in profound aesthetic experiences. According to Holbrook and Zirlin, art violates expectations and generates surprise. The resulting arousal-boost motivates the re-interpretation of the surprising event and the cognitive integration of a newly perceived pattern. The corresponding reduction of arousal creates a deeply felt, profound emotional response (Holbrook & Zirlin 1985, p. 41). This suggests that the specific nature of the artistic experience is not only characterized by the specific qualities of the stimulus (the new aesthetic metaphor) and the specific skills of the consumer who this stimulus appeals to (creative imagination), but also by a specific pattern of arousal resulting in a deeply felt emotional response.

Unfortunately, the use of insights from philosophical aesthetics within arts consumption research has not been systematically followed up by arts marketing scholars. The result is that recently published taxonomies of the motives for arts consumption (Bouder-Pailler
1999; Botti 2000; Cuadrado & Mollà 2000; Colbert 2003) do not identify the artistic experience as a distinct class of benefit sought by art consumers.

Social and Symbolic Benefits of Arts Consumption

The second source of inspiration for investigations into arts consumption motives is Bourdieu’s study of the social dimension of arts consumption. Bourdieu (1984) distinguishes three zones of taste which roughly correspond to educational levels and social classes: legit-imate taste (i.e., the taste for high art), which is most frequent among those sections of the dominant, upper class that are richest in educational capital; middlebrow taste, which is more common in the middle classes; and popular taste, most frequently found among the working classes. Bourdieu claims that art and cultural consumption are predisposed to fulfil a social function of legitimating social differences. Social subjects “distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make between the beautiful and the ugly” (Bourdieu 1984, p. 6). Inspired by a particular interpretation of Bourdieu’s work, several authors assume that expressing one’s individual identity and distinguishing oneself from others are important social motives for participating in the arts (e.g. Kelly 1987; Gainer 1993, 1997; Botti 2000; Cuadrado & Mollà 2000; Colbert 2003). They assume that art attendance functions as a social symbol, as a means to demonstrate one’s social position or personality. These reasons for attendance are called “symbolic motives”.

The need for social contact and interaction is another – closely related – social need that can motivate arts attendance. Artistic events provide opportunities for people to meet with their peers and to engage in interaction processes with others (Bouder-Pailler 1999; Thyne 2000). Art attendance can satisfy the need for social contact because it provides an opportunity to have mutual experiences and provides material to discuss with others. Research has revealed that people attend more often if their partners and friends are also interested in the arts (Maas 1990; Kotler & Scheff 1997, pp. 72–74).

A Recently Proposed Taxonomy of Benefits

The investigation of the hedonistic and social dimensions of arts consumption, complemented by the fact that the arts are a source of knowledge, are summarized in a recently proposed system for classifying the motives for arts attendance (Botti 2000; Colbert 2003). Botti (2000) introduced the following taxonomy of arts consumption benefits:

1. Functional or cultural benefits – or rather educational benefits (mb) – linked to a thirst for cultural knowledge.
2. Symbolic benefits linked to the need to demonstrate one’s social position or personality.
3. Social benefits linked to the need for social contact and interaction with others.
4. Emotional benefits – or rather hedonistic benefits (mb) – linked to the desire for pleasurable experiences, which can be stimulating or relaxing experiences, and to the need to escape from daily problems and routine.

This taxonomy demonstrates where arts marketing thinking about the motives for arts consumption now stands. It shows the neglect of artistic experiences as a specific class of benefits sought. The model, however, can easily be adapted by adding a fifth class of benefits, namely:

5. Artistic benefits linked to the experience to complete a work of art.
Empirical Support for the Artistic Experience as a Benefit Sought

There is no foundation in systematic empirical research to determine whether the artistic experience is seen as a desirable customer value. However, there is some indication that this might be the case. The findings of four academic research projects into the motives behind arts consumption are discussed below.

The first project is a qualitative research project conducted by Cooper and Tower (1992) among British arts attendees and non-attendees. Cooper and Tower used group discussions and projective methods to develop an in-depth understanding of the motivations and psychological barriers that exist with regard to the arts. They identified five categories of needs that the arts can satisfy. One of the categories consists of the need for “aesthetics/beauty, transformation/heightened awareness, and a ‘high’ transcendence” (Cooper & Tower 1992, p. 305).9 This study confirms that the artistic experience is a benefit sought, but it does not provide any information about the prioritization of this benefit in relation to other benefits of arts consumption.

The second project is a quantitative study carried out by Cuadrado and Mollà (2000), in Valencia (Spain), among a representative sample of attendees of major performing arts venues. This study provides information about the importance of different benefits. The researchers asked respondents to rate 14 motives for going to the theatre in order of importance using a five-point Likert scale running from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The results are presented in Table 1.

The findings show that emotional and educational benefits are the most important motives for attending the performing arts. Social contact and social display are considered relatively unimportant reasons; the average rating for these is well below 3. These findings conflict with what several arts marketing researchers expected on the basis of Bourdieu’s work. The validity of the findings can be questioned, however, on the basis of the desire to give socially acceptable answers, especially with respect to the last two motives: social prestige and dressing up. This does not hold for the motive of “social interaction”. Therefore it can

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attendance goalsa</th>
<th>Mean (n = 412)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. To feel emotion</td>
<td>4.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Entertainment</td>
<td>3.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Self-fulfilment</td>
<td>3.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Educational development</td>
<td>3.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. To share an experience</td>
<td>3.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Interest in the arts</td>
<td>3.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Relaxation</td>
<td>2.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. To see particular artists</td>
<td>2.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. To see a director’s work</td>
<td>2.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Relief from boredom</td>
<td>1.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Social interaction</td>
<td>1.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. To be part of a group</td>
<td>1.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Social prestige</td>
<td>1.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. To dress up</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: a Five-point Likert scale. Source: Cuadrado and Mollà (2000, p. 56).
be assumed that the bias is relatively small and that “social interaction” and “social display” are considered unimportant motives. It is possible that social needs do unconsciously play an important role, but that the consumer does not find them decisive for arts attendance because they are not specifically linked to the arts. There are many other leisure activities that can satisfy these needs.

Regarding the most important motive – “to feel emotion” – it is unfortunate that the researchers did not make a distinction between artistic emotions and pure hedonistic pleasure. This comment also holds for the second important motive: “entertainment”. Do performing arts attendees seek artistic entertainment or simple amusement? The findings provide some clues for a speculative answer. “Relaxation” and “relief of boredom” are rated as being relatively unimportant (i.e., < 3). A possible interpretation could be that these attendees are motivated more by the novelty, challenge and stimulation than a desire to escape from stressful and over-stimulating life situations.

The third project is an explorative case study into the quality judgements made by Dutch theatrical arts consumers concerning Mijn Elektra, a production by a Dutch theatre company, the Noord Nederlands Toneel (Boorsma & Van Maanen 2003a, 2003b). The study aimed to determine which product characteristics consumers based their quality judgements upon, and the possible influences of information sources. The study revealed that the judgements of theatrical art consumers seem to be based primarily on the technical quality of acting, directing and scenery, as well as on the level of artistic experience – that is, on whether the production was challenging, touching, confronting, innovative and artistic (Boorsma & Van Maanen 2003a). The main research instrument was a four-page questionnaire sent to the visitors by post a few days after they had attended the performance at one of the seven selected venues spread throughout the country. A total of 472 usable questionnaires were obtained.10 The project was designed primarily to gain insight into expectations, experiences and quality judgements, but it also provided additional information about the motives for visiting the performing arts in general.11 The motives were measured using a five-point Likert scale running from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The findings with regard to the motives are reported in Table 2.

The findings from this investigation show a similar pattern to the results found by Cuadrado and Mollà (2000): the internal personal and emotional benefits are more impor-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivesa</th>
<th>Mean (n = 472)</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. To be touched</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. To be challenged to see things differently</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Pleasure and entertainment</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>1.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. To experience art</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. To experience beauty</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>1.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Interest in questions of life</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Acquisition of general knowledge</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Social contact and interaction</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>1.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. To keep up with theatrical developments</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Technical interest in performing and directing</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>1.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. To be able to take part in conversations with others</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: a Five-point Likert scale.
tant than the social. This investigation, however, provides a better picture of the artistic experience as a possible benefit sought. It shows that the most important benefits are those related to artistic and pleasurable experiences, and to the meaning or content of the performance. Least important are social benefits and technical knowledge. It is notable that the “challenge to see things differently” is an important reason for attendance. This benefit is related to both the artistic experience and the thirst for knowledge. Spectators seem to enjoy the challenge of dealing with the perceptual interruption caused by the artistic metaphor. This could imply that spectators seek to be touched and entertained in an artistic sense instead of seeking simple amusement.

The fourth project is an unpublished case study into the motives of Dutch museum visitors attending the photographic exhibition entitled Silver by Erwin Olaf in the Groninger Museum (September–November 2003). On different weekdays, 120 visitors were surveyed in the museum after viewing the exhibition. The motives for visiting this exhibition are presented in Table 3. They were measured using a six-point Likert scale running from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

The results of this fourth study indicate that the important reasons for visiting a museum are to be inspired by beauty, the acquisition of knowledge, to be touched, to obtain new insights and entertainment. The general pattern is similar to the pattern found with regard to theatre attendance: internal personal benefits are more determinant than social ones. However, there is a slight difference. The acquisition of knowledge seems to be a relatively important reason for visiting an exhibition in a museum, while theatre attendees seem to attach relatively more value to the emotional benefits.

These four studies provide preliminary support for the proposition that the artistic experience is one of the primary reasons why people attend the arts. The evidence, however, should be treated only as indicative. The proposition needs to be tested by further research. Further research should start with the development and validation of a scale that measures the motives of arts consumers and identifies artistic experience as a distinct class of benefit. For the purpose of this article, however, it is tentatively assumed that the artistic experience is one of the primary benefits sought. The next section discusses how the artistic experience can be integrated into arts marketing programmes.

**Table 3**

Motives for visiting the photographic exhibition Silver by Erwin Olaf.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motives</th>
<th>Mean (n = 120)</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. To be inspired by beauty</td>
<td>4.77</td>
<td>1.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Acquisition of personal knowledge</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. To be touched</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>1.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. To obtain new insights</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>1.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. A nice day out</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>1.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Pleasure and entertainment</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>1.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. To share an experience with family or friends</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>1.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Relaxation</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>1.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Social interaction</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>1.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. To meet other people</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* A Six-point Likert scale.
Towards a Strategic Logic for Arts Marketing

In their insightful article, Vargo and Lusch (2004) describe how marketing ideologies over the past several decades have been evolving into a dominant logic in which service provision, the co-creation of customer value and relationships with selected customers are fundamental to stimulating exchange. They base their conclusions on the convergence of new ideas expressed in leading marketing publications such as Zeithaml et al. (1990), Berry & Parasuraman (1991), Webster (1994), Doyle (2000), Grönroos (2000), Prahalad & Ramaswamy (2000, 2003) and Zeithaml & Bittner (2000). Vargo and Lusch (2004) claim that, in essence, everything offered to the market is a service. Consumers do not require products; they require services that satisfy their needs. Products are only elements that provide smaller or larger parts of these services. Vargo and Lusch propose that all organizations should adopt a service-centred marketing logic and create valuable services in interaction with customers. This logic also applies to the arts, provided that the customer's involvement in the value creation process, the core customer value, the selection of customers and performance measurement fulfil specific conditions. These specific conditions are needed because arts marketing programmes should aim at art-specific organizational objectives. These conditions are discussed below.

Condition 1. The art consumer is a co-creator in the total art process, but not a co-designer of the product in terms of its form. As was pointed out above, the art process can be understood as involving the creation of new aesthetic metaphors directed at breaking down aesthetic languages and recreating them. By definition, it is impossible to create a new – an original – metaphor when the artist has to base the process of creation on generalizations about what it is thought potential customers want to see or hear. When this happens, the outcome is not an original art product; it is merely an embellishment of something that already exists. As a consequence of acting in this way, the arts organization will probably end up being confronted by the arts marketing pitfall. A certain level of artistic freedom on the part of the artist is a necessary condition. The art consumer should not be actively involved before the artistic idea has developed its form. After that, however, the art consumer's role becomes crucial. Arts consumers play a central role as co-producers in the final stage of the art process by giving meaning to the artefact by means of their imaginative powers – independently of existing concepts and external interests. As such, the art consumer completes the work of art. Arts marketing should aim to support and reinforce this co-creative role undertaken by the art consumer, for example, by developing additional services that can assist art consumers, differentiated by the needs of different market segments. The art consumer's role requires specific communicative skills and a specific attitude, and arts marketing can assist consumers in developing these necessary skills and attitudes. Arts marketing support can be maximized through interaction with customers and through iterative learning processes on the part of both the arts consumer and the arts organization.

Condition 2. Arts marketing should aim to support and facilitate the artistic experience as the core customer value. The artistic experience is the reward for the co-creative efforts of the art consumer. On the basis of indicative empirical data, we may draw the preliminary conclusion that arts consumers attach a relatively high value to this benefit of art consumption. The profundity of the artistic experience depends upon the amount of perceptual interruption, the extent of the challenge to make sense of the new metaphor and the amount of meaning that the new metaphor subsequently induces. This implies that customer value decreases with the predictability of the stimulus, and confirms once more
that arts consumers are not served well by an adaptation of the stimulus to their wishes. It is also very important that the consumer is willing to co-create. This implies that the consumer needs to approach the artwork with an open mind, must accept the challenge, and needs to believe that the artwork has the potential to say something new. From this point of view, prejudices, an atmosphere of distrust and the making of premature interpretations are very harmful as they can block the co-creation of artistic experiences. Arts marketing managers should be fully aware of this. They should not only create supportive services but also try to create and maintain optimal circumstances for artistic communication. These circumstances are strongly influenced by the artistic reputation of the arts organization. This reputation is only partly under the control of the organization. Artistic reputations depend heavily on the opinions of experts and peers in the art world (Wijnberg & Gemser 2000). Arts marketing, however, can also contribute to building a strong and trustworthy reputation by making use of branding and positioning (Colbert 2003). Such a reputation is important, because arts consumers will not put effort into the co-creation of material in which they do not believe. A trustworthy reputation is a condition, but it does not necessarily lead to success. There is still a possibility that the consumer cannot or does not want to make sense of the perceptual interruption. In that case, the consumer will not undergo an artistic experience. This can be the case if the consumer lacks the necessary competence or does not want to put effort into making sense of the interruption (assuming that there is nothing wrong with the core product). These customers cannot create much value for the organization and vice versa.

In short, we can conclude that it is important for arts marketing to focus on the co-creation of the artistic experience as the core customer value and to create supporting services and optimal circumstances for communication. This does not imply that the other benefits of art consumption should be neglected, or even denied. Arts marketing activities, for example, can engender social or educational benefits as well, as long as they do not compromise the co-creation of artistic experiences.

**Condition 3. The selection of art consumers should be driven by the artistic objectives.** The selection of the appropriate customers has recently become an important issue in marketing discourse. The value of a customer depends on their potential to contribute to the main objectives of the organization (Doyle 2000, pp. 86–88). In a profit environment, a valuable customer is a profitable – loyal and frequent – customer. An important rule of thumb in marketing literature is that 20% of customers provide about 80% of the profits. This inevitably leads to strategies that focus on the handful of profitable customers and try to make the others profitable or discourage them (Doyle 2000, p. 87). It can be argued that this does not apply in an artistic environment.

At first thought, it would seem understandable for arts organizations to focus analogously on the creation of value for frequent customers, not only because they bring in the largest amount of revenue, but more importantly because these customers are committed to the arts and possess relatively high cultural skills and competence – they seem to be better equipped to complete works of art. Focusing on this relatively small group of frequent art consumers, however, can also raise barriers to the optimization of the art process and the societal functioning of the arts. The arts fulfil specific functions within society – they provide a critical perspective on established cultural patterns and give access to new options and meanings. New artistic metaphors have to reach a sufficient number of people to make a significant impact on established worldviews. New artistic ideas must intermingle with the general culture. In achieving this goal, a special role is reserved for occasional and new art consumers. Consumers communicate among themselves about their experiences and apply
new metaphors to everyday life. Occasional art consumers do not have access to a specialist frame of reference, and when interpreting works of art they will be inclined to make associations with concepts from everyday life. In order to fuse new artistic metaphors with general worldviews, it is important that consumers talk about works of art, not only using technical jargon, but also using everyday terms. Non-specialist – occasional or new – art consumers form an important bridge between art and general culture. This suggests that the desire to build customer relations expressed in marketing policies should not be solely directed at forging bonds with and expanding the group of frequent customers. Occasional and new customers should be treated as important market segments as well (Boorsma 2002).

For arts organizations, the selection of valuable customers comes down to the selection of an optimal mixture of competent, arts-committed consumers and non-specialist consumers. To select and reach new and occasional customers, arts organizations should start with a change of their marketing communication activities. Names of artists and technical jargon are often meaningless to these customers. Arts organizations should investigate the decision-making behaviour of these consumers so that they can provide them with meaningful information. In addition, word-of-mouth processes should be promoted not only because of the fact that a satisfied consumer is a good way of convincing others, but also to enable a smooth process of disseminating new metaphors. Accomplishing the latter places emphasis on a thorough after-sales policy. Furthermore, arts organizations should develop educational programmes that offer non-specialist consumers the possibility of learning about their co-creative role.

Condition 4. Performance measurement should focus on the contribution to the artistic objectives. It is evident that concern for financial performance and the generation of funds form a crucial part of good management. However, it is also evident that focusing exclusively on revenue, attendance numbers and efficiency may impede the achievement of the artistic objectives. Arts marketing managers should accept responsibility for optimizing the co-creative role of arts consumers. This implies that the arts consumers’ experiences – especially artistic experiences, but also experiences with the supporting services – should form the basis for performance measurement and the development of reward systems. This is still an unexplored area. An analogy with performance measurement in the domain of service and relationship management could offer clues for exploration. There is a substantial body of research into service satisfaction and customer-perceived value as measures of marketing performance (e.g. Zeithaml et al. 1985, 1990; Cronin & Taylor 1992, 1994; Parasuraman et al. 1994, Zeithaml & Bitner 2000; Grönroos 2000). Developing arts marketing performance measures, however, should also begin from theories about the artistic experience and attempts to measure artistic experiences (Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson 1990; Boorsma & Van Maanen 2003a; Eversmann 2004).

Given these four conditions, the proposed arts marketing logic can be summarized as follows: arts marketing can be defined as the stimulation of exchange with selected customers, by offering service-centred support for the co-creation of artistic experiences and by building and maintaining relationships with these customers for the purpose of creating customer value and achieving the artistic objectives simultaneously. The adoption of this view has consequences for the organizational culture. It requires an organizational mindset that equally respects the roles of artists and arts consumers in the total art process. Customers should not be treated solely as purchasers. Moreover, customer-orientation in an artistic setting does not imply an orientation to the needs and wants of consumers, but an orientation to the co-creative capabilities of customers.
NOTES
1. The results of the study by Voss and Voss should not be interpreted as suggesting that a customer orientation by definition leads to worse performance in theatre organizations. It only shows that the implementation of the customer concept in an artistic environment has its limitations and that it carries the risk of worse performance. Further research is needed to test the effects of different interpretations of the customer concept.
2. The adoption of the relational concept of art does not necessarily imply a commitment to the philosophical doctrines of postmodernism (Novitz 2001). Although most arts philosophers have adopted the view that the arts are culturally embedded and believe that the arts fulfil a specific function within that culture, many of them still assume there are differences between art and non-art and none of them question the notion of artistic freedom, considered in the sense of freedom of speech.
3. It can be argued that some artists produce their works mainly to satisfy their own need for self-expression (Hirschman 1983). However, when these artists are willing to make their works available to larger audiences, it is likely that they also want these works to function as art.
4. For historical works of art, the main artistic objective could be to keep the artwork “alive” by helping consumers to understand why it represents an historical breakthrough and why it is still an important work in terms of the present, considered aesthetically and otherwise.
5. See, for example, the various contributions by leading international scholars in The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics (Gaut & McIver Lopes 2001).
6. This philosophical understanding of the artistic experience must be distinguished from the way some arts marketing scholars use the term “arts experience”. Kotler & Kotler (1998, 2000), Kotler (1999) and Kolb (2000), for instance, use this term to refer to the “total package of experiences” including recreational, social and learning experiences.
7. The other three features are: “felt freedom” – release from distracting concerns about the past and future of everyday life, so that it has the air of having been freely chosen; “detached affect” – where the object is emotionally distanced, which makes us aware of our power to rise above dark and terrible things; and “wholeness” – a sense of being unified and able to encompass perceptions, feelings, emotions, ideas, in a single integrated personhood (Beardsley 1982, pp. 288–297).
8. See Davies (1991) for an overview of this criticism, which is very much intertwined with the debate between functionalists and proceduralists within arts philosophy. Beardsley belongs to the functionalists. Functionalists argue that something is an artwork only if it succeeds in providing an artistic experience. Proceduralists hold that something becomes an artwork only if it is made and presented according to the rules of the art world. This philosophical debate is concentrated around the question of how to define art. For the purpose of this article, the philosophical ideas about the functioning of art are more relevant than the problems of definition. The study of arts policy and management needs to start with a clear view of the specific functioning of art within a culture and needs to distinguish between the functioning of art and the functioning of all other kinds of cultural utterances. Therefore, I have chosen a functionalist perspective. The proceduralist approach, however, is not really opposed to functionalism. Proceduralists do not deny that the arts perform specific functions and that these functions are important; they just do not find them an appropriate basis for a definition of art. See also Davies (2001) for a discussion of functional and procedural definitions of art.
9. Cooper and Tower (1992, p. 305) address this group of needs as “ideals”. The other four categories are emotional needs, personal needs, social needs and basic needs.
10. A twofold questionnaire was sent to 975 addresses, and 472 usable questionnaires were returned. This amounted to a response of 24%, as in most cases – more than 75% – respondents returned only one questionnaire per address. The response per address was about 42%.

11. This information has not been published before. It was gathered primarily to double-check and support the interpretation of the findings on quality judgements.

12. This study was conducted by two Master’s students – Lianne Pronk and Gryt Beerda.

13. Botti (2000) also refers to findings indicating that the thirst for knowledge is one of the primary reasons to visit a museum.

14. See also the supportive commentaries on this view by Day et al. (2004).

15. The importance of the group of non-specialist consumers depends upon the artistic objectives. Reaching this group is of crucial importance for arts organizations – specially subsidized organizations – that have the explicit social objective of optimizing the way that the artistic offerings function within society. It is relatively unimportant for those who only want to experiment with aesthetic forms among peers or for those who primarily aim to support the development of young artistic talents. However, even then, non-specialist consumers should not be ignored completely as fresh views on the production results can be very constructive.

16. Most of the proposed measures such as branding, education and seeking the right customers are in themselves not new, but it is claimed that they should be worked out from a strategic perspective on arts marketing that is based upon a relational concept of art. Further research is needed to assess how current arts marketing practices within different organizations and different countries fit with or differ from this theoretical context.

REFERENCES


Miranda Boorsma, Department of Arts, Culture & Media Studies, University of Groningen, PO Box 716, 9700 AS Groningen, The Netherlands. Tel: +31 50 363 5962; E-mail: m.a.boorsma@rug.nl