Motivation trajectory of attending performing arts: the role of knowledge

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Abstract

Purpose – This study concerns the attendance motivations for cultural services based on the audience’s level of knowledge. The purpose of this paper is to define the role played by general knowledge (e.g. cultural education) and specific knowledge (e.g. communication around a cultural product) in the attendance motivation trajectory of a cultural service.

Design/methodology/approach – The study uses in-depth interviews with 20 visitors to two public theatres, one in Belgium and one in France.

Findings – The results identify a tripartite motivation in the decision to attend a performance, corresponding to four visitor segments defined according to their level of general and specific knowledge.

Originality/value – The recommendations arising from the study are that potential audience members be targeted according to their particular profile and that their cultural tastes be developed by raising their level of general knowledge, an element that goes beyond the suggested motivation trajectory.

Keywords Cultural services, General knowledge, Motivation trajectory, Specific knowledge

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

With the increasing popularity and diversity of cultural services in recent years, it is clear that theatres are facing increasing competition. For instance, in France, according to 2015 statistics from the ministry of culture’s department responsible for gathering statistics (DEPS), the number of cultural institutions in the country has reached 160,000 and the number of cultural associations exceeds 265,000. While cultural activity shows an upward trend, the consumption of live performance has decreased by approximately 3 per cent. The attractiveness of other entertainment and leisure options like videogames, sports, movies and travel has weakened consumers’ motivation to attend cultural institutions such as theatres. The cultural sector represents an interesting field of study from a marketing perspective, since cultural institutions usually prioritise the cultural product over consumers’ expectations. Marketing researchers have even demonstrated that customer-centric approaches are not favoured in the cultural sector (Voss and Voss, 2000). Since consumers’ expectations are given little attention, the offer as well as all communication efforts to attract visitors is based on the intuition of arts and communication managers (Bourgeon-Renault, 2000). It is therefore appropriate that we better understand the nature and the sources of consumers’ motivation to go to the theatre.

The failure of cultural democratisation – that is, political action aimed at helping lower-income and less-educated households to access art and culture (Bouder-Pailler and Urbain, 2015; Donnat, 2012) – has led managers of cultural institutions to rethink their communication strategy and their role in cultural education. Yet despite the political input, the upper classes remain the main customers of cultural institutions. Apart from its informative role, communication is an essential means of motivating people to attend cultural performances (Colbert, 2012; Faber and O’Guinn, 1984). Communication tools such as brochures or websites thus deliver specific knowledge – that is, knowledge concerning a
specific play or a particular theatrical programme. The role of specific knowledge in explaining consumer motivation is worthy of further investigation. Moreover, some researchers have been interested in the study of general drama knowledge in the cultural field – that is, cultural and theatre-related knowledge acquired over time and helping visitors evaluate theatrical works (Colbert and Courchesne, 2012). To date, the simultaneous impact of both types of knowledge (specific and general) on people’s motivation to attend cultural venues, especially theatres, has not been well investigated.

Some researchers have specialized in the study of general factors explaining the motivation to attend the theatre (Brown and Novak-Leonard, 2013; Mackellar, 2013; Walmsley, 2011, 2013), while others (e.g. Bouder-Pailler and Urbain, 2015) have been interested in the type of motivation based on Deci and Ryan’s (1985) typology, which distinguishes between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. It is worth examining how individuals evolve along the so-called motivation trajectory – in other words, how they transition from one motivational state to another. The present study highlights the evolution of cultural consumers along the motivation trajectory by examining their level of specific and general knowledge.

We first present the theoretical foundations of the role of specific and general knowledge in one’s evolution along the motivation trajectory. We then discuss our qualitative study and its results, before addressing the managerial implications of our findings.

2. Theoretical background
2.1 General and specific knowledge in the field of cultural services

General knowledge has been the subject of several studies in the cultural sector, mainly as an antecedent to the cultural experience (e.g. Ateca-Amestoy, 2008; Legoux and Sears, 2005). Consumers with a large amount of general knowledge have accumulated a stock of cultural capital over time (Bourdieu, 1993). They possess the judgement skills necessary to understand and appreciate cultural objects (Ateca-Amestoy, 2008; Boerner et al., 2011; Colbert and Courchesne, 2012; Ghariani et al., 2015; Holbrook, 1999; Legoux and Sears, 2005). Ateca-Amestoy (2008) shows that education and frequency of theatre attendance influence the intention to visit a cultural institution by increasing the consumer’s cultural capital. The consumption of art is thus seen as the result of taste that is acquired over time (Throsby, 1994).

Specific knowledge has been addressed by adopting different perspectives and definitions. Some authors consider specific knowledge to be all sources of information that are available to consumers who seek external input in order to make decisions (D’Astous and Colbert, 2002). More generally, the sources of information discussed in the literature are word of mouth, television commercials, magazines and newspapers, critical reviews, blogs, previews and premières (Colbert, 2012; Eliashberg and Shugan, 1997; Faber and O’Guinn, 1984; Hausmann and Poellmann, 2016; Warne and Drake-Brooks, 2016). The sources of information that are closest to a direct a priori experience, such as previews and premières, are the most influential, followed by interpersonal sources and mass media (Faber and O’Guinn, 1984).

Some researchers (e.g. D’Astous and Colbert, 2002) have begun to investigate whether there is a potential relationship between specific and general knowledge. These researchers are interested in consumers’ search for specific information based on visitors’ level of general knowledge. While Fiske et al. (1994) do not draw clear conclusions about the relationship between the two types of knowledge, some authors find a positive link, explaining that an increase in general knowledge in one area (e.g. product category) facilitates the development and understanding of specific knowledge and the search for specific information (Alba and Hutchinson, 1987; Hoyer and MacInnis, 2001). Fiske and colleagues add that some of those with a highly developed store of general knowledge
tend to focus mainly or entirely on their own knowledge instead of embarking on a search process.

Table I summarises studies that address specific and/or general knowledge in a cultural context. We can see that the majority of research has concentrated on one type of knowledge, mainly in the film industry. Although Colbert and Courchesne (2012) and D’Astous and Colbert (2002) discuss the role of both types of knowledge (specific and general) in cultural education, they do not investigate the potential influence of both types on consumers’ motivation and behaviour. Yet it is of managerial interest to understand the evolution of the audience’s motivation.

2.2 Self-determination theory
To be motivated means to be moved, impelled or inspired to act (Deci and Ryan, 1985). Indeed, several researchers are interested in understanding the notion of a bipolar dimension to motivation; that is, motivational direction – approach vs avoid – and motivational intensity – low vs high (Gable and Harmon-Jones, 2010). Some authors have taken an effective approach, examining the effects of emotional states, with their varying degrees of motivational intensity, on cognitive scope (narrowing/broadening) (Gable and Harmon-Jones, 2010). Although some cultural marketing researchers have studied the antecedents and obstacles to motivation (Bouder-Pailler and Urbain, 2015; Brown and Novak-Leonard, 2013; Mackellar, 2013; Walmsley, 2011, 2013), the dynamism of motivation over time and its relationship to knowledge remain little explored.

A deeper understanding of the various aspects of motivation is provided by the theory of self-determination, which concerns the motivation behind choices in the absence of external influence (Deci and Ryan, 1985) and the degree to which individuals are self-motivated. According to Deci and Ryan (1985), there are three types of motivation: intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation and amotivation.

Intrinsic motivation is defined as individuals’ willingness to engage in an activity for pleasure and personal satisfaction rather than for rewards or because of external

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific knowledge</th>
<th>General knowledge</th>
<th>Authors making no difference</th>
<th>Authors suggesting a difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faber and O’Guinn (1984): influence on attitudinal and behavioural variables (e.g. decision making) (cinema)</td>
<td>Van Paasschen et al. (2015): influence of expertise on the appreciation and interpretation of art (art)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Colbert and Courchesne (2012): influence of cultural transmission (culture)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warne and Drake-Brooks (2016): influence different sources of information (theatre)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table I: Studies on general and specific knowledge in the cultural sector
constraints (Deci and Ryan, 1985). An intrinsically motivated person is one who practises self-determination regarding an activity – for example, a person who goes to the theatre simply for the pleasure of being there and not for external reasons because the play has been declared a success.

Extrinsic motivation is associated with “instrumental” or controlled behaviour (Deci and Ryan, 1985). The practice of the activity is extrinsically motivated when the person is more interested in the consequences than in the activity itself. The motivation of these people is controlled by a specific purpose and by expected outcomes. However, according to the logic of “integrated control” (Deci and Ryan, 1980), the visitor could, by going to the theatre for external reasons (e.g. to see a famous actor), find self-motivational sources that are complementary to the original external source. Such a “changing motivation” provokes the passage from extrinsic to intrinsic.

Finally, amotivation refers to a lack of motivation (Deci and Ryan, 1985). Amotivated individuals are unable to predict or explain the consequences of their behaviour. An amotivated person often has doubts about his/her participation in an activity and may well decide to abandon it. For instance, in the context of this study, an amotivated visitor might attend a cultural performance only because he is invited or because he accompanies another visitor.

According to Deci and Ryan (1985), these different types of motivation can be placed on a continuum according to individuals’ degree of self-determination. Intrinsically motivated individuals have the highest level of self-determination because this type of motivation reflects a behaviour that is initiated by pleasure. Amotivation represents the least self-determined type of motivation, since it indicates a lack of control. Extrinsic motivation falls between the two extremes. Motivation is thus a dynamic concept that may evolve with time and experiences. According to Deci and Ryan’s (1985) “motivation trajectory”, an individual evolves from a state of amotivation to a state of extrinsic motivation and finally reaches a state of intrinsic motivation.

2.3 Cognitive evaluation theory
The literature on the concepts of knowledge and motivation indicates that both factors may be involved in the decision whether to attend a cultural performance. Therefore, we focus on the link between these two concepts in order to understand the role of general and specific knowledge in consumers’ motivation to attend a performance.

The theory of cognitive evaluation (TCE) developed by Deci (1975) and Deci and Ryan (1980) suggests a potential relationship between the two research fields. The TCE examines individuals’ intrinsic motivation and how it evolves under pressure from the environmental factors that affect the strength of the motivation (Deci and Ryan, 2004).

According to Deci and Ryan (2004), an increase in individuals’ perceived competence improves their intrinsic motivation. This has been empirically proven in several studies (e.g. Arnold, 1985; Barak et al., 1989; Malouf, 1988). The source of this knowledge improvement could be environmental factors such as informational events and communication (Deci and Ryan, 2004). Thus, all forms of information and communication become tools for improving intrinsic motivation and attitudes towards the activity (Mouratidis et al., 2008; Vallerand and Reid, 1988). Moreover, it transpires that information not only promotes the acquisition of knowledge but also improves intrinsic motivation (Malouf, 1988). A posteriori, a high level of knowledge helps to maintain a particular behaviour as opposed to encouraging its abandonment (Arkes, 1978). Thus, the development of intrinsic motivation enables one to sustain an activity over the long term (Reeve et al., 1985).

Given the motivation continuum proposed by Deci and Ryan (1985), we suggest that knowledge helps to transform amotivation into extrinsic or even intrinsic motivation. Evolution along the motivation trajectory based on increased knowledge has undeniable managerial implications, because, even though motivation is personal, the knowledge level
of the audience may be raised by cultural institutions through an effective communication strategy. A more thorough study would be useful not only for supporting these proposals but also for characterizing the motivation trajectory. This would help cultural managers to attract visitors in a sustainable fashion based on their intrinsic motivation.

3. Method: qualitative approach

To better understand the importance of specific and general knowledge in consumers’ motivation regarding cultural services, we used a qualitative approach based on semi-structured interviews in order to remain open to interpretation and capture the richness and complexity of the subject matter (Arnould and Wallendorf, 1994; Mojtahed et al., 2014). Informants were theatre-goers attending the Théâtre Royal de Namur in Belgium and La Virgule in France. In total, 20 participants consisted of 9 women and 11 men with a mean age of 41.5 years (cf. Table II). Names of participants have been changed when presenting the emerging findings in this manuscript in order to protect the privacy of participants. The interviews investigated the two main topics of the study, namely knowledge and motivation, using open-ended questions such as the following: Why do you go to the theatre? Why would you consider/not consider yourself a “connoisseur” in the field of live theatre? What would encourage individuals to attend plays more often?

This was a qualitative study featuring a systematic analysis and interpretation of the data in line with previous research and existing theories (Spiggle, 1994). Therefore, we developed a structure to help generate appropriate results in line with the research questions (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988).

Coding was based on a classification procedure according to criteria defined in the literature in order to ensure the usefulness of the results for solving managerial problems (Bittner et al., 1990; Flanagan, 1954). More specifically, we classified verbatim extracts from the transcripts as representing intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation or amotivation and as referring to general or specific knowledge in a 3x2 analysis grid. This method of inductive coding has the advantage of not relying on the establishment of hypotheses and allowing for the formation of emergent patterns that are defined more rigorously than in

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Regular visitor?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IN01</td>
<td>Beatrice</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IN02</td>
<td>Dominique</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IN03</td>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Instructor</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IN04</td>
<td>Benoît</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Senior auditor</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IN05</td>
<td>Raphaël</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IN06</td>
<td>Alix</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IN07</td>
<td>Sophie</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IN08</td>
<td>Guy</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>IT engineer</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IN09</td>
<td>Anne</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IN10</td>
<td>Frédérique</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IN11</td>
<td>Claudine</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IN12</td>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Administrative assistant</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IN13</td>
<td>Pascal</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IN14</td>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Real estate expert</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IN15</td>
<td>Florence</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Educator</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IN16</td>
<td>Gérard</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Retired engineer</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IN17</td>
<td>Régine</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IN18</td>
<td>Pierre</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IN19</td>
<td>Arnault</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IN20</td>
<td>Brigitte</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>Librarian</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table II. Description of the sample of informants
other qualitative approaches (Gremler, 2004; Olson and Thomasson, 1992). While the three motivation types are clearly defined in the literature and helped in the classification of informants’ comments, the two types of knowledge lack proper distinction. Hence, our first step was to define both knowledge types based on informants’ perception of the concepts. We then classified their comments using these definitions. Table III presents the classification scheme and sample interview extracts.

Since specific knowledge is context-dependent, we classified individual verbatim extracts to generate an overview enabling a more sophisticated analysis about the importance attached to specific and general knowledge, and their consequences. Crossing both concepts helped us to better understand their combined effect on consumers’ behaviour. In Table III, the consequences of specific knowledge seem to vary from those of general knowledge. The results support a possible segmentation of the theatrical audience into four categories, depending on their level of specific and general knowledge and their type of motivation.

When the extracts were analysed in more depth, informants appear to move from one motivational state to another depending on the type and amount of knowledge they acquire over time. This observation provides support for the concept of “motivation trajectory”, as illustrated in Table IV and characterised in the following section.

Following this study, we used the verification (expert check) approach to increase the validity and reliability of the results. Verification is defined as a monitoring and confirmation process ensuring the certainty of results (Morse et al., 2002). To this end, we interviewed three experts: a director of a cultural centre in Belgium, a director of a public theatre in Tourcoing and a public relations specialist at a public theatre in France. To add diversity to the expert sample (Yin, 2011), we interviewed professionals, in both countries, with different responsibilities within their institution. Since the topic of the study requires a degree of long-term experience with spectators, we took care to interview individuals holding a position of responsibility within their institution. To avoid any influence of our findings, we did not tell them about the results of this study, but rather asked them about their experience, observations and feelings with regard to their spectators’ motivation, sources of motivation and potential changes in motivation over time. The study subject was discussed and the results confirmed by their statements.

### Table III.
Classification of the qualitative data according to motivation and knowledge type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge Type</th>
<th>Motivation Type</th>
<th>Extract</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Knowledge</td>
<td>Intrinsic motivation</td>
<td>“I have been lucky that my relatives took me to museums and theaters from the early beginning. That’s why I like going there. However, my husband, who did not have this education, prefers seeing comedies. And that’s really education. It is difficult to accustom someone to love and going to the theater” (Régine, 53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific Knowledge</td>
<td>Extrinsic motivation</td>
<td>“I received that from my parents who made me see many plays from an early age. So as soon as I get the brochure with the program for the year, I usually choose the classics and I look at the actors, stage directors and also what will make the difference” (Gérard, 65)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Knowledge</td>
<td>Amotivation</td>
<td>“It’s really the title that made me come. I don’t want to read the program, I don’t want to spoil my pleasure by reading all the details and everything that is marketing. Just the title, and there it is, I go” (Gérard, 65)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific Knowledge</td>
<td>Amotivation</td>
<td>“I once ended up in the theater only to please my neighbor who kindly offered me a ticket” (Florence, 26)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| General Knowledge | Intrinsic motivation | “I know him well enough, this comedian. I know his humor, he’s a comedian, so my expectation was to have fun” (Benoit, 45) |
| Specific Knowledge | Extrinsic motivation | “I don’t remember the play I saw. It was a play I saw last year in Namur, and there I got really bored [...] The show where I was bored, we had tickets that my partner had won at a game on the Internet I think” (Benoit, 45) |

| General Knowledge | Extrinsic motivation | “It’s really the title that made me come. I don’t want to read the program, I don’t want to spoil my pleasure by reading all the details and everything that is marketing. Just the title, and there it is, I go” (Gérard, 65) |
| Specific Knowledge | Amotivation | “I once ended up in the theater only to please my neighbor who kindly offered me a ticket” (Florence, 26) |

| General Knowledge | Intrinsic motivation | “I have been lucky that my relatives took me to musea and theaters from the early beginning. That’s why I like going there. However, my husband, who did not have this education, prefers seeing comedies. And that’s really education. It is difficult to accustom someone to love and going to the theater” (Régine, 53) |
| Specific Knowledge | Extrinsic motivation | “I received that from my parents who made me see many plays from an early age. So as soon as I get the brochure with the program for the year, I usually choose the classics and I look at the actors, stage directors and also what will make the difference” (Gérard, 65) |
| General Knowledge | Amotivation | “It’s really the title that made me come. I don’t want to read the program, I don’t want to spoil my pleasure by reading all the details and everything that is marketing. Just the title, and there it is, I go” (Gérard, 65) |
| Specific Knowledge | Amotivation | “I once ended up in the theater only to please my neighbor who kindly offered me a ticket” (Florence, 26) |
4. Results

4.1 Segmentation of the theatrical audience by level of knowledge and type of motivation

Based on the qualitative data, we define specific and general knowledge as follows:

(1) Specific knowledge refers either to the knowledge about a particular play (e.g. synopsis of the play), the current programming of a theatre or the opinions of others on a particular play. This knowledge is acquired via external media (internet, newspapers, posters), internal media (theatre newsletter, internal communications), or word of mouth (colleagues, friends, family, partner).

(2) General knowledge refers to theatrical culture (e.g. knowing how to appreciate and distinguish between a good and a bad performance) and general culture (e.g. topical or other issues allowing for a better understanding of the content of a given performance). This general knowledge is acquired over the long term, either through repeat visits to cultural venues or through education (family or school).

As shown in the grid in Table III, two categories of result emerged: an audience segmentation based on level of specific and general knowledge and type of motivation; and a motivation trajectory illustrating the movement from one segment to another (see Table IV).

**Table IV.** Segmentation of the theatre audience according to their level of general and specific knowledge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High level of specific knowledge</th>
<th>Low level of specific knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Segment 1: “High specific—High general”</td>
<td>Segment 2: “Low specific—high general”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From extrinsic to intrinsic motivation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low level of general knowledge</td>
<td>Segment 3: “High specific—low general”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From amotivation to extrinsic motivation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As illustrated by these extracts, consumers’ intrinsic motivation is found in its most intense state in segment 2. In analysing our qualitative data, we first identify those individuals with low specific and high general knowledge who are accustomed to attending the theatre and have a taste for it. According to the segmentation shown in Table IV, as evidenced in the comment by Brigitte, this category of visitor possesses a wealth of general knowledge but has poorly developed specific knowledge. Generally, these people are familiar with plays as a result of their accumulated experience from attending the theatre frequently. Possessing little specific knowledge, they go to cultural venues for the pleasure of being there.
Their motivation is intrinsic and thus is initiated by the desire to live a cultural experience, sometimes without necessarily knowing anything about the play or consulting the programme in advance.

*Segment 2: high specific knowledge/high general knowledge.*

[We go] because we are knowledgeable and we appreciate the interpretation of a certain actor or the work. (Marc, 50)

The classics – I love them! This is why I see the same play several times, and sometimes I wonder how it will be interpreted by another director and other actors. (Sophie, 42)

As evidenced by Marc’s comment, another group of visitors are those who have both high general knowledge and high specific knowledge. This category includes people who regularly seek information about new plays being released and who also have an innate taste for theatre. Like those in segment 2, they are familiar with plays as a result of their multiple theatrical experiences. The motivation of these cultivated individuals falls between extrinsic and intrinsic, since they seek not only to satisfy an extrinsic motivation but also to have the pleasure of seeing and experiencing a play. The consequences of their intrinsic motivation can be observed in their desire to frequently attend cultural performances.

*Segment 3: high specific knowledge/low general knowledge.* The third segment is characterised by little or no developed theatre culture. These individuals have acquired specific knowledge regarding a play, which motivates them to visit a cultural venue. This category includes those who are informed about a particular event or about the performance of a particular comedian or actor they admire. In this segment, but not in the others, the motivation is extrinsic (integrated control); the stimulus is external, such as information about an artist and a desire to see him or her perform on stage:

If I go to the theatre, it’s more about seeing one-man shows or a group of comedians […] or people I know […]. I don’t go on my own, like, “ah, well, today I’ll go to the theatre.” No. I need to know the people. (Dominique, 23)

I don’t know the programme well, actually. When I know someone, I say to myself, “ah, he plays in Namur”. (Benoit, 45)

However, this segment also includes those who are attending the theatre for the first time. These visitors state that they are impressed more by the interpretation of the content due to their lack of understanding than by the content of the performance itself. In segment 3 also, an initial experience can arouse curiosity, encouraging the visitor to seek information afterwards. A consumer’s initial theatre experience can trigger a desire to discover this environment and to develop an interest in theatrical culture (transition from the amotive to the extrinsic state). The following comment shows how repeat visits can help one to acquire a taste for theatre:

The first time you go – especially for younger people – you’re impressed. You don’t feel very comfortable. Once you’ve been several times, you feel more comfortable and you start feeling the more majestic side [of it]. (Marc, 50)

*Segment 4: low specific knowledge/low general knowledge.*

I don’t remember the play I saw. It was a play I saw last year in Namur, and I got really bored […] we had tickets that my partner had won […] on the Internet, I think. (Benoit, 45)

In this extract, Benoit describes a situation of amotivation, which in this case resulted in an unpleasant experience. The fourth and final segment is composed of those with both low general knowledge and low specific knowledge. The data show that this type of person attends cultural performances because, for example, he/she was invited by another person
or because he/she won the tickets. This audience does not have an initial intention to attend a cultural performance. In Deci and Ryan’s (1985) categorisation, they are classified as amotivated individuals.

4.2 The motivation trajectory and the need to inform spectators with low general knowledge

From the above data it can be inferred that a change in the motivation trajectory is conceivable depending on the person’s level of specific knowledge about the cultural product and his general drama knowledge (see the motivation trajectory in Table IV). This supports the dynamic approach of Deci and Ryan’s (1985) motivation continuum based on spectators’ general and specific knowledge. Some informants explicitly describe the movement from one segment to another via the acquisition of drama knowledge. The following extract illustrates how intrinsic motivation develops through “habit”, which contributes to the accumulation of general knowledge and a taste for cultural activities, leading to the development of intrinsic motivation (Deci and Ryan, 1980). This motivation trajectory may well be guided and encouraged by the acquisition of general knowledge:

I think if parents bring their children to the theatre regularly, when these children grow up they will probably keep that habit. I think this is perhaps where we get this image of theatres as successful.
(Dominique, 23)

Interestingly, Dominique suggests that education from an early age can instil a “habit” and, more importantly, knowledge or a taste for cultural experiences. Some informants suggest that specific knowledge acquired through media and other means of communication encouraged them to attend a cultural venue. Their motivation is controlled by external factors such as receiving information about the performance of a particular artist:

[My sister and I] often choose which play to attend by reading reviews on the Internet or in the newspaper […] [sometimes] we go to the theatre only because we’ve been missing it, but that is rare! I like to choose the performance and to take the time to read what it’s about. If not, I’m always afraid I won’t understand […] the play and end up being disappointed! (Claudine, 53)

As discussed above, frequent attendance will result in a taste for a specific type of theatre and consequently the acquisition of general knowledge that enables the transition from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation. It appears to be mainly increased general knowledge that motivates one to attend live theatre:

If I don’t go to the theatre often, it’s simply because […] it’s mainly a knowledge problem. I’m not at all literary, so I don’t know the play, I don’t know the author, I’m not attracted by that topic. I think this is another environment in which I don’t know the rules! (Marc, 50)

In this study, expert reviews helped us to identify the advanced motivation trajectory and the need to inform consumers in segment 3 to contribute to their cultural education. When asked how the audience’s knowledge was involved in their motivation, the expert interviewees spontaneously described the audience’s changing motivation, which can be influenced by their communication efforts:

Our job is to go to very different people and show them what we do, and especially to encourage them to come to the theatre. So afterwards, these people move towards becoming another type of spectator, who come to the theatre on their own and they’ll become really motivated to go to the theatre because, simply, at some point they realise that the theatre makes a positive contribution to their life. So suddenly there’s real motivation. (Anna, audience relations manager for a public theatre in France)

Finally, it is noteworthy that in some specific cases, being unknowledgeable is valued by visitors:

Two days later I had an opportunity to see the same play. The reactions were not the same, people’s laughter was not the same. And depending on the reactions of the audience […] the communication was
5. Discussion and academic implication
The results of this study highlight the role of specific vs general knowledge in the development of a motivation trajectory to attend cultural performances. The results also reveal the dynamic aspect of motivation on the motivation continuum developed in Deci and Ryan’s (1985) self-determination theory. Indeed, it appears that communication is the first determinant in the transition from a state of amotivation to a state of extrinsic motivation. When the level of specific knowledge is high, people are encouraged to patronise cultural institutions regardless of their level of general knowledge. This is the case for segments 1 and 3. The increasing number of experiences seems to result in increased general knowledge about theatre culture, its codes and its issues. Thus, a high level of general knowledge appears to play an important role in the transition from a state of extrinsic motivation to a state of intrinsic motivation. Consequently, our results extend Deci and Ryan’s (1985) findings to the cultural field.

In their study, Ghariani and colleagues (2015) stress the importance of knowledge in the field of art without considering the different types of knowledge that can influence the audience’s motivation. Our study, in contrast, highlights the need to combine specific and general knowledge in order to understand people’s motivation to attend the theatre. Furthermore, our study extends the work of Colbert and Courchesne (2012) on understanding the role of the media and cultural education in the acquisition of general and specific cultural knowledge. Finally, our research helps to enrich the work of Walmsley (2011, 2013) and also that of Brown and Novak-Leonard (2013) on the factors explaining the motivation to attend cultural performances.

6. Managerial contributions
This study serves to clarify the concept of access to art as one of the ultimate objectives of the democratisation of culture. Indeed, improving access to culture cannot be limited to using communication to attract audiences. True access involves the establishment of a public education policy, advocacy and mediation, to allow the largest number of people possible to develop a taste for culture and enrich their cultural capital. This goal necessarily requires an appropriation of works, to master aesthetic codes and cultural education.

The findings of this study therefore lead us to recommend efforts to improve the specific knowledge of segment 4, who appear to be oriented towards amotivation. Our findings also indicate that more attention should be paid to segments 3 and 4, whose motivation is weak, with the aim of encouraging them to attend cultural performances. Events that might attract low-knowledge potential visitors to theatrical venues include well-known plays featuring famous actors and popular performances such as one-man shows. Attracting this audience by means of their extrinsic motivation will help them acquire a taste for theatre with its unique and stimulating atmosphere. Continuous communication efforts centred on specific knowledge (e.g. cultural programme) or general knowledge (e.g. information about drama transmitted via newsletters or brochures) will encourage visitors to progress from one motivational state to another. Improved general theatre knowledge, in addition to incentives for returning, will help visitors to evolve beyond the extrinsic motivational path and to reach a state of intrinsic motivation.
Therefore, we recommend retaining audiences by means of content marketing and attractive peripheral services (e.g. updated website, thematic blog posts, newsletters, physical space for social encounters). Managers should also seek to attract younger people by providing cultural education and striving to increase the presence of theatre in schools.

An equally important strategy is to make use of new technologies such as the internet, and social networks in particular. Indeed, with the low costs and minimal effort associated with social media, cultural businesses can reach a larger public by using them for the purpose of communication and outreach. These tools are within the reach of managers wishing to improve the transmission of knowledge and to facilitate strategic decision making, such as by developing incentives adapted to each visitor segment.

7. Limitations and further research
Some limitations of this study are noteworthy. First, as the informants were of different nationalities (Belgian and French) the possibility of cultural bias cannot be excluded. It would be interesting to conduct a study taking this factor into account, in order to anchor observations in a cultural context. One could adopt a multicultural research orientation by extending this study to other cultures using the same methodology. Comparing the results could reinforce the present findings or lead to multiple interpretations of our observations, depending on the cultural background of theatregoers (Yin, 2011). Consequently, a more fine-grained picture could be drawn, deepening our understanding of the relationship between knowledge and motivation.

Similarly, the results of the study are generalisable only to the cultural sector, where both general and specific knowledge come into play. Since our study is limited to the theatre, it would be interesting to extend the research to other sectors, such as the wider performing arts, and also to other services, including tourism, or even to the sports sector.

Finally, the generalisability of our results is limited because of the qualitative approach used. An empirical study using a quantitative approach would help to overcome this limitation. We recommend collecting survey data regarding not only specific and general knowledge, but also the type and level of motivation of theatregoers and other visitors to cultural venues. Based on this data set, a large-scale cluster analysis could be carried out to confirm the results from the four segments identified in our limited sample and also to statistically demonstrate the effect of both types of knowledge on the motivation of spectators. A quantitative approach would also allow for the investigation and control of further relevant variables. There might be conditional effects that did not emerge from our data set but that could determine the conditions under which particular levels of specific and general knowledge might lead to intrinsic motivation – for example, the surprise effect described by Jarrier and Bougeon-Renault (2012).

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