

## Information Systems and Trust: Issues for Live Cultural Performances

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### Abstract

The aim of our research is to understand how the introduction of Information Systems in Cultural Organizations of Live Performances (COLP), influences : 1) the establishment of trust with the (non) spectators, an essential condition for positive attitudes toward the institution, 2) an increased trust on the part of spectators, which play an essential prescription role.

In this perspective, we intend to respond to three questions:

- (1) Why and how are IS implemented in COLP?
- (2) Why must COLP establish the conditions for trust?
- (3) What are they and how do they promote positive behavior?

We intend to answer these questions in theoretical terms, and to justify the causal model to be empirically tested at the request of culture professionals.

**Keywords:** Information System – Trust – Organisations of Live Performances

The challenge of new technologies is essential to the activity of cultural organizations offering live shows. Indeed, these organizations are currently facing both the failure of democratization and a crisis situation. At the same time, they are going through essential organizational changes: moving from an inward to an outward design of their activities, taking into account the growing issue of their audience, of the implementation of actions and tools promoting cultural mediation ... They are simultaneously adopting new information systems, which alter the nature of their relationship with the players, both internally and externally.

In the latter case, research has shown that the issue of **trust** is central to the interactions between supply and demand (Radbourne, 2007).

The question then - both in its theoretical and managerial aspects - is to know how the introduction of NIT in the relation between cultural organizations in the performing arts and the public influences: 1) the creation of trust and response of the (non) spectators in terms of behavior: occasional attendance at the performance site, purchasing subscriptions, positive prescription (especially as these non-public account on an average for 85% of the population), 2) the development and strengthening of trust and the

response of audiences of initiates, faithful and loyal, even passionately committed: increased attendance, sponsorship, relayed information, prescription.

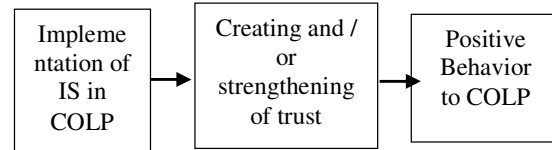


Fig 1. The 3 phases of the problem

The question mainly arises in the issue of the internal - external link of three IS extensions, primarily concerned with the creation and development of trust in the framework of existing mediation: communication via a website, electronic online ticketing, and online relational systems developed by networking on the web.

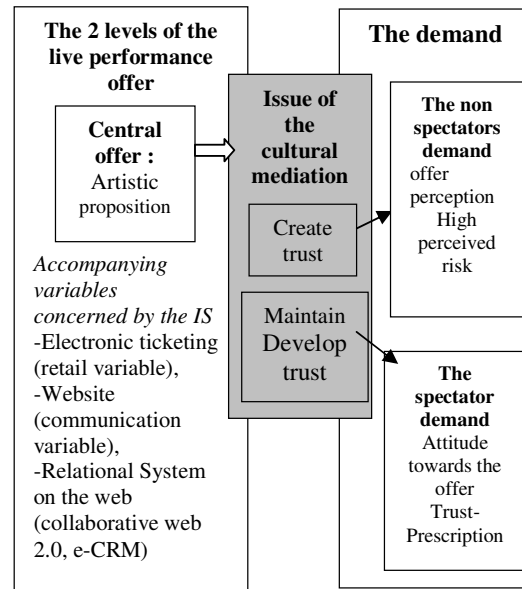


Fig 2 Issues of cultural mediation and links with the IS

To define the conceptual framework of our investigations, we will respond to the following 3 questions: (1) Why and how are IS implemented in the COLP? (2) Why must the COLP establish the conditions for trust? (3) What are these conditions and how do they promote positive behavior?

### Why and how are IS implemented in the COLP?

We must first define an IS designed for a COLP. An IS is a (1) a sum of elaborated and articulated techniques, procedures, rules (2) designed to perform tasks for processing and disseminating information, (3) with the aim of helping individuals and groups of people within the COLP to make management decisions for (4) implementing its missions (whether assigned - by funding organisms - or chosen - as sources of differentiation -).

Information systems are little (or even not at all) developed in "non-profit" oriented cultural organizations of performing arts. Yet these are now experiencing great difficulties, which can best be summarized by the professionals' recurrent statement: "Live performance is in trouble!". What are the causes of this, pithy, yet justified diagnosis? They are many. The first are external factors: the increasing intensity of direct pressure from competing entertainment, the development of alternative offers, a stagnating demand from the same socio-professional categories for 50 years, a failure to recruit potential consumers. These difficulties raise the question of the legitimacy of these organizations' activity. To remedy this, managerial responses are beginning to emerge. They concern an essential structural change: the cultural organizations of performing arts (COLP) are initiating a process that is leading them to move from a product orientation (introverted view of their business) to a market orientation (extroverted perspective) (Gauzente, 2000; Gotteland, 2004). Indeed, they are now forced to adapt to their particularly complex environment, and their very survival is in question.

The value of establishing an IS is double:

- At the process level (consisting of the four points presented in the above definition), as the organization must develop clear strategic and operational lines;
- At the result level (the implementation of the IS itself).

This shows that internally, to implement an IS, four levels are at stake:

1. First of all, the COLP must adopt a **state of mind**: indeed, this is a prerequisite to the technical approach: "it is important to place the sociological and psychological dimensions at the heart of the problems posed by the design and implementation of the IS" (Dayan & food., 2004). Otherwise, we remain in a "technician's" approach which would only crystallize the resistance to change (Deyrieux, 2003).

2. This state of mind can be defined as the organization's willingness, supported by all internal players, to manage its dependence on certain audiences, to which they must adapt, while respecting its own missions (both assigned and chosen). In this context, the role of information is essential because it is necessary for the internal actors - particularly artistic directors - to change their mental representations of the IS, and come to see it as a support for their activities and not as a tool designed to rationalize their cultural and artistic proposals. The challenge is therefore to consider information as a resource and as:

- An instrument of communication within the organization
  - A knowledge support tool for individuals
  - A liaison instrument with the business environment
  - A supporting and coordinating tool for the management processes (Dayan & food., 2004).
- Communication on the implementation of an IS project is therefore essential. The human factor must be highlighted, showing that it's a system built by men for men (Vidal, 2005).

3. Then the COLP must develop an informal IS, based on internal communication tools (intranet, messaging ...): this already exists in a majority of COLP and is linked to the skills of every member of the organization; it is not designed within the IS as a whole, but must be valued as an essential step in its implementation.

4. Finally, the formal IS must be defined, based on strict applications for the missions of the organization.

An application of these four phases would also lead the players involved to admit that the information has a teleological objective (i.e. making an approach based on purpose): it must be understood as likely to change the perception of a situation, with the objective of preparing a decision and executing it. The information is not sought for itself, but to support the decision-making process (Vidal, 2005).

Information management must be all the more rational, that the offer has an irrational character. Indeed, the specific aspects of live performances complicate their marketing and their relationship with the public. Buying a live performance is perceived by a consumer as highly risky, comprising a wide range of risks: financial (cost of the ticket and conditions of access - child care, parking ...), temporal (voluntary allocation of time to the activity), psychological (participation in a sensory experience which could set off flow effects), social (identification to a reference group).

The rationalisation of information management is also essential to the irrational characteristics that prevail in informal management processes, the issue of the affect being linked to a confusion between the organization's objective (to offer works deliberately claiming irrationality), and modes of management, which may themselves be irrational (Gauzente, 2005).

In sum, the IS must be designed through a comprehensive, not a piecemeal approach. It must be understood as a factor generating creativity, facilitating human contact, and freeing time, which corresponds to the COLP's expectations. The NTI contribute to this, so as to increase the value of the transaction with spectators. If of course the use of electronic mail is ubiquitous, tools such as EDI (Electronic Data Interchange), decision support, EDM (Electronic Content Management) ... are not part of a comprehensive approach to information processing (Volle, 2006). The overall aim is to integrate all the tools to achieve a better level of information and communication, to enable artistic projects to be sustained.

#### **Why must the COLP establish the conditions for trust?**

The issue of trust arises in the interactions between providers of live performances and actual or potential audience members, for several reasons:

*One of the specificities of live performance, as an object, is the double duality in its relationship with its audiences.*

- Duality in its inherent characteristics: it is both a sum of objective attributes (analytic perception) and, at the same time, the subject of a holistic approach.

- Duality in its modes of presentation, since the institution that houses it and the specific offer itself (the presentation of a given work) are associated in it (Filser, 2005).

These are two cumulative sources of perceived risk, and thus of risk to the process of building trust.

*As supply precedes demand (marketing principle of supply), it is imperative that the cultural institution should be easy to locate if it is to survive on its market.* The artistic proposal activates the membership, and the website is going to contribute to this, but how? The qualities of the site, but also its referencing strategies for, sponsored links, partnerships, online advertising, are all techniques primarily designed to increase the chances of membership.

*Live performance as a service is intangible* (Eiglier and Langeard, 1987): it is characterized by its "physical unreality" and this can cause a feeling of uncertainty (Courvoisier and Courvoisier, 2005).

Moreover, the audience's choice is based on symbolic elements within the offer rather than tangible elements. The site can help to make the offer more tangible, as a permanent, easy-of-access information support tool.

*Live performances are characterized by a high degree of perceived risk:* psychological risk (exposure to an art form from the emotional register of which can be very dense, even unsettling), temporal risk (the choice of allocation of personal time is crucial in the consumption process, even more demanding than the financial allocation); financial risk (cost of ticket and associated costs - babysitting, transport, parking ...). However, the website may be a reassuring element and help to build trust between the provider and the spectators.

*A cultural offer includes the main service, and associated services.* The main service is the benefit the individual user expects from the experience and the performance itself: to hear a text he loves – Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet – to rediscover the atmosphere created by a well-known director - Jerome Deschamps - .... Secondary services include services related to communication (Evrard et al., 1993). Indeed, the point of the consumption of live shows is to generate emotions, to offer an imaginative and sensory experience. The web site should contribute to this imaginary added value.

*The question of post-experience evaluation is essential in issues of cultural mediation.* Indeed, participating in a live performance provides the spectator with a cognitive and emotional experience, but the resulting satisfaction is influenced by the production process – a process which will involve the individual himself (in a co-production principle, since the spectator contributes to the production of his own satisfaction). It will be less the result of an objective rational assessment. In this context, the site's contribution is essential; it continues to create value for the visitor after his emotional experience. In this way, the web site can constitute an extension of the utility / functional and hedonic / emotional factors, to create and / or increase his overall satisfaction.

*A major vector of communication in cultural consumption is the word-of-mouth* (Bourgeon-Renault, 2001): it influences the elaboration of attitudes towards the supply of live performances. However, one of the limits of this interpersonal, informal, spontaneous and free communication vector, is that it is not controlled by the COLP. On the Web, the participatory spirit (Web 2.0) is developing. Spectators in turn become transmitters of qualitative signals, in addition to those broadcast by the COLP (assessments, opinions, votes ...). These signals are likely to change the perceived

value of the services offered. There must be a "counterweight" to this uncontrolled communication. The structured answer will be, among other proposals, the site, or blogs and other forums developed by various interested parties (actors, producers, spectators, heads of cultural organizations, etc.).

o Finally, thanks to a better interactivity between spectator and COLP, notably through the site and other means of expression (see, in another field, Stenger, 2004, 2007 on interactivity in on-line purchasing), the spectator is better understood, and this helps to strengthen overall satisfaction, a necessary (but not sufficient) condition to establishing loyalty.

### **What conditions of trust must be established to promote positive behavior?**

According to recent research, the probability of on-line purchases depend largely on two factors: risk and trust. To feel he can trust the supplier is particularly crucial when the customer perceives the transaction as risky (Schlosser et al., 2006). Many factors can reduce the level of uncertainty : these act on satisfaction and on the perceived value, which indirectly create and reinforce a feeling of trust. The following elements can provide some elements of explanation:

#### *Factors linked to the site and the role of third parties*

The experience of visiting a site creates value for the visitor, maximizing his level of satisfaction while reducing costs, including the perceived risks. Research has identified utilitarian / functional factors and hedonic / emotional factors, making up the sum of total satisfaction derived from the site. The utilitarian factors of satisfaction result from the visitor's rational requirements in terms of convenience, relevance and performance (Chaffey et al., 2006), simplicity and clarity, content (Bansal et al., 2004; Loiacono et al., 2002). The "Content Is King" (Agawal and Venkatesh, 2002): if the information about the offer is current, accurate, credible, wide-ranging, relevant and comprehensive. The quality of navigation on the site plays an important role in trust (McKnight et al., 2002).

Several studies show that the design plays a key role (Schlosser et al., 2006) in terms of trust. The first impression, formed very quickly (in a few seconds), is decisive, and may act as a filter that holds or, on the contrary, that drives away the potential buyer/spectator. It positions the site according to its target.

Starting from research on the various signals which

may act on a consumer's trust if he is "unfamiliar" with a retail website (Chouk and Perrien, 2004), we can identify many reassuring signals on the COLP website, particularly likely to influence the trust of a potential spectator of a live performance: labels of support (granted by expert organisms, particularly when they are well-respected), the reactions of spectators or influencers (recognized journalists) published on the site, and partnerships with well-known sites who collaborate with the COLP and caution it.

As for hedonic / emotional factors, they are related to personal or social motivations, pleasure and stimulation, entertainment, aesthetics. They contribute to the total satisfaction and thus to trust.

Some research has focused on the consequences of satisfaction with the site, such as an intention to return, and to recommend it to friends (Forsythe and Shi, 2003; Yen and Gwinner, 2003). Flores and his colleagues (2007) also show that visitors, satisfied with their overall visiting experience of a brand site, are more inclined to revisit and recommend the site, and more prone to develop a positive attitude towards the brand and to express intentions of future purchases.

#### *From getting to know one's audience to relationship tools and loyalty*

The Information System helps to establish a unique 360-degree vision of the spectator, whatever the channel he uses to contact the COLP (website, phone, box-office, mailing ...). Loyalty stems from a better understanding of the spectator/buyer in terms of profile and behavior. The next step is to develop actions to consolidate the relationship: to act on all the factors likely to improve satisfaction. By offering added value via e-mails, newsletters and magazines, the COLP website can build strong relationships with spectators, and develop their trust. These relationship tools may present the brand to customers on a monthly, weekly or even daily basis. [...] The brand is no longer something which the customer thinks about periodically, when he makes his purchases, it becomes a daily source of reliable information on a certain category of products / services "(Flores, 2004, p.27). These relationships are strongest for consumers who have subscribed to relational tools such as consumer magazines and online newsletters (Flores et al., 2007). These assertions are probably well-adapted to our specific case: the COLP.

#### *The role of Web 2.0 collaboration and community sites*

The collaborative web represents the interactions between participatory users, sometimes *consume-actors* (*consommacteurs* in French) sometimes *consume-authors* (*consommauteurs*) (Fayon, 2008). The co-producing visitor of the experience is

integrated with the COLP. The spectator is thus a transmitter of signals, in complement to those offered by the COLP. He offers real editorial content, votes, comments, personal opinions, assessments, or links to other personal websites - blogs and wikis. These are all signals which may change the perceived value of proposed performances, and also of the cultural organization in all its aspects. This content, generated by spectators, forms a powerful "viral" word of mouth. It creates an interpersonal source of information, with a powerful impact on the "non buyers'" trust in the site (Chouk and Perrien, 2004). In addition, Web 2.0 is a permanent laboratory, because of its rich sharing of expertise, experiences, attitudes and opinions between spectators and other influential players.

For a few years now, research in the field of e-commerce has recognized that trust predicts future behavior (eg. Gabarino and Johnson, 1999), including the intention to purchase for a specific transaction (McKnight et al., 2002; Pavlou, 2003 ). Therefore, we can postulate that all these signals are trust factors, contributing to some extent in to an active commitment to take advantage of the proposed offer, in terms of the intention to purchase the ticket, of actual purchase and / or recommendation of the live performance to others.

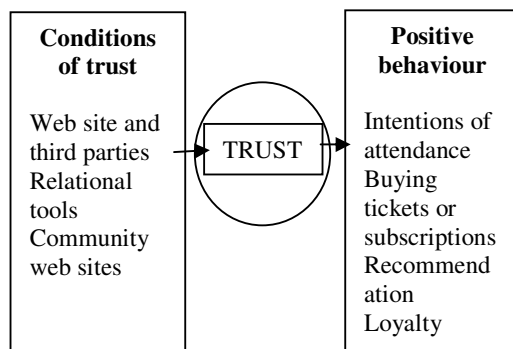


Fig 3. The causal model to test

### Conclusion

The aim of this article is to justify the causal model to be tested, so as to measure the influence of the conditions for trust on trust itself, which in turn would determine the nature of consumer response. We are currently working on the operationalization of the model's variables. We will combine exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis, then measure co-variance. This research, conducted in collaboration with providers of live performances, interests the profession greatly, because the issue of trust is essential to the survival of their artistic and cultural activity...

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