# Data Sources and Data Typology for Audience Research in Performing Arts Institutions[1]

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## Abstract

*Data is a basic prerequisite for successful and effective audience research - for both theoretical and practical marketing research. In this conceptual paper, we explore the data generally used for research in terms of their sources and types. In addition to the analysis of the available literature, we observe common processes performed by institutions of performing arts. Subsequently, we describe the basic entities of the ecosystem of data from the perspective of their origin and identify their sources. We represent the entire data ecosystem with a model of data sources and data types. Then we present a practical application of the model on a specific example of working with data and the use of data for strategic analysis of the audience.*

## Introduction

The word "audience" is the spell of any performing artist and cultural institution. But it is also the focus of an entire research industry. The audience also plays a critical role in the field of arts marketing, in the vocabulary of which the audience equals the customer.

According to Kotler and Scheff (1997), marketing is defined as a process by which an organization relates creatively, productively, and profitably to the marketplace, with the goal of creating and satisfying customers within the parameters of the organization's objectives. The essence of this definition is the fact that it is based on the exchange between customers (market) and organizations. However, the exchange will only take place if the customer (target audience) performs an action. Then the goal of marketing is to influence this audience behavior. Of course, these general principles can also be applied in the field of arts marketing, where the attention paid to the audience is one of the key topics.

The work with the audience is crucial for every cultural institution. During the 20th century, various techniques for working with audiences were developed, however, with

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the rapid development of digital technologies and their massive spread in the 21st century, it is necessary to think about new possibilities and a new approach to working with audiences (Walmsley, 2019).

It is claimed, that since the 1980s, there has been a shift in artistic marketing from product development to audience development, but despite this development little attention has been paid to cultivating relationships with existing audiences to support the long-term viability of performing arts organizations (Rentschler et al., 2002). The basic prerequisite for cultivating relationships and working with the audiences from the marketer's point of view is data - as much quality customer data as possible. Once we are engaged in audience research and working with audiences, we primarily need information about customer behavior in a relation to the product offered. According to Kotler (2016), customer behavior studies are about how individuals, groups, and organizations select, buy, use, and dispose of goods, services, ideas, or experiences to satisfy their needs and wants. This brings us to a detailed research of the audience's shopping behavior and the factors that influence this behavior and decision-making. A customer's buying behavior is influenced by cultural, social, and personal factors (Keller & Kotler, 2016). Information and data on these aspects can be obtained from a variety of sources and, of course, also through audience marketing research. In practice, not only cultural institutions are typically exposed to the problem of how to obtain quality customer data without additional costs, especially costs for traditional research using questionnaires, focus groups or other methods leading to the acquisition of primary data. Unfortunately, it is often not possible to spend money on such research at all. The question therefore remains whether quality results can be achieved in audience research without the need to apply these costly traditional methods of marketing research and whether the data already owned by cultural institutions cannot give even more accurate information about the audience than the data obtained in the questionnaire survey, when it is always necessary to take into account a certain bias. To answer these questions, we must first thoroughly examine the sources of data that are held by cultural institutions and that are suitable for audience analysis. Based on this, we create a general theoretical model of data sources and data types in a cultural institution, which will be widely applicable for further research and practice.

## 1    Methodology

The common approach by conceptual work is to start from a focal theory by arguing that a particular concept, theory, or research domain is internally incoherent or incomplete in some important respect and then introducing other theories to bridge the observed gaps (Jaakkola, 2020). Our approach is based on the key finding that the available literature lacks a theoretical framework regarding data needed for research in the field of strategic analysis of audiences of performing arts institutions. The main output of this paper is then a newly created conceptual model that demonstrates data sources for audience research and audience management in performing arts institutions.

For the purposes of our research, we understand the conceptual model as a representation of the structure of a section of reality. The conceptual model models reality using objects and their properties at the logical level and the selection of entities and

attributes for the description of objects. It is thus a graphically represented structure of entities or classes and relationships between them (Kaluža & Kalužová, 2012).

The model describes the relationships of the individual elements as originators of data and information and identifies mutual interactions and relationships. We then identify specific types of data. When creating the model, we primarily drew on two theoretical approaches: 1) the resource-based theory, which is a popular theoretical foundation in marketing and provides important framework for explaining and predicting the basis of a firm's competitive advantage and performance (Kozlenkova et al. 2014), and 2) the Methodology for Modeling and Analysis of Business Processes (MMABP) that is based on hierarchical Abstraction. The principle of modeling assumes that the objective basis for the implementation of business processes must be real facts that exist outside and independent of the organization (Svatoš & Řepa, 2016). The resulting model according to this methodology should respect the basic goals, status and characteristics of the organization and further respect external influences, independent of the organization, which may affect the organization in its activities. We took advantage of these two approaches and adapted them to the needs and specifics of our research area. This resulted in the following model creation process in several steps:

1. identification of model elements - individual entities
2. hierarchization of model elements
3. identification of interactions and relations between entities
4. identification of interactions in which data is generated
5. specification of data types - origin of data typology

Our arguments are based on assimilation and combination of evidence in the form of previous concepts and theories (Hirscheim 2008), as well as on the data analysis of two diverse performing arts institutions. These two institutions were selected as typical representatives of certain types of performing arts institutions: a small non-profit organization based in a large art center that offers an alternative art program competing with the program offerings of large central (public-supported) organizations and a regional symphony orchestra as a typical main organizer of performing arts in the region.

## 2    Arts marketing and audience research literature review

In academic literature, issues related to the marketing of culture first appeared in 1967. In his still very popular book on marketing management, Kotler (1967) states that cultural organizations such as libraries, museums, concert halls or universities create cultural goods. Since then, cultural marketing has undergone great development and, as in other industries, cultural marketing research has specialized in many topics.

In her two studies, Ruth Rentschler (1998, 2002) summarized the development of the research in the field of arts marketing, resulting in academic publications and marketing articles as follows in the chronological classification that includes the following periods:

*(1) The Foundation period (1975-1984), during which the character of museum and performing arts marketing articles focused on educating audiences, raising the awareness among organization staff of the benefits of studies on audiences and occasionally the economic impact of the arts on the community; (2) the Professionalization period*

*(1985-1994), during which changes forced the recognition of the applicability of marke-ting to nonprofit arts organizations and marketing departments started to be added; and (3) the Discovery period (1995-2000): In this era, a marketing orientation has begun to be embedded in arts organizations.*

Rentschler (1998) identified three major thematic categories: Marketing as Culture, Marketing as Tactics, and Marketing as Strategy. In 2002 Rentschler analyzed 171 articles published over a twenty-five-year period in seven journals which were selected as they are considered representative of mainstream arts marketing research. Her analysis also demonstrates that audience research is an important topic in all of these periods and is undergoing continuous development. Marketing as Culture literature discussed the ability of an organization to assess market attractiveness by analyzing customer needs, Marketing as Strategy papers focused on positioning and defining how an organization is to compete in its chosen businesses, while using a customer-oriented approach (Rentschler, 2002).

Colbert & St-James (2014) evaluate the research in the field of arts marketing from another point of view - on the one hand from the point of view of art consumption, on the other hand from the point of view of the theory and practice of art marketing. They identify cultural participation, cultural capital, arts consumption and consumer experience as key topics. In the part of their study dedicated to the theory and practice of art marketing, they explore three central themes in the arts marketing research: an emerging challenge to the traditional "supply-side marketing" assumption underlying arts marketing, the role of consumers as co-creators of artistic experiences, and unique aspects of arts marketing management — that is, branding of artistic products, pricing of artistic products, cultivating customer loyalty, and incorporating unique funding sources such as fundraising and sponsorships. Colbert and St-James (2014) confirm a gradual shift from a product centered approach to a customer centered approach in the arts marketing literature.

## 2.1  The role of marketing research in cultural organizations

Keller and Kotler (2016) state that marketing research is all about generating insights. Marketing insights then provide information about the market and consumer behavior, and also what this behavior means for the marketer and his organization. Gaining marketing insights through marketing research is crucial for marketing success.

In the 1990s, the field of marketing research developed greatly as the demand for information needed for effective marketing planning increased. In this decade, for the first time, the Internet began to spread around the world, and new information technologies became available even to smaller organizations. Marketing segmentation strategies became more sophisticated and organizations needed more detailed information about their target groups (Kotler & Scheff, 1997). The shopping behavior of the audience has also changed - consumers have become more selective and demanding. It has become increasingly difficult for sellers to predict the reaction of consumers to various offers (Kotler & Scheff, 1997). With the development of the new information technologies, the way of communication has also changed and therefore marketing tools such as advertising, public relations, product differentiation and its positioning needed to have changed.

Bernstein (2006) identifies three common barriers that prevent cultural organizations from conducting marketing research: first, marketing managers have limited budgets, and assign higher priorities to other expenditures. Second, marketers are constrained because of their technical knowledge of the correct use of marketing research and its technical aspects is typically limited. Third, marketers are often discouraged from conducting research by the arts organization´s top-level managers who do not adequately understand the uses and value of marketing research. Bernstein (2006) also points out that there is concern among some managers and artistic directors that audience research will compromise the artistic mission and integrity of the organization. Nevertheless, marketing research plays a critical role in understanding customer attitudes and behavior (Bernstein, 2006). Without data obtained through research, it is not possible to make an objective decision on the suitability of the offered product, its price, method of its presentation or sale. Nor is it possible to objectively assess the consumer's behavior and the audience's reaction to the offered product (artistic performance).

## 2.2  Audience research methods and data

Previous research on the audience of performing arts in any consistent and coherent way has been hampered by the significant fragmentation that characterizes the wider field of audience study (Walmsley, 2019). The breadth and diversity of the researched subject results in the obvious application of interdisciplinarity. Walmsley (2019) argues that this can be perceived as a positive trend, however it can cause a methodological dispute between fields that are not very compatible with each other. Audience research is plagued by countless methodological challenges, from positive audience bias and memory problems, to poor understanding of methods by researchers and their own bias of confirmation. Walmsley (2019) also points out that quantitative analyses of audiences tend to dominate and qualitative research is often dismissed as narrative and anecdotal.

Here we name some selected studies to demonstrate what are the typical sources of data for audience research and what methods of data collection can be found in audience research articles. Using the information contained in the Survey of Structure, Conscience and Biography of Class, Prieto-Rodríguez & Fernández-Blanco (2000) estimate a bivariate probit model to characterise the audience for each kind of music, they quantify the influence exerted by various socioeconomic features on the demand for these goods and they describe the average profile of consumers of Spain. Hand (2011) focuses on three established empirical 'laws' of consumer behaviour: repertoire buying, double jeopardy and duplication of purchase. All three of these patterns emerge from a national survey of arts participation in the UK. For the analysis of patterns of music consumption in Flanders, Roose and Vander Stichele (2010) used data from the survey Cultural Participation in Flanders 2003-2004, a large-scale survey of a representative sample of the Flemish population ages 14-85. Favaro and Frateschi (2007) verify whether musical tastes in Italy are diversified, with the presence of a group of 'cultural omnivores'. They employ micro data from the Italian Survey on Households, Citizens and Leisure (ISTAT, Indagine Multiscopo sulle Famiglie. I cittadini e il tempo libero) for the year 2000.

Tong et al. (2016) focus on classical music concert attendance and older adults. Data for their research were collected in the collaboration with several organizations including both large symphony and philharmonic orchestras and smaller chamber and youth orchestras, which distributed a link to a copy of the questionnaire through their customer databases. Survey data were collected from patrons at the Cheltenham International Jazz Festival in order to establish the demographic profile of the jazz audience and distinguish between two broad categories of jazz fan (modern and hybrid) (Oakes, 2010). The data collected by surveying 1,170 respondents attending the opera house in an East German city were used in the study focused on modes of cultural consumption in the opera audience (Rössel, J. (2011). As we can see, secondary data obtained from nationwide comprehensive surveys and through targeted data collection in a specific target group are often used for audience research. Such data are then typically analyzed using quantitative research methods.

Crawford et al. (2014) interrogate the potentials of social media engagement for audience development work through participatory media and networked publics. This study is based on a mixed-methods approach involving a primary sample group of 18–25-year-old university students. The key method of data was post-concert focus groups. Wilson et al. (2014) engaged in an ethnographic qualitative research approach in the study, in which the researchers were engaging in gaining a greater understanding of classical music audience culture and how this may be impacting participants that are of a "marginalized" or nontraditional classical music audience group. Focus groups are a popular method of data collection employed in the majority of existing qualitative studies on classical music audiences, including Kolb (2000), O'Sullivan (2009) and Dobson (2010).

There are also studies that use a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches. In the case study of the Music in the Round (chamber music festival), Pitts and Spencer (2008) used data from questionnaire survey of audience members and interviews data. Crawford at al. (2014) presented the research project focusing on the audience of the London Symphony Orchestra and their introduction of a new mobile telephone ('app') ticketing system. A mixed-method approach was employed, utilizing focus groups and questionnaires with over 80 participants, to research a sample group of university students.

As we can see above, data from both primary and secondary sources are typically used for audience research, but they are external sources. To the best of our knowledge, there are no studies that describe a theoretical framework of data sources for audience research. Kotler and Scheff (1997), Bernstein (2006) or Colbert (2007) generally describe data sources for marketing research in a cultural institution, and especially in connection with the need for low financial demands of research they mention internal data sources. However, none of the authors discuss these data sources and the potential of their use for further research in more detail.

## 3    Results and Discussion

In addition to the analysis of the available literature, the creation of the model was based on the observation of common processes performed by institutions of performing

arts. Subsequently, we were able to describe the ecosystem of data, identify their sources, and represent the entire ecosystem using a model of data sources and data types. Then we present a practical application of the model on a specific example of working with data and the use of data for strategic analysis of the audience.

### 3.1  Origin of the audience data

Colbert (2007) uses the traditional marketing model (Fig. 1) that illustrates how a company strives to meet existing customer demand (shown as a market, in figure). Using data provided by the company's marketing information system, the company evaluates existing need, given current resources and the corporate mission. Subsequently, the company will use the elements of the marketing mix to achieve the desired effect for potential customers.  It is a simple, constantly recurring cycle that begins and ends in the market.

**Fig. 1**  The Traditional Marketing Model
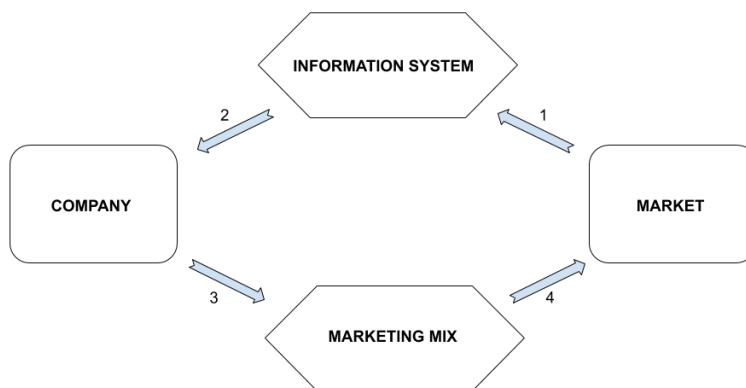


Source: Adjusted according to Colbert (2007)

However, Colbert (2007) further specifies that this model may not always accurately reflect the situation of cultural institutions, whose starting point is often not the market but the product. According to Colbert (2007), this product-centered approach is more appropriate for the field of arts than the customer-centered approach, because the business objective of cultural institutions (especially in the field of high art) is very often not only the financial gain. The mission of these organizations is mainly educational, cultivating, integrating and is in the interest of the whole society, so these organizations are non-profit and often subsidized by the state. Then the whole process can be described as follows: company - information system - market -  information system - marketing mix - market. The initial impulse is given by the company, which through its information system presents its product to the customer (market). The subsequent process takes place according to Figure 1. - The customer responds through the information system and the company then uses the elements of the marketing mix to achieve its goal, i.e., the application of the product on the market. The starting point is therefore the company (in our case, the performing arts institution) and its product (the artistic performance) and the end point is the market.

According to Colbert (2007), the marketing information system is a fundamental part of the marketing process, since it provides the information needed to make enlightened decisions. The marketing information system consists of three types of data: internal, secondary and primary. Primary data are typically newly collected for a specific purpose, using various marketing research techniques. Secondary data is information that already exists somewhere, often collected by someone else for another purpose. Nevertheless, they can often be used for audience research. Internal data are usually derived from six sources (Colbert, 2007): the accounting system, sales reports, the client list, a Web site "hits" report, company stuff and previous studies. These reported internal data sources are very diverse, however Colbert does not go into further detail. Keller & Kotler (2016) cite also three sources of data on which the marketing information system relies on: internal company records, marketing intelligence activities, and marketing research.

The works of other authors are empirical studies that work with data from various sources, whether secondary or primary, but do not place the data itself in context in terms of interrelationships and interactions.

**Fig. 2** Model of Data Sources of Performing Arts in Terms of Data Origin
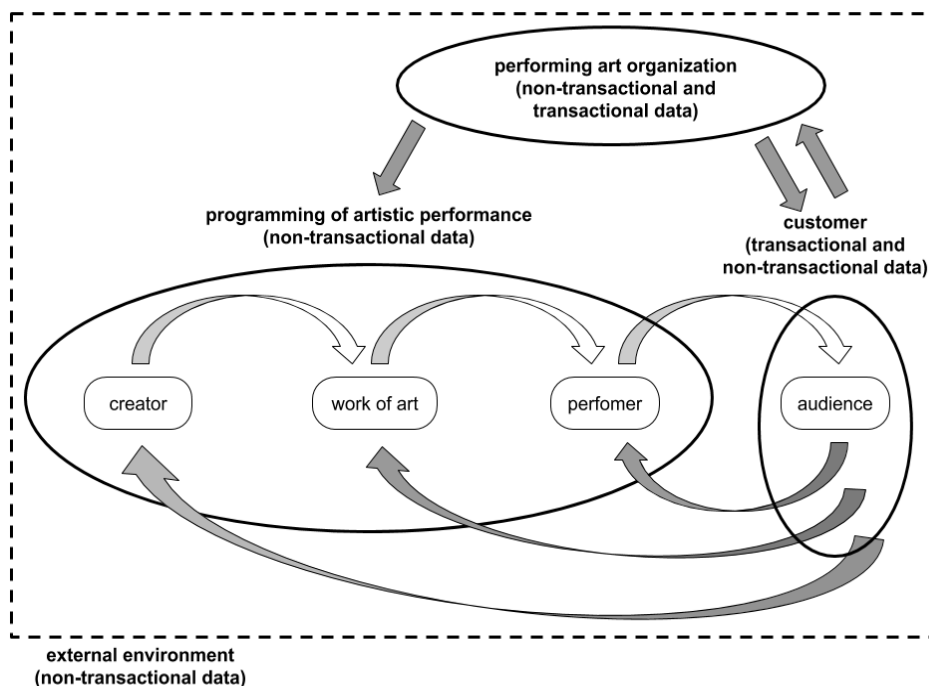


Source: author

The first step in creating our model was to identify the individual elements. These individual elements were identified in terms of the possible emergence of some specific data that may have useful value in audience analysis. Then, the basic elements of the model are, of course, the audience itself and the artistic organization. Another key element is the offered artistic performance (i.e., the product) and its individual components

- work creator, work of art and performer. All these parts of the art program are important in terms of the origin of the data and play an important role in the individual decision-making of the customer. The last basic element of the model is the external environment.

After identifying the components of the model, it was necessary to represent the individual elements in a structure that corresponds to their mutual position in practice. The artistic organization, the audience and the artistic performance in the model figure as separate entities, while the artistic performance is further structured into its three basic components. The external environment provides a framework for all of these entities.

In the next step, we identified the interactions between the individual elements of the model. These interactions are indicated by arrows. It is important to note that in some cases the interaction takes place in both directions, but in some the action is only one-way. For example, the creator and the work itself do not affect the audience directly, but only indirectly through the performance by the artist.

The penultimate step in creating the model was the identification of those interactions between the individual elements of the model, in which specific data are created that can be used in the analysis and management of the audience. In the model, these interactions are indicated by fully colored gray arrows. First of all, there is an interaction between the audience and the artistic organization - the purchase of tickets. When making a purchase, a customer decision is e.g., made on the basis of the information available about the program, price and location. If the customer purchases a ticket, data is generated on which program (creator, work or performer), when and at what price the customer purchased the ticket. Another situation where data important for the analysis and management of the audience is created, is the programming process. An artistic institution typically creates its program offer based on its experience, expertise and in accordance with its mission. Dramaturgs typically strive to create a program that is valuable and attractive to the audience. In addition to the content of its program, the organization also decides when, where and at what price the performance will take place. In all these creative and decision-making processes, data is created.

The last step in creating our model of data sources is the classification of data according to parameters that are significant or decisive for the analysis of the audience. Looking at data sources in detail, we conclude that we can identify two basic (elementar) types of data: transactional and non-transactional. Transactional data provides detailed information about the customer's purchasing behavior, and we can monitor this behavior at a specific time. So we can track how often the customer bought, how much money he spent and when he last bought. In addition to transactional data, however, the artistic institution also has a large amount of non-transactional data at its disposal - that is, data about the program and its composition. As an example, let's mention a classical music concert: His program consists of specific compositions (work of art) from specific authors (creator) and performed by specific performers (performer). In addition, the author and composition represent a certain musical style (baroque, romanticism, contemporary music, etc.). Also, the artist person generates non-transactional data such as the artist's popularity rate. So we can see here a relatively large group of non-transactional data, which, however, have a major impact on the audience's decision whether to attend the concert or not. Another group of non-transactional data is related to the technical realization of an artistic performance. The capacity of the venue or the day of the week when

the performance takes place can serve as an example. Not insignificant are also non-transactional data coming from the external environment - even here come a number of factors that affect the behavior of the audience: weather, geographical availability of the concert venue, the possibility of parking, but also various legislative or hygienic restrictions. All this data can then be used for audience analysis.

## 3.2  Application of the model of data sources

We applied our data sources model in the research of the audience of two contrasting institutions: a small non-profit organization and a regional symphony orchestra. As we have identified transactional and non-transactional data types, we have applied methods that are commonly used in customer analysis using these types of data or at least some of them. Examples of such a method are customer lifetime value prediction and RFM analysis. These proven traditional approaches are based on the use of transactional data. However, in addition to transactional data, a cultural institution also has a large amount of non-transactional data at its disposal, and therefore the question arises as to whether current approaches using transaction data to analyze customers (in our case audiences) can also be enriched with non-transactional data. The first answer to this question is given by Potančok et al. (2020). These authors applied an approach that utilizes recency, frequency and monetary (RFM), and combines this data with other relevant non-transactional attributes about the audience behavior and about the concerts. The implementation of the non-transactional data draws on the assumption based on a long-term observation of customers' behavior that specific properties of the concerts might influence the decision of the audience member whether to attend a concert in the future.

## Conclusion and further research

Being able to identify customer wants and segment markets for increased personalization is a difficult task, but the growth of the Internet and availability of data allows organizations to locate and target audiences more efficiently. The use of data has boomed with the wholesale adoption of computers and the Internet.

In our paper, we intended to outline the direction of the possible use of information sources that are most accessible to cultural institutions - their own internal data sources. Such data sources are typically readily available and do not incur additional costs.

First, we analyzed the available literature on audience analysis and we focused on the data sources used for research, or how to collect these data. It is interesting for us to find out that the studies do not use internal data of institutions, which are available without the need for further collection through marketing research - whether in the case of the application of qualitative or quantitative analyzes. We examined the data of two different institutions and identified typical sources of internal data. Subsequently, we generalized our findings into a widely applicable model of data sources and classified the data into two basic types - transactional and non-transactional. The model monitors data sources in terms of their origin - where and what data is generated.

We used the resulting model to research the audience of two different institutions, we applied standard methods using transaction data for CLV prediction. This raised further questions and possible topics for further research - implementation of non-transactional data into existing methods, development of new methods using data mining and machine learning approaches in customer data analysis - these technologies are widely used in other domains (banking, telecommunications, online shopping), but not yet in culture.

Other directions of future research could follow the process of data management in cultural institutions, the removal of managerial barriers to research and the use of this data for marketing practice.

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