

Insights into managing marketing mix: The perspective of artist-entrepreneur

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Abstract:

The paper explores artist-entrepreneur's opinions about the elements of the marketing mix of cultural product. Artists-entrepreneurs are professionals who manage their art business independently and require artistic and entrepreneurial knowledge. A qualitative study on the sample of ten artists-entrepreneurs was conducted to reveal their opinions and practices in managing a marketing mix. Results showed that artist-entrepreneurs perceive marketing only as a promotion. Also, they consider their artworks as cultural products. However, they believe that the price differs drastically because of the degree of intangibility for some cultural products. Networking, WOM, and social media are the most important promotional tools for artists. Distribution takes form of a live performance or product is delivered personally. Artist-entrepreneurs stressed the need for more business education in art schools.

Keywords: marketing mix, artist-entrepreneur, qualitative research

1. Introduction

In the European Union the significance of the cultural and creative industries (CCIs) is rising. It generates approximately €509 billion, representing 5.3% of the EU's total GDP, and employs more than 12 million full-time jobs, equivalent to 7.5% of Europe's workforce (European Commission Report, 2020). CCIs are knowledge-intensive and based on individual creativity and talent (European Commission, 2020). “As such, they include literary, visual and performing arts disciplines (“the arts”), but also a range of other creative fields where significant intellectual property creation is undertaken, such as design, film, television, radio, advertising, games, publishing and architecture” (Bridgstock, 2018, p. 123). Also, across the EU-28, one third (33 %) of the cultural workforce was self-employed in 2018 (European Commission, 2020).

As an academic discipline, arts marketing is focused on researching “the arts” as part of CCI. In the arts marketing, classic marketing concepts such as marketing mix are still underdeveloped (Colbert & St-James, 2014). It is because some marketing concepts cannot easily be transferred to arts sector (Butler, 2000; Lee, 2005b) and the continuous gap between theory and practice of arts marketing (Lee, 2005). Artists have a crucial role in the success of cultural organizations. Usually, these organizations are small and medium-sized companies (Colbert, 2014) and artists need to be entrepreneurial, so some concepts from entrepreneurial marketing, can be applied to the arts sector (Fillis, 2004) and *vice versa* (Fillis, 2010).

So, this paper aims to connect the concept of marketing mix in the context of arts marketing, with entrepreneurial marketing, focusing on artists as entrepreneurs. Artist-entrepreneurs are artists who are also managers and owners, who need to have both artistic and business skills and knowledge to survive in the art market.

After the introduction, the theoretical background deals with the (1) concept of entrepreneurial marketing in the arts and culture and (2) the concept of marketing mix in the arts and culture. The next part of the paper deals with exploratory, qualitative research of artist-entrepreneur's opinions. After the discussion, the paper ends highlighting conclusions.

2. Theoretical background

2.1 *Entrepreneurial marketing in arts and culture, the role of artists*

The concept of entrepreneurial marketing is related to small and medium-sized companies (Bjerke & Hultman, 2002) who have restrained resources, rely on creative and oftentimes unsophisticated marketing tactics and make heavy use of personal networks (Morris, Schindehutte and LaForge, 2002, 4). It can be applied to for-profit and non-profit companies (Morris et al., 2002). Although the concept of entrepreneurial marketing is not new, it has been neglected in marketing literature.

As pointed out by Fillis (2010, 97) “entrepreneurial marketing provides a way of addressing how creative use of limited resources in organisations of all sizes can result in achieving competitive advantage”. It is defined as “the proactive identification and exploitation of opportunities for acquiring and retaining profitable customers through innovative approaches to risk management, resource leveraging and value creation” (Morris et al., 2002, 5). All entrepreneurs need to balance multiple aims and purposes (Bridgstock, 2013).

In the context of arts and culture entrepreneurial marketing has some similarities, but also differences with entrepreneurial marketing in business in general. Many arts organizations (like museums) are small and medium sized organizations (Hills, Hultman, and Miles, 2008) who have very limited resources (Fillis, 2004), and often don't have a marketing department or marketing professional (Komarac, Ozretić Došen and Škare, 2017). These differences occur because of the arts and culture specificities (Fillis, 2011). These specificities

are related to the three different groups of actors in the cultural production system (Venkatesh & Meamber, 2006). These are: (1) producers of cultural products i.e. the artists, (2) cultural intermediaries responsible for communication and distribution of cultural product to the consumer, and (3) consumers who give meaning to a product by transforming it into consumption experience.

Cultural organizations in the art, share two characteristics: (1) they reserve an important role for the artist and (2) they deal with the product of creative act (Colbert, 2014). Artists as the creators of the product, i.e. the art, are often self-employed and they lack the necessary skills for successfully running their business (Bridgstock, 2013). Additionally, they fear of being unprepared doing business; they lack financial resources and time (Calcagno & Balzarini, 2016). It is because “the arts entrepreneurship has tended to occupy a significantly less important position in arts programs” (Bridgstock, 2013, 125). Artist can have different drivers and aims in comparison to entrepreneurs in other sectors. So, the practice of entrepreneurship in the arts differs from the practice of entrepreneurship in business (Bridgstock, 2013).

2.2. Marketing mix in the arts and culture

Arts includes many different types of artistic and cultural product and services, such as music, dance, photography, industrial design, architecture, motion pictures and many more (Hill, O'Sullivan, O'Sullivan, and Whitehead, 2018). Mostly, cultural products are heterogeneous and complex, and highly intangible (d'Astous, Voss, Colbert, Carù, Caldwell and Courvoisier, 2008). Their management requires a special set of marketing knowledge and skills, specifically for the arts (Lee, 2005a).

The marketing mix for the art product is different and unique (Colbert & Ravanis, 2018). The art product has some distinctive characteristics; it is a cultural product related to human performance of a kind and tends to have strong location identities (Butler, 2000). The artistic product is created by the artist and not under the control of a marketing manager (Colbert, 2014) like in other businesses. The main issue for marketing management in the arts is related to the “sacredness” of the artistic work as the product (Colbert & St-James, 2014) which leads towards product orientation (Lee, 2005b). As pointed out by Butler (2000, 350) “the adoption of a market orientation by the artist may, in fact be counter-productive in artistic terms”. It is because artistic experience (as a core product of the arts) “cannot be driven by market forces in the way commercial products are” (Hill et al., 2018, p. 115). However, art organizations “are encouraged to view themselves from the customer's perspective and put customer needs at the heart of their decision making” (Lee, 2005b, 294). So, there is an obvious need to solve the dilemma between artistic autonomy and the customers expectations and creating the balance between them.

The price of the art product is not proportional to its cost (Colbert & Ravanis, 2018) and it is complex to determine (Butler, 2000). Consumers expectations and artist reputation will influence the perception of the price. For example, the price of visiting museum like Louvre Abu Dhabi which is around 15EUR (Louvre Abu Dhabi, 2020) can be considered low or high, depending on the consumers' expectations and the artist reputation. The cost is the risk that consumer takes when he/she is consuming art product/service (Colbert, 2003, 36). These costs are (1) functional risk – linked to consumers perception of wasting money, time or being bored; (2) social risk – the risk of being seen in place that is incompatible with our perception of how others see us; (3) psychological risk - the risk of being in a place incompatible with our self-image; and (4) economic risk – the risk associated with the money and leisure time that are at stake. Also, the price will depend on the nature of the cultural product, more precisely the degree of intangibility. When the cultural product benefits are less

tangible, it will be more challenging to set a price (Hill et al., 2018). So, the pricing strategies need to have different consumer segments in mind and add value to the cultural experience (Colbert, 2003). Colbert and St-James (2014) call out for more research on pricing because the price has received little attention from marketing researchers in the arts.

The third element of the art marketing mix is promotion. Its importance for the art sector has been recognized early when Strang and Gutman (1980) stated that communication could attract the audience and enable success and financial survival of arts organizations. However, artists had some prejudice regarding promotion, considering promotion to be “below their honour” (Thomas & Cutler, 1994). Later, the promotion has become excepted as a useful strategy for promoting artists and their work. Today, the arts organizations use personal selling, direct marketing, advertising, sales promotion, public relations and social media (Colbert & Ravanas, 2018). Artist-entrepreneurs need to develop skills like networking, building and sustaining relationships and WOM for market survival (Fillis, 2010). In the arts, developing social networking capabilities is needed (Bridgstock, 2013). The promotion, for some types of cultural products, like movies, has received more attention from the researchers, while other types are still unexplored (Colbert & St-James, 2014)

Lastly, distribution (place) in the arts is determined by the form of consumers' consumption of the art product/service (Colbert & Ravanas, 2018). Intermediaries have an important role in distributing cultural products, such as artist agents, promoters, ticket agents or even third-party ticketing services (Hill et al., 2018). Because of the new technologies, some cultural products, like music, can be distributed through different channels. For example, attending the BRS Hyde Park concert (in UK) or streaming the music on Spotify. New technologies have completely changed the traditional perception of distribution in the arts (Smithson, 2019). There is an evident lack of research on the place variable and very few publications (Colbert & St-James, 2014).

Based on the proposed theoretical background and identified research gap in the marketing mix of cultural products, we posed one research question ***RQ: How artists-entrepreneurs perceive and manage marketing mix in arts and culture?***

3. Exploratory qualitative study of artist entrepreneur's opinions

3.1 Methodology

The exploratory qualitative research was conducted in order to reveal artists-entrepreneur's opinions. For investigating topics in entrepreneurial marketing, Fillis (2010, 92) recommends “qualitative perspective because can result in greater insight and facilitate the development of a closer relationship between the researcher and the researched”. The in-depth interview method was used to gather artists-entrepreneur's opinions. The selected method was appropriate, because it was necessary to “encourage participants to talk about their own knowledge and experiences” (Roulston, 2017, 322).

The sample was an intentional expert sample of ten independent artists-entrepreneurs. The number of interviews was considered enough to achieve saturation and variability (Guest, Bunce, and Johnson, 2006). The sample included respondents, artists-entrepreneurs who are running their own art business. Although all respondents have a couple of years of experience in running their own business, none of the respondents had a business degree or any business education. Furthermore, artists who have logistical and financial support (like investors) were not included in the sample because we wanted to investigate self-employed and independent artist-entrepreneurs. Finally, the sample consisted of different artist-entrepreneurs working in various types of arts and culture. So, the sample included five musicians, two photographers, one architect, one illustrator and one wood art artist. Regarding the respondent gender, five

were female, and five were male respondents. Respondents' profiles, together with their codes, are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Sample profile

Respondents' code	Gender	Occupation
ART01	Male	Wood art artist
ART02	Female	Musician
ART03	Male	Musician
ART04	Female	Architect
ART05	Female	Illustrator
ART06	Female	Photographer
ART07	Male	Musician
ART08	Male	Musician
ART09	Male	Musician
ART10	Female	Photographer

Note: Respondent answers are presented in codes to maintain their anonymity.

Source: Research

For the purpose of collecting data, a semi-structured interview guide was used. The semi-structured interview guide consisted of nine open-ended questions. The interview guide was divided into three parts. First, about marketing perceptions, second about perceptions of entrepreneurship in arts, and finally about marketing mix in the arts and its management. All respondents were interviewed face-to-face in their place of work or home. At the beginning of the interview, respondents were briefly introduced in the topic of research. Then nine-opened questions were posed, with the possibility to initiate other related topics. The interviews lasted on average, about 30 minutes. With the respondents' permission, all interviews were recorded and later transcribed for analysis (as recommended by Creswell, 2009).

3.2 Results

The analysis of the collected qualitative data has shown artist-entrepreneur's opinion and experiences in managing the marketing mix for the art product/service. The first theme was related to the marketing perceptions. Here, two open-ended questions were posed. On the first question "What is marketing for you", respondents have provided quite similar answers. They considered marketing to be equal to the promotion, which is not surprising finding. *"Marketing is something related to advertising, product advertising. The science that is dealing with something, I am not sure, but advertising..."* (ART01). Interestingly, one respondent pointed out how marketing and promotion on social media helped her to start and grow her own business (ART04). Similarly, *"From my perspective, it is a key to successful project presentation...."* (ATR 08). Regarding the second question, "Do artists need to have marketing knowledge?" almost all respondents agreed. However, two respondents pointed out how it depends on the artist wishes if he/she wants to be advertised. One respondent explains *"It's a personal matter, whether or not someone wishes advertise themselves. A friend of mine is a good example. He is an artist like me; he graduated from the same academy, doing the same thing I did. I had never heard of him in media, and you can't find him anywhere. Nevertheless, he is working."* (ART06) Furthermore, two respondents stressed the need for marketing knowledge for all professionals regardless of the business. (ART04, ART06)

Next theme was related to the perception and their experience as entrepreneurs. Also, two opened ended questions were posed. Respondents were asked, "Do you consider yourself an entrepreneur? Majority of respondents (8) consider themselves as an entrepreneur

(completely or partially). Only two don't think about themselves as entrepreneurs because they don't have a formal organization with departments. *"I didn't consider myself an entrepreneur until recently. When I opened my business and saw that I was now an accountant, that I needed to do marketing and to be seven positions in one..."* (ART06). Similar, one respondent points out *"Absolutely. Since I opened the LTD, I respect the system in which I live. I think I'm an entrepreneur too."* (ART05) Interestingly, other respondent stressed that he does not consider himself as an entrepreneur, but an entrepreneurial (ART03). On the question to describe their experiences as an artist-entrepreneur, respondents have provided quite similar answers. Majority of respondents identified three most challenging elements associated with entrepreneurship: 1) bureaucracy, 2) account management and 3) paying taxes. The struggle with these challenges presents a huge distinction in comparison to artists who are not self-employed and are a part of cultural organization. This difference is more obvious, especially in the beginning. One explains *"Because you have no idea of absolutely nothing. You don't know how the business works, your responsibilities and tasks. Additionally, when you add the artistic spectrum and when you need to find the person who wants to buy your art, it is difficult"*. (ART04) Similarly, another respondent explains *"In the beginning, you need to make compromises to achieve something. You have the same obligations as the entrepreneur in some other industry or business."* (ART05)

The next theme in the interview was related to the perception of the marketing mix elements and its management. Here, five open-ended questions were asked. Respondents were asked to describe their artworks. Then, they were asked, "Do they consider their artworks as products?". After explaining their artworks, respondents have agreed that it depends from artwork to artwork. Interestingly, one respondent explains *"If there are two of my artworks in someone's house, it will serve as a decoration... And if my artworks are leaning against each other in my studio, without a customer, then it has no value, it is not a product, then it is garbage. So, only when it becomes a product, then it has the proper function for which it was made"*. (ART01) One respondent connected the importance of determining the price for artwork with her product. *"It is a product that has some dimension, originality and individuality.... But definitely, if I put a price on it and if I sell it to you, it's a product"*. (ART05)

The next question was related to the process of determining the price of the artworks. Almost all respondents pointed out big differences in pricing because of their dynamic nature. Also, there is a slightly different view on the topic of pricing among respondents (who are musicians), where the pricing strategies are clearer. Interestingly, one respondent pointed out that in the beginning artist set low prices because of the fear *"you don't know better, you don't have any experience. When someone says to you "how do you charge so much, and you don't even have two years of experience behind you?" After you gain some experience, you get a little encouragement, and you raise prices."* (ART04) The price is also set according to investment into artworks (like materials, equipment etc.). Also, respondents pointed out that they set the price according to similar works by other artists, i.e. their competitors. Furthermore, one respondent explains *"An awful lot of parameter is taken here. Who do you work for; is it a big or small business? Whether it's print or just the web, the number of photos, the length of the shoot ... These are the main parameters. "* (ART 06) One respondent stressed that customer financing methods are also an important factor in determining the final price. *"Some clubs are financed by a city or government, and you can get a higher price for your performance there, than in some private clubs"*. (ART03)

On the question "How do you deliver you artworks to customers?" responses were similar. For example, artists who are musicians bring their equipment, prepare and perform live on an agreed location. Other artists usually use personal delivery, sometimes they use a snail mail, and if possible, buyers come to the artist studio.

The final question was dedicated to discovering, do artists promote their works, and how? Respondents agreed that word of mouth (WOM) and networking are the essential promotional activities in comparison to all other promotional activities. “*It has a lot to do with networking, how you are with people...*”. (ART03) Some artist also pointed out the rising influence of social media, especially Instagram. Musicians pointed out public relations as the most important promotional tool. Artists “*need to know how to sell themselves on the market successfully... The focus is not only on the music and the arts but on the person*”. (ART02)

At the end of the interview, few respondents initiated the topic of arts education in Croatia. Two respondents (ART05 and ART06) consider knowledge in the field of art marketing an essential part of an artist's professional growth. Also, one respondent (ART05) expressed regrets because of the lack of marketing education at the Academy of Fine Arts.

3.3 Discussion

The present study discovered artist-entrepreneurs' opinion and practices about managing the marketing mix of cultural products. Similar to previous studies in non-profit sector, marketing is mostly perceived as promotion, e.g. in museums (Komarac, Ozretić Došen and Škare, 2014) and national parks (Ozretić Došen, Malešević, Komarac and Škare, 2019). Although artists-entrepreneurs have a limited view of marketing, they have recognized its importance for their work. Daily, they are managing all the elements of the marketing mix for their cultural products/services.

Regarding their artworks as cultural products, artist-entrepreneurs expressed interesting views. They believe that when they sell their product to the customers, their artwork becomes a product. Contrary to the notion of art sacredness (Colbert & St-James, 2014) this is a somewhat unexpected finding. However, this finding is probably related to artist-entrepreneurs age and their experience, because they are taking care of every aspect of their business, not only concentrating on their artwork.

Also, the research has corroborated previous knowledge on the complex nature of pricing for cultural products (Butler, 2000). Price strategy for artist-entrepreneurs will depend on their costs or the competitors, but also some other factors, like customer characteristics. They pointed out artists experience as a crucial factor for determining the price. Less experienced artists will have lower prices because of the fear or a lack of marketing knowledge in terms of pricing strategies.

In the distribution channel between artist-entrepreneurs and customers, there are fewer intermediaries. For example, for musicians, intermediaries are only ticket agents. The common characteristics for all artist-entrepreneurs are that they do not have agents, because they represent themselves. The distribution itself depends on the nature of the product (the level of intangibility) and consequently on consumers' consumption of the art product/service itself, which is in line with the existing theory (Colbert & Ravanis, 2018).

Regarding promotion, the essential elements are personal networking, WOM and social media. This finding adds on the previous knowledge on the importance of networking (Morris et al., 2002) and WOM for entrepreneurs (Fillis, 2010) by discovering its importance for artist-entrepreneurs. Additionally, we found the raising popularity of social media among some artists (mostly Instagram) who see it as a good way of promoting visual arts.

The interesting finding is that some artists did not consider themselves as entrepreneurs before they started to manage all aspect of the art business. It is related to the lack of education in arts schools and the need for additional education in terms of business skills for artists. This finding goes in line with Bridgstocks' (2013) call for integrating entrepreneurship and other relevant business skills into arts education curriculum, which is lacking in many arts schools.

3.4 Limitations

The limitations are related to the type of sample, the expert sample from different fields of art and culture. The limitation can be related to the age of the respondents, as the sample included young artists (up to 35 years old). Additionally, the length of the interview can be considered as a limitation. Longer interviews would provide even more profound insight. Finally, the limitation is the researcher's subjectivity in the selection, analysis and interpretation of the data obtained throughout the interviews.

4. Conclusion

Entrepreneurial marketing is a concept that connects entrepreneurship and marketing. It is important for arts and culture where artists are oftentimes entrepreneurs, who they are running their art businesses without anyone's help. They face different challenges, such as lack in business competencies and time management.

The marketing mix in culture and art is specific and complex. The product, which, according to some authors, is outside the domain of marketing management still can be influenced in certain situations. Specifically, the artist-entrepreneur "manipulate product" – artwork in comparison to other cultural organizations or businesses. On the other hand, the price of a product is not proportional to cost, but is determined by different market factors, from competitors to customers. In terms of distribution, artist-entrepreneurs use traditional distribution channel. Regarding promotion, social media marketing is gaining popularity for artists promotion, besides networking and WOM.

Exploratory research on a sample of artists - entrepreneurs revealed that: artists perceive themselves as entrepreneurs. Artist-entrepreneurs believe that marketing is related to promotion, and mostly they consider their works as products. The pricing strategies different for the type of art, musicians, have more clearer pricing strategies, in comparison to other artists. The most effective promotional tool is networking, WOM, and some indicate the growing importance of social media. The distribution is still traditional and depends on the type of art, to the place of performance or personal delivery. So, it can be concluded that artist-entrepreneurs manage all the elements of the marketing mix, adapting it to the characterises of the cultural product/service. Finally, an interesting topic, the lack of arts marketing education emerged as a problem for artist-entrepreneurs who are trying to start and develop their art business on the market but lack the necessary knowledge and skills.

Further research should be directed toward exploring perceptions of different types of artist-entrepreneurs (e.g. only musicians) or even to explore perceptions of different types of artist such as film artist. Also, in future research, it would be interesting to discover customer perception of different cultural products "produced" by artists-entrepreneurs. Finally, additional research about arts education for artist-entrepreneurs is needed.

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