

**“BABEȘ-BOLYAI” UNIVERSITY, CLUJ-NAPOCA**

**FACULTY OF THEATRE AND TELEVISION**

**CULTURAL MANAGEMENT AND MARKETING  
PRACTICES IN ROMANIAN THEATRE AFTER THE  
YEAR 2000**

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## **Keywords:**

Cultural management, cultural marketing, subsidized theatre, Romanian theatre, post-communist theatre, management of theatrical space, success management, the artist-manager, theatre schools, economic efficiency, cultural project.

## **Introduction and Methodology**

### **1. Introduction**

The thorough study of cultural management and marketing is not at all a whim of the academic community; it is a real necessity of the contemporary world that requires cultural organizations to obtain value not only by aesthetic criteria, but also by profit earning capacity and efficiency. These instruments assist the artistic act by the use of modern and current means, for the viable development of arts groups, of the audience; they also have a significant input in the sector of cultural education. The purpose of cultural management and marketing is not to transform the arts products in commercial goods devoid of artistic value, but to heighten and emphasize their characteristics and to integrate them as proficiently and efficiently as possible on an extremely dynamic and extended market. Therefore, it helps “cultural progress”, as stated by Milena Dragičević Šešić (Šešić, 2002, 4) a well-known researcher of the field, who had a major contribution in its development and whose work is the basis of our research.

This thesis is made from two parts, i.e. its two large chapters: “Theatrical management in Romania” and “Marketing practices in Romanian theatre”. Each chapter is divided in theme-oriented subchapters. In the subchapters, we tried to size as suitably and as accurately as possible the theoretical part and the case studies, in order to allow a balance of the two. However, often, we had to pay more attention to the case studies, like in subchapter 1.3

“Benchmarks of Romanian theatrical management”- and in subchapter 2.2 “Marketing in the Romanian theatre”. The theoretical dimension is also mainly present in subchapters 1.1 “Brief historical introduction. Preamble”, 1.2 “Hindrances and interdependences. General outlook” and 2.1 “Theoretical outlines. Where do we stand?”

The first chapter of the thesis focuses on the Romanian cultural management practices, taking into account the subsidized theatres and the independent theatres. While the first two subchapters approach the socio-political context of our operations, and discuss some theoretical elements of general management, the third subchapter seeks to approach separately the dimensions that put together the cultural management practices as such. Subsequently, we chose to focus separate section on the “artist-manager” and on the Romanian schools of cultural management. Then, according to on-site observations (substantiated by the interviews we conducted) and to the bibliographic study, we proposed a classification of the management practices in Romanian theatres; this classification follows three equally important and meaningful directions for the researched field:

- Management of space
- Management of human resources
- Success management

The three specified subdivisions have a large share in the current Romanian practices and they occupy a significant part of the workload assigned to a management team, irrespective of whether they manage a subsidized theatre or an independent theatre. The subchapter “Success management” regards mostly the indicators that drive the “success” or “failure” of a theatre, but it also discusses the aspects deemed success by the main players of Romanian theatre management. In order to obtain this part of the thesis we relied mainly on the information and data supplied by theatres through the annual activity reports, the only public documents that

provide updated information on the economic status and on how the available resources of Romanian theatres are managed.

The end of Chapter 1 includes the conclusions of our research and the potential measures that should be taken in order to improve the performance of Romanian theatre management.

Unlike the first chapter, Chapter 2 aims to clarify first of all the basic notions of marketing and, in particular, of cultural marketing. The research we conducted for the writing of the first chapter showed us a misunderstanding or a partial understanding of the basic concepts of marketing, which is surprising, given the vastness and the accessibility of specialized literature nowadays. Subsequently, we chose to reprise and describe in a simplified form the basic notions and concepts frequent in the job of a cultural marketing operator.

Regarding the practical part, we continued with the exemplification of the notions by case studies that complete the elements of the marketing mix, as seen from the chapter structure. Each marketing mix item is essential for the sound development of the marketing strategy and it is presented and discussed in the thesis, but we need to emphasize the fact that, in the dynamics of the Romanian cultural sphere, a key-problem is the price of the ticket; hence the implications that pricing strategies have on Romanian theatrical practices. In subchapter 2.2.4 “Price and pricing policies. What do we pay? What is the right price?”, we approached this topic and sought to underscore the effects generated by the current traditions of Romanian theatre, especially in the case of subsidized theatres.

Like in the first part of the thesis, we thought it would be helpful to write a series of conclusions of the chapter and to reprise the main topics of discussion, developed in the section on marketing.

Overall, the thesis seeks to obtain a “monograph” of the Romanian theatre institution after the year 2000, beyond the aspects that are visible in the media or in the specialized journals and, especially, beyond the artistic value of each product, whether appreciated or not by the audience. This does not mean that the artistic results of the theatres were ignored; on the contrary, we tried to see whether the artistic results relate in one way or another to good managing and resource supervision practices.

## **2. Methodology**

The nature of the researched topic, and especially the stage and the history of research in Romania, required that we operate mainly with two research methods, the academic-scientific one (and its specific rules), and methods that stem, for instance, from the journalistic field of gathering, documenting and checking the data, sources, etc. The challenge of our approach, based on a twofold (artistic and economic) perspective, was given by the balancing and the conciliation of the two apparently opposing levels.

The paper integrates an effort many times bordering on detective work, however to the aid of academic research. We mean here the decoding of the information from the primary sources that we used, information that was available, but which has not been interpreted in a scientific paper until now: the theatres’ annual activity reports, the final management assessment reports, official documents released by the Ministry of Culture or by the European Commission. The difficulty arose from the lack of an even form of execution of the reports by the institutions; subsequently, for us, the collection and the systematization of the data turned into a strenuous and slow, often exhausting effort. Then, another frequent problem of the activity reports was the coherence of the specified information. More often than not, we found conflicting pieces of information in the same document or incomplete information. This

required a cautious reading and interpretation of the reports, and many times we had to check the statements included in the official documents from a larger number of sources.

In relation to the methodology, beyond the aforementioned general aspects, we need to indicate the import of sociological methods and their application to our research approach. In the research stage period (2014-2015) we conducted half-structured interviews with managers of state theatres and of independent companies, as well as with representatives of marketing and communication departments (see the annexes to the thesis). Furthermore, in 2012, a series of preliminary focus-groups were conducted; their main objective was to survey the attitude of the young generations in relation to theatre and theatrical products. In the same year, 2012, a questionnaire was applied to the community of volunteers of the Temps D'Images Festival (60 members); the questionnaire sought to investigate the attitude of the young in relation to the activity of cultural volunteering. The response rate in the community of volunteers was rather low, but the interview conducted with Ana Mihăncean – coordinator of the volunteer program in the Temps D'Images Festival – supplies us with an inside perspective, which was extremely helpful during the writing of subchapter 2.2.3 “Promotion of cultural events”. In 2016, we applied another questionnaire to the managers of independent companies, whereby we aimed to investigate the effects of crowdfunding campaigns on the non-governmental organizations of Cluj-Napoca and their importance in the general funding scheme of the same. The results can be seen in subchapter 2.2.3 “Promotion of cultural events”.

Of course, the amount of the aforementioned approaches was completed by an extended bibliographical study that includes both texts in Romanian and texts in English. The bibliographical sources in Romanian are very few and mainly oriented to theoretical approaches. For this reason, we found it would help to include in our thesis as many relevant examples and case studies from the Romanian area. The selection of the case studies and of the examples was limited, however, by the quantity of available data; therefore, national



theatres are the most present in our analyses. Although this limitation was first seen as a weakness in our methodology, as our research progressed we found that the operational models of national theatres are very similar or even identical to those of state theatres subordinate to local authorities and, thus, relevant for the whole Romanian subsidized theatre system. In order to balance the case studies and the financial analyses focused mainly on national theatres, we conducted a number of interviews with representatives of state theatres such as “Teatrul Tineretului” of Piatra Neamț, Odeon Theatre of Bucharest, Ariel Theatre of Târgu Mureș.

Regarding the independent sector, we also selected theatre companies that operate according to models that are different, but relevant and important for Romanian theatre practices. These are the Teatru Fix Café-Theatre of Iași, the ColectivA Association of Cluj-Napoca – part of the Paintbrush Factory federation, the Reactor de Creație și Experiment Association, Cluj-Napoca and the artistic groups derived from DramAcum, which are active in Bucharest and in other parts of the country.

We made these choices because we considered them representative for the Romanian theatre environment or because, by the nature of their activities, they set in motion a number of directions for the development of Romanian cultural management and marketing.

We need to add that we did not insist on the management and marketing design of the Sibiu “Radu Stanca” Theatre by choice, although, where this was necessary, we emphasized the importance and the outstanding input of the activity of this theatre in Romania. The reason of our decision is the exhaustive approach of the topic in the doctoral thesis of Lavinia Alexe (2012) and in the research conducted by Cristian Radu and Ion Tomuș (see the bibliography). Moreover, the reports and the materials obtained after the closing of the 2007 Sibiu European Cultural Capital program were a long time under the scrutiny of the theatrical community;

subsequently, in my opinion, a reprise of the topic in this thesis would be redundant. Therefore, I assigned importance to the discussion of the case of Romanian theatres that did not stand out so clearly by their applied cultural policies and who are still searching for their institutional “identity”.

This doctoral thesis aimed to examine the cultural management and marketing practices in the Romanian space after the year 2000 and to obtain a representation as faithful as possible of the current situation in Romanian theatres. Our resources during the research stage (human and financial resources) did not allow an exhaustive treatment of the topic, especially in the marketing section, where there is an acute need of a wide sociological and statistical study, for an improved definition of the theatre consumer in Romania. The available audience surveys (Cultural Consumption Barometers and the Cultural Consumption Eurobarometer) fail to provide the whole picture that a specific marketing survey would otherwise deliver.

Despite the fact that the methodology was adapted to our research possibilities, in our opinion the applied methods were correctly put to assist academic research and they comply with the prescribed rigors.

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