

## Consumption of the Performing Arts from a Supply-Side Perspective: Searching for the Artistic Benefit

**Dr. Michele Bonazzi**

Adjunct professor at the Department of Management  
Ca' Foscari University of Venice

**Prof. Andrea Pastore**

Associate professor at the Department of Economics  
Ca' Foscari University of Venice

**Prof. Francesco Casarin**

Full professor at the Department of Management  
Ca' Foscari University of Venice

### Abstract

*This paper focuses on the artistic benefit for the audience in arts and culture consumption. This benefit is defined as the feeling of being part of the artistic process and it is generated by participatory dynamics and value co-creation. The artistic benefit interacts with other benefits (functional, symbolic, emotional, social) that are involved in the performing arts experience. Its analysis, from a supply-side view, could help to advance arts and culture marketing into a service-dominant logic. An empirical study involving two phases has been designed. First, a qualitative, explorative and item-generation investigation was carried out. A quantitative study was then undertaken to streamline the item-generation process and evaluate the validity of the identified semantic dimensions. The analysis identified the artistic benefit as composed by three different factor that we labelled: breaking, participatory and dialogic. The results confirm the relevance of the topic as a means of shedding light on the audience experience in arts consumption.*

**Keywords:** Performing arts, participation, cultural consumption, customer engagement, value co-creation.

### Introduction

This investigation focuses on the types of benefit a consumer can receive in the performing arts. The National Endowment for the Arts (2018) has documented a reduction in US performing arts consumption during the period 2002 to 2017; this trend has been found in the non-profit performing arts in general (e.g., Hume et al. 2006; Jobst and Boerner 2011). A Eurostat (2017) report shows a more stable consumption trend in Europe. This phenomenon, coupled with scarcer public funding and stronger competition in the entertainment market, has increased the need for an analysis aimed at helping the supply-side to meet market challenges. In particular, it is important that research be conducted with consumers in order to comprehend and address the drop in market demand. The recent pandemic situation makes the need to address this trend more urgent.

A further significant trend in contemporary society is the inclusion of consumers in the creation of value (Arvidsson 2008; Firat and Dholakia 1998; Firat and Venkatesh 1995; Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2000). This trend encourages the service-dominant logic of marketing to consider the link between consumer value and customer empowerment in the entire service value chain (Vargo and Lusch 2004). It underscores the emergence of co-creation of collective service experience (Carù and Cova 2015), the increasing importance of customer participation (Dabholkar 1990) and the role of the consumer in the innovation process (Chaney 2012; Martínez-Cañas et al. 2016). In an investigation of the benefits of the arts, McCarthy et al. (2004) conclude that “the effects of arts participation are likely to accrue to an individual rather slowly at first and then build rather sharply once he or she gains familiarity with the artistic discipline and greater capacity for mental, emotional, and social engagement through the experience” (p. 53).

Reflecting on “co-creating theatre”, Walmsley (2013) identifies a link between the creative process of the audience and the rising trend of co-creation, and asserts that this link is one of most intensive ways in which audience members can engage with arts (p. 109). The relevance of consumer participation in arts events (McCarthy and Jinnet 2001), and specifically in theatre (Bishop 2006; Bourriaud 2002; Debord 1992), is a topic that has long interested researchers. It has been pointed out that participation can bring about increasing involvement of the individual, cognitively, socially and emotionally, in the artistic experience.

In cultural enterprises, user participation generally includes an aesthetic-creative dimension. A feeling of being part of the artistic process reinforces users' engagement in cultural consumption. If we conceive of the artistic product as an innovative metaphor waiting to be completed by the user (Boorsma 2006, 76), the audience is induced to take an active role and it will therefore be more exposed to such engagement.

The opportunity to express one's creativity is a benefit increasingly sought by the user. We conceive of this artistic benefit a *feeling of being a part of the co-creative process of completing a cultural product*. The promise to the user is the opportunity to become a co-author who contributes to the completion of the cultural product; the benefit is awareness of being creative in an artistic sense. The concept of participation in cultural enterprises has a creative-aesthetic component and leads to artistic benefit. For this reason, issues relating to participation in cultural enterprises are different from those pertaining to activities in other sectors. The purpose of this article is to assess the dimensions of the artistic benefit, as perceived together with other benefits from a supply-side perspective.

This empirical research investigates the artistic benefit and the user involvement in order to gain new insights into marketing and management in the field of arts and culture. Our research question is how to measure the artistic benefit as an additional dimension of the audience experience in the performing arts from a supply-side perspective.

Our operational goal is to help managers understand that considering the artistic benefit enables them to engage consumers in a deeper way and to develop cultural products that are more aligned with market trends. We believe that a rethinking of the boundaries between artist and consumer can help producers, artists, marketers and policy-makers to achieve optimal engagement, reducing the risks identified by Walmsley (2013): elitism (cultural products destined for a few select spectators), inter-legitimation (dynamics in which value co-creation is exclusively designed to legitimize artistic products) and the unmet expectations of consumers.

The article is organized as follows. First, we review the literature on user participation and customer engagement in the performing arts. Next, we discuss the artistic benefit and describe two empirically based studies: a qualitative, explorative and item-generation investigation based on in-depth interviews with key professionals from performing arts organizations; and a quantitative study intended to identify, test the item-generation outcome related to, and evaluate the validity of the identified semantic dimensions. Then we present our results and discuss their managerial implications, highlighting the relevance of the artistic benefit for the marketing processes of cultural organizations.

## 1. User Participation and Engagement in Cultural Consumption

Numerous studies have focused on user participation and engagement in the realm of cultural consumption. Table 1 describes 10 studies that illustrate the state of the art on this topic.

TABLE 1 User Participation and Engagement in Arts and Culture: Literature Review

Authors	Context	Methodology	Results
<b>Bishop 2011</b>	Reflects on the participatory arts and political spectatorship, paying particular attention to the relationship between artist and audience.	Book divided into three parts: theoretical introduction, historical case studies and an attempt to historicize the post-1899 period of participatory arts.	Two trends in the participatory arts are identified: "delegated" performance, in which ordinary people are hired to perform on behalf of the artist; and a pedagogic project in which art converges with educational activities and goals.
<b>Bonet and Négrier 2018</b>	Focuses on social participation in the theatre and heritage sectors. Implications for government cultural policies are central.	Essay based on theoretical reflection; the discussion was inspired by results of a European research-action project (BeSpectACTive!) for citizen participation in the performing arts.	The authors propose a model showing the distinct proactive roles played by citizens in order to reveal the dimensions of participation and its consequences for cultural life. They find that participation strategies do not offer a model but, rather, a medium available in specific contexts according to specific strategies.
<b>de Rooji and Bastiaansen 2017</b>	Reviews the literature and endeavours to categorize, conceptualize and operationalize the motives influencing cultural consumption.	A mixed methods approach is used: a qualitative study (47 interviews with theatregoers) and a quantitative study (online survey of 714 attendees of a classical	The authors present a framework of eight motives related to performing arts attendance; they distinguish between <i>cultural motives</i> (cultural aesthetics, cultural relaxation, cultural stimulation and cultural transmission) and <i>social motives</i> (social attraction, social distinction, social bounding and social duty).

		music concert).	
<b>Hager and Winkler 2012</b>	Extends Swanson et al.'s (2008) approach, showing how motives and demographic measures explain attendance across places and art forms.	Data collected via a telephone survey of households in three US cities: Seattle, Minneapolis and Boston.	Two main conclusions are reached: theatre managers should consider demographic factors when making strategic decisions aimed at engaging consumers; and demographic variables are irrelevant in cultivating audiences for opera and orchestras – these attendees are motivated by the desire to escape.
<b>Hume et al. 2007</b>	Examines consumers' experience of the performing arts to identify predictors of repurchase intention so marketing can focus on drawing consumers to return.	In-depth interviews are conducted with 26 people in an exploratory study to investigate the drivers of re-purchase intention in the performing arts.	The findings indicate that functional factors, especially value and service quality, are important in the repurchase decision. Factors such as emotional attainment and experience with shows, which have been the primary focus of performing arts organizations, play a lesser role in repurchase intention. These findings may also have implications for non-profit service organizations outside the performing arts.
<b>Jancovich 2015</b>	Examines the theory that widening the range of voices involved in decision-making can have transformational effects on the management of public institutions.	In a mixed methods approach, a questionnaire was sent to 20 arts officers and 25 in-depth one-to-one interviews were conducted with arts professionals, followed by 15 further interviews.	The findings make a case for participatory decision-making as a mechanism for broadening the cultural offer as well as the range of people who participate in the arts.
<b>Kemp 2015</b>	Endeavours to define an engaging consumer experience in arts and culture; defines arts engagement as “the feeling, cognitions, behavioural, social and connective/relational responses evoked by artistic experiences.”	A theoretical study, conducted with three experts in two sessions each, yielded 55 items; these were tested with a sample of 222 adults. A study with 153 adults was conducted to confirm the dimensions and assess nomological validity. A third study was conducted with 66 university students to assess the test-retest reliability of the scale.	The five identified dimensions are linked to important marketing outcomes, including <i>value</i> , <i>trust</i> , <i>loyalty</i> and <i>advocacy</i> , because higher levels of engagement are associated with greater perceived customer value, more trust in the organization's offering, and a strong behavioural link between the customer and the product offering/organization, which manifests as customer loyalty as well as advocacy.
<b>McCarthy and Jinnat 2001</b>	Focuses on a new framework for building participation in the arts; the aim is to develop strategies for fostering involvement in the programs of arts institutions.	Data were collected in three steps: a literature review, site visits to 13 arts institutions, and a telephone survey of 102 arts organizations in the United States.	Arts institutions must take an integrative approach to building participation, one that considers the organization's core values, mission and goals; identifies target groups and bases its strategies on information about them; commits both internal and external resources to building participation; and establishes a process for feedback and self-evaluation.
<b>McCarthy et al. 2004</b>	Addresses the widely perceived need to articulate the private and public benefits of involvement in the arts; shows how understanding the benefits is central to the development of arts policies.	Extensive literature review of (a) evidence for the instrumental benefits of the arts; (b) conceptual theories from multiple disciplines that might provide insights into how such benefits are generated; (c) the intrinsic effects of the arts, including works in aesthetics, philosophy and art criticism; and (d) arts	Proposes a new approach to building support for the arts, one that is based on a broad understanding of the benefits of involvement, incorporates intrinsic and instrumental benefits, and distinguishes among the ways in which the arts can affect public welfare. An individual's decision whether to become involved in the arts is driven by their intrinsic benefits; a wide range of benefits can be derived from participation in the arts, but many of these require sustained involvement.

		participation.	
<b>Swanson et al. 2008</b>	Identifies six motives of performing arts attendees (aesthetics, education, escape, recreation, self-esteem and social interaction) and their relationships with demographic characteristics and behavioural outcomes.	In this quantitative study, 442 audience members were surveyed in the Midwestern region of the United States.	The results underscore the importance of four motives ( <i>aesthetics, education, recreation and self-esteem</i> ) with respect to performing arts events; factors examined are years of attendance, number of performances attended and the consumer engagement process as a whole.

First, let us consider the research areas to which these studies belong. Six contributions are concerned with arts and culture in general and four with the performing arts specifically. The first group comprises Bishop (2011), Bonet and Négrier (2018), Jancovich (2015), Kemp (2015), McCarthy and Jinnet (2001) and McCarthy et al. (2004). Of these, Bishop (2011), Bonet and Négrier (2018), Jancovich (2015) and McCarthy and Jinnet (2001) focus on the concept of participation in the arts. McCarthy et al. (2004) focus instead on the benefits, private or public, deriving from involvement in the arts, while Kemp (2015) seeks to define the experience of engaging in arts and cultural consumption, moving towards the general theory of customer engagement (Bowden 2009; Dessart et al. 2016).

The second group, consisting of de Rooji and Bastiaansen (2017), Hager and Winkler (2012), Hume et al. (2007) and Swanson et al. (2008), deals specifically with the performing arts and seeks to identify possible motivations related to participate. The contribution by Hager and Winkler (2012) was inspired by that of Swanson et al. (2008), while de Rooji and Bastiaansen (2017) examine previous reflections on the topic to propose, using mixed methods methodology, an extended framework of motives. Finally, Hume et al. (2007) analyze consumer feedback in the performing arts by means of a qualitative study, to identify the predictors of repurchase intention in this setting.

All of the contributions underline, albeit using different approaches, the centrality of participation in cultural consumption. Participation is assessed as one of the main tools for generating involvement and engaging consumers in arts and culture, particularly in the performing arts.

Our research presupposes an increasingly important role for active participation in performing arts events, leading to heavy and lasting involvement. In the studies previously cited, a relevant approach related to performing arts attendance does not appear to be specifically addressed. This is the value co-creation approach (Payne et al. 2008; Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004). Our study includes this dimension, together with the participative dynamics at the centre of the analysis and the theoretical framework applied.

As stated in the Introduction, participatory dynamics and value co-creation represent the basic characteristics of the artistic benefit. In our view, the relevance of value co-creation is increasing and therefore worthy of further analysis. We consider this aspect to be one of the driving forces behind new trends in cultural fruition.

## 2. The Artistic Benefit

In the cultural consumption sector, the artistic experience is essential (Carù and Cova 2005, 2006). According to Styvé (2010), consumers are increasingly oriented towards artistic experiences characterized by active participation, interaction and co-creation. Consumers participate in an immersive experience through appropriation, reducing the perceived distance between themselves and a given work of art. The process of audience involvement in experiencing an artistic product tells us how an individual feels within a circular appropriation wherein consumers, artists and organizations create a collective sense of value (White et al. 2009).

This leads to an important question: what are the benefits that enhance the process of value creation and the aesthetic experience of arts consumers (Zakaras and Lowell 2008)? A possible answer is provided by the taxonomy of benefits proposed by Botti (2000) and discussed by Colbert (2003): functional, symbolic, social and emotional. Reflecting on hedonistic consumption (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982a, 1982b), on its social and symbolic benefits (Bourdieu 1984) and on Botti's (2000) four benefits, Boorsma (2006) hypothesizes a fifth dimension linked to the experience of completing a work of art: the artistic benefit. According to Boorsma, this aspect plays a fundamental role in the user's perception of being part of the artistic process. This feeling of *playing a co-creative role in the artistic process* is central to the audience experience.

There have been some attempts to measure the components of the audience experience (Boerner and Jobst 2013; Boudier-Pailler 1999; Brown and Novak 2007; Eversmann 2004; Independent Theatre Council et al. 2005; Radbourne

et al. 2010; Tung Au et al. 2017). We present these empirical contributions chronologically, together with the theoretical research of Boorsma (2006) and Botti (2000), in Table 2.

TABLE 2 Components Of Audience Experience: Literature Review

Author and approach	Context and methodology	Proposal
<b>Bouder-Pailler 1999 - Empirical</b>	Proposes a means of measuring individuals' motives for going to the theatre, based on the results of a mail survey of 855 French theatregoers.	Based on a literature review, hypothesizes that four dimensions underlie the goals connected with theatre attendance. Together with the content of the play, these dimensions are produced by structural and technical factors: <i>intellectual enrichment</i> , <i>emotional arousal</i> , <i>entertainment</i> or social context and social <i>hedonism</i> .
<b>Botti 2000 - Theoretical</b>	Examines the role of marketing in the arts. Reflection on the issue requires an understanding of both the meaning of artistic value and its diffusion process. Artistic value can be seen as a "flow potential" embedded in a product that may or may not be recognized by those who encounter it.	Proposes a taxonomy comprising four items: (a) <i>functional</i> benefit, linked to desire for cultural knowledge – can also be considered educational benefit; (b) <i>symbolic</i> benefit, linked to need to demonstrate one's social position or personality; (c) <i>social</i> benefit, linked to need for social contact and interaction; (d) <i>emotional</i> benefit, also termed <i>hedonistic</i> benefit, linked to the desire for pleasurable experiences, which can be stimulating or relaxing, and to the need to escape from daily problems and routines.
<b>Eversmann 2004 - Empirical</b>	In in-depth semi-structured interviews, 28 theatre experts (critics, theatre managers, educators in the field) describe theatre experiences that made a lasting impression.	Identifies four components: <i>perceptual</i> (experiencing what is happening onstage without interpretation); <i>emotional</i> (affective reactions to a performance); <i>cognitive</i> (intellectual understanding of a performance); and <i>communicative</i> (feelings of connectivity within the audience and between audience and actor).
<b>Independent Theatre Council et al. 2005 - Empirical</b>	Development of an audience experience framework through an online survey of 2,500 theatregoers and interviews with theatre professionals.	Identifies five components of audience experience: <i>engagement and concentration</i> – extent to which the performance captures and maintains the audience's attention; <i>learning and challenge</i> – whether the theatre experience is intrinsically rewarding without being too easy or too hard; <i>energy and tension</i> – physiological reactions to the performance; <i>shared experience and atmosphere</i> – sense of collective experience afforded by a good performance; <i>personal resonance and emotional connection</i> – experience of a personal connection with the narrative unfolding on stage and extent to which theatre can broaden people's understanding.
<b>Boorsma 2006 - Theoretical</b>	Argues that arts marketing should primarily support and reinforce the artistic function of works of art that arts consumers should be seen as co-producers in the creative process, and that arts marketing should focus on the artistic experience as the core customer value.	Based on Botti's (2000) four benefits, asserts that artistic experience is a reward that consumers receive in return for completing a work of art. Adds a fifth benefit – <i>artistic</i> – and identifies four conditions for implementing a strategic logic in arts marketing: art consumers are co-creators in the process but are not co-designers of the product; arts marketing should support and facilitate artistic experience as the core customer value; the selection of art consumers should be driven by artistic objectives; and performance measurement should focus on contribution to artistic objectives.
<b>Brown and Novak 2007 - Empirical</b>	Attempts to define and measure how audiences are transformed by live performance. The research design comprised two questionnaires – one administered in-venue just prior to curtain and one sent home with the respondent and mailed back. Nearly	Identifies six intrinsic indexes: <i>captivation</i> – degree to which one is engrossed and absorbed in the performance; <i>intellectual stimulation</i> – several aspects of mental engagement, including personal and social; <i>emotional resonance</i> – intensity of emotional response, degree of empathy with the performers and therapeutic value in an

	2,000 theatregoers attending 19 performances were surveyed.	emotional sense; <i>spiritual value</i> – an aspect of experience that goes beyond emotional/intellectual engagement and assesses the extent to which one has a transcendent, inspiring or empowering experience; <i>aesthetic growth</i> – extent to which one is exposed to a new type or style of art or is stretched aesthetically by the performance; <i>social bonding</i> – extent to which the performance connects the individual with others in the audience, allowing her to celebrate her own cultural heritage or to learn about cultures outside of her life experience.
<b>Radbourne et al. 2010 - Empirical</b>	Focuses on measuring the intrinsic benefits of arts attendance. After almost three years of collecting data on arts audiences, an Arts Audience Experience Index was developed. It was tested in two ways: an audience survey at a performing arts venue, and a “deep feedback” focus group with subscribers to a contemporary theatre company.	Identifies four intrinsic benefits (knowledge/learning, quality measures, risk, “live-ness”) that produce four indicators of the audience experience: <i>knowledge</i> – extent to which the audience is enriched by the intellectual stimulation and cognitive growth; <i>risk management</i> – extent to which the audience evaluates the performance in terms of five types of risk: functional, economic, psychological, and social; <i>authenticity</i> – extent to which audience members perceive the performance to be truthful and believable; <i>collective engagement</i> – how the audience engages with performers and other audience members, or even the community, before and after the performance.
<b>Boerner and Jobst 2013 - Empirical</b>	Investigates the impact of visitors’ cognitive, emotional and conative response to a performance on their overall subjective evaluation of the theatre visit. The results are based on the responses of 2,795 attendees of 44 performances in 12 German-language theatres.	Identifies theatregoers’ <i>emotional</i> (involvement and empathy), <i>cognitive</i> (complexity) and <i>conative</i> (thought-provoking impulses, stimulation for communication) response to a performance as significant determinants of their overall evaluation of the theatre visit.
<b>Tung Au et al. 2017 - Empirical</b>	Administers Radbourne et al.’s (2010) Arts Audience Experience Index to 465 attendees of a dramatic performance and 126 attendees of a music performance.	Provides some empirical evidence showing that the importance of and satisfaction with the four AAIE components ( <i>authenticity</i> , <i>collective engagement</i> , <i>knowledge</i> and <i>risk management</i> ) are empirically distinct. A confirmatory factor analysis found that audience members could differentiate among the four components along the two facets of importance and satisfaction.

The studies presented in Table 2 are divided between empirical (seven) and theoretical (two). Among the studies presented, we highlight those of Boerner and Jobst (2013), Eversmann (2004) and Radbourne et al. (2010). The empirical studies included are aimed at developing tools for measuring the intrinsic benefits of arts attendance and proposing different frameworks for defining the audience experience. However, these studies, although interesting, do not expressly consider the artistic benefit deriving from co-creation. In fact, none focuses specifically on the artistic value of co-creation by the audience and none measures the artistic benefit. For the reasons expressed above, we have chosen the Boorsma (2006) theoretical perspective, as this is the only one that introduces this topic in terms of measuring the benefits.

We examine the benefits of attending the performing arts starting from Boorsma’s (2006) taxonomy, which consists of five dimensions: functional, symbolic, social, emotional and artistic. The artistic benefit describes a process in which the user, together with the artist, becomes one of the elements of the creative process. Therefore, the artistic benefit differs from the other four benefits inasmuch it presupposes the active involvement of the user, who is at the centre of the co-creative dynamic. The consumer seeks out cultural products that satisfy his/her desire for more intense participation in order to achieve the artistic benefit by means of value co-creation. It is important to note that the coexistence of a one-dimensional artistic dimension is only hypothesized by Boorsma, not having been subjected to empirical verification. To our knowledge, this is the first attempt to describe and measure this benefit.

### 3. Research Methods

Starting from the definition of artistic benefit, we aim to describe and measure the artistic benefit as an additional dimension within the scheme of benefits (functional, symbolic, social and emotional) behind the audience experience of performing arts events. This approach is explorative, since, to our knowledge, it is the first attempt in this direction. We choose to focus on a specific kind of cultural enterprise: the performing arts organization, in particular one that is dedicated to theatre, classical music, opera or dance. This choice is dictated by the following considerations.

Firstly, performing arts events are more suited to the co-creation of value and the active participation of users than museums/exhibitions, where experience seems more suited to analysis by a classical benefit scheme. Since this is the first attempt to measure the artistic benefit, we have selected the performing arts because we are confident that this domain is suitable for the research object.

Secondly, performing arts is a suitable field for active audiences and for innovation. This sector is characterized by strong movement on the supply-side aimed at constant renewal of theatrical practices and the presence of avant-garde frameworks.

Moreover, performing arts enterprises, especially avant-garde theatre, have been particularly affected by the economic crisis; it is therefore urgent that we gain a greater understanding of their audiences. Similar to Hausman (2011), we adopted the guidelines proposed by Churchill (1979) and De Vellis (1991) for the development of a scale. Given the exploratory nature of our research, we chose a two-stage design.

In the first stage, we generated a set of items starting from the supply-side by means of interviews with experts in the cultural sector. The rationale for this choice is that, although the audience is specific and easily accessible, it is difficult to select a sample of highly experienced users for obtaining an initial set of items. Moreover, interviewing a large number of non-expert users for this purpose would not have been efficient in terms of research costs. This kind of research has been conducted by, for example, Eversmann (2004), as illustrated in Table 2, Jancovich (2015), who focuses on the implications of engaging users in the decision-making of cultural organizations, and Minkiewicz et al. (2016), who address co-creation processes from the point of view of cultural organizations. As in these three studies, we focus on key informants in the cultural sector to identify research areas with a declared exploratory intent. In the second stage, we conducted a quantitative study based on data collected through a Web survey to streamline the item-generation process and evaluate the validity of the identified semantic dimensions.

### 4. Qualitative Study

In order to obtain a set of items related to the five dimensions proposed by Boorsma (2006), we adopted an in-depth interview approach (McCracken 1988). Since the exploratory nature of the research called for a supply-side perspective, we conducted individual interviews with 30 experts in the performing arts, asking them to describe the phenomenon of attending performing arts from the audience's perspective. Then the interviews were "focalized" to examine in depth the dimension of performing arts consumption in terms of "being part" of the performance – that is, "feeling that one is an essential part of the show" and how this relates to the artistic part of the creative process.

The experts were chosen based on three stratification categories (geographical area, organizational role and type of art)<sup>1</sup> in order to characterize the artistic benefit from different points of view and to enrich the corpus.

The interviews were transcribed in their entirety. After collecting and codifying the terms that related to the concept of artistic benefit, we used an explorative analysis with an open-coding procedure to gain a more extensive description of performing arts consumption; we used NVivo8 software (Saldaña 2015) for this purpose. Furthermore, we consulted three additional experts (two scholars in our department and one arts management professional) in order to validate the identified items. The items are listed in Table 3 according to Boorsma's (2006) taxonomy. Most of the items refer to the dimension of the artistic benefit and give different descriptions of what an audience expects from the performing arts. For the item *artistic benefit*, the interviewees described the "feeling of being a part of a creative process" in different ways.

The first six items (A-01 to A-06) refer mostly to the perception of being involved in the process as an active part of the show. While not appearing on stage during the performance, the audience has a sense of contributing to the creative process, improving the show and so forth.

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<sup>1</sup> We chose artists, managers, directors and scholars in the Veneto region of Italy who have expertise in theatre, classical music, opera and dance.

The next four items (A-07 to A-10) relate more to the process of self-fulfillment through the show: self-identification, opportunity to express oneself. The subsequent three (A-11 to A-13) describe participation through a break from the usual framework and the established practices of performing arts. The last two items (A-14 and A-15) are about closeness to the show and to the artist, a proximity that has both physical and symbolic dimensions; it often involves a pre- or post- show meeting with the performer(s).

TABLE 3 List of Items

<b>Functional benefit</b>
[F-01] Be able to address interesting topics for the reference community
[F-02] Address interesting current events
[F-03] Clarify famous events or stories
[F-04] Tell new stories or explore new ideas
<b>Symbolic benefit</b>
[Y-01] Give the audience a chance to dress up appropriately
[Y-02] Invite the audience to exclusive events
<b>Social benefit</b>
[S-01] Offer shows that foster a sense of community
[S-02] Offer shows that build relations among spectators
<b>Emotional benefit</b>
[E-01] Entertain and make the audience laugh
[E-02] Be able to move the audience
<b>Artistic benefit</b>
[A-01] Let the spectator prove his/her artistic abilities
[A-02] Make the spectator feel s/he is an active part of the show
[A-03] Allow the spectator to make a contribution to improving the show
[A-04] Offer shows that make the spectator feel s/he is part of a creative artistic process
[A-05] Make the spectator feel s/he is part of a path of growth proposed by the theatre/festival
[A-06] Offer the audience a chance to contribute to the creative process
[A-07] Stimulate the audience to develop their own interpretation
[A-08] Enhance the process of identification with the actors or the show
[A-09] Give the impression that the show addresses an important part of the life or self of the spectator
[A-10] Give the audience a theatre experience that reduces their sense of fragility through their own self-expression
[A-11] Use public spaces in a theatrical manner, breaking the usual spatial framework
[A-12] Allow the audience to participate in a new and alive ritual
[A-13] Offer a theatrical experience that expresses different ideas about society
[A-14] Offer a chance to meet the artist(s) at the end of the show
[A-15] Give the audience the feeling of being physically close to the artist(s)

The second step in item retention was asking the respondents whether they agreed with the description of art consumption motives for each of the items. Of the 30 respondents, 24 answered. All 25 items received majority agreement so all were retained.

We observed that a significant number of items relating to the artistic benefit had been identified, and that such elements hardly seemed to prefigure the existence of a one-dimensional component. This aspect was verified through quantitative analysis.

## 5. Quantitative Study

The quantitative analysis was based on data collected via a Web-based sample survey. The items were rated on a five-point Likert scale. The target population were those aged 18 to 64 who had attended at least two live performing arts events in Veneto during the preceding 12 months. The survey collected data from 535 respondents during the period 1 April 2016 through May 2016. The sample was checked for representativeness, in terms of age and gender distribution, using official data from the Italian National Institute of Statistics (2016). The results of these comparisons are reported in Table 4. While the representativeness of the sample is satisfactory for age distribution, a slight bias appears in gender distribution, with the female component apparently being overrepresented.



TABLE 4 Age And Gender Distribution In Sample And In General Population (Italy)

		General population(those who attended at least one event in 2015)	
	Sample % (N=535)	Theatre %	Classical music concerts and opera %
<i>Age</i>			
18–24	11.6	12.4	11.9
25–34	12.5	16.7	19.4
35–44	18.7	23.3	20.1
45–54	31.2	25.9	24.4
55–64	26.0	21.7	24.2
<i>Gender</i>			
Male	34.6	42.6	46.7
Female	65.4	57.4	55.3

Source: Italian National Institute of Statistics (2016)

TABLE 5 Reliability Analysis

Dimension	Number of items	Cronbach's $\alpha$	SE
Functional	4	0.89	0.0087
Symbolic	2	0.72	0.0220
Social	2	0.85	0.0120
Emotional	2	0.84	0.0120
Artistic	15	0.86	0.0078

## 6. Results

Internal consistency (reliability) of the items, categorized according to Boorsma's (2006) taxonomy, was assessed using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient. As reported in Table 5, all five coded benefits had acceptable Cronbach's alpha values: greater than 0.8 for all benefits except symbolic (0.72). The symbolic benefit is a difficult dimension to measure because its expression is subject to an idealistic distortion that gives negative meaning to the exhibiting of social status. In the qualitative study, almost all respondents expressed the opinion that the symbolic benefit deriving from attending live performing arts events such as theatre, opera, dance or music is somewhat old-fashioned. Moreover, all of the interviewees referred to the concept of revealing class membership or status as "bourgeois." These interpretations may derive from a view of the theatre as for the middle class; however, in sociology all social actions – not only those of a particular class – can indicate one's social position. Bourdieu (1984) claims that arts and cultural consumption is predisposed to fulfil the social function of legitimizing social differences; this is the meaning we use to justify the symbolic benefit of arts attendance and the dimensions explored in the study.

Once we confirmed that all five benefits had internal consistency and had measured the same dimension, we conducted an exploratory factor analysis (with a rotation) in order to purify the list and examine the dimensionality of the items (Churchill 1979).

The statistical analysis was conducted through the “library psych” (Revelle 2018) available for GNU-R statistical software (R Core Team 2018). We obtained a solution with seven factors, where all 25 items were retained. The results of the analysis are summarized in Table 6, where, for each factor, a semantic definition is given and the related items are listed with the corresponding factor loading (each item is listed with the factor with the largest absolute loading). Each benefit, except for the artistic one, is described by a single factor, while the items related to the artistic benefit define three independent factors. Therefore, the artistic benefit exists, but it is not described by a single factor, as suggested by the qualitative analysis. We label *breaking*, *dialogic* and *participatory* the three factors of the artistic benefit and we notice that the cumulative explained variance proportion of these three factors is about 50%.

TABLE 6 Description Of Factors

Item code	Item descriptions	Factor loadings
<b>FACTOR 1 (Breaking)</b> explained variance proportion: 22% – cumulative explained variance proportion: 22% – Cronbach’s $\alpha$ : 0.78		
A-04	Offer shows that make the spectator feel s/he is part of the creative process	0.49
A-06	Offer the audience a chance to contribute to the creative process	0.45
A-07	Stimulate the audience to develop their own interpretation	0.54
A-08	Enhance the process of identification with the actors or the show	0.39
A-09	Give the impression that the show deals with an important part of the life or self of the spectator	0.41
A-10	Give the audience a theatre experience that reduces their sense of fragility through their own self-expression	0.48
A-11	Use public spaces in a theatrical manner, breaking the usual spatial framework	0.54
A-12	Allow the audience to participate in a new and alive ritual	0.59
A-13	Offer a theatrical experience that expresses different ideas about society	0.57
<b>FACTOR 2 (Educational)</b> explained variance proportion: 21% – cumulative explained variance proportion: 43% – Cronbach’s $\alpha$ : 0.89		
F-01	Be able to address topics that are interesting for the reference community	0.75
F-02	Address interesting current events	0.86
F-03	Clarify famous events or stories	0.80
F-04	Tell new stories, explore new ideas	0.72
<b>FACTOR 3 (Dialogic)</b> explained variance proportion: 14% – cumulative explained variance proportion: 56% – Cronbach’s $\alpha$ : 0.72		
A-02	Make the spectator feel s/he is an active part of the show	0.46
A-14	Offer a chance to meet the artist(s) at the end of the show	0.53
A-15	Make the audience feeling they are physically close to the artist(s)	0.85
<b>FACTOR 4 (Participatory)</b> explained variance proportion: 13% – cumulative explained variance proportion: 69% – Cronbach’s $\alpha$ : 0.71		
A-01	Let the spectator prove his/her artistic abilities	0.64
A-03	Allow the spectator to make a contribution towards improving the show	0.58
A-05	Make the spectator feel s/he is part of a path of growth proposed by the theatre/festival	0.50
<b>FACTOR 5 (Emotional)</b> explained variance proportion: 12% – cumulative explained variance proportion: 81% – Cronbach’s $\alpha$ : 0.84		
E-01	Entertain and make the audience laugh	0.79
E-02	Be able to move the audience	0.78
<b>FACTOR 6 (Social)</b> explained variance proportion: 10% – cumulative explained variance proportion: 91% – Cronbach’s $\alpha$ : 0.85		
S-01	Offer shows that foster a sense of community	0.76
S-02	Offer shows that build relations among spectators	0.68
<b>FACTOR 7 (Symbolic)</b> explained variance proportion: 9% – cumulative explained variance proportion: 100% – Cronbach’s $\alpha$ : 0.72		
Y-01	Give the audience a chance to dress up appropriately	0.63
Y-02	Invite the audience to exclusive events	0.67

The first factor, *breaking*, describes the need to *live with awareness in an open-minded state aimed at the expression of novelty, free from spatial, cultural and social homologation*. This first identified dimension is strongly characterized by eclecticism. A situational approach<sup>2</sup> is to think of the theatre and the messages conveyed by the performing arts as a space in which the viewer feels part of a shared artistic dynamic. The items outline a vision in which the consumer perceives theatre as not only a physical place but also a place of the soul from which to witness moments of liberation from cultural, spatial and social homologation through freedom of expression. This dimension corresponds to that identified by Kemp (2015) as cognitive, with particular reference to aspects that view art as encouraging one “to evaluate things differently” and to “open [one’s] mind to new possibilities” (p. 143).

The second factor, defined as *educational*, expresses the need to *satisfy the thirst for knowledge through the study of current issues related to one’s own community, known or unprecedented stories, facts and ideas*. This aligns with Botti’s (2000) concept and definition: desire for knowledge that urges the individual to look for shows in which the topics are current and linked to their community or that reinforce familiar stories, ideas and characters. The heuristic aspect is predominant in this dimension.

The third factor, *dialogic*, is to *dialogue with oneself and with the artist through inner and communicative paths*. In this dimension, a dialogic approach emerges clearly both as an inner act, identifying with the characters in the narrated stories, and as a communicative and interactive act, promoting a relationship with the artist. In this factor, the artistic benefit as defined in our conceptualization is clear, in that it presupposes active involvement leading to links between artist and spectator in a semantic relationship. It is a relationship that does not finish with the end of the performance but can be implemented before and even after the performance. This factor seems to have similarities with the trend towards “breaking the fourth wall” (cf. Brecht 1964)<sup>3</sup> the goal being to cancel the spatial distinction between artist and viewer – even if it does not imply the physical presence of the user on stage.

The fourth factor, *participatory*, has been defined as *feeling actively involved in the performative act*. This dimension emphasizes the desire of the spectator to be inserted into a context that fosters active involvement in the performative act. It responds to the spectator’s need to be a protagonist in a participatory framework. In this semantic area, there is a strong link with the definition of artistic benefit, in particular the concept of co-creation of value. We found that at the basis of artistic benefit there is a feeling of being a part of the artistic process, from the point of view of the creation of value and of the cultural product itself.

The fifth factor, defined as *emotional*, corresponds to the consumer’s desire to *live in a state of fun or emotive involvement*. This dimension is connected with emotional and recreational aspects: the spectator is looking for events that are able to produce an emotion that involves him or her. That experience provokes feelings of pleasure. In this case it is possible to identify a link with the factor that Kemp (2015) calls “affective,” recognizing that art can be “emotionally stimulating” while not necessarily involving the escapism from daily routine identified by Botti (2000) in her taxonomy. In the first phase of item generation, there was one dedicated to the issue of escape from everyday life; however, this did not survive the evaluation process by the three secondary experts.

The sixth factor, *social*, refers to the need to *increase intersubjective and communitarian relational capital*. This dimension summarizes the social benefit derived from participating in events that are characterized as increasing the intersubjective relationality and sense of community. Botti’s (2000) definition is recollected in this factor, in that a sense of belonging emerges, linked to a community of reference and the act of sharing common values. This type of membership is distinct from that of being part of a particular social group or class as described in the symbolic benefit, as we will explain next.

The seventh and last factor, defined as *symbolic*, outlines the *opportunity to highlight one’s belonging to a particular social group*. As with the educational benefit, the symbolic factor recalls Botti’s (2000) original distinction, highlighting the strong social status component concerning attendance at events that are characterized by a marked social distinction (Bourdieu 1984).

The analysis of the co-creative aspect has generated a tripartition: in our opinion, the identification of a multifactorial artistic benefit is an important result. The *breaking* factor directly concerns how the show manages to engage the

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<sup>2</sup> In linguistics, this approach refers to the complex relations between the linguistic element and the social situation in which communication occurs. Here, the intention is to highlight the correlation between the context and the relationship.

<sup>3</sup> The phrase “breaking the fourth wall,” from Bertolt Brecht’s theory of “epic theatre,” is used in cinema, theatre, television, videogames and literature. It refers to a character who directly addresses the audience, thus breaking the metaphorical wall that separates the actors from the audience.

viewer, the *dialogic* factor is based on the artist–spectator relationship and the *participatory* factor expressly relates to the user.

As shown in Table 6, these dimensions are characterized by internal consistency between the items they comprise. In addition, each factor has a semantic independence that allows us to identify specific aspects of the cultural consumption. Table 7 summarizes the item distribution of the sample.

TABLE 7 Item Statistics

Factor	Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Breaking	A-04	Offer shows that make the spectator feel part of the creative process	3.76	0.98
	A-06	Offer the audience a chance to contribute to the creative process	3.28	1.11
	A-07	Stimulate the audience to develop their own interpretation	3.73	1.08
	A-08	Enhance the process of identification with the actors or the show	3.72	1.14
	A-09	Give the impression that the show deals with an important part of the life or the self of the spectator	3.58	1.14
	A-10	Give the audience a theatre experience that reduces their sense of fragility through their own self-expression	3.57	1.11
	A-11	Use public spaces in a theatrical manner, breaking the usual spatial framework	3.88	1.02
	A-12	Allow the audience to participate in a new and alive ritual	3.54	1.02
	A-13	Offer a theatrical experience that expresses different ideas about society	3.87	1.00
Educational	F-01	Be able to address topics that are interesting for the reference community	4.07	0.86
	F-02	Address interesting current events	3.96	0.92
	F-03	Clarify famous events or stories	4.07	0.86
	F-04	Tell new stories, introduce new ideas	4.19	0.82
Dialogic	A-02	Give the spectator the sensation of being an active part of the show	0.15	1.12
	A-14	Offer a chance to meet the artist(s) at the end of the show	3.83	1.10
	A-15	Give the audience the feeling of physical closeness to the artist(s)	3.45	1.12
Participatory	A-01	Let the spectator prove his/her artistic abilities	2.08	1.17
	A-03	Allow the spectator to contribute to improving the show	2.52	1.19
	A-05	Make the spectator feel s/he is part of a path of growth proposed by the theatre/festival	3.25	1.19
Emotional	E-01	Entertain and make the audience laugh	4.01	1.00
	E-02	Be able to move the audience	4.12	0.92
Social	S-01	Offer shows that foster a sense of community	3.68	1.07
	S-02	Offer shows that foster relations among spectators	3.53	1.15
Symbolic	Y-01	Give the audience a chance to dress up appropriately	2.08	1.24
	Y-02	Invite the audience to exclusive events	2.96	1.34

## 7. Managerial Implications

The results highlight the contribution of the artistic benefit to the managerial processes. We will illustrate how the artistic benefit can be integrated into the marketing processes of non-profit cultural organizations.

**Redesigning of time and space in performing arts events to align with new trends in consumer behaviour.** Audience participation is based on four axes of benefit: educational, symbolic, emotional and social. The factor analysis and the indicators of agreement show that the audience is focused on knowing what they are going to see, as well as the enrichment provided by the artistic product. The items earlier included in the artistic benefit were later placed in three new semantic areas: *breaking*, *participatory* and *dialogic*. The results of item correlation indicate that audiences commonly search for new kinds of creative process in which to engage in behavioural patterns and rituals. These rituals break the usual frameworks of performing arts and stimulate new interpretations of concepts and beliefs. The user's need for an "immersive artistic experience" translates into a desire to meet the artist(s) face-to-face and be touched by their inner dimension. Taking this need into account means redesigning the performance to extend its boundaries: planning the use of time before, during and after the show as well as the use of physical spaces –both inside and outside the venue.

**Consumer engagement as a key concept in artistic benefit.** The literature on consumer engagement outlines the importance of involving the spectator emotionally, cognitively, socially and behaviourally, as suggested by Vivek et al. (2012). The theoretical contribution of our study regarding the notion of artistic benefit is that it underlines the importance of the co-creative aspect of consumer engagement within the performing arts sector. An event that is based on participation and co-creation of value is able to involve the user in a re-enchantment experience (Ritzer 1999). Despite the standardization and homogenization of the cultural industry and its products as a whole, in the performing arts each show tends to be interpreted as a single event inviting user engagement, rather than as a replica of the last one. Observing the characteristics of the artistic benefit makes possible the design of unique and engaging cultural products and the development of communication strategies to promote them. However, it should be remembered that some audiences will want less psychophysical involvement (Leighton 2007) and forcing them to participate actively might not be advisable.

**Broadness: artistic benefit as a key dimension for all performing arts.** The three factors included in the concept of artistic benefit concern the performing arts in general, not only the experimental or avant-garde. Artistic benefit does not necessarily imply the active, on-stage participation of the spectator: it is sufficient for the audience to feel they are an essential part of the artistic experience. Should artistic benefit be understood as an active role for the spectator, participating directly in the show, the results of this study serve to broaden its meaning and reveal its dimensions: *breaking, participatory* and *dialogic*. This finding brings to light an important rationale for the management of cultural organizations: all artistic products should consider consumers' need to feel a part of the creative process. This does not mean that the audience is involved in generating the artistic idea, but development of the idea should involve the spectator in various ways. This does not imply giving artistic license to the audience. We believe the artist maintains his/her creative role in the generation of content, a phase that is different from the development and production of the idea itself.

**Segmentation: selected audience(s) for particular shows.** The new taxonomy of benefits can provide variables for identifying audiences for a given product. If educational, emotional, social and symbolic dimensions are taken for granted as part of the large artistic experience (Bourdieu 1984; Carù and Cova 2005), adding the concept of artistic benefit enables a deeper understanding of the audience. The potential of segmentation, whose purpose is identifying the most suitable users for a specific product, is enriched. This can help small cultural non-profit organizations with limited marketing competency to handle the complexity of the segmentation process. Market segmentation is especially important for small-scale performances that require substantial involvement by a few spectators: the artistic product needs to be tailored to specific audiences who desire particular spatial dimensions, community links and sociality. The new taxonomy can help smaller enterprises to develop a fine-tuned process of profiling that allows them to target prospective attendees more precisely. It can also help the manager and director to develop performances that stimulate a feeling of being "more than mere spectator" during the artistic experience.

**More effective tools on the supply-side.** Articulation of the artistic benefit in three factors can help organizations to formulate tools for fulfilling this benefit and its various components. For example, the adoption of new technological applications could lead to a deeper understanding of artistic performance, fulfilling the *breaking* component of the benefit. Planning and promoting participation through awards and incentives could foster the *participatory* component. Making space and time available to engage with artists and with the work of art itself, and offering incentives for self-reflection on the experience, could help to fulfil the *dialogic* factor.

## Conclusions

Our study has assessed that the artistic benefit, introduced by Boorsma's study, is composed of three elements: *breaking, participatory* and *dialogic*.

From a theoretical standpoint, embedding of the creative aesthetic component into consumer participation has produced the notion of artistic benefit. Our analysis of the artistic benefit enriches the taxonomy of cultural consumption benefits as described in the literature. Further analyses in different contexts will be necessary to confirm the obtained results.

Operationally, the new taxonomy enables a more fine-tuned segmentation process. This contribution has several implications. First, it allows one to take into account new trends in consumption and the tailoring of appropriate cultural products. As marketers aim to improve the value co-creation behaviours of consumers in the performing arts, they can use the seven semantic areas identified for assessing, planning and tracking actions.

Second, cultural organizations may adopt actions aimed at enhancing the artistic benefit and gauging the audience experience (new technological applications, awards and incentives, redesign of time and space) as tools for exploiting opportunities and addressing threats emerging from consumers' co-creation behaviours.

Third, the semantic areas could increasingly be applied in the design of novel performing arts products. The ability to measure the propensity of institutions and producers to address the artistic benefit would be a proxy for the intensity of the relationship between the cultural organization and the user.

This study could be considered as a contribution in understanding the meaning of artistic benefit, using an exploratory approach.

It could be appropriate to continue along this heuristic path to examine in depth the features of the artistic benefit relative to the emergence of new behavioural models of cultural fruition. For example, it is crucial that the relationship between the artistic benefit and the segment of the population known as voracious cultural consumers (Sullivan and Katz-Gerro 2007) be analyzed. Another research direction would be the audience creative self-awareness in terms of fruition choices. The hypothesis could be that users modify their selection of events based on which ones allow them to exercise creativity and thus achieve the artistic benefit and which ones are characterized by passivity. Moreover, it would be interesting to reflect on the relation between the *breaking* component of the artistic benefit and digital engagement (Walmsley 2016) in the cultural decision-making process. A further area of interest is the appeal of large versus small venues and their influence, if any, on the feeling of user engagement and on the relevance of the artistic benefit. In addition, it would be interesting to test the relevance of this taxonomy for other art forms.

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