

# WHEN ARTS MET MARKETING

## Arts marketing theory embedded in Romanticism

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*This article argues that arts marketing theory is embedded in the existing context of the nonprofit arts sector – that is, Romantic belief in the universal value of the arts and producer authority over the consumer. As “a set of techniques” and “a decision-making process”, marketing was able to sit comfortably in the nonprofit arts context during the 1970s and 1980s. However, recent recognition of marketing as “a management philosophy” has brought out incompatibilities between the customer orientation of the marketing notion and the Romantic view of artistic production. This article demonstrates that arts marketing writings embrace Romanticism through the following: generic marketing concept; relationship marketing approach; extended definition of the customer; extended definition of the product; and reduction of marketing to function. Such findings suggest that persistence of the existing belief system and the embeddedness of the market be considered when marketisation in the arts sector is analysed.*

**KEYWORDS** arts marketing; Romanticism; marketisation; cultural persistence and embeddedness

### Introduction

Contemporary literature on British arts policy and management tends to conceptualise the institutional change in the nonprofit arts sector since the 1980s as “marketisation” (Bennett 1996; Gray 2000; McGuigan 1996; Quinn 1998).<sup>1</sup> Although there exist different opinions on whether public arts subsidy has actually reduced and to what extent it has been replaced by private money, the literature agrees that a fundamental cultural change has occurred in the sector in that arts organisations have adopted new governing ideologies and managerial practices so that they can think and function as if they were for-profit businesses. The proliferation of arts marketing is regarded to be a good example of the penetration of market reasoning into the arts world (Bennett 1996, p. 11). Marketing is understood as helping organisations detach from their old values and practices and reorient themselves around *market* needs, and such a view seems to be shared by both advocates and critics of arts marketing.

However, arts marketing practice has been observed as not being very far from the traditional idea of audience development, which aims at broadening public accessibility to the arts. As Lewis (1990) and Kawashima (2000) argue, it tends to employ the “product-led”

rather than the “market-led” approach. Practitioners’ views of arts marketing may give us a hint of their primary sympathy towards the product: “[T]he Product is sacrosanct (it must be shaped by the artist and the artistic team and it should be protected from market forces)” and “[M]arketing ... is selling the director’s vision to the world” (Wadeson, cited in Arts Marketing Association, 2004, p. 77, and my interview with a marketing manager in an English regional arts marketing agency). Some people would try to explain this by saying that there is always a gap between theory and practice and arts marketing is not an exception. However, it should be pointed out that the product orientation in arts marketing is actually backed up by its *theory*.

This article proposes that arts marketing theory has been constructed within the existing context of the nonprofit arts sector, such as the Romantic belief in the value of the arts and in “producer authority” over the consumer. In order to demonstrate the “embeddedness” of the arts marketing theory in Romanticism, the article examines arts (including museum) marketing manuals, textbooks and articles that have been available to arts organisations in Britain since the 1970s. First, it is shown that during the 1970s and 1980s, marketing in the arts context was conceptualised as “a set of techniques” and “a decision making process” that could be utilised for arts organisations to reach a wider public. Second, it is pointed out that recent recognition of arts marketing as “a management philosophy” sheds light on tensions between the customer orientation of the marketing notion and the Romantic view of artistic production. However, it is soon found that the arts marketing literature tries to reconcile these two different perspectives by adopting modified definitions of marketing itself, the market and the product, and also by reducing the role of marketing to a mere function. This is followed by a discussion of the implications of the findings on our understanding of marketisation in the arts sector.

### **Nonprofit Arts, Romanticism and Marketing?**

The British nonprofit arts sector has developed under the auspices of state subsidy since the Second World War. Public funding was justified by citing the “civilising” and “educational” values of the arts, and this led most nonprofit arts organisations to be constituted as “educational charities”. It was within this context that John Maynard Keynes, the economist and first chairman of the Arts Council, said,

We look forward to the time when the theatre and the concert-hall and the gallery will be a living element in everyone’s upbringing, and regular attendance at the theatre and at concerts a part of organised education. (Keynes 2000 [1945])

As Bennett (1996) observes, the intellectual framework for cultural policy evolved out of the Romantic perspective of the arts, which was developed by English Romantic poets such as Blake, Wordsworth and Shelley around the turn of the nineteenth century and shared by artists in other disciplines. In fact, Romanticism is difficult to define as it includes a wide range of ideas and practices such as opposition to the mimetic theory of the arts, celebration of free expression of the imagination, emphasis on the authenticity of the emotions, adoption of new subjects such as natural and wild landscapes, and development of personal and intimate styles (Honour 1981; Shiner 2001; Vaughan 1994). Nonetheless, in arts policy and management context, it can be understood as a new attitude to the arts and artists. First the Romantic artists idealised the arts as a realm where truth and ideal were explored. The arts were no longer simply skilful activities that served social, religious or commercial purposes. Instead they were

viewed as a means of recovering human values depleted by commercialism and the material progress of society and even a practicable mode of access to the ideal of human perfection (Williams 1982, pp. 39–42). This idea was further developed in Mathew Arnold's (1993) theory of culture as "the great help out of anarchy" that could re-impose social order and drive individuals and society into a perfect state. Arnold held that culture could be achieved by means of reading, observing and thinking in an effort to know the best that can be known, which reinforced the belief that the mass public could be enlightened by exposure to the arts.

Second, the Romantics elevated the status of artists to that of "geniuses", "prophets", "the unacknowledged legislators of the world" or "agents of the revolution of life". Artists' creativity, imagination, originality and sincerity were highly praised and regarded as the very source of greatness in art works. As the German Romantic painter Friedrich (cited in Vaughan 1994, pp. 24–25) said, "The artist should not only paint what he sees before him, but also what he sees within him." In order to explore the truth, so the argument went, artists should express their innermost feeling and inspiration free from any external forces. The market, now the most influential patron of the arts, was generally deemed a threat and it was believed that, if artists pursued market success, this would be at the cost of their own genius.

Such a view was strongly supported by the postwar British government and the Arts Council. With the assumption that the arts had universal values, they identified one of the primary aims of arts policy as being the dissemination of the arts to people, and this was conceptualised as "the best for the most" (Redcliffe-Maud 1976). While the autonomy of artists was taken for granted as a prerequisite to artistic production, the role of the public was by and large confined to enjoying art works presented to them. If they did not, they needed to be further encouraged, persuaded and educated. It is because their "deprivation [of the arts] ... is usually the result of their education and environment ... [and most] people do not know how to get into cultural swim" (Shaw 1987, pp. 118–120). Therefore, one of the most important issues for arts policy and management has been how to remove the geographical, psychological, economic and educational barriers that prevent people from consuming the arts.

On the contrary, marketing provides a very different perspective on the relation between the arts and the public. The core of the marketing concept is "market (or customer) orientation", a management attitude which holds that production should not merely be conscious of market needs, but it should also start from them (Baker 1994; Dalgic 2000; Kotler 1976; Kotler *et al.* 1996). In other words, an organisation should produce what its customers really need rather than struggling to sell what it can produce. This orientation is often compared to product or sales orientation. The "product orientation" refers to the tendency for an organisation to produce what it can and what it thinks is valuable in the belief that consumers will respond positively to a good product. Meanwhile, a "sales-driven" organisation believes that consumers will normally not buy enough of a product unless there is a substantial selling and promotion effort made by the company. Marketing theory argues that today's market-driven management is *the* precondition for organisational survival and success as customer preferences are becoming more sophisticated and changing very rapidly. Baker (1994, p. 8) describes what marketing is all about:

Marketing starts with the market and the consumer. It recognizes that in a consumer democracy money votes are cast daily and that to win those votes you need to offer either a better product at the same price or the same product at a lower price than your competitors. Price

is objective and tangible but what is 'a better product'? Only one person can tell you – the consumer.

As such, marketing provides not only a management strategy for individual organisations, but also an ideological framework. It asserts the democratic character of a market transaction over other means of social interaction: the market is seen as giving power to people by ensuring their right to voluntarily choose what they want (Frank 2000). Through the market, individuals and organisations, as rational interest-seekers, are deemed to maximise their own utility through freely creating, offering and exchanging products of values with others. It is also supposed that the market transaction allocates resources in society most efficiently because it gives people the maximum information and incentives.

Obviously, there exists an inevitable tension between the marketing concept and the Romantic idea of the arts. From the marketing perspective, value is "completely subjective and exists in the eyes of the beholding market" (Kotler 1972, p. 50), and this may also be the case in the arts. Individual consumers, as "sovereign" actors, are seen as the best arbitrators of value in arts products; they have a right to choose or reject the products according to their own tastes and preferences, which they know best. Therefore, asserting the general value of certain kinds of arts and claiming public accessibility to them is likely to be perceived as a paternalistic and producer-led approach. Similarly, arts organisations' efforts to attract a larger audience to already created products may be criticised as sales-driven management. However, it was not until the 1990s that the theoretical incompatibility between marketing and the Romantic view on arts production, and producer authority over the market in particular, came to the forefront. It is because during the two previous decades, arts marketing was generally perceived to be a managerial function rather than an organisational orientation, as we shall see in the following section.

## Understanding of Arts Marketing in the Past

### *The 1970s: Marketing as a Set of Techniques*

The 1970s saw the introduction of the notion of "marketing" to the nonprofit arts sector. Marketing, as "a collection of techniques" that could be easily transferred from the commercial sector was generally seen as a helpful way of widening the social composition of the audience as well as increasing ticket sales. This is why the Arts Council began to be involved with arts marketing activities and encouraged the Regional Arts Associations to consider the appointment of regionally based marketing officers. As Diggle's *Marketing the Arts* shows, the starting point of arts marketing was to acknowledge the authority and autonomy of artists:

[T]he end product is what the artist decides it will be. ... The essential freedom of the artist ... is what makes the product worth marketing in the first place. ... The marketers of the Arts do not allow themselves to be satisfied with giving people what they like; they also want to persuade those people to like more and to increase generally the body of people to whom the Arts have meaning and value. (Diggle 1976, pp. 10–11)

The job of a marketer, as a "middle-man" between artists and audience, was concerned with the "way" in which artistic products would be brought before a paying audience (Diggle 1976, pp. 5–9); consequently, most of Diggle's book was devoted to explaining specific marketing functions (e.g., market research, producing, advertising, promotion, pricing, merchandising, distribution and financial planning). The perspective that saw marketing as

a technique was also found in the marketing projects in Sheffield, Bristol and Birmingham between 1973 and 1976 that were funded by the Arts Council. The projects concerned the setting up of regional marketing agencies to examine ways in which the arts within the given communities would become more accessible. Here, marketing techniques such as market research, advertising, promotion and sales were experimented with (Arts Council of Great Britain, 1976).

Interestingly, a similar understanding of marketing is also found in the for-profit arts sector. A marketing proposal entitled *Ready for the Eighties?* (Burke 1980), published by the Society of West End Theatres,<sup>2</sup> is an example. This report addressed the importance of an aggressive marketing approach in theatre management. However, its notion of “marketing” was no more than “methods of selling a product”, which involved public relations, informing the public, joint promotion, advertising and cooperation with the tourism industry.

### *The 1980s: Marketing as a Process*

The 1980s saw the nonprofit arts sector’s increasing interest in the use of marketing. Under the Conservative Government’s threat of funding cuts and calls for self-help and a commercial mentality in arts organisations, marketing’s focus on customers as the starting point of business was suggested as the alternative to the traditional attitude of the arts sector that saw the audience as passive recipients. As discussed in detail elsewhere (Lee 2005), the diffusion of marketing was initially driven by the arts funding system under the encouragement of government. The first half of the 1980s saw the Arts Council begin to provide its clients with market data such as ACORN<sup>3</sup> and the creation of the Marketing and Resource Department to give advice and help on marketing and audience development. During the three years from 1988/89 to 1990/91, the Council’s “incentive awards” were distributed to improve marketing skills and resources of arts organisations, as well as enhance their capacity for efficient management and sponsorship development.

In spite of the rapid growth in demand for arts marketing under the marketisation policy, this period witnessed relatively slow progress in its theorisation. While there were arts marketing texts produced by marketing academics in the United States (e.g., Mokwa *et al.* 1980), their British counterparts were supplied with practical guides mainly by the arts funding system. What was noticeable from the guides was that arts marketing began to be perceived as a systematic “process” of organisational management as well as a set of techniques (Robbins & Verwey 1982; Wyatt 1983). For instance, *The TMA Marketing Manual* (Robbins & Verwey 1982),<sup>4</sup> an important source of arts marketing in the 1980s, defined marketing as: “A co-ordinated process [emphasis added] which makes the best use of available resources to present a product proposition to a target market in order to achieve objectives – and then evaluating how successfully this has been done” (p. 1). The manual suggested “six basic principles” of the process: “taking account of resources”, “agreeing objectives”, “product positioning”, “deciding target market”, “marketing action” and “evaluation” (p. 1). Nonetheless, it was also keen on spreading knowledge about a wide range of marketing techniques so theatres could use them according to individual situations. Thus, most of the three volumes of the manual (a total of 650 pages) were dedicated to explaining them.

The understanding of marketing as a decision making process was supported by writings produced in the second half of the 1980s (Greater London Arts 1989; Maitland & Meddick 1990; Rodger 1987). Maitland and Meddick (1990, p. 7), in a marketing manual published by the Arts Council, insisted that marketing was “a particularly effective way of

approaching the work your organisation wants to do" and "a clear way of prioritising tasks and discarding those which do not give a good return". As a "a series of logical steps" in decision making, marketing activity generally consisted of the following elements: setting organisational objectives, SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis, audience analysis, setting marketing objectives, setting targets, deciding means to achieve the targets, implementation and evaluation. In marketing theory, the marketing process aims at realising market orientation through identifying, anticipating and satisfying customer needs. Arts marketing guides of the 1980s, however, scarcely considered market orientation in their discussion of the process, and this helped marketing to be squared with the nonprofit arts context. Nonetheless, the second half of the decade also witnessed the beginning of a new approach to arts marketing, in which heavy emphasis is given to the role of marketing as a "philosophy" (e.g. Rodger 1987).

## Analysis of Arts Marketing Theory

### *Marketing as an Organisational Philosophy*

The period since the 1990s has seen a remarkable development in arts marketing. The place of marketing has become consolidated through its institutionalisation in individual arts organisations (e.g., the establishment of marketing departments); the proliferation of arts marketing experts and consultants; and the expansion of relevant training courses, seminars and conferences (e.g., those provided by the Arts Marketing Association). Also, there has been an increasing supply of marketing manuals by arts funding bodies (Arts Council England 2003; Arts Council of Wales 2000; Maitland 1995; Scottish Arts Council 2001).

Marketing academics have shown interest in the application of marketing to the arts and cultural sector, and some of them see it as a branch of nonprofit marketing (Butler 2000; Kotler & Kotler 1998, 1999; Sargeant 1999; Scheff & Kotler 1996). Now marketing in the arts context tends to be defined as "arts marketing" with a complete logic of theory rather than a mere "use of marketing for the arts". Such developments started from criticism of the existing approach's attention to only the functional elements of marketing. For instance, Hill *et al.* (1995, p. xii) argue that "up to now the focus ... has tended to be tactical, concentrating on particular areas of marketing technique (such as pricing and promotion) rather than on a holistic account". Recent writings draw our attention to the very essence of marketing – that is, market orientation and the role of marketing as "a guiding philosophy" of an organisation. Now arts organisations are encouraged to view themselves from the customer's perspective and put customer needs at the heart of their decision making. It is expected that a product should be created based upon what customers genuinely demand, and deliberately combined with price, place and promotion in order to maximise customer satisfaction.

Interestingly, it is at this stage that arts marketing writers face the theoretical incompatibility between the marketing concept and the Romantic view of artistic production and some explicitly show uneasiness towards the direct application of market orientation to the arts. The contradiction is the very issue that was discussed in Hirschman's (1983) influential article "Aesthetics, Ideologues and the Limits of the Marketing Concept". Based upon the Romantic idea that artists "create primarily to express their subject conceptions of beauty, emotion or some other aesthetic ideal", Hirschman (1983, p. 46) argued that

marketing theory should recognise the specificity of artistic production. In other words, artists may “first create a product ... and then present this product to consumers who choose to either accept or reject it” (Hirschman 1983, p. 47). The issue raised by Hirschman has been widely shared in subsequent arts marketing literature. For instance, O’Sullivan (1997) suggests,

In a very real sense the arts remain and perhaps need to remain “producer-led” in apparent contradiction to the central tenet of marketing as a body of theory and a management practice. Perhaps there is a need to acknowledge here the limits of marketing, as Hirschman ... has argued. (p. 142)

In a similar vein, Bhrádaigh (1997, p. 208) confesses: “The major difficulty [in a transfer of marketing to the arts sector] ... resides in the central marketing notion that products are created to suit the customers.” In a nutshell, arts marketing as a philosophy faces an inevitable “orientational dilemma” in which market orientation needs to be enacted if arts marketing is to be marketing, while producer autonomy and value of the arts should be also protected (Andreasen 1985).

### *Five Approaches to Solving the Orientational Dilemma*

How does arts marketing theory settle the orientational dilemma? An analysis of the arts marketing literature has found that a number of different, but mutually non-exclusive, approaches are adopted including: the generic marketing concept, the relationship marketing approach, an extended definition of the market, an extended definition of the product, and the reduction of marketing to function. In the following sections, each approach is explored in detail.

*The generic marketing concept.* Many arts marketing writings tend to negate the orientational dilemma by adopting the “generic” marketing concept, the softened concept of marketing. Kotler and Levy (1969) first argued for the relevance of marketing to all types of organisations in society by broadening its meaning to “sensitively serving and satisfying human needs”. Since then, generic marketing has gained currency, which has led to an abundance of modified definitions of marketing such as “transactions between any two parties”, “exchange of values”, “human exchange relationships”, “achieving organisational objectives”, “influencing behaviour” and “fundamental human process” (Kotler 1972; Kotler & Andreasen 1991, p. 404; Mokwa *et al.* 1980, p. 28; Sargeant 1999, pp. 11, 259). Equipped with a generic definition, marketing began to claim its “universal” application to any organisation that involves social interactions (Bagozzi 1980).

As an application of generic marketing, arts marketing is able to avoid being directly interpreted as identifying and satisfying customer needs. Many writings define marketing as “value exchanges” between an arts organisation and its consumers. For example, it is supposed that the customers get aesthetic, social and psychological benefits from their visit to the organisation at the expense of their time, money and energy; meanwhile, the organisation obtains income, recognition and emotional support from the visitors at the cost of its artistic and managerial efforts and expenditure. The notion of “exchange” has been welcomed because it emphasises a two-way and mutually beneficial transaction between two actors and allows an arts organisation to not necessarily scarify its artistic mission in order to satisfy customer needs.

The generic account of the marketing perspective tends to permit further modification of the marketing concept. For instance, Kotler *et al.* (1996, pp. 18–20) propose the “societal” marketing concept. According to them, an organisation that aims to maintain or improve the consumer’s and the society’s well being should take the producer-led approach and determine the needs, wants and interests of target markets. It is because their customers often do not know what is needed for their long-term benefits and welfare. Sympathetic to this interpretation of marketing, Boorsma (2002) and Butler (2000) see arts marketing as societal activity and place a heavy emphasis on the equal distribution of the arts among the public, particularly through transforming non-attenders into an arts audience.

*The relationship marketing approach.* Some arts marketing literature turns its attention to “relationship marketing”, a notion that has developed in service industries since the 1980s (Buttle 1996; Grönroos 1989; Hill *et al.* 1995; O’Sullivan 1997; Rentschler *et al.* 2002). While criticising existing marketing practice for limiting itself to a technical implementation of the marketing mix for one-off transactions, relationship marketing maintains that the core of marketing activity should be to develop a long-term relationship with customers. Such an approach is assumed to be more economical than transactional marketing: to retain an existing customer costs less than to win a new one, and the longer the association between a company and its customer the more profitable the relationship for the firm (Buttle 1996). Writers from this perspective hold that arts organisations, as service providers, should view marketing activities from human relationships:

If the relationship marketing approach is to be adopted as a strategic option by an arts organisation, it is important that the marketing officer involved bears in mind the kind of qualities that are associated with everyday human relationships – mutuality, emotional investment, trust, concern for the other’s long-term interest, giving priority to the other’s needs – and endeavour to apply those values in the planning, creation and implementation of effective marketing programmes. (O’Sullivan 1997, p. 145)

It is supposed that an arts organisation can develop and maintain a mutually satisfactory relationship with its customers, even if it is not purely market-led, through personalised customer services, provision of incentives or improvement of mutual knowledge. As the relationship progresses, customers are expected to go through a ladder of loyalty, for instance from single-ticket purchasers to repeat customers and finally to advocates (Rentschler *et al.* 2002). Here, organisational focus is placed on audience retention rather than on continuously seeking new audiences. In this sense, the relationship approach seems to contradict the societal interpretation of arts marketing.

*The extended definition of the customer.* In order to allow market orientation to make sense in the arts context, some writings adopt an extended definition of “customer”. This approach, too, is backed up by the mainstream marketing literature. For instance, Kotler and Levy (1969) interpret consumers as many groups that are interested in an organisation’s products and can make a difference in its success. The word “public” is often used to refer to a wide range of customers such as supporters, employees, suppliers, agents, consumers (buyers), government, competitors, special publics and general publics. Similarly, arts marketing writings suggest that customers of an arts organisation include peer artists, critics and funding bodies as well as a paying audience (Bhrádaigh 1997; Butler

2000; Hill *et al.* 1995; Hirschman 1983; Sargeant 1999, pp. 15–18). Even the definition of customer is broadened to include *artists themselves*. For instance, Hirschman (1983, p. 49) argues:

The term “audience” or “consumer” is extended beyond the public at large and even beyond the notion of external parties (e.g., peers, critics) to the realization that some marketing exchanges are initiated within one’s self. In self-oriented marketing, *the creator* [italics added] may serve as the initial consumer of that which he/she creates.

For Hirschman, meeting the needs of arts producers themselves is most important to the creation of an artwork, and then efforts to satisfy their peers and critics are likely to follow. Nonetheless, she defines this as a market-driven approach as producers are initial customers of their own works. Meanwhile, some writers use the notion of “multiple constituencies” or “associates” to refer to all those who support an organisation, such as public funding bodies, local authorities, grant-making trusts/foundations, educational establishments, press/media, customers for ancillary services (e.g., catering, space hire and costumes), business sponsors, friends/members, and trustees/governors of the arts organisation (Hill *et al.* 1995, pp. 25–27; Sargeant 1999, pp. 15–18). With the extended definition of the customer, an arts organisation can be viewed as market-oriented even if it is more concerned with the constituencies other than actual and potential paying audiences.

*The extended definition of the product.* Some writings attempt to grasp the original meaning of market orientation and demonstrate that arts products can actually be changed and modified to meet market needs (Bhrádaigh 1997; Boorsma 2002; Kolb 2000; Kotler & Kotler 1998, 1999; McLean 1997). Their theoretical manoeuvre is to widen the definition of the “product”. This approach is supported by Kotler (1976), who categorises product into “tangible” (the physical entity or service), “extended” (the tangible product along with the whole cluster of services that accompany it) and “generic” (the essential benefit or problem-solving, e.g., beauty, joy, cleanness or comfort). Similar to the generic product concept, arts products tend to be understood as “the total package of experience” including an evening’s entertainment, a learning experience, a social experience, a yearly ritual and/or an adventurous event (Kolb 2000, pp. 78–79). Kotler and Kotler (1998, 1999) also identify the museum product with multiple experiences of museum-going, which include recreation, sociability, learning, an aesthetic experience, a celebrative experience and an enchanting experience.

Arts marketing literature maintains that all kind of arts experiences can be provided by the arts organisation *without* changing its “core” products such as actual performances or exhibitions. Then, how can customers’ experience be enhanced and their satisfaction maximised? The answer is that it is made possible by altering and modifying “augmented (secondary or peripheral)” products that complement or facilitate consumption of the core activities (McLean 1997, p. 107). Augmented products include accessibility to the car park, ease of access to the building, cleanliness of the facilities, hospitality of the staff, quality of the catering services, gift items, ease of booking, signage and so on. In short, customer orientation is applied only to those augmented products, while core products remain intact:

[A]rts organisations do not have to be reluctant to adapt parts of the total art product or service offering to the needs of consumers, as long as the core part of the artistic process can take place autonomously. (Boorsma 2002, p. 67)

Marketing of culture and arts needs to safeguard the core product, while modifying the non-core elements of the augmented product. (Bhrádaigh 1997, p. 208)

[T]he product is the total package of experience. ... All of these can be provided by the cultural organisation without changing the cultural product. What would change would be the way the cultural product is communicated, presented and packaged. (Kolb 2000, pp. 78–79)

*(Re)reduction of marketing to function.* Interestingly, some arts marketing writings see marketing itself as being in conflict with the achievement of artistic mission. Their idea is that arts organisations have two different aims – to fulfil artistic vision and to satisfy market needs – and the job of arts marketers is to seek a “reconciliation” or “balance” between them. For instance, Scheff and Kotler (1996, p. 38) suggest that arts marketers should explore and discover a harmonious balance between arts- and market-centred perspectives, a mix that benefits both arts organisations and their customers. Sargeant (1999, pp. 164–165) also observes:

[I]t seems clear that there is an inherent conflict here between the marketing concept on the one hand and the whole ethos of the arts on the other. ... There is clearly, therefore, a need to reconcile these two extremes of opinion and to strike some form of balance between the preferences of audiences on the other hand, and the needs of those producing the arts on the other.

Meanwhile, some writings see marketing as only a means of achieving an organisation’s artistic missions (Butler 2000; Diggle 1994; McLean 1993, 1997; Scheff & Kotler 1996). For museum marketing, McLean (1997) suggests that marketing be specific to fit in the “museum context” that has been constructed over time depending on the nature of collection, museum building, human resources and its relationship with the public. According to her, marketing is “merely an orientation within a museum which sets out to achieve the museum’s mission using a variety of practical tools” (McLean 1997, p. 40). She defines this type of marketing as a “marketing-led” approach, which can be distinguished from its “market-led” counterpart. Similarly, Kotler and Kotler (1998, pp. 60, 322) maintain that, in practice, the role of marketing is limited to functional use:

Marketing’s role has to be seen as one of supporting a museum’s objectives. ... Marketing is *a set of tools and a process* [italics added] wrapped in a philosophy that assists an organization in achieving its objectives. ... Marketing staff have an advisory role when professional staff formulate program offering. In the areas of designing communications, promoting offerings, and communicating with audiences, marketing staff have more weight in the decision-making process.

The frequent emphasis on the “neutrality” of marketing supports the role of arts marketing as a function. According to Rodger (1987, p. 9): “Marketing, like energy, is a neutral force which can be used to good or ill effect. The morality or ethic of marketing lies not in the activity but in the use.” The neutrality was initially promoted to legitimatise the generality and transferability of marketing concept as a business philosophy. Ironically, it also implies that, in reality, marketing is a management function that is common to both commercial and non-commercial organisations.

Table 1 summarises the five different approaches found in the arts marketing literature that attempt to reconcile marketing and the producer orientation of artistic production.

**TABLE 1**  
Five approaches in arts marketing writings

	Generic marketing	Relationship marketing	Extended definition of customer	Extended definition of product	Mission versus marketing function
Andreasen (1985)				♦ core and peripheral	
Bhrádaigh (1997)			♦ artist, peers and the public	♦ core and augmented	
Boorsma (2002)	♦ exchange, societal activity			♦ core and augmented	
Butler (2000)	♦ societal activity		♦ the public, public funders and critics		♦ arts context (arts first)
Colbert (2001)*					♦ product orientation
Diggle (1994)*					♦ arts first
Hill <i>et al.</i> (1995)*	♦ exchange	♦	♦ associates (all those who support the organisation)	♦ core, extended and potential	
Hirschman (1983)			♦ artist, peers and the public		
Kolb (2000)*	♦ exchange			♦ core and augmented	
Kotler & Kotler (1998*, 1999)	♦ exchange			♦ core and augmented	♦ mission first
McLean (1993, 1997*)	♦ exchange	♦		♦ core and augmented	♦ museum context, balance between museum and marketing
Mokwa <i>et al.</i> (1980)*	♦ exchange			♦ core and augmented	♦ balance between arts and the market
O'Sullivan (1997)	♦ exchange	♦			
Rectschler <i>et al.</i> (2002)	♦ exchange	♦	♦ customers and shareholders		
Rodger (1987)*	♦ exchange				♦ marketing is neutral
Sargeant (1999)	♦ exchange, satisfaction of social needs		♦ multiple constituencies		♦ balance between mission and marketing
Scheff & Kotler (1996)					♦ balance between arts and the market

Note: \*arts (or museum) marketing textbooks.

### *Compromise and Contradiction*

Arts marketing writers' explicit sympathy towards producer orientation seems to be grounded upon their belief that the arts have an intrinsic value that is essential to the ultimate development of the human being and is best achieved when art works embody the creative, original and innovative intentions of their producers. The frequent quotation of Maslow's "hierarchy of human needs" might reflect such an attitude. The psychologist Abraham Maslow (1970) has argued that when basic human needs for food, security, belonging and love are met, people are motivated to fulfil their needs for self-esteem and then for self-actualisation. Arts marketing literature supposes that the arts are an important element of self-actualisation, the highest human needs because they provide people with "transcendent experiences" and "elevate the spirit, enlarge thought and feeling, stretch the imagination, and offer enchanting experience" (Kotler & Kotler 1998, p. 5). Some writers argue that arts experiences offer satisfaction of all lower levels of human needs in addition to the need for self-realisation (Hill *et al.* 1995, pp. 119–121; Kolb 2000, pp. 118–121). In order to maximise people's benefits from the arts, the literature commonly acknowledges that producers should not pander to capricious market demands and have "a right to hang on the eternal verities" (Lewis 1994). Hence, Butler (2000, p. 359) argues, "artists are the ultimate manifestation of that absolute insult in the marketing schoolyard, namely the 'product orientation'. But their internal focus, that total commitment to their artistic endeavour, is what makes them artists."

Conclusively, the goal of arts marketers is seen as to "find consumers who are likely to appreciate the product" (Colbert 2001, p. 15) and develop a good relationship with them. Another important goal is to encourage people who are indifferent to the arts into becoming arts consumers. As for this group, the marketers attempt to convince them that they have hidden needs for the arts, even though the needs – identified by the marketers – are a long way from their real preferences, and then to encourage them to fulfil these needs. However, it should be noted that such compromise between the marketing perspective and Romanticism tends to cause a contradiction in arts marketing narratives. Brown's (2002, p. 320) account of the logic of marketing clearly illustrates why such contradiction is inescapable:

[D]oes what remains after the abjuration of customer orientation still count as marketing? Many would maintain that it comprises a reversion to sales- or production-orientation. Clearly, there is a tautological element in all this, since you cannot have one (marketing) without the other (customer orientation). The option of being a non-customer oriented "marketing" organisation is precluded on principle, if not practice.

Logical or tautological confusion in arts marketing shows up conspicuously often when the writings justify the need for marketing with its focus on customer needs. As Butler (2000, p. 359) observes, the notion of market orientation, triumphing over product or sales orientation, is well established in the opening section of many arts marketing writings, in particular when they criticise existing marketing approaches. It is likely to be followed by the argument that marketing should not only be a function, but also an organisational philosophy. However, the relevance of market orientation to arts production is often questioned or even denied. Alternatively, it is applied to augmented products only. Finally, marketing comes to be suggested as a neutral function (not a philosophy) if not a counterforce against artistic endeavour.

An example is found in Andreasen's (1985) article "Marketing or Selling the Arts: An Orientational Dilemma". According to him, arts organisations tend to believe that the major

reason they do not have greater sales or attendance is that consumers simply do not fully appreciate what a truly stimulating and enriching experience awaits them. He argues that the problem is the organisations' ignorance of market needs and their sales-led strategies, and that they genuinely require a marketing concept. At the end of the article, however, he too comes to a sales- or product-centred conclusion: only peripheral products can be modified to maximise customer satisfaction, or, alternatively, marketers can sometimes change customers' wants.

### **Cultural Persistence and the Embeddedness of the Market**

This article has examined the arts marketing literature and argued that Romanticism has set the very framework upon which arts marketing theory is formulated. Although there exists a fundamental conflict between the marketing concept and product orientation of the arts world, arts marketing writings have tried to resolve it in a number of ways, not without inconsistency in its narrative.

The findings of this article provide some implications for our understanding of marketisation of the arts. The boundedness of arts marketing theory to Romanticism suggests that marketisation might not be a clear-cut cultural change, which is often characterised as a one-sided permeation of market values and logics into the arts (e.g., McGuigan 1996). Rather, it can be understood as a complicated process of the "persistence" of the existing culture in the arts sector and its "negotiation" with the market ideology. The Romantic view of arts production, which has prescribed the attitude and behaviour of both arts organisations and the arts funding system for a long time, is relatively stable because it exists as an internal pattern of values of actors in the sector (Barley & Tolbert 1997; Powell 1991; Scott 2001). It is not easily questioned or compared against any alternatives and is still taken for granted even by arts marketing writers and practitioners. Under the circumstances, it is the marketing concept itself that has been adjusted in order to adapt to the context of the arts sector: "We should not attempt to reconstruct them [arts] to suit marketing assumptions: rather, marketing concepts and technologies should be modified to fit their essence" (Hirschman 1983, p. 54).

The discussion of cultural persistence leads us to deliberate on the "embeddedness" of the market. As Karl Polanyi (1944) argued insightfully, the market is embedded in the political and sociocultural contexts of society – that is, capitalist markets could emerge only after relevant normative consensus and state policies were made, and state intervention is still essential for solving social problems the market system inevitably causes. The market is also influenced and constrained by ongoing social relations and institutions such as trust, networks, norms and beliefs (Granovetter 1997 [1985]; Powell & DiMaggio 1991). The notion of "embeddedness" informs us that the market exists as a part of broader society and embodied within its conditions, which consequently challenges the myth of the free and self-regulating market.<sup>5</sup>

In a similar vein, this article has argued that marketing is deeply nested within specific contexts of sectors. This is why marketing theory, which assumes the existence of the free market and sovereign consumers, produces semantic and logical confusion when it explains the real world of marketing activity and, what is more, when it extends itself to non-commercial sectors where normative factors are more influential. As seen earlier, it is mainstream marketing literature that has provided arts marketing with sources of the compromise and thus the contradiction – for example, through providing a variety of modified definition of marketing and slippery use of language. By doing so, marketing theorists

try to make marketing applicable to all types of social activities, but instead this heats unceasing debates around the identity, definition and domain of marketing itself. For instance, “are all human exchange relationships marketing if marketing is human exchange relationships?”, “is marketing outside the marketplace still marketing?” or “can non-market-oriented marketing be marketing?” (Arndt 1978; Brown 2002; Graham 1994; Foxall 1989; Luck 1969).

It is argued that the framework of cultural persistence and the embeddedness of the market is useful for analysis of marketisation of the arts and the development of arts marketing. By drawing our attention to cultural and social construction of the market and marketing, the framework could also produce an effective criticism of free market ideology.

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### NOTES

1. In this article, “institutional change” refers to a shift in formal and informal systems such as policy, law, ideology, culture, belief, norm and rule, which influence the way in which individual organisations in a sector should behave (Powell & DiMaggio 1991; Scott 2001). As to the nature of the change in the British nonprofit arts sector since the 1980s, many conceptualisations have been attempted: “marketisation”, “commodification”, “privatisation”, “commercialisation” or “managerialism”. However, “marketisation” seems to be the most comprehensive notion that refers to the phenomenon of market reasoning becoming a dominant institutional force in the sector. Other notions are likely to be concerned with particular aspects of marketisation.
2. The Society of West End Theatres (currently the Society of London Theatres) consisted mainly of commercial theatres with a small number of subsidised theatres.
3. ACORN (A Classification of Residential Neighbourhoods) is a manipulation of census data that indicates distinct groups and types based on the housing, age, household and socio-economic character of the population. Using the ACORN data, arts organisations can identify the residential postcodes of their existing and potential audience, and accordingly their profile.
4. Originally, the first three volumes of the manual were published in 1978, as the *CORT Marketing Manual* by the Council of Regional Theatres, with assistance from the Arts Council. The revised version was published by Theatrical Management Association in 1982, and the fourth volume in 1983.
5. The concept of “embeddedness” has received increasing attention in social science disciplines. It generally refers to the boundedness of the market to historical, cultural and social contexts of society, but its use varies depending on how one sees the relationships between social relations/institutions and the market and between social relations/institutions and rationality (see Scott 2001).

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