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## INTRODUCTION

The first records of theater events date away back to Ancient Greece. As one of the oldest art forms, theatre has occupied a significant place in the arts' history of all European societies. Its mission throughout the historical and cultural ages has been to inspire, criticize, reflect political and social realities, worship God, deny God or simply entertain.

As a classical art form drama theater represents a huge part of the Bulgarian cultural scene. Although its historical development commenced in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, quite late compared to the western European tradition, its popularity and significance has grown gradually in the past hundred years. The role of theater in Bulgarian society was especially important in the period between the 50s and 90s when the country was ruled by a totalitarian government. At that particular time there was almost no accessible information about the political, cultural, social events from the world outside the country. Attending the theater, where European dramatic masterpieces were performed was one of the few opportunities of Bulgarian citizens to get in touch with western European or American culture. On the other hand, the same system that suppressed the freedom of artistic expression created such a wide network of drama and puppet theaters, that almost every town had one (or two) such institutions, generously subsidized by the state.

The political changes after 1989 led to many economic and social alterations. Of course, the cultural sector was not an exception. The hundreds of state-owned cultural institutions, including theaters, had to adjust to a new environment, which to the most part of the employed in the sector was petrifying. Many artists lost their jobs and the opportunity to work in the cultural sphere again.

The performing arts organizations, namely theaters, also had to face challenges evoked by the new era. The drama theater performance, which to that moment had had very few alternatives as a leisure time activity was standing in front of a whole palette of entertainment options that obviously the thirsty-for-novelty public preferred. Therefore, theater managers needed to adopt new, inexistent to that moment in Bulgaria, techniques to bring the audience back in the theater halls. That was when the word "promotion" began to appear more and more often in culturally related publications, theater experts' conferences, directors' interviews.

When the idea of this research was forming in my mind, several months ago, I called some acquaintances of mine in Bulgaria, who are either connected or work in the drama theater sphere. I simply asked them if they knew whether theaters there engaged in modern ways to attract audiences to their performances. I personally have seen many newspaper articles, heard radio spots or watched interviews with famous actors on the TV, but I have never found any literature sources on the marketing and promotion of the Bulgarian performing arts scene. The answers I received did not have a word in common. I heard statements that ranged from: “Yes, they are actually very active. Here in Sofia there is a new hype now, going to theater is very popular. So news about theater events is everywhere.” to “Bulgarian drama theaters haven’t changed much since the early eighties. I even doubt they have heard about marketing and promotion.” After reflecting briefly on these answers, I realized that conducting this research would be an interesting challenge, first as a work process and then naturally for the knowledge that could be obtained about the consciousness and state of development of Bulgarian Drama theaters in terms of marketing and promotion.

Generally stated, the focus of this research is to investigate what types of promotional activities drama theaters in Bulgaria conduct. The overall aim it strives to achieve is to describe to some extent the current state of development and attitudes of the drama theaters towards the tools of the promotional mix. The research starts with a review of literature sources on cultural marketing and promotion. Secondly it delivers information on the Bulgarian drama theater scene, focusing on the history of this art form in the country and also explaining the organizational structure of theaters and the subsidy system. The research objectives and method are presented in the fourth chapter and finally, the obtained results and conclusions – in the final fifth chapter.

# CHAPTER ONE

## **Defining Marketing, Cultural Marketing and Promotion**

### **1.1. Introduction**

The main focus of this thesis is to investigate and discuss the promotional activities of drama theaters in Bulgaria. Since promotion is one of the components of the marketing mix, in this first chapter we will take a closer look at the main concepts of marketing, cultural marketing and the promotional mix.

First of all, we would discuss on the definitions of marketing as an organizational function, presented by Kotler and Keller (2006) and Francois Colbert (2007), followed by a brief historical feedback on the development of the marketing concept. Also, special attention will be paid to the core notions that form the basis of the modern marketing theory. In the second part, we will attempt to discover how the concept of marketing applies to the world of arts and culture. Moreover, we would compare the more art-centered view on cultural marketing, expressed by Colbert (2007), to the more market-oriented philosophy of Kotler and Scheff (1997). Promotion, the fourth marketing mix variable would be presented in the final part of this chapter. Apart from defining the four tools in the promotional mix, we would see how they are related to the performing arts sphere.

### **1.2. Understanding the Concept of Marketing**

#### 1.2.1. Defining Marketing

The various definitions of marketing are being continually refined and reformed. Kotler and Keller (2006) suggest the formal definition of the American Marketing Association, which states that: “Marketing is an organizational function and a set of processes for creating, communication and delivering value to customers and managing customer

relationship in a ways that benefit the organization and its stakeholders” (Kotler and Keller, 2006:6). The key concepts the definition emphasizes on are obviously communication and relationship. So, we could easily conclude that the main role of marketing is to build up and develop a relationship between an organization and its customers through a set of specific tools and principles. Kotler and Keller (2006) develop this basic definition by adding more dimensions to the concept of marketing. They point out that there is a distinction between the social and managerial definitions of marketing and in defining marketing we should also consider the role that it plays in society. The social definition of marketing underlines that “marketing is a societal process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creating, offering and freely exchanging products and services of value with others” (Kotler and Keller, 2006:6). This definition broadens the frames of the managerial definition which describes marketing as simply “the art of selling”. It expands the notion of marketing as a social process of exchange, where exchange represents a core concept of modern marketing.

Francois Colbert (2007) also focuses on the notion of marketing and its dimensions. He states that marketing unites four essential elements – a consumer, a need, satisfaction of the need and optimization of profits. The interaction between these four elements represents the processes of exchange and transaction, which Kotler brings forward as basic and essential for modern marketing. Colbert however points out three more points, which assist in understanding better the marketing process. First of all, marketing is the fruit of the decision making and work of human beings. Since people are complex by nature, nothing could either black or white, respectively right or wrong. So, the systematic analysis of the surrounding environment is crucial for successful marketing decisions. The second point the Colbert outlines is the ability to put oneself into the “customer’s shoes”, or in other words instinct, imagination and creativity should be present. Finally, understanding how consumers perceive a certain message and how they build up images and ideas about the offered product is what marketers should be alert about. Even if this perception is false, consumers would base their decisions on the reality that they take to be true.

### 1.2.2. Evolution of Marketing

Marketing as a science and art developed gradually in parallel with the industrialization and development of trade. Several stages could be identified in this evolution process. During the last centuries, marketing has moved through three eras (Byrnes, 2003).

The first era began with the birth and development of the industrial revolution in the nineteenth century. During this period the supply of goods clearly created demand (Colbert, 2007), or in other words consumers did not possess enough means, neither they had great choice. Colbert describes this period as a “seller’s market”, as opposed to “buyer’s market”. The general assumption of the manufacturers was that the consumers would buy whatever they were offered (Byrnes, 2003).

During the second era, the attention gradually became more focused on sales of the mass-produced products. It was during the first part of the twentieth century when began the rise of the salesperson as a dominant figure in the trade system. During their interaction with customers, they became more and more conscious of people’s needs, desires and expectations. Byrnes (2003) describes the rise of the salesperson as a part of the American myth.

The actual marketing era began shortly afterwards (Byrnes, 2003). Firstly, more and more companies began to pay attention to what consumers were saying about the available products. This was the start of the so-called consumer driven economy, where companies were first and foremost concerned with the relationship with the consumer. That process resulted in the development of research and testing products, before their actual release on the market. Colbert (2007) points out that between 1945 and 1960, during the post-war baby boom, sales experts became to be more interested in sciences as psychology and sociology in their attempts to understand better consumer behaviour. The first steps in defining and implementing the core concepts of marketing, that had started from economic theory gradually became enriched and developed through knowledge derived from other sciences.

But the modern marketing era started in the final decades of the twentieth century. By the 1990s the concepts of marketing had been embraced by every industry. More and more specialized products, designed to meet almost every consumer need appeared on the market. However, the use of computers and especially the rise of the Internet in the 1990s expanded greatly the reach of the marketers. On-line sales have revolutionized the purchasing process. In fact, the expansion of global marketing has led companies to use communications that allow them to monitor worldwide sales and make adjustments in production much more rapidly (Byrnes, 2003).

### 1.2.3.Core Concepts

To understand how marketing actually functions, we need to explain and understand certain fundamental concepts that lay in the basis of modern marketing theory.



The first cluster of notions that need to be mentioned are *needs*, *wants* and *demands*. Kotler and Keller (2006) make the following distinction between them. Needs are described as basic human requirements such as air, food or shelter. They also include education, entertainment and recreation. More specifically, Byrnes (2003) describes the need as “something lacking that is necessary for a person’s physical, psychological or social well-being.” (Byrnes, 2007:254) and divides them into universal (food and shelter), psychological (knowledge, achievement and stability) and social (esteem, status, power). Wants, on the other hand, are actually realized needs, that are directed towards specific objects that might satisfy the need (Kotler and Keller, 2006). In other word, we might conclude that a want is personalized need, for example a person may *need* knowledge, but they *want* to obtain it through a specific book. Finally, demands are wants towards certain products, backed by an ability to pay (Kotler and Keller, 2006).

Understanding needs and wants is crucial for marketing. Kotler and Keller even point out that “Marketing deals with identifying and meeting human and social needs. One of the shortest definitions of marketing is “meeting needs profitably.” (Kotler and Keller, 2006:5). This ideology however has risen the most frequent criticism towards marketing, which states that marketing could actually create needs and as a result force people to buy products they do not really need. But Kotler and Keller (2006) argue that needs could not be created, simply because they existed before marketing. However the authors admit that marketers would influence wants and demands.

Companies and marketers address needs by offering a value proposition that implies a set of benefits for consumers, which would be able to satisfy the needs (Kotler and Keller, 2006). This specific value proposition is made physical by an *offering*. Offerings are another basic marketing concept. They could be represented by a products, service, information or experience. A *brand*, on the other hand, is an offering from a known source. All companies try to build up strong and memorable brands.

Another set of essential notions in marketing theory are *value* and *satisfaction*. The customer makes distinctions and choices between the different offerings with regard to what value they would deliver. Value represents the tangible and intangible benefits to consumers (Kotler and Keller, 2006) and with regard to this definition, is a central marketing concept. Satisfaction represents the relation between the expectations of the customers and the perceived performance of a product.

*Competition* and *marketing environment* represent some more important concepts for marketing. Competition includes all actual and potential rival offerings. All marketing theory authors stress upon the importance of being alert and aware of the company's competitors. Underestimating competition is considered to a major mistake, made by marketers. However, competition represents only one aspect of the environment in which a marketer operates (Kotler and Keller, 2006). The larger *marketing environment* in which a company exists should as well be taken into account. It consists of task environment and broad environment. The task environment includes the company, the consumers, suppliers, distributors and dealers, or in other words all the immediate actors involved in the production, distribution, and promotion of the offering. On the other hand, the broad environment consists of six components: demographic environment, economic environment, physical environment, technological environment, political – legal environment and social-cultural environment. All these environments represent forces that could have a major impact on the components of the task environment.

Finally, to reach the target market, the marketer uses *marketing channels*. The marketing channels are of three types: distribution, service and communication channels (Kotler and Keller, 2006). Distribution channels are used in order to deliver the physical product to the consumer. On the other hand, service channels are represented through banks, insurance or transportation companies and serve to carry out transactions with potential buyers. But probably greatest importance and impact have the communication channels. Through these channels the actual process of communication and exchange of information with the target buyer takes place. They include all the known media, but also communications could be delivered through the body language and facial expression of the sales person, the look of retail store and other unconventional media. The importance of interactive dialogue channels, such as the internet, nowadays gradually increases as opposed to monologue channels, such as advertisements.

All these concepts and principles of marketing find application into the marketing management process. In order for a product or service to be marketed effectively, an organization should carefully and precisely design its *marketing mix*. The marketing mix could be defined as “the combination of activities involving *product, price, place* and *promotion* that a firm undertakes, in order to provide satisfaction to consumers in a given market” (Byrnes, 2003:260). Each of the four elements of the marketing mix have an impact

of the exchange process. The marketing mix, or the so called four Ps of marketing are central concept in marketing management. In “Marketing Management”, Kotler and Keller represent the components of the four Ps through the following diagram (Kotler and Keller, 2006:19).

Table 1

| Marketing mix   |   |  |   |
|---|---|--|---|
| Product   | Price   | Place  | Promotion   |
| Product variety<br>Quality<br>Design<br>Features<br>Brand name<br>Packaging<br>Sizes<br>Services<br>Warranties<br>Returns | Last price<br>Discounts<br>Allowances<br>Payment Period<br>Credit terms | Channels<br>Coverage<br>Assortments<br>Locations<br>Inventory<br>Transport | Sales promotion<br>Advertising<br>Sales force<br>Public relations<br>Direct marketing |

We could conclude that the four Ps actually represent the marketing tools available for influencing buyers (Kotler and Keller, 2006). From a buyers point of view each of these tools is designed to deliver a certain benefit. To illustrate this relation, Kotler and Keller suggest that to the four Ps correspond four Cs (Kotler and Keller, 2006:20):

| <b>Four Ps</b> | <b>Four Cs</b>    |
|----------------|-------------------|
| Product        | Customer Solution |
| Price          | Customer Cost     |
| Place          | Convenience       |
| Promotion      | Communication     |

Byrnes (2003) points out that the promotion variable in the marketing mix is probably the most visible element. That is why often people the whole concept of marketing simply with promotion.

Marketing mix decisions are crucial for a successful marketing strategy. Whether a company would change the price of a product, invest in advertising, use various trade channels or add new features to its product depend heavily on what marketing goals the organization want to reach. However, every decision concerning the four Ps of the marketing

mix that the company undertakes is designed to reach the final consumer in an efficient way and bring value and satisfaction to customers.

### **1.3. Marketing Culture and the Arts.**

#### 1.3.1. The Cultural Enterprise.

There is probably no doubt that the artistic and cultural sphere reveal features that cannot be shared by the other market-driven industries. However, the arts exist in the same environment and reality as the other spheres and from this point of view they cannot afford to ignore the processes that take place in the economy and society. In the preface of “Standing Room Only”, Kotler and Scheff (1997) stress on the fact that the challenges of nowadays world affect everybody, also the arts sector. In this sense, the organizations in the cultural sphere should as well be aware of the environment they operate in, their competitors and their audiences. Many authors have doubted whether the conventional marketing theory could fit in the reality of the arts world and have tried to outline the difference and the specific features of cultural marketing. The marketing of cultural and the arts share many of the common concepts of traditional marketing that have been discussed above, but still, the specific character of the arts sector has introduced new notions and attitudes towards marketing theory.

Before discussing in detail the features of cultural marketing, we should first of all pay attention to the character and role of cultural organizations. Colbert (2007) discusses the position and role of cultural enterprises in our society. He describes the notion of the cultural enterprise in narrow and broader terms. The narrow view portrays the notion of cultural enterprises as production and distribution companies in the performing arts sphere, such as theater, music, opera and dance, the visual arts sphere, represented by galleries and museums and finally libraries and heritage sites. In broader terms, cultural enterprises also could include the cultural industries – films, recording, publishing, ext., and the traditional media. More importantly however, Colbert (2007) emphasize that cultural enterprises play a key role in the modern society. On the one hand, there is the economic point of view, which states that cultural enterprises constitute an important economic force, because of the jobs they create and their contribution to a country’s GNP. But, on the other hand, the activity of cultural enterprises reflect and reveal the cultural identity of a country or nation, their values or contradictions, and also open windows to the world by presenting the reality of other cultures.

Kotler and Scheff (1997), from their perspective, outline the importance of cultural enterprises in terms of the impact that their products have on society. Of course, their focus is on American society, but the statements they present could be applied to any other modern society as well. Kotler and Scheff classify ten reasons for the importance of the arts. They are said to be: “ (1) important to the image of American society abroad, (2) a means of communication and consequently of promoting understanding between this country and the others, (3) an expression of national purpose, (4) an important influence in the liberal education of the individual, (5) an important key to an American’s understanding of himself, his times and his identity, (6) a purposeful occupation for youth, (7) vital to institutions mobilizing the social, moral and educational resources of American communities, (8) good for business, especially in the new centers for population, (9) components for strengthening moral and spiritual bastions in a people whose national security might be threatened and (10) an influence to offset the materialism of a generally affluent society” (Kotler and Scheff, 1997:14).

Apart from the social role that cultural enterprises display, they reveal two main characteristics: the most important role in a cultural enterprise is delegated to the artist and they deal with the product of a creative act (Colbert, 2007). Different cultural enterprises may have different roles in terms of their products, for example they may range from designing, producing, distributing or preserving. But, despite of that, what distinguishes the cultural enterprises from the other market driven industries, where products are created in order to respond to demands of the market, the cultural sphere is said to be product-driven industry, where products are an embodiment of the creative work and inspirations of an artist (Colbert, 2007).

### 1.3.2. Defining Cultural Marketing

Defining cultural marketing is not a recent phenomenon. Colbert (2007) reviews a brief “history” of cultural marketing definitions. The start was established by Kotler, in his introductory textbook, where he points out that cultural organizations of all types produce cultural goods, but all of them should start to pay attention that they had to compete for the consumer’s attention and also their share of national resources. In other words, cultural organizations, just as all other industries, were facing a marketing problem.

Furthermore, Colbert (2007) discusses the standpoints of few other authors, such as Diggle, Mellilo and Reiss. Their texts, most of which are dedicated to management of culture

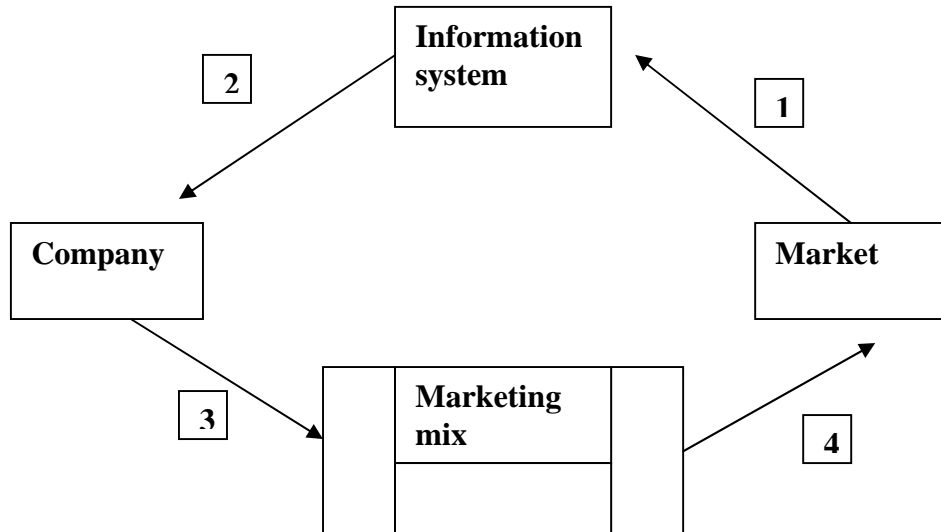
and the arts, provide some definitions of cultural marketing that diverge from the traditional ones. But probably, more attention should be paid to Diggle's definition of cultural marketing. In the centre of the definition Diggle places the artist and mostly the artistic product, which should stay in the foreground of any marketing strategy. The accent is on the contact between the artistic work and the consumer and the initial goal of cultural marketing is not to satisfy any consumer need, but to "invite consumers to get to know and appreciate a work" (Colbert, 2007: 11). So, according to Diggle, marketing culture and the arts seeks to distribute the artistic product in the best possible way and generate the best possible financial gain. This standpoint contradicts the marketing convention of the commercial sector, where products are produced according to consumer needs. In the arts, the product is created first and then marketers or managers try to find audiences and distribute it to them – a position, described as "marketing the supply" (Colbert, 2007:11).

Starting from this point and comparing the views of several authors, Colbert (2007) concludes that marketing process in the arts differs from the traditional one, because it is product-centered and in this case the artistic organization should look for and find consumers who are likely to appreciate it. Therefore, he proposes the following definition for cultural marketing: "The art of making contact with market segments, that are likely to be interested in the product by adapting the marketing variables – price, distribution and promotion – in order to put the product in contact with a sufficient number of consumers, thereby achieving the objectives that were set based on the company's mission" (Colbert, 2007:12).

Obviously, the definition of Colbert (2007) in a way controverts the traditional marketing model. To make the distinction more illustrative, he also provides two figurative models to present the difference between the traditional and the cultural marketing models. The conventional marketing model is presented by the following diagram (Colbert, 2007:13), (see Graphic 1):

It is quite obvious, that the model follows the conventions of the traditional marketing theory, where the goal of the company is to fulfill an existing need among consumers. The sequence of steps through which the company tries to produce the desired effect on the potential consumer is as follows: market - information system – company-marketing mix – market. As a result the market becomes the starting and final point in the process.

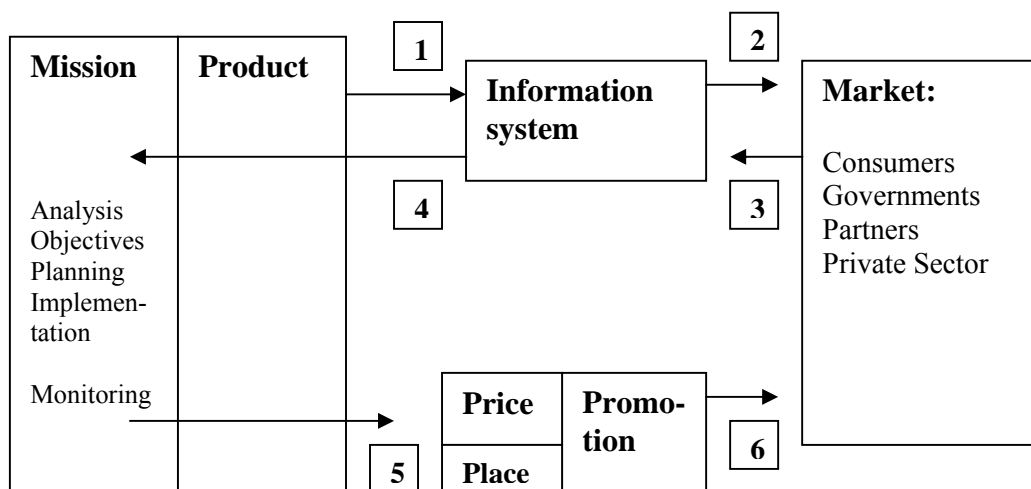
On the other hand, although the marketing model for culture and the arts contains the same components, the marketing process for product-centered cultural enterprises is different. First of all, the process here begins from within the enterprise by the creation of the product.



Graphic 1

Consequently, the enterprise tries to discover which part of the market might show interest towards the already existing product. When the audience is identified, the company undertakes decisions, concerning the other three elements of the marketing mix. In this type of model, the process sequence is respectively: product (company) – information system – market – information system – company – marketing mix – market. The starting point is represented by the product and the final one is the market. The specificity of this kind of marketing process derives from the different kind of objectives that are set by the cultural enterprise. The commercial sector seeks to optimize profits, while cultural enterprises have “art, rather than profit as its ultimate objective”. (Colbert, 2007:15).

Graphic 2



In “Standing Room Only”, Kotler and Scheff (1997) express in a way similar to Colbert’s attitude towards defining cultural marketing. They again distinguish the market-centered from the product-centered philosophy. The basic premise of the marketing-concept is that a company should determine the customers’ needs and wants and consequently try to satisfy them, provided that doing so is consistent with the company’s strategy and objectives. But the pure market-centered concept is incoherent with what the concept of the arts is about. According to Kotler and Scheff (1997) the art do not represent “just another industry” (Kotler and Scheff, 1997:17). The arts and the creative work of artists is pure visionary and expression. In this sense, the pure adherence to a market-centered approach could not work. But, on the other hand, Kotler and Scheff (1997) express a view that is more marketing influenced than the arts focused definition of Colbert (2007). They argue that an entirely art-centered approach is not sufficient either. Similarly to marketing, the arts and especially the performing arts reside on communication with an audience. So, Kotler and Scheff conclude that it is of essential importance that a balance between the two ends of the spectrum is discovered.

Furthermore, Kotler and Scheff (1997) state that the complex nature of the arts marketing requires the solving three marketing problems. First of all, an arts organization must find a market for its offerings. The authors assume that often cultural organizations present productions for which there is little or even no existing demand. In such a case, the organization must create new needs, rather than just trying to meet existing ones. The second important point is that the organization must expand its market. Usually it happens that the products of an art organization are “ahead of its audience” (Kotler and Scheff, 1997:20) or in other words, too complex or innovative for the general part of the arts audience. So, Kotler and Scheff suggest that organizations must limit themselves to producing works that would permit the quickest expansion of the audience, because it is financially very risky and time-consuming to educate and develop audiences. The final standpoint is that the organization must keep its audience or in other words, the art organization must be constantly aware of the sensitive and perpetually changing interests and needs of the different audience segments. It must be noted that all the points that Kotler and Scheff (1997) discuss represent a rather conventional marketing philosophy, as opposed to Colbert’s (2007) views. As a conclusion, the two authors emphasize that the arts organization should always pay attention to the demand side, or as mentioned in the previous sentence, to support projects that meet the specific audience needs. The essence of the arts is communication. Therefore, art organizations must focus their attention to that communication. They must shift from a pure



product focus towards a balance between the decision-making process of the artists and the audience preferences.

### 1.3.3. Marketing Mix in Culture and the Arts.

#### ***Product***

Colbert (2007) has repeatedly stressed that the cultural and arts sphere is product-centered industry. This obviously means that the product variable in the marketing mix of any art enterprise is of essential importance, because we could even say that it represent the essence of the enterprise itself.

Colbert (2007) states that cultural products could be considered as complex products, mainly because their perception by the audience more or less relies on the taste, upbringing and subjective estimation of an individual. Usually many cultural works require specific knowledge or an ability to perceive abstract notions. The complexity of the cultural product however derives also from the fact that it could be broken down to four components: the artistic product itself, spin-off products, related services and the customer experience. The artistic product of course, is the central component and the other three components revolve around it. They are however integral to the cultural experience as a whole. Colbert (2007) illustrates the concept of the four components of the cultural product, giving an example with the Montreal International Jazz Festival. Some people attend the festival in order to see a specific show, which represent the central artistic product. Others on the other hand enjoy the creative atmosphere of the festival, which relates to the customer experience component. Finally some visitors would base their choice on the related service, for example choose a venue with a nice bar. Understanding the complexity of the cultural product and the significance of the different component is important, because the different visitors of cultural events could make their decisions in accordance to their preference for one component over the other.

On the other hand, Kotler and Scheff (1997) present the cultural product as comprising three different levels. The very essence of a cultural product is the core product. The core product is the offering that is presented to the target audience for purchase or consumption. For example, the core offering of a symphony orchestra could be the piece that is to be performed. The second “stage” of the cultural product is the expected product. It of course represents the customer’s expectation regarding the purchase and consumption. The final

level is revealed through the augmented product. According to Kotler (1997) the augmented product includes benefits beyond the expectation of the audience and it may serve to build satisfaction and commitment.

More important however in the Kotler's presentation of the cultural product is his concept of the cultural product as an experience. So, in marketing a certain product, marketers must also identify what kind of experience people seek and what would satisfy them. For example if the customers seek positive emotions by attending a cultural event, the kind of experience that they expect could be categorized as aesthetic pleasure, admiration relaxation or surprise. The notion of the cultural product as an experience is especially vivid in the sphere of the performing arts, where the art event is limited in a specific place and time.

### *Place*

The place variable in the marketing mix comprises several elements (Colbert, 2007). The most distinct ones are the distribution channels, physical distribution and commercial location. The distribution channel includes all the agents that play a role in the process of bringing the product from the manufacturer to the consumer. It can be non-existent, for example in the case of a museum, dealing directly with the public, or long and include various intermediaries, such as agents, distributors, presenters. The physical distribution, on the other hand, includes the logistics that is involved in distributing a certain product: moving a book from the publisher to the consumer, organization of a tour, etc. Lastly, the commercial location is represented by the physical site where the product could be consumed. The complex nature of cultural products requires careful decisions, related to how and where the product will be distributed to the public. Especially in larger cities with rich cultural life, where competition is greater, the choices that a cultural enterprise undertakes for its distribution strategy are crucial.

Although all elements of the place variable are significant, in the performing arts the choice of commercial location is probably of greatest importance. In "Standing Room Only", Kotler and Scheff (1997) attach three different meanings to the notion of location. On the one hand, it refers to the advantages and drawbacks of an organization's own performance venue. Secondly, the location is also represented by all other places that the organization chooses to perform and finally, location may refer to all the ticket distribution sites that are available. Of the three aspects, the venue, or performing space, relates best to the overall experience and satisfaction from the product. Kotler and Scheff (1997) point out that venues have enormous

symbolic, social and political significance. Sometimes they could even be one of the main reasons why people would attend a certain event.

The significance and various dimensions of the venue are described in “Positioning the Supply of Live Performances: Innovative Managerial Practices, Related to the Interaction of Spectator, Performance and Venue” by Remi Mancarelli and Pulh(2006). They emphasize that the venue is central element in the overall experience of a performance and the interaction of the audience with all the services of a cultural institution depends heavily on their interaction with the venue. Therefore, the venue represents an important component of the spectator’s experience and its influence is on three levels: perception, behaviour and evaluation. Moreover, the performance space has many other dimensions that have an impact on the interaction with the performer. For example, it could be a medium for emotions, because it “has the capacity to arouse emotions in the spectators, providing them, through the physical space with a unique experience” (Mancarelli and Pulh, 2006: 25). At the same time, a performing space may have an aesthetic value, such as the Sydney Opera House, or even a symbolic value, as in the case with famous halls like Olympia or La Scala. The physical features of a place could also affect the experience from a performance – a totally different perception would be achieved if a play is staged in an Ancient Greek Theatre, abandoned factory or a modern hall. Finally, the performance space could be regarded as a medium for social interaction.

### *Price*

In the sphere of cultural marketing, pricing appears to be a complex issue (Kotler and Scheff, 1997). In all other for-profit industries, the price of the product is determined largely by costs so that profitability can be ensured. But in the arts sphere, most companies are non-profit firms and monetary costs are just one aspect of the pricing decisions. However, one of the most important factors in determining the price is the company’s costs. Kotler and Scheff (1997) states that art organizations usually have three types of costs: fixed, variable and incremental. Fixed costs are those costs that incur, even if no performance is held. Variable costs, on the other hand, are associated with each stage production and include wages, royalties, transportation, sets and all other production costs. Lastly, incremental costs are the additional costs in selling one more seat (in the performing arts) and such costs are usually extremely low.

However, price might be also regarded from another point of view – the one of the consumer. Colbert (2007) argues that the price of a cultural product is not represented only by the monetary value attributed to it, but also includes all other expenses related to its consumption, for example transportation and the effort that a consumer makes in order to buy the product and the time spent for its consumption. So, from this point of view every product has a price, even if it is for free.

Consumers do not always base their decision on buying a cultural product on price alone (Colbert, 2007). There are other factors that affect their thinking, such as for example the risks that might occur after the purchase of the product. Colbert (2007) discusses four types of consumer risks. The one most related to pricing is the economic risk. They include not only the cost of a product, but also the total expense incurred in consuming the product. For example such expenses may include parking, babysitting, transportation costs, etc. The other quite significant type of risks is the functional risk. It is represented by the possibility that a consumer might purchase a product that may not meet his expectations. In the cultural sector, products are often considered to be “experiential” which makes their evaluation difficult, so functional risks are often high. The other types of risks that may appear are the psychological and social risks. They are related to the possibility of purchasing a product that may not correspond to the consumer’s self image (psychological risks) and the image that others have for them (social risks). All these factors play a role in the decision making process and influence the audience’s willingness to pay a certain price.

### ***Promotion***

Promotion is the final variable in the marketing mix. In the case of the field of arts and culture, some authors consider promotion to be the one with greatest significance. Generally spoken, promotion is responsible for building the bridge between the company itself and its marketplace, which of course is also applicable to the arts sphere. Promotion would be discussed in detail in the following part with regard to the role it plays in the performing arts.

## 1.4. Promotion and the Arts

### 1.4.1. Defining Promotion and its Functions

The fourth marketing mix variable, promotion, is basically considered to be the most important and vital one for the marketing strategy of every company. In the world of art, communication with the audiences is as significant as for all other industries.

Colbert (2007) points out, that promotion is first and foremost a communication tool, an instrument created to bring the corporate message and image to the market. Cultural enterprises as well have specific image that they want to communicate to the general public and their markets. The image of the cultural firms derives from consumer perceptions, which are formed by promotional campaigns, critics' reviews, other's opinions, experience, etc. In this sense, promotion could be generally described as a tool, whose main objective is "to modify consumers' perceptions, attitudes, knowledge and awareness" (Colbert, 2007: 227). It could also educate a consumer about a certain product or even create a change in the consumers' attitudes by transforming negative perceptions to positive ones. So, Colbert finally defines promotion as a marketing tool, whose function is to "inform, persuade and educate existing and potential consumers" (Colbert, 2007: 227).

Apart from these features, Colbert (2007) also adds two other two other main functions of promotion: communication of a message and producing a change in the consumer. These functions are implemented through four steps, also known in the marketing theory as the AIDA concept (attention, interest, desire, action). Firstly, *attention* of the audience must be attracted by the message. If the message is perceived positively by the consumer, an *interest* is created. If the interest becomes deeper, then the next stage takes place – generation of *desire*. Finally, the desire provokes *action*, which takes form in the purchase and consumption of the product.

In "Standing Room Only", Kotler and Scheff (1997) refer to promotion as "communication". They also underline that communication is matter of informing, persuading and educating target audiences. But they, however, suggest that these communication objectives result in six successive effects. First come *awareness*, or introducing the target audience with the offering of the organization. After consumers become aware of the organization and its product comes the stage of *knowledge*, when the target audience grows to know and understand the offering. The third stage is the stage of *liking*, which takes place if

the consumers, after getting to know the product, develop positive feelings towards it. Target audiences might like the product, but not prefer it to other available options. So, the fourth stage - *preference* – is crucial for the success of any communication campaign. The next stage is called *conviction*, and takes place if consumers not only like and prefer a certain product, or theatre performance, but are entirely sure that they would attend it. In the end if consumers really buy the product, comes the final stage of *purchase*.

#### 1.4.2. Understanding the Communication Process

It was mentioned several times above that promotion is the action of communication between a company and a consumer. However, in order for successful communication to take place and the function of promotion to be implemented, the marketer must have a thorough knowledge of how communication is actually realized.

All authors in marketing and communication theory, including Kotler and Scheff (1997) and Colbert (2007) agree that the communication process consists of five components. These five components were firstly introduced by Lasswell (Kotler and Scheff, 1997). He states that the communication approach should answer five questions:

- who communicates;
- what is communicated;
- through what channel the message is transmitted;
- to whom the message is directed;
- what are the effects of the communication.

Colbert (2007) adds also one more component to the other basic five questions:

- when the communication takes place.

Answering these questions describes the entire process of communicating a certain message. At the beginning stands the sender, who encodes the message, by transforming it into symbolic form and transmits it through a media – the communication channel that brings the message from sender to consumer (Kotler and Scheff, 1997). The message is received and decoded by the receiver. The receiver's response, which is communicated back to the sender is called feedback and all other messages in the environment that interfere with the basic message are referred to as noise.

In cultural marketing the communication process takes the same form. Kotler and Scheff (1997) however, underline that in marketing of culture and the performing arts, the choice of communication channels is of more specific nature. They distinguish three different types of channels. Advocate channels consist of all efforts that the organization makes in order to influence the members of the target. Social channels are the so called personal channels, and they include all the members of the social milieu of the consumer – their friends, relatives, colleagues, neighbors. The third type are expert channels, which are represented by arts' critiques, spokespersons, ext.

Probably with greatest effectiveness and significance in the field of arts and culture are considered to be the personal communication channels. Kotler and Scheff (1997) state that these channels involve the direct communication between two or more people face to face, over the telephone or through mail. The benefits of personal communication are that the feedback and effects of the presentation could be immediately evaluated. In the performing arts the most popular and effective type of personal communication is word of mouth, or so called buzz marketing.

The success of word of mouth is based on the fact that receiving recommendation from a friend or a colleague always has higher credibility than any other type of non-personal communication, such as advertising. Kotler and Scheff (1997) underline that word of mouth is especially efficient when people select which performing arts event to attend. A friend's recommendation is expected to be less biased than a message received through an advocate channel. Also, personal sources usually have education, tastes and expectation closer to the ones of the opinion seeker and thus could be more persuasive than impersonal experts as arts' critiques. Finally, attending performing arts events is a social activity; that is why personal influence has a greater weight. Arts organizations try to involve word of mouth in their promotional campaigns by reaching opinion leaders (Kotler and Scheff, 1997). Opinion leaders are the ones, who respected and have a higher social status within a certain community. The members of the social group consult opinion leaders, because they trust their expertise. They could be presidents of membership organizations or local radio speakers others with a higher status, but not so high as to be in another social class. Arts organization could offer opening night invitations, subscriptions or other stimuli to the opinion leaders and thus provoke word of mouth.

### 1.4.3. Promotional Mix

The four main promotional tools are advertising, personal selling, sales promotions and public relations. For a successful promotional campaign a company is supposed to select a useful combination of these tools. Their importance and selection for a campaign depend on many factors, among which are the company's budget, the features of the product and the target audience or tradition within a particular industry. Below we will outline the basic characteristics of each one of the promotional tools.

#### *Advertising*

Advertising is a paid impersonal means by which an organization communicates with its audience by presenting ideas, goods and services. The advertising message is delivered to the audience through different electronic and print media – radio, television channels, newspapers and magazines, posters, billboards, the Internet space (Colbert, 2007).

The benefits of this promotional tool are that it provides total control over the encoding of the message and the nature of medium. Advertising could also present a certain message in an attractive and creative way, inform the audience about a particular production, service or event, build up long-term organizational image (Kotler and Scheff, 1997). On the other hand, however, advertising has no control over the decoding of the message by the audience and also results in little or delayed feedback on the received message (Kotler and Scheff, 1997). Another disadvantage of advertising that Kotler and Scheff (1997) point out is the difficulty of measuring the actual effects from a certain add. Having in mind the high costs that advertising imposes, especially when the limited budgets of cultural organizations are considered, it appears that often it is really difficult to determine whether organizations are investing the correct amounts in advertising. Kotler and Scheff (1997) describe that in the field of the performing arts often theatre companies take advantage of collaborative opportunities to reduce advertising costs, but still be able to achieve their goals in terms of attracting audiences.

However, in the world of cultural and the arts, advertising is probably not the most exploited promotional tool, mainly because it requires heavy investments in order to be effective. From the different options that advertising suggest, cultural enterprises use mostly the poster. It is widely used especially in the performing arts. Colbert (2007) mentions however that posters usually have short life span and also the amount of information that



could fit in a poster is limited. This is the reason why posters need to be designed in such a way as to attract attention and generate interest among the potential customers. Kotler also outlines the strengths and weaknesses of posters and billboards (Kotler, 1997: 330):

Table 2

| Strengths                  | Weaknesses                   |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| High Reach                 | No depth of message          |
| High frequency of exposure | High cost for broad use      |
| Minimal waste              | Best positions already taken |
| Can localize               | No audience selectivity      |
| Immediate registration     | Poor coverage in some areas  |
| Flexible scheduling        | Minimum one-month purchase   |

The effectiveness of posters have been heavily studied and tested. The effects of postering for the cultural events are presented by Corinne Berneman and Marie-Josee Kasparian (2003) in their article “Promotion of Cultural Events by Urban Postering: An Exploratory Study of its Effectiveness”. In their study, Berneman and Kasparian (2003) compare the effectiveness of postering in terms of recall by showing videos to a focus group of respondents. The videos showed a city street with a number of posters of different cultural events. The respondents were asked afterwards to recall the type of events that the posters advertised. The study concluded the recall is positively affected by the number of exposures and number of posters per exposure. However, recall is not a guarantee of attendance and also the city open spaces provide limited positions for postering.

The other most popular advertising tools, used by the cultural enterprises are brochures and web-pages. Brochures allow more and deeper information and usually cover more than one performance or event as opposed to posters. They could also contain information about other promotional activities, such as subscriptions. Web-pages are nowadays a major marketing and promotional tool. It provides world-wide reach and constant frequency, something that probably no other medium could offer (Kotler and Scheff, 1997). The amount of information in a web page surpasses the possibilities of posters and brochures. Many internet sites now also provide the opportunity for online ticket sales.

### ***Personal selling***

Unlike advertising, personal selling consists of transmitting a message from one person to another through direct contact (Colbert, 2007). This promotional tool is used for more complicated messages, because the seller receive immediate response by the consumer and has the possibility to adjust the message, according to consumers' preferences during the communication. Besides that, the sales person could at the same time conduct research and provide important information about the customers needs, problems or reservations.

Kotler and Scheff (1997) outline the three distinctive qualities of personal selling that are not available through the other communications means. First of all, personal selling provides personal interaction with the customer. This allows an immediate and interactive response and adjustments from both sides. Second, personal selling permits cultivation of a relationship, which is a significant asset for every organization. Cultivation of relationship could keep a long-term interest in the customers towards the organization's activities. Finally, this promotional tool allows immediate response and evaluation of the effectiveness.

Personal selling could be used not only to sell a cultural organization's product to its customers. Moreover, it could be used to sell an idea. For example, a funding or sponsorship request could also be regarded as personal selling (Colbert, 2007). However, the benefits that personal selling provides come at a cost (Kotler and Scheff, 1997). This form of promotion is probably the most expensive one, but if it is planned efficiently, the benefits could minimize the costs involved.

### ***Sales promotion***

Sales promotion are usually used to stimulate earlier or stronger market response (Kotler and Scheff, 1997). They include premiums and special gifts, exhibits, coupons, subscriptions, actions like "two tickets for the price of one", discounts, ext. Kotler states that sales promotions make three main contributions. First, they assist *communication* attract attention that would eventually lead to trying a certain product. Next, sales promotion create *incentives*, because they offer concessions or other advantages, which are valuable for the consumer and finally, they represents an original type of *invitation*.

In the performing art sphere sales promotion could assist the art organization to fill in empty seats by provoking consumers to try new offerings and make them more aware of the product and its price (Kotler and Scheff, 1997). On the next level, sales promotion assists in

building partnerships between art organizations and local businesses. An example for such a relationship is a sales promotion activity realized by the Los Angeles Philharmonic in 1993 (Kotler and Scheff, 1997). They stimulated new subscriptions and managed to attract many first-time concertgoers by offering generous premiums, such as dinners at local restaurants.

The major promotional tool, described by Kotler and Scheff (1997) in “Standing Room Only” are coupons, samples, price packs, premiums, tie-in promotions and patronage awards. Samples are considered to be most effective, especially in the performing arts, where filling one extra seat costs relatively nothing. Examples of samples could be free concert in a targeted area or free guest tickets. Coupons represent specific certificates, authorizing their owners with a certain saving on a purchase. In the arts, coupons are usually discounts for special shows. Similar to coupons are price-packs that also offer savings to the consumer, such as “two for the price of one”, or subscriptions with a free show included. Premiums are all the gifts and merchandize, offered at low price or for free. Premiums, bearing the organization’s name – bags, cups, badges, become more and more popular even in the high arts field. Of course, the design of such merchandize must correspond to the quality of the product. The next sales promotion tool, tie-in promotions is represent by the collaborative efforts of two or more arts organizations or a cultural organization and a business one. Many studies have shown that businesses associated with leisure time, as restaurants or parking places, whose locations are close to performing arts organization are enjoying great financial benefits from theater goers. Finally, patronage awards are exclusive values, given to loyal consumers, for example an opportunity to meet the artist after performance or eligibility for the best seats.

### ***Public Relations***

Among the other promotional tool, PR is probably the one with ever growing impact in recent years. Although many art managers appreciate the importance of public relations for their organizations, still there is sometimes confusion between PR and media relations or publicity. PR represents not only the communication of a company and its customers, but it also relates a large number of interested publics, including also suppliers, dealers, government representatives, the company’s employees (Kotler and Keller, 2006). PR involves various programmes and activities, designed to communicate the company’s image to its publics.

The growing success of public relations could be attributed to several reasons. Although paid advertising is considered to be second-ranked marketing tool in terms of

effectives after direct mail, the ever growing costs of advertising and decline of reached audiences, has forced many companies to put emphasis on marketing PR techniques (Kotler and Scheff, 1997). The overall function of marketing is to influence behaviour, whereas the main objective if PR is to change public attitudes towards the company and its products. Kotler and Scheff (1997) point out several advantages of this promotional tool. Usually PR has higher credibility than advertising, because of the paid nature of adds, while PR just appears in normal news. Another plus of PR, especially with regard to cultural companies, is its relatively lower cost compared to other promotional activities. In the performing arts, PR “prepare the artsgoer for what is on stage” (Kotler and Scheff, 1997:377). In other words, it lessens the consumer risks that were described above and could pull down the barriers that potential consumers have towards visiting cultural events. PR could also have an important role in attracting and stimulating nonattenders.

One of the main tools of PR is publicity, which serves to promote a company’s product in the mass media without having to pay for advertising (Colbert, 2007). Media relations is a part of public relations, that include press releases, press conferences, free air time on radio and TV, ext. Colbert (2007) states that in the cultural sector, publicity is the most popular and widely exploited promotional activity. Mainly financial reasons have directed cultural enterprises to use publicity as their main promotional vehicle. But despite all the advantages of this approach, the main drawback of publicity is that, unlike advertising, the company has no control on the final message and all aspects of coverage. So, what is going to appear in the media, concerning the cultural enterprise, is more or less in the hands of the journalists, and not so much in the PR expert.

Several promotional tools could be included in the PR and especially publicity: events, press releases, public service announcements, interviews, photographs and speeches (Kotler and Scheff, 1997). As marketing experts, Kotler and Scheff (1997) point out the significance of careful planning for the success publicity campaign. In order to attract the media, the publicity expert should be able to offer them a story that attract their interest and provoke them to include it in the news. Many PR experts in cultural organizations underestimate this “rule” and just offer to the media a piece of information that is neither interesting, nor exciting. A well planned publicity campaign should focus on the message, the timing and the media they would like to cover their events or products. Another common mistake of cultural organizations is that they are not selective in terms of media. Kotler and Scheff (1997) underline several times that not all publicity campaigns need a full-scale coverage, so knowledge about the audiences of certain media is crucial. In conclusion, the authors simply

point out that public relations have the ability to create memorable impact on public awareness about a company's product and image that could hardly be compared to the effects that other promotional tools are able to achieve.

#### 1.4.4. Direct Marketing

Despite the variety of possibilities and effects that the tools of the promotional mix offer, often they prove to be less efficient in the cultural sphere (Colbert, 2007). The reason is the targets are the small targets, too complex products, limited budgets. That why often organizations focus on using direct marketing to achieve their goals.

Colbert defines direct marketing as “direct communications with carefully targeted individual consumers to both obtain an immediate response and cultivate lasting customer relationship” (Colbert, 2007: 241). In a direct marketing campaign, the organization sends a promotional offer directly to the final individual consumer through using mail, telephone or the Internet instead of mass communication channels such as newspaper, television or billboards. In this an immediate response from the consumers could be achieved. Direct mail has the advantage of being relatively inexpensive and highly selective (Kotler, 1997). Telemarketing is more costly, but on the other hand a lot faster than mail, more personal and interactive. Using e-mails, or the so called e-marketing, is the less expensive and labour consuming option. But it has some key disadvantages. The flood of spam has changed the image of e-marketing in the negative direction. Moreover, several countries have even restricted legislation concerning the flow of undesired mail (Colbert, 2007).

The benefits of direct marketing in comparison with other promotional activities are many. Among them we could distinguish higher selectivity, a possibility for relationship building, better attention, a possibility to test alternative media and messages (Kotler and Scheff, 1997). Also, this technique provides the opportunity to personalize the message and “shorten the distance” between the organization and the consumer. An example of effective direct mail for the performing arts organizations is the seasonal brochure (Kotler and Scheff, 1997). It could stimulate interest towards the organization, point out the special events in the upcoming season, give details about subscription benefits. The overall effectiveness would be better if the information is presented in a clear, but creative and interesting manner.

## **1.5. Conclusion**

There is a generally accepted belief that the concept of marketing cannot be integrated within the world of arts and culture. Marketing expresses a consumer-centered philosophy, whose main focus is the wants and needs of the customers. In the arts sphere on the other hand, the emphasis is on the artistic creation, or expressed through marketing terms - on the product.

However, both marketing-driven for-profit companies and cultural enterprises exist in the same environment and are influenced by similar economic, social and political powers. From this standpoint we could argue that the cultural sphere experiences the challenges of the contemporary world just as the other industries (Kotler and Scheff, 1997). Despite of the differences in their views towards the merge of the arts sphere and the marketing philosophy, Colbert (2007) as well as Kotler and Scheff (1997) express their belief that the marketing tools assist cultural enterprises by maintaining better communication and creating consumer satisfaction for their publics. That applies extensively to the performing arts sphere where communication with the audience is a crucial feature. With regard to this fact, promotion as a major marketing tool, could be highly beneficial to the performing arts and theaters in particular, as Kotler and Scheff (1997) simply describe promotion with one word – communication.

The authors, discussed in the chapter argue that all of the promotional tools – Public Relations, Advertising, Personal Selling and Sales Promotion – could find application in the performing arts in one form or another. However, especially Kotler and Scheff (1997) seriously focus on the importance and effectiveness of the personal communication channels as most beneficial for the arts sphere.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **Bulgarian Drama Theaters – A Look At the Past and the Present**

#### **2.1. Introduction.**

The Republic of Bulgaria is situated in the south-eastern part of Europe and probably due to this fact the native Bulgarians refer to their country as “the borderline between Europe and the Orient”. Some main aspects of the history, political affairs and economy of the country would be outlined in the beginning of this chapter. But as we focus predominantly on culture and theaters, the general part of the second chapter is dedicated to the presentation of the main features of Bulgarian cultural life as well as its drama theater scene.

Bulgaria has a wide network of different cultural institutions from all spheres of the arts, most of which are publicly subsidized. Despite of the fact that the cultural field in Bulgarian society started its development in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it experienced rapid growth in the last hundred years. In this part of the thesis we would take a closer look at this process with regard to the drama theater art. Some major points in the history of theater will be presented and afterwards the spotlight will be put on the contemporary theater network in the country, the organization within a drama theater institution and the responsible government bodies. Finally, we will also clarify how the understanding and attitudes towards communication between the audience and the theater institution changed within the proceeding several decades, a process that play a crucial role in the development of promotional activities of drama theaters organizations.

#### **2.2. Introduction to Bulgaria and Bulgarian Cultural Life.**

##### 2.2.1. Bulgaria - General Facts

##### *Basic historical facts*

Bulgaria was established as a state in 681 (Landry, 1997). During large periods of its history, the country was periodically occupied by Byzantium – in 1018 for 168 years and by the Ottoman Empire, in 1396, for a period of 482 years. The Bulgarian “renaissance”, both in national and cultural context, began in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but it was only between 1878 and 1944, when Bulgaria developed a modern institutional cultural system. This period was put to an end by the 45-year-long communist political system. After the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989, Bulgaria had undertaken serious steps into becoming a modern democratic state. However, in conclusion Landry (1997) states that Bulgaria has had a relatively short and insufficient experience as an independent democratic state, which of course influenced its development of Bulgarian society and culture.

### ***Demographic data***

The population of Bulgaria is 7 679 290 and could be considered as homogenous, because the largest part of the population belongs to the Bulgarian ethnos. According to a 2001 census, the Bulgarians are 83,9% of the total population. The two other biggest ethnic groups, represented in Bulgaria are the Turkish (9,4%) and the Roma minority (4,7%). The other 2% are represented by Armenians, Russians, Greeks, Jews and Karakachans - a minority, whose origins are not clear, due to lack of historical sources; the most popular hypothesis, however, is that they are descendants of Ancient nomads, that used to inhabit the Greek mountains in the pre-classical times.<sup>1</sup>

The birth-rate in the country is rapidly falling (Landry, 1997). Bulgaria is one of the European countries with the highest rate of inhabitants over the age of sixty. This is due to the fact that many young people immigrated abroad during the last twenty years.

Almost 62.7% of the Bulgarian population lives in cities. The capital of the country, Sofia is the largest city in Bulgaria with a total population of 1, 251, 083 inhabitants. Recent research has shown that soon almost every fourth Bulgarian would be an inhabitant of the capital city.

### ***Political context***

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.wikipedia.org> – visited at 25.03.2008



Bulgaria is a republic and the Bulgarian voters elect directly their president for five-year term with the right for one re-election. The other main political institutions in Bulgaria are the Council of Ministers, which is the principle body of the executive branch, the National Assembly and the Bulgarian Judicial System. Bulgaria joined NATO on March 29<sup>th</sup>, 2004 and signed the European Union Treaty on April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2005. It became a full member of the European Union on 1 January 2007. The country is also a member of the United Nations since 1955.<sup>2</sup>

The modern Constitution of Bulgaria dates from 1991 (Landry, 1997). The relation between the state and the cultural sphere is specified in clause 23, which roughly states that the state is responsible for the creation of conditions, ensuring the free development of science, education and the arts and to support them; it also has to preserve the cultural heritage of the country (Landry, 1997).

Almost all cultural institutions in Bulgaria are governed by the Ministry of Culture. From 1989 by far, the Ministry has been headed by over six different ministers (Landry, 1997). This has affected in one way or another the development of the cultural life in the country, because everyone of the ministers has expressed preference and supported different sectors in the cultural sphere – for example music, or cultural heritage – depending on their professional qualification.

### ***Economic indicators***

Between 1990 and 1995 the GNP has decreased to 86.6 % from its rate in 1990. The processes of inflation during different time periods have ranged from 473% annually in 1990, to 32% in 1995 and almost 330% in 1996 (Landry, 1997). This has lead to serious consequences for Bulgarian trade and bank system

Gradually, Bulgaria has tamed the economic crisis of the 1996-1997 and has experienced an economic growth in recent years. In 1997 a currency board was adopted, which has been retaining by now. Despite of all the efforts and the envisaged progress in Bulgarian economy, the current government is still facing problems with the low living standards and corruption in the state administration.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.wikipedia.org> – visited at 16.03.2008

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.wikipedia.org> – visited at 26.03.2008

### 2.2.2 Defining Culture

Culture is a specific European product, but in every country it receives a different meaning, as well as every science interprets the notion of “culture” from a different perspective (Tomova, 2003). For sociology culture represents behavioral models, based on ideas, norms and values. From anthropological perspective culture is everything created by humanity – philosophy, beliefs, rituals, the arts. In a narrower sense, it is associated with a particular type of creative activity, whose final result are the different types of arts. Landry (1997) on the other hand regards culture as an indefinable matter – the more one tries to put it into certain frames, the less feasible the definition is.

Tomova (2003) states that there are over 164 different definitions of “culture”, which once again shows how complex and variable this phenomenon is. She however accepts a point of view, which brings the definition of “culture” to a narrower context: “ a type of creative activity, whose final product are the arts, which are unique and have market aspects” (Tomova, 2003:13).

On the other hand, for the purposes of the national cultural policy, the Bulgarian Law for Protection and Development of Culture presents the following definition: “Culture is the activity of creation, dissemination and preservation of cultural values, as well as the results of these activities” (Stoichkova, 2002). The definition in the law is clearly quite vague. Stoichkova (2002) however criticizes this officially accepted view as being too narrow and also out of date.

For the purpose of this study we would define culture not in its anthropological or social sense, but in the context of the arts: music, dance, drama, folklore, literature, architecture, the fine arts, design, cinema and so on. In this specific context, the arts include modern art forms and cultural heritage (Landry, 1997).

### 2.2.3 Cultural Life and Cultural Policy

#### ***General characteristics of the national cultural policy***

Nowadays in many European countries, the political decisions, concerning cultural policies are formulated by their cultural ministries or a group of ministries (Stoichkova, 2002). In Bulgaria the specialized body responsible for the development of the national

cultural policy is the Ministry of Culture. But since the notion of culture is rather broad and could include also education, the cultural industries, tourism and so on, often in other countries several ministries take part in the creation of cultural policy, for example the ministries of education, tourism, architecture. Through these collaborations there is a possibility for building up structured and sustainable relations between culture and economy, tourism, social services and education.

Tomova (2003) states that usually the objectives of every cultural policy are influenced by the political and social-economic conditions in every country. The results of the implementation of the cultural policy do not affect only the consumption of a particular cultural good, but also could influence the social relations and the sense of national identity. In “Art and Market”, Tomova (2003) presents the main principles and objectives, set in the national cultural policy:

- “1. Democracy of the cultural policy, freedom of artistic creation and non-admission of censorship;
2. Decentralization in the management and financing of cultural activities;
3. Equality of artists and cultural organizations;
4. Preservation of Bulgarian cultural and historical heritage; preservation of the literary Bulgarian language, traditions and customs;
5. Protection of the national cultural identity and the culture of the Bulgarian diasporas;
6. Encouragement of cultural diversity while preserving the unity of the national culture;
7. Encouragement of the cultural industries and the market for works of art; stimulation of producers in the cultural sphere;
8. Discovery, support and training of young talents in the cultural sphere;
9. Encouragement of donations, sponsorships patronage in the cultural sphere;
10. Development and improvement of education in the arts and cultural sphere” (Tomova, 2003: 29).

### ***Ministry of Culture***

The supreme executive body in the cultural sphere in Bulgaria is the Ministry of Culture. It formulates and implements the principles of the state cultural policy. What is more specific about the Ministry are the five different departments for arts and culture, which are namely:

Theater, music-hall and circus art  
Music and dance  
Book publishing and libraries  
Museums, galleries and fine arts  
Preservation of the Cultural Monuments

The main function of the Ministry of Culture is to insure the legal basis and the realization of the overall conceptional frame for the development of the culture and cultural policy (Landry, 1997). Landry (1997) argues however, the Ministry should not be the direct producer of cultural goods, but to encourage and support other organizations to carry out cultural activities and create cultural products. The role of the Ministry according to the author should not be to “produce” culture, but through taxes from licenses and other sources to accumulate resources and consequently distribute them according to the priorities of the cultural policy. This represents the so called “arm’s length principle”.

The Ministry of Culture does not exactly function in this way. As it was pointed out, the different ministers that have occupied this position have tried to emphasize on one or another sector in the cultural sphere (Landry, 1997). Another important point here is that the different institutions (the departments for arts and culture), responsible for the different sectors in the cultural sphere are not independent units, but are integrated within the structure of the Ministry. They assist in the implementation of the cultural policy, but on the other hand control many aspects of its application according to Landry (1997) create in a way potential conflict between different interests.

All this conditions has lead to a relatively poor image of the Ministry of Culture among the cultural community. Landry (1997) argues that the Ministry has not still implemented the needed reform in the approach towards its own role, working patterns and evaluation of the criteria for a modern institution. However, the Ministry is still the most influential and respectful institution in the cultural sphere in Bulgaria and the its policy towards cultural life and development still have the most serious impact on Bulgarian culture.

### ***Basic information on Bulgarian cultural institutions***

Bulgaria has a wide network of cultural institutions in all arts spheres – drama, music, fine arts and so on. Most of them are supported by some form of state subsidy or by the local government. A general overview of the subsidies, provided for cultural activities in Bulgaria

over the recent years are published in “Cultural Policy in Bulgaria”, a report of a European panel of examiners. The report states that the national budget spares 1.37% for subsidies for culture (Landry, 1997). The average percent of self-revenues of cultural institutions has remained relatively constant and is about 3.5 %, although in the sphere of the performing arts it is significantly higher – drama theaters averagely realize between 10% to 20% of self-revenues from their budgets. Some sectors are however much more publicly subsidized than others; for example, the state provides almost all financial means for the opera – 98% of the opera houses’ budgets, while in other sectors, like theaters the state subsidies amount to 56% of their budgets and for museums the number is 33% (the rest is covered by the local authorities).

It is important also to note that the processes of privatization were successful mainly in the sphere of the cultural industries, like the film industry and book publishing. There were not enough successive attempts to transform the publicly subsidized cultural organizations (like drama theaters for example) into non-profit organizations or foundations.

There is some basic information about the number and status of Bulgarian cultural institutions, published on the web-page of the Ministry of Culture, but it concerns only the state-run cultural organizations.<sup>4</sup> According to their official lists, there are 180 museums and art galleries in Bulgaria, subsidized by the state budget. The National Statistical Institute on the other hand provides some statistical information about all the museum and galleries in Bulgaria.<sup>5</sup> The information they offer however has not been updated since 2005. The statistics about the same year shows that in 2005 there are 229 museums and art galleries in Bulgaria.

In the field of music and dance there are 18 state cultural institutions with national significance.<sup>6</sup> Six of them are situated in the capital: the Sofia Opera and Ballet, the Sofia Philharmonic Orchestra, the State Music Theater, the State Folklore Ensemble, the State Ballet and the Music Centre “Boris Hristov”. The other institutions are respectively situated in the larger Bulgarian cities and among them there are three opera- philharmonic companies, three state music and drama theaters, four philharmonic orchestras and two opera companies. Finally, there are 42 state, 10 municipal and 2 university theaters and over a 100 private theater groups (Tomova, 2003).

As a conclusion, it is important to mention some of the most popular cultural festivals and events in the country. Very prestigious national cultural events are the International

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.mc.government.bg>, visited on the 26.03.2008

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.nsi.bg>, visited on the 26.03.2008

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.mc.government.bg>, visited on the 26.03.2008

Theater Festival “Varna Summer” (held annually from and the 1<sup>st</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> of June) and the International Music Festival “Varna Summer” – from the 23 of June to the 22 of July. The theater festival exists for 12 years and presents international drama theater programme, while the music festival – local and international classical music performers and orchestras. Also great interest attracts the Varna International Ballet Competition. It is held between the 15<sup>th</sup> and the 30<sup>th</sup> of July, every two years as a part of the International Music Festival and has international prestige. All these events take place in the city of Varna, which is the largest coastal city in Bulgaria and a big trade and tourism centre. Another famous art festival is “Apolonia”, which also takes place at the Black Sea coast, but in a quite smaller town. The programme of this festival includes many types of art events – from art exhibitions to jazz concerts and theater performances, but there is a prevalence of the performing arts and theatre. Also, since a couple of years a new theater event emerged in Bulgaria – a festival, dedicated to Bulgarian drama texts. The festival programme consists of two stages. In the first stage both emerging and recognized Bulgarian playwrights present their newest works, while the second part includes performances of Bulgarian plays, not only by Bulgarian theaters and theater groups, but also by foreign ones. Finally, Varna hosts one more theater event – “The Golden Dolphin”, an international festival, dedicated to puppet theater art.

### **2.3. Bulgarian Drama Theater – a General Overview.**

#### 2.3.1 History of Drama Theater in Bulgaria

The modern Bulgarian drama theater started its development in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is officially acknowledged that the first theater performance took place during 1856. Three different cities still compete over the question where the first theater performance in Bulgaria took place. However, it is accepted that the first modern theater performance was presented in the town of Lom (small town in the north of Bulgaria) and was presented by a traveling Hungarian theater group. The first Bulgarian performance took place in the city of Shumen (north-east Bulgaria) and the first theater company was established during the same year in the city of Plovdiv, which is up to now the second largest Bulgarian city. In the dawn of Bulgarian theater all the parts in the plays were performed by men, because it was still considered immoral for women to be actresses.

The official liberation of the Bulgarian state from the political power of the Ottoman Empire in 1878 respectively marks a new era in the development Bulgarian drama theater. Up

to the early years of the twentieth century there were still no professional drama theaters. Only small theater groups existed and were formed by amateur actors. At that time in Bulgaria there were (and still exist) very specific cultural institutions, called “chitalishta” (plural form of “chitalishte”; the name comes from the verb “cheta”, meaning “to read”), which played a significant role in the history of Bulgarian drama theater and Bulgarian cultural life in general. These institutions started to appear in Bulgarian cities around the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and were formed and managed by volunteers. They focused predominantly on organizing and financing different cultural and mainly educational activities. For Bulgarians, the “chitalishta” have a symbolic significance, which is hard to be evaluated by people, foreign to Bulgarian culture (Landry, 1997). Their role for the cultural development of the country is enormous, because the activities they developed gradually affected the forming of national awareness in Bulgarians during the Ottoman period and also helped in preserving Bulgarian language.

Similarly, the “chitalishta” were the first organizations that supported the young Bulgarian drama theater. Of course, because their activities were mainly educational, the first plays that were performed also had such character. The amateur actors chose to perform plays that focused more on moral values, than on following current European tendencies.

In the beginning of the twentieth century, new trends were set in the development of Bulgarian drama theaters. In the first twenty years of this century gradually women started to appear in theater performances and also the first national theater institutions began to form. The first professional theater group in Bulgaria was the drama theater “Salza I Smiah” (Teardrop and Laughter), which was formed in 1892.<sup>7</sup> The group was granted an annual subsidy by the Parliament. Twelve years later, the National Theater of Bulgaria was founded. Up to the 1944, there were four national theaters in Bulgaria, namely in the capital, Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna and Burgas (biggest sea port) and Thessalonica which was in the Bulgarian territory at the time. The status of this theaters expressively shows, that they were subsidized by the state, but also apart from that, they received generous grants by the municipalities, they were situated in. The actors in these theaters enjoyed many advantages, for example their salaries were considered to be relatively high for the period. Meanwhile, in the 20ties and 30ties of the twentieth century, in the period between the two World Wars a new impulse for establishment of theaters in the bigger cities in Bulgaria emerged (Yordanov, 2004). The status of these theater institutions changed several times during this period, ranging from

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.salzaismiah.com>, - visited on 24.03.2008

institutions entirely subsidized by the local municipalities to state-subsidized theaters. Despite of their inconstant status, Yordanov (2004) states that the period between the two World Wars is crucial for the development of Bulgarian drama theater, because that was the time when a wide network of municipal and regional theaters were founded. Simultaneously, numerous traveling theater groups emerged in Bulgaria, but they were not supported by the government.

An entirely new era not only in Bulgarian cultural life, but also for Bulgaria as a state began after 1944, when the country was occupied by the Soviet Union. In 1947 a new decree for the organization of theaters was voted. It stated that every city, capital of a region should establish a state theater, which should be entirely financially supported by the new Bulgarian government. Shortly afterwards, theaters were founded also in many smaller towns and again they received official government support in the form of generous subsidies. By the beginning of the seventies almost every town in Bulgaria had a State Drama Theater and a couple of years later also a State Puppet Theater. On the one hand this initiative of the government lead to great popularity of drama theater art in Bulgaria, but on the other many nowadays theater critics and specialists argue that such a large network of state theaters were only a waste of financial means.

The structure of the state theater was more or less similar to any other state administration. An average theater usually had an administrative department, art studios for production of theater sets and costumes, technical staff, sales department, permanent group of actors. The average salaries were comparable to that of white-collar workers. State theaters also had the structure of repertoire theaters – they had constant group of actors that were appointed with regular labour contracts. All state theaters had permanent a building, where they rehearsed and performed. Many of these buildings were reconstructed older chitalishta, cinemas, halls. It is important to note that this type of structure actually formed the image and organization of modern Bulgarian drama theaters, because many of them still maintain a similar structure.

Naturally, the question why such a small country needs such a large network of drama theaters appears. In the 45 years of socialist government in Bulgaria theaters (and art in general) were treated as units which could serve the national policy. That could be also be observed in the national cultural policy, which stated that art should be “close to the masses” or in other words accessible to everyone. This resulted in the transformation of art as a vehicle for bringing communist propaganda to the people. In the report on Bulgarian cultural policy, Charles Landry (1997) notes that at that particular time artists occupied a sort of a privileged



social position. Concerning the significant role that culture played in society, a serious emphasis was put on the professional and amateur training in the art sphere and professional artists usually enjoyed a life-long employment. To illustrate the ideological role that theaters played, it is enough to demonstrate how the repertoire of a drama theater was formed for a certain period of time: it was obligatory that almost 40% of the drama texts should be by Bulgarian authors; 25% should be by Russian authors and the remaining part should be international with a particular emphasis however on Eastern European authors.

The heavy censorship over media and the arts at the time however had a certain impact on the “style” of some drama artist and directors. Artists struggled to avoid censorship by presenting the burning social and political problem in a more concealed way, a so called by the critics “Aesopian language”. That is why, despite the above described almost gloomy picture, many theater experts and critics argue that the heavy support to the arts, exercised by the government resulted in serious development and that many of the noted Bulgarian drama actors, directors and playwrights emerged during that particular time period.

### 2.3.2. Modern Theater Reform – Success and Failures.

The political changes in 1989 marked the start of the transition of Bulgarian society towards democracy and market economy. All social spheres and economy sectors were affected by this complex process. Of course, similar situation appeared in the cultural sphere. The already described centralized system in the organization of all cultural processes created serious problems for all employed in the cultural sector (Landry, 1997). The new political and economic reality demanded art and cultural organizations to be more independent and decentralized in their management. However, most of the artists, who just recently had been state employees, expected that all of the responsibilities for the development of the cultural sphere should still be in the hands of the Ministry of Culture (Landry, 1997). The overall confusion was deepened by the emerging economic crisis in the country that significantly affected also the cultural sphere, especially the subsidized sectors, such as theaters and operas. There was a growing need for reform and reorganization of the cultural sector and its relation with the authorities.

The discussion about the urgent need for a reform in the performing arts and theater sector became especially actual with the establishment of the National Center for Theatre at the Ministry of Culture. The first administrative reforming actions undertaken by the Ministry were launched in 1994. The general idea and objective of this “attempt for a reform”, as

called by many critics, were to decrease the number of existing repertoire theaters. The main reason of course was the decreasing budgets of the Ministry and its incapability to sustain so many state theaters. Consequently the Ministry withdrew the subsidies for a few smaller provincial theaters. However, most of the theaters still received full state subsidies. One of the reasons for such an insignificant change was the fact that the reform met serious opposition and criticism by the cultural community. Adding the fact that the country was in an unstable political situation, the Ministry could not afford to undertake radical change and the planned reform basically failed.

The next stage of the theater reform took place in October 1997 when the Ministry of Culture launched a Programme for Development of Theatre Activities. After a continued debate among the theater professionals, the objectives of the Programme were set for a period of five years. These objectives mainly focused on:

- introducing new models in the field of theater management by transforming some of the repertoire theaters into the so called “open stages” – a theater venue with permanent technical and administrative staff, which could either invite outer productions or produce their own performances;
- creating new regulations for granting subsidies that could support both repertoire theaters and the open stages;
- decentralization in the theater sector, by involving local authorities and municipalities in the processes of financing.

The reform was launched in November 1997. Two competitions were held for the distribution of the state subsidies - the first one in November 1997 and second one in December 1999. The theaters that lost their state subsidy had to release all their employees - actors, designers, technical staff. The Ministry only covered the salaries of six administrative employees for a certain period, while the management of these theaters was trying to find alternative forms of financing. The overall objective was to transform these repertoire theaters into theater venues, but its implementation was not entirely successful. The number of theaters did not actually decrease, because many of the theaters that lost the state subsidies started to get financially supported by the local municipalities. The reduction in the number of theaters was actually a result of the union of drama and puppet theaters in most cities.

Generally stated, the reforms that took place in the period between 1997 and 1999 brought some innovation into the financing system and structural models of Bulgarian

theaters. But many of its ideas and goals could not be implemented to full extent, because of existing contradictions in the Bulgarian legislation, which also experienced changes at the time. Also there were continuous discussions and arguments between theaters critics and state experts, concerning the direction and objectives of the theaters reform that consequently led to a bit chaotic changes in the Programme.

However, there were some significant changes: in the early 90s there were more than 3000 people employed in the theater network (which means that these were 3000 public employees), while nowadays they are 1800. The main questions that arise are: do these reforms actually led to a bigger independence of artists and decentralization of the system, or just created more than a thousand unemployed people and decreased the range and content of cultural life? Nowadays, the state drama and puppet theatres produce between 230 and 250 new performances, which is considered to be an unneeded lavishness and a result of lacking management skills and market orientation among theater professionals.

However, despite all the criticisms towards the theater reform by the cultural community and its contradictory results, certain steps were undertaken towards the decentralization and liberalization of the theater network (Tomova, 2003). Together with the different forms of subsidies that were introduced, it was the first time when the local authorities became involved in the financing and management of state cultural institutions. The reform also provoked the establishment of the first private organizations in the cultural sphere. On the other hand Tomova (2003) argues that these changes are in a way shallow, because actually there was not such a radical and significant change in the structure of the repertoire theater which are still the most popular organizational form of drama theaters in Bulgaria. The most important management positions - like marketing manager or financing manager – still do not exist in the theaters, which creates certain limitations in the entire management and planning processes. But still, most of the experts state that unless there is a change in Bulgarian legislation, that would encourage donations for example, there would not be a more radical change in the network and structure of Bulgarian theaters.

### 2.3.3 Theater as an Organization

Nowadays, in the sphere of drama and puppet theater art in Bulgaria, there are 42 state, 10 municipal and 2 university theaters (Tomova, 2003). The state theaters have mixed subsidizing - by the state budget and by the municipalities, while municipal theaters are supported only by the relevant municipality. Tomova (2003) points out that during recent

years the state subsidy for the performing arts has sensibly decreased, which has led to some changes in the distribution of subsidies. As a result, currently there are several types of institutions, depending on the type of state subsidy and its form – more specifically subsidies for a particular activity or a project. Consequently, theaters could be divided to:

**Repertoire theaters:** the Ministry of Culture covers their overhead expenses, salary expenses and some of their expenses for production activities. Often the production costs of repertoire theaters are covered by the municipal subsidy. Moreover, the Ministry of Culture offers the so called “project subsidy” – theaters could apply for support for a single project twice per year.

**“Open Stages”:** this form of organization is respectively a result from the reform carried out shortly after 1989 and described above. Open stages dispose of a permanent venue (usually a theater hall) and a small administrative and technical staff. Unlike repertoire theaters, open stages do not have a constant group of actors or other artistic staff. These theater institutions could also be divided into two other subgroups, depending on their activities. They could either invite other theater groups to perform at their stage or produce performances by casting actors and director. Open stages also receive an annual subsidy by the Ministry of Culture and have the right to apply for a project subsidy. Just a few theater companies in the country have adopted this type of management. The predominant part of drama and puppet theaters in Bulgaria still are repertoire theaters.

There is an inconstant number of private puppet and drama theater groups, which are currently over 100. At the time when Tomova (2003) published “Art and Market” the registered private theater institutions were 125. Eighty-two of them were registered by the Commercial Law, while the other 43 were foundations. Realistically, however, only 15 of all private theaters produce constantly and 10 of them are puppet theaters. The other private theater formations produce randomly. All of them could also apply for project subsidies at the Ministry of Culture.

The presented current picture of theater “life” and development in Bulgaria meets however serious critics by many drama specialists. In “The Anachronistic and the Creative in the Modern Bulgarian Theater” a conference held and published as a book in 2007, Alexander Zhekov (*The Anachronistic and the Creative in the Modern Bulgarian Theater*, 2007)<sup>8</sup>, a prominent theater expert, expresses some criticism towards the existing theater network and

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<sup>8</sup> “The Anachronistic and the Creative in the Modern Bulgarian Theater” is the title of a conference of theater experts, which was afterwards published as a book. Because of the specific nature of this literature source, the referencing is an exception from the conventional rule and is explained in the Bibliography list.

organization in Bulgaria: “Theater is a conservative system...The institution is immobile, inert and to a large extent dependent on social-economic relations that by definition change slowly and difficultly” (*The Anachronistic and the Creative in the Modern Bulgarian Theater*, 2007: 34). Without lack of irony the expert argues that there is no real need for such a large network of theater companies, subsidized by the state. Usually the subsidies that the Ministry offers could not cover all the production expenses and that forces directors and managers often to compromise with quality. Zhekov (*The Anachronistic and the Creative in the Modern Bulgarian Theater*, 2007) blames the existing subsidy system and also theater managers for bringing quality down and thus harming the overall state of Bulgarian drama theaters. It is important to note however that his criticism is more or less towards smaller provincial theaters, because in the capital and larger cities competition between diverse leisure activities does not allow a drop in quality.

In return to this statement we could mention that at another international conference, “The Performing Arts: European Horizons”, also published as a book in 2005, Krasimira Filipova, a head of the Department for Theater, Music-Hall and Circus Art at the Ministry of Culture, discusses the situation and prospects for the smaller provincial theaters. Usually these theater institutions are supported only or at least to a greater extent by the Municipality, they are situated in. The recent policy of the Ministry of Culture focuses on decentralization of cultural life and the same of course applies to theaters. Filipova (*The Performing Arts: European Horizons*, 2005)<sup>9</sup> states that transforming the state theaters on municipal ones creates a possibility for them to become “hostages of the configurations of the local governments” (*The Performing Arts: European Horizons*, 2005) In other words, elections and changes in local governments and municipal councils could affect the subsidies’ policies or even the existence of small municipal theatres. That is why Filipova (*The Performing Arts: European Horizons*, 2005) expresses doubt with regard to the decentralization policy of the Ministry.

To offer a more precise overview of the current situation of Bulgarian cultural life, the Department for Theater, Music-Hall and Circus Art presented the following table, showing some statistical data about all the theaters in the country:

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<sup>9</sup> Same case as “The Anachronistic and the Creative in the Modern Bulgarian Theater”

Table 3

|   | <b>Number of performances in the country</b> | <b>Visitors (total)</b> | <b>Number of seats in the theater halls</b> | <b>Average attendance per performance</b> |
|---|--|-------------------------|---|---|
| Drama Theater Blagoevgrad                             | 116  | 13749                   | 530   | 118,5                                     |
| <b>DT Burgas</b>                                      | 100  | 21660                   | 400   | 216,6                                     |
| <b>DT Varna</b>                                       | 162  | 26237                   | 812   | 162,0                                     |
| Drama and Puppet Theater Vratza                       | 198  | 16988                   | 290   | 85,8                                      |
| DT Gabrovo  | 96   | 20124                   | 420   | 209,6                                     |
| DT Dobrich  | 55   | 5548                    | 800   | 100,9                                     |
| DPT Kardjali  | 171  | 19366                   | 150   | 113,3                                     |
| DT Lovetch  | 133  | 21846                   | 434   | 164,3                                     |
| DT Montana  | 36   | 6657                    | 664   | 184,9                                     |
| DPT Pazardjik   | 243  | 26685                   | 800   | 109,8                                     |
| <b>DPT Pleven</b>                                     | 171  | 23989                   | 570   | 140,3                                     |
| <b>DT Plovdiv</b>                                     | 140  | 58160                   | 550   | 415,4                                     |
| DT Razgrad  | 100  | 13761                   | 600   | 137,6                                     |
| <b>DT Russe</b>                                       | 98   | 16069                   | 810   | 164,0                                     |
| DPT Silistra  | 265  | 29737                   | 670   | 112,2                                     |
| DT Sliven   | 67   | 20435                   | 604   | 305,0                                     |
| Rodopski DT Smolian                                   | 87   | 13299                   | 670   | 152,9                                     |
| <b><u>National Theater “Ivan Vazov” Stage 4th</u></b> | 99   | 5063                    | 72  | 51,1                                      |
| <b><u>National Theater Chamber stage</u></b>          | 127  | 10780                   | 120   | 84,9                                      |
| <b><u>National Theater Grand Stage</u></b>            | 139  | 63657                   | 780   | 458,0                                     |
| <b><u>National Theater Total</u></b>                  | <b>365</b>                                   | <b>79500</b>            | <b>972</b>                                  | <b>217,8</b>                              |
| <b>DT Stara Zagora</b>                                | 154  | 12387                   | 329   | 80,4                                      |
| DT Targovishte  | 58   | 12359                   | 500   | 213,1                                     |
| DPT Haskovo   | 302  | 33520                   | 366   | 111,0                                     |
| DPT Shumen  | 301  | 25446                   | 600   | 84,5                                      |
| DT Yambol   | 92   | 14754                   | 300   | 160,4                                     |
| Youth Theater   | 299  | 36684                   | 550   | 122,7                                     |
| <b><u>State Satiric Theater</u></b>                   | 207  | 72605                   | 605   | 350,7                                     |
| <b><u>New Drama Theater „Salza i Smiah”</u></b>       | 195  | 43858                   | 430   | 224,9                                     |
| <b><u>Theater “199”</u></b>                           | 353  | 51504                   | 169   | 145,9                                     |
| <b><u>Theater Workshop “Sfumato”</u></b>              | 180  | 10426                   | 130   | 57,9                                      |
| <b><u>State Traveling Theater</u></b>                 | 102  | 9926                    | 140   | 97,3                                      |
| <b><u>“Bulgarian Army”</u></b>                        | 229  | 74147                   | 550   | 323,8                                     |

| <b>Theater</b>                   |     |       |     |       |
|----------------------------------|-----|-------|-----|-------|
| DT Dimitrovgrad                  | 62  | 9040  | 520 | 145,8 |
| <b>Puppet Theater<br/>Burgas</b> | 234 | 20233 | 180 | 86,5  |
| <b>PT Varna</b>                  | 250 | 21217 | 140 | 84,9  |
| PT Vidin                         | 88  | 6830  | 142 | 77,6  |
| PT Gabrovo                       | 248 | 12242 | 154 | 49,4  |
| PT Dobrich                       | 173 | 14004 | 175 | 80,9  |
| <b>PT Plovdiv</b>                | 352 | 26595 | 136 | 75,6  |
| <b>PT Russe</b>                  | 173 | 12414 | 144 | 71,8  |
| PT Sliven                        | 268 | 18850 | 192 | 70,3  |
| <b>PT Stara Zagora</b>           | 198 | 16321 | 199 | 82,4  |
| PT Targovishte                   | 338 | 16284 | 162 | 48,2  |
| PT Yambol                        | 269 | 19423 | 200 | 72,2  |

Abbreviations:

DT – Drama theaters

DPT – drama and puppet theaters

PT – puppet theater

**bold** - cities with population over 100 000 people

**bold** and underlined – theater companies in the capital city

## 2.4. Attitudes and Audiences

### 2.4.1. Totalitarian Government: Effects on Cultural Life

All the historic, social and economic processes, described briefly above has exercised fundamental effects on the development of cultural life in Bulgaria and also on the attitudes towards culture and the arts both by the artists and the consumers of cultural goods. Many authors argue that the most serious influence on modern Bulgarian cultural activities was caused by the 45 years of communist government.

In her book, “Cultural Politics and Cultural Management”, Tatyana Stoichkova (2002), states that the cultural policy during the socialist period was affected by the centralized control over all cultural activities. Great significance during this period was attached to the political influence that could be exercised through different cultural activities. A large infrastructure of many cultural institutions was created, that covered the entire

country and was entirely governed and generously subsidized by the state. The cultural policy was aimed at the masses and focused on the ability of culture to express political and ideological propaganda. The most common feature of this period was the easy and mass access to the arts.

This processes are also described in the report, dedicated to Bulgarian cultural life and policy, implemented by a European panel of examiners in 1997 (Landry, 1997). The report describes that between 1945 and 1989, the cultural activities were entirely “organized”, starting from schools and reaching to the working places. Some enterprises even had cultural plans and in fact the biggest “donators” for culture were the industrial enterprises.

This type of policy led to a double-standard situation. On the one hand, the choice of the people was controlled to a great extent, but on the other, the national policy to guarantee an equal access to the arts had led to relatively low prices of all cultural events (Landry, 1997). There was even an entire network of “organizers” of cultural events, whose objective was to “bring culture to the people” (Landry, 1997: 25). They decided, for example, what kind of theater performance or cultural activity should a team of workers visit. All these organizational activities has lead to the creation of official statistics for attendance of cultural events, that was used to prove the significance of the cultural sector, although many people actually avoided to attend the cultural events, but only existed in the statistical data. In this way the empty theater halls were reported to be full, creating false images and ideas for the real situation of the cultural life as a whole.

There are many factors that affected the consumption of cultural products and particularly, of theater performances in the period between the 60s and the late 80s of the twentieth century. First of all, the network of theaters that existed already in the country provided an easy access to live theaters performances almost to everyone. Another influential point is that there were almost no other options for leisure activities. Some of the greatest competitors of the live drama performances are cinemas and TV. At that particular period there was only one state TV channel, whose programming was as well strictly controlled by the political authorities. There were cinema halls in almost every city, but they also provided very limited choices with regard to new titles. The official censorship did not allow many of the popular international films to be aired in Bulgaria. With regard to this situation, theater appeared to be one of the limited choices for the population in both bigger cities and smaller towns for quality leisure activities.

On the other hand, there were almost no self-employed artists. All the artists were appointed with labour contracts at some of the national cultural institutions, which basically



made the most significant decisions about the artists' career. A particular example is the so called State Concert Administration. This institution was responsible for the organization and management of the concerts and tours of almost all Bulgarian music artists. Despite the fact that the Administration had offices in all regional cities, not many concerts of popular artists were organized in middle-sized cities and again the local theater remained the most popular place for entertainment and leisure time.

The features of this centralized and heavy controlled system had some interesting effects on the attitudes that cultural institutions developed towards their audiences. The organized attendance by schools and enterprises to theater performances created no incentive in the theater management to research their audiences and try to respond to their expectations and desires. Almost all the time the theatre halls were full and that lead to a certain image in all the theater employees – from the actors to the management - that there was no need to take any interest in audience development or promotion. This problem became extremely problematic after 1989, when the activities of the institutions, such the State Concert Administration were terminated. Theater managers suddenly felt helpless, because they simply did not know how to fill the empty theater halls.

The historical context has influenced everybody in the cultural sphere (Landry, 1997). Although the report “Cultural Policy in Bulgaria” by Charles Landry (1997) was published in 1997, the description of the attitudes of the artists it provides is essential in order for somebody foreign to this particular situation to understand the obstacles and barriers some artists and cultural managers have encountered in accepting the concepts of modern management and marketing. The basic features of these attitudes are:

- the expectation that every decision should be made by a higher authority in the hierarchy, from the center to the peripheries - from the Ministry of Culture to the local cultural institutions;
- all artists had guaranteed permanent employment;
- the needs and wants of the consumers of cultural goods were not taken into account;
- the wide-spread belief that the independence of the artists would be threatened by the market; moreover, it was considered that creative work and the arts would be profaned by marketing or advertising;

- the definition of management included nothing more than mere administration; in this sense the optimal utilization of resources and their efficient controlling was not a priority (Landry, 1997).

There are however certain positive effects of the cultural policy during the socialist political system for the development and popularization of the arts. First of all, the state granted generous subsidies to all cultural institutions in all art forms. That of course resulted in the emergence of rich cultural life and diverse cultural activities that were available in almost every Bulgarian town and accessible for everyone. That transformed many cultural activities, which were mainly elitist and accessible for a very limited audience, into a more popular leisure activity with quite larger audience.

The second and probably most important positive feature of the national cultural and educational policies were the numerous arts and cultural activities which were available for children. The “chitalishta”, which were cultural institutions predominantly focusing in educational and leisure activities for children offered all forms of art training – from drama and dance lessons to musical instruments and fine arts. Especially, if we focus on theater and the performing arts, almost every school had a small theater ensemble where school children could be active in performing and even writing plays. These extracurricular activities represented a certain form of “audience education”. The early involvement of the children in the creation process had an influence on their attitudes towards arts and theater and basically turned them into loyal theater audiences.

#### 2.4.2.Changes and Development

After 1989 the entire political, social and respectively cultural situation in Bulgaria experiences radical changes. Bulgarian society was facing a deep economic crisis which was undoubtedly going to affect its cultural and moral dimensions. The government had to reformulate the objectives of the national cultural policy, which appeared to be very problematic (Landry, 1997).

The first problems that the cultural community in Bulgaria had to face was the rapid decrease in the amount of subsidies, granted to cultural institutions. Since almost all Bulgarian artists were state employees, many of them became unemployed. The cultural organizations that maintained their state subsidies had to struggle to manage a certain quality, which was

rather difficult due to the inflation processes, described above. The harsh economic situation however affected mostly the attendance to performing arts event. The general audience, which by far consisted mainly of middle-class people decreased rapidly in the first years after 1989, because this former middle-class could afford to visit regularly art events and theater performances. Another major problem that affected the occupancy rates in theater halls was that the smaller subsidies which theaters received had a negative effect on the quality of theater performances. The audience that was used to visit lavish performances with big casts and rich decoration at the time had to accept a quite humbler offering. In such a case many former theater-goers preferred to spend the money for the growing ticket prices on an easily accessible entertainment, which were for example video tapes and satellite TV, which had just entered the market.

Suddenly managers and actors in the performing arts had to face empty theater halls. That rapid change provoked many theater critics, managers and Ministry officials to realize that the entire system and also the attitudes towards the audience had to be changed. The first actions that the managers undertook were to make more radical changes in the repertoire of the drama theaters. Many of them supposed that the emerging new possibilities for entertainment and leisure time activities were the new competitors to drama theater performances. That is why some managers and theater directors adopted a repertoire that was more commercial and entertaining, rather than more elitist drama texts that were offered before. It is hard to estimate what were the effects of this “product innovation”. On the one hand, what was really new was the change in the attitude towards the cultural product. In the past years, theater and art were considered to be a prestige, artistic activity, although it was so accessible. Going to a theater performance was more an act of social status than entertainment. But in the 90s of the twentieth century these attitudes gradually changed and whole concept of the theater performance (or other artistic creation) as a product was introduced to the cultural community. The attitude towards art as an entertainment and leisure activity created the idea of the “cultural product” that also bears some of the features of the mass products.

On the other hands however, people still expected form drama performances to be prestigious and of high quality. For this particular reason the repertoire changes towards more commercial and entertaining plays had a very short term effect – the critics stigmatized it and the audience obviously expected more. At this point theater managers started to be more marketing oriented and trying to discover who exactly are the theater audiences. They tried to become more conscious of what theater-goers would like or expect from a performance,

which resulted in a more diverse repertoire, targeted towards different audience segments. Gradually some random promotional activities such as press-releases or possibilities for subscriptions started to appear.

When Bulgaria began to recover from the economic and social crisis, the attitudes of the people towards culture and the arts also experienced certain changes. In 1994 and 2000 surveys were conducted with the objective to estimate what is the value of cultural institutions for Bulgarian citizens (Tomova, 2003). Both surveys produced similar results, which showed that the arts and cultural institutions have a certain symbolic value for Bulgarian, expressed through the feelings of prestige, self-esteem, social status. Among the “most important for society” and “most visited” cultural institutions, the respondents rated theater at a second place, after opera in the first case and cinema in the second. The surveys aim were to discover and prove the importance the arts and culture play in Bulgarian society and that they have certain effects that reach beyond consumption.

Unfortunately, there are no existing research on theater audiences in Bulgaria. In “Art and Market” Tomova (2003) presents a general image of a typical art consumer: well-educated, upper-middle class consumer of entertainment, with a relatively high ability to pay and cultivated taste for leisure time. For Bulgaria it is hard to say whether this image corresponds to the real image of the theater audience. After the decrease in attendance during the early 90s, nowadays a serious revival on the drama theater scene is observed. Especially in the capital, tickets have to be bought months in advance for a popular theater performance. The main reasons that many critics attribute to these process are the development in society in general. First of all, people are more willing to pay for cultural events, because they could afford it nowadays in comparison with ten years ago. Another reason is that all entertainment activities, such as TV or cinemas, which were a novelty in the beginning of the 90s, are now available and well known to everyone, so people are looking for a different kind of entertainment. Finally, people are looking for the prestige and status associated with theater going.

## **2.5. Conclusion.**

Although some outstanding facts from the history of Bulgarian drama theater scene were presented, the most detailed and expressive descriptions in the entire chapter concerned the effects of the totalitarian regime in Bulgaria on all aspects of the cultural sphere. These

effects concern the formal structure of cultural institutions, the attitudes of the artists towards their work and environment and naturally – the communication with art audiences.

There is however one contradiction which is very interesting – on one hand one of the main principles of the national cultural policy is decentralization in the management and financing of the cultural institutions (Tomova, 2003), while on the other the Ministry of Culture, the government body which should be most concerned about the implementation of this policy, controls steadily many aspects of the cultural institutions' activities. That is why an overall confusion appeared in the theater institutions during the reflux of theater audiences in the early 90s. Many theater managers and experts expected some guidance or fundamental resolution from the Ministry officials, but actually received a badly designed reform. But there is also another side of the coin – although arts and theater experts criticize the official policy for the cultural sector, the Ministry of Culture still maintains a wide network of state-owned, publicly subsidized cultural institutions in almost every corner of the country.

As far as promotional activities of the theaters are concerned, there are almost no sources of information in Bulgarian. There are no official government documents, whose theme is the marketing activities of the cultural institutions. The briefly presented in the chapter surveys (Tomova, 2005) are broad and focus more on the meaning of the arts for the society. Therefore the application and aspects of cultural marketing and promotion with regard to the specific features of the Bulgarian cultural sphere were not discussed in detail in this chapter. The emphasis was more or less on the processes that affected the development and adoption of the concepts of promotion by Bulgarian theater institutions, while the expectations of what their nature could be is expressed later in the thesis.

# CHAPTER THREE

## **Marketing Research and Promotion in the Cultural Sector**

### **3.1. Introduction**

In the first chapter the core concepts of marketing were presented. However, one of the fundamental parts of the marketing process was not discussed in detail – marketing research. Here we will take a closer look into the definitions of marketing research and how this process should be designed. Moreover, special attention would be paid to the application of this concept in the performing arts sphere. Marketing research focuses intensively on consumer behaviour and decision making and buying. These processes are especially specific in the performing arts sphere, whose performances are complex cultural products and are also space and time limited. In this chapter, we would discuss on what external and individual factors could influence the consumption of such goods.

In the second part of the chapter more attention would be paid to the components of the promotional mix for the cultural sector. The main features of the promotional tools were already outlines in the first chapter. However, since promotional activities in the performing arts are the theme of this research, more detailed information on what these exactly are and how they are implemented would be provided here.

### **3.2. Marketing Research.**

#### 3.2.1. Defining Marketing Research

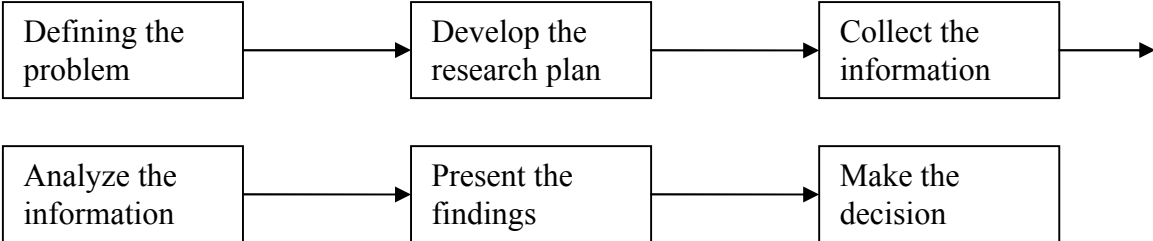
All organizations, including cultural organizations, exist and operate in a permanently changing environment, that includes their customers, competitors, partners and so on. The surrounding environment exerts certain influence not only on the company, but also on its customers and markets. Especially in Bulgaria, where in the past twenty years the country has

experienced major political, economic and social changes, there has been a revolution on the markets of almost all goods, including cultural products.

In order to keep up with the changing marketing environment, companies need to have specific knowledge about their particular markets (Kotler and Keller, 2006). To obtain and consequently use this knowledge, marketers commission specific marketing studies on particular problems, or in other words, use marketing research to gain insight about their customer’s attitudes and buying behaviour. Marketing research could be defined as the “systematic design, collection, analysis, and reporting of data and findings relevant to a specific marketing situation facing the company” (Kotler and Keller, 2006: 102). Larger companies usually have their own marketing research departments, but research is not limited to big firms only.

Kotler and Keller (2006) suggest a six step plan for the implementation of the effective marketing research (Kotler and Keller, 2006: 103):

Graphic 3



The authors repeatedly emphasize on the importance of every stage of the marketing research process. In the first step the marketers must pay attention not to define the research problem too broadly or too narrowly (Kotler and Keller, 2006). Only when the problems that need to be studied are set correctly, the development of the research plan may be implemented. In this stage, the marketer must make decisions on data sources, research approaches, instruments, sampling plans and contact methods. Data sources could be of two types: primary data and secondary data. Secondary data had been collected previously for another purpose, while primary data is gathered for the specific purposes of a current research. There are numerous approaches to collect primary data. Kotler and Keller (2006) present five main ways: through observation, by forming focus groups, by undertaking surveys, using behavioral data, or conducting experiments. All these approaches have different advantages and drawbacks and respectively call for different research instruments.

The choices of course depend on the specificity of the problem to be researched. The third step, the data collection phase, is usually considered to be the most expensive and at the same time the most prone to error, for example respondents might refuse to cooperate or they might give biased or dishonest answers (Kotler and Keller, 2006). Getting in contact with “the right” respondent is critical at this stage. As much as there are numerous ways to conduct a research, there are also many different approaches on deciding on the parameters of the sample of respondents. Of course, the reliability of the results increases with the size of the sample (Colbert, 2005).

Once the data has been collected, the next step in the Kotler and Keller (2006) plan is the analysis of the findings. Usually different statistical techniques are used during this phase. The next-to-last step is the presenting of the findings. It is important that the researcher present findings that are relevant to the marketing decision facing the management. Finally, after the entire research process has been conducted, the last stage of making marketing decision may take place.

In “Marketing Culture and the Arts”, Colbert (2007) also pays attention to the importance of marketing research. He presents a more elaborate scheme. First of all, Colbert (2007) distinguishes three types of data: internal, secondary and primary, where internal data represents the information that is available in the company, for example financial reports. Second, he presents a fourteen step plan for conducting a marketing research (Colbert, 2007: 265):

Table 4

| <b>The 14 steps of Any Research Process</b> |  |
|---|--|
| Step 1                                      | Defining the problem                                   |
| Step 2                                      | Defining research objectives                           |
| Step 3                                      | Deciding on the human and financial resources required |
| Step 4                                      | Setting a schedule                                     |
| Step 5                                      | Choosing the appropriate tools and techniques          |
| Step 6                                      | Deciding on the sample                                 |
| Step 7                                      | Designing the questionnaire                            |
| Step 8                                      | Testing the questionnaire                              |
| Step 9                                      | Coding responses                                       |



|         |                       |
|---------|-----------------------|
| Step 10 | Gathering Data        |
| Step 11 | Monitoring Interviews |
| Step 12 | Compiling Data        |
| Step 13 | Analyzing the results |
| Step 14 | Writing the report    |

Despite of the different schemes that Kotler and Keller (2006) and on the other hand Colbert (2007) suggest, the point and importance of marketing research remains unquestionable for all authors. When marketing research is conducted and implemented right, it assists marketing managers to gain substantial insights about their customers and markets. It also means that marketers could better evaluate the effects of different marketing investments and make better decisions on their marketing-mix modeling (Kotler and Keller, 2006). Finally, the more complex and globalized our world becomes, consumers become more selective and demanding in their choices, segments become smaller and smaller, and the need to know customers' demands and buying behaviour becomes crucial.

### 3.2.2 Marketing Research in the Context of the Performing Arts

#### *Arts organizations and marketing research*

All authors writing on marketing and management emphasize on the critical role, that marketing research plays in understanding consumer attitudes and behaviour (Kotler and Scheff, 1997). In the world of the performing art, where products are usually described as complex and multi-dimensional (Colbert, 2007) and also time and space limited (Kotler and Scheff, 1997), having sufficient knowledge on consumers' attitudes, preferences and behaviour could be of great benefit to performing arts organizations. However, Kotler and Scheff (1997) criticize arts organizations for ignoring marketing research, due to limited budgets and focusing on other expenditures. Artistic directors often show resistance to marketing research also for other reasons. Some of them express concerns that applying marketing research results would create compromises with their artistic mission and influence negatively their decision making (Kotler and Scheff, 1997). In response to that, the authors suggest several reasons for artistic directors and managers of cultural organizations not to underestimate the importance of marketing research.

The first most common obstacle, according to cultural managers, is the cost of marketing research. But Kotler and Scheff (1997) argue that marketing research need not to be very expensive. There are cheap forms of research, such as observation or focus groups. For example, just listening to audience comments during intermission could also provide a lot of information. Another inexpensive method is to analyze already available information, such as ticket sales by production, performer, time of the year and so on. Another resistance that artistic directors show towards marketing research is their lack of technical knowledge. However, as much as they need to be acquainted with the different approaches and principles of the marketing research process, they need not to be experts on designing surveys or statistical computer programmes. Finally, Kotler and Scheff (1997) argue that marketing research would not yield artistic directors to compromise with the integrity of their organizations, but would provide an opportunity for making their offering better and attract more audiences.

### ***Factors influencing attendance***

The first step towards marketing research, even before the defining the actual research question, is trying to understand the factors that affect consumer behaviour of the performing arts audiences. Colbert (2007) states that the consumption of leisure products – including cultural ones – cannot be approached in a similar way as the consumption of all other products. Two main reasons could be presented in support of this statement. First of all, performing arts events require not only financial investment, but also they include spending time and traveling to the venue and second, the consumption of leisure time goods is considered to be “experiential”, which means that the product could be assessed only at the time and place of consumption (Colbert, 2007).

Kotler and Scheff (1997) on the other hand state that consumer behaviour decisions concerning art events attendance are far broader than the characteristics of a specific artistic offering. These major factors are shown on the following table:

Table 5

| <b>Factors Influencing Consumer Behaviour</b>  |
|--|
| <b>I. Macro-environmental trends</b><br>Social, political, economic, technological forces  |
| <b>II. Cultural Factors</b><br>Nationality, subcultures, social class                      |
| <b>III. Social Factors</b><br>Reference groups, opinion leaders, innovativeness            |
| <b>IV. Psychological Factors</b><br>Personality, beliefs and attitudes, motivation         |
| <b>V. Personal Factors</b><br>Occupation, economic circumstances, family, life-cycle stage |

Macro-environmental trends could be large social, political or technological changes and processes that affect the development of the society as a whole (Kotler and Scheff, 1997). They influence our values, important life decisions, such as education or career choices, and also include our daily decisions. Macro-environmental trends, called also megatrends, last about a decade, but we could conclude that nowadays changes in our societies are accelerating which affects our values and beliefs.

Another group of factors that influence consumer behaviour are cultural factors. They, according to the authors, exercise the broadest and deepest influence. Nationality, as one of the cultural factors, could affect the attendance to performing arts events and that depends on the cultural history of a certain country or nationality, the government support that the art receive, the state of the cultural life or how much the people in a certain country are habituated to arts attendance (Kotler and Scheff, 1997). On the other hand, each culture consists of numerous subcultures. These subcultures influence people's tastes, preferences, lifestyles and in certain cases – their interest in the arts. A person's social class also affects their behaviour and attitudes (Kotler and Scheff, 1997). Members of similar social class usually have similar values and interests. Moreover, social classes often have distinctive preferences towards certain brands and leisure time activities. The specific characteristics of the different social classes suggest to marketer different approaches towards how to reach and influence them. For example, if a marketing manager of a performing arts organization wants to attract middle-class consumers, they could offer tickets for the performance in a local super market. That could encourage people, who were previously intimidated by the elitist image of theater events, to visit the performance (Kotler and Scheff, 1997).

Social factors, another major group influencing consumer behaviour, include reference groups, opinion leaders and innovativeness (Kotler and Scheff, 1997). Reference groups include family, friends, coworkers or more formal professional or religious groups. They usually have a serious effect on arts attendance, because leisure time activities have a strong social component. Adult reference groups play a crucial role in attendance patterns. A study conducted in 1985 in Cleveland examined the effects of peer group influence and childhood arts education on arts attendance. The results of the study showed that adult reference groups are much more important than childhood exposure to the arts and if these groups were absent, the effects of art education tend to dissipate. Attendance is also influenced by opinion leaders. That is why opinion leaders are often attracted by marketers to participate in personal communication channels and be the starting point of word of mouth strategies (Kotler and Scheff, 1997). Finally, people differ in their attitudes and readiness to try new products. In the sphere of the performing arts innovators are more likely to attend an avant-garde theater performance while the majority of the population would probably wait for the cue of a opinion leader.

Apart from the features of a person's social group, a variety of psychological characteristics also shape persons' attitudes and behaviour. Among the psychological factors, influencing consumer behaviour, are personality, beliefs and attitudes and motivation (Kotler and Scheff, 1997). Terms such as self-confidence, autonomy, sociability are usually used to describe one's personality. Among the features of one's personality is also the image he has of himself. Psychologists distinguish between actual self-concept (the image we have about our own selves), ideal self-concept (how we would like to view ourselves) and others self-concept (or how we think others view us). In the context of arts marketing, different promotional campaign messages could address different personality features; for example a person's self-esteem, desire for socializing or how they wish to be seen by others. Other psychological factors are beliefs and attitudes. They are acquired during one's experience and learning process. Attitudes and beliefs are largely discussed in marketing literature. Different authors try to discover links and relations between attitudes and behaviour. The traditional marketing approach assumes that attitudes must be changed first in order for behaviour change to appear (Kotler and Scheff, 1997). But Kotler and Scheff (1997) argue that this model has been challenged by a new concept, stating that we often adjust our attitudes to fit our behaviour. Marketers could launch specific promotional campaigns to attract new audiences to visit a performance for the first time and thus, after the experience, probably change the attitudes of some of the visitors towards a positive view of the performing arts.

The final psychological factor, described by Kotler and Scheff (1997) is motivation. There are several theories, explaining peoples' motivation. Probably the most popular one is the Maslow's hierarchy of human needs. Maslow states that people have different needs – psychological, social, esteem needs and self-actualization needs – which stay on a certain hierarchy and a person first need to fulfill a lower level in order to move to the next one (Kotler and Scheff, 1997). Attending a theater performance could be triggered by different level needs, for example social or esteem needs.

The final set of factors influencing behaviour are personal factors. Personal factors include occupation, economic circumstances, lifestyle, life cycle stage and family. It is needless to discuss how all of them could affect the attendance to performing arts events. As most influential however could be named lifestyle and life cycle stage. Nevertheless, consumer behaviour is influenced by a complex interplay between all five groups of factors. To influence behaviour, marketers must obtain knowledge and develop understanding for all these factors and take them into account when elaborating a promotional campaign (Kotler and Scheff, 1997).

### ***Making decision and buying process***

A consumer's decision to purchase or not a certain good is usually regarded in marketing literature as complex process that involves the presented above factors. The decision – making process may involve some or all of them, depending on the product to be purchased and the specific situation. In the performing arts sphere, the buying process often has a high degree of involvement, because as it was discussed above, cultural goods are “experiential goods” that could be estimated only after the experience.

Colbert (2007) presents different reasons that could affect the decision making process for cultural goods. Basically he distinguishes between cognitive experience and affective processes. In the first case the decision is based on careful reflection, weighing alternatives and so on. In the affective process the total experience relies more on affective elements, like love, hate, boredom. Nevertheless, no decision-making process is entirely affective or cognitive, but “a blend of the two” (Colbert, 2007:107).

Kotler and Scheff (1997) on the other hand present the decision and buying as a five stage process that includes the following steps:

*Need recognition:* the buying process starts, when the consumer realizes a problem or a need. The need recognition could be powered by internal or external stimuli. Advertising and word-of-mouth campaign are external forces that could trigger need recognition.

*Information search:* when a consumer is already interested in a certain good, they usually wish to search for more information. Theater plays and performing arts events are complex goods and informational sources are crucial for the buying process. That is why art marketers often make surveys among their audiences in order to discover which informational sources had the greatest influence on consumers.

*Evaluation of alternatives:* after consumers obtain enough information for a certain product, they estimate also the available alternative products. However, the evaluation of alternatives is not based only on the collected information, but is also influenced by a person's attitudes, feelings and background. Every consumer sees each product as a group of attributes; the marketer's job in this case is to discover which attributes are important for consumers and emphasize on them in their campaigns.

*Purchase decision:* the buying process for cultural products is more complex by the fact that target consumers usually attend in a group. Kotler and Scheff (1997) suggest that there are five different roles that an individual could play in the decision-making process:

Initiator – the one that suggests first the idea of attending a particular event

Influencer – the one that others turn for advice to

Decider – the person who ultimately determines whether, when and what action is to be taken

Transactor – the one that executes the actual transaction (buy the tickets for example)

Consumer – the person who finally attends a performance, but need not to participate in the other roles

*Postpurchase behaviour:* after experiencing a performance, consumers experience certain levels of satisfaction or disappointment. That could determine whether a consumer would wish to visit the performing arts organization again and attend another performance.

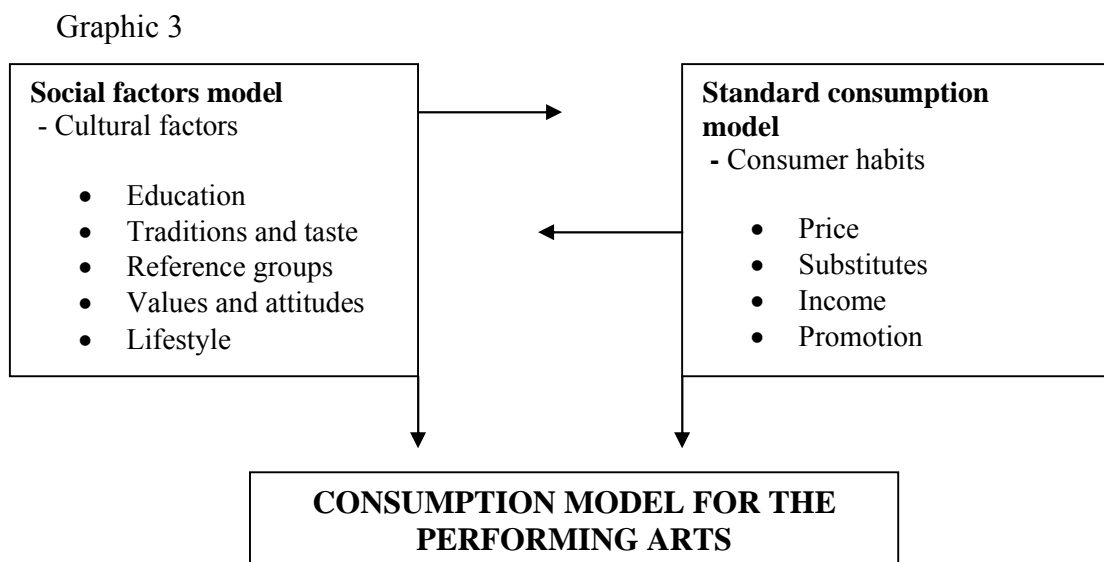
Understanding consumer behaviour and the decision making and buying process, together with all the factors that could influence them is of crucial importance for marketers. This understanding allows them to create programmes and campaigns that best meet people needs and expectations.

### 3.2.3. Marketing Research and Theater Audiences in the Bulgarian context

There are not many literature sources in Bulgarian that explore the situation, concerning theater companies and marketing research in the country. However, we would present several standpoints from the existing Bulgarian literature that discuss this relation.

Theater audiences and the consumer behaviour for cultural goods in Bulgaria have experienced tremendous changes, especially in the recent years. On the one hand these changes have been triggered by the “shuffle” in the above mentioned macro-environmental, cultural, social, psychological and even personal factors in the past twenty years. On the other hand however, the performing arts and attendance to theater events have had serious development throughout the entire twentieth century, therefore it becomes very difficult to determine whether people nowadays attend performing arts events more or less or are there some significant changes in the decision making process.

In “Art and market”, Tomova (2003) argues that there are two groups of factors – non-economic and economic - that form the specific model for consumption of performing arts. This model is based both on general consumption habits and cultural factors and is represented by the following figure (Tomova, 2003: 67):



Tomova (2003) argues that in industrial societies, where both incomes and the value of leisure time increase simultaneously, most influential in the consumption of cultural goods are cultural factors, such as traditions, tastes, values, which are expressed in the market through the preferences of the consumers. The power and intensity of the factors, influencing demand

are also determined by the level of development of national cultural market, its regulation and the microeconomic environment. The still very flexible and changeable markets in the Eastern European countries, according to Tomova (2003) create some additional specifications in consumption patterns. For example, the connection between social status, level of income and consumption of cultural goods is not so clearly feasible as it is in the developed economies. There are also differences in consumer behaviour, regarding the leisure time activities. In countries with developing markets a great part of the leisure time is devoted to additional labour (Tomova, 2003). If the harder economic conditions are added to this fact, the prospects for development of the performing arts sphere do not seem so hopeful. In addition, there are several other factors, although with less influence, that also might limit consumption, such as transportation, babysitter, appropriate clothes, etc, called by Kotler and Scheff (1997) barriers to access of the performing arts.

The behaviour of Bulgarian audiences in the past years is a strong argument for the impact of cultural and social factors, such as values, traditions and tastes for the consumption of cultural goods (Tomova, 2003). In macro-environmental trends, which do not stimulate demand, such as decrease in income and multiple increase in all prices, including ticket prices, as well as strong decrease in GNP, attendance to performing arts events has not changed so drastically. Tomova (2003) argues that this situation is a result from the state support that has been stimulating the development of stable consumption and traditions for decades. She also presents some example from an empirical research, conducted in Sofia in December 1998-January 1999, named "Consumer preferences and satisfaction of citizens". The research results show that the non-economic factors have a decisive role in the consumption model. It is expected however that an increase in incomes would lead to a consequent increase in consumption, although Tomova (2003) states that in this situation the appearance of a "substitute effect" is possible; in other words, an increase in income, the demand for performing arts events might be substituted with demand for less "intensive" leisure activities, requiring less concentration. The empirical research confirms that an increase in education leads to a greater satisfaction in the consumption of cultural goods; most influential factors still remain education, social group and the household income. There were some expectations, that the newly formed class of businessmen and managers with high incomes would consume more cultural products, but they were not justified. The major audience segment consists of people with average incomes, but with stable aesthetic criteria.

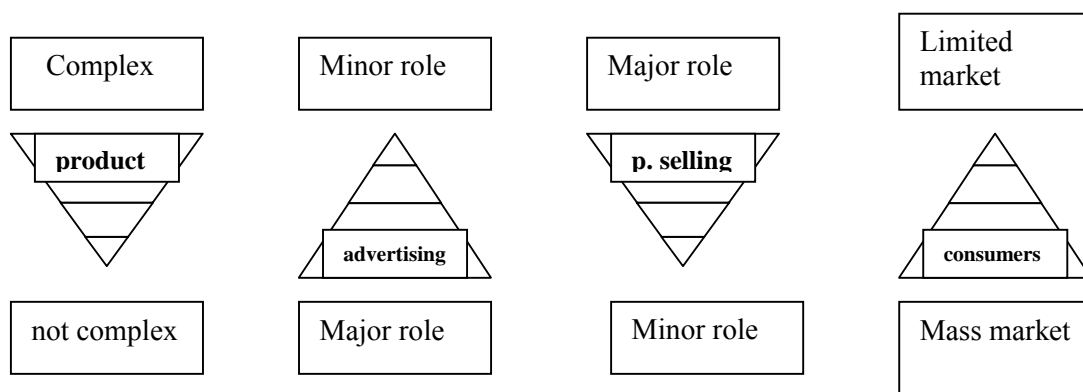
There is however no marketing research of theater audiences, conducted in Bulgaria, as far as Tomova (2003) shows.



### 3.3. Promotion in the Cultural Sector.

The promotional mix consist of sales promotion, advertising, PR and personal selling. The choice of one promotional variable over another is a matter of the choice of the marketer and depends on many circumstances. In the arts sphere, which is rather product –oriented, the complexity of the product as well as the size of the market are some of the most influential characteristics. Colbert (2007) presents the relationship between the product, market size and choice of promotional tool in the following graphic (Colbert, 2007: 236).

Graphic 4



The base and tips of the pyramids show the level of importance of certain characteristics (Colbert, 2007). If we take for example the “product” pyramid, the tip indicates low levels of complexity, while the base indicates otherwise. Basically, what we see in the graphic is that complex products are usually designed and determined for limited markets. The more complex the product is, the more detailed information and efforts are needed to convince the consumers to buy it. That is why Colbert (2007) argues that personal sales are most suitable in such a case, since they involve direct communication with customers. On the other hand, advertising is more appropriate for less complex products, because this promotional tool does not convey much information, but broader market coverage. Also, the market for simple products is quite larger. Therefore personal selling would be highly inefficient and costly (Colbert, 2007).

There are however many reasons for a marketer to take advantage of one promotional tool over the other. In the cultural sector, all components of the promotional mix could find

application. Here, we will present in detail the specific features of each of the promotional tools: why organizations use them, how they are implemented and what is their application in the cultural sphere.

### 3.3.1. Sales promotion:

Sales promotion is considered to be one of the oldest forms of promotion that has been existing for over a hundred years (Dakin, 1974). Even before the development of national branded goods, sales promotions, such as price reductions or extra-product free, were organized by local retailers or producers to attract customers.

Nowadays, sales promotion are still a powerful technique in the promotional mix. As any other promotional tool, however, they have their specific strengths and limitations. Stanley (1977) states that sales promotions are most effective, when the following circumstances are present:

- When a new brand is being introduced
- When a product improvement needs to be communicated
- When the product is being advertised and sales promotion are used as a supporting tool
- When the company wishes to improve its distribution channels

There are on the other hand several conditions in the presence of which sales promotion would prove to be ineffective, for example too much sales promotion might hurt the brand image or in other cases “spoil” the customers, who would eventually stop buying a product if it is not promoted (Stanley, 1977). That is why the first and main consideration of marketers should be to set the precise objectives of a sales promotion campaign. Stanley (1977) argues that the main objectives of sales promotion are “to motivate, assist, train, inform and execute the company’s sales and distributors, and to get new and present customers to try the product” (Stanley, 1977: 311). On the other hand, Kotler and Scheff (1997) state that despite all the benefits that sales promotion provides for the performing arts, their effects of such campaign are usually short-term. That is why the main challenge for marketers is to create and design an incentive that would both attract target audiences and serve the cultural institutions’ long-term interests (Kotler and Scheff, 1997).

In the first chapter the main forms and techniques in sales promotions were outlined. Generally, in the performing arts sphere, sales promotion could take the form of free guest tickets, different subscription programmes, premiums or gifts, games, in which prizes are tickets for performances and so on. Here we would try to structure and outline the main “steps” that a sales promotion campaign should consist of and how they should be implemented. In “Sales Promotion Handbook”, Dakin (1974) presents several stages of such a campaign:

*Stating the objectives:* as it was emphasized above, the most important stage in sales promotion, is to set the right objectives. Whether the performing arts organization desires to attract first-time visitors, or stimulate interest for a new production calls for different promotion tools (Kotler and Scheff, 1997). That is why it is crucial for marketers to decide precisely what effects they wish to achieve and what kind of incentive they want to create in their customers.

*Timetable:* once the promotional objectives are agreed, a timetable of activities should be prepared in order to allow the marketer to check each stage of the promotion as it progresses (Dakin, 1974).

*Preparing the promotion:* the preparation of the exact promotion is probably the most complex stage of the entire campaign. Many aspects should be taken into account – organizational issues, costs, time and duration. For example, a premium would have a price, a source of supply and continuity of supply to be agreed and organized (Dakin, 1974). Also, the sales promotion campaign may require some advertising support, which should be organized parallel to the campaign. Certainly, managing the staff, productive and organized communication with partners and finally, the precise timing are all crucial elements in the preparation and launching of sales promotion.

*Dividing responsibilities:* a sales promotion campaign involves a number of people. Usually performing arts organizations do not have large administrative and management staff. On the one hand, that facilitates the division of responsibility, because the communication between the team members is direct; but on the other it also means a single person may become responsible for numerous tasks. In this case the precise setting of responsibilities should take place before the actual launch of the sales promotion activity.

*Coordinating the promotion:* this stage is obviously closely related to the previous one. Usually companies with large marketing-management structures should at some level provide coordinating management (Dakin, 1974). This is not the case in the performing arts organization, where as stated above, management and marketing teams are small. But still,

following the objectives and fulfilling the time schedule should be coordinated, as Dakin (1974: 91) states “successful marketing and sales promotion, do not depend so much on the system as on the people involved:

*Dealing with complaints:* once the promotion is planned and launched, the marketers’ job is not finished (Dakin, 1974). They need to be available to deal with any consumer complaint. Dakin (1974) states that the “current wave of consumerism (Dakin, 1974: 89) has made companies’ images more vulnerable than ever. For this reason, managers and marketers should be alert for the remarks of unsatisfied consumers and be prepared to communicate with them.

*Measuring the results:* the results of sales promotion campaign should of course correspond to the objectives set at the start of the campaign. Marketers should research whether they have increased the number of visitors for a particular show; have they attracted more new-comers or donations after the promotion and so on; and if not an analysis of the failures should also be carried out.

Sales promotion has different strengths and weaknesses as a promotional tool (Stanley, 1977). But if they are implemented successfully, they could create a sense of excitement about an event or an organization in consumers and consequently – a desire to return (Kotler and Scheff, 1997).

### 3.3.2. Advertising.

Advertising is another element of the promotional mix. There several reasons why marketers use advertising, but the major ones are: to improve long-term profits, to improve the image of an organization and to try to affect behaviour (Brierly, 2002). In the cultural sphere, advertising is not very wide spread due to the high costs associated with this promotional tool. Nevertheless, performing arts organizations use several advertising techniques among which are printed materials, such as posters and brochures, radio spots and the Internet.

First of all, we will pay attention to the most wide spread advertising material, used by theaters – the poster. The main role of posters is to inform visitors for the existence of a new performance, the creative team involved in it (director, composer, actors), the place and time of the performance and information about ticket sales. There are several “rules”, accepted by advertising experts, concerning how a good printed advertising material should look like.

## *Posters*

First of all, marketers should be aware of their target audiences (Stanley, 1977). When audiences are identified, the next stage is to decide on how they should be attracted, what message the material should carry and how this message is to be transmitted through vision. Stanley (1977) describes the most important elements of a poster to be the copy (in other words, the text), the brand name and the layout. In a theater poster, the copy has two main functions: first of all, it has to present information to the customers, as described above - the name of the performing arts institution, the time of the performances, etc. As much as this information is important, it should not take a central position in the poster layout and “disturb” the images and artwork. Next, the copy should contain and deliver a certain message to the customers. Often, theater posters do not have a headline or a slogan. The choice to include a slogan in a theater poster depends on the type of the performance, characteristics of the audience, the preference of creators of the poster. In the cases, when a poster has a headline or slogan, Stanley (1977) presents the following suggestions: 1) the headline should be kept as short as possible; 2) it should be clear in meaning; 3) should be on the level of the audience’s level of experience; 4) it should be relevant to the product. Another component of an advertising poster is the brand name. The brand name “identifies a product or a service and distinguishes it from the others in its class” (Stanley, 1977: 197). In the theater field, the brand name represents the actual name of the performance. In the case of a known playwright, for example Shakespeare, the brand name already creates certain connotations in consumers; in others, when there is a new author and performance, the brand name could influence audiences that are particularly interested in innovative and experimental theater art. The final element that Stanley (1977) mentions, is the layout. In the performing arts sphere, the layout is the most essential element of all. Since we are discussing a poster that advertises a cultural event, layouts are usually pieces of artwork, created by visual artists or designers. The visual of a theater poster is most influential in attracting audiences. There are several points that need to be taken into consideration: the layout should be memorable, aesthetic and in coherence with the type and message of the performance advertised.

It often happens that despite all the efforts, the theater poster does not manage to attract enough audiences. Apart from the appearance and message, in order to reach potential consumers, posters need to be placed at the “right” places. That is why studying the lifestyles of target audiences plays a vital role: theater posters need to be put at places, where the

consumers could see and remember them, for example at “hot spots” in city centers, near popular restaurants and clubs, at bus stops, ext. Choosing appropriate places for theater posters increases the possibility for attracting target audience attention and consequently – attending the performance.

### ***Radio***

Radio spots are also used often as advertising tool by performing arts organizations, mainly because they are not so costly in comparison with other advertising forms. Radio advertising also offers high audience selectivity, which posterizing could ensure at all, but on the other hand radio spots lack visual impact (Kotler and Scheff, 1997).

Stanley (1977) pays more particular attention to the production techniques of radio commercials. The production of a radio spot starts with a script, which contains a copy, sound effects and music or some other instructions, mentioned to guide commercial participants (Stanley, 1977). The creative aspects of a radio spot depend mostly on the message that has to be communicated, the characteristics of the target audience and of course – the features of the product. However, when advertising an event, that is limited in time and space as theater performances are, the spot should follow the five step communication model, formulated firstly by Lasswell and described in the first chapter (Kotler and Scheff, 1997). In other words, the radio commercial should contain the name of the performing arts company, the event that is advertised, time and place and information on tickets sales. In such cases the timing is of great importance: it is pointless to air a commercial about an opening night, thirty minutes before the start of the performance.

In order for radio commercials to be effective, the choices of particular stations, frequency and time of airing should be carefully designed. When deciding on particular media, marketers should first of all answer several questions: who are the target consumers, who are the competitors, and how to make the most cost effective planning, i.e. to reach the greatest amount of coverage at the lowest price (Brierly, 2002). Two additional definitions need to be clarified here: coverage, which is the “number of the target audience reached” (Brierly, 2002: 107) and frequency – “the number of times they are reached” (Brierly, 2002: 107). To achieve the objectives of the campaign, marketers need to balance between the two. However, most media planning experts argue, that airing a radio spot less than four times a day, is simply a waist of means, because such airing pattern could not ensure neither enough coverage, nor enough frequency for the target audience to remember the commercial.

There is also another problem, concerning the timing in using radio spots for advertising performing arts events. Audience sizes and interest vary through different times of year (Kotler and Scheff, 1997). This is caused by the seasonal schedule of theater companies and also by the different types of leisure activities available in different seasons during the year. In this case, marketers should advertise in coherence with the level of audience interest the objectives set in the campaign.

### ***Brochures***

Together with posters, brochures are probably the other most popular printed advertising materials in the performing arts field. Brochures are printed as advertising materials for every new performance, for every season or to advertise the theater company in general.

Here we will suggest some basic rules for production of brochures and pays attention to four main stages:<sup>10</sup>

- Determine the purpose of your brochure: is it to present a new upcoming performance or to advertise the company on general; is it more informative or more creative and artistic; is it to be distributed freely or sent to subscribers only. Whatever the purpose of the brochure is, three main points should be taken into consideration: who the brochure should reach; how the marketer wants to influence the audience; how it is going to be distributed;

- Decide how much you could spend – this stage of course depends on the advertising budget of the company;

- Write the brochure copy - the copy of the brochure should first of all carry enough information, second it needs to sound interesting and appealing and finally, the “proper” look of the fonts and space needs to be designed. The copy should not obstruct the pictures or other visual elements in the brochure. Also the font size has to look “right” to the reader<sup>11</sup>. It needs neither be too small or too big and comic. Basically, in a typical three fold brochure, the headline has to be on the first page and the contact information on the last one. So the copy needs to fit neatly on the other remaining space;

- Lay out the brochure: the design of the brochure should correspond to the message and the available budget. A brochure should not be too busy or too boring; it should contain

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.williamswriting.com> – visited on 16.04.2008

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.wikihow.com> – visited on 16.04.2008

colours and images that would appeal to the target audience. Finally, it has to be aesthetic and have certain artistic value.

### ***Internet***

There is probably no need to discuss the ever growing significance and influence of the Internet in nowadays communications. The Internet is becoming the most powerful medium in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. That is why Internet advertising is also increasing its share in comparison to the advertising in other media.

There are numerous ways to advertise in the World Wide Web, but the most common one and probably most appropriate for a performing arts organization is to have a good website. To convince arts organizations to create web sites is not needed any more, because almost all of them already have one. Here we will emphasize on some suggestions, concerning what should be the content of a successful website and how it should look like.

First of all, a website should contain enough information on the product offered. In the case of a theater performance, it is recommendable that site contains a short description of the play, pictures or in some cases theater companies even include a short trailer. The presentation of a performance should also include information about the creative team behind the production – the director, the actors, stenographers, ext. Often people base their decision to attend certain performances on the reputation of a directors, or a star actor.

Another characteristic of a website is that its vision should correspond to the organization's image and mission. Many performing arts organizations include their history or try to present some distinctive feature of the organization that might be attractive to their audiences. It is also useful if the organization publishes short presentation of its creative team. After watching a certain performance, visitors might become interested in particular actors and would like to know more about them and where they could see them perform again. In such cases a forum or a blog in the website would have a very beneficial effect. On one hand, the visitors could share their opinion about the performance and thus could facilitate the possibilities for creation of word-of-mouth and provoke audiences to get more involved. On the other, a forum could provide essential information for the management of the performing arts organization about the audiences' characteristics, as well as their opinions, attitudes and expectations.

One of the most important uses of a website is the information it provides about the possibilities for buying tickets: where are the places for buying tickets, are there tickets



available, who are the contact people in the theater. Some theater companies even provide an opportunity for on-line purchase of tickets, which is highly appreciated by people with very busy lifestyles and limited leisure time. Finally, a website of a performing arts organization should provide some information for its current and potential partners, such as private donators, government agencies, as well as what are the benefits for sponsorship programmes.

### 3.3.3. Personal selling

Personal selling is used by many companies to distribute their products and services. In this promotional tool, the selection, behaviour and skills of sales people are the most important component (Stanley, 1977). By carefully selecting and training sales people, companies could achieve sales goals, as well as improve their image in front of their customers and partners.

Kotler and Scheff (1997) outline the main advantages of personal selling. First of all, personal selling allows for greater selectivity in comparison with other promotional tools. Second, it provides opportunity for personalization and customization of the message, dependant on the type of person or groups that are addressed. Personal selling also can be used to build strong relationship with every customer. The authors state that by appealing to consumers' individuality and needs, the sales person can increase their interest, frequency of attendance and loyalty. Next, personal selling could be timed more precisely than advertising or publicity campaign. For example, a theater company could offer their subscribers a new programme, before the season begins. Attention is the following advantage of personal selling, described by Kotler and Scheff (1997). Potential consumers are more likely to listen and be influenced by a sales person than by a commercial or a review. Finally, this type of promotional activity allows for research of target audiences.

The most outstanding drawback of personal selling is its high cost (Stanley, 1977). This is not however always the case in the performing arts sphere. As it was described above, there are many reasons why people attend performing arts events and one of them is the influence by peers or opinion leaders. Personal communication channels often have proved to be more successful in the arts sphere than non-personal channels, mainly because the performing arts are "experiential" goods and second, because attending is also associated with socializing. That is why many performing arts organizations recruit sales people that could either visit places where potential audiences gather or work (for example, offices, universities, schools, clubs, ext) or call them and present their offering. This type of promotional activity has

proven to very successful for performances, addressed to children, such as puppet theater, where sales people visit kindergartens or primary schools and invite whole classes to the performances. There is also the possibility for joint-activities, when several theaters hire one or several sales people, who could distribute their tickets at the same time. This approach is far less costly, but on the other hand it does not provide enough possibilities for audience research and creates competition.

Nevertheless, personal selling provides with great opportunities for the performing arts and solves some of the main problems that theater organizations face – the one with the distribution of tickets. Many visitors of arts events share that they would attend more often, but their busy lifestyles does not allow them to get informed on time for upcoming performances and buy tickets on time. In such cases, personal selling programmes could attract these potential customers and eventually turned into loyal visitors.

#### 3.3.4. Public Relations

Companies may choose to use or avoid the above described promotional tools, but all institutions conduct some or other form of public relations. Stanley(1977) defines this promotional technique as “a functions that determines the attitudes and opinions of the organizations’ publics, identifies its policies with the interest of its publics, and formulates and executes and executes a programme of action to earn the understanding and goodwill of its publics” (Stanley, 1977: 244).

A company’s publics do not include only its final customers. It involves also other groups that communicate with the company’s products, services and image. These groups could be the organization’s employees, its stakeholders, suppliers, the local community, local and state government bodies, the financial community and the press (Stanley, 1977). In the cultural sector, an art’s enterprise publics include its customers, the government bodies responsible for cultural policies and subsidies, the private sector (donators or sponsors), partners, such as other cultural organizations or third sector bodies, the local authorities, art experts, such as art critiques, different media. An arts organization communicates with all these publics through different means and for various reasons. In this case, a company or a cultural institution are constantly implementing one or other form of PR, as Stanley (1977) states “public relation is a state of being, rather than a communication tool” (Stanley, 1977: 248).

On the other hand, a communication tool within the function of PR is media relation or publicity. Publicity could be defines as “news or information about a product, service, or idea, that is published on behalf of a sponsor but is not paid for by the sponsor” (Stanley, 1977: 249). Publicity could be used by a company to communication with all or part of its publics, but it is mainly directed to its final customers. Many authors argue about the advantages of publicity in comparison with other promotional tools. However, the advantages and drawbacks of publicity were described to some extend in the first chapter. Here more attention would be paid to some general “tips”, prescribed by several authors, about how the communication with the media should be managed.

Publicity could take many forms. Some of the more popular types, mentioned by Stanley (1977) are news releases, feature articles, press conferences, editorials, records and films. These are usually materials, prepared by PR experts and send to the media, which are of interest to the organization’s publics and would also be interested to publish or air these materials. In “Marketing Culture and the Arts”, Colbert (2007) suggests six basic principles of media relations. But he also states that before implementing these principles, the art organization should develop good relationship with journalists in the media they are interested in, in order to ensure that their publicity material would not be ignored. Media relations, therefore, involves the following steps (Colbert, 2007: 230):

#### Graphic 5

- Formulate your news
- Prepare communication tools (press releases, photos, etc.)
- Target specific media and send your message out to them
- Follow up with the media to ensure that you’re your news is published or broadcast
- Collect articles and reports following the release of the news item
- Analyze impact and adjust your strategy

Sending a press release or other form of communication tools to the press published does not always guarantee that it would be published. Probably the most distinctive drawback of publicity is that it is much less controllable than other promotional tools. For this reason, getting the press interested and involved depends tremendously on the publicist’s communication skills. Kotler and Scheff (1997) suggest that successful communication with the media involves good planning and constant and appropriate communication with journalists. First of all, when designing an effective publicity campaign, advance planning of

all the activities involved is crucial. The first “job” a publicist should do is to get well acquainted with the media they are interested in; in their style, readers, strong and weak points. A major mistake that many arts organizations do, when sending press releases, is that they are either not selective in terms of media, or on the other hand they are being too selective, in the sense that they send their material to a very limited number of media. In the planning process the deadlines of the selected media should also be taken into account. Another point, largely discussed by Kotler and Scheff (1997) is how the communication with the journalists is to be handled in order to attract their attention and get a publicity material published. The authors state that journalists prefer to write about their own opinions and views when covering a story, an event or a performing arts show. In this case giving advise about the form and content of an article or announcement is not recommendable. Another major mistake, made by publicists is to criticize a review of an arts expert. Finally, journalists are not responsible for an organization’s ticket sales; their “job” is to cover an event, but not to promote it. Creating a network of journalists and media people, who are interested in a performing arts organization and are willing to write about it is a major success that a publicist could achieve. Therefore, Kotler and Scheff (1977) suggest several “tips” to attract the media people’s attention, among which are opening nights invitations (sent at least three or four weeks in advance); invitations to rehearsals; special events, such as meetings with the director and cast, etc. Additionally, the authors underline that special promotional materials for journalists should be produces, such as yearly brochures or catalogues.

Finally, we will pay attention to a relatively new, but gaining serious popularity, concept of word of mouth marketing. Silverman (2001) describes word of mouth as “the most powerful way to make decisions easier and accelerate your prospects’ decision process” (Silverman, 2001: 21). He additionally mentions several reason why this specific promotional activity is more persuasive than the traditional ones. Word-of mouth creates a higher degree of confidence and trust among potential consumers, because it is transmitted through a personal communication channel. Therefore it is more credible and relevant to consumers than a designed advertising message or a media review. Another feature of word of mouth is that it is customer driven and it is self-generating. Silverman (2001) argues that word of mouth have exposure that is tens if times larger than any other of the traditional media. In the context of the performing arts, where consumer behaviour and decision making is highly influenced by opinion leaders and peers, word of mouth could be create awareness about an upcoming show, festival, etc.

According to Silverman (2001) there are three sources of word of mouth among customers, namely: expert to expert; expert to peer and peer to peer. They exhibit different features and are triggered by different motives. In the performing arts, the role of the expert could be taken by art critiques, journalists, informal leaders in social and reference groups or a subculture leader. They all have “the power” to influence attendance in a negative or positive way. The different function of the sources are exhibited in the following table (Silverman, 2001: 88):

Table 6

| <b>SOURCES OF WORD OF MOUTH</b> |                 |  |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|--|
| <b>Source</b>                   | <b>Function</b> | <b>Content (what it provides)</b>                              |
| Experts                         | Confirmation    | The upside and downside potential under the best circumstances |
| Peers                           | Verification    | What to expect in the real world, in typical situation         |

In implementing a word of mouth campaign, apart from choosing appropriate source, it is important for the marketer to identify to predominant adopter type that they would like to influence. Every market could be identified with a several types of consumers, depending on the product life cycle (Silverman, 2001). These are innovators, early adopters, middle-majority, late adopters and laggards. Influencing the different adopter types in the right sequence is crucial for a successful word of mouth campaign.

It is not however easy to consciously provoke people, experts or peers, to talk about a product or a cultural event and trigger a word of mouth campaign. For this case Silverman (2001) suggests several ways of how to harness word of mouth (Silverman, 2001: 60, 61):

### **Using Experts**

- Advisory groups
  - o Customers
  - o Suppliers
  - o Experts
  - o Sales people
- Experts’ roundtables
- Experts’ selling groups

### **Seminars, Workshops, Speeches**

- Speakers programme
- Seminars
- Group selling
- Dinner Meeting
- Peer selling groups
- Teleconferences experts’ panels
- Trade show events/opportunities

### **“Canned” Word of mouth**

- Videotapes
- Audiotapes
- World Wide Web
- CDs

### **Referral Selling**

- Testimonials
- Networking
- Referral Selling Programme

### **New Media**

- Hotlines
- Faxback services
- Web based word of mouth, forums, e-mails, etc.
- Call Centers

### **Using traditional Media for Word of Mouth**

- Customer service as word of mouth engine
- PR
- Placements
- Promotions
- Word of mouth in ads, sales brochures, or direct mail
  - Salesperson programmes, such as sales stars, peer training, or using salespeople as word of mouth generators
- Word of mouth incentive programmes
- Useful gifts to customers that they could give to their friends

Word of mouth marketing gains more and more popularity, especially in the recent years. It represents an opportunity that is not however so widely used in the performing arts, despite of its potential – namely, the specific features of cultural products and consumption of cultural goods, numerously mentioned above, showing that personal communication channels would be much more successful in the cultural sphere. Nevertheless, word of mouth marketing represents another “perspective, or viewpoint, from which to view marketing” (Silverman, 2001: 7).

### **3.4. Conclusion.**

The promotional mix for the cultural sector consists of the same components as the conventional promotional variable. However, the execution of the promotional tools exhibits certain specificities, caused, for example, by the characteristics of the performing arts audiences, as well as by the unique features of the cultural products. In this chapter, we have

tried to outline the most important details of the actual implementation of the promotional tools for the cultural sector.

The role of this chapter was to create a base for the future research design. Since we will explore promotional activities, it was needed to present and describe in detail what these activities actually are and how they are implemented. In the next chapter, the results from the preceding three chapters would be combined in order for some suppositions about the use of promotion by Bulgarian drama theaters to be designed. These suppositions are to be tested on a later phase by the research itself. The research methods in data collection and analysis are to be presented in the following chapter.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## **The Research Method**

### **4.1. Introduction**

In the preceding chapters the main features of cultural marketing and promotional activities in the performing arts were defined. Chapter Two in particular discussed the current situation of the cultural life and more precisely the performing arts in Bulgaria, as well as a brief historical overview of drama theater art. However, the existing literature in Bulgaria does not provide with information about marketing and promotion of Bulgarian drama theaters. Therefore the focus of this research is to clarify what promotional activities drama theaters in Bulgaria currently conduct.

Consequently, we would also try to discover whether the promotion, executed by Bulgarian drama theaters corresponds to the definitions and descriptions of the literature on marketing and promotion. More specifically, we would also focus on marketing research, planning of the promotional activities in terms of target audiences, objectives to be met and expected results. Finally we would attempt to discover what kind of knowledge theater managers have about marketing and how they estimate the significance of promotion for performing arts scene in Bulgaria.

In this chapter we are going to describe several suppositions, concerning the promotional activities of Bulgarian drama theaters. These suppositions were derived from reviewing literature on marketing, cultural marketing and promotion on one hand and on the other - literature and documents on the drama theater scene in Bulgaria. Combining the information from these sources, we now will derive suppositions, which are consequently to be tested by this research.



## **4.2. Promotional Activities of Bulgarian Drama Theaters: Suppositions.**

1. Theaters in Bulgaria do not base their decisions about promotion on marketing research.

So far, there seems that no marketing research has been conducted in Bulgaria, whose focus would be specifically drama theater audiences. There were however, several researches focused on the role of art for the society and the value of cultural institutions for Bulgarian citizens, described in “Art and Market” by Tomova (2003) and mentioned in Chapters Two and Three. These researches could be useful in understanding the overall picture of Bulgarian cultural life and the attitudes of society towards the arts, but they do not provide information precisely on drama theater audience.

The authors, discussed in Chapter Three, namely Colbert (2007) and Kotler and Scheff (1997), who wrote on marketing research, emphasize numerously how crucial is marketing research for successful consequent marketing decisions. Colbert (2007) even presents a precise fourteen-step plan for conducting marketing research. He numerously underlines the importance of setting clear research objectives, creating elaborate time schedule, clear analysis of the research results. It is obvious that the above mentioned Bulgarian researches on the arts present results that are too general and vague, compared to the Colbert’s (2007) plan for marketing research. The results that they offer can not be used for setting clear individual marketing or promotional objectives as described by Colbert (2007), Kotler and Scheff (1997) and Kotler and Keller (2006). From these points we could expect that marketing research, focused on the features of audiences of individual drama theater audiences, as described in the literature on marketing, has not been conducted so far in Bulgaria. This could also mean that the promotional activities, implemented by Bulgarian drama theaters are not based on knowledge about the characteristics of their audiences, obtained through scientific means.

2. Bulgarian drama theaters do not have marketing specialists in their organizations.

In Chapter Two, a section was devoted to theater as an organization. The two main types of theaters were described – open stages and repertoire theaters, which are the most popular form. Both forms of theater organizations have administrative staff, whose size depends on the size and budget of the theater. However, almost no theaters have an employee, responsible for the marketing decisions with the appropriate education and experience in

marketing. Some theaters, usually in the capital, have marketing and sales departments (this could be seen in their web sites). However, the literature and reports on Bulgarian theater reform, discussed in Chapter Two, always stress upon the importance of proper marketing for modern drama theater art, but there is no information for a theater which actually hired a marketing specialist. A solid reason for this statement is also the fact that almost all theater companies in Bulgaria are still state-run. This status does not allow theater managers to take decision about the number and offices of their personnel at liberty. They almost always need to coordinate their decisions with officials from the Ministry of Culture, which makes the entire procedure for appointing new personnel at a theater administration rather slow and clumsy. Moreover, the Ministry has exact requirements about what offices could be appointed in the administration department of a drama theater institution. The reports on the reform processes during the 90s however do not mention that any changes were planned or executed in the Cultural Ministry's list of offices as to the employment of marketers, respectively it could be concluded that marketers are not included in the Ministry's requirements.

Another point is that in the administrative staff of theaters there is an office, named "organizer". (in Bulgarian: организатор /organizator/ ). Before 1989 this was the person, who was responsible for the organized attendance to theater performances (see Chapter Two). This office is still existent in Bulgarian theaters. The organizers are responsible for some organizational activities, for example the organization of tours, and so on, but they do not make marketing decisions and do not participate actively in promotional activities or publicity.

For the above presented reasons, we do not expect Bulgarian drama theaters to have an office particularly responsible for their marketing activities.

3. Theaters in Bulgaria conduct certain promotional activities, but without precise planning and evaluation of results.

Chapter Three was widely devoted to descriptions of how different promotional activities should be planned and implemented. It was emphasized, several times by different authors how important the planning of time, personnel, objectives, resources is for the successful implementation of promotional activities. In the case of promotional activities, conducted by Bulgarian theaters, if the first two suppositions are confirmed, we might also conclude that marketing planning, as described in the marketing literature, is not precisely implemented by Bulgarian drama theaters.

There is also another point that should be taken into account. Bulgarian theaters have very limited resources in terms of budgets, personnel, etc. In this case, there is a possibility that they simply do not have enough resources to plan promotion in real marketing terms. The same could also be applied to the stage of evaluation of results. All authors on marketing include this stage as very important for successful promotion. Evaluation of results is also crucial for planning future marketing and promotional activities. However, if promotional activities are conducted randomly, without very clear objectives, it also becomes hard to estimate the exact results, derived from them.

In this regard, it is expected that the promotional activities, implemented by Bulgarian drama theaters are not a result of accurate preliminary planning. Evaluation of results from these activities is not expected either, since it also requires the use of additional research techniques.

4. Theaters in Bulgaria execute promotional activities with the following features:

#### 4.1.Publicity.

Publicity in the form of article in the press, interviews with directors and actors and press conferences were a form of promotional activities, conducted by Bulgarian drama theaters traditionally. In this case, there is a reason to believe that this form of promotion is still existent. However, if the supposition that drama theaters do not employ marketing and PR specialists is true, we might also conclude that these forms of publicity do not exactly follow the suggested standards by the marketing literature.

Colbert (2007) suggests the following steps for creating successful media communications: Formulate your news - Prepare communication tools (press releases, photos, etc.) - Target specific media and send your message out to them - Follow up with the media to ensure that you're your news is published or broadcast - Collect articles and reports following the release of the news item - Analyze impact and adjust your strategy (also mentioned in Chapter Three). However, there is no information available that the publicity actions of Bulgarian drama theaters follow certain steps or they more or less depend on the general knowledge that the theater companies have about media and audiences or existing relations they might have with journalists. Therefore it is expected that the publicity activities of the theaters are not following the process, described by Colbert (2007), but are traditional (with regard to publicity formats) and spontaneous (with regard to media targeting).

It would also be interesting to discover what kind of employees are actually responsible for publicity actions, what is their knowledge on marketing and PR and what kind of experience or education they have. On the other hand, Kotler and Scheff (1997) particularly focus on the importance of skillful communication with the press in order to maintain successful publicity. How the employees, responsible for publicity in Bulgarian drama theaters manage to attract journalists' attention? Do they rely more on personal contacts with certain media, or they offer the journalists special offers and gifts, as suggested by Kotler and Scheff (1997)? Finally, how do they decide which media to target?

#### 4.2. Printed advertising materials and radio spots.

Printed advertising materials, in the form of brochures and posters have been produced in every theater in Bulgaria for years by far. In the same manner, as publicity was discussed above, there is no need to doubt that they currently use this form of promotion.

The question to be researched here is however from another nature. In Chapter Three two main features of printed advertising materials in the sphere of the performing arts were outlined – they need to have high artistic quality and secondly, they need to be produced as advertising materials. The features of printed advertising materials were described in Chapter Three: in short, they need to attract the audiences' attention, they need to contain useful, but not surplus information, they have to make clear where and when the performance takes place and where people could purchase tickets. However, the question is do Bulgarian theaters create their printed advertising materials in such a manner? Most theaters employ a couple of artists and have their own small studio where they produce sets, costumes and so on. Almost in all cases a designer or a scenographer create the layouts for posters and brochures. The question is however do they correspond to the requirements for appropriate advertising materials and also how are they distributed in order to reach potential audiences? We expect this not to be the case. There is also another interesting point: if posters and brochures are so common, do theater managers actually realize and estimate their role as promotional tools?

Radio advertising is considered to be appropriate for promoting performing arts events, mainly because of its low costs and high audience selectivity (Kotler and Scheff, 1997). Radio could be used either as a form of publicity (when for example an opening night is announced in the news) or as standard media advertising tools. Bulgarian drama theaters use radio more for publicity purposes, which is also a sort of tradition.

#### 4.3. Internet.

The Internet space nowadays is one of the most popular and influential media and a major marketing tool (Kotler and Scheff, 1997). Kotler and Scheff (1997) argue that the World Wide Web provides numerous opportunities and benefits for the performing arts organizations. They give as an example the website of the San Francisco Symphony as one of the most successful ones, because of the wide variety of information it provides: mission statement, history of the orchestra, upcoming events, photographs, opportunity to reserve tickets on-line.

Almost all Bulgarian drama theaters have Internet sites. Some of these sites, for example the site of the National Theater, or the Varna Drama Theater are quite successful.<sup>12</sup> They correspond to the main requirements for successful internet sites (see Chapter Three). Others on the other hand maintain web pages, but do not update them regularly, or do not have enough information about the shows or availability of tickets. Therefore, it is needed to find out how theater managers estimate the importance of their web-site as a promotional tool. Do they use the possibilities that the Internet provides in other forms to promote their organizations and what are these forms? Do they sell on-line tickets and if so, is this initiative successful?

#### 4.4. Personal selling.

The existence of the above mentioned office of organizers gives a reason to suggest that drama theaters in Bulgaria actually implement personal selling as part of their promotional mix. The role of the organizers of course was more important in the period before 1989, when they were responsible for the organized attendance to drama theater events. However, this office is still present in many theater organizations. Therefore we expect to discover a large use of personal selling activities. For this reason, it would be important not only to discover exactly what kind of responsibilities do organizers have but moreover if they actually correspond to the definitions and descriptions of personal selling as part of the promotional mix, especially in a business to business setting.

It would also be interesting to discover whether the “organizers” are entirely focused on personal selling or do they have some other type of responsibilities in the institution. Do

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.dramavarna.com/about.php> - visited on 28.04.2008  
<http://www.nationaltheatre.bg/> - visited on 28.04.2008

they engage in a real personal selling process, as described in Chapter Three, or they are not exactly sales people in a business to business setting. In this case do theaters employ somebody else for the selling of their tickets?

5. Theaters do not take full advantage of theater festivals as an opportunity for promoting their organizations.

Festivals could have a major role for promotion and popularization of a theater company or performance. They could even be used to trigger a word-of mouth campaign. However, despite the fact that there are numerous theater festivals in Bulgaria and a great number of theaters participate in them, they probably still look at festivals as a community event, not as a possibility for promoting their new performance for example. The reasons for this supposition are based mainly on the report by the European panel of examiners (Landry, 1997), discussed in Chapter Two. There they explain how the attitudes of the artists developed through preceding decade in Bulgaria; how many of them still feel uncomfortable in the “new era” and due to this fact miss numerous opportunities for financing or promoting their work. There is a high probability that some of these attitudes could also be present among the employees of Bulgaria drama theaters. This research would try to answer how theater managers evaluate festivals as an opportunity for promotion their organizations.

### **4.3. Research Method.**

#### 4.3.1. Aims and Objectives

The main objective of this research is to obtain an overall picture of the types of promotional activities of drama theaters in Bulgaria and the ways they are implemented. After reviewing the available literature on the history of Bulgarian drama theater art, as well as several recent publications and reports on Bulgarian cultural life and policy (discussed in Chapter Two), it was quite clear that there are not existing publications on the marketing and promotion of drama theaters. Therefore the aim of this research is to conduct a form of investigation, whose objective would be to answer the questions set in the beginning of this chapter and consequently create an up-to date piece of information about the development stage of the promotion in the performing arts sphere in Bulgaria.

Another major background reason for this research is to be found in Landry's (1997) description of the attitudes that artists have towards their profession as well as the surrounding economic, social and cultural environment (see Chapter Two). Landry (1997) argues that many Bulgarian artists and cultural managers are still experiencing problems in adopting the ideas of modern management and marketing. On the other hand, the economic and social situation in Bulgaria has been changing rapidly in the last twenty years, triggering entirely new attitudes, criteria and expectations in the average Bulgarian citizen about almost all aspect of their lives, including their requirements for leisure time activities. These processes have created feelings of insecurity in the people, involved in the arts and cultural scene. They believe that they are a bit "left out" from the reform processes; they feel uncertain about their knowledge in marketing and management (Landry, 1997) and moreover, they do not have a basis to compare their stage of development, due to the specific features of the Bulgarian theater scene, in terms of the types of theaters in Bulgaria, their relation to the Ministry of Culture, their past. Therefore, the current research would bring some form of clarity, at least with regard to the promotional activities of Bulgarian drama theaters, comparing the existing promotion of theaters to the definitions and practical issues derived from the literature on marketing and cultural marketing. Hopefully, the research would clarify where in their development with regard to promotion Bulgarian drama theaters are at present.

Relying on the knowledge, obtained from the literature and also being a native Bulgarian and a witness of the political and cultural changes, described briefly in Chapter Two, I expressed my expectations for what the possible promotional activities in Bulgarian theaters might be in the suppositions above. These supposition are to be tested through this research and depending the obtained results, either confirmed or rejected. Nevertheless, new insights about Bulgarian drama theater art will be obtained along the way.

#### 4.3.2. The Research Method.

There are several main theoretical positions, regarding the problem of "how we might gain knowledge of social life and what should count as knowledge in the social sciences" (Seale, 2004:8). The two main empirical approaches in obtaining knowledge however are the qualitative and quantitative methods of research. Briefly stated, the main differences between these two approaches is that the quantitative method focuses on the investigation of properties and their relationship, while qualitative research seeks to discover a deeper understanding of behaviour and the reasons that govern it. Moreover, in "Handbook of Qualitative Research",

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) state that in qualitative research the emphasis is on meanings which are not strictly measured in terms of quantity, amount or frequency, but “seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning” (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994: 4). On the contrary, according to the authors, the quantitative method of research emphasizes on the measurement and analysis of relationships between variables.

The current research on promotional activities of Bulgarian drama theaters is based on the qualitative research method. There are several reasons that could be pointed out as a basis for this decision. First of all, as it was mentioned above, there is scarcity of information and literature in the field of promotion of cultural activities and institutions in Bulgaria. As Denzin and Lincoln (1994) state, qualitative researches “study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense or interpret phenomena” (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994: 2). In this case, the qualitative approach gives an opportunity to generate knowledge on the matter in its natural environment, respectively drama theaters in Bulgaria. On a second place, qualitative research is not bound to a particular discipline or specific method or practice (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). Therefore, this type of research is suitable, because of its feature of being more flexible and applicable to many disciplines, as in this case – marketing and promotion in the cultural sector. There are also other characteristics of qualitative research, which could be added as a motive for such a choice. Qualitative research tends to look at the larger picture and search for an understanding of the whole (Janesick, 1994). This is also one of the aims of this research – to create an overview of the state of development of promotion in the drama theater scene in Bulgaria, to try to generalize the research findings and elaborate some statements and conclusion about promotional activities of theaters in Bulgaria. Moreover, qualitative research focuses on “relationships within a system of culture” (Janesick, 1994: 212), into the “meaning that people attach to things in their life (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998) and gaining deeper insights into attitudes and meanings, which also corresponds to the aims and objectives of the research. It is needed to find out not only what are the promotional activities of the theaters and how they are executed as a process, but also how the managers of the theater institutions understand and estimate promotion, in terms of how they define it, what they expect from it, how important they believe it is for their institutions.

Qualitative research includes and utilizes many different approaches, methods and techniques (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). It could be based on ethnographies, interviews, case studies, participant observations and so on. However, probably the most popular methodological tool of qualitative researchers is the interview (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994).



Denzin and Lincoln define interviews as “the art of asking questions and listening” (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994: 353). Although interviews are not a neutral tool, because of its interactive nature, qualitative interviews have many advantages that would be useful for the purposes of this research. Byrne (2004) argues that qualitative interviews are quite suitable for understanding and discovering complex issues. Moreover, this approach allows for flexibility in the ways of approaching a certain research question. Theaters and also the performing arts in Bulgaria have a specific historic development, that has affected their status in society and Bulgarian cultural life, their repertoire (respectively product) decisions, and also the way people employed in theaters assess their role as a part of this society. The promotional activities of the theaters could either be a continuation of an existing tradition or new forms that have been adopted by theater managers as a way to struggle, or keep up-to-date with the changing environment. Nevertheless, these are obviously complex issues that are in connection with social changes, the self-evaluation of artists and the role of the performing arts on the Bulgarian cultural scene. Qualitative interviewing could assist in understanding these processes better and thus also finding out why, how and in what form promotion occurs as a part of the activities of Bulgarian drama theaters.

Several types of interviews could be conducted and all of them provide with different type of information and ways to assess it. Bloch (2004) distinguishes between face-to-face interviewing, telephone interviews and questionnaires. However, he argues that face-to-face interviews allow for a better flexibility and greater depth of the responses as compared to other forms of interviewing.

For the purposes of this research, the data would be gathered by using face-to-face interviews. Such format could either be carried out with an interview guide or an interview schedule (Bloch, 2004). Interview schedules represent an exact order of questions which is the same for each respondent. Bloch (2004) argues that such a format minimizes the variation in the interview process. Since we expect from Bulgarian theater managers to name and explain the types of promotional tools executed by their organizations, using ordered questions would make the final responses easier for further analysis. On the other hand, the questions would be open, without suggested multiple-choice answers, so that more detailed information could be obtained.

When undertaking research by using qualitative interviewing, several questions need to be answered (Byrne, 2004). The most significant decision of course is who is going to be interviewed. For the current research, the representatives (managers and dramaturges) of eight

drama theaters from Bulgaria would be interviewed. Four of these theaters are located in the capital, and the other four are in the biggest cities in the country. The reason for choosing this exact sample of theaters is presented in the next section of this chapter. The main features however are that all of these theaters have similar type of repertoire and are renowned in the country. Half of the sample of theaters is situated in the capital city, because most of the cultural life of Bulgaria is located in Sofia.

The next essential question is: where the interviews would take place. The interviews will be conducted in the theaters. This will probably make respondents feel more relaxed and more willing to cooperate. Finally, the most questions will be what exactly the respondents would be asked. A list of questions will be prepared before the actual interviews. These questions will correspond to the suppositions made in the first part of this chapter. The questions are in ANNEX A. The names and function of the respondents of the interviews are presented in ANNEX B.

As a subsidiary method to the qualitative interviewing, observation and analysis of the web-pages of the theaters will be added. The use of the Internet as a medium for promotion is an essential part of the questions to be researched. The rest of the promotional activities are expected to be described and defined by the respondents. The time limits of this research do not allow for a prolonged collection of newspaper and magazine publicity materials or electronic media spots and their analysis. Moreover, one of the main objectives of the research is to discover how the respondents (who are representatives from the drama theaters) understand, define and estimate promotional activities. However, visiting web-pages is much less time-consuming. Therefore, observing and analyzing the content and appearance of the web-pages of the theaters in the interview sample would also take place during the research. This part of the research strategy is associated with the practice of participative observation. The Internet sites of the theaters are in ANNEX C.

#### 4.3.3. Data Analysis.

There are many different types of qualitative research that predetermine a wide variety of handling and interpreting qualitative data (Tesch, 1990). In fact, no strict rules exist for that could specify how data from qualitative research, in this case, interviews, must be analyzed. This is quite logical since the main interest of qualitative research is to discover and describe meaning and interpretations, than create countable facts. The technical aspects of data collection in this research include recording the interviews and consequently typing the

answers on paper. The answers of the respondents will afterwards be translated from Bulgarian to English. There would be no loss of information in the translation, which is guaranteed by the fact that most of the core definitions in the questions, like PR, promotion, media, are either the same or similar in Bulgarian. To present any possible confusion, the main definitions - the components of the promotional mix – will also be presented both with their English and Bulgarian names to the respondents.

The nature of the questions in the questionnaire is rather concrete. For this reason, it is also expected that the respondents will give concrete and tangible answers. Basically, the respondents will be asked to name the promotional activities of the theater they represent, to give clear descriptions on how they define them and to present the process of how they implement these activities. The questions are designed in such a manner partly to facilitate the later analysis of the responses.

The process of analyzing the answers from the interviews would be based mainly on comparison. After typing all the responses down, I would search for similarities between them – for example I would compare whether all the researched theaters use sales promotion or sell tickets through the Internet. Finding such repetitive patterns in the answers would afterwards help to draw final conclusions about the research results. To make the comparison between the responses more plausible, the interviewer would make sure that the respondents understand the definitions in the questions correctly and in the same manner. In such a way it will be insured that the same processes, events and phenomena are compared during the analysis. Finally, asking the respondents to describe how they understand the definitions in the questions would help to compare their answers with the definitions from the marketing literature, which is one of the objectives of the research.

At the end, the results from the interviews and the consequent data analysis would be presented.

#### **4.4. The sample**

The subjects of the current research, as mentioned above, are eight drama theaters in Bulgaria: four in the capital and four in the country. Before presenting the theaters however, some information on the administrative division of Bulgaria and the representative cities is provided below.

#### 4.4.1. Bulgaria: Administrative Division.

The Republic of **Bulgaria** is situated in the South-East of Europe, or more particularly in the Eastern part of the Balkan Peninsula. Its neighboring states are Greece and Turkey in the South, Serbia and FYROM in the West and Romania in the North. The eastern border of Bulgaria is the Black Sea. The total population of Bulgaria is 7 679 290 and its territory is 110 910 км<sup>2</sup>.

The territory of Bulgaria is subdivided into districts and municipalities. Bulgaria includes 28 districts, each one headed by a district governor, appointed by the government. The country also includes 263 municipalities. This form of administrative division of Bulgaria exists since 1999. All the districts are named after their administrative capital. Among the largest cities in Bulgaria are the capital **Sofia** with population of 1, 380, 406 inhabitants, the second largest city **Plovdiv** (376, 918), **Varna** (346 944), **Burgas** (209,985), **Pleven** (121, 700), **Shumen** (103, 016), **Rousse** (175,632).<sup>13</sup> An administrative map of the country is provided below.

#### 4.4.2. The cities

The cities where the drama theaters, subjects of the research, are located are: Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna, Burgas and Shumen. The choice of theaters in these particular cities is based on several reasons.

First of all, all of them are big cities with high population rate. Plovdiv and Varna are the two largest Bulgarian cities after the capital. All of the cities are district capitals and business and cultural centers. The theaters, located there are quite famous and have long history of existence and therefore we could assume that they also might have loyal audiences. Another major reason is that all of the cities in the sample host universities. The presence of many young educated people also creates favorable environment for the flourishing of leisure and cultural activities. Finally, as much as the provincial cities are concerned, the main reason to select these particular cities is the fact that the most famous theater festivals in Bulgaria are hosted by them. This may (or may not) have a certain effect on their promotional activities. A brief presentation of the chosen cities and the sample of theaters is described below.

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.wikipedia.org> – visited on the 03.05.2008

Administrative Map of Bulgaria (the image is taken from [www.visittobulgaria.com](http://www.visittobulgaria.com) – visited on the 05.05.2008)<sup>14</sup>



## Sofia

Sofia is the capital and respectively largest city in Bulgaria with a total population of 1, 251, 083 inhabitants. It is situated in the western part of the country and is named after the early Christian temple “St. Sofia” and is one of the most ancient European capitals with more than 7 000 years of history.<sup>15</sup>

As a capital city, Sofia is the administrative, industrial, business, cultural and university centre of Bulgaria. This fact has created a serious debate in the media about the ever growing population of Sofia and its role and importance as a business and cultural centre.

<sup>14</sup> [http://www.visittobulgaria.com/visit/images/Bulgaria\\_Detailed\\_Map.gif](http://www.visittobulgaria.com/visit/images/Bulgaria_Detailed_Map.gif) - visited on the 05.05.2008

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.wikipedia.org> – visited in the 03.05.2008

Recent research has shown that soon almost every fourth Bulgarian would be an inhabitant of the capital city. This process on the other hand has led to the decrease of the population in the country and weakening of the business and cultural importance of the provincial cities. The latter is intensified also by the fact, that the most respectable universities and cultural institutions are situated in Sofia. The city hosts the National History Museum, the National Art Gallery, the Archeological Museum. Among the performing arts institutions, most notable and, also of national importance, are the National Theater, the National Opera and Ballet, the State Central Puppet Theater and the Music Theatre, which performs mainly musicals and operettas. All the higher educational institutions for arts are also situated in Sofia. These are the National Theater and Film Academy, the National Music Academy and the National Academy of Arts. There are numerous cultural events that are held in Sofia. Probably most popular and attractive to audiences are the jazz festival, Sofia Jazz Peak, held annually in April and Cinemania – cinema festival that takes place every November.

### **Plovdiv**

**Plovdiv** is the second-largest city in Bulgaria with a population of 378,107. It is the administrative centre of Plovdiv District in southern Bulgaria, as well as the largest and most important city of the historical region of Upper (or Northern) Thrace, famous for its ancient and diverse culture and millennial history. Plovdiv is one of the oldest cities in Europe.

Because of the rich and diverse history, nowadays Plovdiv has more than 200 known archaeological sites, 30 of which are of national importance. Most of them date back to the Roman Empire. The Old Town of Plovdiv is a historic preservation site known for its unique Bulgarian Renaissance architectural style. Almost every house in the Old Town is characteristically impressive in its exterior and interior decoration.

The city of Plovdiv is also known for its religious diversity. There are a number of 19<sup>th</sup> century churches, located in Plovdiv, several Roman Catholic Cathedrals and two mosques. There is also one synagogue.<sup>16</sup>

The existing infrastructure of the city adds to the development of cultural activities. The Drama theatre in Plovdiv is an ancestor of the first professional theatre group in Bulgaria, which was founded in 1881. Also, the Plovdiv Puppet Theatre, founded in 1948, remains one

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<sup>16</sup> <http://www.wikipedia.org> – visited in the 03.05.2008

of the leading institutions in this genre. Plovdiv also hosts an Opera house, the Plovdiv University and Plovdiv Music Academy.

The city Municipality and the drama theater in Plovdiv organize the festival “Stage at a Crossroad” for drama theater performances, which takes place annually between the 10<sup>th</sup> and the 23<sup>d</sup> of September.

### **Varna**

Varna is Bulgaria's third largest city, after Sofia and Plovdiv. The oldest gold (dated 4200 - 4600 BC) in the world was found near the city. It was an inhabited place long before the Greeks established the colony of Odessos there about 580 B.C. <sup>17</sup>

What is most distinctive about Varna is the fact, that it is situated at the Black Sea coast, which makes it a trade and tourism centre. It is the biggest sea coast city and some of the most popular summer resorts in Bulgaria are situated near Varna. It also hosts two universities – the Varna Free University and the Varna University of Economics.

As a coastal city, Varna attracts a lot of local and international tourists. That is why many of the cultural events take place during summer. The most popular events, also at national level, are the International Theater Festival “Varna Summer” (held annually from and the 1<sup>st</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> of June) and the International Music Festival “Varna Summer” – from the 23 of June to the 22 of July. The theater festival presents international drama theater programme, while the music festival – local and international classical music performers and orchestras. Also great interest attracts the Varna International Ballet Competition. It is held between the 15<sup>th</sup> and the 30<sup>th</sup> of July, every two years as a part of the International Music Festival and has international prestige.

The festivals held in 1993, 1994 and 1995 were of a national scope - their program consisted of the best Bulgarian theatre productions for the respective season. From 1996 on the festival became an international forum through the participation of prestigious foreign theatre groups, selectionists, managers of European festivals, theatre critics. Moreover, with every next issue of the festival, its parallel program is gaining greater importance and thus, gradually the festival has been turning into a multidimensional cultural event, during which a series of smaller projects are being realized - workshops, scenographic exhibitions, seminars, discussions, critical debates, and so on. <sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> <http://www.wikipedia.org> – visited in the 03.05.20

<sup>18</sup> [http://www.theatrefest-varna.org/07/en/fest\\_en.htm](http://www.theatrefest-varna.org/07/en/fest_en.htm) - visited on the 03.05.2008.

## **Burgas**

Burgas is the second largest Sea Coast city in Bulgaria and fourth in the number of population. It is located in the south-eastern part of the country. Like Varna, the city is a tourist centre. What distinguishes it from other coastal parts is the fact, that Burgas is surrounded in north and south by smaller coastal towns, many of which are ancient Greek and Roman ports and possess numerous cultural and historical sites, like ancient fortresses, ports and churches. That fact explains the large number of small historical and archeological museums in the area.

The Burgas drama theater is the organizer of the International theatre festival "On the Shore" which takes place annually between the 7<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of September.

## **Shumen**

The city of Shumen is situated in the North \_east part of Bulgaria and has a total population of 103,016 inhabitants. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Shumen was a major cultural and educational centre in Bulgaria – some of the first Bulgarian schools were established there, as well as the first theater performance took place in Shumen.<sup>19</sup>

It is interesting to note that in the North –Eastern part of Bulgaria the predominant part of the population is of Turkish minority. The predominant part of the minority lives in smaller towns and villages. So, as a part of the national cultural policy, the theater of Shumen and regularly organizes tours in the Turkish minority communities so that they could have the chance to be a part of the cultural activities of the majority of the population.

The city of Shumen and its drama theater host of the most interesting performing arts events in Bulgaria, the theater festival “New Bulgaria Drama”, held annually between the 11<sup>th</sup> and the 16<sup>th</sup> of May since 1998. “New Bulgarian Drama” is the only drama theater event in the country, where only Bulgarian drama texts are performed. Apart from the festival programme, “New Bulgarian Drama” also organizes presentations of modern Bulgarian drama texts from their authors, live on stage. Moreover, the most successful plays are published annually in a festival book.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> <http://www.wikipedia.org> – visited in the 03.05.2008

<sup>20</sup> [http://theatre.icon.bg/about\\_4.php](http://theatre.icon.bg/about_4.php) - visited in the 03.05.2008



#### 4.4.3. Drama Theaters

The selection of the theaters for the current research was based first of all on the fact that all of them are drama theaters, or in other words the focus of their activities is drama theater art. All of the theaters in the sample produce annually new productions and have permanent repertoire. Most of them have permanent ensemble of actors, except for Theater 199 in Sofia, which has different casts for every new production. However, it manages to maintain a repertoire and therefore could be included in the list as a repertoire theater. The type of repertoire that the selected theaters maintain is similar. None of them is too innovative, or experimental in their repertoire decisions. As much as the cast is concerned, the capital theaters in the sample work with the most famous theater actors and directors in the country. They sometimes participate in the productions of the selected provincial theaters.

All of the drama theaters in the sample however are respectable cultural institutions with a long history of existence and numerous national and international awards. From the above we could assume that the product that the selected theaters offer is of high quality. A short presentation of the drama theaters in the sample is shown below.

##### **Drama theatres in the capital city**

###### National Theater "Ivan Vazov"

The national theater is naturally the biggest and most popular theater in Sofia and Bulgaria. It was founded in 1904. It is a company with a permanent ensemble of 37 actors. It is housed in a baroque building and has four stages. The theater is financed by the Ministry of Culture and in its lengthy history the company has toured extensively in Europe, Asia, Africa, North and South America.<sup>21</sup> The person who is going to be interviewed about the promotional activities of the National Drama Theaters is the theater dramaturge. After my initial contact with the theater administration, the dramaturge was pointed out as the person, responsible for the theater's publicity and promotion activities.

###### "Aleko Konstantinov" State Satiric Theater

The State Satiric theater is one of the oldest and most known theaters in Sofia and Bulgaria with a rich and diverse repertoire. "Aleko Konstantinov" State Satiric Theatre was

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<sup>21</sup> <http://www.bgtheatre.com/bg/index.shtml> - visited on the 05.05.2008.

founded in 1956. It is a company with a permanent ensemble of 35 actors. Eight productions are done yearly and between 450 and 500 performances are presented per season. The theatre is financed by the Bulgaria's Ministry of Culture.<sup>22</sup> The interviewee in the State Satiric Theater again would be the theater's dramaturge.

### Drama Theater Sofia

The theatre was founded in 1966. It has a diverse repertoire spectrum - from classical drama to contemporary plays. Seven productions are done yearly and about 150 performances are presented per season. The theatre is financed by the Sofia Municipality.<sup>23</sup> The interviewee in Drama Theater Sofia is the theater dramaturge.

### Theater 199

Theater 199 does not have a permanent group of actors; however it regularly produces new performances and maintain a repertoire. Four or five productions are done yearly and about 360 performances are presented per season. It is famous for being more commercially oriented in comparison with other theaters. The theatre is financed by Bulgaria's Ministry of Culture and from its own revenues.<sup>24</sup> The interviewed person in this theater is the theater manager.

## **Provincial Drama Theaters**

### Plovdiv Drama Theater

The theatre was founded in 1881. It has a permanent ensemble and building. Six productions are done yearly. The theatre is financed by Bulgaria's Ministry of Culture and by the city municipality. It also organizes the festival "Stage at a Crossroad".<sup>25</sup> The interviewee in Plovdiv Drama Theater is the theater manager.

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<sup>22</sup> <http://www.bgtheatre.com/bg/index.shtml> - visited on the 05.05.2008.

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.bgtheatre.com/bg/index.shtml> - visited on the 05.05.2008.

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.bgtheatre.com/bg/index.shtml> - visited on the 05.05.2008

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.bgtheatre.com/bg/index.shtml> - visited on the 05.05.2008

### “Stoyan Bachvarov” Drama Theater - Varna

The theatre was founded in 1921. It has a permanent ensemble of 20 actors and a two-hall building. It has a diverse repertoire spectrum - from classical drama to contemporary plays. The theatre is financed by Bulgaria's Ministry of Culture, from own revenues and donations.<sup>26</sup> The Varna Drama Theater hosts a major theater event - the festival “Varna Summer”. The person to be interviewed in the theater is the manager.

### "Adriana Budevskia" Drama theatre Burgas

"Adriana Budevskia" Drama theatre was founded in 1812. It is a company with a permanent ensemble of 16 actors and has its own hall with 400 seats. Five or six productions are done yearly and between 100 and 120 performances are presented per season. The theatre is financed by Bulgaria's Ministry of Culture and the Burgas municipality.<sup>27</sup> It is the organizer of the International theatre fest "On the Shore". Again the theater manager would be interviewed.

### "Vassil Drumev" Drama and Puppet Theatre – Shoumen

The theatre was founded in 1856 with the first theatrical performance in Bulgaria.. It has a permanent ensemble and a two-hall building. What is more interesting about “Vasil Drumev” Theater is that it produces both drama and puppet plays. Seven or eight drama and puppet productions are done yearly and about 250 performances are presented per season. Because of the different audiences for drama and puppet performances, it is expected that the theater has probably different promotional activities.

The Shumen theatre is financed by Bulgaria's Ministry of Culture and by the Shumen Municipality. It is the major organizer of the yearly national festival "New Bulgarian Drama".<sup>28</sup> The theater manager would be interviewed.

## **4.5. Conclusion**

The central research question of the current research is to explore what are the promotional activities of drama theaters in Bulgaria. The reviewed literature, presented in

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<sup>26</sup> <http://www.bgtheatre.com/bg/index.shtml> - visited on the 05.05.2008

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.bgtheatre.com/bg/index.shtml> - visited on the 05.05.2008

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.bgtheatre.com/bg/index.shtml> - visited on the 05.05.2008

Chapter One and Three, have introduced us with the main features of the promotion for the performing arts. These features, combined with the characteristics of the Bulgarian drama theater scene, resulted in the supposition described in the first part of this chapter, which will be tested by the research. The results, obtained from the research itself would either confirm or reject the suppositions, but in any case would assist us to gain new insights about the types of the promotional activities of drama theaters in Bulgaria and the ways they are implemented.

The chosen method in the case of this research is qualitative interviewing. Face-to-face interviews would allow us not only to discover what the promotional activities are, but also how they are conducted. The interviewing process itself will follow an interview schedule, which represents an exact order of questions that are the same for each respondent. Afterwards the descriptions of the respondents would be compared with the definitions from the literature and conclusions would be drawn.

For the conduction of the interviews, eight Bulgarian drama theaters were chosen. The selection was made for several reasons. First of all, all the theaters are located in big cities, with busy cultural life and opportunities for leisure time activities. Therefore, it is expected that theaters there have to face strong competition and be more creative in the choice of promotional tools. Moreover, four of the theaters in the sample are in the capital city, because most of the cultural activities in the country happen there. The type of theater organization is the “repertoire theatre”. This is still the most popular and wide spread organizational form in the country. As a final remark on the chosen sample, it is needed to add that the drama theaters from the country host renowned national and international theater festivals, which also one the basic reasons for their selection, since one of the suppositions examines festival in particular.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## Research Results and Conclusions

### 5.1. Introduction

After the conduction of interviews in the eight drama theaters, described in Chapter Four, in this final chapter the obtained results would be presented. In order for the presentation and discussion of the responses of the interviewees to be as accurate as possible, the twelve questions from the already presented questionnaire would be combined into groups, according to their content and the category they question (for example marketing research, or ticket sales). Afterwards the answers of the different respondents would be discussed for each group of questions and would be compared. Following this pattern, the similarities and the differences between the answers would become more obvious.

Consequently the interview results would be regarded as to what their relation with the suppositions expressed in Chapter Four is. More precisely we would discuss which of the suppositions are confirmed by the research findings, which are rejected and also if there are any specific features, related only to the Bulgarian drama theaters' promotion. The final part of this chapter, and the thesis itself, is the conclusion in which the main research results and drawn conclusions are summarized.

### 5.2. Interview Results.

#### 5.2.1. The Importance of Promotion.

The first question from the questionnaire is more specific and would be regarded by itself. It focuses on the importance of promotion and more precisely questions the respondents how they estimate the significance of promotion for a performing arts organization.

All of the respondents shared that they found promotion extremely important, even crucial for their organizations, especially in the nowadays modern society. A couple of the

interviewees mentioned that promotional activities were a mean to inform the audiences for the theater's production and also attract and encourage them to visit it. The dramaturge of the National Theater also mentioned that the promotional mix for them also represented a source of information in the competitive environment, which the capital drama theater scene represents.

### 5.2.2. Promotional Strategies.

Questions two, three and four focus on the promotional strategies of the theaters. More accurately, the respondents were asked to describe their promotional strategy (if they had one), to present how they implement the promotional activities – traditionally or spontaneously – and to explain who in their organization is responsible for promotion and how.

The responses to these questions were quite mixed. From them it appeared that only two drama theaters – Theater 199 in Sofia and the Plovdiv Drama Theater prepared a year plan for their promotion with tangible objectives, expected results, budget. The respondent from the National Theater shared that by far they had not developed an annual promotional plan, but for the new 2008/2009 season they had already started to develop one. All the others respondents stated that they did not have a year plan for promotion. The Drama Theater Sofia and the State Satiric Theater respondents said that they “partly” had a year plan, which they explained could be defined as an action plans prepared for each new performance. The respondents from the Burgas and Shumen theaters also shared that they prepared such action plans, but their promotional activities generally could be described as traditional. The Varna Drama Theater manager stated that they did not make long-term planning and act spontaneously. What was common between most of the respondents' answers was that their promotional activities were determined by the already planned an year in advance repertoire of the theater.

As for the office, that is responsible for the promotional activities, the answers also varied. Usually the responsibilities are shared between several offices. The National Theater for example has a “Marketing and Sales” department that includes a manager (responsible mainly for planning, sales promotion, tours, research on audience competition, etc.), advertising expert (media relations and printed advertising materials) people, working at the ticket office and a photographer. Similarly, Theater 199, has a “Marketing and Project Management” department with a sales manager, ticket sales people – inside and out side the

organization, project coordinators, data base manager, designer. In most of the other theaters the responsibilities are divided between the ticket sales people and organizers, which in some cases are called “Marketing” department; the theater dramaturge, who is a PR and media relation expert; the theater manager, who is most of the times in charge of taking final decisions. The Varna Theater manager mentioned that they had a PR specialist, while the Burgas theater, apart from all the other mentioned offices, have a designer, who is responsible for all printed advertising materials.

It is quite obvious that the drama theaters in the sample have adopted different approaches towards the division of tasks, associated with promotional activities. However, all of the respondents have put “at the foreground” as most significant the person, responsible for the relations with the media, be it a PR expert, a dramaturge or the theater manager themselves and the ticket sales people.

### 5.2.3. Ticket Sales.

The ticket sales are one of the most important activities in a drama theater organization. Two questions addressed this issue. The respondents were asked to describe how tickets are sold in the organization they represent, do they use the Internet as a medium for ticket sales and finally also to elaborate on the office of the “organizer”, which was presented in Chapter Four.

As it could be expected, all theaters in the sample have their own ticket office. To the present moment, the major part of the ticket sales for drama theaters in Bulgaria, according to the respondents, happens at the ticket offices, situated in the theater buildings. Five drama theaters from the sample still have an office, called “organizer”. Usually, the organizers are between two or three. The function of the organizer is to sell tickets for the theater shows at different organizations, for example schools, private companies, offices, public institutions. The targeting of these organizations depends on the organizers’ own judgment, which is basically determined by their experience, personal contacts, information they obtain from other organizers, etc. They also engage in the organization of the tours of the theater.

There are several exceptions, which do not have such an office. The first one is the National Theater, which relies only on the sales at the ticket office. Theater 199 is also in this group, although they employ several people, who sell tickets outside the ticket office. The manager of the theater, however, insisted that these employees should be called “professional sales people” and that the office of the “organizer” is associated with the objective to organize

mass attendance to theater performances (for example, a whole school, or an entire office), rather than selling tickets to individuals. The third drama theater without organizers is the State Satiric Theater. This theater relies mainly on the sales at their ticket office, but they also use sales people, who are not employed there and sell tickets outside the organization for a percentage from the total sales. The same sort of sales people work also with the Drama Theater Sofia. The Drama Theater Burgas also uses sales people outside the organization, but they are not professionals – usually retired people, students and so on.

From the eight respondents only the Plovdiv Theater and Drama Theater Sofia use the Internet as a mean to sell tickets for their shows. Moreover, Drama Theater Sofia has its own small flower shop at the center where tickets are also available, while the Plovdiv Theater cooperates with a bookshop in the city, which offers their tickets and printed advertising materials.

#### 5.2.4. Marketing Research.

Almost none of the drama theaters in the sample use professional marketing research to obtain information about the features of their audiences. The great exception among Bulgarian drama theaters is Theater 199. As it was mentioned in Chapter Four, this performing arts organization is more commercially oriented in comparison with other theaters. The manager of the theater shared that for about ten years they maintained a special system for researching their audiences. The visitors at almost every performance receive a questionnaire, prepared from professional sociologists. That is why, the manager of the theater knows how many people there are at every show, what is their age, sex, profession, contact information. The data from the questionnaires is stored in a data base system, which at the moment contains data for around 80 000 people. Information about the programme and events at the theater are send personally to the visitors, who expressed desire to receive such.

Three other theaters follow this example and periodically distribute questionnaires among their visitors – Drama Theater Sofia, Plovdiv Drama Theater and Shumen Drama Theater. However, they prepare their inquires sporadically, therefore they dispose of less information about the audience both in quantitative and qualitative terms. Also, in contrast to Theater 199, they do not maintain a data base system to store the information they receive for the inquiries.

Despite of that, the drama theaters have discovered and use several other methods to get acquainted better with the characteristics of their audiences. All of managers regularly



obtain information from the ticket office and the sales people, who work in and outside the organization. They are interested mainly how people respond to their “products”: which performance is most popular, why, who are the most liked actors and directors. The managers are also interested in the age and educational level of the visitors and their financial status. The dramaturge of Drama Theater Sofia also mentioned that information about the attitudes of the audience was obtained also from the theater programmers. The programmers prepare the programme of the events in a theater. They have monthly meetings where they discuss which performances, actors, directors and theaters are most successful at a certain point. That is how they share the information they have for the expectations and desires of the theater audience. Of course, this source of information is possible only in the capital, because in the provincial cities such meetings are not conducted.

Finally, information about the demographic profile of the audience could be obtained through the different types of discount tickets that theaters offer – for example discounts for students, children, retired people and so on.

#### 5.2.5. Promotional Activities.

The most significant part of the conducted interviews involves the questions concerning directly the promotional activities that the theaters in the sample implement. First of all, the respondents were asked to name which ones of the tools in the promotional mix – PR, Advertising, Personal Selling and Sales Promotion – they use and how they decide on their choice. Secondly, the interviewees described more in detail the features of each of the tools in the mix.

Almost all of the respondents stated that they used all of the mentioned promotional tools. Only the dramaturge of the National Theater said that they did not use personal selling, because they sold the tickets for their performances only at the ticket office at the theater building. Some of the respondents however mentioned that they regarded the employees at the ticket office, together with the organizers, as sales people, who engaged themselves in personal selling, while the representative from the National Theater was positive that this form of tickets selling could not be described as personal selling in pure marketing terms.

When asked about how they choose on which sort of promotional tool to use, the respondents gave varied answers. The most part mentioned that the choice depended on the features of the product, the target audiences the theater would like to attract, the season (with regard to different events like Christmas holidays, school vacations, etc.) and the life-cycle of

the product. Secondly, great importance is attached to the relations and contacts that a certain theater has with the media, as well as the budget they could afford to spare on promotion. Only the representatives from Drama Theater Sofia and the Plovdiv Theater gave more precise descriptions on their decision making and planning of the promotional activities. The Drama Theater Sofia dramaturge explained that the planning process started together with the rehearsal period of the performance. Several weeks before the opening night they proceed with PR actions in the national media (Drama Theater Sofia is situated in the capital) to attract the attention of the audience and after the first couple of shows the theater relies more on its sales promotion activities and sales people (employed organizers and sales people, outside the organization). Similar description was presented by the manager of the Plovdiv Drama Theater, except for the fact that they target the local media in the city. The respondent also mentioned that the theater relied on PR activities not only to provoke the audience to attend the show, but also to create and maintain a positive image of the institution.

Then the participants in the interviews were asked to give some examples of the promotional activities they use. Most of the answers shared a lot of similarities. All of the drama theaters in the sample use heavily different public relation and publicity activities. They send regularly press releases to the media and also try to organize feature articles and interviews with the artists they work with. The drama theaters from the capital work mainly with national media, because all of the national newspapers, radio and TV stations are situated in Sofia. On the other hand, the respondents from the country said that they worked mainly with local media. These drama theaters are situated in the biggest cities in Bulgaria, which are also regional centers. For this reason all of these cities have regional newspapers, radio stations and local cable TV stations. Press conferences are also a frequent form of publicity action, used by Bulgaria drama theaters. Usually, the press conference is held before the opening night, where the invited journalists get acquainted with the title of the production, the artists and receive different printed materials. The respondents also shared that the opening night was the most significant event, when launching a new play. All of the interviewees said that they invited different opinion leaders – for example prominent people in their community, theater critics, intellectuals, politicians – at opening nights. The manager of Theater 199 mentioned that they had an “intellectual circle”- group of opinion leaders that are invited to every opening night or special event at the theater. The representatives from the country drama theaters added that they also invited opinion leaders at the theater festivals that their theaters organize.

When asked about their participation in the electronic media, the respondents stated that they used these media also for different PR activities. The managers or PR experts from the theaters try to organize announcements about their events in the news section of TV and radio stations (again national for theaters in the capital and local for theaters in the country), participation of artists in cultural programmes, morning shows, etc. Some of the theaters (mainly the ones from the country) also presented radio and TV spots as advertising activities. However, one of the major characteristics of advertising is that it represents a paid form of information delivered to the public. When asked about this feature, the respondents stated that all sorts of advertising material in the electronic media were not paid by them – they either represented a form of donation, made by the medium to the theater, or sometimes the theater gave away invitations and free tickets to the medium representatives. The choice of media, both printed and electronic, depends on their popularity and also on the relations that the theater has with them. The only exception was Drama Theater Varna, which does not use TV and radio to promote its work.

All of the theaters have their own website, which is the major way in which they use the Internet for promotion. The State Satiric Theater posts information about their activities in different websites, related to cultural events, while the Plovdiv Drama Theater uses banners with links to the theater website in partner - websites. Some of the theaters also use other types of media for their promotion. Drama Theater Varna, for example, has TV screens on the two buildings they have, on which trailers from their performances are broadcasted. Theater 199 and the National Theater have billboards in front of their buildings and Drama Theater Sofia, as already mentioned above, has a small flower shop in the centre of the capital, where they also sell tickets and distribute printed materials and programmes.

All theaters, without exception, rely on printed advertising materials, like brochures, monthly programmes, posters (with the exception of Varna Theater, which do not use posters). Almost all of the theaters have their own designer, who prepares all of the printed materials and usually they are graduates from the National Academy for Arts. The respondents stated that they tried to use messages in their advertising materials, that would best present the character of the performance and create interest in the public. The printed materials are most of all distributed in the cities' centers – at cafes, other cultural institutions, at the ticket offices and also by the organizers.

The drama theaters also make use of sales promotion activities. All of them make discounts from the ticket price for students, retired people and disabled people. Some of the theaters also decrease prices for plays that are at the end of their life-cycle; on the other hand

the representative from the State Satiric Theater said that they preferred not to lower prices in any case, because it would signify to the consumers that the performance is not of good quality. Five of the theaters have also subscription programmes, which usually represent a member card, that could be purchased at the beginning of the season and authorize its owner with a certain discount from the price. Burgas Drama Theater also sometimes organizes lotteries in the local radios with free tickets as prizes. Generally stated, discounts for students, retired and disabled people are constant, while the other forms of sales promotion vary, depending on the theater and the season.

Finally, the respondents were asked to describe their personal selling activities. Except for two, all of the respondents stated that personal selling of tickets was executed by the organizers – the ones employed in the theater and the ones, working on percentage from the sales outside the theaters. Some of the respondents also stated that they regarded the ticket office employees also as a form of personal selling, because often they inform the customers about upcoming events and introduce them with the discounts and subscription opportunities. However, the dramaturge of the National Theater said, that they did not use personal selling at all and that neither the ticket office, nor the organizers (even though they do not have such at present) could be regarded as forms of personal selling. The other different answer was given by the manager of Theater 199. She said that the term “organizer” was associated with the mass attendance to shows in the past and she preferred to call the people, who sell tickets “professional sales people”.

#### 5.2.6. Festival as a Promotional Tool.

In question eleven from the questionnaire, the respondents are asked to describe whether they consider the participation in theater festivals and similar cultural events as a sort of promotional tool for their organizations.

Generally, participation in festivals and cultural forums is not regarded as a promotional tool. The main reason for theaters to participate is the selection and invitation from the festival organization. Only the respondents from Burgas and Plovdiv Drama Theaters mentioned that participation at a festival could be regarded as a sort of promotion, but more as an enhancement of their prestige and positive image among both the theater audience and their colleagues. The dramaturge from the Burgas Drama Theater however mentioned that the festival they organized themselves (described briefly in Chapter Four) had a positive effect on the interest of the audience towards their performances.

The other respondents stated that participation at festivals could not be regarded as a promotional tool. Nevertheless, they mentioned several reasons why they regard appearance at a festival as valuable for their institutions. All of them shared that participation at national and international cultural events, and eventually winning an award, affected positively the image and prestige of the theaters. The manager of Drama Theater Varna expressed her belief that theaters festivals in general were important for the well-being of the cultural life in Bulgaria, while the National Theater participated mainly, because they believe it was their duty as an institution with a national significance. Finally, the manager of Theater 199 stated that participation at festivals did not affect the audiences in the country very much, but festivals could be regarded as a promotional tool for theater companies who wished to present their performances abroad. Theater 199 participates at festivals for two main reasons: to present its production at cultural forums with national and international significance and to gather information about the audiences in different cities in Bulgaria, which consequently could be used for the organization of their tours.

#### 5.2.7. Expected Results from the Promotional Activities.

The final question, presented to the respondents was how they estimate and measure the success of the promotional activities, executed by their organization.

Almost all of the answers were similar. The respondents said that they kept track on the number of visitors per performance and for certain periods of time. They also record the number of sold tickets and their income, which all drama theaters in Bulgaria, being state owned institutions, are obliged to present to the Ministry of Culture. If these numbers are higher than average, they conclude that the promotional activities they have implemented had been successful. Only the respondent from Drama Theater Sofia mentioned that sometimes in the questionnaires they distributed among their visitors they had included questions, concerning their promotional activities - for example they asked the visitors how they had been informed about the performance, had they seen a poster or heard an announcement on the radio.

Two of the respondents in the sample however mentioned that they did not measure the results – Varna and Burgas Drama Theaters. The representative from Burgas stated that they recorded the number of tickets sold, but did not research how promotional activities affected them. The manager of Varna Theater however said that they did not measure results,

because first of all they did not have promotional strategies or plans, due to the lack of qualified personnel.

### **5.3. Promotional Activities of Bulgarian Drama Theaters: Comparison of Suppositions and Research Findings**

In Chapter Four several suppositions, concerning the current promotional activities of drama theaters in Bulgaria were expressed. The suppositions were derived from the literature review on marketing in promotion (Chapter One and Three) and also from the overview of Bulgarian drama theater scene at present and in the recent past.

After the qualitative interviews had been conducted with representatives of eight drama theaters in Bulgaria - four in the capital city and four in major provincial cities – a description of the obtained results were presented above. However, it is also needed to present how the research findings relate to the suppositions made before the interviews. The results would be compared to each of the five supposition statements, presented in Chapter Four.

1. Theaters in Bulgaria do not base their decisions about promotion on marketing research.

This supposition was partly rejected by the research results. There is indeed no representative marketing research on drama theater audiences, conducted in Bulgaria that would correspond to the definitions, described by Colbert (2007) and Kotler and Scheff (1997). However, some of the teams of Bulgarian drama theaters have discovered other opportunities to gather information about the features of their audiences that they could consequently use for the plans for their marketing research activities. Naturally, the first example is Theater 199, which has been using regularly questionnaires to research its audience and moreover, the obtained information is stored in a data base system. To this extent, we could conclude that the activities, adopted by Theater 199 in the capital relate to the marketing research definitions, presented more broadly in Chapter Three. Several other theaters have followed this example and sporadically use questionnaires too. However, they do not store and analyze the results regularly therefore there is a possibility that their conclusions might not always be feasible and valid.

All of the theaters however have adopted some form or another to obtain information about theater audiences. There are several sources they make use of: the managers' and

programmers' meetings; the sales people and ticket office employees' reports; information about age distribution from discount tickets and so on. Similar activities were also described by Kotler and Scheff (1997) in "Standing Room Only", where the authors discuss on inexpensive research practices, used by performing arts organizations (see Chapter Three). To this extent, we may conclude that some drama theaters in Bulgaria make use of marketing research when planning their promotional activities, however, their practices and findings could not be classified as representative and fully correspondent to the literature definitions. This statement could also be supported by the fact shared by many of the respondents that they would be happy if they could use information from representative researches and that the Bulgarian drama theater scene needs to progress more in this direction.

## 2. Bulgarian drama theaters do not have marketing specialists in their organizations.

As related to this statement, the answers of the respondents were rather varied. Six of the theaters in the sample had a "Marketing and Sales" departments at the time when the interviews were conducted. However, when questioned what activities these departments implement and what type of experts are employed there, most of the answers were that these departments engage mainly in ticket sales. Usually, the employed specialists in the "Marketing and Sales" departments are several organizers and a head of department, who coordinates their work. In cases where there were no employed organizers, the head of department manages the work of the external to the organization sales people. The publicity activities, on the other hand are mainly assigned to the dramaturges. To some extent, the exceptions here are the National Theater and Theater 199, whose cases were described above in the Chapter.

Generally stated, drama theaters in Bulgaria do not employ marketing specialists. Several reasons could be pointed out here: the marketing related activities are divided and implemented by other offices (almost all cases); two theaters have offices, responsible for the bigger part of the marketing related decisions (National Theater and Theater 199); sometimes they could not find qualified personnel (Drama Theater Varna). There is also another point, mentioned in Chapter Four – as state owned institutions, Bulgarian Drama Theaters should coordinate all the decisions they make about changes in the personnel structure with the Ministry of Culture, which in some cases could be regarded as an obstacle.

3. Theaters in Bulgaria conduct certain promotional activities, but without precise planning and evaluation of results.

The first couple of questions from the questionnaire focus on promotional strategies and planning. The respondents' answers were also quite mixed, just as in the case of the second supposition. As described above, only two theaters prepare annual plans for their promotional activities. The National Theater also would adopt such a plan for the upcoming 2008/2009 season. All other respondents said that they acted either spontaneously, or they implement their promotional activities traditionally. However, most of the theater representatives shared that they prepared action plans for promotion, usually at the beginning of the rehearsal period of a new play. Nevertheless, in most cases, they either rely on traditional practices or also on their long-term contacts with certain media, rather than planning months in advance and targeting new media.

As for evaluation of results from the promotional activities, the research findings are rather questionable. The respondents said that they evaluated the results through monitoring the ticket sales. If sales are higher than average, they conclude that their promotional activities are successful. However, there could be many possibilities for a rise of ticket sales, not solely promotion. Only Drama Theater Sofia sometimes distributes questionnaires that ask the visitors how they obtained information about their performances, which could be regarded as monitoring of results, if they did it regularly, not just sporadically. In this case, we may conclude that the evaluation of results from promotional activities is not precise.

4. Theaters in Bulgaria execute promotional activities with the following features:

#### 4.1. Publicity

The statement that Bulgarian drama theaters use publicity as a promotional tool was confirmed by the research results. As a matter of fact, publicity is one of the promotional activities that theaters rely on most heavily. Publicity in the form of press conferences, feature articles and interviews, press releases to the media was mentioned by all respondents in the sample.

As for whether these publicity actions correspond to marketing literature definitions, we may conclude that to a large extent they do. The steps for successful media relations, suggested by Colbert (2007), (Chapters Three and Four), are basically fulfilled by the people,



responsible for PR activities in the theaters. They prepare different communication tools, like press releases, picture, etc., send them to the targeted media, make sure if the materials are published and collect the already published material. Finally they make attempts to analyze their impact.

The people, who are in charge of the PR and publicity actions in the theaters, are in most cases the dramaturges. Just in a few cases there was a PR office. The targeting of the media, which was also another point of interest, is based on two principles: the location of the theater, in the sense that theaters in Sofia target national media, while the ones in the country – local media and also on the contacts and relations that the theater or PR person have with the media representatives. In most cases, publicity materials appear in the most popular media (targeting theater audiences) and also in highly specialized periodicals, like “Theater” magazine (targeting intellectuals and co-workers).

#### 4.2. Printed Advertising Materials and Radio Spots

Printed advertising materials are also a widely used promotional tool by Bulgarian drama theaters. Almost all of the theaters in the sample employed a designer of their posters, programmes and brochures. Usually designers are university graduates from the National Academy for Arts or other visual arts institution and the artistic quality of the printed materials is high. Features of the advertising materials are also present, since most of the designers have studied programmes, especially associated with poster design.

Radio advertising was the other point, mentioned in the supposition. Radio is used regularly as a medium for promotion by Bulgarian drama theaters. However, the information that is broadcasted is mostly in the form of news announcements, rather than traditional advertising spots. Only two of the respondents mentioned advertising spots on radio stations as a promotional tool.

There were hardly any expectations about other electronic media, such as television. However, it appeared that Bulgarian drama theaters also make use of TV stations – local and national - to promote their activities. The appearances on TV are in form of interviews, or participation in cultural shows, or in other word they are publicity action. Therefore, the obtained conclusion is that electronic media also play an important role in the promotional activities of the theaters, but more as public relation activities.

### 4.3. Internet

The research findings confirmed the supposition that Bulgarian drama theaters use the Internet space mostly to promote their institutions through their websites. All of the theaters in the sample maintain a website that contains sufficient information about their performances, programme, history. Only two theaters use the Internet as a mean for selling tickets. The State Satiric Theater also treats the Internet space as an opportunity for publicity activities, by publishing information about their shows in different websites for culture and arts and the Plovdiv Drama Theater uses banners with links to the theater website in partner – websites. Generally stated, however, the web-pages, maintained by the drama theaters, are the most popular form of promotion in the virtual space.

### 4.4. Personal Selling.

The question on personal selling also led to some variations in the answers. Despite of this fact, with two exceptions, the respondents gave positive answers and referred to the organizers as the ones that implement personal selling activities. As it was already described, the organizers are of two types – the first ones are employees at theaters and the second type are sales people, who sell tickets for performances, sometimes for several performing arts institutions and are called “outer ticket sellers” (they are more common in the capital). Whether a theater would use one type or the other depends on their policy and budgets. The manager of Theater 199 insisted that “organizer” was not a correct term and she called the people, responsible for the sales professional sales people. The only exception was the National Theater – they do not use organizers or sales people and use only the ticket office. Without this example, all other respondents stated that personal selling was one of the most important promotional activity for their organization, together with publicity.

5. Theaters do not take full advantage of theater festivals as an opportunity for promoting their organizations.

The literature on cultural marketing stresses numerously how festivals and arts events could play a significant role in the popularization of a performance or a cultural organization. However, most of the respondents stated that theater festivals did not affect the attendance to their performances. Only the representative of Drama Theater Burgas mentioned that the

festival they organized had a positive influence on the attendance to their performances. We could not conclude whether their statement is valid, because the role of drama theater festivals in Bulgaria and their effects on the theaters' activities are not in the focus of this research. Only the representative of Drama Theater Burgas mentioned that the festival they organized affected the attendance to their performances. However, all of the respondents were positive, that participation in festivals was crucial for every performing arts organization. The main reason they pointed out was prestige and good reputation. On a second place is obtaining information about audiences in other cities that could be useful for the organization of tours (performed by Theater 199).

#### **5.4. Conclusion.**

After the conducted research, several conclusions could be drawn from the responses of the interviewees.

Drama theaters in Bulgaria at present implement a wide variety of promotional activities. The drama theaters in the sample engage in all four tools of the promotional mix: they communicate with national and local media and send them regularly publicity materials; organize different public relations actions; publish a variety of printed advertising materials; create sales promotions and engage in personal selling activities. However, by assessing the similarities and differences between the responses, we could come to the conclusion that theaters rely mostly on publicity and personal selling. The reason behind this statement is the fact that these particular promotional activities were mentioned by almost all of the respondents in the sample.

Publicity mainly takes the form of materials, published in the printed media – news, feature articles, interviews and announcements, broadcasted by the electronic media. All of the above described activities are not paid by the theater institutions. The targeting of the media is based mainly on their popularity among the mass public and on the relations that the theaters have established with them.

Another major promotional tool is personal selling. The personal selling activities of the theaters appear to be mainly the responsibility of the office of the organizers and although there were some contradictions in the responses over the functions of this office, organizers in general could be regarded as a form of personal selling. However, organizers could not be classified only as sales people, because they also engage in many other activities in the theater –coordination of tours, communication with partner organizations about upcoming events,

organization of donations, etc. But still, a major part of their activities is selling tickets to different institutions and organizations and thus – popularizing the work and image of the theater they represent. Personal selling in its initial form is executed by the outer ticket sellers, who sell tickets individually. Generally stated, the exact responsibilities of the office of the organizers differ slightly between the different theaters, which is probably due to the role of the management, the location, the other administrative offices that are present and lastly – to the other specific promotional activities of the theater.

As for whether the promotional activities correspond to the definitions provided by the marketing literature, after the analysis of the responses, we could conclude that to a greater extent they do. There are only a couple of specificities. First of all, the role of the personal contacts and relations is much higher in the choice of media for publicity and in the personal selling activities. Second, there appears to be some confusion over the differences between advertising and publicity, when it comes to the use of electronic media. Sometimes, an announcement in the TV or radio was described by the respondents as “advertising” although they missed the paid nature of advertising – a major characteristics in the definition. However, TV and radio advertising spots, or trailers, were correctly described as advertising activity, despite of the fact that they also were free; but in this case their free broadcasting was also determined as “donation”.

As for whether marketing research, planning and estimation of results are concerned, a summary of the respondents’ answers was presented above in detail. In general, except for Theater 199, Bulgarian drama theaters do not use professionally designed marketing researches, but have adopted many different practices to gain information about the characteristics of their audiences. The planning of the promotional activities follows the annual repertoire plan, as far as timing and the form of promotion are concerned. Finally, the measurement of the results from the promotional activities is rather vague. The managers make conclusions about their promotional activities’ success mainly on the amount of ticket sales. Only Drama Theater Sofia uses questions, concerning their past promotional actions in the questionnaires for their audience, but they make their inquiries sporadically.

Another point of interest in the research was how much managers or people responsible for promotional activities understand and know about marketing theory. Despite of the rather hopeless picture, presented by Landry (1997), referred to in Chapter Two, it appeared that theater managers are quite well acquainted with the major marketing

definitions, at least as far as promotion is concerned. How they obtained their knowledge, or what is their opinion and views over cultural marketing in particular was not a point in this particular research. However all of them mentioned that the nowadays busy lifestyle and reality has in a way “forced” them to become more conscious about how they could attract more audiences.

There is also another point that could be drawn from the responses of the interviewees – the extent, activity and attitude towards marketing and promotion of the administrative teams in Bulgarian drama theaters is to a great extent determined by the role of the management. All of the theaters in the sample are quite renowned and popular. This basically means that their performances are usually attended by numerous audiences. In this case, the promotional activities are executed to attract as much more visitors as possible, which consequently leads to higher income. Another reason is the prestige of the drama theater and theater art in general, which is enhanced by promotion and this belief was expressed by the respondents. Several examples could support the conclusion about the role of the theater manager. First of all, according to the system adopted by the Ministry of Culture in Bulgaria, theater managers are appointed by a competition between several candidates held in front of a commission of Ministry representatives. The candidates therefore should present a plan about the work and development of the theater – repertoire programme, budget decisions and so on. This practice basically means, that almost all decisions, associated with the activities and image of a theater depend on the manager. There are also several examples that could support this statement. It was quite obvious that Theater 199, which is also state-owned and supported by the Ministry of Culture, is much more commercially oriented and engages in many marketing activities, like marketing research, that other theaters miss. This specific concept and direction of development was adopted by the previous manager of the company, which was quite innovative at the time and his initiatives are appreciated and followed to the present day (the example is based on the story of the dramaturge of Drama Theater Sofia, who was one of the respondents and used to work for Theater 199). The second example was drawn from a comparison between Drama Theaters Varna and Burgas. Although the Burgas Theater is smaller than the Varna one, both in building space and team, and the city of Burgas has less population and influence as a cultural centre, Drama Theater Burgas engages in more promotional activities than the Varna Theater. They work with more types of media, use more sales promotion, print more types of advertising materials, while Drama Theater Varna does not make use of posters and TV and radio stations. The explanation of the manager was that

she could not find appropriate experts, who could make marketing and promotional plans for them.

Finally, a few words would be added about the state of development of promotion for performing arts organizations in Bulgaria. We could make comparison only with the marketing literature, reviewed in this research and the historical feedback, described in Chapter Two. As far as the past state of drama theaters is concerned, the results from this research display a serious progress in the knowledge and attitudes of theater managers. As for marketing literature definitions, the promotional activities performed by Bulgarian drama theaters are rather similar to them. Differences and specificities appear in the fields of marketing research, planning and media targeting. Another difference is in the administrative teams' structure – there are almost no professional marketers in the performing arts sphere in Bulgaria and also organizers, which are common in Bulgarian drama theaters are not mentioned in the reviewed literature on cultural marketing.

As a final statement, we could say that promotional activities of drama theaters in Bulgaria represent a mix of older traditional activities and modern tools that appeared gradually, together with the development of social and political changes and are determined by the specific Bulgarian reality and performing arts.

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<sup>29</sup> The book represents a report by a European panel of examiners. The research for the report was executed by a European expert team in 1996/1997 in Bulgaria, written by Charles Landry and published in 1997 by the Ministry of Culture. The referencing in the text shows the authors name and the date of publication

<sup>30</sup> This title, as well as *The Anachronistic and the Creative in the Modern Bulgarian Theater*, refers to theater experts' conferences, which consequently were published as books by the Ministry of Culture of Bulgaria. Because of their specific nature, the referencing is made as follows: organizers of the conference, title of the conference, year of publication, place of publishing and publisher. The referencing in the text shows the title of the conference and year of publication in brackets



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## ANNEX A

1. How do you estimate/value the importance of promotion for a performing arts organization?
2. Do you have a promotional strategy or you do it spontaneously/traditionally ? Do you have objectives when you commence some sort of promotion ? If yes, what kind of objectives do you wish to reach when starting a certain promotional activity and what results do you expect? Are these results quantified?
3. Do you develop a year plan for promotion? What does your promotion plan look like; how do you plan and organize it? How specific is it in logistics and budgets?
4. Is somebody responsible for promotion in your organization? What is their function? Is there a special office or are the responsibilities divided between several offices? If so, how?
5. In general, describe how tickets for performances are sold in your organization. Do you use the Internet as a medium for promoting your organization? How? Do you sell tickets through the Internet?
6. In Bulgarian theaters there is an office called “organizer”. Could you elaborate on the function of the `organizer` in your organization?
7. All marketing specialists stress upon the importance of marketing research on target audiences. However, I could not find information about any marketing research, concerning drama theater audiences in Bulgaria. In this case, what kind of information do you have about your target audiences? Do you gather systematical information about your audience? How? Collective available information? Individual information? Do data from the ticket-office reach you?
8. Promotion consists of PR, Advertising, Personal Sales and Sales Promotion. Of these promotional tools, which ones do you use/implement.
9. If you do not use some of them, would you please explain why? How do you decide on which one to use? What is the importance of each one of them?
10. Could you kindly describe how you implement the specific promotion activities (as far as applicable) in your theatre?
  - 10.1. PR – what kind of PR do you do in your organization? How do you pick the media you would like to work with?

Do you use:

    - Press Releases to the Media
    - Press Conferences
    - Feature Articles or Interviews
    - Special Events

- Invitations to the so called opinion leaders (critics, journalists, prominent persons etc. )

10.2 Advertising - what kind of advertising do you implement as an organization? What kind of media do you choose?

Do you use:

- TV Advertising
- Radio Advertising
- Internet advertising (banners; your internet site, etc)
- Other media
- How will you describe your printed advertising materials, like posters and brochures, in terms of design, what message they send to the public, when do you make a new issue, who design s the, ext. Where do you distribute them?

10.3. Does your organization offer some kind of sales promotion – like subscription programmes, discounts, special games, two tickets at the price of one and so on?

10.4. The fourth main type or promotional activity is personal selling. Is somebody in your organization in charge of some form of personal selling activities? If so, which groups do you want to reach this way?

11. Does your theater participate in festivals or similar sorts of art events? How often. Do you think that participating in festivals is a form of promotional activity? Is that the main reason for you to participate?

12. Do you measure the success of the promotional activities that your theater executes?

## **ANNEX B**

### **National Theater "Ivan Vazov":**

Andrey Filipov – dramaturge

### **"Aleko Konstantinov" State Satiric Theater:**

Rozalia Radichkova – dramaturge

### **Drama Theater Sofia:**

Bogdana Kosturkova – dramaturge

### **Theater 199:**

Anna Monova – manager

### **Plovdiv Drama Theater:**

Emil Bonev - Manager

### **"Stoyan Bachvarov" Drama Theater – Varna:**

Dafinka Danailova – Manager

### **"Adriana Budevskia" Drama theatre Burgas**

Ivan Slavov - Dramaturge

### **"Vassil Drumev" Drama and Puppet Theatre – Shumen:**

Diana Hristova – vice-manager

## ANNEX C

National Theater "Ivan Vazov":

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