

RUNNING HEAD: STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS MANAGEMENT IN CANADIAN
NOT-FOR-PROFIT ARTS ORGANIZATIONS

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**STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS MANAGEMENT IN CANADIAN NOT-FOR-PROFIT ARTS
ORGANIZATIONS: THE TENSION BETWEEN PATRON AND PRODUCT ORIENTATION IN
MISSION-BASED ORGANIZATIONS**

Diana Weir, 0344813
Master of Communications Management
McMaster University – Syracuse University
Co-supervisors – Prof. Michael Meath & Dr. Alexandre Sevigny

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Lay Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to determine the extent to which strategic communications is being practiced, and its implications for organizational performance in the Canadian arts sector. This thesis discusses the unique characteristics of not-for-profit charitable performing arts organizations within the context of strategic communications. Building on communication and arts marketing theories, this thesis posits that strategic communications management can contribute to the success of arts organizations and address the gap between arts products and patrons.

Keywords: Strategic Communications, Arts Marketing, Organization Public Relationships, Relationship Marketing, Market Orientation, Product Orientation, Strategic Management, Strategic Orientation, Performing Arts, Not-for-Profit

Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to determine the extent to which strategic communications is being practiced, and its implications on organizational performance in the Canadian arts sector. This thesis discusses the unique characteristics of not-for-profit charitable performing arts organizations within the context of strategic communications. As a mission-based field, the not-for-profit arts sector operates under the premise that it must find a market for its product, instead of finding a product for its market. Building on communication and arts marketing theories, this thesis posits that strategic communications management can contribute to the success of arts organizations and address the gap between arts products and its market. In particular, this thesis analyzes the following components of strategic communications management, in relation to the practices of the Canadian arts sector: relationship management/marketing, interpersonal relationship values, organization public relationship values, and market orientation.

Keywords: Strategic Communications, Arts Marketing, Organization Public Relationships, Relationship Marketing, Market Orientation, Product Orientation, Strategic Management, Strategic Orientation, Performing Arts, Not-for-Profit

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Declaration of Academic Achievement

The following is a declaration that the content of the research in this document has been completed by Diana Weir and recognizes the contributions and advice of co-supervisors Prof. Michael Meath and Dr. Alexandre Sevigny. Diana Weir created the study, was responsible for data analysis and interpretation, and wrote the manuscript.

INTRODUCTION

The not-for-profit arts sector is unique in a number of ways. First, organizations are mission-based, meaning that while money is necessary to run programming, money is a means of achieving the goals of the organization and not the goal itself. Second, every performance or exhibit is a completely new product. Additionally, product-oriented programming, where the artistic integrity of that product is of foremost concern over its profitability, is utilized in order to develop high-quality, enriching artistic products, differing from market-oriented, consumer product design in the commercial sector (Voss & Voss, 2000). For these reasons, the role of marketing and communications in this sector has traditionally been tactical: artistic directors make decisions on programming and it is the responsibility of marketing and communications staff to disseminate the message.

For the purpose of this paper, an “arts organization” refers to a not-for-profit, charitable association or corporation formed for the purpose of creating, promoting, and educating the general public on the visual and performing arts such as painting, sculpture, dance, symphonic music, opera, theatre, and multi-media arts. This thesis specifically concentrates on the performing arts, as opposed to visual arts. Not-for-profit arts organizations demonstrate a product orientation in the design and delivery of their products. Product orientation is a type of strategic orientation whereby an organization produces “what it thinks is valuable in the belief that consumers will respond positively to a good product” (Lee, 2005, p. 291). This differs from commercial organizations that practice a market (or customer) orientation in the design and delivery

of their products. The primary trait of market orientation is that it seeks to create superior value for customers by generating and responding to market intelligence about customers expressed wants and needs (Sorjonen, 2011). Opinions on the value of integrating a more market-oriented approach into the product-focused world of the not-for-profit arts are mixed. While some arts management scholars caution arts organizations about applying market orientation due to concerns about losing focus on their mission in place of commercial activities (Voss & Voss), others find that market-oriented culture and activities can result in organizational success, such as higher levels of customer satisfaction, growth in reputation among peers, and growth in resources (Gainer & Padanyi, 2002). Arts management scholar Hilppa Sorjonen (2011) describes a more nuanced vision of how market orientation intersects with the not-for-profit arts world. She argues art organizations practice a proactive form of market orientation that serves customers' latent and unarticulated needs and desires, whereas commercial ventures practice a reactive form of market orientation that directly reacts to customers' expressed needs (Sorjonen, 2011).

The Canadian not-for-profit status is a legal designation bestowed by the Canadian Revenue Agency, reserved for organizations and associations whose work contributes to social welfare, civic improvement, pleasure or recreation, or any other purpose except for profit (Canada Revenue Agency, 2012). Canadian arts organizations can also acquire the legal designation of a charity, because their work provides a public benefit in a way the courts have deemed charitable (i.e. educational advancement) and they devote all resources and income to charitable activities instead of for the benefit of its members

(Canada Revenue Agency, 2011). The charitable status also provides another benefit to Canadian arts organizations, as it precludes them from paying income tax and entitles them to offer charitable tax receipts to people who donate to their cause. Due to these designations by the Canadian Revenue Agency, not-for-profit charitable arts organizations in Canada are legally bound to act within the scope of their mission.

As mission-based organizations, the purpose of a not-for-profit charitable arts organizations is often to respond to unexpressed desires of customers as they seek to offer new and innovative arts experiences to the public instead of experiences with which they are already familiar (i.e. commercially-based theatre productions that repurpose stories the public already knows and loves). Operating under the model where the integrity of the arts product comes ahead of its commercial viability can cause unique challenges in communicating with publics. The product-oriented nature of these organizations can create a gap between the artistic product they create and the publics they serve, causing stakeholders to feel alienated from works that might be challenging or unfamiliar. This thesis posits that the theories and practices of strategic communications management as they apply to interpersonal relationship values, organization-public relationships, market orientation, and relationship management/marketing can fill the cognitive gap between the customers and products of not-for-profit performing arts organizations.

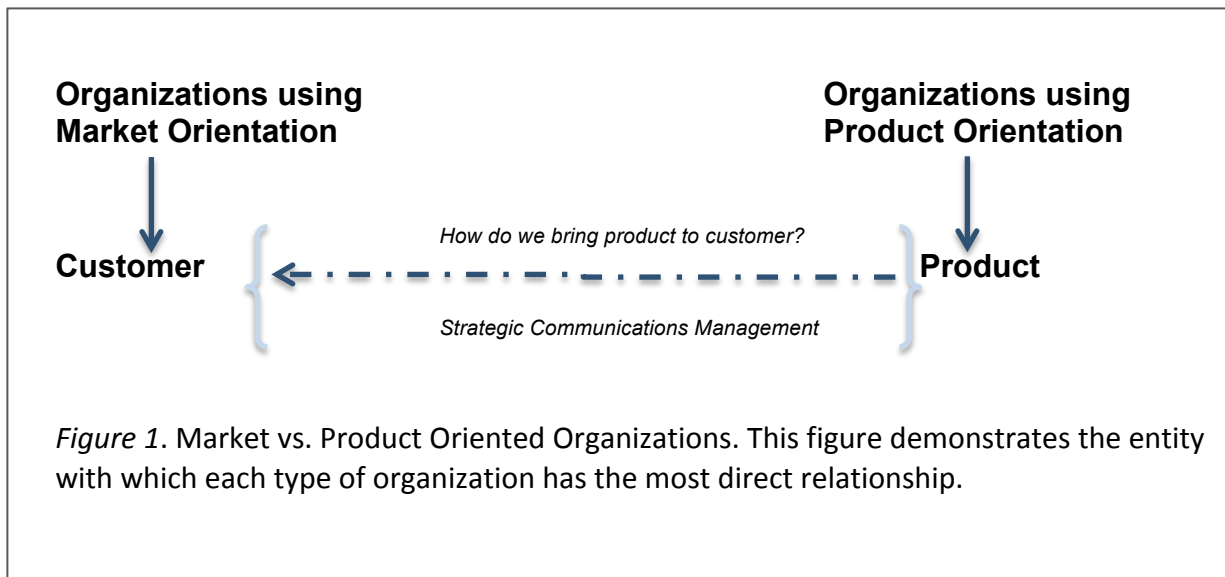
Research Problem

The relationship between arts consumers and the products created by arts organizations differs from average commercial ventures. While commercial products

are usually created in direct response to consumer's expressed desires, arts products, such as plays, symphonic concerts, and ballets, rely on the artistry and experience of artistic directors and artists to create new, compelling works, in line with their mission, that the public might not even know they were interested in. As such, arts products are not typically created as a direct result of arts consumer's expressed desires.

Figure one attempts to illustrate the difference between two strategic orientations: market orientation and product orientation. The left side of the figure shows that market orientated organizations create products that provide a direct link with the customer's needs and desires—these organizations act directly on the expressed desires of their customers. Cell phone manufacturers, for example, might create new models of phones in direct response to market research and their consumer's explicit desires for functionality, camera quality, and integrated communication capabilities. This is not the model to which not-for-profit performing arts organizations subscribe. The right side of the figure displays that a product-oriented approach seeks to deliver a product of the highest value, and therefore has the most direct relationship to the product itself. The primary concern in this scenario is for the integrity of the product itself. A non-profit theatre company, for example, subscribes to the product orientation model in that it only creates theatrical productions that abide by its mission to perform the works of new Canadian playwrights. This organization would likely not rely on audience consensus or market research when creating its products because its audience would not necessarily be familiar enough with the works of Canadian playwrights to provide informed feedback, or they might suggest

plays that are contrary to the mission of the theatre company. Therefore, organizations using product orientation appear to have a more direct, one-to-one relationship with the product itself rather than the needs of their customers. This thesis proposes that due to the product orientation model of not-for-profit arts organizations, a cognitive gap can exist between the customers of arts organizations and the cultural goods produced by arts organizations. The author therefore suggests that good communication and public relations practices should seek to reach current and prospective customers by filling that gap with strategic communications practices, thereby helping arts organizations achieve organizational success.



Based on scholarly literature in the fields of arts marketing and strategic communications management, the author proposes that in implementing a strategic communications approach, arts organizations could consider the following methods to help align customers and cultural products: 1) how and to what extent market orientation can exist in arts organizations; 2) how and to what extent relationship

marketing is a viable component of this strategy; 3) principles of organization-public relationships; 4) how and to what extent values of interpersonal relationships can be integrated.

Research Questions

The first of the two following research questions seeks to understand the extent to which Canadian arts organizations are using strategic communications. The second question seeks to understand how the practice of strategic communications fits in to an organization's mission, operations, and relationships with stakeholders.

RQ 1: How and to what extent are Canadian arts organizations using strategic communications to develop mutually beneficial relationships between their customers and the products they develop and deliver?

RQ 2: How and to what extent does strategic communications with the customer coexist with the challenges of operating within a mission-based, product-oriented field?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Arts Organizations: A Historical Context

As an industry in Canada, not-for-profit, professional performing arts organizations (PAOs) originated with the Massey Commission of 1951 (Library and Archives Canada, 1951). Formally known as the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, it supported Canadian cultural capital, whereby value was created by encouraging and stimulating the development of the arts in Canada, through the creation of the Canada Council for the Arts which provided aid to Canada's cultural initiatives, including the establishment of professional symphonies,

opera companies, and theatres, to name a few (Library and Archives Canada, 1951, p. 76). This was followed by a so-called “cultural golden age” when Canadians flocked to attend, support, and engage with the performing arts in their daily lives. Lasting between approximately 1960 and 1990, this boom in the culture industry can be attributed to population growth, increased household income, increased leisure time, a more educated population, and the degree to which women became active outside their domestic roles (Colbert, 2009). Research conducted in the 1970s by Andreason and Belk (1980) paints an ideal picture of performing arts patrons and supports the assertion that education, racial status, lifestyle, and other socioeconomic factors played a large role in determining attendance at cultural events. Beginning in 1957, new professional ballet, opera, symphony and theatre organizations were founded and the Canadian public found themselves with a plethora of arts options thanks to the Canada Council for the Arts Act, whose mission was to “foster and promote the study and enjoyment of, and the production of works in, the arts” (Stewart & Kallmann, 2015).

The twenty first century professional performing arts organization, however, does not enjoy the same status and heightened sense of cultural importance as its predecessors, and discussions abound on how the arts can continue impacting the lives of Canadians and sustain itself as a sector. A federal discussion paper by the Canada Council on public engagement in the arts analyzes how Canadians can possess a deeper relationship with the arts and cultural life. The report provides a cultural participation snapshot and posits whether today’s supply of arts offerings is mismatched with its demand (Canada Council, 2012, p. 19-20). Today’s arts organizations compete within a

highly saturated arena of leisure activities and a societal landscape that does not necessarily value the same arts experience it once did (Colbert, 2009). This has created an increasingly challenging environment in which the twenty first century performing arts organization operates (Colbert, 2009).

In addition to today's competitive marketplace for audience attention, performing arts organizations (PAOs) experience inherent productivity issues that result in an especially challenging financial predicament, unique to its field. This phenomenon, known as Baumol's cost disease, was named after the economist who studied the performing arts sector in the 1960s and found that labour productivity growth was not feasible in the performing arts (Baumol and Bowen, 1960). Traditional theories on economies of scale teach that as businesses mature, efficiencies are developed that reduce the product's manufacturing costs. This is evident in the manufacturing of goods and services that allow for increased efficiency and profitability from economies of scale. Unfortunately, PAOs are not subject to the same savings over time. For example, it takes the same number of musicians to perform a Beethoven symphony today as it did in 1890 and it takes just as long to present *Hamlet* in 2015 as it did when Shakespeare wrote it. Thus labour costs remain constant or rise with inflation for any given artistic product, regardless of the number of times that product has been performed or the labour's familiarity with its execution. This condition, known as Baumol's cost disease, means that, with inflation and labour costs constantly rising, PAOs can only ever expect product costs to increase over time (Baumol and Bowen, 1966). This is further complicated given that production and consumption of arts

products are inextricably linked due to the experiential, perishable nature of the performing arts. For example, a ballet performance does not exist without an audience present to witness the performance (production and consumption happen simultaneously), meaning that the standard of quality for a performing arts organization is particularly high and the organization itself is unable to adjust or improve upon the delivery of the product until well after it has already been presented to an audience (Bernstein, 2014). Therefore, Baumol's cost disease combined with the inability to separate the production and consumption of the arts product creates an especially cumbersome financial situation (Larsen and O'Reilly, 2010).

This cost disadvantage can be exacerbated by the mission-based approach that PAOs take in creating the artistic product. Mission-based organizations are characterized by their focus on mission, in this case the artistic product, as their reason for being (Colbert, 2014). While certain commercial performing arts enterprises do exist, such as Canadian commercial theatre company Mirvish Productions, not-for-profit PAOs, according to their legal responsibility to operate according to their charitable mission, must uphold a specific purpose that does not always result in producing the most popular or economically successful ventures. For example, a professional opera company, because of its not-for-profit (NFP) charitable status, cannot decide that it will shift its focus to commercial musical theatre or circus acts when they find ticket sales lagging for *La Traviata*. This is because the opera company has been given special status by the Canadian government to promote and educate the public on the operatic art form, for the greater public good. Should the opera company decide that its opera

activities are unsustainable, it would be legally required to re-incorporate as another entity, since it would not longer be meeting its government approved charitable mission. This differs from, for example, a for-profit book-binding enterprise which has the ability to exit the book-binding business or modify their product line without any legal or social ramifications once they find business slowing down. As such, not-for-profit PAOs operate under a product-oriented approach, where the legal duty of the NFP status demands a commitment to the social good obtained through the arts products they are presenting, as opposed to the pursuit of profits. In the world of mission-based organizations, product-orientation refers to organizations, such as PAOs, whose *raison d'être* is the artistic product they create (Colbert, 2014).

Product-orientation is a form of strategic orientation that informs both the creation and marketing of PAOs' artistic products (Voss & Voss, 2000). Whereas the marketing function in commercial organizations might inform product development through market research and expressed desires of potential consumers, the usefulness of true market research for PAOs can be limited. This is primarily due to the fact that the audience does not know what it does not know—namely, a prospective audience member cannot articulate that s/he enjoys a certain artistic product until s/he experiences it. Therefore, market research for NFP PAOs works to help understand what patrons *have* enjoyed in the past, and not necessarily what they *will* enjoy in the future. Even when market research is undertaken, the information would be “limited by how informed or reliable customers are in identifying the available creative inputs,” and it would be unlikely that an arts organization could develop an all-satisfying artistic

product given the “intangible, complex, and heterogeneous nature of the inputs to this creative process” (Voss & Voss, 2000). Additionally, because arts products must be fully developed before customers can consume them, it is nearly impossible to assess audience predisposition toward a particular artistic product during the development phase (Rentschler, Radbourne, Carr, & Rickard, 2002). A theatre company cannot, for example, perform a single scene of a new work for an audience, hoping to understand whether that audience might enjoy the fully formed play. Also, in the case of NFP PAOs, products are developed according to the guiding principles of the organization’s mission. An opera or theatre company, for example, might embody the mission to create new Canadian operatic or theatrical works for audiences. Their not-for-profit, charitable status is usually granted on the basis that the work educates the public about this art form and exists for the purpose of the greater good, instead of commercial gain. Many arts organizations’ charitable statuses are predicated on the cultural education of the public and development of Canadian cultural capital through new Canadian works, hiring Canadian talent, and generally developing the Canadian culture sector. As such, PAOs must develop works according to their charitable mission. They are prevented from programming based on direct market desires and therefore incorporating the marketing concept in general differs from their commercial counterparts.

Even if organizations were to program works based on what they think people will like, the subjective nature of the value of artistic products (Castaner and Campos, 2002) makes arts organizations unable to directly respond to market desires. Since it is extremely unlikely that audiences have a clear understanding of the variety and scope of

artistic inputs that can be incorporated into the product development process—this level of proficiency is usually reserved for an artistic director—it is extremely unlikely that, even with great market research, an arts organization can give each audience member exactly what they want in an arts experience (Voss & Voss, 2000). Whereas commercial arts present works based on expressed desires of patrons and often manufacture what they feel will sell so as to meet shareholder responsibilities and end the year with a profit, NFP PAOs often create unknown, new, difficult, or unconventional works for audiences and offer a different value proposition than commercial ventures. In short, not-for-profit PAOs usually produce what they themselves believe to be high-quality works they think have an intrinsic value to humankind and support the social purpose, be it the development of Canadian talent or education of the greater public, of their organization. This differs from a market-oriented approach, which seeks to respond to market research and develop products that customers expressly need or want. This subject is analyzed by theorists Hirschman (1983), Lee (2005), Sorjonen (2011), and Voss (2000), who believe market-orientation is a fraught concept in the not-for-profit arts sector and discuss both the merits and concerns of incorporating it into the performing arts.

PAOs can experience a challenging marketing proposition as they seek to achieve their mission while simultaneously appealing to the ticket-purchasing market base, who cannot necessarily articulate their desire in an artistic product. This challenge of the is exacerbated by the fact that PAOs are highly revenue intensive, and rely on advance ticket sales (often of a product the general public might not be overly familiar with) to

cover current expenses (Bernstein, 2014, p. 20). Additionally, marketing artistic products is difficult because PAOs are in a nearly constant state of product innovation (Voss and Voss, 2000). At a producing theatre, for example, every new play can be considered a new product, and different audience reactions to each of these new plays can create variances in earned revenue from production to production, causing a tumultuous financial environment (Bernstein, 2014, p. 21). Therefore, qualities such as the intangibility and subjectivity of the performing arts, its constant state of innovation, and the combination of Baumol's cost disease, product orientation, and a reliance on audience's latent desires set the tone for a unique and challenging operating environment for twenty first century Canadian PAOs. Against this backdrop, the communications function has the potential to propel the social good accomplished by the Canadian performing arts sector while supporting the sustainability of the arts in Canada.

Role of the Artist

In this product-oriented field, the role of the artistic director, from whom all programmatic decisions come, is of great importance. As the product expert, the artistic director knows the most about their art form and has a full understanding of the various inputs and resources available to build their product. The artistic director can be the gatekeeper of the mission of the organization and, together with management, is responsible for understanding audiences so they may design artistic experiences that audiences enjoy or by which they feel creatively stimulated. These artistic heads exist to address two concerns typical of product-oriented fields: the notion that audiences are

not able to evaluate the quality of artistic works and that audiences are typically conservative in their tastes (Sorjonen, 2011). The alternative situation being that without an artistic director, PAOs would adopt a more commercial approach, putting on performances they know would sell. In this scenario audiences would not be pushed to experience new performances, ideas, and thoughts, thereby negating the educational and social good purpose of PAOs' not-for-profit status. For these reasons, the artistic director figure is a necessary position that enables PAOs to fulfill their mission of educating audiences and creating new, compelling, and enriching art for Canadians year after year.

The notion of an artistic director's authority over the cultural product can be challenging for the general public. In the traditional arts model where the artistic director is the totalitarian force behind the artistic product, communication is seen as a tactical function instead of strategic, and communications staff are tasked with simply delivering the artistic director's message through a variety of platforms. This romantic belief that the arts has "producer authority" over its patrons can be credited with some of the elitist stereotypes bestowed upon the arts world over time (Lee, 2005, p. 290). For example, in post-war Britain the attitude of arts organizations and artists was that those who did not enjoy the art presented felt this way due to a lack of education (Shaw, 1987), a paternalistic sentiment that was also adopted in North America when eminent American conductor Theodore Thomas, in the late 1800s, felt that only the most cultivated citizens could understand orchestral music (Wichterman, 1998). Over

the years, these sentiments have caused great concern, giving the arts sector a poor reputation amongst some members of the general public.

Within the “artist as authority” framework, patrons can feel alienated by the choices of an artistic director who may not have a desire to know, understand, or educate their audience. Some scholars see the notion of an artist or artistic director’s authority over the product as not conducive with a twenty first century approach which should incorporate audience feedback and some sense of participation as valuable in the artistic creation process (Lee, 2005). It can be said that today’s arts organizations must now consider the arts consumer in a different way: as not only a passive recipient of the arts product but a co-producer of the art form, insofar as their reception of the art is integral to the arts creation process (Boorsma, 2006). Given this situation, a new arts marketing focus can be articulated as “the stimulation of exchange with selected customers, by offering service-centred support for the co-creation of artistic experiences and by building and maintaining relationships with these customers for the purpose of creating customer value and achieving the artistic objectives simultaneously” (Boorsma, 2006, p. 87). Within this framework, organizations face an orientational dilemma between serving patron desires while also serving the art form, where the real financial need to create a product that sells an adequate number of tickets can create tension with the artistic mission-based approach to designing products (Lee, 2005). For these reasons, arts management is a distinctive discipline in itself since it not only brings together general management approaches but must also challenge and satisfy the complex needs of audiences through their art form (Weinstein & Bukovinsky, 2009).

Contemporary challenges of the twenty first century arts organization relate to changing environments in which PAOs operate and the industry's inability or reluctance to shift with changing demographic, economic, and societal factors. In the 1970s, researchers theorized that lifestyle, education, and attitudes, along with socioeconomic factors, had the greatest impact on attendance in the arts (Andreasen & Belk, 1980). Today, culturally active demographics include audiences from a broad age range, racial, and socio-economic status, and attend live arts events for a number of reasons including entertainment, to spend time with friends and family, and to expand their perspectives (LaPlaca Cohen, 2014). Reasons for *not* participating in cultural activities are complex and can range from the social, political, and technological forces that influence our values, including consumer tendencies to seek entertainment at home and their desire for personalization in a de-personalized society (Popcorn, n.d.). In a saturated market, where cultural products are both financially and physically accessible to a greater population and some organizations must work to shed elitist stereotypes, arts organizations must break through the clutter of leisure activity options to grab the attention of current and prospective audiences (Colbert, 2009) by designing "memorable events that engage customers in an inherently personal way" (Bernstein, 2014, p. 44).

Even though mass audiences are resorting to more familiar and comfortable forms of entertainment and enrichment and "high art" consumption is arguably in decline (National Endowment for the Arts, 2015), today's PAO ecosystem displays an even greater number of not-for-profit arts organizations and professional artists. In the US

between 1970 and 1990, the number of professional artists increased by 127%, while the overall labour force increased by 55% (Wallace Foundation, 2005, p. 2). In Canada between 1971 and 2001, the number of artists more than tripled, compared with an 81% increase in the overall labour force (Hill Strategies, 2005). Between 1990 and 2001, the number of artists grew by 29%, nearly three times the growth in the overall labour force (Canada Council, n.d.). Artists and organizations seeking government funding also grew. In 2013-14 the Canada Council supported 5,811 organizations and artists (Canada Council, 2014), whereas it supported only 4,076 through its granting programs in 2000-01 (Canada Council, 2001). Grant recipients came from a broad range of artistic disciplines and included individuals, collectives, and organizations in fields such as visual art, fine craft, multi-media, literary arts, aboriginal arts, film, music, theatre, and dance, as well as support for arts presenters, touring artists, professional development, residencies, and festivals. While demand for live arts events in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s was higher (Colbert 2009), today the number of options for a person's attention means that a high quality product is not a strong enough value proposition for consumers to choose an arts event over any other type of leisure or enrichment activity.

The growing imbalance between supply and demand of artists, arts products, and arts organizations in Canada merits discussion. Discussion of supply and demand of cultural products is fraught with both political and ideological issues. It can be argued that the high supply of arts experiences and products the Canadian public has the opportunity to consume can support a healthy democratic society. If we allow that art is a communicative experience and necessarily requires the public's critical response in

order to reflect, evaluate, and contribute to social discourse (Zakaras & Lowell, 2008), then a multiplicity of arts experiences and products is necessary to support such dialogue—a cornerstone to a democratic society. It can be argued then that diminishing the amount of arts offerings and new ideas the public can engage with through art, diminishes the impact of the arts as a communicative experience and can have a negative impact on the public (Zakaras & Lowell, 2008, p. 11). In order for arts experiences to fulfill their mission as contributors to social good, the arts product must be engaging, an individual must encounter the work of art, and the individual must have the capacity to be moved by that work of art (this capacity is often derived from a level of familiarity with the art form) (Zakaras & Lowell, 2008, p. 14). Removing any of these three conditions might affect the public's demand for art, while also sacrificing the social benefit powers the arts provide.

The discussion of supply and demand in the arts is further burdened by its inherently economic argument. As most arts organizations operate under a not-for-profit premise, discussing the merit of the arts under the guise of supply and demand seems contrary to the *raison d'être* of the arts. This begs the question of why the arts' merits should be judged based on money rather than aesthetic or artistic metrics (Ellis, 2012). As a mission-based field, the not-for-profit arts sector operates under the premise that it must find a market for its product, instead of finding a product for its market. While the Canadian not-for-profit arts sector has been set up to occupy a tastemaker role in our society, exposing audiences to new and challenging ideas through the arts, this “build it and they will come” model of operations that many

organizations subscribe to is incredibly risky in today's increasingly competitive funding environment.

It is worth noting that due to the nature of arts organizations and Baumol's cost disease, the supply of artistic products is not easily reactive to changes in demand (Ellis, 2012). For example, a theatre that has planned and announced a season of plays will likely not cancel one of its lesser selling performances due to low ticket sales because it has a contract to pay its artists already and there would likely be (albeit small) a group of patrons who have already purchased tickets to attend. In another example, an arts council cannot reallocate the funding it received to offer a full-day professional development workshop if demand is low, because funds would have been given to the arts council to be specifically allocated to that project and are not fungible. For these reasons, successfully managing the reduction of supply in the face of decreased demand has not traditionally been easily accomplished in the arts.

At the same time, demand for live arts experiences has changed due to the social, technological, and cultural environment of the twenty first century, including competition for leisure time, national demographic changes due to immigration, and the "fragmentation of focus" in our society caused by personal technology devices (Ellis, 2012). But most importantly, the diminishment of arts education resources as a core component of the educational system in Canada can be cited as the most important causal link to decreased demand in the arts (Ellis, 2012). For example, in Ontario between 1997 and 2004, the number of schools with elementary music teachers declined by 32% (People for Education, 2004, p. 3), while 60% of elementary music

teachers reported inadequate resources to support elementary music programs (Beatty, 2001, p. 43). In the face of these challenges and the tension between supply and demand and the social good the arts create, an aggressive marketing and communications strategy must be put in place for the sector to survive and thrive.

Exploring a New Arts Marketing Imperative

Scholars and managers have suggested multiple strategies, orientations, and techniques to avoid declining demand for performing arts products and develop the sustainability necessary in the twenty first century. In a model that relies so heavily on a healthy subscriber base, the goal of marketing and sales directors is often to move patrons up the “ladder of customer loyalty” (Baron et al., 2010, p. 37) from single ticket purchaser into eventually becoming a subscriber and then a donor (two streams of revenue heavily relied upon by PAOs). The subscription model allows patrons to choose a number of performances before the season starts and buy tickets in bulk, as opposed to purchasing tickets to individual performances closer to the date of each performance. Despite efforts to move single ticket purchasers (STP) into subscribers, many customers are not taking the linear route that customer engagement research says they should (Scheff, 1999). Often patrons will choose to remain in the STP category, never moving into the subscriber category. This could be due to lack of interest in programmatic offerings, little loyalty to the art form, and/or lifestyle preferences that favour the flexibility to buy and attend a performance closer to the performance date. While Scheff’s research found that programming options played a role in patrons’ decision to

attend, stiff competition for leisure time was cited as a top reason for staying as an STP or moving down from a subscriber to an STP status (Scheff, 1999).

The historical precedent of “high art” along with quickly changing audience demographics has left arts organizations searching for new models as they strive to remain relevant. The tension between the sales necessity of meeting financial obligations and the integrity of the artistic product can be palpable. In its worst case, you might find arts organizations producing performances and shows that might sell well, but do not meet the mission of the organization or further the art form that they have been tasked with developing. Artistic directors and CEOs must balance both artistic desires and a given arts product’s marketability when making programming choices. Artistic Directors and CEOs must recognize that “along that continuum of art-centred and market-centred choices, the ultimate product is the one in which the two concepts merge and become indivisible” (Weinstein & Bukovinsky, 2009, p. 45).

In their report on audience engagement, commissioned by The San Francisco Foundation to help understand the stages of experience audience members encounter when consuming the arts (Wolf Brown, 2011), Brown and Ratzkin insist that the following elements must ground arts organizations’ adaptation to the twenty first century environment: prioritize the audience perspective during the artistic planning process; respond to patrons’ needs for interactivity and customization; respond to audiences desires for a variety of experiences. These three propositions ground the contemporary arts marketing approach in an entirely different structure than the marketing practices of arts organizations past, and appear to focus much more directly

on the audience's experience than on the artistic director's expertise of the arts product.

And yet, implementing new approaches like Brown and Ratzkin's can be challenging for the industry. Orchestra managers, for example, have struggled with developing trust with patrons to support artistic experimentation, and, as a result, contemporary symphonic works are not as well received with symphony patrons as, say, contemporary theatrical works are with theatre patrons. Professional symphonies struggle with programming new works that do not easily sell to the core audience, yet acknowledge that this is an important component of their mission (Wichterman, 1998). Knowing that contemporary arts marketing practices are a departure from traditional modes of operations, some scholars recommend the balanced scorecard strategy, as developed by Kaplan and Norton (1993), and suggest decisions be made based on their ability to impact four components of organizational performance: financial performance, customer perspective, internal processes, innovation and learning (Weinstein & Bukovsinsky, 2009; Boorsma & Chiaravallotti, 2010). According to the authors, this approach incorporates both the mission-driven and market-based sides of arts organizations. Speckbacher takes the proposition a step further into the realm of stakeholder relations and insists that organizations must "define clearly what key stakeholders have to give the organization in order to fulfill its mission and how to satisfy these stakeholders in return" (Boorsma & Chiaravallotti, p. 307). Colbert and St-James (2014) insist that since art is an experiential product, the environment and services surrounding the artistic experiences play a great role in how and to what extent

a consumer enjoys and repeats their participation in an arts activity. Therefore, more knowledge of the service component along with a better understanding of consumers' experience at the performance will help with the future direction of PAOs (Colbert & St-James, 2014). Other approaches to "solve" the orientational dilemma of arts organizations include incorporating a relationship marketing approach, extending the definition of the artistic product to include auxiliary activities, or simply maintaining the marketing function as a neutral, tactical set of tools used to achieve the goal of the organization or artistic director (Lee, 2005).

While scholars agree that product-orientation is typical of not-for-profit PAOs, a number of alternative strategic orientations exist that might support or progress the sector in the future without sacrificing the organization's legal obligation to its charitable mission. PAOs in the twenty first century experience a greater pressure than their earlier counterparts to balance budgets in the face of diminishing government support and ticket sales, and the idea of moving toward a market-led programming style is a debated subject in the sector. As a mission-based industry, some scholars believe that exhibiting a customer or market orientation, whereby an organization incorporates the customer or market's preferences into the product development process (Voss & Voss, 2000) is in direct opposition with the core purpose of an arts organization. This sentiment is embedded in a romantic notion of the art's "civilizing" effect (Lee, 2005), inherent superiority as a discipline, and years of reverence to "the artist" and their creative output.

The status of the artist as being put on a pedestal and a reverence to the sanctity of the artistic product is evident throughout the ages and across artistic disciplines. For example, painter Gerhard Richter was once quoted as saying, “Art is not a substitute religion: it is a religion...But the church is no longer adequate as a means of affording experience of the transcendental—and so art has been transformed from a means into the sole provider of...religion itself” (Elgar & Obrist, 2009, p. 34). While maintaining this devotion to their art, artists have, at the same time, had an interesting relationship with the notion of success and how it does or does not affect the integrity of their artistic practice and an artist’s relationship with his audience. Referencing his commercial success in 1956, Picasso stated, “Success is dangerous. It leads to sterility.” In 1966, he went on to say, “But success is an important thing! It has often been said that an artist should work for himself, for the love of art, and scorn success. It’s a false idea.” He went on to extol the virtue of unpopular artistic styles and the necessity of an art that goes against the status quo: “An artist needs success...But where is it written that success must always go to those who flatter the public taste? For myself, I wanted to prove that success can be obtained without compromise, even in opposition to all of the prevailing doctrines” (Ashton, 1972, p. 86-87). Picasso’s thoughts are an example of how, historically, artistic integrity and financial success or marketability have had a tenuous relationship. This sentiment is echoed in traditional arts marketing practices that relegated marketing to a purely tactical role in order to protect the purity of the art itself. Responding to this popular notion of an artist “selling out” for commercial success, Australian art critic Robert Hughes (New York Times, 1984) said, “The idea that

money, patronage, and trade automatically corrupt the wells of imagination is a pious fiction, believed by some utopian lefties and a few people of genius like Blake, but flatly contradicted by history itself.” It is against this backdrop that the sanctity of the artist has been revered and protected across the ages, and from this mode of thinking that the concept of market-oriented activities are shunned.

In keeping with this romantic and reverent view of the arts, Voss and Voss (2000) caution PAOs in using the marketing concept in general and customer orientation specifically, in fear that it might alienate and create dissatisfaction in arts organizations’ most dedicated patrons who often rely on the artistic director’s product knowledge and do not care for the opinions of their peers in the audience. Voss and Voss’s research (2000) determines that market orientation in PAOs is undesirable due to “high rates of intangible and artistic innovation, customers who may not be able to articulate their preferences, [and] customers who rely on the product expertise of the artist to inform and challenge them” (p. 78).

Yet, as the number of dedicated arts patrons wanes (National Endowment for the Arts, 2015), organizations seek to cast a wider net on prospective audiences and Voss and Voss’s approach does not take into account that introductory programming that incorporates elements of market orientation and works to bring new people into the arts might be a good practice. Without throwing away the marketing concept completely, others scholars posit that marketing in the arts must be considered within the unique marketing challenges of the industry itself. Firstly, an arts organization must find a market, “because it is presenting productions for which there may be little or no

existing demand,” then it must expand its market, “but since art is so often ahead of its audience, the organization is limited from producing the works that would most quickly expand the audience.” Finally, an arts organization must then keep its audience, which might be challenging given that its mission to innovate and experiment might hinder the retention of certain audience members (Bernstein, 2014, p. 26-27).

An array of options exist for the twenty first century arts organization and research shows that a better understanding of stakeholders could contribute to improved sustainability in the sector. Another type of strategic orientation is peer or self orientation, a highly internal and personal approach which elevates artists’ and arts organizations’ values and approval as a higher priority than approval of the public at large (Hirschman, 1983). An entrepreneurial orientation more similar to start up companies, which focuses on innovation, risk-taking, and being proactive has also been suggested (Morris, Coombes, & Schindehutte, 2007), while other arts management scholars feel this orientation can compromise the social and artistic values of a not-for-profit PAO (Voss & Voss, 2000; Butler, 2000).

Due to the need for not-for-profit PAOs to satisfy their charitable mission, product orientation remains the most common and constant direction for performing arts organizations. This type of strategic orientation integrates innovation into the product development process (adhering to the artistic integrity of the product and working within the understanding that the artistic product holds intrinsic value), and tries to “find consumers who are likely to appreciate the product” (Colbert, 2001, p. 15) instead of creating art that customers might appreciate (Voss & Voss, 2000; Hirschman, 1983;

Lee, 2005). Other scholars reiterate the complexity of strategic orientations and posit that the PAO sector, because of the multiplicity of stakeholders it serves, can take on multiple orientations simultaneously, including customer, artist, media, and competitor orientations (Sorjonen, 2011, p. 10). While it is argued that product-oriented fields operate in direct opposition with the marketing concept (Voss & Voss, 2000), the romantic view of artist as the authoritarian on aesthetic products is challenged by those scholars who believe market or customer orientation has a role in mission-based fields such as not-for-profit PAOs (Colbert and St. James, 2014; Lee, 2005).

Proponents of market orientation in PAOs describe a strategy in which PAOs can focus on their mission while also being customer-centred (Sorjonen, 2011). This research distinguishes between a reactive form of market orientation that responds to expressed needs and desires of customers, and a proactive form of market orientation that anticipates customers' latent or unarticulated needs. Proactive market orientation might respond to a customer's need to be intellectually stimulated or experience new things, and takes a role in leading the tastes of the market instead of responding to it. The proactive form of market orientation is the ideal strategic orientation for not-for-profit PAOs because it fits the mission and social values of this sector, anticipating and leading the aesthetic tastes of cultural consumers (Sorjonen, 2011).

This theory of proactive market orientation is echoed in research on strategic orientation by Jaworski, Kohli, & Sahay (2000). In their research, the authors analyze two approaches to market orientation: market-driven and driving markets. While the market-driven approach is based on a reaction to market preferences, driving markets

refers to an organization's capacity to influence the behaviour of consumers in the market in a way that makes the organization more competitive and successful. Both approaches can play a role in developing and delivering artistic products, as PAOs can both drive markets with innovative, new products while also creating products that are in direct response to market desires. Jaworski et al. (2000) recommend a deeper understanding of customers in order to discover unmet needs, and posit that excellent companies can occupy both orientations simultaneously. This approach is perhaps exemplified in symphony programming that offers both "pops" concerts, like, for example, a symphonic Beatles tribute, to satisfy the pure entertainment desires of audiences and "masterworks" concerts which might present denser, more challenging repertoire, such as 20th century art music or Mahler's Third Symphony. In this sense, PAOs can increase their organizational effectiveness, meet their mission and become more competitive in a crowded marketplace by taking a cue from Jaworski et al.'s recommendation to "manage the present through short-term, market-driven actions and, simultaneously, consider how to reshape markets by driving them into new competitive spaces" (Jaworski, Kohli, & Sahay, p. 54).

Other supporters of market orientation in PAOs believe that this strategic orientation does not, by definition, compromise the artistic mission of an organization. For example, positive relationships between PAOs and audiences were found in organizations that exhibited a strong commitment to customer satisfaction and were attuned to audience feedback and suggestions (Simon, Pervan, & Nuttall, 2009). This form of market orientation can also support the financial success of the organization.

Research by Gainer and Padanyi (2002) suggests that as audiences start being considered in the creation and delivery of artistic products, arts organizations will experience not only higher levels of audience satisfaction, but also financial gain from donors and corporate sponsors and the respect of peers.

Applying the Marketing Concept

In many PAOs, the marketing and communications function plays a tactical role in communicating and selling the vision of an artistic director and marketing staff may not have a seat at the programming table where decisions about the artistic product are made. This limits the communication professionals' ability to truly contribute to the success and sustainability of the sector. In order for a customer-oriented approach to be successful, researchers have posited that market orientation in PAOs must be modified to suit the unique structures of the not-for-profit sector, and not vice versa (Hirschman, 1983). In some situations, consideration of customers' desires is implemented within a small segment of the overall artistic experience. Castaner and Campos (2002) assert that innovation of artistic products can occur either in the artistic product itself or the form in which it is delivered.

Innovation in the form the artistic product's delivery is evident in the creation of market-oriented auxiliary products. Instead of applying the marketing concept directly to the core product (i.e. what's on stage), some PAOs create augmented or auxiliary products that support and keep the integrity of the core artistic product. In this case, the auxiliary product is created to appeal to a wider demographic and the experience *surrounding* the consumption of the art is designed to bring in new audiences (Lee,

2005). Examples of market-based auxiliary programming include a symphony holding a classical music performance in a bar, such as the nationally popular Classical Revolution program, or a regional art gallery opening up their space to nightclub style party for young professionals, such as the Art Gallery of Ontario's monthly First Thursdays parties. These programs do not affect core symphonic programming in concert halls or exhibition openings in art galleries, but rather augment the experience of each art form by placing it in a different context for audiences who need a more market-oriented offering in order to be encouraged to consume the product at all. In this sense, the marketing concept is applied to a limited slice of a PAO's program offerings, while maintaining its core product and the "artist as authority" product orientation (Lee, 2005).

Beyond the creation of auxiliary programming, the pressure to become more market- or customer-oriented must be better explored as a potential strategic orientation for contemporary PAOs. Research from the 1970s to today teaches that a new understanding of customer desire and motivation is necessary in order for the arts sector to evolve. The reasons why people attend the performing arts can be complex, and range from as cerebral and personal as someone wanting to experience intellectual enlightenment to simply needing an activity to do with a friend. Some research suggests that audiences participate in leisure activities based on an idealized self-image they want to reflect (Walmsley, 2011). Motivations to attend can include social, intellectual, spiritual, and emotional dimensions such as attending the ballet to enjoy the beauty onstage, attending the symphony to experience self-reflection, or buying

tickets to a new play by a controversial director because the content is intellectually challenging (Walmsley, 2011). However, audiences are also provoked to attend arts events through other variables, including personal feelings of value and satisfaction (Troilo, Cito, & Soscia, 2014). Additionally, today's audiences are notoriously fickle and do not display the same level of loyalty as previous generations of arts consumers (LaPlaca Cohen, 2014), further complicating the matter. Motivations can also vary depending on age, ethnic background, the type of art form, and other social factors. For example, patrons for music or theatre events are more likely to participate in arts events as a means of socializing with friends and family, as opposed to guests of museums and galleries, for whom a desire to learn is most important (Wallace Foundation, 2005; The Audience Agency, 2015). As a matter of fact, research has shown that contemporary audiences increasingly prioritize the social component of attending an arts event over the art itself (National Endowment for the Arts, 2015). Other motivations for arts consumption can include supporting a community organization, gaining knowledge, learning about ones' cultural heritage, and having an emotionally rewarding experience (Wallace Foundation, 2005). Often audiences want to fulfill multiple dimensions simultaneously when choosing to consume an arts product, such as a performance or an exhibit, underscoring the importance of understanding and developing relationships with discrete audience segments and individuals to best serve their unique needs (Slater, 2007).

In the face of increasing competition for consumer leisure time, marketing and arts management scholars speculate that a strategic communications approach that

includes a relationship management component can help PAOs evolve to meet contemporary challenges. This approach is particularly effective in service industries, like the performing arts, where both the consumer and provider of the service must be present in order for the arts product to be consumed. Relationship marketing refers to an approach that incorporates both product and service elements to “establish, maintain and enhance relationships with customers and other partners, at a profit, so that the objectives of the parties involved are met. This is achieved by a mutual exchange and fulfillment of promises” (Gronroos, 1996, p. 13). Relationship marketing seeks to move customers up the ladder of customer loyalty by establishing a sense of customer satisfaction, mutual trust, and commitment (Voss & Voss, 1997), and through a recognition that quality, customer service, and marketing must be brought together (Baron et al., 2010). It differs from transactional marketing efforts by building long-term relationships through an “exchange of value for both sides” (Rentschler, Radbourne, Carr, & Rickard, 2002, p. 124).

Theories and practices of relationship marketing suit the social purpose of the not-for-profit sector. The relationship marketing approach is based on the theory that it is more expensive to gain customers than steward existing ones, and long-term associations with customers result in more profitable relationships for the organization (Baron et al., 2010). Baumol’s cost disease and the unique nature of PAOs makes cost controls and efficiencies difficult to implement, however, a relationship marketing approach, where patrons become more loyal and consume more of the organization’s products and services over time, could be the best way to reduce costs and increase

sustainability in this sector. As the relationship deepens, organizations can become more knowledgeable about their patrons. This deepening of the relationship has an added benefit: the longer and more loyal a patron is with an organization, the more the relationship is important to them and the less price sensitive they become to the organization's products (Baron et al., 2010).

Scholars have recommended numerous tactics to operationalize the relationship management/marketing approach and improve relationships with current and prospective patrons. As a means of addressing the needs of twenty first century consumers, Day (2000) suggests a three-point relationship spectrum that includes transactional exchanges, value-adding exchanges, and collaborative exchanges. Day (2000) also suggests that in order to move along the spectrum an organization must display market-relating capability, a value that competitors would find difficult to understand and replicate, thereby creating a competitive advantage for an organization. Sheth, Sisodia, and Sharma (2000) stress that the marketing function must move beyond simply relating to the marketplace and address the needs of *individual* customers instead of the mass market or targeted segments. Pressures to increase marketing productivity and the use of technologies that make customer-focused marketing possible drive organizations into a more one-on-one marketing relationship, thereby making relationship marketing with *individual* customers more feasible in the twenty first century (Sheth, Sisodia, & Sharma, 2000). In the service sector, of which PAOs are included, Bitner et al. (2000) cites technology as an important tool in overcoming service failures, delighting customers, and customizing service offerings (Bitner, Stephen, &

Matthew, 2000), thereby furthering the goals of the relationship marketing/management approach.

This method is echoed in arts fundraising literature that articulates the importance of relationship cultivation in developing and maintaining support from donors (Waters, 2008). Relationships with donors are more successful when organizations are clear and open with stakeholders about needs, success, and goals, creating a link between relationship management and fiscal health (Waters, 2008). The literature on relationship marketing in the arts moves away from the tactical marketing style, common in the “artist as authority” approach where marketing played a promotional role, and incorporates the marketing function into a more strategic role to create sustainability through mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and the publics they serve (Conway & Whitlock, 2007). Elements of a successful relationship with stakeholders include “customer empathy, experience/satisfaction, trust/commitment, and effective two-way communications” (Conway & Whitlock, 2007, p. 208). This is also reflected in strategic communications theory that underscores the importance of trust, commitment, satisfaction and control mutuality (Hon & Grunig, 1999), cooperation, open communication, an in-depth understanding of customer needs (Bruning & Ledingham, 1999), and generally displaying the characteristics of a satisfying personal relationship (Bruning & Galloway, 2003) when developing relationships with publics.

Some arts management scholars understand that the opportunity for creating a mutually beneficial and interdependent relationship with those publics on whom

success depends is greatly increased when a patron knows more about the organization's direction and needs. In their research on relationship marketing, Rentschler et al. (2002) recommend emphasis on relationship building instead of transactional exchanges and a focus on flexibility, adaptability, and capacity for change as hallmarks of organizational viability in this sector. Believing that commercial, transactional marketing strategies are not appropriate for the NFP PAOs, Rentschler et al. believe that awareness that "quality, customer service, and marketing activities need to be brought together" (Rentschler et al., 2002, p. 123) will lead to increased levels of patron satisfaction and loyalty, thus improving organizational sustainability. Furthering the discussion on relationship marketing and interpersonal relationship dynamics, Duck (1991) believes that any patron relationship must be entered in to with an awareness of these four elements of relationship building: 1) awareness of opportunities for a relationship; 2) the ability to encourage people into a relationship; 3) knowledge and skills pertaining to how the relationship can be developed; 4) skills to maintain and repair the relationship. This research makes it evident that developing and managing relationships between organizations and patrons cannot happen by chance, but rather must be considered and planned carefully and mindfully given the capacity and goals of an organization.

Due to their structure and nature of the industry, not-for-profit PAOs are not able to adapt as quickly to changes in their environment as commercial ventures. With seasons of programming planned years in advance, union agreements that make labour costs harder to manage, and Baumol's cost disease making productivity efficiencies

nearly impossible, performing arts organizations can function as slow moving ships. As such, strategies to improve the sustainability of the sector must be implemented with the long-term in mind. Relationship marketing, therefore, must be seen as a long-term strategy to improve communication and relationships with the various publics served by a PAO. Utilizing marketing communications as a tactical promotional tool can be short-sighted and problematic in the long run (Conway & Whitlock, 2007). Rentschler et al. (2002) suggest that a marketing strategy that incorporates elements of relationship marketing to improve relations with stakeholders can increase organizational success and viability in an increasingly competitive marketplace. Therefore, institutionalizing the practices that promote positive relationship management between an organization and its patrons could present a real competitive advantage for twenty first century arts organizations.

Incorporating a Strategic Communications Approach

Research on the linkages between relationship marketing and organizational viability in the arts is echoed in strategic communications and public relations literature. This existing research has the potential to ground future arts marketing practices in theoretically and empirically sound knowledge. The Canadian Public Relations Society (CPRS) defines public relations as “the strategic management of relationships between an organization and its diverse publics, through the use of communication, to achieve mutual understanding, realize organizational goals and serve the public interest” (Flynn, Gregory, & Valen, 2008). According to this definition, organizations and publics have an

interdependent relationship that can only be maintained and deepened through a greater understanding of each other.

The purpose of this thesis is to analyze the ways in which organizations communicate and present themselves to the public. Therefore, for the purpose of this thesis, “strategic communications” refers to the practices that encompass public relations, marketing, and communications efforts. This is akin to the arrangement Kotler and Mindak (1978) proposed, where the goals of marketing and public relations converge under the same function and single department handles an organization’s external affairs.

The value of communications excellence as a cornerstone of organizational success has been explored by Grunig & Grunig (2000). The social benefit structure of NFP PAOs is especially suited to Grunig’s standards of communications management, as arts organizations rely more and more on relationships and value than the traditional transactional models of commercial enterprises. Grunig (2001) outlined how organizations might exhibit one or more of the following styles of communication when communicating with stakeholders: 1) one-way (press agency, public information, etc.); 2) two-way asymmetrical (persuading publics); 3) two-way symmetrical (a dialogue between organization and public). His work stressed that the twenty first century communications professional is moving away from the one-way, asymmetrical modes of the past into an approach that stresses collaboration as a core value (Grunig, 2000). The collaborative values exemplified in strategic communications encourage practitioners to balance the needs of the general public with that of the organization by highlighting the

importance of communal relationships (Grunig, 2000). Strategic communications therefore is well suited to the social benefit structure of not-for-profit PAOs. In the same way that arts organizations should move away from transactional exchanges toward relationship marketing/management, strategic communications encompasses the marketing function's shift from transactional exchanges to relationships based on satisfaction, value, and quality (Hallahan, 2007).

As such, a PAO's communication practitioner can become an important organizational asset in helping improve relationships between the organization and publics they serve. In helping an organization understand the view of itself from the outside (Steyn, 2007), strategic communication practitioners become boundary spanners and deal with strategic issues by "aligning organizational goals and strategies to societal/stakeholder values and norms—serving both the organizational and public interest" (Steyn, 2007, p. 139). Communication practitioners are tasked with understanding an organization's various publics and, through good communication practices, seek to garner trust, legitimacy and good reputation (Steyn, 2007). Theories of strategic communications management are comparable to the twenty first century needs of arts marketing, which, in the absence of a pure market-oriented approach to product development, seeks to create mutually beneficial relationships with patrons based on understanding needs and goals, trust, commitment, and loyalty (Conway & Whitlock, 2007). In this new dynamic, the strategic involvement of communication staff at the decision-making table is vital.

The evolution of communications thought offers that the communications function (which encompasses both public relations and marketing practices) achieves excellence when it is used as a strategic management function within an organization, managing the interdependence of various publics most likely to affect an organization's ability to pursue its mission (Grunig & Grunig, 2000). One of its roles is not only to understand concerns of its publics and build relationships with them, but also to bring those views into an organization's decision-making process. As such, arts organizations could bring communications staff to the table when discussing the development and delivery of artistic products in the marketplace. Not only can communications practitioners help artistic directors understand the impacts of their decisions, they can also guide the thought of the artistic director toward an approach that is both artistically sound and appropriately delivered to the publics they are trying to reach.

To that end, arts organizations could seek to achieve a "mutually beneficial end state" with a variety of stakeholder groups, exhibiting a mix of dialogue, collaboration, and negotiation in their communications (Flynn, 2006), depending on the type of stakeholder they are speaking with and their level of commitment to the organization. Stakeholder needs and concerns, especially regarding something as diverse and complex as aesthetic taste, are often complex and multidimensional (Bruning and Galloway, 2003; Bruning and Ledingham, 1999; Flynn, 2006). This makes meeting stakeholder needs difficult, in general, but especially challenging in an industry where consumers do not necessarily know what they enjoy in an artistic product. Therefore a dedicated effort to understand publics, develop trust and commitment, and interact and respond

sincerely to patron needs is critical in order to maintain or improve the viability of arts organizations in the twenty first century.

In order to fully understand the impact and importance of organization-public relationships, a definition and understanding of “relationship” must be established. Relationships occur when relational partners have an expectation and perception of each other and work toward interdependent needs or goals (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 1997). As such, relationships are not passive entities, but are dynamic and evolve over time based on exchanges between parties (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 1997). Based on this understanding, it’s clear that a good organization-public relationship has similar qualities of a satisfying personal relationship and exhibits traits that show a sense of personal commitment (Bruning & Galloway, 2003). Applying axioms of interpersonal communication can contribute to successful relationships between organizations and the publics they serve. The axioms of interpersonal communication assert that interpersonal communication is ongoing and constantly changing, communication is inevitable and irreversible, communication is a process of adjustment, and partners in the communication process may complement each others’ behaviours or mirror them (DeVito, 1995). Furthering the understanding of how organizations and publics can work together to achieve mutual understanding and achieve goals, Bruning (2001) took these axioms and applied the principles to the context in which organizations and publics interact. This understanding of the organization-public relationship dynamic highlights the sensitivity and interdependency of stakeholders in the relationship and, based on DeVito’s (1995) interpersonal relationship values, asserts the following axioms

to help organizations understand how communications works within the framework of organization-public relationships and relationship management:

- 1) Organization-public relationships are ongoing and in a constant state of flux.
- 2) Organizations and publics are interdependent.
- 3) Communication is inevitable and meaning is assigned to all organizational action or inaction.
- 4) Communication is irreversible.
- 5) Communication is culture-specific and the public's reception of key messages can be seriously impacted based on cultural differences between organizations and publics.
- 6) The development of positive OPR is a process of adjustment and requires mutual adaptation and response.
- 7) OPR has a content dimension (referring to the organization's expectation of itself) and relationship dimension (referring to relationship that exists between the organization and key publics), and should understand the expectations that relate to these dimensions.
- 8) Mutual benefit should be the foundation of relationships.
- 9) Organizations and publics might have a complementary, exchange, or symmetrical style relationship.
- 10) Organizations must adapt their messages based on the interaction expectation of their publics and the relationship phase they are in.

Each of these axioms illuminate an interpersonal dimension of an arts organizations relationship with their patrons that, when properly stewarded, can yield positive results for the organization. For example, when stewarding a patron through the phases of coming together, as outlined by Ledingham (2000), a theatre organization might base their communication strategy on an understanding of the unyielding nature of the communication process, respond to the period of adjustment when learning what is important to their patron, and create a foundation of mutual benefit with that patron.

Bruning's (2001) research reflects the need for communication to support an ongoing relationship of active publics, instead of a dated view of one-way communication with passive publics, analogous to the "artist as authority" approach. When comparing arts marketing and strategic communications management literature, the "artist as authority" model, so prevalent in the "cultural golden age" (Colbert, 2009), appears similar to the one-way and asymmetrical models of Grunig's (2001) four models of public relations, which relegates the public to a more passive and subservient position in organization-public relationships. While the contingency theory teaches that each of the four models can be effectively deployed at the appropriate time (Grunig, 2001), one-way approaches and two-way asymmetrical approaches seem incongruous with the contemporary social values, when collaboration, collectivism (Grunig, 2000), trust and commitment (Hon & Grunig, 1999) is most valued in organization-public relationships. This research calls for twenty first century arts organizations to embrace a more collaborative and mutually adaptive dynamic with patrons, as a means of sustainability for this sector.

Through solid strategic communications practices, the communications function of an organization can make or break that organization's rapport with diverse publics. Knowing where an organization is positioned in relation to a given public can help an organization adapt its messages based on which relationship phase a specific public occupies. For example, the phases of coming together include the introductory, exploration, escalating, assimilating, and fidelity phases, whereas the stages of coming apart include the contrasting, spiraling, idling, evading, and discontinuance phases (Ledingham, 2000). These phases of a relationship might be applied to a symphony orchestra's relationship to a new patron, and help form a strategy around customer retention. In the introductory and exploration phase, the prospective patron becomes more interested in the organization and explores the various programming it has to offer (i.e. attending performances and talks, visiting the website often, watching videos of the symphony's artists). The escalation and assimilation phases see both parties better understand each other's needs while the openness of the organization causes the individual to increase their favourable view of the organization (i.e. talking about the organization with friends). The patron occupies the fidelity phase once s/he becomes a subscriber, a public expression of the patron and organization's loyalty and mutual commitment to one another. Understanding these phases can help organizations successfully integrate new publics into the organization and upgrade patrons up the ladder of customer loyalty.

Organization-public relationships (OPR) can take on many dimensions, but displaying the qualities of a satisfying interpersonal relationship is undoubtedly a crucial

component in strategic communications (Bruning & Galloway, 2003). In addition to behaving like a good interpersonal relationship partner, organizations must ensure that their communication strategies establish a sense of professionalism, so that patron expectations that services are delivered in a business-like manner are met (Bruning & Ledingham, 1999). Additionally, OPR must take on both a personal and community dimension, where patrons feel engaged in the organization and trust is developed through open communication to improve social and economic aspects of the community (Bruning & Ledingham, 1999, p. 165). In order to address each of these dimensions, organizations must understand that publics are “active, interactive, and equal participants of an ongoing communication process” and the communication strategy must support an ongoing relationship as opposed to a one-way transfer of information (Gronstedt, 1997, p. 39). Effective OPR requires a symmetrical communication approach and relies on a nurturing relationship management style and creating a sense of openness, trust, and understanding (Bruning & Ledingham, 2000), matching well with the contemporary relationship marketing approach recommended for arts organizations. Incorporating the interpersonal relationship models explored by Bruning and other scholars can be helpful understanding the implications of PAOs’ actions and decisions.

These theories act as an important foundation through which one might understand how and to what extent Canadian not-for-profit performing arts organizations are incorporating strategic communication practices into their relationships with patrons. This thesis attempts to close the gap between theory and

practice, and recognize whether arts organizations are displaying a similarly forward thinking approach in the operation of Canadian not-for-profit performing arts sector and how that approach can contribute to organizational success.

Proposition

In summary, the theories of strategic communications management possess the qualities necessary to meet the communication and organizational needs of the twenty first century not-for-profit performing arts organization, contributing to the sustainability of the sector. Arts marketing theorists have identified the inherent challenges in marketing a product that was not designed expressly with the market in mind. Not-for-profit arts organizations must seek to develop audiences through the practices of strategic communications management, learn how to keep them, and steward them into increasingly engaged phases of organizational activity. Theories from communications management literature on relationships management/marketing, market orientation, interpersonal relationship values, and organization-public relationships can support the development and viability of the Canadian arts sector in the twenty first century.

Working Definitions

Strategic communications management – The intersection of strategy, management, and the communications function (including public relations and marketing) that informs the managerial decisions and actions to determines the long-run performance of an organization (Meath, 2013). Also, the process by which the communications plan is managed strategically to provide a link between an organization’s communication

activities and the achievement of the organization's mission and strategies (Steyn, 2007).

Not-for-profit (NFP)– In Canada, refers to the legal status of a club, society, or association that is organized and operated solely for: social welfare, civic improvement, pleasure or recreation, any other purpose except for profit (Canada Revenue Agency, 2012).

Charity – In Canada, a registered charity is an incorporated organization designated by the Canada Revenue Agency and governed by a legal document explaining the organization's purpose and structure (called a trust or constitution). The organization must be established and operated for charitable purpose, devoting all resources and income to charitable activities instead of for the benefit of its members. Charities must provide a public benefit through their activities, and fall into one of the following categories: poverty relief, educational advancement, advancement of religion, or other purposes that benefit the community in a way the courts have deemed as charitable. Charities are exempt from revenue tax and can issue official donation receipts (Canada Revenue Agency, 2011).

Performing arts organization (PAO) – Entities that produce performing arts products for audiences, such as dance, music, theatre, opera, performance art, etc. These art forms differ from the visual arts in that they offer perishable inventory that loses its value if left unsold after a certain amount of time.

Professional arts organizations – Corporations that are run by professional, paid staff and employ professional, paid artists to carry out their work. Artists are most often

highly skilled and highly educated in their craft, respected amongst their peers, and make their living through their art form.

Arts product – Refers to an arts organization’s total product offerings, from the core product that is presented onstage to the auxiliary products designed to increase audiences. In the case of the performing arts industry, “arts product” also refers to the intangible, experiential service elements inherent in consuming performing arts products. Therefore, the service element is intrinsically linked to performing arts products, and arts products are subject to the same unique characteristics of the service industry (Bernstein, 2014, p. 173).

JUSTIFICATION OF RESEARCH PROBLEM AND QUESTIONS

***RQ 1:** How and to what extent are Canadian arts organizations using strategic communications to develop mutually beneficial relationships between their customers and the products they develop and deliver?*

This research question is designed to understand in what way Canadian arts organizations create relationships with patrons. In particular, RQ 1 positions the relationship with patrons against the arts products the organization delivers, underscoring the importance of stakeholder relations to the sustainability of the not-for-profit arts sector. This question seeks to open a dialogue to explore the many strategies and tactics organizations could employ to build relationships that further their mission and serve stakeholders.

***RQ 2:** How and to what extent does strategic communications with the customer coexist with the challenges of operating within a mission-based, product-oriented field?*

The second research question focuses attention on the tension that can arise between an organization's patrons and the art it develops. In particular, this question seeks to understand the extent to which organizations maintained relationships with patrons even when patrons are not always satisfied or interested in the arts product the organization delivers. This question acknowledges the unique structure of NFP PAOs and the relationship between patrons and the arts product, and seeks to understand how and whether organizations are using tactics and strategies to ensure patron satisfaction with performing arts organizations, where product-oriented arts experiences presented by a single organization can be highly variable and elicit multifarious responses from patrons.

RESEARCH METHODS

Overview and Approach

While most arts marketing literature research seems to call for a more embedded practice of strategic communications as a means of improving the viability and contributing to the success of the arts, the purpose of this research is to understand the extent that this approach is being used in performing arts organizations as a means of improving the sustainability and viability of the Canadian arts sector. This study is interested in testing the extent to which strategic communications is being used to close the gap between the arts products and the stakeholders organizations aim to reach with those products.

Research Design

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To determine our sample size, a list of non-profit, charitable performing arts organizations was identified through the Canada Council for the Arts website. Organizations were selected in a purposive sample in order to have a representative cross-section of artistic genres. From that list, contact information was found on each organization’s website and emails were sent to CEOs of 12 organizations. Nine CEOs were part of the final sample size. CEOs were contacted via email to book an interview time. The confidentiality of respondents was assured throughout the research process and was a prerequisite according to McMaster University’s ethics approval (MREB #2014230). Names and organizations have been kept anonymous in this thesis, helping to ensure subjects were forthcoming in interviews and surveys. Of those contacted, a final respondent sample of 9 small- to large-sized professional Canadian arts organizations was used.

Table 1

Art Form	Approximate Budget Size	Region	Approximate Years of Operation
Dance	Under \$1M	Central Canada	40
Dance	\$10M	Western Canada	75
Theatre	\$2.5M	Central Canada	45
Theatre	\$8.5M	Central Canada	45
Opera	Under \$1M	Central Canada	35
Opera	\$9M	Western Canada	60
Opera	\$35M	Central Canada	60
Symphony	\$25M	Central Canada	90
Symphony	\$1M	Western Canada	45

Table 1. Characterization of final respondent sample.

Organization budget sizes ranged from under \$1M to \$35M and staff sizes ranged from two staff members to over 100. The respondent organizations were based in three

different provinces. As a purposive sample, it is worth noting that only professional arts organizations were contacted, meaning that artists from each organization receive payment for their services and organizations are run by professional management. Community-based organizations that serve amateur art-makers and/or those managed by volunteers were not included in this study. Additionally, each organization made up their budget through at least two of the following three revenue streams: municipal, provincial, and/or federal government; individual and corporate giving; and ticket revenue. Arts organizations included: two orchestras, two dance companies, two theatre companies, and three opera companies.

Data was collected via three vehicles: one-on-one interviews, online surveys, and a content analysis of marketing materials. Semi-structured, one-on-one interviews took place over the phone with each CEO. Interviews were based around a set of questions, but also allowed for appropriate deviations from the interview script based on the answers and unique perspectives of each respondent. Following CEO interviews, marketing directors for each organization were sent an online survey. The survey pertained to their organization's marketing strategy and tactics.

The study was rounded out with a content analysis of marketing and other publicly available materials. Three pieces of marketing materials were analyzed from each organization. Analysis consisted of reading the text of each piece and identifying when, where, and how phrases and language were used that pertained to strategic communications. In particular, the analysis identified instances where sentiments of interpersonal relationship values, market orientation, organization-public relationship

values, and relationship marketing/management were used. The purpose of this analysis was to understand the extent to which organizations explicitly or implicitly expressed dimensions of strategic communications management in their written materials, in order to support improved relationships with their current and prospective patrons.

Due to the diversity of participating organizations, titles of interviewees varied widely. Depending on the organization, interviewees might be referred to as “Executive Director,” “CEO,” or “Managing Director.” The difference in title did not affect the quality of data received from each interview, since in each instance the interview took place with the most senior business professional in the organization. Surveys were completed by staff with titles such as “Chief Communications Officer,” “Marketing Director,” and other nomenclature that represented the person most responsible for communicating with patron stakeholders.

To understand the extent to which CEOs engaged strategic communications methods in their organizations, semi-structured interviews took place over the phone or in person between December 2014 and March 2015. Interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes in length and were audio recorded and transcribed at a later date. The interviewer prepared 11 questions, which were sent to each interview subject a couple of days prior to the interview. Interview questions were designed to best understand the strategic direction of the organization, encourage the CEO to speak about current challenges in their field, and discuss how and to what extent they incorporated the qualities of strategic communications management in dealing with those challenges.

During the interview process, CEOs were also probed about their organization’s communication vehicles and to what extent they incorporated two-way mechanisms in communicating their product to current and prospective patrons. To protect the identities of organizations and their staff and allow leaders to be forthcoming in their interviews and surveys, the identities of all study participants were kept confidential.

Table 2

Interview question	Justification for question
<i>What is the strategic direction of your organization?</i>	Seeks to understand the overarching mission and goals of the organization at the time of the interview (general question).
<i>Describe, in your opinion, the ideal relationship between your organization and your patron stakeholders?</i>	Seeks to understand the relationship management approach of the organization (relates to RQ1).
<i>What values do you want your stakeholders to associate with your organization?</i>	Seeks to understand whether the organization seeks to establish interpersonal relationship values with stakeholders (relates to RQ1).
<i>What challenges do you have in communicating your product to current patrons? Prospective patrons? Discuss.</i>	Seeks to understand how the organization communicates potentially challenging artistic products to current and prospective patrons (relates to RQ2).
<i>As a not-for-profit, mission based arts organization, how do you balance programming that appeals to your artists, peers and current patrons with that which appeals to your prospective audience and the general public?</i>	Seeks to understand the extent to which market orientation, peer orientation, and/or product orientation is used in developing programming (relates to RQ2).
<i>How and to what extent are your patrons’ expressed desires incorporated at the artistic programming table?</i>	Seeks to understand the extent to which patron feedback and two-way communication have an impact in determining how an artistic product is developed (relates to RQ2).
<i>What, if any, organizational changes have you made over the past 10 years to adapt to changing social, cultural, and artistic environments?</i>	Seeks to understand the extent to which the organization has adapted its practices to the twenty first century social landscape (relates to RQ1).
<i>What, if any, organizational changes have you made over the past 10 years to adapt to the changing ways people consume live performing arts?</i>	Seeks to understand the extent to which the organization has adapted its practices to the consumer trends of today’s audience (relates to RQ1).
<i>What are your biggest challenges in designing product offerings for current patrons? How does this differ for prospective patrons?</i>	Seeks to understand how and if organizations differ in the products they design for different audiences, and whether a targeted, patron-focused approach is used in reaching different types of audience members (relates to RQ2).
<i>What do you find most challenging about making product decisions in a field that is mission-based</i>	Seeks to understand how and to what extent the organization address the market vs. product

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<i>compared to one that is purely market based? How do you alleviate these challenges?</i>	orientation tension (relates to RQ2).
<i>Some arts management scholars believe that responding to market forces will result in a low quality of work and have a “dichotomous view of the relationship between artistic excellence and popularity.” What are your thoughts?</i>	Seeks to understand the extent to which organizations have a romantic view of the arts, common in the “artist as authority” perception (general question).

Table 2. Justification for CEO interview questions.

In addition to interviewing CEOs, online surveys were sent to marketing directors or other chief communication professionals of the same organizations. The identity of survey respondents was also kept confidential and anonymous to ensure they were forthcoming in their responses. The survey consisted of 13 questions sent through Survey Monkey, an online survey service. Of the 13 questions, 11 of them were closed-ended or partially closed-ended questions (where respondents had a choice of responses but could also create their own) and two were open-ended. The survey consisted of single response and Likert scale questions. The open-ended questions gave marketing directors the opportunity to provide rich qualitative data that helped communicate the unique position of their organization and its approach to patron engagement. The survey was pre-tested with one arts management professional who was not included in the set of respondents.

Table 3

Online survey question	Justification for question
<p><i>Which definition more adequately describes the strategic direction of your organization? (select one)</i></p> <p>a. <i>We seek to produce an art form we believe is intrinsically valuable and to which we believe patrons will respond positively. We are chiefly concerned with the quality of the art form we produce.</i></p> <p>b. <i>We seek to create superior value for patrons by generating information about and responding to patrons’ expressed</i></p>	Seeks to understand whether the marketing director identifies the purpose of the organization as product oriented or market oriented (general question).

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<p>wants and needs. We are chiefly concerned with satisfying patrons' desires.</p> <p>c. Other</p>	
<p>Which engagement tactics does your organization use to create dialogue with current and prospective patrons? (select all that apply)</p> <p>a. Social media engagement b. Paper feedback forms c. Phone calls d. Email feedback e. Suggestion box f. Online surveys g. In-person meetings h. Focus groups i. Town Hall type meetings j. Other</p>	<p>Seeks to understand if and how the organization engages in a two-way dialogue with patrons (relates to RQ1).</p>
<p>How effective do you believe your organization is at patron engagement? Not at all effective = 1, Neutral = 3, Very effective = 5 (scale 1-5)</p>	<p>Seeks to understand whether the organization feels competent and effective in their current patron engagement practices (relates to RQ1).</p>
<p>How would you like your organization to be perceived when communicating with patrons? (choose all that apply)</p> <p>a. A form of entertainment b. A form of cultural enrichment c. Advancing the art form d. Charitable organization e. Other</p>	<p>Seeks to understand the idealized self-image the organization seeks to create for the public (relates to RQ1).</p>
<p>Which tactics does your organization use to help current patrons understand your art form?</p> <p>a. Workshops b. Program Notes c. Talk backs d. Education classes/sessions e. "Art form" 101 f. Online learning opportunities g. Other</p>	<p>Seeks to understand whether the organization takes an educational approach in helping current stakeholders understand its art form (relates to RQ2).</p>
<p>Which tactics does your organization use to help prospective patrons understand your art form?</p> <p>a. Advertising b. Earned media c. Online Learning Opportunities d. Short/accessible performances designed for prospective patrons e. Education classes/sessions f. Other</p>	<p>Seeks to understand whether the organization targets or approaches prospective stakeholders differently in helping bring them into the organization and understanding its art form (relates to RQ2).</p>
<p>To what extent do you believe that the Marketing/Communications department has a functional role in programming decisions for your organization? Not at all = 1, Neutral = 3, Very much so = 5 to quite a lot (scale 1-5)</p>	<p>Seeks to understand to what extent the marketing director believes the communication department should contribute to the discussion of what arts products are developed and presented, and whether the sole authority for the artistic product lies with the artist or there is a more collaborative</p>

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	approach (relates to RQ2).
<p><i>How do you acquire information on the programming demands of your current audience?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. <i>Post concert surveys</i> b. <i>Pre concert surveys</i> c. <i>Focus groups</i> d. <i>Patrons advisory groups</i> e. <i>In house general online surveys</i> f. <i>Subscriber surveys</i> g. <i>Single ticket purchaser surveys</i> h. <i>Large scale polling and market research</i> i. <i>Non-concert goer surveys</i> j. <i>Social media content analysis</i> k. <i>Other</i> 	Seeks to understand whether the organization proactively engages in a dialogue with current stakeholders regarding their aesthetic tastes and programming desires (relates to RQ2).
<p><i>How do you acquire information on the programming demands/desires of your prospective audiences?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. <i>Large scale polling and market research</i> b. <i>In house general surveys</i> c. <i>Focus groups</i> d. <i>Third party surveys</i> e. <i>Social media content analysis</i> f. <i>Other</i> 	Seeks to understand whether the organization targets this demographic and proactively researches prospective stakeholders regarding their desires and aesthetic tastes (relates to RQ2).
<p><i>To what extent does your organization incorporate market research and feedback when making programming decisions?</i></p> <p><i>Not at all = 1, Neutral = 3, Very much so = 5 (scale 1-5)</i></p>	Seeks to understand the organization's propensity to incorporating a market oriented approach (relates to RQ2).
<p><i>With whom do you share patron feedback? (select all that applies)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. <i>The information is filed for future use</i> b. <i>Front line staff (i.e. box office, call centre and customer service)</i> c. <i>Marketing/communication department</i> d. <i>Departmental directors</i> e. <i>CEO</i> f. <i>Other</i> 	Seeks to understand the extent of the collaborative nature of the organization, and whether patron feedback is shared with higher levels of the organization (relates to RQ1).
<p><i>Describe the marketing/communication tactics your organization uses to develop relationships with current patrons.</i></p>	Seeks to understand whether a relationship management approach is implemented based on the level of integration/familiarity a patron has with the organization and/or art form (relates to RQ1).
<p><i>Describe the marketing/communication tactics your organization uses to develop relationships with prospective patrons.</i></p>	Seeks to understand whether a relationship management approach is implemented based on the level of integration/familiarity a patron has with the organization and/or art form (relates to RQ1).
<p><i>What challenges does the marketing/communication department face in communicating your art form with prospective patrons or those people who have no prior knowledge of the art form?</i></p>	Seeks to understand if and how marketing directors articulate the potential tension between customers and the arts products these organizations develop (as described in Figure 1) (relates to RQ2).

Table 3. Justification for marketing directors' online survey questions.

Marketing and development materials were obtained from each participating organization. Three pieces of marketing collateral were analyzed: prior season brochure, current season brochure, and donation solicitation. In situations where all three materials were not available for an organization, the most closely linked organizational web page was used. The most up-to-date version of each piece of publicly available piece of collateral was analyzed. The content analysis of marketing materials helped determine whether or not there was a link between the language and sentiments of CEOs and Marketing Directors and how each organization represented itself in printed materials. The content analysis identified each instance when sentiments of strategic communications management (interpersonal relationship values, market orientation, relationship marketing/management, and organization-public relationships) were either explicitly or implicitly stated. From that point, each statement was put into a table to understand that language's effect and impact on the current or prospective patron, and how that language either supports or does not support the four elements of strategic communications management discussed here. The content analysis helped guide the research in determining how and whether information and sentiments expressed by the organization's staff matched the messages in public-facing printed materials.

Data Analysis Methodology

Given the qualitative nature of this research and the possibility for subjective interpretation of interview subjects, it was important to construct validity by defining

the measurements by which the hypothesis was or was not supported (Yin, 2009). This study constructed validity by inferring a positive correlation between organizations' behaviour and strategic communications management when CEOs used language or gave answers that were reflective of scholarly literature on strategic communications management. This included any language that explicitly or implicitly inferred that the organization might be a superior partner by emulating the characteristics of interpersonal relationships (Bruning, 2001; Bruning & Galloway, 2003; Hon & Grunig, 1999), displayed a level of market orientation in their activities (Gainer & Padanyi, 2002; Voss & Voss, 2000; Sorjonen, 2011), incorporated tactics of relationship marketing/management (Conway & Whitelock, 2007; Rentschler et al., 2002), and any language pertaining to organization-public relationship models (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 1997; Ledingham, 2000; Bruning & Ledingham, 1999).

Online survey respondents provided some opportunity to quantify feedback from marketing directors of eight of the nine organizations while also collecting rich qualitative data through open-ended questions. A content analysis of three pieces of marketing materials included measuring the extent to which latent language (which *infers* meaning) or manifest language (which uses specific, explicit messages) was used pertaining to organizational public relations (Stacks, 2011). Table 4 identifies each of the four components of strategic communications management and defines the themes and ideas they embody, as defined in the literature. By also utilizing latent content units of analysis, a general theme of a positive or negative association with principles of strategic communications management could be inferred.

Utilizing these three points of research (interviews, surveys, and content analyses) to triangulate data, this thesis follows the case study approach, whereby a phenomenon is investigated in a real-time setting through multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2009). Additionally, the design of this study follows a more “holistic” approach as it seeks to understand the connections amongst the three data points and “interrelationships among people, institutions, events, and beliefs” across the whole organization (Weiss, 1998, p. 261). This method appears to pass the test of reliability because each operational step is documented in this thesis so the same procedure might be followed for a future study (Yin, 2009). The case study method has a distinct advantage as this research seeks to “expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization) and not enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization)” (Yin, 2009, p. 15).

Table 4

Theme	Definition
Interpersonal Relationship Principles (Bruning, 2001) (Ledingham, 2000)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • interpersonal communication is an inevitable ongoing process that relies on learning and interpreting the other person’s signals • interpersonal communication is continuous and has no clear-cut beginning or end • principles of interpersonal relationships form the basis of good OPR • publics want to engage with organizations they see as a good relational partner
Market Orientation (Sorjonen, 2011) (Gainer & Padanyi, 2002)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • activities and programming directed at market’s wants and needs • usually based on market research and associated with commercial activities
Relationships Marketing/Management (Voss & Voss, 1997) (Conway & Whitelock, 2007) (Rentschler, Radbourne, Carr, & Rickard, 2002)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • building strong, long term relationships with individual audience members • a proactive form of marketing where information is gathered on patrons in order to best communicate with and serve them • differs from transactional marketing; development of continuous relationship between parties that are long term and dynamic

<p>Organization-Public Relationships (Bruning, 2001) (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 1997) (Bruning & Ledingham, 1999)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • relationships between organizations and publics are interdependent and in a constant state of flux • communication is inevitable and irreversible and therefore communicators must understand how issues will affect key publics in order to practice good OPR • OPR is dependent on effective mutual adaptation and contingent response • OPR is developed around the notion of mutual benefit and meeting interaction expectations
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Table 4. Keys components for strategic communications management in arts organization. These terms and definitions make up the criteria through which all materials were analyzed.

RESULTS

All nine organizations demonstrated at least some level of the four components of strategic communications management (market orientation, interpersonal relationship principles, relationship marketing/management, and values of organization-public relationships) in the top-level vision of the organization. The extent to which CEOs involved themselves in strategic communications management varied widely, based on the size of the organization, financial health, and organizational priorities at the time of the interview. This summary provides context for how CEOs incorporate each of the four areas of strategic communications into their respective organizations. Following that, an organization-by-organization analysis is provided, detailing the extent to which marketing directors and marketing materials reflect a strategic communications approach in their public-facing messages.

Interviews with CEOs

An analysis of CEO interviews uncovered how each organization’s leadership viewed and/or implemented each of the four elements of strategic communications

management: interpersonal relationship values, organization-public relationships, relationship marketing/management, and market orientation.

Table 5

CEOs	Interpersonal Relationship Values	Market Orientation	Relationship Management/ Marketing	Organization Public Relationship Values
Opera Company A		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -programming must drive markets and encourage return of subs; careful about pushing people away with “cutting edge” and programming away from expectations -considering patron desires is “part of mix” of programming process, but doesn’t let them dictate -historical instance of programming to MO due to financials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -lack of success in broad-based marketing and move toward niche driven activities and customization of digital comms -maintaining subs model important to developing relationships with patrons -rel mgmt more important with long-term subs/donors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -very focused on OPR w/ current database as most likely to re-engage -for most price-sensitive audience, communicate offers about accessible prices
Opera Company B		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -programming challenges between traditional and new audiences; how to give each an experience they enjoy -display latent form of MO by programming what they think people will respond to and not necessarily what they already know -in some instances, MO programming increased single ticket sales -adjusting mktg budget to reflect 21st century mktg direction (i.e. less print, more online) -balancing act between MO and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -invests most rel mgmt into supporters (donors) instead of customers (ticket purchasers with a transactional relationship) -rel mgmt with donors is different than with patron base -challenge in communicating unfamiliar works; rel mgmt strategies could assist with this 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -very segmented audience makes OPR difficult due to small number of productions and ability to serve desires of multiple demographics -challenge to be “all things to all people” and communicate effectively with two different patron groups (i.e. traditionalists vs. non-traditionalists); haven’t developed good OPR with different segments of patrons

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		mission; challenges in innovating based on financial constraints		-challenge communicating unfamiliar works; good OPR could alleviate
Opera Company C	-mktg and organizational msgs built on IPR values instead of product oriented approach -value proposition is intimacy of the art form; providing “moments of connection” -focus on serving patrons through IPR with staff and “one to one” conversation	-balancing product-oriented and market-oriented language, depending on demographic speaking to -MO in its approach of telling modern stories to modern audiences -patron comment cards submitted after every show; MO approach even if they don’t do directly what audience says -mktg comms more MO in its delivery (i.e. mobile capabilities)	-allowing patrons to feel “ownership” in company sets foundation for successful rel mgmt -not focused on transactional approach -goal to create more infrastructure to support rel mgmt with current patrons	-want patrons to feel “ownership” of company -balancing product vs market oriented language depending on demographic displays positive OPR by responding to audiences needs -patron comment cards offer two-way mechanism -understanding the desires of specific audience types (i.e. bigger shows vs. works in development)
Dance Company A	-“family-like” relationship developed through direct comms with patrons -patrons should feel “pride of ownership”	-MO approach in mktg comms by speaking to ppl the way they want to be spoken to -displays latent MO by “engaging audiences, not catering” to them, to the extent that it fulfills mission -can be injurious to only program for current audiences and not experiment -new subs and comm approach is more MO in delivery (i.e. flexibility, accessibility) -“populist” pieces plays a role in programming; need to have some level of consideration for audience but not have them always lead the decision	-“family-like” and “pride of ownership” set foundation for good rel mgmt. -reforming rel to make patrons feel they are in rel with company, not with that particular show -goal to develop same sense of support and loyalty from patrons and city as local football team (even if they’re losing)	-strategies and tactics for “family-like” rel display awareness of OPR values -experimenting with programming for new audiences develops OPR with different demographics beyond current patrons -awareness of need for constant comm about company/art -must program many different offerings to appeal to diverse audiences -offers “populist” programming to respond to demographics’

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				desire for dance, thereby serving multiple stakeholder types
Dance Company B		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -believes tension between MO and mission-based programming is natural part of industry -exhibits peer/arts council orientation in developing new programming; must incorporate realities of finances -more focused on considering the audience in programming choices and awareness of need to sell tickets -belief that communication is not just tactical but that comm/mktg belong at decision-making table 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -no subscription model so rel mgmt is harder to incorporate -historical lack of rel mgmt resulted in diminished funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -recently adjusted approach to the public due to criticism from funding bodies -very diverse and segmented audience base, therefore use different strategies to appeal to different groups -more focused on considering the audience in programming choices -use of critical acclaim to market shows that appeal to specific patron segment -moving toward more integration of org and audience, and less reliance on Artistic Director as “authority” on all
Orchestra A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -trying to communicate that artists are personable, regular people -develop IPR by allowing patrons to speak honestly about their experience with specific works 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -“pops” concert type is designed to be especially MO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -rel mgmt with stakeholders includes obtaining patron feedback on their engagement with the orchestra 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -wants to give audiences the opportunity to have an opinion about their experience, and even share if they don’t enjoy a particular work; allowing comm process to be ongoing part of positive OPR -discussion of helping newcomers navigate concert choices; reading

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				signals and making appropriate recommendation
Orchestra B	-developing positive IPR by providing two-way comm opportunities -express values and take part in activities that make org good IPR partner	-MO in comm approach and delivery of message -make efforts to bring back artists the audience enjoys -at the same time, express difficulty/improbability of being able to program in an MO approach; balance well-known and lesser known artists and work	-new technology infrastructure allows for better rel mgmt process	-ideal rel includes two-way comms and constant opportunities to engage with org -proactive about serving multiple stakeholder groups (i.e. new people at concerts know what they need to know) -identify community groups most relevant to a specific concert and appeal to them (i.e. pre-concert visit for community/youth group) -difficulty in finding best way to comm w/ multiple demographics and managing expectations of audience
Theatre Company A	-wants to create personalized experience for guests	-MO in communication approach and delivery of subscription model (i.e. flexible alternatives available) -believe that MO works can still be artistically excellent	-positive rel mgmt for company is based on rel where patrons feel entertained and challenged -customized communication and personalize experience provides basis for rel mgmt. -use strat comms to offer enjoyable yet challenging experiences; most successful when rel mgmt is strong	-adapt to desires of new audiences -strategically targeted communications w/ new audiences sets foundation for rel mgmt -"spark curiosity" and offer "small navigational tools" to help audiences through challenging works -use strat comms to offer enjoyable yet challenging experiences; good

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				OPR practice -story of theatrical work itself is most important basis for OPR
Theatre Company B	-auxiliary programs designed to develop stronger sense of IPR	-don't do MO programming for financial reasons; company is financially stable -don't want to assume what general public would like; believe there's something for everyone in each play -MO approach in delivery of subs model	-auxiliary programs support rel mgmt efforts -use digital infrastructure to support rel mgmt. -outreach for young people starts rel w/ company at young age	-awareness of desires of specific types of patrons and their arts consumption preferences

Table 5. Comparative summary of CEO interviews, marking instances when the four components of strategic communications management were discussed.

Interpersonal Relationship Values

The following sub-table provides a summary of how each CEO spoke to elements of interpersonal relationship values in their interview.

Table 6

Organization	Insights on Interpersonal Relationship Values
Opera Company A	n/a
Opera Company B	n/a
Opera Company C	-mktg and organizational msgs built on IPR values instead of product oriented approach -value proposition is intimacy of the art form; providing "moments of connection" -focus on serving patrons through IPR with staff and "one to one" conversation
Dance Company A	-"family-like" relationship developed through direct comms with patrons -patrons should feel "pride of ownership"
Dance Company B	
Orchestra A	-trying to communicate that artists are personable, regular people -develop IPR by allowing patrons to speak honestly about their experience with specific works
Orchestra B	-developing positive IPR by providing two-way comm opportunities -express values and take part in activities that make org good IPR partner
Theatre Company A	-wants to create personalized experience for guests
Theatre Company B	-auxiliary programs designed to develop stronger sense of IPR

Table 6. Summary of CEO interviews, marking instances when interpersonal relationship values were discussed.

Four of the nine interviewees spoke explicitly of enhancing relationships with stakeholders by incorporating a level of interpersonal relationship values. “We want to be very, very close and I’m going to say [have a] family-like relationship with them. We like them to be aware of everything we’re doing all the time and how we represent them,” said the Executive Director of Dance Company A, a touring organization. The Executive Director went so far as to say that this sense of relationship and “pride of ownership” could take priority over all other aspects of the patron-organization relationship. “I think that actually almost takes precedence over everything else. We could say quality in the [dance] world [is most important]...but we want them to feel that they own it,” said the Executive Director. “We want that relationship to be that people are proud *of* us and *for* us.”

Orchestra B’s Managing Director sought to exhibit many of the values that make an organization a good one-to-one relational partner for prospective patrons in addition to committing themselves to high artistic standards. Orchestra B’s Managing Director wanted stakeholders to feel they were “open, sincere, having a lot of integrity, committed to excellence in our artistry and in the delivery of the artistic products...friendly, helpful, and that the artistic content would be challenging, entertaining, representative of Canadian diversity, and innovative.” Opera Company C’s General Manager shunned the “artist as authority” approach and replaced it with messages about what the product does for a potential patron, instead of why the product is intrinsically valuable. “We talk about why people should engage with us not

because we're important for the art form per se," said the General Manager, "but that you should engage with our programming because we offer unique, memorable experiences that no one else is offering in the same way" (personal communication, February 7, 2015). In each instance, CEOs and Executive Directors embraced interpersonal relationship values, but sought to communicate different themes through that mechanism, such as developing a general friendly dynamic or a strong position on the quality of the art itself.

Orchestra A's CEO discussed the need to incorporate a level of interpersonal relationship management that not only supports the intangible components of patron engagement (i.e. trust, sincerity, etc.), but that can also help guide patrons on their arts consumption path and be honest with one another about their experience. "A lot of people have this strange idea that they're going to come see the orchestra and we expect them to like everything they hear...We haven't really allowed audiences to say 'this just didn't do it for me,'" said the CEO of Orchestra A. "We need to open up the conversation and allow them to have a real, honest response from whatever background and position they might be coming from" (personal communication, January 27, 2015). Orchestra A CEO's desire for an advanced understanding and honesty with patrons not only allows organizations to understand, interpret, and respond to patrons' signals, but, theoretically, incorporates a level of symmetrical communications as a strong component of organization-public relationships in the twenty first century. In this sense, Orchestra A appears to use strategic communications management as a central function in stewarding new audiences and enabling conversation about

personalized arts consumption experiences. Additionally, this approach rejects the “artist as authority” notion, and appears to give audiences permission to be critical about their own artistic experience, whether or not they have formal education in understanding the intricacies of that art form, theoretically diminishing the elitist stereotype that exists in the performing arts.

The discussion of interpersonal relationship values between organizations in this study and their patrons, ranged from little to no mention of these values, to strongly intertwining these values within the cultural fabric of the organization itself. It is interesting to note that in some instances, CEOs did not only want to develop trusting and open relationships, but they also encouraged artistically critical relationships as a way of increasing the interpersonal connection with patrons. Orchestra A’s CEO, for example, articulate the desire to create a culture where Orchestra A’s music could be critically assessed by any type of patron. This approach is in direct opposition to the dated sentiment that people who do not enjoy high art are uneducated (Shaw, 1987) and therefore do not have the capacity to critically appraise artistic works. Instead, this sentiment encourages contemporary arts consumers to exercise their agency when it comes to critical dialogue with arts products, thereby creating an even more intimate and potentially inimitable (and therefore competitively advantageous) bond between the organization and its public.

Organization-Public Relationships

The following sub-table provides a summary of how each CEO spoke to elements of organization-public relationship values in their interview.

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Table 7

Organization	Insights on Organization-Public Relationship Values
Opera Company A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -very focused on OPR w/ current database as most likely to re-engage -for most price-sensitive audience, communicate offers about accessible prices
Opera Company B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -very segmented audience makes OPR difficult due to small number of productions and ability to serve desires of multiple demographics -challenge to be “all things to all people” and communicate effectively with two different patron groups (i.e. traditionalists vs. non-traditionalists); haven’t developed good OPR with different segments of patrons -challenge communicating unfamiliar works; good OPR could alleviate
Opera Company C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -want patrons to feel “ownership” of company -balancing product vs market oriented language depending on demographic displays positive OPR by responding to audiences needs -patron comment cards offer two-way mechanism -understanding the desires of specific audience types (i.e. bigger shows vs. works in development)
Dance Company A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -strategies and tactics for “family-like” rel display awareness of OPR values -experimenting with programming for new audiences develops OPR with different demographics beyond current patrons -awareness of need for constant comm about company/art -must program many different offerings to appeal to diverse audiences -offers “populist” programming to respond to demographics’ desire for dance, thereby serving multiple stakeholder types
Dance Company B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -recently adjusted approach to the public due to criticism from funding bodies -very diverse and segmented audience base, therefore use different strategies to appeal to different groups -more focused on considering the audience in programming choices -use of critical acclaim to market shows that appeal to specific patron segment -moving toward more integration of org and audience, and less reliance on Artistic Director as “authority” on all
Orchestra A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -wants to give audiences the opportunity to have an opinion about their experience, and even share if they don’t enjoy a particular work; allowing comm process to be ongoing part of positive OPR -discussion of helping newcomers navigate concert choices; reading signals and making appropriate recommendation
Orchestra B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -ideal rel includes two-way comms and constant opportunities to engage with org -proactive about serving multiple stakeholder groups (i.e. new people at concerts know what they need to know) -identify community groups most relevant to a specific concert and appeal to them (i.e. pre-concert visit for community/youth group) -difficulty in finding best way to comm w/ multiple demographics and managing expectations of audience
Theatre Company A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -adapt to desires of new audiences -strategically targeted communications w/ new audiences sets foundation for rel mgmt -“spark curiosity” and offer “small navigational tools” to help audiences through challenging works -use strat comms to offer enjoyable yet challenging experiences; good OPR practice -story of theatrical work itself is most important basis for OPR
Theatre Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -awareness of desires of specific types of patrons and their arts consumption

B	preferences
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Table 7. Summary of CEO interviews, marking instances when organization public relationships values were discussed.

Successful organization-public relationships are built around mutual adaptation and contingent response (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 1997) along with meeting interaction expectations (Bruning, 2001). A common theme throughout CEO interviews was the challenge in communicating difficult programming to patrons and maintaining the ability to manage expectations of patrons, no matter where they were on the customer loyalty ladder (i.e. first time attender vs. long time subscriber). Orchestra B's Managing Director found it most challenging to convey reasons behind artistic decisions and "finding the vocabulary that will communicate the artistic ideas and strengths that these artists are going to be bringing," (personal communication, January 15, 2015) and managing expectations by ensuring the message they communicate suits the type of programming (i.e. not leading audiences to believe that a challenging piece will be accessible). Opera Company B's General Director's audience challenges emerged from ensuring "traditional" audiences understand that even if an opera is more accessible or "populist," the company's commitment to quality is just as high as any traditional or grand opera production that opera diehards prefer. The General Director shared that Opera Company B had been challenged to develop this level of trust into their organization-public relationships and struggled with finding the right communications approach to appeal to its diverse stakeholder groups.

In conducting these interviews, it became clear that arts organizations' ability to train audiences to trust artistic choices is an important component of the organization-

public relationship dynamic. However, the complexity of audience desires and preferences makes finding the best relationship dynamic between the arts product and all stakeholders incredibly challenging. Opera Company B's challenges are a reflection of how the complex mix of artistic inputs that go in to an arts product (Voss & Voss, 2000) and variety of stakeholder types can create an almost insurmountable barrier to patron approval. For this reason, developing the sense of a trusting and open relationship starting at the outset of an organization's interactions with a patron is important, as it sets the tone in establishing a culture where mediating and navigating through mutual adaptation and response can be possible. Incorporating this trust and willingness to experiment into the relationship dynamic with patrons seems particularly important, given that so much of the viability of arts organizations depends on stakeholders purchasing tickets to experience things they do not yet know.

For Theatre Company A's Managing Director, the story of the play itself was the most important message in developing good organization-public relationships. They sought to communicate the "essence of the work, the most interesting thing" to prospective audience members but find it challenging to market the "philosophical essence" of a show. They accomplish this by "sparking curiosity and then giving some small navigational tools without giving it away" (personal communication, January 21, 2015). When developing a season of theatrical offerings, Theatre Company A mixed both challenging works with shows that could bring in a comfortable financial return. In the words of their managing director, the company balanced programming using an approach that implies, "I'm going to raise you one by saying I'm going to give you that

piece but I'm going to insist that you come with me on this journey" (personal communication, January 21, 2015). This message encourages mutual trust as publics become familiar with Theatre Company A and the style of art it produces.

In a season where many different types of musical offerings might be presented, including a mix of lighter classics, popular music, and dense, abstract symphonic works, Orchestra A's CEO discussed the opportunity to train box office staff to identify newcomers to symphonic music, and be able to adequately prepare or advise them if a concert they were about to choose might not be in the best interest for them, given their current relationship with the art form. Orchestra A CEO's desire to read and adapt to social cues of patrons showed a higher attunement to understanding their patron and could result in successful organization-public relationships.

The theories and values of organization-public relationships state that communication is inevitable and constant (Bruning, 2001). For Dance Company A's Executive Director, this relentless pursuit of challenging the public's perception of the art form is displayed in the highest level of organizational management. "People don't see that it's a kinetic and viable art form," said Dance Company A's Executive Director. "They see it as something stuck in museum pieces and things like that. So it is a constant, constant degentrification; a constant, constant exposure and awareness" (personal communication, December 22, 2014). Both Dance Company A's Executive Director and Opera Company B's General Director discussed reaching further into the community to tell stories directly related to the people and places of their province, an effort that shows a greater responsibility to the broader community outside their

traditional subscriber base. These organizations display an understanding of the unrelenting nature of the communications function and appear to have incorporated strategies to combat challenges by leveraging the inevitable and constant nature of the communications function into a tool that can support their mission.

Opera Company B’s General Director stated that a big challenge was to effectively communicate to all patron groups: those who are not interested in new things and desire to only see traditional canon of works presented, and those wanting new and innovative operas. Needing to replace customers who are aging out of the patron base and having to be “all things to all people” was a big OPR challenge for this company.

These comments establish that while a majority of interviewees have incorporated strategies to create and maintain relationships with diverse publics, stewarding positive organization-public relationships is a challenging field to navigate and is being addressed differently by each organization, according to their capacity, artistic goals, and priorities. These strategies might affect organizational messaging, programming choices, and customer service practices, to name a few.

Relationship Management/Marketing

The following sub-table provides a summary of how each CEO spoke to elements of relationship management/marketing in their interview.

Table 8

Organization	Insights on Relationship Management/Marketing
Opera Company A	-lack of success in broad-based marketing and move toward niche driven activities and customization of digital comms -maintaining subs model important to developing relationships with patrons -rel mgmt more important with long-term subs/donors
Opera Company B	-invests most rel mgmt into supporters (donors) instead of customers (ticket purchasers with a transactional relationship)

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -rel mgmt with donors is different than with patron base -challenge in communicating unfamiliar works; rel mgmt strategies could assist with this
Opera Company C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -allowing patrons to feel “ownership” in company sets foundation for successful rel mgmt -not focused on transactional approach -goal to create more infrastructure to support rel mgmt with current patrons
Dance Company A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -“family-like” and “pride of ownership” set foundation for good rel mgmt. -reforming rel to make patrons feel they are in rel with company, not with that particular show -goal to develop same sense of support and loyalty from patrons and city as local football team (even if they’re losing)
Dance Company B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -no subscription model so rel mgmt is harder to incorporate -historical lack of rel mgmt resulted in diminished funding
Orchestra A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -rel mgmt with stakeholders includes obtaining patron feedback on their engagement with the orchestra
Orchestra B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -new technology infrastructure allows for better rel mgmt process
Theatre Company A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -positive rel mgmt for company is based on rel where patrons feel entertained and challenged -customized communication and personalize experience provides basis for rel mgmt. -use strat comms to offer enjoyable yet challenging experiences; most successful when rel mgmt is strong
Theatre Company B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -auxiliary programs support rel mgmt efforts -use digital infrastructure to support rel mgmt. -outreach for young people starts rel w/ company at young age

Table 8. Summary of CEO interviews, marking instances when relationship management/marketing was discussed.

CEOs were all aware of the importance of relationship management/marketing in their sector. All of them spoke in some way about using relationship management/marketing tactics to build long-term relationships through an exchange of value (Rentschler, Radbourne, Carr, & Rickard, 2002) and mutual fulfillment of promises (Gronroos, 1996). The move toward a more patron-centred, relationship management approach to stakeholder communication was expressed in many of the interviews, showing the high level of practicality for arts organizations to implement value-adding and collaborative exchanges (Day, 2000) when managing patron relationships. Multiple organizations spoke of the relationship management approach as a cornerstone of their communications strategy, implementing more personal and individualized

communications (Sheth, Sisodia, & Sharma, 2000) and thereby creating a greater competitive advantage that would be difficult to replicate (Day, 2000). Additionally, the approach of customizing communications based on the organization's relationship with the patron reflected Baron et al.'s (2010) observation that a combination of quality, customer service, and marketing are important components of the relationship management/marketing process.

Theatre Company A's Managing Director felt the core of the audience relationship was best served when they exercised their "ability to customize our communication with you so that you have a very integrated and personal experience" (personal communication, January 21, 2015). Additionally, Opera Company C's Managing Director and Orchestra B's General Manager also discussed that tailoring communication according to patron desires was one way they improved relationships with their key stakeholders. In an era where customer customization is highly valued by the general public (Sheth, Sisodia, & Sharma, 2000), Opera Company A's Managing Director recognized the necessity for a more targeted approach to building and maintaining relationships and had moved away from broad-based advertising toward more niche-driven activities. This was not feasible for all organizations, though. For Dance Company B's Executive Director, the only organization that did not follow the traditional subscription model, managing relationships through customized communications was more difficult. Relationship management and targeted communications work best when a base of supporters and patrons is already invested, and the organization already has an understanding of patrons' unique preferences. Dance Company B's lack of a

subscription model put them in a less stable position to incorporate relationship management/marketing activities with their ticket-purchasing stakeholders. The extent to which this approach will impact Dance Company B's future remains to be seen.

Targeted communication based on patron desires was a strategy integrated into most of the interview subjects' organizations, but Opera Company A's Managing Director was clear that majority of focused relationship management went to high value relationships with large donors. "Ninety percent of our time is dealing with those people who have been around a long time," said the managing director. "So it's not that we're saying no to newbies, it's just that you've got to put them on a map and say how much can we commit to this" (personal communication, January 9, 2015). While relationship management was frequently executed in the organizations interviewed for this thesis, the extent to which it was applied to all demographics of patron types was highly dependent on the value the organization felt it would receive as a benefit of that exchange. In the case of Opera Company A, many of those "people who have been around a long time" were high-level donors and long-term subscribers who were integral to the sustainability of the organization. Therefore, it is worth noting that relationship management is still a judiciously implemented strategy, managed according to the organizations' needs and resources it can dedicate to its success.

Throughout these interviews, relationship management/marketing showed itself to be a multi-faceted tactic within the strategic communications mix, as it was incorporated in many different areas throughout the organization, from subscriber

benefits to targeted digital communications based on consumer preference to creating committed relationships with long-term supporters.

Market Orientation

The following sub-table provides a summary of how each CEO spoke to elements of market orientation in their interview.

Table 9

Organization	Insights on Market Orientation
Opera Company A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -programming must drive markets and encourage return of subs; careful about pushing people away with “cutting edge” and programming away from expectations -considering patron desires is “part of mix” of programming process, but doesn’t let them dictate -historical instance of programming to MO due to financials
Opera Company B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -programming challenges between traditional and new audiences; how to give each an experience they enjoy -display latent form of MO by programming what they think people will respond to and not necessarily what they already know -in some instances, MO programming increased single ticket sales -adjusting mktg budget to reflect 21st century mktg direction (i.e. less print, more online) -balancing act between MO and mission; challenges in innovating based on financial constraints
Opera Company C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -balancing product-oriented and market-oriented language, depending on demographic speaking to -MO in its approach of telling modern stories to modern audiences -patron comment cards submitted after every show; MO approach even if they don’t do directly what audience says -mktg comms more MO in its delivery (i.e. mobile capabilities)
Dance Company A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -MO approach in mktg comms by speaking to ppl the way they want to be spoken to -displays latent MO by “engaging audiences, not catering” to them, to the extent that it fulfills mission -can be injurious to only program for current audiences and not experiment -new subs and comm approach is more MO in delivery (i.e. flexibility, accessibility) -“populist” pieces plays a role in programming; need to have some level of consideration for audience but not have them always lead the decision
Dance Company B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -believes tension between MO and mission-based programming is natural part of industry -exhibits peer/arts council orientation in developing new programming; must incorporate realities of finances -more focused on considering the audience in programming choices and awareness of need to sell tickets -belief that communication is not just tactical but that comm/mktg belong at decision-making table

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Orchestra A	-“pops” concert type is designed to be especially MO
Orchestra B	-MO in comm approach and delivery of message -make efforts to bring back artists the audience enjoys -at the same time, express difficulty/improbability of being able to program in an MO approach; balance well-known and lesser known artists and work
Theatre Company A	-MO in communication approach and delivery of subscription model (i.e. flexible alternatives available) -believe that MO works can still be artistically excellent
Theatre Company B	-don’t do MO programming for financial reasons; company is financially stable -don’t want to assume what general public would like; believe there’s something for everyone in each play -MO approach in delivery of subs model

Table 9. Summary of CEO interviews, marking instances when market orientation was discussed.

The tension between market-oriented and product-oriented artistic programming was discussed at length with each leader. While leaders implicitly referred to latent and proactive forms of market orientation within their program offerings, as introduced by Sorjonen (2011), none of the CEOs spoke of market orientation in as explicit terms as this. The distinction between these two types of programming was made based on a need to maintain a current level of subscriber base while also creating product offerings to attract prospective patrons and/or a mass audience to the field. Depending on the organization’s current financial state or period in its organizational life cycle, each organization approached the idea of “market-based” product offerings in different ways. Theatre Company A’s Managing Director articulated the need to have artistically challenging works along with crowd-pleaser type shows in a season, in order to fulfill the budget goals allotted to single ticket sales. This was a very palpable tension for Theatre Company A and a topic of much discussion with artistic staff. Opera Company B also mixed traditional operatic fare with more recognizable options, in order to bring in new audiences who might not typically think of the opera as an option for their entertainment dollar, helping meet the financial needs of the company. While the long-

term success of Opera Company B's approach cannot yet be assessed, in the short-term this strategy echoes Gainer and Padanyi's (2002) theory that arts organizations' market-oriented culture can result in a the satisfaction of a customer segment and growth in resources.

Discussions with Theatre Company B's Managing Director illuminated that not all arts organizations have this same challenge. Theatre Company B did not create works to appeal to different audience segments and seemed to provide very little overt product differentiation. "There's not much that we do that I wouldn't feel happy having someone who had never been to theatre before come and see," said Theatre Company B's Managing Director. "I think that within each piece there's something for everybody...we don't program things with the idea, 'Okay, this is going to be a little more challenging for people, this would be a little easier for someone.' We don't program like that at all" (personal communication, February 24, 2015). This approach to programming could be the result of Theatre B's particularly stable financial position, or the fact that its vastly smaller level of inventory, as compared to other art forms like opera and symphony which perform in halls that seat thousands, creates less of an pressure to sell tickets. It is worth noting that Theatre Company B is also highly regarded by its peers in the theatre world, and that this combination of low inventory, historic organizational success, stable financial position, and respect from peers and funding bodies has allowed Theatre Company B the privilege of eschewing market-oriented programming activities based on financial necessity or audience development. In this sense, Theatre Company B has been able to operate under the model that was

historically successful for them, and continue making organizational and programming decisions based on the product-oriented approach highly regarded by Voss & Voss (2000).

This idea of having multiple *types* of artistic offerings in any given season in order to appeal to various demographics was a passionate subject for Dance Company A, whose Executive Director optimistically spoke about the necessity of an arts organization to be “all things to all people” and program for diverse audiences (differing greatly from Opera Company B’s assertion earlier in this thesis, that being “all things to all people” was an especially arduous proposition for that organization). “The fact of the matter is you need to be doing a lot of things. If I have 2,000 people in the audience, I have 2,000 different desires and agendas. We often talk as if we know what they want and that’s the mistake,” said the Executive Director. “So we don’t give them what we think is good for them. We give them a little bit of this and a little bit of that. Our business is to practice art, but also to practice art to an audience” (personal communication, December 22, 2014). Orchestra A also offered “a little bit of this and a little bit of that” by attempting a balance between multiple types of concerts: masterworks, pops, light classics. While pops concerts were originally designed to be the most market-oriented and sell the most tickets, the orchestra had found that the pops audience is highly fragmented and pops patrons do not come to other types of concerts throughout the season, limiting this demographic’s revenue potential.

Opera Company B’s General Manager spoke of incorporating more market-oriented programming choices over the past number of years, to make up for dwindling

subscriber numbers through single ticket sales. However, they found that programs designed for broader audiences failed to bring out their traditional subscriber base, making the relationship between audience and programming types a very delicate balance. For Opera Company B market-oriented programming was a way to increase revenue from audiences outside the core patron base, but for this organization, who produced only a handful of productions each year and had little room for error, the need to be all things to all people seemed to be daunting and, possibly, financially unsustainable. In the case of Opera Company B, their experience with market oriented programming echoed Voss and Voss's research (2000), which predicted that market-oriented product design would not satisfy those patrons most loyal to the art form and providing the most financial support.

Just as scholars' research posits that arts organizations cannot "know" a prospective patrons artistic preferences (Voss & Voss, 2000), so too do some arts managers feel this is an area of organizational management fraught with issues. In keeping with literature against market orientation, Orchestra B's Managing Director talked about the improbability of successfully building a season based on a market-oriented approach, "You can't make too many assumptions on what someone does and doesn't want to see, what will and what won't be marketable" (personal communication, January 15, 2015). Dance Company B's Executive Director saw this relationship between artistic and market-oriented programming choices not as a point of tension, but just a natural reality of the field. The Executive Director knew first hand about what could happen when audiences were not at least considered when making

programming decisions. At the time of this interview, the company had emerged from a significant restructuring due to artistic leadership changes and altered the model of the organization. Historically, Dance Company B's approach to programming had been criticized by funders and patrons. "If you sell tickets, there's no room, unless you've got very deep pockets with private funders, there's no room for you to program whatever the hell you like," said Dance Company B's Executive Director (personal communication, March 17, 2015). "Marketing and artistic have to walk hand in hand in the company to create and to make everything happen. No decision is made without marketing."

At the same time CEOs talked about the extent to which they incorporated some level of market orientation, every organization interviewed understood that its audience should not *lead* its programming choices. "We need to engage the audience not cater. By the same token, we don't do broccoli: eat it, it is good for you," said the Executive Director of Dance Company A. "[We need to determine]: What is it they want to see, how does that fulfill our artistic vision and mission, and be ready to succeed and be ready to fail on it" (personal communication, December 22, 2014). Opera Company A's Managing Director took patron feedback into consideration, but recognized that its role was to artistically lead subscribers through operatic experiences while still programming seasons that would motivate subscribers to return. Using artists' expertise and leading customers on an enriching and exciting arts path, is the unique value proposition arts organizations provide to their communities and a core professional service for stakeholders. Not only can this approach be seen as a proactive form of market orientation described by Sorjonen (2011), it also establishes positive organization-public

relationship through the professional relationship dimension, ensuring that services are offered in a business-like fashion (Bruning & Ledingham, 1999).

Opera Company B's General Manager also acted on his stakeholders' latent desires and stated, "We are not here to answer, and on a short term basis respond, to a group of patrons or subscriber wants...What we do want to do is respond to the community's wants and needs" (personal communication, March 11, 2015). Both Dance Company A's and Opera Company B's leaders were not afraid of what one might consider to be more "populist" programming choices, as long as it suited the aesthetic vision of the organization. "Our problem in the arts is that we have catered to the audience we know, and we haven't necessarily experimented or explored with the audiences that we don't yet have," said the Executive Director of Dance Company A about the detrimental results of programming only to current audience tastes. "Hence, can we afford to fail? No. Can we afford not to? No. We have to be out there a little bit and trying these new things. Otherwise, we will continue to see dwindling audiences if we just cater to that" (personal communication, December 22, 2014).

In addition to considering a market-oriented approach in the design of its core product, some of the organizations interviewed had become more market-oriented in other components of the organization, such as targeting communications based on patron desires and making it easier to buy tickets or find parking and dinner places around the concert hall. This approach is analogous to Kotler's (1976) "extended" definition of the product, which goes beyond what happens onstage and includes all of the service elements surrounding the consumption of the arts product. It is clear

through these conversations that market orientation is a multi-faceted topic that can incorporate any manner of organizational behaviour. CEOs interviewed here established that they might incorporate market orientation in their core programming, auxiliary programming, and even adopt a more market-oriented approach when communicating with patrons. Leadership, art form, and organizational health all contributed to how each organization incorporated latent or explicit market desires when making organizational choices.

Analyzing the Marketing Function: Marketing Director Surveys and Content Analysis of Marketing Materials

The information contained below was taken from online surveys completed by Marketing Directors of the nine participating organizations. The content analysis of marketing materials was coded based on the four components of strategic communications (interpersonal relationship values, market orientation, relationship management/marketing, and organization-public relationships). Instances where the sentiments of these elements of strategic communications appeared have been summarized, cited and described in the tables below. A full content analysis of marketing materials can be found in appendix C.

Orchestra A: What did the Marketing Director say?

This organization's strategic direction has a stronger sales imperative, as they seek to "sell tickets to performances." Communication is mainly one-way and they incorporate a low level of patron engagement. Beyond executive level oversight, this organization does not believe marketing plays a functional role in programming

decisions and does not incorporate market research or feedback when making programming decisions. Patron feedback, however, is shared at all administrative levels internally.

The major challenge in communicating with prospective patrons is to communicate the essence of the creative concept. Because of this challenge, a sales message has been emphasized and, historically, the organization has not been effective in nurturing “high value customer relationships.” It is worth noting that during the time of this online survey this organization was in transition and their marketing director had been in the role for a few months.

What did the marketing materials say?

This section analyses the messages in three pieces of marketing materials to uncover the effect of the company’s printed messages, and to what extent their printed, public-facing communications incorporate the components of strategic communications management.

Table 10

<i>Strategic Communications Concept</i>	<i>Observations</i>	<i>Effect/Impact</i>
Market Orientation	Very product oriented language; season tag is also product oriented	To be expected for season brochure
	Page of “special performances” includes introductory programming	Separate section for more market-oriented concerts designed for prospective audiences
Interpersonal Relationship Values	Includes mostly quotes about the product in the voice of the artist	Provides a personal connection to artists onstage
Organization-Public Relationship Values	One quote from young orchestra patron	Brings audience into conversation and displays semblance of two-way communication style
Relationship Management/Marketing	Donation page invites higher	Outlines benefits of donating,

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	level of involvement from patrons	displaying a relationship management strategy to fundraising
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Table 10. Summary of content analysis of Orchestra A's prior season brochure.

Table 11

<i>Strategic Communications Concept</i>	<i>Observations</i>	<i>Effect/Impact</i>
Market Orientation	Tag for season is much more patron oriented	Implies what music does for people, not why music is intrinsically good; patron focused
	Page of "special performances" includes introductory programming	Separate section for more market-oriented concerts designed for prospective audiences
Organization-Public Relationship Values	Music Director message page includes message of connection between audience and orchestra; directly welcomes newcomers	Inclusive message to support a broader scope of audience engagement; good OPR practice
Interpersonal Relationship Values	Donation page includes photos of the community, children and audience members	Inclusive message; helps patrons identify how they can make an impact; personalization of orchestra

Table 11. Summary of content analysis of Orchestra A's current season brochure.

Table 12

<i>Strategic Communications Concept</i>	<i>Observations</i>	<i>Effect/Impact</i>
Interpersonal Relationship Values	General giving page includes video of young musicians, photos of donors and artists	Provides personal connection to artists and donors; prospective donors can see themselves reflected
Market Orientation	Cites product-centred reasons for donating, including supporting the orchestra's educational work and performances by the "world's greatest artists"	Product-focused reason to donate; does not indicate how becoming a donor benefits patron
Relationship Management/Marketing	Donation webpage for gifts under \$2,000 offers three headings of information: Why donate; how it enhances the concert experience; Join now	Some mention of reciprocal relationship benefits which supports relationship management and positive OPR
Organization-Public Relationship Values	There's a link to a chart that displays benefits of giving along with three bullet points of types of events donors can attend to provide a "deeper" relationship with the orchestra	Various events support developing relationships with patrons and positive OPR

Table 12. Summary of content analysis of Orchestra A’s donation web page.

Orchestra B: What did Marketing Director say?

This organization has a high level of patron engagement and believes that marketing plays a role at the marketing table. This is displayed in the fact that market research and patron feedback is shared throughout the organization, at all levels internally, and incorporated into decision making at the programming table.

In attracting prospective patrons, they cited both traditional advertising techniques while also incorporating relationship marketing tactics on a smaller scale, such as collaborations with other groups and building relationships with parents of children giving pre-concert recitals.

The major challenge in communicating with prospective patrons for this organization was reaching large groups of people and eliciting a response.

What did the marketing material say?

This section dissects the messages in three pieces of marketing materials to uncover the effect of the company’s printed messages, and to what extent their printed, public-facing communications incorporate the components of strategic communications management.

Table 13

<i>Strategic Communications Concept</i>	<i>Observations</i>	<i>Effect/Impact</i>
Relationship Management/Marketing	Talks about subscriber benefits	Relationship management through offering special privileges
Organization-Public Relationship Values	Extra tidbits and descriptions to contextualize repertoire	Good OPR to provide extra communication on art form
	Pre-concert talks, events, and pre-concert club to talk about the	Further opportunities to develop and deepen organization-public

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	music	relationships by offering patrons information they desire
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Table 13. Summary of content analysis of Orchestra B’s prior season brochure.

Table 14

<i>Strategic Communications Concept</i>	<i>Observations</i>	<i>Effect/Impact</i>
Interpersonal Relationship Values	Description of music and personal quotes by artists	Personal nature of quotes offer sense of IPR
Relationship Management/Marketing	Subscriber benefits listed	Means of relationship management
Organization-Public Relationship Values	Addition of new listening guide program that offers “carefully guided” approach for patrons to understand the music	Helps walk patrons through the art form, thereby creating a sense of understanding with patrons who need it most, and contributing to positive OPR by understanding specific demographics’ needs

Table 14. Summary of content analysis of Orchestra B’s current season brochure.

Table 15

<i>Strategic Communications Concept</i>	<i>Observations</i>	<i>Effect/Impact</i>
Market Orientation	Very product focused, especially on artistic integrity	Very little discussion on impact of organization to people
Organization-Public Relationship Values	Raising funds for “significant national presence” and to provide more work for musicians	Very inward looking; lacks sense of OPR values in communication
Interpersonal Relationship Values	Includes one quote by musician, one quote by student, one quote by guest artist	Tries to position orchestra as good relational partner due to the positive association to these three stakeholders

Table 15. Summary of content analysis of Orchestra B’s endowment solicitation brochure.

Theatre Company A: What did the Marketing Director say?

Online survey data was not collected from the Marketing Director of Theatre Company A.

What did the marketing materials say?

This section dissects the messages in three pieces of marketing materials to uncover the effect of the company’s printed messages, and to what extent their printed,

public-facing communications incorporate the components of strategic communications management.

Table 16

<i>Strategic Communications Concept</i>	<i>Observations</i>	<i>Effect/Impact</i>
Market Orientation	Media quotes used as third-party endorsement or establishing credibility	Artist or media as “authority” on the art form; product focused
	Very product focused; clear inter-media collaborations and new artistic direction managing director spoke of	To be expected; supports direction of organization CEO was discussing in interview
Organization-Public Relationship Values/ Interpersonal Relationship Values	Promoting pre- and post-show talks and new programming to bring audience “up close” with theatre creators and together in “immersive” experience	Shows efforts to integrate OPR values by responding to desire for patrons to know more, and develop interpersonal relationships
Relationship Management/Marketing	Talks about subscriber benefits	Method of relationship marketing/management by offering special privileges

Table 16. Summary of content analysis of Theatre Company A’s prior season brochure.

Table 17

	<i>Observations</i>	<i>Effect/Impact</i>
Interpersonal Relationship Values	Special events offer “highly personalized” experiences	Shows theatre as good IPR partner
Organization-Public Relationship Values	Clear page of special events offers many different types of auxiliary programs	Develops relationship with audiences off mainstage; by designing something special this incorporates good OPR by meeting the needs of multiple types of audiences through auxiliary experiences
Relationship Management/Marketing	Subscriber benefits	Means of relationship management
	High level message on donation page includes reciprocal benefits	Product-focused reason to donate; but also incorporates relationship management/marketing through reciprocal benefits

Table 17. Summary of content analysis of Theatre Company A’s current season brochure.

Table 18

<i>Strategic Communications Concept</i>	<i>Observations</i>	<i>Effect/Impact</i>
Interpersonal Relationship Values	Very personal, patron-centred language: “thrilled to recognize your contribution and reward...[you] with customized behind-the-scenes events.”	Language encourages an IPR relationship between organization and audience
Relationship Management/Marketing	Donor benefits page	Means of relationship management

Table 18. Summary of content analysis of Theatre Company A’s donation solicitation brochure.

Theatre Company B: What did the Marketing Director say?

This organization has a high level of patron engagement and gives each patron the opportunity to provide feedback regarding the work on stage and also attend play readings to give feedback during the development process. However, this organization does not believe marketing plays a role in programming decisions and does not incorporate patron feedback at the programming table.

Feedback and the marketing perspective, however, is taken into account when creating auxiliary activities that support the work on stage, and feedback is shared with all administrative levels internally.

The major challenge this theatre company faces is programming works for people who did not “grow up” with theatre. Additionally, balancing between programming to their mission and what new audiences would like to see is a challenge articulated by the Marketing Director (although not a sentiment that was emulated by the company’s Managing Director). It is exactly this challenge that RQ 2 aspires to address, and whether strategic communications management can alleviate this tension.

What did the marketing materials say?

This section dissects the messages in three pieces of marketing materials to uncover the effect of the company’s printed messages, and to what extent their printed, public-facing communications incorporate the components of strategic communications management.

Table 19

<i>Strategic Communications Concept</i>	<i>Observations</i>	<i>Effect/Impact</i>
Market Orientation	Very product oriented pages for each play; highlights industry awards	Industry awards show theatre has a peer orientation; lack of market orientation
Interpersonal Relationship Values	Back cover includes quotes from happy patrons	Quotes prove theatre has developed interpersonal relationships with select patrons, so others might want to do the same
	Auxiliary programs use very IPR oriented language, including invitation to “go deeper”	Encourage closer relationship between audience and organization
Organization-Public Relationship Values	Multiple auxiliary program offerings to meet the needs of multiple types of publics, including programs for theatre aficionados and programs for “busy” audience members	Good OPR to understand the different types of audience members and offer something for each of them, tailored to their needs
	Parking and dining pages inform audience of offerings	Knowing patrons require this information for a positive experience indicates good OPR
	Value add pages highlight amenities, great customer service	Good OPR to highlight auxiliary activities to further engage with art form

Table 19. Summary of content analysis of Theatre Company B’s prior season brochure.

Table 20

<i>Strategic Communications Concept</i>	<i>Observations</i>	<i>Effect/Impact</i>
Interpersonal Relationship Values	First page includes message about making the theatre one’s “home”	Very inclusive language; helps develop interpersonal relationship with prospective donor
	Each product page includes quotes from subscribers	Stronger display of interpersonal relationships with patrons
Relationship	Subscription page shows benefits	Explains the reciprocal benefits

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Management/Marketing	of subscription purchase (unlike last season)	of being a subscriber, offering a relationship management component
Organization-Public Relationship Values	Extra value add programs encourage dialogue with artists and audience, nights to welcome new subscribers and a program for theatre aficionados	Designing offerings to appeal to different segments of audience shows desire to engage prospective patrons and displays overall positive OPR by responding to the needs of various publics

Table 20. Summary of content analysis of Theatre Company B’s current season brochure.

Table 21

<i>Strategic Communications Concept</i>	<i>Observations</i>	<i>Effect/Impact</i>
Interpersonal Relationship Values	Front cover says theatre’s “members mean the world to us”	Very clear interpersonal relationship message on front cover
	Image on front cover of brochure shows two people in close contact	Seems to imply a level of closer relationship, in theory, with donor and organization
Relationship Management/Marketing	Focus of donation is product oriented but also displays donor benefits	Explains reciprocal relationship of being a donor, offering a relationship marketing/management component
Organization-Public Relationship	Language like “contribute to our community” is also used in donation pitch	Language is inclusive and references benefits to larger community, instead of just to the art form itself

Table 21. Summary of content analysis of Theatre Company B’s donation solicitation brochure.

Dance Company A: What did the Marketing Director say?

There is a high level of patron engagement incorporated into this company’s activities. While marketing is a major contributor at the programming table, only a moderate level of market research and feedback is incorporated. Developing relationships was the main approach in ensuring the sustainability of this organization. This was achieved by creating customized offerings based on which phase of the “journey” the patron was.

The major challenge in attracting prospective patrons for this organization was financial access and overcoming stereotypes. The concept of “pride of ownership,” cited by the CEO, was echoed in the survey.

What did the marketing materials say?

This section dissects the messages in three pieces of marketing materials to uncover the effect of the company’s printed messages, and to what extent their printed, public-facing communications incorporate the components of strategic communications management.

Table 22

<i>Strategic Communications Concept</i>	<i>Observations</i>	<i>Effect/Impact</i>
Market Orientation	Very product oriented language, which is to be expected in a season brochure	Messages are not very transactional but rather are very descriptive of arts product itself, showing product orientation of company
	No reflection of consumer voice; quotes to support performances are from media	Displays an “artist/media as authority” dynamic; product/media oriented; lack of market orientation
Interpersonal Relationship Values	“Join the family” language used in reference to becoming a subscriber	Language references values of interpersonal relationships
Organization-Public Relationship Values	Programming includes participatory element for the public in recreational division	Appealing to the needs of an active public desiring participation displays positive OPR
Relationship Management/Marketing	Subscriber benefits highlighted	Displays reciprocal benefits of being subscriber, help establish relationship management

Table 22. Summary of content analysis of Dance Company A’s prior season brochure.

Table 23

<i>Strategic Communications Concept</i>	<i>Observations</i>	<i>Effect/Impact</i>
Same as above	Same as above	Same as above

Table 23. Summary of content analysis of Dance Company A’s current season brochure.

Table 24

<i>Strategic Communications Concept</i>	<i>Observations</i>	<i>Effect/Impact</i>
Interpersonal Relationship Values	Highest level donors receive most IPR services	IPR as a result of level of support from donors
Relationship Management/Marketing	Benefit grid highlighted for each level of donation	Means of prioritizing and managing relationships

Table 24. Summary of content analysis of Dance Company A’s donor grid/donation brochure for “friends” of the company.

Dance Company B: What did the Marketing Director say?

Dance Company B is very mission and art form focused. They want the public to perceive them as an organization that “advances the art form.” This organization does not believe the marketing department has much of a role in programming, however, input from the marketing perspective is “well-considered.” Even if direct patron feedback is not incorporated at the programming table, patron feedback is shared with all administrative levels internally.

What did the marketing materials say?

This section dissects the messages in three pieces of marketing materials to uncover the effect of the company’s printed messages, and to what extent their printed, public-facing communications incorporate the components of strategic communications management.

Table 25

<i>Strategic Communications Concept</i>	<i>Observations</i>	<i>Effect/Impact</i>
Market Orientation	Half of brochure focused on artists; other half focused on performances and programs;	Very product focused; very strongly presents an “artist as authority” approach; lack of market orientation
Relationship	Lack of subscription model	Precludes organization’s ability

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Management/Marketing	highlighted	to integrate a relationship management approach
Organization-Public Relationship Values	Multiple listings for “chat” or “workshop” programs that allow some level of patron engagement, however not much description of these programs	Shows attempt at engaging with the public through a more two-way approach instead of being purely artist-oriented

Table 25. Summary of content analysis of Dance Company B’s prior season brochure

Table 26

<i>Strategic Communications Concept</i>	<i>Observations</i>	<i>Effect/Impact</i>
Market Orientation	All event descriptions very product- or artist-oriented, i.e. free artist talk, masterclass with artist, etc.	Product-oriented, peer-oriented outreach programming; little display of market orientation
Interpersonal Relationship Values	Other types of events include a program that “throws the studio wide open” so the public can witness the creation process;	Inviting public into creation process helps organization and publics understand each other better; displaying some level of interpersonal relationship values by inviting them into the creation process
Organization-Public Relationship Values	Another event offers a workshop performance where audience can provide feedback of newly developed works	Two-way communication is good OPR practice

Table 26. Summary of content analysis of Dance Company B’s events web page for the current season.

Table 27

<i>Strategic Communications Concept</i>	<i>Observations</i>	<i>Effect/Impact</i>
Relationship Management/Marketing	Donation campaign currently; focused on Canadian content but also used language “we need your support” for the purpose of supporting artists’ lives	Very product focused donor language; little to no discussion of benefits to donor as a means of relationship management
Interpersonal Relationship Values	Video personalizes artists as they talk about their art, however no donor-centred language to encourage relationship between organization and donors	Little relational messages to encourage connection between parties; lack of IPR

Table 27. Summary of content analysis of Dance Company B’s donation web page.

Opera Company A: What did the Marketing Director say?

While there is a high level of patron engagement employed at this company and marketing is very involved with shaping season offerings, market research and feedback is not incorporated when making programming decisions. While feedback regarding programming desires was shared with the company, it was not sought out by the company.

The marketing director felt that marketing and communication’s primary responsibilities were to sell tickets and not, necessarily, create an open forum for patron engagement. The company is in the process of “returning to basics” with transactional approaches such as direct mail and telemarketing. The major challenge for the organization in attracting prospective patrons is their lack of interest in the product.

What did the marketing materials say?

This section dissects the messages in three pieces of marketing materials to uncover the effect of the company’s printed messages, and to what extent their printed, public-facing communications incorporate the components of strategic communications management.

Table 28

<i>Strategic Communications Concept</i>	<i>Observations</i>	<i>Effect/Impact</i>
Market Orientation	Very product oriented language, not much in the way of strategic communications	To be expected in piece that outlines artistic offerings; lack of market oriented language
Relationship Management/Marketing	Donation page explains impact of becoming a patron donor; highlights personalized service donors receive	Helps patrons understand impact of their help, while also establishing relationship management expectation
Organization-Public Relationship Values	Subscription page shows very customizable options for different patron types; also	Flexibility of options displays level of OPR that could attract new people as company

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	discusses benefits of subscribing	responds to their needs; new “value pricing” referred to by Managing Director is introduced to avert pricing issue, showing greater understanding of diverse audience demographics
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Table 28. Summary of content analysis of Opera Company A’s prior season brochure.

Table 29

Strategic Communications Concept	Observations	Effect/Impact
Organization-Public Relationship Values	Very product oriented, however, patron-oriented language is about pricing value proposition i.e. “subscribers can save up to 60%” or “purchase both events and save”	Pricing value proposition for patrons encourages a highly transactional relationship that doesn’t necessarily encourage relationship development; organization knows that subscriber audience is mostly product and price focused and appeals to that in brochure
	Value pricing option highlighted	Shows company’s attention to price-sensitive demographic
Relationship Management/Marketing	Subscriber benefits listed, which include always getting “the best seats”	Establishes foundation to incorporate relationships management strategy
Interpersonal Relationship Values	Donation page encourages people to get “close” with organization by donating	Language encourages close relationship development through customization, special relationships with staff, and relationship management through donor benefits

Table 29. Summary of content analysis of Opera Company A’s current season brochure.

Table 30

Strategic Communications Concept	Observations	Effect/Impact
Relationship Management/Marketing	Language offers donors the opportunity to contribute to organization and receive privileges	Privileges display a relationship management approach that prioritizes highest givers

Table 30. Summary of content analysis of Opera Company A’s donor solicitation brochure.

Opera Company B: What did the Marketing Director say?

This organization incorporates a high level of patron engagement into their activities. They not only believe that marketing plays a role at the programming table, but also ensure that patrons feedback is considered to a high degree when making programming decisions.

Patron feedback is shared with all administrative levels internally. The major challenges of Opera Company B included advertising expenses, human resources to expand online presence, and, most importantly, diminished support for music education in the classroom.

What did the marketing materials say?

This section dissects the messages in three pieces of marketing materials to find uncover the effect of the company’s printed messages, and to what extent their printed, public-facing communications incorporate the components of strategic communications management.

Table 31

<i>Strategic Communications Concept</i>	<i>Observations</i>	<i>Effect/Impact</i>
Market Orientation	High level message about product uses accessible language i.e. “hilarious” version of classic that is specific to company’s city and “popular masterpiece”	A sense of market-orientation is established by using words like “popular” and appealing to general public by highlighting most accessible components of operas
Relationship Management/Marketing	Subscription message very user friendly and offers advantages for becoming subscriber	Highlights reciprocal benefits of loyal relationship with organization
Organization-Public Relationship Values	Programming itself is varied and offers an opera unique to the company’s city	Reflects company’s home city on mainstage, through core programming, thereby establishing positive OPR with proud citizens; programming is reflective of general public without, in theory, sacrificing the core product

Table 31. Summary of content analysis of Opera Company B’s prior season brochure.

Table 32

<i>Strategic Communications Concept</i>	<i>Observations</i>	<i>Effect/Impact</i>
Market Orientation	High level message about product uses accessible language i.e. “globally successful” and “popular masterpieces”	Same as above; use of language that appeals to general public and thus possess level of market-orientation
Relationship Management/Marketing	In addition to subscriber benefits from company, subs also get benefits from other local opera organization	Rewards display a relationship management approach that prioritizes most loyal patrons

Table 32. Summary of content analysis of Opera Company B’s current season brochure.

Table 33

<i>Strategic Communications Concept</i>	<i>Observations</i>	<i>Effect/Impact</i>
Interpersonal Relationship Values	Highlights that donors have the opportunity to “get closer” to the art form	Interpersonal relationship message that encourages connection between donor and organization
Market Orientation	Message is equally program- and donor-centred	Displays a level of attention to donor desires
Relationship Management/Marketing	Table of donor benefits, based on how much they give; message is that donor benefits are an “appreciation” of a donor’s support	Benefits display a relationship management approach that prioritizes highest givers; reciprocal relationship developed through donor support

Table 33. Summary of content analysis of Opera Company B’s donation web page.

Opera Company C: What did the Marketing Director say?

While the marketing director articulated their mission-based strategic direction, this person added this caveat: “We are also mandated to create art relevant to contemporary Toronto audiences, and therefore we do take into account their feedback, and it often shapes (partly) the nature of the work we produce. I would say our production values aspire to serve both art and public. (The two are inextricably and

bi-directionally connected.)” The major challenge this opera company faced is addressing the opera stigma, and showing prospective audiences that they are “entertaining and moving and...in touch with contemporary culture, society, events.”

This organization fosters a high degree of patron engagement around their performances. And while the organization does not necessarily believe that marketing has a strong role at the programming table, seemingly paradoxically, they do incorporate a high level of market research and feedback when making decisions.

“Insofar as we are interested in producing shows that the Toronto public would actually want to see, it is in our interest to be aware of what type of content and material would attract them,” said the marketing director. “We are also committed to our craft, which we believe is best served by topical material relevant to present-day audiences. Again, for our particular company, the two stakeholders (art and public) are rarely at odds with one another.”

What did the marketing materials say?

This section dissects the messages in three pieces of marketing materials to uncover the effect of the company’s printed messages, and to what extent their printed, public-facing communications incorporate the components of strategic communications management.

Table 34

<i>Strategic Communications Concept</i>	<i>Observations</i>	<i>Effect/Impact</i>
Market Orientation	Very product oriented	To be expected for season webpage; lack of market orientation
Interpersonal Relationship Values	Offers much photo and video content to tell story of company	Visuals connect patrons to art form and organization and

		encourage sense of IPR
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Table 34. Summary of content analysis of Opera Company C’s prior season web page.

Table 35

<i>Strategic Communications Concept</i>	<i>Observations</i>	<i>Effect/Impact</i>
Market Orientation	Very product oriented	To be expected for season webpage; lack of market orientation
Relationship Management/Marketing	Offers pricing value proposition, i.e. “save 20%” by subscribing; also highlights subscriber benefits	Establishing relationship management with subscribers through offering special privileges
Organization-Public Relationship Values	Two types of subscription packages to appeal to different demographics, i.e. regular subscription and “under 30” subscription	Good OPR to understand various demographics and offer subscription to suit their needs

Table 35. Summary of content analysis of Opera Company C’s current season web page.

Table 36

<i>Strategic Communications Concept</i>	<i>Observations</i>	<i>Effect/Impact</i>
Interpersonal Relationship Values	Main heading is “your support means so much to us”; language is very personal and appreciative	Language that incorporates level of interpersonal relationship values
Relationship Management/Marketing	Does not display donor benefits; instead discusses various initiatives donor can support to “invest in the future of opera;” very product focused	Instead of highlighting reciprocal benefits, which would display a level of relationship marketing/management, donor page focuses on product and how the donor benefits the organization; lack of relationship management/marketing evident

Table 36. Summary of content analysis of Opera Company C’s donation web page.

General Observations

The following section displays a collection of general observations from the online surveys and content analysis of marketing materials. Of those organizations that operate under the subscription model, 100% displayed subscriber benefits in their season brochure, exhibiting the relationship management/marketing tactic with their

subscriber demographic. The importance of this message varied according to the organization. Some organizations designated a full page to presenting subscriber benefits, while others included a few lines of text. In their season brochure (or webpage, in some instances) or donation solicitation, 78% used language that incorporated interpersonal relationship values and 67% displayed auxiliary programming in their season brochures that responded to needs of different segments in their community and offered opportunity for more interpersonal-based interaction, helping to also increase OPR with various stakeholders. It is worth noting that some companies might have offered this type of programming, but not included it in their major marketing publications.

The following tables show how marketing directors felt about their role within the organization including the companies' effectiveness at engaging patrons, marketing/communications' role in programming, and the extent to which patron feedback and market research should be considered when making programming decisions. Generally, organizations incorporated the four components of strategic communications management in their marketing materials and through the actions of their marketing department. It is interesting to note, however, that organizations appear to be split in their opinions regarding incorporating patron feedback into programming decisions. While the online survey results appear to show a relatively even divide in this belief (see Table 38), it should be noted that incorporating market feedback likely happens in a nuanced way. For example, patron feedback could be incorporated into programming decisions in a formal or informal way, and does not

necessarily mean that organizations are responding to direct, expressed desires (i.e.

“vote for your favourite orchestra program,” “tell us which ballet you want us to produce next season,” etc.).

Table 37

Not effective (rated 2 or 1)	Neutral (rated 3)	Very effective (rated 4 or 5)
Orchestra A		Opera Company A
		Dance Company A
		Orchestra B
		Theatre B
		Opera Company C
		Dance Company B
		Opera Company B

Table 37. Results from online survey of marketing directors: self-assessment of organizations’ effectiveness at patron engagement.

Table 38

Not at all (rated 2 or 1)	Neutral (rated 3)	Quite a lot (rated 4 or 5)
Orchestra A		Opera Company A
Theatre Company B		Dance Company A
Opera Company C		Orchestra B
Dance Company B		Opera Company B

Table 38. Results from online survey of marketing directors: belief that marketing/communications department plays functional role in programming.

Table 39

Not at all (rated 2 or 1)	Neutral (rated 3)	Very Much So (rated 4 or 5)
Opera Company A	Dance Company A	Orchestra B
Orchestra A		Opera Company C
Theatre Company B		Opera Company B
Dance Company B		

Table 39. Results from online survey of marketing directors: organizations’ inclination to incorporate market research/patron feedback in programming.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this thesis was to understand how and to what extent Canadian performing arts organizations use theories and practices of strategic communications to create mutually beneficial relationships with current and prospective patrons to

contribute to organizational success. Additionally, this thesis sought to understand whether the techniques of strategic communications could help alleviate some of the tensions between an organization's patrons and artistic products, which are not necessarily developed with the patrons' expressed desires in mind.

This study interviewed high-level staff and analyzed marketing materials of nine not-for-profit performing arts organizations across Canada. Artistic disciplines included dance, opera, symphonic music, and theatre, and organizations' budgets ranged from under \$1M to over \$30M. Each organization occupied a different state in its organizational lifespan. Some had a firm financial foundation with a long-standing patron base and leadership, while nearly half of them were recently adjusting to new changes in artistic and administrative leadership, creating a level of tumultuousness as they adapted to new directions. Each company's organizational state and history contributed to the extent to which strategic communications tactics were incorporated into organizational practices.

Incorporating components of 1) market orientation in the design and/or delivery of artistic products, 2) relationship management/marketing in the communication of products with stakeholders, 3) theories of organizational-public relationships, and 4) values of interpersonal relationships can help support arts organizations' progress in the twenty first century, and address some of the challenges inherent to the sector. Scholarship on improved methods for arts marketing is robust, and influenced by pure marketing literature, management, and communications theories. This research revealed that organizations do incorporate strategic communications, however, the

extent to which they believe the four components actually play a management role that meets the business and mission-based goals of the organization is highly variable and contingent on the following dynamics.

The Influence of Leadership Style

Each organization's relationship to components of strategic communications management was complex and multi-dimensional. For example, organizations' inclination to incorporate relationship marketing/management techniques with diverse stakeholders was highly dependent on both human and technological resources, and the beliefs and leadership styles of directors. Not all organizations felt they needed to take prospective patrons by the hand and guide them through their art form. In particular, the organization that expressed the most artistic and financial stability, Theatre Company B, was the least concerned about incorporating special mechanisms within the strategic communications mix to reach prospective patrons. While they were strong communicators with their audience, Theatre B's staff felt that the art had the capacity to speak to everyone and did not need communication or engagement tools to translate it.

The extent to which CEOs thought about their organization's communications function was dependent on the CEO's background and the strengths they brought to their organizations. For example, some CEOs spoke quite globally about their organization's position in patrons' lives, while others spoke about their organizations through the lens of repertoire selection and donor relations. This could be because some CEOs are more involved in communications while others are more highly

integrated in fundraising practices. In a similar vein, some marketing directors appeared far less interested in incorporating strategic communications management into their practices, choosing instead to focus purely on ticket sales. This could be because some marketing directors saw their role as more transactional or sales focused, while yet others focused on media and public relations to build less tangible capital through goodwill and reputation management.

Therefore, the leadership style of each marketing director or CEO, combined with each organization's genre of art and their organizational state (i.e. considering factors such as financial and artistic stability, respect from peers and media, state of subscriber base, etc.) played a role in whether or not strategic communications was incorporated as a management function or as a tactical approach to selling tickets.

In response to RQ 1, the extent to which Canadian arts organizations are incorporating strategic communications management to develop mutually beneficial relationships between patrons and artistic products is heavily influenced by the management style and preferences of the organization's business leader.

Organization Public Relationships: Patron Engagement as a Multifaceted Concept

A strong sense of effective patron engagement, a sub-component of the organization public relationship dynamic, was evident amongst all but one organization. According to online surveys by marketing directors, 87.5% of organizations felt they were effective at patron engagement. When asked whether they believed the marketing and communications department played a role in making decisions at the programming table, 50% felt marketing should have a role, while 50% felt marketing

should not play a role. When asked whether their organization did, in fact, incorporate market research and feedback when making programming decisions for future seasons, 37.5% of organizations did incorporate feedback, 50% of organizations did not incorporate feedback. Of those organizations that said they were effective at patron engagement, 43% of them admitted to not incorporating any of that patron feedback at the programming table.

The notion of “patron engagement” (defined as the extent to which customers feel involved in the activities of an organization through meaningful dialogue) had a multifaceted interpretation amongst Canadian performing arts organizations. While the majority of respondents cited themselves as effective at patron engagement, few organizations incorporated the knowledge gleaned by the marketing and communications department when making decisions about programming. These figures cause one to wonder what the purpose of patron feedback is for these organizations that assert its importance, but do not incorporate it into the artistic considerations of the organization. It is conceivable that these organizations incorporate this information into decisions in an informal way, as Opera Company A’s Managing Director cited in their interview. However, organizations that collect patron feedback but do not react to it should be forewarned of possible OPR implications, which stress the importance of mutual adaptation and contingent response as key to positive relationships between organizations and publics (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 1997). It could be deduced that information is sought from patrons as simply an exercise whose primary goal is to establish trust (one of the major tenets of successful organizational-public relationships)

(Bruning & Ledingham, 1999), or that feedback is only taken into consideration in non-artistic arenas (i.e. show times, customer service issues, auxiliary programming, innovative forms of artistic programming, etc.).

The notion of bringing information gleaned from marketing's patron engagement practices to inform the development of artistic products supports the idea of communications professional as a "boundary spanner," helping artistic staff view the organization from the outside and supporting the formulation of organizational strategy and direction (Steyn, 2007). Incorporating this knowledge throughout the entire organization can also allow arts organizations to proactively meet the needs of their constituencies (Sorjonen, 2011). This proactive approach is more highly desired and suited to the nuances of the mission-based performing arts industry, as opposed to the more commercially based reactive form of market orientation. Therefore, patron engagement can and should be a tool for ensuring that a proactive form of market orientation is properly and efficiently deployed in an arts organization.

In response to RQ 2, patron engagement, as a sub-component of the organization-public relationship dynamic, could be used to alleviate the tensions between customers and the artistic products created by mission-based, product-oriented organizations. However, leadership style and the organization's general strategy influenced whether patron engagement was incorporated in any meaningful way, and the results from these interviews were mixed. It is conceivable that information gleaned through patron engagement practices and incorporated into the non-artistic arena can still help support the relationship between patrons and the organization, even helping to alleviate some

of the tensions between customers and potentially challenging arts products by creating strong relationships between the organization and its patrons that extend beyond the customer's desire to like what is on stage.

Therefore, patron engagement tactics offer a few benefits to organizations and publics: 1) they benefit the organization by facilitating a two-way dialogue with the public and develop a sense of trust from the public; 2) they benefit the public by offering a venue to have their concerns heard; and 3) they provide arts organizations with a bank of information from which they can better understand their patron base, and decide whether or how they incorporate feedback into any part of the organization's operations (artistic or non-artistic). In other words, the act of collecting patron feedback does offer an intrinsic benefit for both the organization and patron, regardless of whether that feedback is acted upon by the organization. From these interviews, it is clear that organizations incorporate patron engagement in different ways and that its benefits extend beyond influencing what happens on stage. Depending on greater organizational strategy and goals, arts organizations can enjoy one or all of these benefits by incorporating patron engagement tactics, whether or not they incorporate feedback at a programming level.

The Influence of Market Orientation

Patron engagement, as a subcomponent of organization-public relationships, can help build trust and two-way dialogue between constituents while also informing the extent to which patron feedback is realized in market-oriented products and services. Each organization's relationship to market-oriented product design and the level to

which market-based programming decisions were incorporated varied widely. Reasons for these differences have to do with the aforementioned leadership style and organizational goals, but also might be a result of the variety of sizes and genres of art. For example, a large organization that presents over 80 performances per year has a greater opportunity to develop some market-oriented works. Conversely an organization with only 10 performances has fewer opportunities to present crowd-pleaser operas, plays, or symphony concerts. Additionally, some genres, like theatre, have historically been viewed as more “accessible” art forms to the Canadian public, as opposed to, say, contemporary dance and modern opera, and might not require the same approach in product design as “less accessible” art forms.

While there was a near unanimous sentiment that patron engagement was effectively deployed by each arts organizations, there was a 50/50 split as to whether this information played a role in influencing what happens on stage. Therefore, half of the interviewees responded negatively to incorporating market-orientation into programming activities (Voss, 2000) while the other half seemed to find some use for it at the programming table (Gainer & Padanyi, 2002; Sorjonen, 2011). Additionally, the impact of intra-organizational systematic barriers that prevent patron feedback from being implemented should not be discounted.

While nearly all organizations shared patron feedback internally, the extent to which general market preferences informed critical management decisions varied widely depending on the organization itself. Because this study did not attempt to understand the sales and community impact of each organization, or their financial and

artistic performance as a result of strategic communications efforts, it is hard to determine whether those who incorporated expressed market desires when making programming decisions were more or less successful, or if it impacted financial sustainability or met any other metrics of the organization. In those cases where market research and feedback was used, we do not have an understanding of whether market-oriented activities were incorporated out of financial necessity or out of a desire to accurately respond to the needs, latent or expressed, of their constituencies (Jaworski et al., 2000; Hirschman, 1983; Sorjonen, 2011).

This research shows that information on patrons' preferred artistic products obtained through the marketing function holds limited actionable practicality for Canadian performing arts organizations, especially in terms of product development. This sentiment was shared amongst CEOs, majority of whom informally and unofficially incorporated market desires into programming. All respondents stated that patron feedback is shared with all, or nearly all, administrative levels internally. This makes one wonder whether 50% of respondents are intentionally keeping this information from artistic staff, therefore ascribing to the theory that artistic decisions are best made by *ignoring* audience feedback (Martin, 1995).

In response to RQ 2, developing artistic products with a strong sense of reactive market orientation is not generally used as a strategic communications technique in Canadian performing arts organizations. While collecting and being aware of this information was important for marketing directors and CEOs interviewed and surveyed in this study, it does not appear that market orientation, in the commercial sense, was

incorporated in order to alleviate the challenges of working within the mission-based fields. However, Sorjonen's theory of latent market orientation (2011) seemed most akin to how CEOs and marketing directors responded in this study.

Managing and Developing Relationships

Tactics of relationship marketing/management were strongly favoured by all respondents. Segmenting and targeting communication messages according to patron preferences was the most common method of relationship marketing/management. While CEOs and most marketing directors spoke positively of developing relationships with patrons, the majority of public-facing marketing collateral was mainly product-focused. This causes one to wonder: if the key document to describe an organization's offerings does not help prospective patrons want to develop a relationship with the organization, in what context can arts organizations best exhibit this component of the strategic communications management mix?

Language pertaining to interpersonal relationships more strongly exhibited in donation literature than in any other piece of printed material, showing that organizations are pre-disposed to investing in IPR tactics with donors than with ticket-purchasers. Additionally, literature describing auxiliary activities (i.e. post-show talks, social events with artists, etc.) incorporated a higher frequency of interpersonal relationship language than descriptions of core product offerings. Since auxiliary activities seemed to be the arena in which the most patron engagement and market-oriented tactics could be realized (while maintaining the integrity of the core product), it makes sense that organizations would promote these offerings in a way that

encouraged the strongest bond between their art form and the customized, targeted wants of certain demographics.

This research found linkages between organizational size and the inclination to develop and grow relationships. In two of the three largest organizations, marketing directors leaned toward a pure sales imperative. In contrast to their smaller-budget counterparts, whose marketing directors might also be responsible for public relations and community outreach and seemed interested in establishing interpersonal relationship values in their practices, larger organizations appeared more highly driven by earned revenue through ticket sales. One marketing director stated that he did not see how past efforts at building relationships had contributed to increased ticket revenue, which was the area he felt most responsible for in his role.

This lower tolerance for the long-term, relationship-building process could be a response to the high volume of inventory these organizations must sell for each production, and the high expense of their art form. An organization with 100,000 ticket purchasers per year might struggle with the overwhelming task of developing relationships with and products for individual consumers (as recommended by Sheth et al., 2000). Meanwhile, smaller budget organizations do not have the financial resources or sophisticated technology for expensive broad-based marketing initiatives, and therefore might be uniquely positioned to incorporate one-to-one relationship building techniques as a means of selling their products, using their small size and flexibility as a major competitive advantage in the field.

In response to RQ 1, Canadian arts organizations use relationship management/marketing and interpersonal relationship values to develop mutually beneficial relationships between customers and artistic products in mostly the non-artistic arena, relying on special programs and organizational staff to bridge the gap between the core product and diverse stakeholder groups.

Managerial Implications

This research does not just aim to understand the extent to which strategic communications influences the Canadian arts sector. It also seeks to inform how contemporary arts managers can improve their practices for the sustainability of their sector and to the benefit of the people they serve. Artists, board members, and arts managers should consider that the services arts organizations provide their communities are not merely artistic in nature, but rather touch on the diverse and multi-dimensional needs of the human psyche and soul. For artists and managers to be skeptical of incorporating strategic communications practices because of the ambiguous threat of compromising artistic integrity miscalculates how arts organizations function in people's lives. Instead, artists and managers must consider the multitude of ways arts organizations serve their constituents and determine which components of strategic communications are applicable in a given situation with a given public. It seems counterproductive to maintain that elements of strategic communications management, market orientation for example, would be inappropriate in *all* situations, considering the vastness of an arts organization's activities and audience types.

Within their activities and organizational planning, the communications and artistic departments of arts organizations should therefore seek to:

- 1) Build strong, long term relationships with audience members;
- 2) Develop and communicate programming based on a proactive form of market orientation, responding to patrons latent desires;
- 3) Behave in a manner that allows patrons to feel the organization is a good relational partner;
- 4) Develop programming and messages around the notion of mutual benefit and an understanding of each other's needs.

Artists and managers must not think of the marketing and communications function and the artistic function as two discrete entities that operate independent of each other. These departments must consider that OPR values apply internally as well: just as organizations and publics are interdependent, the marketing and artistic functions must work for the mutual benefit of the audiences they serve, helping the organization meet the public's interaction expectations and aligning its practices to the values of its stakeholders (Bruning, 2001; Steyn, 2007). Strategic communications management has great potentials for reaching new audiences and bringing current audiences into alignment with the organizational mission, thereby bridging the gap between art and the people it serves.

LIMITATIONS

This study focused on a small number of performing arts groups in Canada, and therefore the results are not generalizable in all arts organizations. Quantitative results from the survey are limited by the fact that they represent a small number of respondents and therefore should be considered hypothesis-generating. Some of the organizations we contacted for participation in this study did not respond. Thus the

final sample may not be fully representative of the vast range of arts organizations in Canada. Additionally, due to the nature of the methods, it is difficult to determine whether saturation was achieved with the sample used. Because this research did not examine organizational success metrics like financial, artistic, or community resources, the ability to determine the success of those organizations that incorporated strategic communications management was limited. It should also be noted that some organizations had separate marketing and communications departments. It is possible that the elements of strategic communications management were more valued by communications directors (who were not surveyed in this study) than marketing directors.

This research meets the threshold for reliability, since the data collection procedures and content analysis of this study can be repeated. However, it should be noted that while content analysis was guided by the literature review presented in this thesis, interpretation of the data is subjective. Therefore, the results of this thesis are interpretive in nature and might be open to rival interpretations (Yin, 2009).

Additionally, the author is an experienced arts manager, and readers should assume that some level of personal bias might have been integrated into research results.

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This research did not examine organizational success metrics like financial, artistic, or community resources and whether organizations that incorporated strategic communications management experienced more or less organizational success as a result of their efforts. Future research should be developed to analyze the relationship

between measures of economic and social success and levels of strategic communications management.

Given the that changes in arts organizations' operating environment has so drastically changed in recent years, a longitudinal study analyzing long term affects of strategic communications management on the success of arts organizations is needed. Specifically, the success of organizations that do practice it and whether there is a price to be paid for *not* practicing it. Future research should also consider the how strategic communications can influence long-term artistic planning, sales strategies, and the acquisition of prospective patrons.

In summary, strategic communications management does play an active and important role in Canadian arts organizations. The extent to which it is used as a management function is dependent on a number of factors including the size and type of the organization, organizational lifespan, and leadership preferences. These are all important factors in how and to what extent strategic communications is practiced in the Canadian performing arts sector. It can be asked whether arts organizations truly have the ability to incorporate all of the components of strategic communications, given their limited human and financial resources, and whether the small staffs can really practice the type of organizational-public relationship management necessary to cut through the clutter of the marketplace to obtain and maintain patrons. Whether or not strategic communications management contributes to a sustainable model of Canadian arts organizations remains to be seen, however, it is clear that other methods must be

explored in order to ensure the viability of Canada's not-for-profit performing arts industry.

Those in the arts industry must be aware that the results and recommendations in this thesis might contribute to a long-term strategy for the future of this sector. Some arts managers might find these recommendations to be insurmountable, given the limited human and technological resources of much of the sector. In the face of this challenge, it is worth noting that incrementally incorporating some of the elements of strategic communications into operations might be the best approach for some organizations. Relationship management/marketing, for example, should not be an indiscriminately strewn tactic for organizational success. While relationships management/marketing can be applied to multiple different patron types, the extent to which it is actively implemented should depend on the potential mutual value of the exchange. Therefore all four dimensions of the strategic communications mix should be applied strategically, given an organization's unique environmental factors, and the value it predicts it will receive from the investment.

In response to the research questions of this thesis, arts organizations are using strategic communications management to develop relationships between customers and the arts products they deliver. Additionally, strategic communications management is used, to varying degrees, to bring together customers and arts products. However, it is worth noting that strategic communications practices not only help organizations serve their stakeholders more fully, they also encourage arts organizations to become better relational partners to the multiple types of stakeholders they serve, encouraging

dialogue and communication as a management strategy that is fully integrated into the entire organization.

With the pressures of running an arts organization in the twenty first century, this research may be reassuring in that new models of attracting and communicating with audiences are on the minds of many CEOs of Canadian arts organizations, and that the authoritarian artist aesthetic is being re-purposed into a more inclusive, communicative, two-way approach to building a Canadian community of arts patrons. It can be said that certain “high art” art forms are a niche product, appealing to a small slice of the general public. Some organizations attempt to fight this elitist presumption by programming works that can have broad appeal to the general market and using a highly transactional sales strategy, thus bridging the gap between consumer and arts product (see Figure One). The problem with incorporating a transactional approach instead of one that stresses the four elements of strategic communications is that the pervasiveness cheap and easy competition for entertainment dollars makes it nearly impossible for arts organizations to compete in this arena. This “race to the bottom” of discounted ticket-sales and transactional messaging is unsustainable in this sector.

Therefore, arts organizations would be wise to instead bridge the gap between consumer and arts products by highlighting their unique value proposition of being able to understand and serve audiences through strategic communications practices, creating a base of patrons who believe in and will champion the work of the organization. The creation and activation of this type of patron is an arts organizations greatest strength, and key to the future existence of the arts and culture sector. This

study underscores that incorporating a strategic communications approach in art organizations can and should support the organization's objectives. It is the author's belief that organizations that do not find ways to integrate these techniques into multiple interdependent departments of the organization fail to fully serve the needs of their community and achieve their artistic mission.

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Appendix A

Online Survey Questions for Marketing Directors

- 2) Which definition more adequately describes the strategic direction of your organization? (select one)
 - d. We seek to produce an art form we believe is intrinsically valuable and to which we believe patrons will respond positively. We are chiefly concerned with the quality of the art form we produce.
 - e. We seek to create superior value for patrons by generating information about and responding to patrons' expressed wants and needs. We are chiefly concerned with satisfying patrons' desires.
 - f. Other

- 3) Which engagement tactics does your organization use to create dialogue with current and prospective patrons? (select all that apply)
 - k. Social media engagement
 - l. Paper feedback forms
 - m. Phone calls
 - n. Email feedback
 - o. Suggestion box
 - p. Online surveys
 - q. In-person meetings
 - r. Focus groups
 - s. Town Hall type meetings
 - t. Other

- 4) How effective do you believe your organization is at patron engagement?
Not at all effective = 1, Neutral = 3, Very effective = 5 (scale 1-5)

- 5) How would you like your organization to be perceived when communicating with patrons? (choose all that apply)
 - a. A form of entertainment
 - b. A form of cultural enrichment
 - c. Advancing the art form
 - d. Charitable organization
 - e. other

- 6) Which tactics does your organization use to help current patrons understand your art form?
 - h. Workshops
 - i. Program Notes
 - j. Talk backs
 - k. Education classes/sessions

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- l. "Art form" 101
- m. Online learning opportunities
- n. Other

7) Which tactics does your organization use to help prospective patrons understand your art form?

- a. Advertising
- b. Earned media
- c. Online Learning Opportunities
- d. Short/accessible performances designed for prospective patrons
- e. Education classes/sessions
- f. Other

8) To what extent do you believe that the Marketing/Communications department has a functional role in programming decisions for your organization?

Not at all = 1, Neutral = 3, Very much so = 5 to quite a lot (scale 1-5)

9) How do you acquire information on the programming demands of your current audience?

- l. Post concert surveys
- m. Pre concert surveys
- n. Focus groups
- o. Patrons advisory groups
- p. In house general online surveys
- q. Subscriber surveys
- r. Single ticket purchaser surveys
- s. Large scale polling and market research
- t. Non-concert goer surveys
- u. Social media content analysis
- v. Other

10) How do you acquire information on the programming demands/desires of your prospective audiences?

- a. Large scale polling and market research
- b. In house general surveys
- c. Focus groups
- d. Third party surveys
- e. Social media content analysis
- f. Other

10) To what extent does your organization incorporate market research and feedback when making programming decisions?

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Not at all = 1, Neutral = 3, Very much so = 5 (scale 1-5)

11) With whom do you share patron feedback? (select all that applies)

- a. The information is filed for future use
- b. Front line staff (i.e. box office, call centre and customer service)
- c. Marketing/communication department
- d. Departmental directors
- e. CEO
- f. Other

12) Describe the marketing/communication tactics your organization uses to develop relationships with current and prospective patrons.

(open question)

13) What challenges does the marketing/communication department face in communicating your art form with prospective patrons or those people who have no prior knowledge of the art form?

(open question)

Appendix B

Interview Questions for CEOs

- 1) What is the strategic direction of your organization?
- 2) Describe, in your opinion, the ideal relationship between your organization and your patron stakeholders?
- 3) What values do you want your stakeholders to associate with your organization?
- 4) What challenges do you have in communicating your product to current patrons? Prospective patrons? Discuss.
- 5) As a not-for-profit, mission based arts organization, how do you balance programming that appeals to your artists, peers and current patrons with that which appeals to your prospective audience and the general public?
- 6) How and to what extent are your patrons' expressed desires incorporated at the artistic programming table?
- 7) What, if any, organizational changes have you made over the past 10 years to adapt to changing social, cultural, and artistic environments?
- 8) What, if any, organizational changes have you made over the past 10 years to adapt to the changing ways people consume live performing arts?
- 9) What are your biggest challenges in designing product offerings for current patrons? How does this differ for prospective patrons?
- 10) What do you find most challenging about making product decisions in a field that is mission-based compared to one that is purely market based? How do you alleviate these challenges?
- 11) Some arts management scholars believe that responding to market forces will result in a low quality of work and have a "dichotomous view of the relationship between artistic excellence and popularity." What are your thoughts?

Appendix C

Content Analysis of Marketing Material

Orchestra A

Item	Interpersonal Relationship Values	Market Orientation	Relationship Management/Marketing	Organization Public Relationship Values
Current Season Brochure	Message from CEO/MD is more related to city and its people	Tag for season is more patron oriented		Message from CEO/MD offers dialogue w/ reader
		Introductory programs offered		
	Donation pg shows IPR values of org; photos of patrons and children benefitted by orchestra			
Prior Season Brochure	Message from MD to converse w/ reader	NOPE; tag is product oriented		Message from MD to converse w/ reader
	Connection to artists through their quotes throughout brochure; personalizing	Introductory programs offered		Snowbird series anticipates need of key public; contingent response
	Quote from young patron shows IPR between org and people; exemplar of one-to-one relationship potential		Donation page invites higher level of involvement and deeper relationship; highlights benefits to donors as rel mgmt strategy	
Donation page	Photos of artists and young musicians position orch as good IPR partner	Product centred reason for donating	Cites reciprocal benefits of donating for rel mgmt. purposes	Cites reciprocal benefits of donating; contingent response
			Benefits chart offers ways of deepening relationship through rel mgmt. benefits	

Orchestra B

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS MANAGEMENT IN CANADIAN NOT-FOR-PROFIT ARTS ORGANIZATIONS

Item	Interpersonal Relationship Values	Market Orientation	Relationship Management/Marketing	Organization Public Relationship Values
Current Season Brochure	Descriptions and quotes by artists personally offer sense of IPR		Subscriber benefits as means of rel mgmt.	Extra info on each concert program increases OPR by offering patrons information they desire
				Pre-concert talks and events offer more opp to develop OPR
Prior Season Brochure	Descriptions and quotes by artists personally offer sense of IPR		Subscriber benefits as means of rel mgmt.	Extra info on each concert program increases OPR by offering patrons information they desire
				Pre-concert talks and events offer more opp to develop OPR
				Specially crafted listening guides offer more context for music and a “carefully guided” approach, developing positive OPR by understanding needs
Endowment solicitation brochure	Quotes by musician, student, and guest artist position orch as good IPR partner	Very product focused; raising funds for “significant national presence” and		Lacks this; very inward looking in its description of donation options

Theatre Company A

Item	Interpersonal Relationship Values	Market Orientation	Relationship Management/Marketing	Organization Public Relationship Values

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS MANAGEMENT IN CANADIAN NOT-FOR-PROFIT ARTS ORGANIZATIONS

Current season brochure	Special events page offers “highly personalized” experiences; shows theatre as good IPR partner	Donation page very product focused	Subscriber benefits as means of rel mgmt	Special events page offers multiple types of experiences, to help meet needs of multiple types of publics and improve OPR
Prior season brochure	Pre- and post-show talks as means of developing IPR; new auxiliary program invites guests to be seen “up close” by the theatre creators	Use of media quotes show more of a peer/product orientation rather than market		Pre- and post-show talks to create positive OPR
Donor solicitation	Personal language and invitations to special events to encourage IPR; gracious and personal language	Patron-centred language	Donor benefits as means of rel mgmt	“Customized”

Theatre Company B

Item	Interpersonal Relationship Values	Market Orientation	Relationship Management/Marketing	Organization Public Relationship Values
Current season brochure	“Make it your home” message encourages IPR between theatre and public			
	Auxiliary programs use very IPR oriented language		Subscriber benefits as means of rel mgmt	Auxiliary programs offer multiple types of experiences to help meet needs of multiple types of publics
Prior season brochure	Quotes from subscribers position theatre as good IPR partner	Very product oriented; highlights industry awards of		Parking and dining directions good OPR for audience: understanding

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		artists and plays		needs of audience demographics
	Auxiliary programs use very IPR oriented language, including invitation to "go deeper"			Auxiliary programs offer multiple types of experiences to help meet needs of multiple types of publics, including concierge type offerings
Donor solicitation	IPR language on front cover; image of actors in close contact on cover seems to imply level of close relationship	Focus of donation is product oriented but	Focus of donation is product oriented but also includes donor benefits	Also includes "community" focus of company which shows theatre's attention to OPR

Dance Company A

Item	Interpersonal Relationship Values	Market Orientation	Relationship Management/Marketing	Organization Public Relationship Values
Current season brochure	Subscription page includes "family" language, as means of positioning company as good IPR partner	Very product oriented language in performance descriptions	Subscriber benefits as means of establishing rel mgmt.	Programming includes participatory element for the public in recreational division; appealing to specific demographic needs
Prior season brochure	Subscription page includes "family" language, as means of positioning company as good IPR partner	Subscribing can happen in "easy steps," thereby offering an accessible way for the general public to purchase		One production centred on local social/cultural issues, thereby displaying strong awareness of and response to specific social demographic
Donor benefit grid	Highest level of donors receive most IPR privileges and		Various levels of donor privileges as means of establishing rel mgmt.	Most advanced privileges go to highest donors, thereby

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	services			displaying an awareness and response to what is important to high-level donors
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Dance Company B

Item	Interpersonal Relationship Values	Market Orientation	Relationship Management/Marketing	Organization Public Relationship Values
Prior season brochure		Very artist/product focused	Lack of subscription model precludes ability to integrate rel mgmt in the way most orgs do	Some listings for “chat” or “workshop” style program that provide some opportunities to engage with patrons
Events webpage for current season	One auxiliary program aims to “throw the studio wide open” and invite audience into creation process; attempt to develop IPR	Very artist/product focused	Lack of subscription model precludes ability to integrate rel mgmt in the way most orgs do	One auxiliary program aims to “throw the studio wide open” and invite audience into creation process allows for OPR through two-way communication
Donation webpage	No donor centred language that would encourage a relationship between organization and donors	Very artist/product focused	No donor centred language that would encourage a relationship between organization and donors	No donor centred language that would encourage a relationship between organization and donors

Opera Company A

Item	Interpersonal Relationship Values	Market Orientation	Relationship Management/Marketing	Organization Public Relationship Values
Prior season brochure	Donation page offers personalized service and	Very product oriented	Donation page offers personalized service and experience for donors as means of rel mgmt	Donation page explains impact of the donor to the company,

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	experience for donors, showing company as good IPR partner			playing on donors desire to feel helpful and useful (display of contingent response to donor desires)
				Customizable subscription options to meet needs of certain patron demographics for whom flexibility is important
Current season brochure	“Join the conversation online” invitation allows for digital sense of IPR between company and patrons	Very product oriented	Donation page invites guests to “get closer” to company, inviting them into a rel mgmt dynamic through benefits of donation and customization of experience	
	Donation page invites guests to “get closer” to company, inviting to enjoy a customized, special relationship with company	Any patron oriented messages have to do with price benefits; Very strong transactional message (ie “save xx%) for subscriptions	Description of subs as always getting the “best seats” and other benefits that allow for rel mgmt	By focusing on product and price in season brochure, company is speaking to subscribers’ two most important variables; displaying good OPR by knowing their interests
				Value pricing option shows company’s attention to price-sensitive demographic and allows OPR w/ them
Donor solicitation			Rel mgmt language highly visible including descriptions of privileges and benefits	

Opera Company B

Item	Interpersonal Relationship	Market Orientation	Relationship Management/Marketing	Organization Public
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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS MANAGEMENT IN CANADIAN NOT-FOR-PROFIT ARTS ORGANIZATIONS

	Values			Relationship Values
Current season brochure		High level of market oriented, accessible language including “globally successful” and “popular masterpiece”	Subscriber benefits as means of establishing rel mgmt	
Prior season brochure		Description of performances use very accessible language	Subscriber benefits as means of establishing rel mgmt	One production set in the company’s city, thereby establishing positive OPR with proud citizens
		Subscription message very clear and appealing to general public		
Donation webpage	Invites donors to “get closer” thereby establishing foundation for IPR	Message is both donor and product centred	Donor benefits as means of establishing rel mgmt	

Opera Company C

Item	Interpersonal Relationship Values	Market Orientation	Relationship Management/Marketing	Organization Public Relationship Values
Current season webpage		Very product oriented	Subscription offer highlights subscriber benefits	Offers two types of subscriptions to appeal to different demographics (i.e. “under 30”), thereby anticipating needs of particular demographic
Prior season webpage	Uses many visuals to tell story of company and	Very product oriented		

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	help patrons feel sense of IPR			
Donation webpage	Language is very personal and appreciative		No display of donor benefits, but instead of how donor's support benefits the art form and organization; very product focused	