

Attendance at College Theatre Events: Contributions Beyond Culture

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Abstract

Today higher education faces financial constraints leading administrators to embrace a new program-based break-even analysis business model. Administrators are looking for ways to reduce program costs through prioritization cutting programs based on enrollment. Due to enrollment size, the arts face some of the greatest challenges of survival in this climate. Therefore, demonstrating the economic value to the community of the college arts may save it from the prioritization cuts. Research has shown that the arts influence the local economy through spending on materials and personnel. Yet, research into the economic contributions of spending by patrons of the arts before, at, or after college performing arts' events has not been examined in academic literature or by the Americans for the Arts. This research consists of two consecutive self-report survey methodology (appropriate as respondents know their own personal spending habits and intentions) studies that examined patrons' characteristics and their spending in the community surrounding college performing arts events. The data analyses showed a statistically significant positive economic impact of spending before, at, and after theatre performances in the local community by consumers of college theatre performances in the studies' subject county. College arts programs often do not have access to funding to market their events and resort to *limited in-house efforts*. Therefore, the characteristics of the patrons of a college arts program (theatre) provide knowledge to inform marketing strategies to increase theatre patronage and spending. Collaboration across disciplines (marketing and theatre) is proposed to add value at no cost to the arts providing more visibility fostering the continuation of cultural sharing, while providing a pathway to saving them from funding cuts. Collaboration also benefits stakeholders of higher education by providing experiential learning (i.e., marketing of events).

Keywords – Economic influence, prioritization, performing arts, marketing strategy, social stratification, conspicuous consumption

Purpose of the Studies

This paper addresses new territory that is particularly important, especially in economically uncertain times, because some colleges and universities are embracing a new business model (i.e., financial profitability). This study takes a fresh perspective on the role of arts in the community by examining the yet unexplored role of college performing arts attendees' spending habits on the local community's economy. Findings from these studies are important to colleges and universities as the business model that involves program cuts through prioritization initiatives has replaced "business as usual" in which the academic value that once outweighed the bottom line no longer holds the same level of importance to administrators. Financial resources are not only crucial to equity that "considers the social justice ramifications of education in relation to fairness, justness, and impartiality of its distribution" (Carpentier 2012, p. 365), but to the very survival of programs such as theatre. It is increasingly important for college theatre to demonstrate its economic value beyond academic contributions, something yet

unknown in the United States, in order to secure its place in higher education. The current study engages in the “effects method” of studying the arts (i.e., college theatre) by studying the economic importance of the arts through the analyses of activities and their respective economic influence on a geographic area (Martinello and Minnon, 1990). This study follows the methodology of Greffe (1990) in which a snapshot in time for which a cultural event or event’s influence is assessed within an economy. Further, based on the outcomes of the empirical analyses, the researchers demonstrate the potential of college theatre as an economic engine and recommend marketing strategies to increase its economic influence within the larger community through indirect spending.

Introduction

Performing Arts’ Contribution to the Local Economy

The importance of the arts has been well-established as a staple of the United States (US) culture and of its economy for decades. As part of the arts, college theatre, a nonprofit entity, acts as a venue where students, staff, faculty and the community come together to experience culture. The economic contributions of the arts have come into question. College theatre performances are no exception. In recent years, financial contributions to the arts have become more difficult to secure due to fewer resources pursued by more and more nonprofits. The inability to demonstrate the extent of the cultural and economic impact on a community may be a deal breaker for receiving grant funding, donor or other financial support, or long-term survival. As in society as a whole, the inability to secure funding for the arts may mean the closing of a theatre or reduction of its performance schedule and in the case of college and university theatre it may mean cuts in program funding or the program itself.

Marketing of the Arts

For many years marketing of the arts in the for-profit sector (i.e. Broadway or the film industry) has been crucial to a project or firm’s success, but that has not been considered as important in the non-profit sector where the theaters don’t have the staff or budgets for traditional marketing efforts. In fact, there are even those in the non-profit sector who considered it taboo because it was their belief that attempts to popularize the arts through marketing was actually dumbing down of their value (Conway and Leighton, 2012). The perception of the arts by donors and grantors, and the consuming population has changed over time and so has marketing of the arts as a tool to increase consumption of the arts and to increase their economic viability and economic impact on the community or these mediums of culture will be diminished (Towers, 2010). Increasing attendance at cultural events has an economic benefit (i.e., direct, indirect, induced). The ability to increase attendance and revenues at cultural events depends on the successful integration of the 4 P’s of marketing (i.e., price, product, promotion, place) through the use of effective marketing strategies targeted to appropriate markets. Although college theatre programs often do not have sufficient funding for elaborate marketing strategies, many marketing strategies available to theatre are free or come at a very small cost and with the assistance of other departments on campus (e.g., marketing or communications) are possible. But first, the characteristics and motivations of the patrons of the

theatre must be known so that the most effective marketing strategies can be created. Some college theater departments have relative autonomy to secure outside sponsorships and cooperative relationships, although in some instances the departments must first ensure that these efforts will not interfere with overall University fundraising efforts. In this article, the study involves theatre and dance productions produced in a college's performance venues that are not incorporated separately from the college as independent non-profits. The focus at the subject university is on a theatre and dance program that can raise funds designated to a college foundation account, the proceeds of which are spent on theatre and dance activities. In addition, this article focuses on a theatre and dance program that is able to set up sponsorships with local businesses to support theatre and dance activities.

The two studies presented herein examined patrons' characteristics by examining the influences on a consumer's indirect spending behavior in a small college town located in the Southeastern United States before, at, and after college theatre performances. From the findings of two studies, the researchers identified marketing strategies to increase attendance and the spending surrounding attendance at college theatre performances. These strategies were recommended based on the economic reality of most colleges that limited marketing dollars and personnel are available, so it is typically necessary to undertake both effective and low cost alternatives to generate attendance. Marketing strategies of the subject college theatre at the time of this study were limited by financial constraints and a lack of marketing personnel available to the theatre department.

Literature Review

The extent for which innovation and competitiveness grows across economies (i.e., national and global), is influenced by the growth in the cultural industry (Florida, 2002; Lampel, Shamsie, and Lant, 2008). In Western countries, for decades, organizations in the cultural industry have been part of a fast-growing industry sector. For example, the economic impact in the United States of the performing arts grew substantially between the years 2000 and 2005. Nonprofit arts and other culture organization increased spending from \$53.2 billion to \$63.1 billion. After adjusting for inflation, the growth was four percent. Audience spending on attending events increased from \$80.8 billion to \$103.1 billion, a 15% increase (adjusted for inflation) (Ferguson 2006). However, from 2005 to 2010, there was a decline in audience spending due to the economic downturn and a slight decrease in economic activity of the arts overall. This accounts for the lower numbers in 2010. A national study by the Americans for the Arts Organization conducted in 2011 provides statistics indicating the economic impact of theatre and arts in general. Non-profit arts and culture organizations produced revenues of \$61.1 billion in 2010 according to the Americans for the Arts in their "Arts and Economic Prosperity IV Study," and an additional \$74.1 billion came from the audience spending. Out of \$135.2 billion in economic activity in 2010, \$74.1 billion in revenues came from the theatre audience. Artistic programs support 4.13 million jobs. From these statistics it is evident that the performing arts play an important role in the United States economy in spite of the short term negative impacted on them by the worst recession since the USA great depression (Ferrara, 2013).

The Americans for the Arts "Arts and Economic Prosperity IV study" (AEP) released in June 2012 was one of the most comprehensive arts impact studies ever conducted. Findings

revealed approximately \$135 billion in economic activity in the USA from the nonprofit arts and culture industry. These findings clearly demonstrate the economic power of the nonprofit arts industry. Cultural venues (e.g., theatre) have both a direct and indirect impact on local, national, regional and global economic systems at the macro level through employment and capital expenditures (Radich, 1990). Beyond its ability to increase the vitality of an area, artistic products disseminate monies to businesses throughout the area within their economic network. Typical products purchased surrounding a theatre performance such as meals, drinks, clothing, accessories and even hotel stays benefit local businesses (Anderson, 2007; Topos Partnership for the Fine Arts Fund, 2010). Shellard (2004) identified this as “additional visitor spending (AVS)”, which adds to the economy of the local community. Patrons often purchase goods and services such as concessions to consume at an event. Further, Seaman (2003) identified these three economic effects of culture as: 1) direct (i.e., spent on production), 2) indirect (i.e., audience expenses surrounding attendance), and 3) induced (ripple effect into the rest of the economic system inside or outside the area under study). Matieson and Wall (1982) report that induced effect (a.k.a., multiplier effect) to be common in any tourism spending ranging from arts to sporting events for which incremental dollars are spent several times over within the community.

It is well documented that commercial theatre has a direct economic impact on the community (AEP 2012). College theatre as part of the artistic industry sector (i.e., profit, nonprofit, and public enterprises) contributes directly to the local community through the purchase of materials and supplies from the local community to produce a performance and to supply goods to be sold at the concessions (Mangia, Canonico, Toraldo, and Mercurio, 2011).

As a part of a key nonprofit organization (i.e., higher education) functioning within the local community, college arts programs (e.g., dance and theatre) draw in consumers from surrounding areas from which significant indirect consumption is expected to add economic benefits to the community. Indirect economic impact from college artistic performances must be measured by examining purchasing behaviors of attendees. Yet, research into the economic contributions of college performing arts events have not been examined in academic literature or by the Americans for the Arts; thus, failing to include the contribution of this important economic engine’s contribution to the US economy.

This study adopts White and Rentschler’s (2005) definition of economic impact as the net economic exchange within a community, but not to include non-market values from spending that is attributable to the event. One measure of economic impact is a Creative Vitality Index (CVI). This tool is easily accessible and affordable. It compares valid information from place-to-place (Irby and Hebert, 2005). In the current study, wages paid or spending on production materials by the college in order to produce shows is not considered. The current study does examine indirect economic influencers (i.e., factors connected to artistic performances such as spending at local businesses before, at or after the performance). The current studies examined factors closely related to the artistic events’ economic impact (i.e., intervening factors connecting artistic performances and outcomes - spending at local businesses) within the community. This study examines key factors not presented in other studies that are relevant to indirect spending before, at, or after a cultural event (i.e., frequency of attendance, conspicuous and status consumption).

Frequency of attendance is expected to directly influence the economics of the university or college through the purchase of the ticket for the performances. For the purpose of this study, a frequency of greater than 50% in attendance of all college theatre/dance productions during the

study period was considered to be representative of a positive attitude toward college theatre/dance. Therefore it is reasonable to consider that frequency of attendance at college artistic performances increases the potential for future spending before, at, or after a performance. Frequency of attendance is but one indicator of spending potential. Therefore, understanding the external influences on people to spend money before, at, or after a theatre event is important to knowing how to market to them.

Not everyone is drawn to consumption of the arts experiences. Social divisions (e.g., class and ethnicity) divide people by segregated experiences and opportunities that are inequitable across societies. Social gentrification purports that people of influence are attracted to similar things (e.g., neighborhoods); thus, leading to displacement of social groups from experiences such as those offered by the arts (Guetzkow, 2002). Academic sociological literature reveals three factors associated with social class standing and spending at performing arts. Homology is identified through social stratification as social inequality that maps directly to stratification of culture. Individuals within the high social strata are believed to be the main consumers of “elite” cultural experience. Homology may result in using social class as a vehicle to symbolically portray superiority. Nevertheless, individualization may negate the homology factor. In the United States and various other countries, cultural taste and consumption may no longer be a good measure for consumption of the arts. So, where one lives may no longer play an important role in consumption. Lastly, univore (i.e., single interest) and omnivore (i.e., having wide interests) are a challenge to both the individualization and homology factors. Conceptually, univore or omnivore do not map to an elitist mentality of cultural consumption. Based on low-ticket prices, cultural omnivores and univores may explain consumption of college productions. However, due to the scope of the current study, the existence of cultural omnivores and univores were not examined, as inter-subjectivity was believed more relevant. Status order reflects “inter-subjective assessments of individuals’ equality, social superiority, and inferiority expressed in relations of social intimacy” (Chan and Goldthorpe 2005, p. 196). A basic equality of status may exist where inter-subjectivity exists and when absent indicate recognition of inequality. When taking a purely economic perspective, an objective way to investigate consumption behavior is through class structure (Chan and Goldthorpe, 2005). The fourth factor that is anticipated to influence behavior is involvement level. Therefore, key demographic factors such as education, annual household income, and objective social class are believed to play a key role in social stratification and influence attendance of cultural events including indirect spending. Research has shown that reference groups influence consumption decisions such as brand name clothing. Often the individual purchases the item in an attempt to gain approval or avoid sanctions by a reference group (Asch, 1952). By emulating an aspirational group, the individual exhibits value-expressive behavior in hopes of being seen as or becoming part of a group (Parks and Lessig, 1977). Based on the influence of reference groups (i.e., groups with which one identifies with or aspires to identify with), Study #2 extended the research from Study #1 by examining social stratification by examining conspicuous or ostentatious consumption and status consumption. Conspicuous consumption (e.g., flashy purchases - jewelry) for a theatre performance often occurs regardless of an individual’s social status. This behavior is sometimes an individual’s way of enhancing his or her ego (Riquelme, et al., 2011). According to Thorstein Veblen (1899) rich US citizens spend a significant amount of time and money purchasing frivolous items that were unproductive leisure expenditures. This was termed “conspicuous consumption.” Status consumption as defined by Eastman et al., (1999) is the “motivational process by which

individuals strive to improve their social standing through consumption of consumer products that confer or symbolize status for both the individual and surrounding others” (p. 42). Status consumption is any luxury purchase and it may or may not involve peer admiration. Purchasing a ten thousand dollar bed without mentioning it to others is clearly a status purchase, but since others do not know it is not conspicuous. Peer admiration (Mason, 2001) holds that consumption of luxury goods provides satisfaction where the possibility exists to display one’s wealth to those of an aspirational group. These consumers’s spending shifts from the sole purpose of satisfaction of consumption for individual pleasure to one of identification of one’s self worth (Eastman et al., 1999). Eastman et al., (2011) found that global economic conditions have little affect on consumers who spend for status as they tend to be less price conscious and are more brand conscious. Keeping in mind that theatre attendance is highly visible during the event as well as providing the opportunity to discuss attendance later (and therefore giving an opportunity to express that display of status to others), it is theorized that the visible nature of this consumption is considered a benefit to attendees. But regardless of impressions that consumption of the arts present to others the self-edification of arts patronage is believed to be considered by its consumers to be its own reward as well. This is something that would be expected regardless of ticket price because other costs weigh into patrons decision to attend. There is an inherent value to the time spent related to attendance and there are ancillary costs that make attendance a decision based on multiple variables.

A key psychological factor that must be considered in indirect spending at cultural events is product involvement. It tends to have a number of antecedent variables that impact each patron’s involvement level (Laurent and Kapferer, 1985). Just as a team has “die-hard fans” who would do anything to see a game, those same involvement levels play a role in arts patronage. Similarly someone who is personally invested in an event, such as the parent or significant other of a soccer player or of a performer, is more likely to be highly motivated to attend and to be highly interested in the event itself. An indicator of this was included in the study as, buys flowers for a performer. A parent or friend who knows someone involved in the production, or someone who is exceptionally fond of a specific type of artistic performance (whether it is Shakespearian plays or a cello performances) will be far more likely to attend because they have a higher involvement level than the typical patron. This can be a powerful indicator of patronage intentions for which frequency of attendance is expected to lead to spending before, at or after a cultural event.

In 2012, a regional nonprofit arts and cultural economic impact study was undertaken in middle Georgia in college town located in close proximity to the sample population for the current studies by the Arts & Economic Prosperity IV initiative (AEP), but it did not include college theatre. This 2012 study contained a usable sample of 885 audience-intercept self-report surveys. A direct audience economic activity impact of \$6,168,568 of spending within the region generated revenues for local government of \$461,000 and State government revenues of \$272,000. Total attendance for events (i.e., arts and cultural) revealed attendance of 128,881 (70.2%) of local residents and 54,710 (29.8%) visitors from outside the local area. The average spending per person was \$27.27 by residents and \$48.51 by visitors for an overall average of \$33.61. The most significant percent of spending was on meals and refreshments (42.71%); 20.4% was spent on miscellaneous items, followed by sovenirs and gifts at 14.3%, overnight lodging gathered a 11.6% (measure for one night only) followed by transportation (10%). This, as with other studies, fails to measure the direct economic impact of the arts. No research was

found as to the impact of attendance behavior, psychological, or sociological factors identified here the current study on the local community by attendees of college artistic performances.

Guetzkow (2002), proposed that identifying theatre's economic influence in a community and measuring it is problematic because of the difficulty of defining impact and community. In an attempt to overcome such a problem, economic impact, defined in this study is the relevance of different categories of expenditures' power on sectors of the region and suppliers within the region herein defined as the "subject." Although community has many meanings such as a city, neighborhood or ethnic group, in this study community is the subject county in which the college is located. By setting these definitional parameters, the researchers can identify where spending is weak or significant; thus, revealing where and what to strategically market within the county.

An adapted regional input-output technique is used in the current studies to analyze the interrelationship between economic sectors within the county and artistic performances. This technique provides the researchers with a spending behavior map of subject attendees at artistic performances, which in turn provides knowledge of inputs needed in other industry/sectors to meet spending needs within the local economy (Throsby, 2003). A simple accountability perspective is used in this study to measure indirect economic impact. As with all methodology, this one has its short-coming as it does not measure costs and revenues; yet, it gives the research team a reliable framework in which to study consumption behavior (Dwyer et al., 2000; Snowball, 2000; Rao, 2001). Because respondents are knowledgeable as to their own personal spending behaviors, both studies (#1 and #2) use a self-report survey methodology.

Based on knowledge gained from the literature, in order to empirically examine the economic impact (i.e., indirect) from college arts events within the subject county, the following research question must be measured: Study #1 – Is there a significant economic impact on the subject county from attendees spending before, at, and after college arts performances? For Study #2, the following research question was examined: Which stratification factors are prevalent among consumer spending before, at, and after college performing arts event within the community?

Methodology

Scale Purification

Studies #1 and #2: To verify the validity and reliability of scales used in the study, it was the responsibility of the director of the theatre and her team to examine them for face validity. Data from the survey underwent reliability testing using SPSS[®] statistical software.

Study #1 Scale Reliabilities

Purchase Behavior was measured with a six-item frequency scale with endpoints of 1 = never and 5 = always. This scale analysis revealed a reliable Cronbach alpha of .718 (n = 121) (Hair, Jr., Celsi, Ortinau, and Bush, 2013).

Study #2 Scale Reliabilities

Status Consumption was measured with the five-item Eastman et al. (1999) (7-Point) Likert scale. The Eastman et al. (1999) scale reported a Cronbach's alpha of .83 (n = 220). For the current study, the scale produced a highly reliable Cronbach alpha of .818 (n = 74) (Hair, Jr., Celsi, Ortinau, and Bush, 2013).

Conspicuous Consumption scale was measured with the 11-item Chaudhuri, Mazumdar, and Ghosal (2011) Likert (7-point) scale. The Chaudhuri et al. (2011) scale produced a highly reliable Cronbach alpha of .82 (Hair, Jr., et al., 2013). Chaudhuri et al. (2011) reported EFA >.56 for all 11-items with Eigen value 5.117% and percent of variance explained = 52.36 (n = 240). For the current study, the scale produced a Cronbach's alpha of .875 (n = 74).

Intention to purchase was measured with a six item scale with endpoints of 1 = definitely will not and 4 = definitely will with an option for not sure. The scale produced a reliable Cronbach alpha of .623 (n = 121) (Hair, Jr., et al., 2013).

Sample

Two distinct samples representing one population were examined across two studies. These two distinct samples collectively represented the whole population and thus are believed to give a broader picture of the college or university theatre consumer in general.

Study #1: The sample consisted of attendees at individual performances whose age was 18 years or older. These individuals were identified through a university database as previous academic year performance attendees. The surveys were delivered using an opt-in or opt-out survey methodology via email. In order to generalize the findings, a census of the entire 1,000 theatre attendees was conducted. One hundred twenty-one usable surveys were received (12% response rate) in response to the request to participate. A precision level where the confidence level is 90% was attained. Thus, the sample was large enough that the finding is representative of the population of those frequenting the theatre.

Study #2: The sample population consisted of residents over the age of 18 years of the area within the county within which the theatre is located 44,454 (US Census Bureau 2012). A purposive sample (heterogeneity) common in applied social research was used (it was not feasible to do random sampling) to include a broad spectrum of views. The researchers were not concerned about representing these views proportionately as the goal was diversity of ideas not the "average" respondent. A broad and diverse range of participants was surveyed using an intercept methodology conducted at various public locations throughout the county (e.g., indoor mall, strip malls, large box stores) that resulted in 74 usable surveys. Respondents were first asked if they had attended a college theatre performance in the last two years. If they had not attended a performance in the last two years, they were not given the survey. Table #1 below demonstrates that the convenience sample is a representative sample of the theatregoer sampled in Study #1.

Table 1 - Study Demographics Comparison

<u>Classifications</u>	<u>Demographics</u>	<u>Study #1 Findings (n = 121)</u>	<u>Study #2 Findings (n = 74)</u>
Age	45+ Years	65%	57.9%
	Bachelors Degree	20.3%	21.7%
Education	Masters Degree	30.4%	30.4%
	Post Graduate Degree	21.7%	20.3%
Household Income	> \$39,000 with a percentage > \$150,000	72%	69%
		19.1%	41.1%
Race	White/Caucasian	95.8%	95.7%
	Black/African American	3.1%	2.3%

Analyses and Findings

In the United States, thousands of theatre performances are produced each year by colleges and universities. These performances have the potential for a significant economic impact on their communities by collaboratively marketing to increase indirect spending before, at, and after performances (i.e., multiplier effect in which spending on local goods and services re-circulate dollars within the local community) (Guetzkow, 2002). Thus, findings from studies #1 and #2 are important to the understanding of the role of college or university theatre performances on the local community.

Study #1

Although the demographics for this sample were not proportionate to the county in the study, they do reflect the affluence of traditional theatre consumers. Colbert, Beauregard, and Vallée (1998), for example, demonstrated that theatre consumers tend to be unrepresentative of the population overall skewing toward higher income and education levels and away from manufacturing and construction. It should also be noted that the census population does not include some students who attend school in the area and are a potential target market for college productions.

Study #1 examined the research question: Is there a significant economic impact on the subject county from attendees spending before, at, and after college arts performances? This was examined by surveying the respondents as to the frequency of attendance at performance within the previous academic year. This research question was examined using linear regression with the dependent variable (a summated 4-item intention scale) and independent variable (frequency of attendance at performances – indicating level of attitude ranging from negative to positive). Findings of the regression analysis showed that of the sample, 25.5% of a respondent likelihood to positively impact the economy in the future through purchases before, at, and after the performance [$R^2 = .255$, $F(1,105) = 35.984$]. It is reasonable that frequency of past behavior

would not be the only variable contributing to likelihood to purchase in the future; nevertheless, this finding demonstrates a statistically significant relationship between frequency of attendance and purchasing intention.

A post hoc frequency analysis of attendance and intended purchase behavior was further broken down into categories to more closely identify minor and major purchases. Of 121 respondents, patrons who attended more rarely (less than three times) were unlikely to make purchases other than eating out (29.6%). As to those attending more than three times, the greater the number of attendances, the more often they purchased drinks and ate. Flowers were never or rarely purchased for cast members by 40 to 50% of the respondents regardless of the number of attendances. There was not a significant number of people purchasing outfits or hotel rooms though there was a minor increase for those attending three or more performances. So there is clearly an economic impact, but it tends to be on low cost items. The incremental expense on dining at restaurants in the community is clearly related to performance and increases for those who do so more often. Because types of product purchased are important for marketing implications, a post hoc analysis of all scale items (frequency of purchasing scale) used a correlation analysis for comparison to determine which purchase decisions were correlated. Findings revealed that approximately 52% ($p = .000$) of the decision to purchase a new outfit is associated with buying drinks before or after the event and has a 38.8% ($p = .001$) association with getting a dessert before or after the event. Approximately 63% ($p = .000$) of the decision to get a new outfit is also associated with buying cast members flowers. Sixty-seven percent ($p = .000$) of the decision to purchase jewelry or other accessories is associated with buying a new outfit for the event. There were other significant associations (e.g., jewelry or accessories) with drinks (41.2%) with dessert before or after the event (49%), and with flowers for cast members (54.8%) ($p = .000$).

Study #2

From Study #1, we learned of the items purchased and the relationship of frequency of theatre visits to purchases before, after, and during events. Thus, the purpose of Study #2 was to examine the effect of social stratification on purchase behavior before, at or after attending a theatre event. The researchers first determined if this sample's purchase behavior was similar to those in Study #1. For Study #2 it was found that patrons who attended more rarely (less than three times) were unlikely to make purchases other than eating out (40.7%) of 59 respondents. As to those attending more than three times, the greater the number of attendances, the more often they purchased drinks and ate out more frequently (34.4%/40.6% respectively). Flowers were never or rarely purchased for cast members by 33.3% to 50% by the respondents who frequented the theatre less than five times. There was not a significant number of people purchasing hotel rooms though there was a significant decrease for those attending three or more performances (from 63% saying never with <3 visits to 80% saying never who attended 10+ times). As with Study #1, Study #2 demonstrates that there is clearly an economic impact, but it tends to be on low cost items. From these findings, both samples have similar purchasing behaviors before, at, or after theatre events.

Study (#2) examined which of two social stratification factors are prevalent in the sample of theatregoers by examining social stratification factors (i.e., status consumption and conspicuous consumption) through a paired sample t-test, which revealed that these two factors

within sampled consumers are statistically significantly different (.000). The effect size $r = .532$ is a large effect size (Cohn, 1988). The participants engage in more status consumption ($M=2.82$, $SE=.077$), than in conspicuous consumption ($M=2.52$, $SE=.097$), $t(-3.681)$, $p<.01$, ($r=0.571$). This finding validates that attending the arts is something that is done for the self that may or may not be viewed by those sampled as a symbol of prestige to others.

Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

Just as commercial theatre has been studied by the Americans for the Arts, performing empirical analyses of college theatres would provide the colleges with the ability to identify their target markets' spending habits surrounding theatre performance attendance and to develop effective marketing strategies to increase economical impact for the university and community at-large. Part of the reality for college theatres going forward is an increased justification of their costs and in order to do that it is crucial to understand the many ways beyond just educating theatre students that these programs impact the University and the community.

In order to overcome the constraint put forth by Guetzkow (2002), that determining the economic impact of anything on a community as problematic, this study clearly defined the parameters of economic impact measured. Thus, data analyses revealed a statistically significant positive economic impact on the defined community (i.e., subject county) by consumers in the subject study attending college artistic performances. College theatre, as demonstrated in this study, plays an important role as an economic engine. However, college theatre has the potential to have a more significant economic impact and that, as with commercial theatre, it can be achieved through effective marketing. It is proposed that effective marketing has the potential to increase the economic impact from college theatre production attendance and to increase its economic potential within the community as well as university or college. However, the findings from these studies were limited to one university and should be examined across other universities or colleges.

The findings of these two studies showed that as claimed by Seaman (2003) and Radich (1990), theatre has both a direct and indirect impact on economies through a dissemination of influence on businesses within the subject county (e.g., Study #1 – respondents' likelihood to have a positive impact on the economy within the subject county was 25.5%), which was created by purchases surrounding performance (i.e., before, at, and after). However, findings of studies by Anderson (2007) and Shellard (2004) that out-of-town guest attending performances will impact the economy was not supported in this study. This may very likely be a constraint of the area in which the college is located (rural Southeastern USA).

These studies supported the sociological literature Guetzkow (2002) as to inequality within society (i.e., annual household incomes $>39,000$) with only 28% to 40% respectively of the samples under \$39,000 attending the theatre. The lack of sample representativeness of the county's true demographics (e.g., significant African American population) clearly demonstrates the appropriateness of the decision to examine the sample through inter-subjective assessment (Chan and Goldthorpe 2005).

Further, study #2 revealed that behaviors related to status consumption (i.e., striving to improve social standing through product consumption) are prevalent in the sample. This finding supports Parks and Lessig (1977) and Asche (1952) research on reference aspirational groups.

This study demonstrated, for this sample population, the definition provided by Eastman et al., (1999) of status consumption as a “motivational process by which individuals strive to improve their social standing through consumption of consumer products that confer or symbolize status for both the individual and surrounding others” (p. 42) was supported. Within status consumption, peer admiration (Mason, 2001) holds that owning and displaying one’s wealth to an aspirational group is important, for the study population satisfaction of consumption for individual pleasure is comingled with pleasure of consumption to identify one’s self worth (Eastman et al 1999). In order to increase impact on the economic value of the college or university theatre within the community at large, college arts programs are recommended to work with local businesses and marketing students within the institution to strategically market through co-branding efforts surrounding artistic events. By using a differentiated market strategy (i.e., one that markets differently to each target market), stakeholders (i.e. college, community businesses, and the local economy) enter a win-win situation.

As to an antecedent variable’s impact on patron’s involvement level (Laurent and Kapferer, 1985), purchase of flowers for performers was used. Involvement can be a powerful indicator of patronage intentions for which frequency of attendance is expected to lead to spending before, at or after a cultural event. Buying flowers as an indicator of involvement either was not the best indicator or the study failed to show high levels of involvement. Based on other findings in this study, frequency of attendance in conjunction with purchase of flowers indicates a statistically significant, yet weak relationship. In future studies, another variable should be considered to replace buying of flowers.

As evidenced in this study, research of the impact of college theatre’s economic impact on the community is in its infancy. Nevertheless, the studies herein demonstrate the economic importance of college/university theatre within the greater community. It also demonstrates the need to market the theatre within and with the greater community to secure its economic value to the university and the community avoiding the prioritization axe. The cultural value of theatre is undeniable, but in unstable economic times demonstrating its value is vital to its lifecycle within the college or university. Marketing is a tool that if used efficiently and effectively can help increase the economic value of the university while preserving its cultural value.

Opportunities for collaboration for the betterment of society (i.e., community as a whole) can be realized through strategic marketing of artistic events. Marketing in which local businesses co-brand with the arts program to market their business and the event and for which the artistic event promotes the local business is an economic win-win for all stakeholders. This strategy must only be entered with entities that do not have conflicting objectives. Budget constraints on marketing of the college theatre could be eased through internships offered to senior marketing majors especially if the student is a theatre minor. By providing such an internship, theatre benefits from having an intern who understands theatre and marketing and the student benefits from the experience of applying their knowledge to a real world setting. While involvement level has been well examined in other areas of marketing, such as sports, it is an area of interest for the arts and should provide valuable information for segmenting consumers of arts products. This also provides another key benefit that theatre departments can claim. By having students across campus actively engaged in theatre productions those students, whether they are finance students working on the budgeting of the production, graphic art students creating event posters, or marketing students who have a real-world event to

promote, these students are getting practical engaged learning opportunities that increase the likelihood of success of the production while giving a cross-disciplinary benefit across the University. The opportunities for collaboration across campus are vast and they not only enhance the production, but also the importance of theatre as a unifying force within the University.

Other sociological factors to consider in future research are influences on spending such as impulse buying and novelty. Although these were not examined in this study, it is reasonable to presume that a portion of those who attend artistic events, may be doing so as a special occasion thus are more likely to purchase on impulse before, at or after the event. Attendance at a theatre performance is not consumed in isolation, as patrons may be attending for a special occasion, which is a novelty experience such as combining attendance with dinner, drinks, etc. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that some portion of those who attend artistic performances are infrequent attendees who may be likely to purchase impulsively before, at, or directly after the event. Impulse buying as defined by Beatty and Ferrell (1998) is, “the behavior occurs after experiencing an urge to buy and it tends to be spontaneous and without a lot of reflection” (p. 170). Impulse purchases such as drinks, food or flowers (for performers) are possible. Some may make purchases in an attempt to influence or impress members of their reference group (i.e., person highly valued, associates, and/or institutions for which opinions are valued as to individual behavior and values that a member should hold) (Cocanougher and Bruce, 1971). As a result, impulse and novelty should be examined in future studies. From a marketing perspective, the ability to identify purchase motives in order to properly create and target advertisements and/or promotions is vital to successfully increasing revenue. Future studies should include these factors because their value to marketing strategies and their ability to influence purchase before, at, or after an artistic performance is the difference between wasted marketing efforts and productive efforts.

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