RELATIONSHIP MARKETING AND SERVICES MARKETING: TWO CONVERGENT PERSPECTIVES FOR VALUE CREATION IN THE CULTURAL SECTOR. EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE ON PERFORMING ARTS CONSUMERS IN SPAIN

María José Quero*

ABSTRACT:

Using the relationship paradigm as a theoretical framework, a management model for cultural services (relationship marketing of cultural organizations) is proposed, what is an unprecedented contribution in the marketing field.

By combining two convergent perspectives –as relationship marketing and services marketing–, the model is structured on the basis of two large types of relationships in the management of a cultural organization: instrumental relationships and group relationships.

The paper is an in-depth study of relationships regarding performing arts audience. A theoretical/empirical approach was applied, including face to face interviews to 1005 performing arts consumers and telephone interviews to a sample of 2005 individuals in Spain.

Key Words:

Cultural marketing; performing arts services; relationship marketing; services marketing; customer relationships.

* Departamento de Economía y Administración de Empresas – Universidad de Málaga. Facultad de CC. Económicas y Empresariales, Campus Universitario de El Ejido s/n, 29071-Málaga (Spain). E-mail: mqg@uma.es
Data for this paper were obtained as part of the research project “Focus on Relationship Marketing in the Performing Arts Market: Analysis and Proposals for Action”, with the financial support by the Spanish Network of Publicly Owned Theatres, Auditoriums and Circuits (Red Española de Teatros Auditorios y Circuitos de Titularidad Pública) and the University of Málaga.
Received: October 2006. Accepted: December 2006.
1. INTRODUCTION:

The most recent literature on marketing management is demonstrating a revolutionary change in both form and content, which, undoubtedly, will result in several research projects in the short term aimed at shedding some light on this dilemma. Traditional management models and paradigms do not adapt to the requirements of new products, as there are more and more exceptions and questions on the models developed so far (Lovelock and Gummesson, 2004; Vargo and Lush, 2004). In this complex context, this paper aims to make an in-depth study of the field of cultural services management by using two concurrent perspectives –relationship marketing and services marketing–, in order to contribute to the development of the new marketing domain: cultural marketing (Kotler, 2005). This is a field still in its development phase, but has probably found, with these new trends, the right moment to grow and develop management structures and models that meet its particular requirements.

From the very beginning, contributions made to the cultural sector by the marketing discipline have been very diverse. However, although they seem to have come to a consensus in the scientific world about the idea that the management of cultural identities presents such special characteristics that make it considerably different (Voss and Voss, 2000; Colbert, 2001; Johnson and Garbarino, 2001; Arts Council of England, 2003; Kotler and Scheff, 1997). Contributions from the marketing management area still do not suffice to construct a knowledge base that is solid enough to create a theoretical management framework similar to the one other disciplines with more tradition in marketing research have.

In this context, it is stated that the relationship marketing paradigm offers a suitable framework for the implementation of cultural management and this research study has focused on the performing arts services sector, as considering that it is one of the most forgotten sectors by scientific researchers of management. Furthermore, the decreasing consumption of this art form in Europe goes against the trend if taking into account that time and money invested in leisure activities has not stopped growing with countries’ economic development. In view of this situation, questions as following are required: what is the reason for this loss of competitive advantage?, what is being done wrong to be losing impact in a market, which, in theory, is becoming more and more inclined to consume leisure activities, such as the performing arts?, which agents are responsible for the results?, which agents are affected by the results?, what can be done to improve this? These questions are the basis for carrying out this research study.

2. RELATIONSHIP MARKETING, SERVICES MARKETING AND CULTURAL MARKETING AS THREE CONVERGENT PERSPECTIVES:

Relationship marketing has become one of the most important contributions in the development of modern marketing science (Payne and Holt, 2001), and it has generated a recognised interest in the field of scientific research. What is more, in the opinion of numerous authors, it has even been seen as a new paradigm (Gummesson, 1999; Peck et al., 1999; Webster, 1992; Sheth and Parvatiyar, 2000; Kothandaraman and Wilson, 2000).

With the concept by Gummesson (2002) on “relationship marketing is interactions in networks of relationships” as a starting point, the management of a cultural organization is understood as being necessarily determined by a multitude of agents in the market,