

COORDINATES OF THE CULTURE CONSUMPTION IN URBAN ENVIRONMENT

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ABSTRACT: Applying marketing principles within the culture field represents a challenge addressed for specialists, taking into consideration the substantial changes that the consumption of culture has met at the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century. This approach cannot be achieved without a coherent substantiation of the ways through which actual culture consumer behavior manifest itself. The present paper aims to investigate with the help of an exploratory marketing research a number of items referring to the main coordinates of the current culture consumption from the urban Romanian environment. The research results were analyzed also from the perspective of various statistical data about the access to culture and participation of European citizens to its specific forms of expression. In the context of complex transformations that have occurred in the social, economic and implicitly cultural layer, after 1990, at the level of Romanian society, the way that Romanian culture consumers are relate to the dynamics of their own needs has been radically changed. Within the paper are proposed not only some future research directions but also different measures which at a social level can influence the evolution of culture consumption towards the reduction of disparities compared with the average of main indicators considered at European level.

Key words: cultural marketing, consumption of culture, consumption behavior, artistic creation

JEL codes: Z10, M31

Introduction

Culture consumption represents a very complex concept that has been analyzed from different angles corresponding to sociological, psychological, economical and religious fields. From the point of view of marketing science culture has a tremendous importance at the level of the consumer behavior modelling. First we can talk about culture as an external factor that can greatly influence the behavior regarding buying and consuming different products and services. The perpetual interaction between culture and individual along his life circle determine major possible changes in the value system of the person, attitudes, motives etc. Second, when we talk about the consumer cultural products and services own consumption, we can analyze the way in which marketing principles can be applied in relation with this. The consumption of culture in Romania was strongly affected by the historical changes made at the level of Romanian society after 1990. Thus, entirely new ways of artistic and cultural expression have emerged, different categories of cultural products and services and different types of cultural offers. Within this new enriched cultural environment, tastes and preferences of the audience has changed too, entirely new types of consumers evolving along with the new forms of expression. Present research tries to explore some aspects of the main features of culture consumption in the urban area, and also it tries to establish if participation of the people to different ways of expressing themselves within cultural activities has an effect on the culture consumption itself.

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Features of the culture consumer behavior – a review of literature

According to a more complex theory about the interaction between producers and consumers – a theory that goes beyond the absolute figures of consumption in economic terms – we are neither the passive victims portrayed by the “critique of mass culture” school, nor are we the liberated consumers reported by many other authors. We are creative, active individuals, working with a range of cultural materials, and through a range of consumption practices, constructing and making sense of our everyday life.

In a research made by Romanian specialists from West University of Timisoara, on a sample of 1060 respondents from urban area of Timisoara city the following data has been revealed:

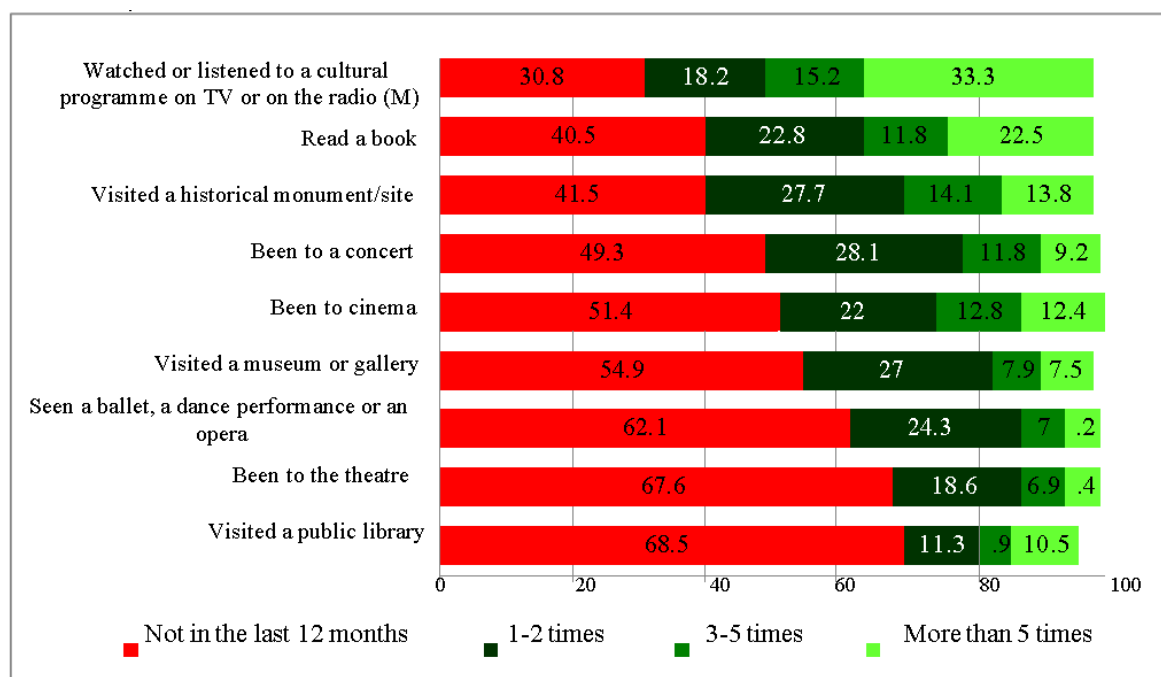


Figure 1. Frequencies for cultural services consumption in Timisoara City in 2016

Source: Gavreliuc Alin, Nadolu Bogdan, Access to culture and participation – report of sociological research, West University of Timisoara, Faculty of Sociology and Psychology, Centre of social Diagnosis, June 2016, <http://www.timisoara2021.ro/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Sociological-research-report-Access-to-culture-and-the-participation.pdf>

According to the research at the level of the Romanian urban center of Timisoara we can observe that 33,3% of the respondents have been more than 5 times in the last 12 months previous to the research interested in watching or listening a cultural programme on TV or radio, followed by 22,5% that were reading a book, 13,8% visited a historical monument or site, 12,4% have been to the cinema, 10,5% visited a public library 9,2% have been to a concert, 7,5% visited a museum or a gallery, 4% have been to the theatre, and 2% seen a ballet, a dance performance or an opera. These percentages indicate the degree of interest from the point of view of sub-samples interested in the particular cultural services taken into consideration.

At the level of the European Union the same type of research conducted in 2013 as the Special Eurobarometer 399 has revealed the following data:

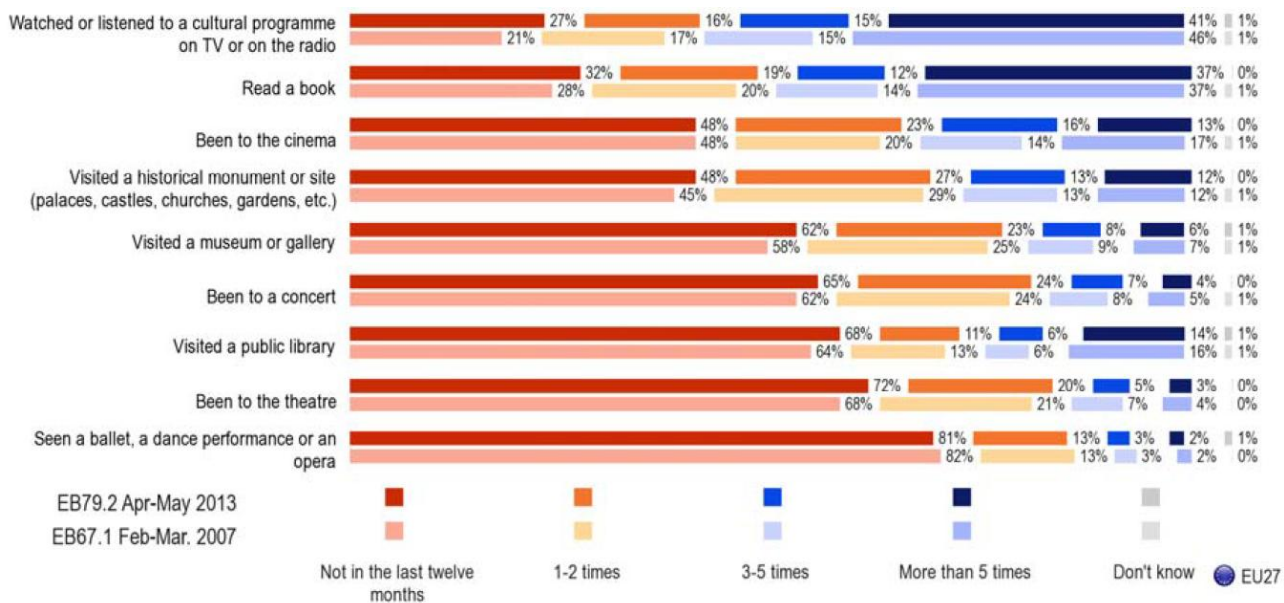


Figure 2. The level of involvement in cultural activities in EU

Source: European Commission, Special Eurobarometer 399, Cultural access and participation - Report, 2013, http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_399_en.pdf

According to the research at the level of EU we can observe that as regarding the percentages of individuals watching or listening a cultural programme on TV or radio more than 5 times in the last 12 months prior to the research, the percentage was rising from 40% in 2007 to 41% in 2013 being greater than the corresponding one referring to the Romanian city (33,3%).

As regarding the activity of reading a book the figures for EU are 37% again higher than the ones from Timisoara city - 22.5%. At the level of the activity concerning going to a concert the Romanian city has greater values than EU – 9,2% comparing with 4% in 2013 and 5% in 2007. Also, visiting a museum has greater value – 7.5% compared with 6% in 2013 or 7% in 2007. Seen a ballet, a dance performance or an opera has the same value of 2% in the case of EU and the Romanian city of Timisoara.

The statistics are quite interesting in terms of comparisons, Timisoara being a particular case for a Romanian cultural urban center, that has a lot of western influences in terms of cultural consumption, more well expressed than other Romanian cities. Still, cultural domestic activities are more favored by the average European citizens.

From the research conducted by the Romanian specialists also is resulting that the main factor that was an obstacle for the individuals in order to involve more in consumption of cultural services is represented by lack of time. This is followed by lack of interest, the price level and lack of information.

Comparing the data with the Eurobarometer statistics we can observe that for the majority of the types of cultural consumption the lack of interest is the major restrictive factor. Only in the case of “watching or listening a TV or radio cultural programme”, visiting a historical monument or site, going to the cinema and reading a book the lack of time was a more important factor than the lack of interest. The third negative factor was the level of prices the biggest percentage being identified for going to a theatre, to the concerts and to the cinema. The differences in the two sets of data can show actually the differences between the social and economic environment in the context of every research. For the Romanian citizens, the lack of time is representing the main negative factor because the relationship in the field of work are influenced by the degree of unemployment so people are trying to do more efforts having a greater workload and less time to spare.

The lack of interest manifested by the European citizens is correlated with the type of cultural activity – the most unattractive being related with more complex and sophisticated cultural services like seen a ballet, a dance performance or opera (50%).

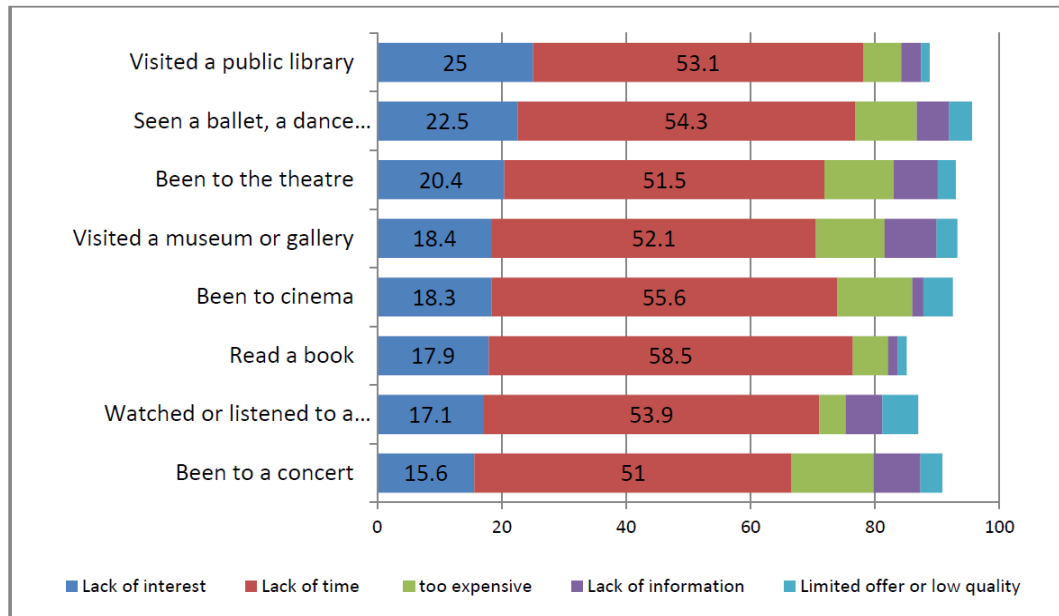


Figure 3. Barriers to accessing culture in Timisoara city

Source: Gavreliuc Alin, Nadolu Bogdan, Access to culture and participation – report of sociological research, West University of Timisoara, Faculty of Sociology and Psychology, Centre of social Diagnosis, june 2016, <http://www.timisoara2021.ro/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Sociological-research-report-Access-to-culture-and-the-participation.pdf>

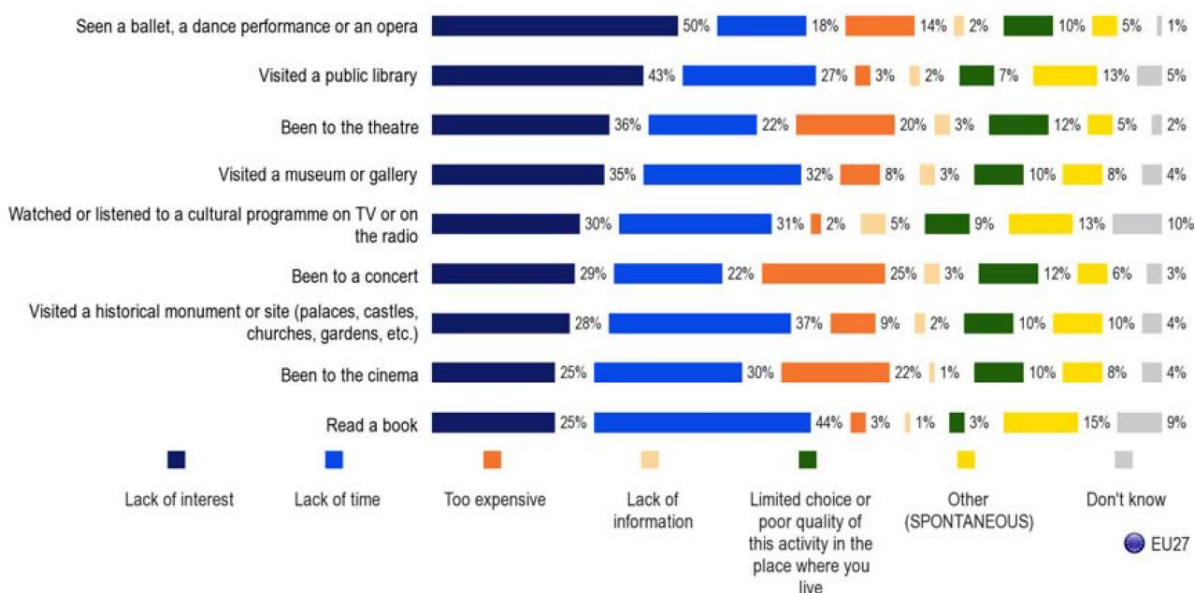


Figure 4. Barriers to accessing culture in EU

Source: European Commission, Special Eurobarometer 399, Cultural access and participation - Report, 2013, http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_399_en.pdf

In other Romanian cultural context - city of Alba Iulia, it was identified a strong relationship between two different characteristics regarding cultural events and goods consumption – individuals that are attending to an important cultural festival within the city are having read a book in the last three months, having university and post-university level of studies and an average income. (Muntean Andreea, Pastiu Carmen, Maican Silvia, 2013, p. 745-749)

All the data presented are sustaining the idea that culture consumption has its own dynamics determined by a series of factors that are varying from one cultural, social and economic context to another.

Relationship between culture consumption and culture co-creation

Culture consumption is a very complex and distinctive act of consumption in the general framework of consumer behavior. If we take into consideration the definition of culture advanced by UNESCO in 2011 we may highlight the fact that culture will encompass not only different forms of expression for arts, literature but also value systems, beliefs and traditions, lifestyles, ways of living within the social groups etc. Thus, trying to measure these types of qualitative elements is almost impossible, so specialists have been preoccupied to measure actually behaviors and practices associated with these beliefs and values. In this process of measuring behaviors and practices, culture will be seen as an integrated part of the society and economy. In the same time, there are elements that are outside the market sphere and can be measured through indicators like participation, use of the time or the social capital.

If we take into consideration principles corresponding to economic transaction we can consider that many elements concerning production, distribution of culture are corresponding to such activities and can be measurable.

In the figure below it can be highlighted the stages corresponding to the culture cycle process, starting from creation of cultural goods and services through dissemination and finally consumption and participation or direct involvement of individuals in the process.

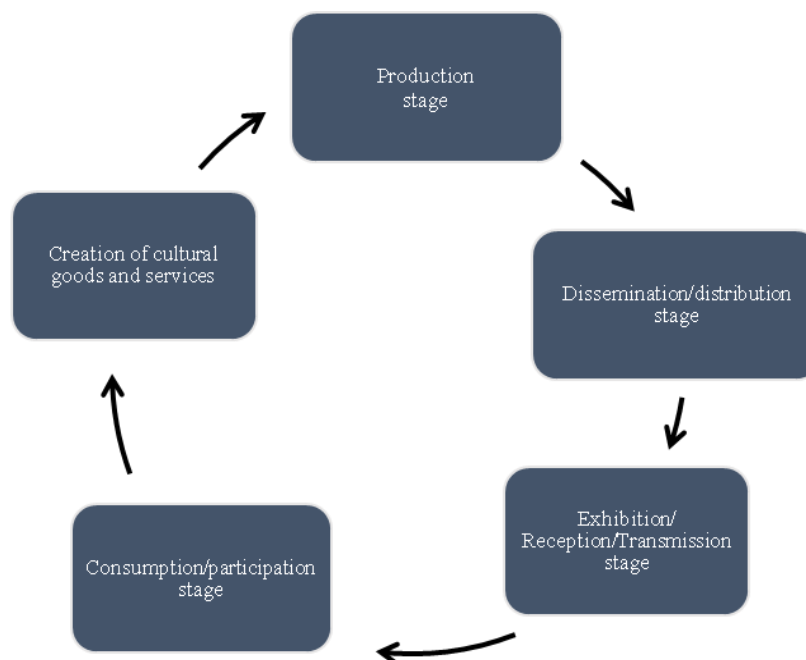


Figure 5. The culture cycle

Source: UNESCO World Report Investing in Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue, Published by United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization, 2009, Paris, p. 267, http://www.un.org/en/events/culturaldiversityday/pdf/Investing_in_cultural_diversity.pdf

The culture cycle can be very suggestive as a concept that entails the multiple stages which can be individualized relating to the idea of production of cultural goods and services. We can see that different type of activities and resources are transforming ideas in cultural goods and services.

The idea of participation to the creation process of culture is related with the symbolic value and the possibility to give a sense of identity and creation of social cohesion. So, in essence cultural participation will embrace practices that could merge the form of consumption of culture with effective participation in different activities with different social groups, activities that are reflecting lifestyles, traditions, beliefs and quality of life. We can presume that the involvement in cultural amateur activities can be seen as a process of building the self-identity of the people.

Specialists have been distinguished three major different forms of participation to cultural activities – participation in the high arts, participation in the low arts and practicing arts for leisure. (Vladimír Bína et al., 2012)

The cultural context in which individuals has been developed has a strong connection with the culture consumption itself. The cultural context represents a collection of resources, practices, norms and meanings which are creating the background for the values co-creation and the evaluation of experiences (Edvardsson et al., 2011, p. 327-339).

Cultural goods and services have as a background needs that are superior in comparison with other type of commercial goods or services. Thus, if we speak about a process of co-creation in the field of culture, it becomes very important to be aware of the capacity of people to recognize and appreciate distinctive elements for the culture that they belong too, and their possibility to give symbolic value to those artistic products that are capable to express better their personality traits, their lifestyle characteristics.

When it comes to co-creation of value in the cultural field one of the most important factors that is affecting it is the capacity to access, adapt and integrate available resources within the process (Akaka, Vargo & Lusch, 2012, p.13-50).

People that are involved in cultural activities, creating artistic works, playing music, carving, dancing, acting etc., are more capable to appreciate within their consumption of culture other artistic works or cultural events, museums, exhibitions, etc.

Creating value represents for cultural goods and services creators a continuous challenge, adapted to the requests and subjective interpretations, social and cultural dynamics of the individuals.

Methodology of research

The research has been conducted as a quantitative marketing research, field inquiry based on questionnaire. The final validated number of respondents was 311, individuals selected from the urban area of Bucharest. The purpose of the research was to determine the relationship between the consumption of culture and the involvement of the people in cultural creative activities.

In order to properly build the questionnaire, a number of different hypothesis have been advanced:

H1: For a great part of the respondents the consumption of culture is associated with a way of expression for their own personality

H2: Usually, people are involving in dynamic, light creative cultural activities such dancing

H3: The most important motives that are determinants for the involvement in cultural creative activities is dealing with the possibility to express feelings and ideas, the personality and the socialization with other persons.

H4: Among possible ways to spend their spare time disposable there are traveling out of town and going to shows or concerts

H5: The frequency of participation to cultural events or activities is higher regarding cultural events like urban festivals and musical shows and concerts

H6: There is a correlation between the age of respondents and the frequency of participation in cultural events or activities

H7: There is a correlation between variables referring to cultural creative activities in which the respondents are usually involved in their spare time and the motives that are determining them to enroll in such cultural activities

Results of the research

Examining the degree in which the hypotheses advanced can be confirmed or not, the following conclusions could be drawn:

As regarding hypothesis H1, the results are confirming the advanced hypothesis, 35% of the respondents considering that consumption of culture represents for them a way to better express their personality. On a second place 27% are considering that culture consumption means a way to spend the free time with their friends.

Still, a pretty important percentage are not having an opinion related with the listed variants, being thus possible that the perception about culture consumption to be unclear for some of the people.

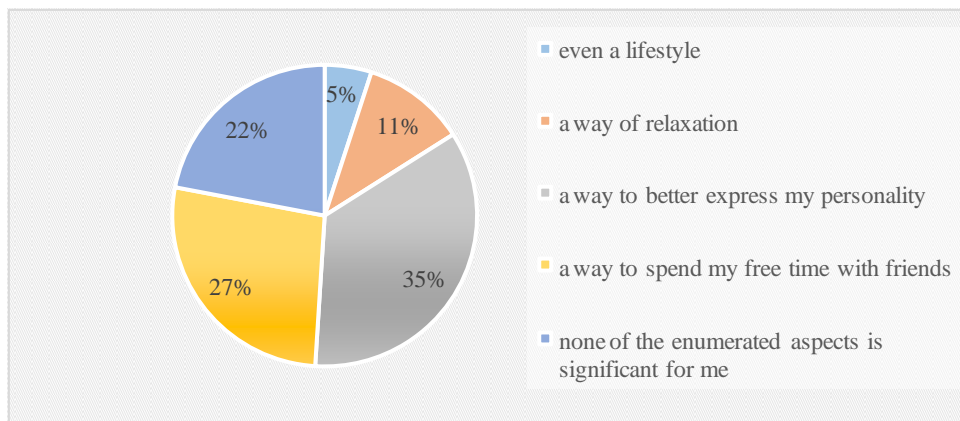


Figure 6. The meaning of culture consumption according to respondents' opinion

Hypothesis no 2 is also validated, because from the univariate analysis the results are showing that 22% of respondents have chosen dance as a usual creative cultural activity.

As regarding the motives that are determining the respondents to be involved in creative cultural activities the order of importance is the following:

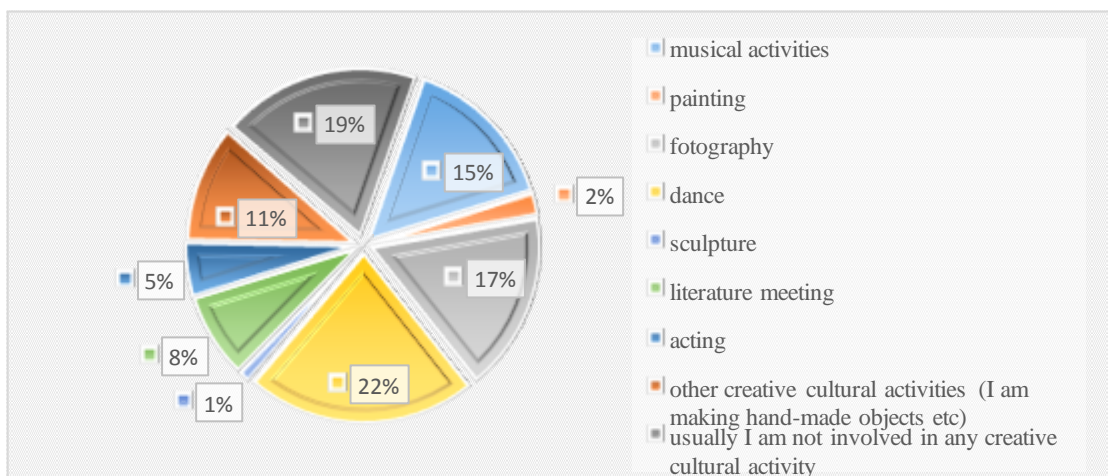


Figure 7. Creative cultural activities that respondents are usually involving in their spare time

Hypothesis no3, referring to the motives that are determining people to get involved in cultural creative activities is validated as we can observe from the results that measuring the answers with the differential scale the first place among possible motives is taken by the variant referring to the possibility to express feelings and ideas. On the second place is placed the motive related with the possibility to express one's personality and on the fourth place the possibility to socialize with other persons.

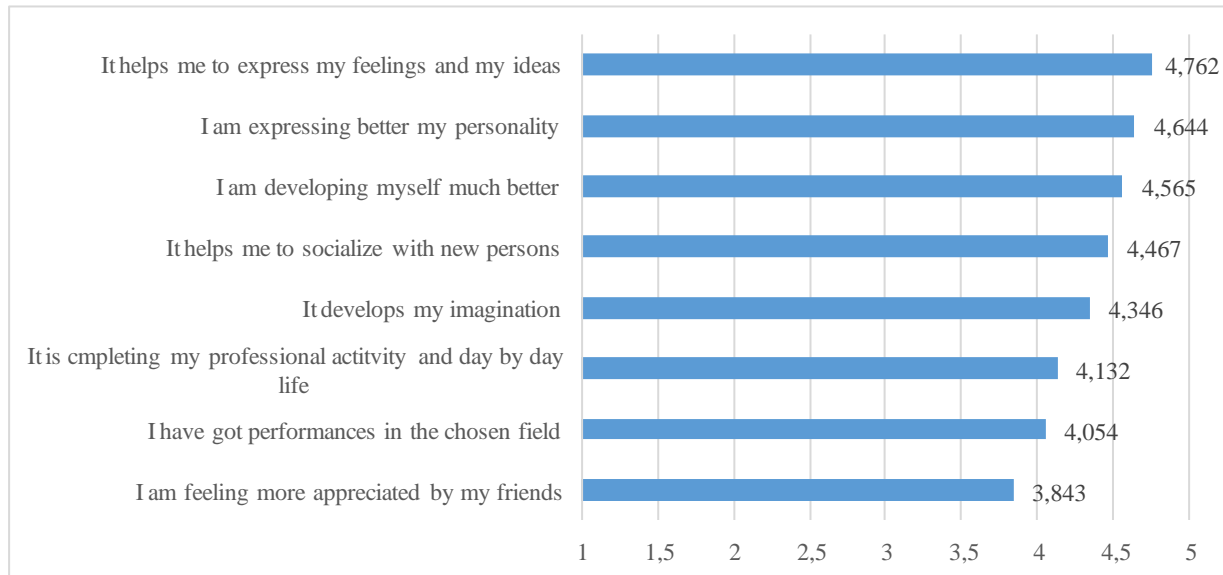


Figure 8. Motives that are determining the respondents to be involved in creative cultural activities

As regarding the order of importance for the variants that are showing the best option for spending the spare time in consumer opinion this is the following:

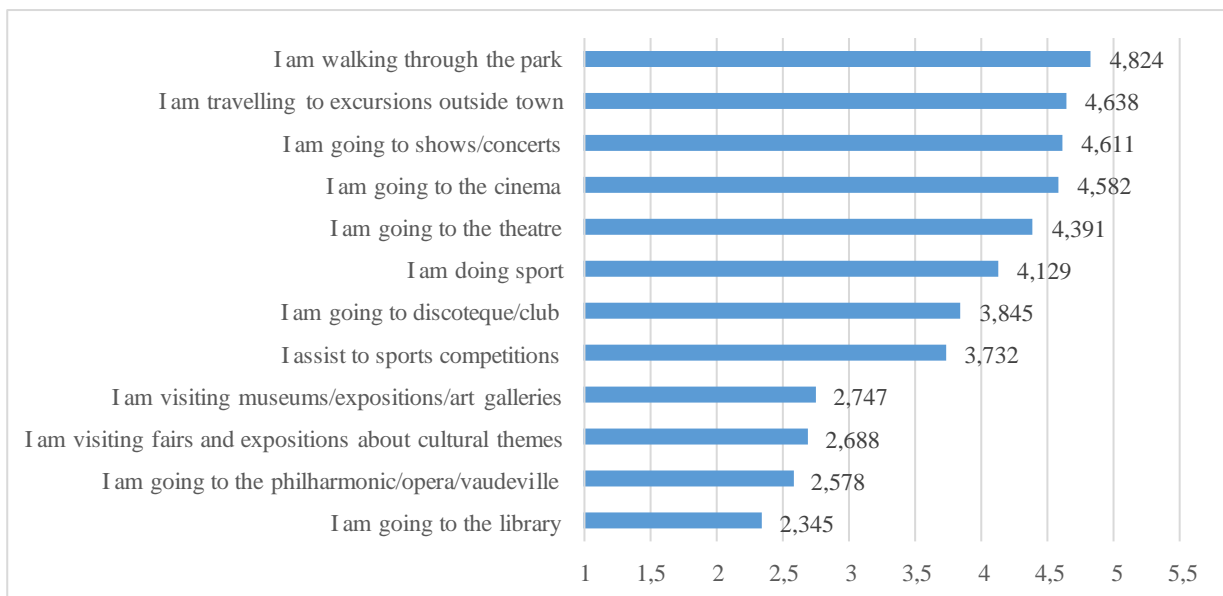


Figure 9. Respondents perception about the best ways of spending their spare time

As it can be seen, the results are confirming also hypothesis no 4, travelling out of town being on the second place measured with differential semantic scale from 1 to 5. Going to shows or concerts is on the third place, followed by the option “going to cinema”.

Hypothesis no 5 is validated after analyzing the responses that are showing which cultural activity is more frequent among respondents. Thus, festivals are having 11% from the respondents that are going weekly, shows and music concerts are having 8% from the respondents that are going weekly.

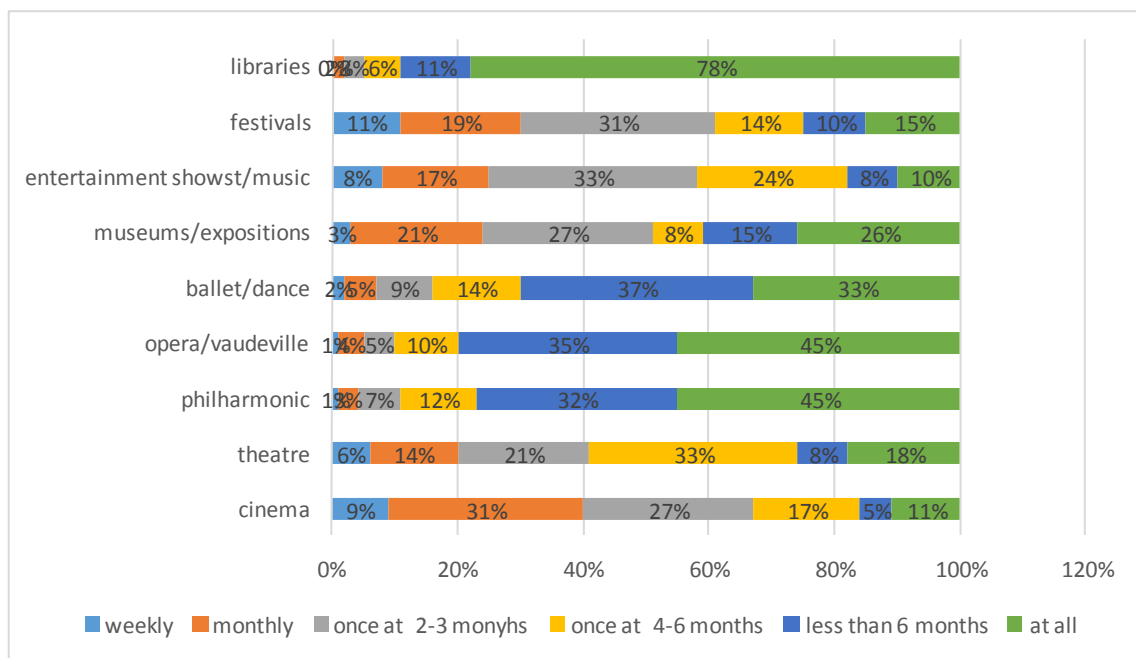


Figure 10. Frequency of participation in cultural events by event type

Hypothesis H6 is validated because most people that are usually go to the cinema are having ages between 19-25 years (83%) and between 26-30 years (77%). The fewer people that are going to the cinema are having over 60 years of age, for this category the predominant answer is less than once in six months or not at all.

In the same time, most people that are usually going to theatre are between 31-40 years of age (67%) and between 19-25 years of age (48%).

Finally, most people that are usually going to philharmonic, opera or vaudeville are between 41-60 years of age (55%).

Testing hypothesis H7 we have synthetized the following conclusions:

It has been wanted to identify if exists a correlation between variables referring to cultural creative activities in which the respondents are usually involved in their spare time and the motives that are determining them to enroll in such cultural activities. Because the answers to the two questions have given the possibility to choose multiple response alternatives simultaneously, the bivariate analysis it was done through the correlation of the answers two by two. The resulted correlations have implied that:

- Persons that are implied in photography activity consider that the motive of enrolling in such activities is the fact that these activities helps them to express their feelings and ideas (the values from within tables no1 and 2 indicates a strong connection between the two variables analyzed).

Table 1.

Results for Chi-Square Tests obtained after correlation between variables referring to cultural creative activities in which the respondents are usually involved in their spare time and the motives that are determining them to enroll in such cultural activities

Chi-Square Tests					
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	184.323 ^a	1	.000		
Continuity Correction ^b	181.184	1	.000		
Likelihood Ratio	214.132	1	.000		
Fisher's Exact Test				.000	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	183.730	1	.000		
N of Valid Cases	311				
a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 58.53.					
b. Computed only for a 2x2 table					
Symmetric Measures					
			Value	Approximate Significance	
Nominal by Nominal	Contingency Coefficient		.610	.000	
N of Valid Cases			311		

- It can be observed a strong correlation between the variable referring to the enrollment in cultural activities and the variable referring to the perception of the individuals towards the motives for which they are implying in such activities. The involvement in musical activities was correlated with the motive "I am feeling more appreciated by my friends" (Pearson Chi-Square = 143.193; Contingency Coefficient = 0.561; Approximate Significance = 0.000).
- Also, the involvement in dance was correlated with the motive referring to „it helps me socialize with new persons" (Pearson Chi-Square = 176.096; Contingency Coefficient = 0.601; Approximate Significance = 0.000).
- The involvement related with painting is strongly correlated with the motive "it develops my imagination" (Pearson Chi-Square = 168.289; Contingency Coefficient = 0.593; Approximate Significance = 0.000).

Final assumptions and future direction for research

The culture consumption is a very complex process that encompasses different stages and a specific relationship between needs, motives, buying decisions and value co-creation.

The data presented is showing just a part of the global image regarding culture consumption throughout Europe and from Romania. The dynamic of needs and motives determine a much more demanding research effort in order to fully characterize the cultural goods and services consumer behavior. Statistical data is shaping an image of culture consumption having correlations with variables like age, sex and incoming level. Also, a clear correlation is present between individuals that are involving themselves into cultural activities and their effective consumption of culture.

From the data presented the behavior of culture consumer in the Romanian context is characterized by a lack of preoccupation regarding visits to public libraries, going to theatre, seeing a ballet or opera and going to museums and galleries. In the same line, main motives for non-consumption of cultural events or products have been identified as being lack of time followed by lack of interest, price level and lack of information. At European level, lack of interest is more important than the lack of time, this motive being correlated with the type of cultural activity.

Activities that are more complex like the ones not so present also in the consumption of Romanians – going to theatre, opera or ballet are the least interesting for European citizens.

The results of the research conducted among urban respondents have shown strong bounds between the conceptualization of culture consumption and the need to assume an identity, the traits of its own personality. The pretty big percentage of respondents that are considering the culture consumption a way to spend the free time with their own friends shows a possible preference towards a group type consumption for cultural events. If we take into consideration this information and we are correlating it with the fact that one of the most important motives for consumption was associated with the possibility to socialize with other persons we may assume that essentially the consumption of culture is a complex process that cannot be assessed without social relationships, like an isolated act of consumption of the individual outside of the social norms. There are actually many forms of cultural consumption that are validated by the society itself and are making part of the specific context that we can find in case of a certain social group or another that are essential for the individual.

Culture consumption will be associated also with the expression of feelings and ideas seen as vehicles for the value corresponding to a certain artistic act or artwork.

Correlations measured between different types of cultural creative activities and motive of consumption for cultural goods and services in general, have shown also interesting relationships between the nature of every activity and the motive invoked. It can be seen a particular relation between the abilities required to be involved in a specific cultural activity and psychological needs of the individuals – photography is requiring introspection and sensibility in order to be close to an artistic act so is favorizing the expression of feelings and ideas, musical activities are requiring having from time to time an audience so the possibility to have a recognition from apart the local community, dance activity is requiring partners in order to do it so it is connected with the idea of socialization and finally painting requires the development of imagination and capacity of visualization.

For a better understanding of the cultural consumption phenomenon a wide body of research is needed. The multiple factors that are influencing the decision process of every individual, the context and the content of different cultural activities can be analyzed only through a mixed effort at the qualitative level and the quantitative one in the same time. From this respect, we propose some possible future directions of research like: perception upon the importance of cultural activities involvement from the perspective of social image.

The tendencies identified that are showing a quite low participation in complex cultural events for Romanian people are concerning on a long run because are inter-related with some educational gaps at the level of young population. Taking into consideration these ideas, we think that a cultural development strategy at national level should be focused on the following directions:

- Improvement of cultural education among young people using other forms of institutionalization not only the existing ones (formal schools);
- Reinitialization of pupils' clubs that are offering the possibility to develop competencies in diversified artistic fields;
- Rising the degree of motivation of young people in order to involve themselves in cultural creative activities;
- An effective national framework capable to sustain the cultural and creative industries and the private initiative in the field – creators of culture and artworks;
- Rising the awareness of private sector regarding the need for sponsorships in the field of culture;
- A set of measures that are targeted to sustain the possibilities for people to engage in cultural amateur activities on a larger scale.

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