

Filling the House: Engaging a Millennial Performing Arts Audience

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FILLING THE HOUSE: ENGAGING A MILLENNIAL PERFORMING
ARTS AUDIENCE

by

SARAH SCHRECK

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Honors in the Major Program in Advertising & Public Relations
in the Nicholson School of Communication
and in the Burnett Honors College
at the University of Central Florida
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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to identify best practices for public relations professionals when engaging with a Millennial performing arts audience, focusing on Hon and Grunig's relationship management theory (1999) and Kent and Taylor's theory of dialogic communication (2014) to build interactivity in a digital space. Performing arts organizations have successfully engaged with previous generations, but are facing new challenges when communicating with millennial audiences. Changing demographics have led to a stagnation and decline of performing arts attendance as the millennial generation has come of age. This massive population has new priorities for spending and consumption of entertainment, and social media is their preferred channel of communication as opposed to print and broadcast media. The researcher distributed a survey to patrons of the Orlando Shakespeare theatre to identify their perspectives of current public relations practices. Results from 148 respondents indicated that the Orlando Shakespeare Theatre maintains strong relationships with Millennials (N=6) and non-Millennials alike, as made evident by their practice of Baumgarth's cultural consumer behaviors (2014) . However, a larger sample of Millennial patrons is necessary to determine best practices for the specific population. The primary product of this research is the creation of a theory-driven survey that can be used to effectively measure the depth of a performing arts organization's relationship with its patrons, and a case study exemplifying a successful organization.

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Table of Contents

List of Figures	v
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Chapter 2: Literature Review	3
The Millennial Generation	3
Public Relations & The Digital Generation	6
The State of Public Relations in the Performing Arts	7
The State of Public Relations in the Performing Arts – Establishing Language	9
Millennial Performing Arts Audiences	10
Dialogic Communication Theory	12
Organization-Public Relationship	13
The Orlando Shakespeare Theater.....	15
Chapter 3: Methodology.....	17
Survey Development.....	17
Participants.....	19
Chapter 4: Results.....	20
Chapter 5: Discussion.....	25
Limitations.....	28
Industry Implications	28
Practical Implications	29
APPENDIX A: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT HUMAN RESEARCH	31
APPENDIX B: SURVEY.....	34
APPENDIX C - TABLES & CHARTS	41
References.....	43

List of Figures

TABLE 1: MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF OPR DIMENSIONS	21
TABLE 2: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR FOUR DIMENSIONS OF OPR	22
TABLE 3: MODEL SUMMARY FOR REGRESSION ANALYSIS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS IN LAST THREE MONTHS	23
TABLE 4: COEFFICIENTS FOR REGRESSION ANALYSIS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS IN LAST THREE MONTHS	23
TABLE 5: COEFFICIENTS FOR REGRESSION ANALYSIS FOR EVENT/PERFORMANCE ATTENDANCE IN LAST TWELVE MONTHS	23
TABLE 6: MODEL SUMMARY FOR REGRESSION ANALYSIS FOR EVENT/PERFORMANCE ATTENDANCE IN LAST TWELVE MONTHS	24
TABLE 7: COMMUNICATION CHANNEL PREFERENCE	42

Chapter 1: Introduction

Performing arts organizations have successfully engaged with previous generations, but are facing new challenges when communicating with Millennial audiences. Changing demographics have led to a stagnation and decline of performing arts attendance as the Millennial generation has come of age (National Endowment for the Arts, 2015). This population of 92.2 million has new priorities for spending and consumption of entertainment, and social media is their preferred channel of communication as opposed to print and broadcast media (Fromm & Garton, 2013).

In the 2012 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, “Older Americans emerge as the only demographic group to have experienced increases in attending live visual and performing arts activities over the last decade” (opera, classical music, musicals, and non-musical plays) since 2002. However, attendance at performing arts events has decreased overall. The case for the importance of the Millennial Generation is one of inevitability, and it is with healthy urgency that performing arts organizations must evaluate the expansion of their audiences. While attempts have been made to study the relationship between the performing arts and millennial audiences (e.g. Baumgarth, 2014, Peck, 2015), research on this specific group and setting is still in its infancy. An analysis of the information available shows where there is research yet to be done.

This research sought to identify relationships held between Millennials and performing arts organizations. By analyzing the strengths and shortcomings of relationship elements according to dialogic communication theory and organization-public relationship theory, this research sought to identify communication vacuums in the Millennial arts organization-patron relationship. The foundation for this goal was the creation of a survey that effectively evaluates this relationship.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The Millennial Generation

Marketers and consumer researchers have analyzed the millennial generation with the goal of understanding consumer behavior. The generation has been described as overwhelmingly digital, and diverse, coddled, and confident (Taylor, 2014). Millennials demonstrate feelings of certainty and proficiency with emerging technologies.

General information about the generation is available in books on public relations and demographic studies, as well as data aggregations like consumer analyses and the census. Pew Research executive vice president Paul Taylor (2014) defines the group as adults born after 1980, and the generation has since been defined as ending with those born in 1996, meaning 2017 and 2018, Millennials were between the ages of 21 and 38. The US Census estimated the population of this group to be 92.2 million in 2015. This makes it the largest generation yet, surpassing the Baby Boomers, who stand at 72.88 million. The Millennial generation struggles with more student debt and lower wages than their predecessors, and their financial woes last through their first home buying experience. The median net worth of a householder younger than thirty-five decreased 44% from 1984 to 2011. The US Census indicates that full-time workers between the age of 18 and 34 had median earnings of \$33,883 from 2009-2013, \$3,522 less than in 2000. This reflects the first bar-to-entry of a Millennial arts audience – a thin wallet (Taylor, 2014). Despite being less wealthy than their predecessors, the Millennial generation is set in its financial optimism, and places entertainment spending priorities on console gaming and other

digital media that provide many hours of use (Miller & Washington, 2017). Consumer behavior analysis indicates that 33% of Millennial females and 40% of Millennial males prefer that transactions take place entirely online (Miller & Washington, 2017). This is a racially and culturally diverse generation raised by the Internet, shaped by the Great Recession to be reluctant to trust government and business, and dedicated to communicating through digital social groups and networks (Taylor, 2014).

According to leisure theory models presented by Mannell and Kleiber, as generations age, their “leisure repertoire” (the number of activities able to be participated in by a given individual) shrink as they become less interested in seeking unfamiliar forms or subjects of entertainment (Carpenter & Blandy, 2008). The Millennial Generation is entering its peak of seeking unfamiliar experiences and is entering its most empowered state to participate in leisure activities.

However, more recent studies suggest it’s dangerous to lump millennials together as a homogenous entity. In a cross-national study, millennials have proven to be motivated primarily by price, quality and convenience above all factors. However, subsections of the generation make decisions based on personal ethical priorities alone, despite having high awareness of a variety of causes and volunteering opportunities (Tania, Jennifer & Denni, 2012).

In Fromm and Garton’s book, *Marketing to Millennials*, a study found six distinct subgroups in the Millennial Generation that range from disconnected but charitable to environmentally dedicated or information hungry (2013). Fromm and Garton (2013) segment Millennial personas (sharing Millennial traits in different combinations and

magnitudes) into the following groups: Hip-ennial, Old-School Millennial, Gadget Guru, Clean and Green Millennial, Millennial Mom, and Anti-Millennial. The largest of these segments are Hip-ennials, mostly female social-media users (not content producers) who are charitable and ready to consume cautiously. Next come Millennial “Moms” who are wealthy, digitally savvy, and are ready to shop, exercise, and socialize. The remaining subgroups include Anti-Millennials (who want familiarity, comfort and conservation), Gadget Gurus (who are mostly male device owners who produce plenty of content), and Old- School Millennials (disconnected, but still a cautious and charitable consumer). The final subgroup, Clean and Green Millennials, are cause-driven, create and distribute content, and are typically male.

These subgroups are important to consider when dealing with such a massive generation. Christine Barton of the Boston Consulting Group is referenced in this study, saying, “brands should optimize their relationship with their key targets with whom their brand has permission.”

The Millennial Generation holds the attention of marketers and public relations practitioners as the largest generation to date, but it is important to understand that while they are largely more digital and less wealthy than their predecessors, they can be categorized into more homogenous groups and targeted within specific social circles.

Public Relations & The Digital Generation

Public Relations practitioners have been advocating for building relationships online since 1998, when Kent and Taylor established that content should be valuable, intuitive, timely, should allow for feedback, and have the 'personal touch' that it has offline. When analyzing the Millennial generation, public relations practitioners almost reflexively turn to social media as the primary focus. It is true that around the same time that Millennial adolescents were forming their own identities, they were aggregating in online communities that will shape their cultural values, behaviors, beliefs, and general knowledge (Tapscott, 1998). The generation has continued to group themselves online in social spheres, where communication is based on a common interest. Much like in real-world relationships, when content is shared within these spheres, it is influenced by the relationships of the group. Public relations scholars have been quick to identify these spheres as prime areas of influence, where content could be published without being changed by traditional media gatekeepers (Kent, 2013). The preference for social media has been critiqued by scholars like Valentini (2015), who questions the role of social media in public relations altogether, asserting that it should be used instead as a case-based tool. A case can absolutely be made for performing arts organizations, and will be a focus of this research. Valentini (2015) advises careful consideration before blindly pursuing stakeholders through social media.

An important distinction made by Villi (2013) when communicating via social media is between content shared between individuals and content shared en masse on a platform, that is, between direct and indirect interpersonal communication. Villi determined that this

distinction will be different depending on the material and the individuals involved, but there will always be a difference in the level of understanding and the message taken away by the receiver.

The emerging theme illustrates that Millennials are grouping themselves in social spheres of influence where organizations may be discussed, promoted, and critiqued based on individual relationships. Millennial consumer decisions are increasingly affected by the relationships held by fellow members of these social spheres, as opposed to third-party media.

The State of Public Relations in the Performing Arts

It is important for the sake of this research to clarify the definition of a performing arts organization. In this research, a performing arts organization is a registered non-profit organization that produces regular arts programming like dance, theatre, and music that is attended by an audience of any size. Small non-profit performing arts organizations may rely on volunteer performers, craftsmen, and administration, while the largest performing arts non-profits may fully employ all staff, casts, and crew. These differences are significant because they pose different organizational goals and objectives, and must be taken into account when reviewing how they communicate with their stakeholders.

Digital public relations has had a slow start and shaky foundations in the non-profit and performing arts sector. Scholars have explored how non-profits as a whole could use Facebook to build relationships, but at the inception of social media, “nonprofits [had] not incorporated the vast majority of the Facebook applications [Messenger, Facebook,

Instagram] available to them into their social networking presence” (Waters, Burnett, Lamm & Lucas, 2009, p.105). Perhaps due to a lack of guidance, organizations demonstrated an inability to create dialogue between themselves and their stakeholders on Facebook or take advantage of important tools created by Facebook for non-profits.

This is a pattern that is evident in a number of studies. According to McDonald and Harrison (2002), public relation tactics have historically been the preferred method of outreach for arts organizations due to its lack of necessary finances and personnel, but in many cases, the practice itself remains ambiguous, outdated and mixed with marketing responsibilities. McDonald and Harrison (2002) suggested that performing arts organizations worldwide are unclear about the differences between marketing and public relations, preferring the latter due to historical loyalty and general lack of training. While this preference may have changed for larger performing arts organizations since their research was conducted, small non-profit arts organizations continue to rely on public relations as the less expensive communication field.

Audience building has always been one of the primary focuses of arts organizations, but literature about audience development has historically had an emphasis on mass marketing techniques as opposed to relationship building and dialogue, (public relations strategies). Therefore, literature on the topic may be used while taking into account this difference in perspective. In a case study conducted on chamber music events, Barlow and Shibli (2007) established that there is no one-size-fits all tactic when building an audience, but there are two fundamental practices: using local strengths to build attendance, and focusing on developing strong relationships with potential audience members. The

majority of literature on audience development is classified under the marketing umbrella. Perhaps this is a continuation of the muddying of professions mentioned in McDonald and Harrison's analysis.

The State of Public Relations in the Performing Arts – Establishing Language

Vernaculars have been developed in a number of studies that help to define specific elements of performing arts experiences, which is helpful when researching a product as presentational and ephemeral as the performing arts. Bernstein (2007) designates a performance as a *core product*, and all other parts of the entertainment experience (like ticket offerings, educational programs, lectures, privileges, newsletters, and so on) *augmented* products. This designation helps when using resources to incentivize the public, and may allow for engagement without encroaching on the artistic independence of the work.

A study was conducted by Baumgarth that identified “brand attachment” (seeing oneself in a brand) as having a larger effect than “brand attitude” (having positive feelings toward a brand on cultural institutions like theaters and museums. Through the course of the work, Baumgarth designates two kinds of behaviors practiced by cultural patrons: “superficial behaviors,” simple contributions like attendance and recommendations (considered classic results of strong branding), and “intensive behaviors,” where patrons invest personal resources like time and money to provide sponsorships or donate to the organization (Baumgarth, 2014). This study created a framework of activities on a scale from which one can judge the dedication of patrons as stakeholders in the organization.

Millennial Performing Arts Audiences

There is extremely limited material that focuses solely on Millennial performing arts audiences. In 2014, marketing scholars Halliday and Astafyeva (2014) identified four points about Millennial cultural consumers (MCCs) that, while they were drafted with marketing theory in mind, are worth considering in the context of public relations. These points were drafted by combining branding and consumer theory, and still need to be tested. Among these points, Halliday and Astafaya (2014) assert that MCCs want to engage with organizations that create experiences. Halliday and Astafaya (2014) define the ideal Millennial experience as being made up of four elements: value, self-development, memories, and emotion. They also emphasize approaching MCCs both online and offline at once.

In his work on theatergoing Millennials, Peck (2015) outlines a “social contract” between the audience and the performance that has changed over time from one of rowdiness to one of silence. When observing a Millennial audience, hungry for interaction and influence over presented work, he claims “the theatre must be open to including productions that reimagine the audience social contract and consider the voice of the emerging Millennials” (Peck, 2015). This echoes one of Halliday’s and Astafyeva’s (2014) points, that Millennial cultural consumers seek “greater involvement in co-creation of arts experiences” to foster feelings of personal significance. Co-creation indicates involvement, having one’s voice heard by artists backstage and onstage, having one’s culture reflected in the work they are consuming. It can take a form as complex as hosting focus groups when

creating work that will influence the performance itself, or may be the encouragement of call-and-response from an audience in a live performance, breaking the social contract.

And again, from the perspective of cultural arts programmers, events attract audiences when the event itself is relevant to the individuals. Carpenter and Blandy (2008), for instance, indicate numerous case studies wherein engagement with an area's cultural identity led to increased audience attendance because of attachment.

Models have been adapted from other areas of business to support the performing arts following the 2008 economic downturn, and may inadvertently target Millennial audiences by providence of timing. Filice and Young (2012) interpreted a model of 20th century movie-making entrepreneurs, Bob Bablan and Sam Katz. These show business entrepreneurs operated with a philosophy of "continuous performance," combining the elements of location, space, customer service, convergence, and technology to massive success. Filice and Young (2012) thus encourage continuous performance in tandem with simultaneous programming; that is, having multiple programs presented at once (2012). However, these models have less to do with public relations and developing relationships with audience members, and more to do with the programming itself. The model changes the content of a performing arts center's season, but does not change the way it interacts with its stakeholders.

Dialogic Communication Theory

The level of interactivity desired by millennial audiences is reflected in Kent and Taylor's (2013) dialogic theory of communication. The shift in public relations focus established by Kent and Taylor is that managing communication with stakeholders is not the final goal of organizations, but rather the means to reach the ultimate goal of relationship building (Kent & Taylor, 2013). This theory has been extended over time to analyze dialogue on emerging social technology, and successfully establishes best practices for engaging with publics and is based upon four tenants.

The first of these tenants is *mutuality*, which includes *collaboration* and a *spirit of mutual equality*. An understanding of collaboration happens when two parties believe that they are incomplete without the other; "No single individual or group involved in a dialogic exchange can be said to possess absolute truth" (Kent & Taylor, 2002). This feeds the idea of mutual equality, where there is no exercise of superiority when engaging in conversation. *Supportiveness, communal orientation* and *confirmation* fall under the tenant of *empathy*; This tenant asks how well encouraged and facilitated communication is between parties. Is there a perception of mutual value of the other? Do the parties share trust in one another?

The tenant of *Risk* is divided into *vulnerability* (are information and values shared between parties), *unanticipated consequences* (are conversations spontaneous and unscripted), and *recognition of strange otherness* (the obstacle of misunderstanding). This particular tenant was evaluated by determining whether patrons perceived the organization as accepting of risk by engaging in spontaneous dialogue.

The final dialogic tenant was *Commitment*, involving *genuineness* (the use of honesty and non-deception when engaging with the other party), *commitment to conversation* (non-competitive and sustained dialogue), and *commitment to interpretation* (the willingness to consider the opinions of the other).

Organization-Public Relationship

When evaluating a relationship between an organization and its publics, one seeks to define the concept of relationships. This has been proven a difficult task, and the idea of a relationship has been broken down with with Organization-Public Relationship evaluation (OPR). Bruning and Ledingham (1999) define OPR as the “state which exists between an organization and its key publics in which the actions of either impact [...] the other entity,” and establish quantitative measures by which these states may be evaluated.

Broom, Casey, and Ritchey (1997) are the first to provide the basis for the dimensions of positive public relationships. What may seem like a nebulous, complex and subjective concept, organization-public relationships can clearly be evaluated by breaking down elements of interaction. “The formation of relationships occurs when parties have perceptions and expectations of each other,” and it is the exchange of communication, power and behavior within these expectations that designate measurable properties.” However, Broom et al. (1997) concludes that without a useful definition for relationships, public relations practitioners are forced to make inferences about relationships in both scholarly literature and in practice. While they did not establish operational definitions for

relationships, Broom, Casey, and Ritchey set up a framework from which one may view relationships independently.

Hon and Grunig's (1999) Public Relations Measurement Scale evaluates an organization's relationship with its patrons. This scale measures six outcomes of public relations efforts to determine whether short-term public relations outputs contribute to a healthy longer-term relationship (1999). These outcomes include control mutuality, trust, satisfaction, commitment, and two measures of relationship (exchange and communal).

Control mutuality describes the understanding two parties hold of one another's power in a relationship. Trust describes the beliefs held in each party that the other will follow through on held expectations. Commitment describes the loyalty and bond between the two parties, while Satisfaction describes the perceived quality of interaction. The final two dimensions, exchange relationships and communal relationships, describe whether an organization gives of itself for its patrons and whether or not it contributes to its community without expecting anything in return; they relate to the contributions given and received by the organization in question. A nonprofit must make returns to its community a hallmark of its operations. These measures were not evaluated, as the mission of a registered nonprofit must serve its publics by principle.

These outcomes are measured via Likert scale in a series of questions relating to each outcome.. These outcomes are rooted in Western literature, and have been expanded upon to include Eastern influence by Yi-Hui Huang (2001) in a cross-cultural evaluation. When evaluating Eastern or international arts organizations, this will be a useful tool and is

thus worthy of note. However, the four measures included in the following research remain the foundational Western elements.

Overall, this research indicates that while there are ample resources for those studying millennials, public relationships, and performing arts audience development, more holistic research is needed to draw conclusions about attracting millennial performing arts audiences. Millennials are often grouped as a single generation, when it may be more beneficial to communicate to their subgroups, and a majority of these groups seek hands-on interaction and engagement with organizations they identify with and can create meaningful experiences with. Audience development may focus on marketing techniques, while arts organizations themselves misunderstand the difference between marketing and public relations and apply principles haphazardly. This research has produced language to support further investigation, and suggests that performing arts organizations have ample opportunity to create meaningful relationships with their Millennial stakeholders, given a better understanding of the population and of public relations techniques themselves.

The Orlando Shakespeare Theater

The Orlando Shakespeare Theater in Partnership with UCF was founded in 1989. According to their vision statement, their “main goal is to be a nationally recognized destination theater offering productions and education year-round for all audiences.” Their promoted values include “professionalism, creativity, fiscal responsibility, positive audience experience, accessibility, and community enrichment.” Their programming has

reflected these emphases, with the use of accessibility-focused performances, new live streaming techniques, and other audience-focused efforts. The theater had 18,176 Facebook followers as of April of 2018.

The organization communicates in all public relations and advertising avenues, including newspaper, mail, phone, television, radio, email, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube. Their *Les Miserables* “flash-mob” video earned viral status in 2014, with 5.2 million views as of March of 2018. Since then, they have focused efforts on digital public relations practices, with multiple attempts to recreate the viral phenomenon.

Chapter 3: Methodology

I constructed a survey to evaluate the conceptions currently held by performing arts patrons. The survey was disseminated via the Orlando Shakespeare Theater's mailing list, to all patrons who had attended a performance in the past six months. A link to the survey, hosted on the Web-surveyor Qualtrics, was provided, along with background on the survey and its purposes. The survey was approved. The data was collected after three days and no follow-up was conducted. All respondents participated voluntarily. This survey is provided in Appendix A.

Survey Development

Part One – Public Relations Measurement Scale

The survey was divided into four sections. The first evaluated measures according to Dr. Linda Childers Hon and Dr. James E. Grunig's (1999) Public Relations Measurement Scale. The items here included measures of relationship health between patrons and the organization, including *trust* (the competence, integrity and dependability of the organization), the perception of *control mutuality* (the power of a patron to influence or be listened to by the organization), *commitment* (the loyalty between both parties), and *satisfaction*.

Two measures were not included from Hon and Gruing's scale due to the mission focus of non-profit business. These measures were that of communal relationships and exchange relationships, which call into question the way an organization balances its

access to power and financial gain. All items were evaluated on a five-point Likert scale from *Strongly Agree* to *Strongly Disagree*.

Part Two – Dialogic Communication Evaluation

The second segment of the survey evaluated agreement with Kent and Taylor's tenants of dialogic communication. Each segment of survey question five (Appendix B) corresponds to the tenants of mutuality, empathy, risk, and commitment, and were evaluated on a five-point Likert scale from *Strongly Agree* to *Strongly Disagree*.

Part Three – Communication and Consumer Behaviors

This section evaluated the basic communication channels between the organization and its patrons. There were two purposes of this section. First, to determine which channels were utilized for communication between the parties. The second goal was to identify which of Baumgarth's superficial and intensive behaviors were practiced by respondents.

Part Four – Demographics

The final section of the survey identified basic demographic information including age, education, race, gender identity, estimated income, and ZIP code.

Participants

Participants in this study were a convenience sample of Orlando Shakespeare Theater patrons. All members of the theater's mailing list were invited to participate in an online survey and 148 respondents completed the survey. There was a significant drop-off in responses to demographic questions. Of the convenience sample, 37 (25%) were men and 54 (36.5%) were women. The remaining 57 respondents did not indicate their gender. Of respondents, 87 (58.8%) were White or Caucasian, 2 (1.4%) Hispanic/Latino, 1 (0.07%) Black, and 1 (0.07%) Asian, and 1 (0.07 %) reported themselves as "Other." The average year of birth was 1957, and 6 respondents (4%) were born between 1980 and 1995. Due to such a small sample size of Millennials, results for OPR dimensions do not significantly reflect their perceptions and relationships with the arts organization, but instead reflect the respondents as a whole, with the average birth year of 1957.

Chapter 4: Results

Questions one through four sought to identify strengths and weaknesses in the relationship held between the arts organization and its patrons. To address this question, the mean scores and standard deviations for responses were analyzed on a five-point scale. Table 1 displays these results.

The mean score for all OPR dimensions (trust, control mutuality, commitment and satisfaction) fell between 3.79 and 4.62, demonstrating a strong relationship between Orlando Shakespeare Theater patrons and the organization itself. Participants agreed most strongly with being “happy with this performing arts organization” ($M = 4.75, SD = 0.65$), and feeling “very confident about this organization’s skills” ($M = 4.64, SD = 0.79$). Participants indicated the most disagreement with “The management of this organization gives people like me enough say in the decision-making process” ($M = 3.78, SD = 0.95$). The strongest dimension overall was Satisfaction, with an average mean of 4.55. The weakest was Control Mutuality, with an average mean of 4.15.

Table 1: Means and Standard Deviations of OPR Dimensions

Please indicate the extent of your agreement with each statement:		M	SD
Trust	This organization treats people like me fairly and justly	4.62	.943
	Whenever this organization makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned about people like me.	4.17	.982
	This organization can be relied on to keep its promises	4.47	.892
	I feel very confident about this organization's skills	4.64	.791
	I believe that this organization takes the opinions of people like me into account when making decisions	4.24	1.014
	This organization has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do.	4.50	.853
Control Mutuality	This organization and people like me are attentive to what each other say	4.24	.908
	This organization believes the opinions of people like me are legitimate	4.34	.952
	In dealing with people like me, this organization has a tendency to throw its weight around (Reversed)	4.09	1.127
	This organization really listens to what people like me have to say	4.22	.905
	The management of this organization gives people like me enough say in the decision-making process	3.79	.948
Commitment	I feel that this organization is trying to maintain a long-term commitment to people like me	4.59	.789
	I can see that this organization wants to maintain a relationship with people like me	4.57	.873
	There is a long-lasting bond between this performing arts organization and people like me	4.45	.857
	Compared to other performing arts organizations, I value my relationship with this organization more	4.07	1.041
	I would rather work together with this organization rather than not	4.57	.725
Satisfaction	I am happy with this performing arts organization	4.75	.651
	Both the organization and people like me benefit from our relationship to each other	4.62	.717
	Most people like me are happy in their interactions with this organization	4.38	.887
	Generally speaking, I am pleased with the relationship this organization has established with people like me	4.61	.750
	Most people enjoy dealing with this organization	4.36	.847

A reliability analysis was then performed to determine the internal consistency of the OPR scale. The analysis revealed that the OPR survey measure had excellent internal consistency (Chronbach's $\alpha = 0.945$). The only items that would further increase internal consistency by being omitted were "In dealing with people like me, this organization has a tendency to throw its weight around" (Chronbach's $\alpha = 0.961$) and "Compared to other performing arts organizations, I value my relationship with this organization more" (Chronbach's $\alpha = 0.946$). These questions were included in analyses because the internal consistency remains high.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Four Dimensions of OPR

Components	No. of Items	M	SD	α
Trust	6	4.4456	.76951	.918
Control Mutuality	5	4.1476	.76486	.851
Commitment	5	4.4496	.69485	.863
Satisfaction	5	4.5511	.65539	.905

Correlation and multiple regression analyses were then conducted to examine the relationship between OPR dimensions and consumer behaviors. The behaviors measured were both superficial (event attendance, recommendation of services) and intensive (contributions of money, labor or time), but the significant relationships identified in the analysis were both superficial behaviors.

This regression analysis identified two causal relationships. The first of these relationships is between individuals' recommendation of the organization in the last three months, which positively correlates with the OPR Commitment dimension. See Table 3 for

the overall significant model ($p < .05$) and Table 4 for coefficients of this analysis. Both relationships discussed are superficial behaviors, as there were technical issues with intensive behavior questions.

Table 3: Model Summary for Regression Analysis for Recommendations in Last Three Months

R	R ²	R ² adj.	df	F	p
.447 ^a	.200	.161	87	5.182	.001

Table 4: Coefficients for Regression Analysis for Recommendations in Last Three Months

Variable	B	SE B	β	t	p
Constant	1.022	.566		1.808	.074
Commitment Scale	.686	.247	.576	2.775	.007
Trust Scale	-.066	.223	-.058	-.295	.768
Control Mutuality Scale	.315	.203	.267	1.552	.124
Satisfaction Scale	-.506	.279	-.410	-1.812	.074

The second causal relationship demonstrated by this analysis is performance attendance in the last twelve months and the OPR Control Mutuality dimension. See Table 5 for the overall significant model and Table 6 for coefficients of this analysis.

Table 5: Coefficients for Regression Analysis for Event/Performance Attendance in Last Twelve Months

Variable	B	SE B	β	t	p
Constant	2.020	.447		4.516	.000
Control Mutuality Scale	.361	.160	.392	2.250	.027
Trust Scale	-.93	.177	-.106	-.529	.598

Commitment Scale	.233	.196	.250	1.189	.238
Satisfaction Scale	-.125	.221	-.130	-.565	.573

Table 6: Model Summary for Regression Analysis for Event/Performance Attendance in Last Twelve Months

R	R ²	R ² adj.	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
.423 ^a	.179	.139	87	4.514	.002

Chapter 5: Discussion

This study sought to identify the relationship between Millennials patrons and their performing arts organization of choice. Due to a statistically insignificant sample of Millennial respondents and technical issues in the Dialogic Tenants section of the survey, results present helpful findings, though they are not entirely aligned with the survey's initial research goals. However, these results may still benefit public relations practitioners at performing arts organizations and how they communicate with their publics.

Overall, findings from this survey indicate that the Orlando Shakespeare Theater has a strong relationship with the respondents to this survey as all measures reached a mean of 3.79 or higher.

The most important findings of this research are the correlations between relationship dimensions and Baumgarth's superficial cultural consumer behaviors. Commitment is positively correlated with recommendations of the organization's services or events. The weakest dimension, Control Mutuality, is positively correlated with an individual's event attendance record. According to Hon and Grunig's definition of Control Mutuality (1999), patrons' attendance increases in line with "the degree to which parties agree on who has the rightful power to influence one another." While this dimension is the Orlando Shakespeare Theater's weakest dimension, it remains at a relatively high mean of 4.15 ($SD = .765$). Its strongest dimension, at a mean of 4.55 ($SD = .655$) is Satisfaction, indicating reinforced positive expectations. Hon and Grunig (1999) define a satisfying relationship s one where "benefits outweigh the costs." The Orlando Shakespeare Theater

therefore serves as an exemplar of an arts organization in a positive relationship with its publics.

All respondents exhibit a strong commitment to superficial behaviors. All respondents, regardless of generation, made at least one recommendation of the Orlando Shakespeare Theater to another individual in the previous three months, with the exception of 4.7% of non-Millennials (four respondents). Millennials had attended fewer performances on average than non-Millennials. Most Millennials had attended one to two performances in the past twelve months, while 73% of non-Millennials had attended five or more. An informal observation here may suggest that Millennials are less receptive to subscription packages, and thus purchase tickets on a show-to-show basis. This does not have an impact on communication, but may indicate a new path for future research. Additionally, questions concerning subscription purchases may be added to the current version of the survey in order to build in an additional superficial measure.

Intensive behaviors include the contribution of money and time by an individual to a cultural organization (Baumgarth, 2014). One of the six Millennial respondents had contributed financially, in comparison to nearly one-half of non-Millennial respondents. No Millennial respondent had volunteered with the organization in the past year, while 14.12% of non-Millennial respondents had done so. This information should be appraised with the goals of the Orlando Shakespeare Theater in mind; are they actively seeking out volunteers? When this survey is disseminated in other settings, comparisons must be made that take into account the specific goals and outputs of the organization. For example, a

small non-profit community theater that runs most if not all of its programs through volunteer artists and contributors will receive a larger response to intensive behaviors, while large non-profits that pay their artists will likely receive a smaller volunteer response. The behaviors must be evaluated in comparison to arts organizations of a similar structure.

A casual observation of the survey respondents may indicate that Millennials are not as easily reached by email blasts as older generations. The lack of Millennial response may indicate a preference of other communication channels, a lack of desire to engage in these kinds of surveys, or possibly a small population amongst Orlando Shakespeare Theater patrons. Information about the theater's patronage is an avenue for future research, as one compares survey results to all patron demographics.

Revisiting Fromm and Garton's subgroups, certain segments of the Millennial population may be attracted more or less powerfully by different OPR measures and dialogic tenants. These cannot be determined here due to sample size, but one may expect that just as Millennials share overarching qualities in varying degrees, OPR dimensions may correlate on varying levels of strength with different subgroups of Millennials. For example, The "Millennial Mom" is focused on highly social aspects of life, and could be expected to recommend the organization's services to her social circle. Thus, focusing efforts to increase perception of commitment on this subgroup will lead to more brand awareness. In short, these correlations are strengthened by their application to appropriate Millennial subgroups.

Limitations

Aside from technical difficulties, information that could have contributed to this research include data illustrating the full size and demographic scale of the Orlando Shakespeare Theater's patronage and mailing list.

The existing body of research on Millennials has changed significantly over time, and adjustments may need to be made as the youngest of the generation come into purchasing power. The consumption habits of a generation mature as they enter life stages of empowerment. The 2020 Census can be expected to provide better insight into this generation's spending habits and nuances that influence its entertainment spending habits.

Industry Implications

The most significant correlation from this study is the relationship between Control Mutuality and performance attendance, and Commitment with recommendations. In seeking an increase in patronage, performing arts organizations may increase public relations outputs that correlate with OPR outcomes in a more targeted way.

Tying this study to the Millennial generation will take additional research, but it is promising to see that Halliday and Astafaya's ideal Millennial experience of value, self-development, memories, and emotion (2014) are reflected in OPR dimensions. Just as Hon and Grunig (1999) describe Satisfaction as based on happiness and a mutually beneficial relationship, Commitment as based on consistent action and emotional orientation and Trust as based in integrity, the experiences produced by arts organizations may reflect values and emotions pertinent to Halliday and Astafaya's MMC model. By working to satisfy

OPR dimensions, performing arts organizations may inadvertently satisfy some of the ideal Millennial activity requirements.

Halliday, Astafyeva (2014) and Peck (2015) all propose a shift in power dynamics, that Millennial cultural consumers seek “greater involvement in co-creation of arts experiences,” indicating a desire for increased Control Mutuality, which is positively correlated with recommendation of services or programming. An increased emphasis on Control Mutuality and dialogue about the power balance in organizations may lead to an increase in Millennial patronage, along with an increase in program recommendation. Previous literature supports the idea that this dimension of OPR may prove integral to securing the Millennial performing arts audience. The Orlando Shakespeare Theater had the lowest mean in response to “the management of this organization gives people like me enough say in the decision-making process” ($M = 3.79, SD = .948$), and if this is reflected in the performing arts industry, the empowerment of patrons may serve as the boost needed in public communication.

Practical Implications

This survey developed in line with communication and cultural theory may be best utilized to reach patrons of multiple performing arts organizations. Through the comparison of successes and shortcomings held by a multitude of performing arts organizations, a best practices guide may be effectively developed. Similarly, an organization may disseminate this survey to compare its success with those of benchmark organizations or competitors to track programming or public relations campaigns and

techniques. These findings may also serve as a benchmark comparison by which organizations can compare patron demographic data.

APPENDIX A: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT HUMAN RESEARCH



University of Central Florida Institutional Review
Board Office of Research & Commercialization
12201 Research Parkway, Suite
501 Orlando, Florida 32826-
3246
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-
2276
[www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.h
tml](http://www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html)

Determination of Exempt Human Research

**From: UCF Institutional Review Board
#1 FWA00000351, IRB00001138**

To: Sarah Schreck

Date: March 12, 2018

Dear Researcher:

On 03/12/2018, the IRB reviewed the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:


Type of Review: Exempt Determination – Category 2 – Adult Participants
Online Survey; n=300
Project Title: Filling the House: Engaging a Millennial Performing
Arts Audience
Investigator: Sarah Schreck
IRB Number: SBE-18-13717
Funding Agency:
Grant Title:
Research ID: N/A

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

Please be aware that UCF Policy requires de-identified data to be kept for at least 5 years.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the [Investigator Manual](#).

This letter is signed by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jennifer Neal-Jimenez", written over a horizontal line.

Signature applied by Jennifer Neal-Jimenez on 03/12/2018 10:12:21 PM EDT

Designated Reviewer

APPENDIX B: SURVEY

Relationship Management Theory

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this survey!

This survey seeks to better understand your relationship with a central Florida performing arts organization. Please respond to the following questions to the best of your knowledge. Results of this survey will be used to improve communication and engagement between this organization and you.

This survey is voluntary and you may discontinue participation at any time.

By proceeding, you consent to participate in this research. All of this information will be kept confidential and private. The survey will take no longer than 20 minutes to complete.

You must be 18 years of age or older to take part in this research study. If you have questions, concerns, or complaints please contact:

Sarah Schreck
University of Central Florida (904) 708-2093 sarahschreck@knights.ucf.edu

1. Trust: Please indicate the extent of your agreement with each statement. (Five Point Likert Scale, from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*)

This organization treats people like me fairly and justly.

Whenever this organization makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned about people like me.

This organization can be relied on to keep its promises.

I feel very confident about this organization's skills.

I believe that this organization takes the opinions of people like me into account when making decisions.

This organization has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do.

2. Control Mutuality: Please indicate the extent of your agreement with each statement. (Five Point Likert Scale, from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*)

This organization and people like me are attentive to what each other say.

This organization believes the opinions of people like me are legitimate.

In dealing with people like me, this organization has a tendency to throw its weight around.

This organization really listens to what people like me have to say.

The management of this organization gives people like me enough say in the decision-making process.

3. Commitment: Please indicate the extent of your agreement with each statement. (Five Point Likert Scale, from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*)

I feel that this organization is trying to maintain a long-term commitment to people like me.

I can see that this organization wants to maintain a relationship with people like me.

There is a long-lasting bond between this performing arts organization and people like me.

Compared to other performing arts organizations, I value my relationship with this organization more.

I would rather work together with this organization rather than not.

4. Satisfaction: Please indicate the extent of your agreement with each statement. (Five Point Likert Scale, from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*)

I am happy with this performing arts organization.

Both the organization and people like me benefit from our relationship to each other.

Most people like me are happy in their interactions with this organization.

Generally speaking, I am pleased with the relationship this organization has established with people like me.

Most people enjoy dealing with this organization.

Dialogic Tenants

5. Please indicate the extent of your agreement with each statement. (Five Point Likert Scale, from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*) This organization:

Mutuality

Treats me as an equal

Makes me feel comfortable asking questions or engaging in discussion

Acknowledges my needs, desires, and views

Engages in timely communication with me about important events, issues, or organizational efforts

Empathy

Is accessible when I want to communicate with them

Is engaged with the local community

Is engaged with the greater (international, national) community

Makes it easy for me to provide feedback (ex. providing online forms, in-person comment cards, having receptive employees in person and on the phone).

Encourages me to provide feedback

Makes me feel valued

Risk

Seems genuine when communicating with me

Seems scripted when communicating with me

Commitment

Communicates with me until I am satisfied

Engages in deceptive communication

Responds in a timely manner to my communication

Considers my opinions when selecting their season of shows and events

Have you ever engaged in a spontaneous conversation with this performing arts organization in person, online, or over the phone? If no, write "no." If yes, please explain.

Yes Maybe No

Have you ever noticed a change in this performing arts organization's language over time that has made it more accessible to you or others?

Yes
No
Unsure

Communication & Consumer Behaviors

Which of the following forms of communication have you and this performing arts organization used to communicate with each other? (Select all that apply).

- Television
- Radio
- Email
- Mail
- Phone
- Facebook
- Other Social Media
- In-Person (ex. Talking with staff in the lobby or at events)

Have you ever engaged with this performing arts organization through social media, the phone, email, or in-person regarding a topic other than a general issue or problem?

Yes No Unsure

Have you attended specific events put on by this performing arts organization that had connections to local issues, people, or history?

Yes No Unsure

Superficial Behaviors

In the last three (3) months, how often have you personally recommended this organization's events or services to others?

- None
- 1-2
- 3-4
- 5+

In the past twelve (12) months, how many events or performances have you attended that were held by this organization?

- None
- 1-2
- 3-4
- 5+

Intensive Behaviors

Have you contributed to this organization financially? (ex. donations, sponsorships, fundraising events)

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to answer

In the past twelve (12) months, how often have you volunteered for this organization?

- Never
- 1-2 times
- 3-4 times
- More than 5 times

How likely are you to do any of the following in the next three (3) months? [One answer per activity]

- Attend an event hosted by this organization**
- Donate money to this organization**
- Volunteer for this organization**

- Extremely Unlikely
- Somewhat Unlikely
- Neither Likely nor Unlikely
- Somewhat Likely

Extremely Likely

Demographics

What is your year of birth? (If collecting generation-specific information)

What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?

Less than high school degree

High school graduate (high school diploma or equivalent including GED)

Some college but no degree

Associate degree in college (2-year)

Bachelor's degree in college (4-year)

Master's degree

Doctoral degree

Professional degree (JD, MD)

Choose one or more categories that best describe you:

American Indian or Alaska Native

Asian

Black or African American

Caucasian

Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

Other

What is your sex?

Male

Female

Information about income is very important to understand. Would you please give your best guess? Please indicate the answer that includes your entire household income in (previous year) before taxes.

Less than \$10,000

\$10,000 to \$30,000

\$31,000 to \$60,000

\$61,000 to \$90,000

\$90,000 to \$120,000

\$120,000 or more

What is your ZIP code?

APPENDIX C - TABLES & CHARTS

Table 7 - Communication Channel Preference

Channel	Millennial Use	Non-Millennial Use
Television	0%	1%
Radio	0%	1%
Email	12%	28%
Mail	12%	15%
Phone	16%	25%
Facebook	16%	6%
Other Social	12%	0%
In-Person (Talking with staff in lobby or events)	24%	24%

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