

A Segmentation Study of Theater Audiences Based on Benefits Sought

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Abstract

Marketing activities can be implemented by all businesses in the market and these firms gain various advantages from these activities. One of these businesses may be cultural organizations. They can also be a brand in the sector and communicate with their audiences successfully by applying appropriate marketing activities. The first step in doing this should be knowing the audiences. Who are they and what do they want? From this point of view, the aim of this study is segmenting the theater audiences in order to know and understand them. In the scope of the study, 400 members of theater audiences were surveyed and data gathered from these surveys were analyzed through cluster analysis. A cluster analysis of the theater audience was performed based on their benefits sought. The findings show that the theater audiences in Istanbul consist of enthusiasts, utilitarians, hedonistics, and socializers groups. Managerial and academic implications, limitations, and suggestions for further research were given.

Keywords: Arts marketing, benefits sought, cluster analysis, theater audiences.

1. Introduction

In the marketing field, arts marketing, based on applying marketing strategies to cultural organizations as well as specific works of art, is a very interesting field to focus on especially in a country like Turkey where both participation in art (Cinema and Theater Statistics, 2015; 2016; Participatory Approaches in Culture and Arts, 2017) and research studies that choose art as the main topic is rather low (Izmir, 2017). The report of Participatory Approaches in Culture and Arts which was prepared by the GfK Research Company for Istanbul Culture and Arts Foundation (IKSV) shows the level of participation in cultural and artistic events in Turkey (Participatory Approaches in Culture and Arts, 2017). According to the report, the percentage of those who say, "I go to the events by buying tickets one or more times in a year" is 20%. The rate of those who participate in free-of-charge activities is 10%. The remainder of the respondents, 70%, do not participate in any types of arts events. In the report, barriers to attendance of arts events are listed as social environment and education system-based problems, inadequate nature of culture and arts places, metropolitan problems such as traffic, the lack of public transportation, and insufficient announcement campaigns of arts institutions. Another report from recent years prepared by Turkish Statistical Institute, TUIK (Cinema and Theater Statistics, 2016), shows that the size of audiences decreased 3.7% compared to the previous year (Cinema and Theater Statistics, 2015) and unfortunately, the situation is forecasted to go on in the same direction.

As marketing theory shows that keeping the existing customers loyal costs less than gaining new customers (Bitran and Mondschein, 1997), keeping existing theater audience should be given importance by a country where art consumption is rather low compared to other countries in which art consumption and public expenditure on arts is high, such as the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, W. Germany, Netherlands, Sweden, and Australia (Throsby, 1994). For this purpose, analyzing existing consumers can be a good starting point for later steps such as differentiating the theater for different audience groups, creating the expected value, and positioning the "art" for these groups in order to satisfy them better. This study aims to contribute to the field of arts marketing which has limited studies in Turkey, by analyzing the audience of an art branch, theaters specifically, to understand the characteristics of theater audience, and segment them into smaller groups with similar characteristics and needs. Based on these market segments, it would be possible to propose strategies to better satisfy the theater audiences.

2. Theoretical Background

Product or service suppliers can segment the market and differentiate their product or services in order to better satisfy the segments, offer higher value compared to competitors, and compete better with other firms (Dickson and Ginter, 1987). Companies provide their products and services according to their audiences' unique needs. Segmentation can be done by using different bases for dividing the customers into different groups according to geographical, demographical, psychographical characteristics and behaviors (Kotler and Armstrong, 2013).

In behavioral segmentation, needs and benefits, decision roles, user and/or usage characteristics are analyzed (Kotler and Keller, 2012). All these characteristics may differ from person to person. Two different people may buy the same product for different needs or benefits sought. Furthermore, usage patterns and user types may also be different among people. Because of this, motivation categories of occasions, user status, usage rate, buyer-readiness stage, loyalty status, and attitude behaviors of people are analyzed for understanding behavioral segmentation. Uses and gratification theory helps to understand the needs, motivations, and benefits sought by people while using a product

or getting a service (Ruggiero, 2000). This theory helps to find different needs, motivations, and benefits sought for the same product, service, product category, sector, and so on, by different consumers, and thereby the answers of the question “why do people consume this product or service?” can be found. Needs of people are found among general need categories, such as cognitive needs, affective needs, personal identity, integration and social interaction, and escapism (Katz, Gurevitch and Haas, 1973). Researchers tried to find segments in more specific areas, too, and adapted scales, which are based on uses and gratification theory. Our study can also be seen as representative for a specific topic such as the theater sector, and in order to find benefits sought by audiences, a research was conducted with an approach based on uses and gratification theory while adapting uses and gratification scale to the theater sector. In this way, an important point such as the reasons of audiences’ preferences can be clarified.

Some benefit segmentation research were also conducted in arts marketing. In one of these studies, Botti (2000) disclosed five benefit categories: functional or cultural, symbolic, social, emotional, and artistic benefits. Functional benefits are about cultural knowledge; symbolic benefits refer to the social position and individuality; social benefits are in relation to social contract and interaction; emotional benefits show desired likable experiences and artistic benefits are related to the experience to attend an art. Another benefit segmentation study (Boorsma, 2006) explained the benefits sought in art consumption in two categories: hedonistic benefits and social and symbolic benefits. Hedonistic benefits arise when an artistic product is consumed for intrinsic rewards first, and extrinsic or utilitarian rewards follow intrinsic rewards. Pleasure, hedonistic fulfillment, emotional arousal, amusement, and imaginary and sensory stimulation are indicators of hedonistic benefits in this study. Social and symbolic benefits were explained in this study by way of the social dimension of arts consumption in a study by Bourdieu (1984). There are three taste zones in art consumption in the study, which match up with social classes and educational levels in the society. Legitimate taste refers to educated upper class, middlebrow taste to middle classes, and popular taste to working classes (Bourdieu, 1984).

When arts audiences were analyzed theater-specifically, some studies were also found. According to some of these studies, the most important benefits are individual and emotional benefits (Boorsma & Maanen, 2003a; Boorsma & Maanen, 2003b). In these two studies, all the benefits to participate in a play are listed from the most important one to least: to be touched, to be challenged to see things differently, to experience pleasure and entertainment, to experience art, to experience beauty, to stimulate interest in questions of life, to acquire general knowledge, to engage in social contract and interaction, to keep up with theatrical developments, to foster technical interest in performing and directing, and to be able to take part in conversations with others. In the study of Chytková, Cerná and Karlíček (2012), segmentation was designed for Czech National Theater audiences. In this study, various segmentation criteria were used rather than one criterion. They are first age, place, education, and income and then benefits of theater for the audiences. Consumers went to their theaters because of the following priorities: repertoire, culture, tradition, atmosphere, because of children, fun, interest in theater, casting, quality, opera, ballet, building/environment, and prestige. The audiences want to see all these topics in good situations and good conditions.

3. Research Methodology

The uses and gratification scale of Rubin (1983) was adapted to theater and translated to Turkish in order to use as a data gathering instrument of the study. The 5-point Likert scale was used for measuring the items (5: strongly disagree, 4: disagree, 3: neither agree nor disagree, 2: agree, 1:

strongly agree). Lastly, a filter question and demographic questions were prepared by the researchers. After the pre-test of the questionnaire was conducted with 30 respondents, an online survey was created and the survey link was shared with people through social media and theaters in Istanbul, which were willing to share the link with their audiences. People who saw at least one play in the last season were eligible to take part in the study, whereas the people who did not go to the theater in the last year were eliminated with the filter question. A total of 400 respondents were surveyed with a non probability convenience sampling technique which helped researchers to get information about the theater audience in Istanbul, Turkey (Krathwohl,1997). The data which were provided by survey respondents were analyzed through SPSS 20. The main analysis method which was conducted for the study to accomplish its purpose is cluster analysis. To do this analysis properly, a factor analysis was conducted first. After that, grouping the participants, Turkish theater audience, was realized through cluster analysis in a benefit-centered approach. Reaching deductions about the population was achieved by grouping individuals with similar characteristics and needs.

First, hierarchical cluster analysis and then k-means cluster analysis methods were used to cluster the participants. The reason to use the hierarchical method first is that the number of clusters could not be predicted and it was desirable to get it through the existing data. The number of clusters that were acquired by this way was used for the K-means method, which can be used only by providing a cluster number and findings were extended.

4. Findings

Participants are usually classified according to their gender, age, education level, visiting frequency, and income level, generally (Mann, 1967; DiMaggio and Useem, 1978; Andreasen, 1987; Kotler and Scheff, 1997; Masters Russell, and Brooks, 2001; Borgonovi, 2004; Favaro and Frateschi, 2007; Ateca-Amestoy, 2008; Solomon et al., 2010; Falk and Falk, 2011; Willis et al., 2012). Besides, in this part, the data were analyzed according to variables like who makes the decision to go theater, who purchases tickets and from which purchasing channel. Analyses of 400 people in accordance with the specified elements are given in Table 1.

Table 1: Characteristics of Sample

Characteristics	N	%
Gender	Female	257 64.25%
	Male	143 35.75%
Age	18 and less	12 3.00%
	19–25	111 27.75%
	26–35	172 43.00%
	36–45	58 14.50%
	46–55	41 10.25%
	56 and more	6 1.50%
Education level	High school	31 7.75%
	College	24 6.00%
	University	224 56.00%
	Postgraduate	121 30.25%

Visiting frequency	More than once a week	29	7.25%
	Once a week	41	10.25%
	More than once a month	105	26.25%
	Once a month	87	21.75%
	More than once a year	119	29.75%
	Other	19	4.75%
Income level	1500 and less	43	10.75%
	1501–2500	48	12.00%
	2501–3500	71	17.75%
	3501–4500	68	17.00%
	4501–5500	49	12.25%
	5500 and more	121	30.25%
Decision maker when selecting a play	Themselves	352	88.00%
	Friends	33	8.25%
	Family/Relatives	15	3.75%
Ticket buyers	Themselves	300	75.00%
	Others	100	25.00%
Purchasing channel of self-buyers	Counter	125	31.25%
	Online Ticket Sale Channels	110	27.50%
	Theaters' Own Websites	39	9.75%
	Other	26	6.00%

As can be seen in Table 1, most of the participants were female with the rate of 64.25%. The most common age group was 26–35 years and it constitutes 43% of the sample. Respondents aged 19–25 is the second common group with 27.75%. Then, participants aged 36–45 and 46–55 years have rates of 14.50% and 10.25%, respectively. The rate of participants who are aged 18 years or younger is 3%. The lowest rate for participants who are aged 56 years and older is 1.50%. When the education level is examined, it is seen that more than half of participants has a university degree, with a rate of 56%. Having a postgraduate degree, which can also be considered a majority, is in the second place with a rate of 30.25%. Then, those with a high school degree and a college degree made up 7.75% and 6% of the audience, respectively. Participants' frequency of going to the theater is arrayed as follows: 29.75% went more than once a year; 26.25% went more than once a month; 21.75% went once a month; 10.25% went once a week; 7.25% went more than once a week; and last 4.75% were part of other. The participants were examined according to the income level, and 30.25% of them earned 5500 TL and more monthly. Other rates are very close to each other. The percentage rates of other income levels are: 2.501–3.500 TL have a rate of 17.75%; 3.501–4.500 TL have a rate of 17%; 4.501–5.500 TL have a rate of 12.25%; 1.501–2.500 TL have a rate of 12% and 1.500 TL or less have a rate of 10.75%.

In the category “decision maker when selecting a play,” which is another field that participants answered, it is seen that the majority of participants, 88%, choose which play to go to by themselves. The rate of participants who stated that their friends chose the play is 8.25% and the rate of participants whose family and friends chose the play is 3.37%. Most of the participants, 75%, purchase

tickets themselves. Of those who purchased tickets themselves, 31.25% bought tickets from counters, 27.50% of them bought from online ticket sale channels, 9.75% bought from the theaters' own websites, and a small group with a rate of 6% bought in other ways.

In light of the k-means analysis in pursuit of hierarchical cluster analysis, four clusters arose as can be seen in Figure 1. The first cluster represents 35.8% of participants, the second cluster 31.3% of participants, the third cluster 29.3% of participants, and the last cluster represents 3.8%, a low rate of participants. The names of the clusters, which represent their features are as follows:

- Enthusiasts
- Utilitarians
- Hedonistics
- Socializers.

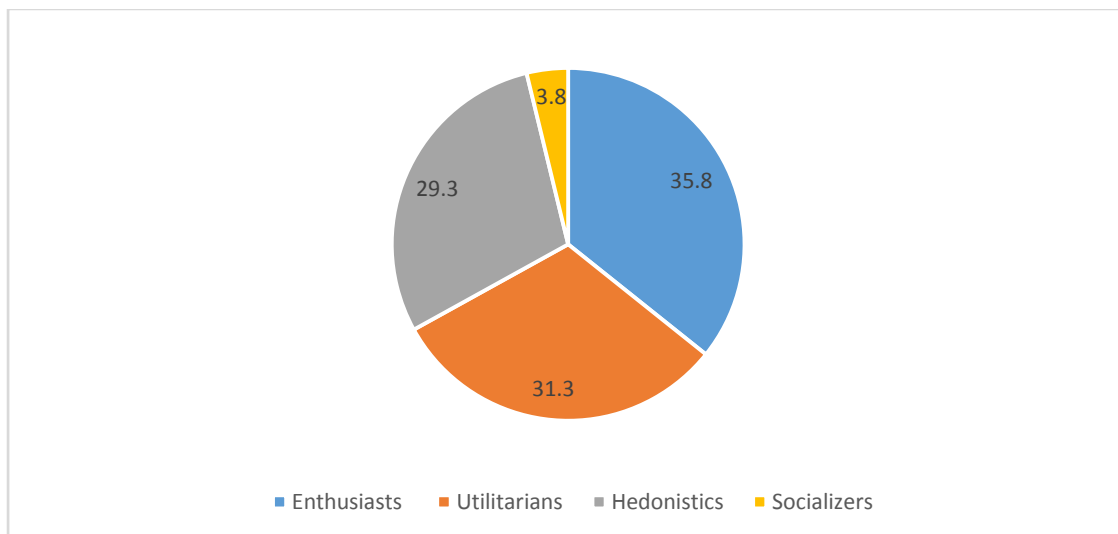


Figure 1: Cluster Sizes

The distribution of factors was reviewed in order to understand the characteristics of the clusters better. In Table 2, similarities and differences of deviations according to clusters can be seen.

Table 2: Clusters' Information Based on Descriptive Statistics

Factors	Items	Enthusiasts		Utilitarians		Hedonistics		Socializers	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
Relaxation	Because it relaxes me.	4.07	1.058	4.60	0.647	3.04	1.096	4.19	0.705
	Because it allows me to unwind.	3.65	1.190	4.53	0.706	2.71	1.075	3.85	0.937
	Because it is a pleasant venue.	3.76	1.112	4.53	0.685	2.97	1.050	3.89	0.928
Companionship	So I will not have to be alone.	1.62	0.809	3.47	1.258	1.71	0.912	2.10	1.014
	When there is no one else to talk to or be with.	1.47	0.756	3.00	1.353	1.61	0.943	1.80	0.917
	Because it makes me feel less lonely.	1.65	0.922	3.50	1.213	1.73	0.949	2.34	1.164
Pass Time	When I have nothing better to do.	1.35	0.631	2.58	1.235	1.69	0.958	1.64	0.776
	Because it passes the time away, particularly when I am bored.	1.53	0.828	3.55	1.171	1.83	1.058	1.97	0.964
	Because it gives me something to do to occupy my time.	1.63	0.957	3.61	1.295	1.81	1.062	1.88	0.875
Entertainment	Because it entertains me.	4.08	0.953	4.50	0.778	3.03	1.252	3.99	0.710
	Because it is enjoyable.	4.13	0.778	4.48	0.800	3.15	1.226	3.96	0.772
	Because it amuses me.	4.13	0.848	4.57	0.776	3.05	1.195	4.00	0.740

Social Interaction	Because it is something to do when friends come over.	2.05	1.178	3.86	1.206	2.17	1.129	2.59	1.017
	So I can talk with other people about what is on.	2.47	1.362	4.05	1.067	2.41	1.198	2.95	1.093
	So I can be with other members of the family or friends who are watching.	2.50	1.276	4.29	0.795	2.48	1.266	3.03	1.018
Information	Because it helps me learn things about myself and others.	4.55	0.587	4.76	0.506	3.24	1.324	4.23	0.747
	So I can learn how to do things which I have not done before.	3.69	1.029	4.57	0.652	2.47	1.044	3.68	0.975
	So I could learn about what could happen to me.	3.87	0.949	4.60	0.591	2.40	0.986	3.76	0.952
Arousal	Because it is thrilling.	4.31	0.782	4.41	0.817	2.79	1.244	4.08	0.773
	Because it is exciting.	4.45	0.553	4.47	0.820	2.95	1.241	4.23	0.659
	Because it peps me up.	4.11	0.884	4.55	0.575	2.44	1.174	3.99	0.791
Escape	So I can forget about school or other things.	3.09	1.190	4.64	.641	2.35	1.257	4.29	0.691
	So I can get away from the venue of the family or others.	1.52	0.672	4.22	1.044	1.96	1.032	3.24	1.123
	So I can get away from what I am doing.	1.94	0.945	4.31	1.046	2.12	1.078	3.80	0.915

In each cluster which was generated through benefits sought by theater audiences, mainly two factors scored higher for each group. Factors of the first group, enthusiasts, are entertainment and relaxation; information and arousal are in the second group, utilitarians; the third group, hedonistics, value passing time and companionship; and escape and social interaction are in the last group, socializers.

Enthusiasts represent the first cluster which goes to the theater to have fun and relax. Theater relaxes and unwinds the participants in this cluster. At the same time, it provides a pleasant resting moment. On the other hand, the theater is an entertainment for these people. They can have fun by going to the theater.

Utilitarians are the second cluster. People in this group go to the theater to learn something and to be enlightened. They see the theater as an exciting activity and agree that it arouses them. Members of this group believe that by means of theater, they can learn something about themselves and others, how to make things they have not done before and how they may live in the future. They go to the theater to learn such things.

Hedonistics, which constitute the third group, go to the theater to pass time and find the theater as a companion. People in this group see the theater as an alternative to killing time when they are bored or have nothing better to do. Additionally, they go to the theater not to be alone or to feel less lonely. Members of this group, pass their time by going to the theater when there is no one around to talk or do something with.

The last one, socializers, which represents a small group, goes to the theater to socialize unlike hedonistics. Here, the theater is seen as a social activity. Members of the group choose the theater as an activity to do with friends or family. The theater is also a topic to talk about with other people. Another important factor for the group is escaping. People of this group go to the theater to escape from things like school, a job, or to get away from their families. While the things to escape from are not specific, the purpose is to escape from something, whatever it is.

Finally, a chi-square test was used to see whether there is any difference related to demographics and other related issues such as visiting frequency, decision makers, ticket buyers, and purchasing channels between clusters. Because of lower degrees of probability levels for each group, any difference in groups for demographic and other related characteristics was not observed.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

To segment cultural audiences and more specifically theater audiences, there is a research gap especially in Turkey and a holistic market segmentation research is needed. In the present study, a clustering analysis was made by using an approach called "benefit segmentation," which can be influential in the decision-making processes of audiences, in order to analyze the theater audiences and understand which benefits they sought while going to the theater. The factor analysis first showed that the benefits sought by audiences are relaxation, companionship, passing time, entertainment, social interaction, information, arousal, and escape. Habit, which is used as a dimension of the scale, was not found significant for our research and not included in the cluster analysis. The four clusters of the study can be summarized as: enthusiasts who seek fun and relaxation to go to the theater, utilitarians who search to learn and be aroused, hedonistics who want to pass time and enjoy companionship, and socializers who socialize with theaters arise from the responses in our research. On the other hand, social ritual (Kolb, 2005) which is found as a factor in the literature and may carry out similar meaning with the habit factor (Rubin, 1983) is not significant for our sample.

The results of our factor analysis as an essential of the segmentation research provide evidence to researchers for the entertainment factor (Boorsma and Maanen, 2003a; Boorsma and Maanen, 2003b; Boorsma, 2006; Chytková, Cerná and Karlíček; 2012), social interaction factor (Botti, 2000; Boorsma and Maanen, 2003a; Boorsma, 2006), information factor (Boorsma and Maanen, 2003a; Boorsma and Maanen, 2003a), and arousal factor (Boorsma, 2006). In this comparison, the information is interpreted as a related factor with self-improvement and intellectual needs, social interaction with social benefits/needs and some other implications were made while reviewing of the related literature. Companionship, escape, relaxation, and pass time factors which are benefits sought by theater audiences in the research were presented as different factors compared to the literature.

Lastly, demographic differentiation was not found among theater audiences. The underlying reason behind that can be the limited number of arts audience members in Turkey. All the groups even though they seek different benefits for attending the theater share similar demographic characteristics. Since they are already a very small part of the population, a significant difference was not found between them. In this regard, the present study provides an opposite approach to some research in the literature (Mann, 1967; Heitmann and Crocken, 1987; Sargeant, 1997).

In conclusion, it was seen that theater audiences sought different benefits, such as relaxation, companionship, passing time, entertainment, social interaction, information, arousal, and escape. These benefits were also differentiated among groups, so that a segmentation study was a significant approach to the subject. After that analysis interpreting the findings, developing adequate strategies to the segments, exploring additional relationships, and providing useful conclusions will be important for both researchers and theater owners/managers.

6. Limitations, and Managerial and Academic Implications

Besides the findings of the research, there are some limitations. Among these limitations, one can be seen as the online survey method. The online survey method was used in the present study due to the reason that the percentage of people who attend the theater in Turkey is very low (Cinema and Theater Statistics, 2015; 2016) and it is hard to reach them randomly. The respondents are the people who can reach the questionnaire through a link and complete the questionnaire via this link. The fact that the study was conducted mainly in Istanbul, the majority of the sample was women and high-income people were other limitations. Simple random sampling may be used for further research to better represent the population. With simple random sampling, the difference among the sample respondents based on demographics could be highlighted, and their demographic characteristics would be explained better.

The current work presents various groups and behaviors of theater audiences. Theater managers/owners can utilize these findings. They should realize the importance of audiences and how the audiences change humanity and thus the sector. With the increase in going to the theater, people will be able to develop themselves by having theater experiences. The theater owners must first discover the demographic characteristics of the audience. The benefits sought by audiences in going to the theater should also be important for them. In addition, they can examine the clusters formed by theater audiences. Even if they do not have to make radical changes such as making plays according to these segments, the communication campaigns conducted for reaching the audiences can be shaped according to the characteristics of the segments. For enthusiasts, for instance, a funnier content can be presented. This can be in the form of a gamified system in which gamification techniques are used for people to experience a “game” atmosphere, and so on. In communication campaigns for utilitarians, for example, an informative content about the play, the story behind the play, and other related

subjects can be presented. In this way people can feel more valued and theaters can express themselves better. Moreover, theaters can also strengthen their branding efforts through creative campaigns according to the segments. In this regard, theaters should find their unique sides to present to audiences, which are in relation to audiences' benefits sought, and then these important sides should be explained to the audiences with a creative communication program. For instance, theaters can choose an experiential branding strategy for the segment "utilitarians" because they are already seeking information and arousal as a reason to go to the theater. Thus, theaters provide information and arouse them by presenting a unique experience. With this method, audiences can know the theater better through created experiences and relationships can be built with those audiences.

As theater owners can benefit, researchers can create original research themes from various points using this data. For example, the subject can be applied to other art branches, such as dance, opera, ballet, and so on, in future research. In addition, the sample size can be increased by including the individuals outside the city of Istanbul in the research. Moreover, a research can be conducted in comparison with a country where the theater is perceived differently. A country where consumption of theater is much higher can be given as an example. With such a comparison, it is possible to observe the validity of benefits sought and the varying needs between the two samples. Further research can also support the theaters as an entertainment activity. Starting from this point of view, related theories of entertainment can be adapted to theater or other art forms. Moreover, the sample size can be extended by adding other segments of the population who do not participate in theater or other art forms. A comparison between two segments can be done and differences can be disclosed. For example, their favorite entertainment activity was asked to audiences and maybe the place of arts consumption among these activities can be seen, so that all population can be analyzed in light of "entertainment" perspective.

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