

You Shouldn't Judge a Book by Its Cover: Contractual Relations, Commitment and Loyalty Outcomes

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Abstract

This article deals with the outcomes of loyalty in performing arts. Research carried out at the Croix-Rousse Theatre in Lyon (France) shows that, on the contrary to previous works carried out on this theme, membership is not necessarily a proof of loyalty. Furthermore, it does not show a specificity of performing arts consumer behaviour concerning the outcomes of loyalty.

Keywords

Loyalty, performing arts, commitment, loyalty program

Introduction

This work bears on the outcomes of customer loyalty towards performing arts institutions. These latter are currently confronted with the necessity to “fill theatre halls” in a context where subsidies have been reduced and this, despite the fact that the conclusions of Baumol are still to the fore, as much in terms of the field of lyrical arts as for performing arts as a whole (Baumol & Bowen, 1966 ; Benhamou, 2001).

Although frequenting performing arts has been tending to increase, whether this be a long-dating or more recent trend, it still continues to be elitist (Benhamou, 2001). Therefore, in this context where the offer is significant and where, a contrario, the demand is limited and in weak growth, filling “traditional” theatres cannot be based uniquely on capturing new clients: it should mainly rely on the regular frequentation of one particular theatre by this clientele.

If the question of building customer loyalty towards a performing arts organisation appears to be crucial, when seeking answers, we come up against the very question of the specificity of performing arts and, more generally, that of the cultural activity in comparison with other industries, in particular, those of services. Several consumer behaviour specificities have been identified (Bourgeon and Filser, 1995; Evrard et al., 2000). The decision to attend a particular theatre or a particular performance does not rely as much on the treatment of the information ex-ante concerning a particular attribute of the performance – reputation of the director, price,... – than on seeking a new experience.

Some recent works are attached to modelling the loyalty behaviour in cultural activities (Harrison and Shaw, 2004). Among these works, those of Garbarino and Johnson (1999), which we develop later in this article, bring some elements of response to our questioning.

To broach the question of the outcomes of customer loyalty towards the performing arts and to bring to the fore some specificity of this behaviour, we propose to test the generic models developed in the field of services on a concrete case. Our ambition, in this work, is to compare the results obtained by Garbarino and Johnson (1999) with the conceptualisation of loyalty proposed by N'Goala (2003) on a specific case: the Croix-Rousse Theatre in Lyon.

Definition of the Conceptual Framework: Loyalty Models in Services

Literature concerning loyalty in general has been extremely abundant since the beginning of the 90's; it aims to answer three questions:

- What are the antecedents of loyalty, or how can an organisation foster customer loyalty?
- What are the outcomes of customer loyalty? Or what is loyalty?
- What constructs best relate antecedents of loyalty to the outcomes: satisfaction and perceived quality? Or trust and commitment instead?

In this article, we are interested in the two last questions: outcomes of loyalty and the mediator concept of models.

Loyalty: a Behaviour and an Attitude

If today there is not a consensus around a unique model to represent loyalty, some common elements emerge from different works. Loyalty is considered as a multi-dimensional phenomenon (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner and Gremler, 2002; N'Goala, 2003; Bendapudi and Berry, 1997) because it is determined by several factors and because it can take several forms. In particular, loyalty is a matter of both attitude and behaviour (Dick and Basu, 1994). These two dimensions are combined to reach four types of loyalty, which are expressed in different ways. "True" loyalty is the combination of a favourable relative attitude with a high repeat patronage. It can be distinguished from spurious loyalty or inertia, where only the repeat patronage is high: there are no attitudinal influences on behaviour. It can equally be distinguished from latent loyalty where only the attitude is favourable but not the behaviour (low repeated patronage).

How Is “True” Loyalty Expressed?

According to Dick and Basu (1994), the “true” loyalty of a customer has three consequences: resistance to counter persuasion, tolerance to dissatisfaction and positive word of mouth. Bendapudi and Berry (1997) complete these three expressions of loyalty by four elements: acquiescence, cooperation, relationship enhancement and partner identification.

All these definitions of loyalty seem to be included in the proposal of N’Goala (2003) that simultaneously has the advantage of being both more complete and more parsimonious. He defines loyalty as a commitment, which is expressed through three dimensions: stability (resistance to counter persuasion, tolerance to dissatisfaction), cooperation (relationship enhancement, acquiescence) and integrity defined as fairness, goodwill and steadfastness (absence of opportunism, absence of negative word of mouth). The expressions of loyalty brought to mind by the authors quoted earlier are just as much expressions of these three dimensions. We broach here a specificity of loyalty in services: in these activities the client co-produces the service with the service provider, consumer behaviour is as important as the purchasing behaviour, and the stability, cooperation and integrity expressed by loyal clients constitutes a source of considerable value for the service company.

N’Goala is interested in situations of adversity, i.e. those where customer loyalty is put to the test, either by the competitive offer, or by an episode of dissatisfaction. He has translated the three dimensions of loyalty into very concrete expressions. Our ambition in this article is to identify concrete translations of loyalty in a particular field – performing arts – and in situations, which are not necessarily a question of adversity.

Satisfaction or Commitment? Transaction or Relation?

A major debate of literature dealing with loyalty is focussed on the question of the mediator concept or the central concept of models: satisfaction or commitment? The debate sets a perspective in which it is the transaction, which dominates (loyalty is in this case a consequence of satisfaction with regards to the service (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner & Gremler, 2002) against another perspective in which it is the relationship, which prevails. In this case, loyalty is defined as “a deep commitment of the consumer to behave in a favourable manner to the brand despite circumstances which can from time to time be unfavourable” (N’Goala, 2003).

In this debate between commitment and satisfaction as the most predictive concept of loyalty, Garbarino and Johnson (1999) bring an interesting contribution on an empirical field, which is similar to ours: performing arts. According to them, satisfaction or commitment as mediator concepts depends on clients. Some have a strong relational orientation: trust and commitment are the most important determinants of their loyalty intentions. Others have a low relational orientation: their future intentions are therefore determined by their satisfaction. Moreover, the two authors show that their contractual relations reveal their orientation: relational for consistent subscribers (long term subscribers), transactional for occasional subscribers and individual ticket buyers.

Analysis Framework

Basing our research on the contributions of Garbarino and Johnson (1999) and N'Goala (2003), we are going to analyse the views expressed by three groups of customers of the Croix-Rousse Theatre in Lyon: consistent subscribers, former or occasional subscribers and individual ticket buyers. In the views communicated, we will be looking for expressions of integrity, cooperation and stability that reflect client commitment towards the theatre.

Thus, we will acknowledge the relevance of these three outcomes of loyalty to describe the differences in commitment or relational orientation on the behalf of each group. We will also contribute by stating how stability, cooperation and integrity materialise on a particular field – performing arts – and in a variety of situations not necessarily falling within the scope of adversity. We will also analyse the internal homogeneity of each group of customers and finally we will compare our results with those of Garbarino and Johnson (1999).

The Diversity of Outcomes of Loyalty of the Spectators of the Croix-Rousse Theatre

Empirical Case and Methodology

The Croix-Rousse Theatre located in Lyon, which is the subject of our empirical study, is a young theatre. Created in 1994, it puts on stage fifteen or so plays and shows per year, a third of which are first productions. In 2002, the theatre, which offers different pricing formats – season tickets, bookings with reductions according to age – is today confronted with problems of subscription renewal. While the current members represent a significant and increasing part of spectators (29% in 1999 vs. 47% in 2002), the rate of membership renewal is only 37%.

As our empirical field is similar to that studied by Garbarino & Johnson (1999), we have decided to make use of part of their research protocol and to base our segmentation on the same criteria, contractual relations: consistent subscribers, occasional subscribers and individual ticket buyers.

Three focus group interviews have been carried out over a period of three days. The first brings together seven spectators, members for a number of years and attending at least five performances per year. The second group brings together 8 members in 2001 that have not renewed their subscription in 2002. The third group is made up of nine spectators who regularly go to the theatre but have not taken out memberships.

The interviews, which are filmed and transcribed, are performed using a generic grid focussing on the attractiveness of different contractual relations.

All the materials were subjected to a re-codification through the use of the three types of outcomes proposed by N'Goala (2003).

The Perception of the Subscription Differs According to the Population Group Studied

For consistent subscribers, the membership enables regular outings to the theatre: “it is very easy to take ten to twelve performances”. Interested by the theatre, these spectators have frequently been members of other institutions within Lyon. The flexibility of the membership options offered by the Croix-Rousse Theatre is appreciated: “There are practically no constraints”. “It is flexible: we can change the date of the performances chosen”. The obligation to assist a first new production, one of few obligations of the membership, is perceived by this group as a legitimate constraint: “Every theatre must allow its first productions to be known”. Finally, the membership is presented as a virtue: “it forces us to go out even when our schedules are busy”, “it avoids finding pretexts to not come”.

Spectators of the second group, made up of former subscribers, seem to be more reluctant towards the membership system. They choose options including few performances and would like to see a bigger advantage in terms of price for the choice of complementary performances: “We would like major reductions on supplementary performances”. They would like “a minimum commitment with many membership advantages”. “It is always unpleasant to feel something is forced upon us”.

Spectators of the last group, as for them have never taken out a membership with the Croix-Rousse Theatre. This group could be divided into two subgroups. The first subgroup, made up of people who, for the last few years, frequently go to the theatre, express an aversion to the membership: “It is a real constraint”. “We prefer to pay more rather than to be obliged to come”. “We like our liberty and do not want to be bound by a subscription”. The second subgroup is made up of non-members due to the fact that they are newcomers or through a lack of information: “We don’t look at the advertising leaflets”. “Can we take out a membership which requires attending only two performances?” For this subgroup, membership conserves a practical use. “It is only interesting if it brings the privilege of accessing the highly popular representations”. “Or to be sure to have a good seat”. However this guarantee is not necessary: “There are always seats at the last minute for performances at the Croix-Rousse Theatre”. “The theatre doesn’t have any *bad* seats”.

Over and above these differences in perceiving the membership, the three groups express loyalty of varying degrees. We reproduce them in relation to the three types of outcomes envisaged by N’Goala (2003): stability, integrity and cooperation.

Outcomes of Loyalty of Consistent Subscribers

Stability: Stability is high. Members for a number of years, these spectators possess a membership for a large number of performances: “We wouldn’t think about taking out a membership for any less than five performances”. The performances of the Croix-Rousse Theatre make up a large number of the performances to be seen during the year: “If there is a little left in our budget, we will perhaps buy seats for performances in other venues”. “We prefer to add more performances to our repertoire rather than to change venues”.

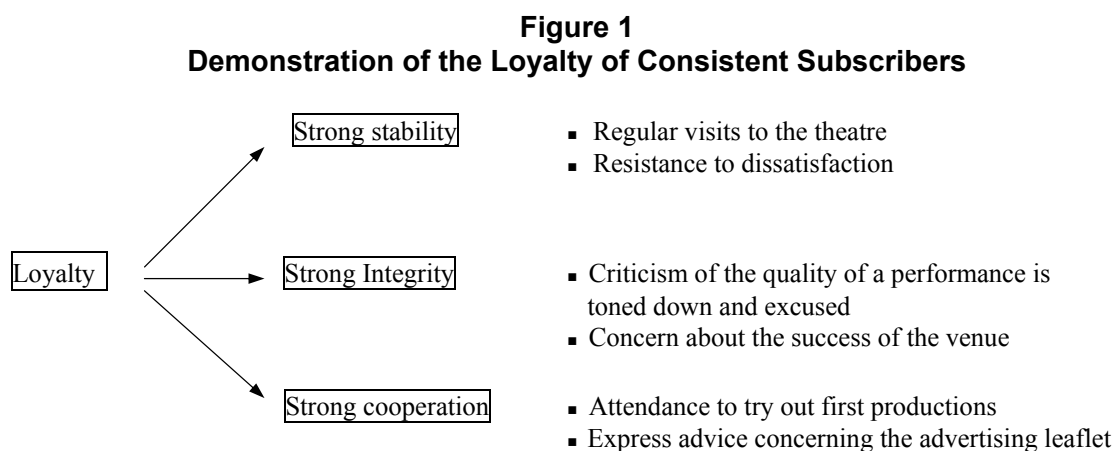
Integrity: Regular members express an unconditional integrity that is demonstrated in two ways. Questioned on the quality of the performances, they sometimes express negative opinions concerning the first productions: “We have sometimes been disappointed”, “We were bored”, “We found this show unbearable”, “It made my blood boil”. Nevertheless, these negative comments are immediately followed by positive comments about the theatre, justly appreciated for its creativity: “You can’t feel indifferent about this venue”. “We have spent some extraordinary moments here”. Also, being disappointed is, according to them, unavoidable: “It’s part of the game”. The main explanation given for this disappointment resides in themselves and not in the institution: “It was my choice”. “We trusted the team”. “We come here to have a surprise, whether it be positive or negative”.

The second demonstration of integrity resides in the continued support in relation to adverse conditions, for example when there is a last minute cancellation of a performance – “We were not bothered by that” – or that a play offered by the venue did not receive the expected success: “I was sad to see that it didn’t come off”.

Cooperation: The remarks made by regular members show cooperation since their role is, for them, to assist first productions: “We take the risk of discovering new directors”. “We choose our performances in relation to the director who was unpopular in order to give him another chance and perhaps get a better impression”. This attitude would be made easier by subscription and by the variety of performances offered: “It is easier to take risks on the artistic level if the financial risks are low”. “The diversity of the programming allows us to take risks”.

Furthermore, cooperation is demonstrated in the comments expressed about the communication of the theatre which, according to them, does not show the theatre in a flattering light: “The denomination “Théâtre d’essai populaire (popular experimental theatre) is not good (...) And also this theatre does more than just experiments!” “It is more accurately a theatre for all”.

We have summed up the demonstrations of loyalty of this group of spectators in the following diagram:



The Outcomes of Loyalty of Former Subscribers

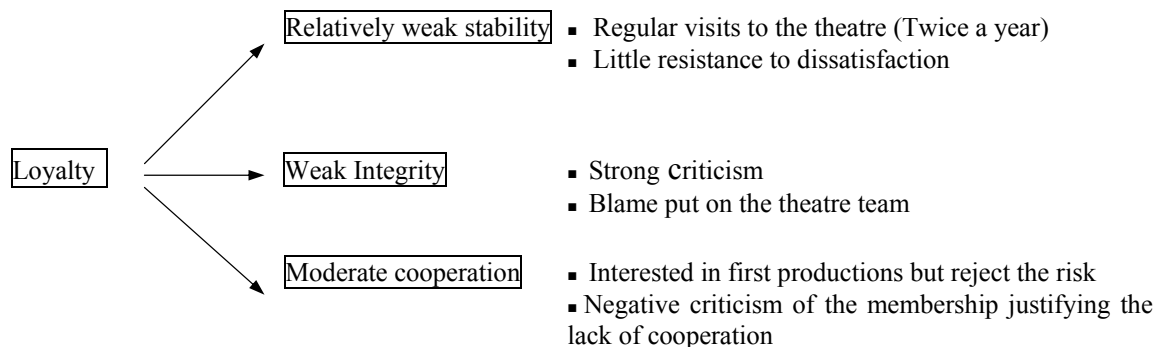
Stability: All the members of this group attend the Croix-Rousse Theatre on average twice a year and come less regularly than the previous group. However, the main reason for not renewing membership resides in the feeling of disappointment in relation to the performances or the last-minute cancellation of a performance. Finally, they notice that the Croix-Rousse Theatre is not an exclusive venue: "We can easily find performances which suit us elsewhere".

Integrity: These spectators acknowledge the originality of the theatre's programming. Nevertheless, criticism of the performances or the organisation is expressed spontaneously and more easily than the qualities are: "Our choice was a catastrophe". "The cancellation of the play is scandalous". "It is outrageous that the director was not ready". The recollection of performances judged to be of bad quality is the subject of shared jokes. These expressed let-downs are attributed to the theatre team: "The team did not warn us enough!".

Cooperation: The signs of cooperation among this group are moderate. Fans of the theatre, they willingly announce they will attend new first productions. However, before coming, they want to be informed: "That way we are not let down". On the subject of first productions they give some advice: "Stop adding there, where there is already enough". Finally, the subscription is considered to be complex and making an effort to try to understand it not worthwhile: "We are not ready to make such an effort". "I let the date of membership go by as the form you have to fill in is a real nightmare. Even motivated people give up".

We have summed up the demonstrations of loyalty of this group of spectators in the following diagram:

Figure 2
Demonstration of Loyalty of Former Subscribers



Demonstrations of Loyalty of Individual Ticket Buyers

As for the perception of the membership, we can notice the same subdivision of this group into two subgroups.

Stability: The subgroup of individual ticket buyers resistant to subscription shows a strong stability and has regularly visited the theatre for several years: "We can come six times in the same season".

The second subgroup is made up of spectators coming less often (less than twice a year). Their regularity is especially justified by the interest in the performance itself and not the interest in the team or the institution: "We come on an impulse".

Integrity: Here again, the opinions differ according to the two profiles of spectators. Those resistant to membership seem on the whole to demonstrate integrity. Like the consistent subscribers, they express spontaneously their disappointment with regards to certain performances – "On this account, frankly we feel let down" – but they do not attribute their disappointment to the theatre team: "that must come from us". The second category of spectators, misinformed or newcomers, make few negative remarks: "No. The programming is the most original in Lyon ». « We have never been disappointed". Nevertheless, not having any remarks which are strongly negative about the Croix-Rousse Theatre or on the quality of the performances, we are not in a position to evaluate the preservation or not of integrity when faced with a negative event.

Cooperation: Those resistant to subscription seem to be the most cooperative of the two subgroups. They willingly attend first productions, even if they do try to inform themselves beforehand about the nature of the performance.

The second category of non-members is less cooperative. The risks taken when attending first productions are very low: "We prefer to keep to what is known so as to have as few surprises as possible". Cooperation is inexistent in the framework of the choice of performance at the beginning of the season: "We are unable to decide at the beginning of the season. You need to be a real theatre buff to do that". "Yes, we are a little lazy". Finally, we identify a certain nonchalance on the subject of reading the advertising leaflets: "No. We don't come to get them. Could you send them to us?". "Read the handouts? They're too heavy-going". "It is really easy to give up reading about a performance you don't know".

We have summed up the demonstrations of loyalty of this group of spectators in the following diagram:

Figure 3
Demonstration of the Loyalty of the Non-member Clientele, Resistant to Membership

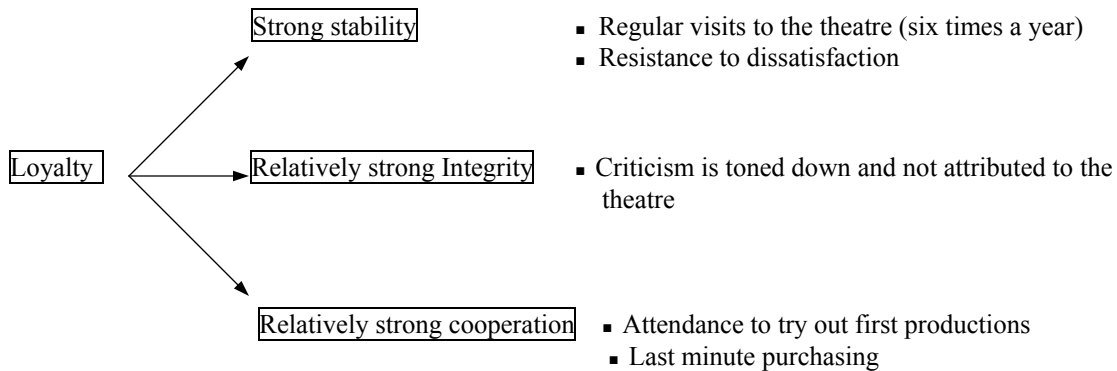
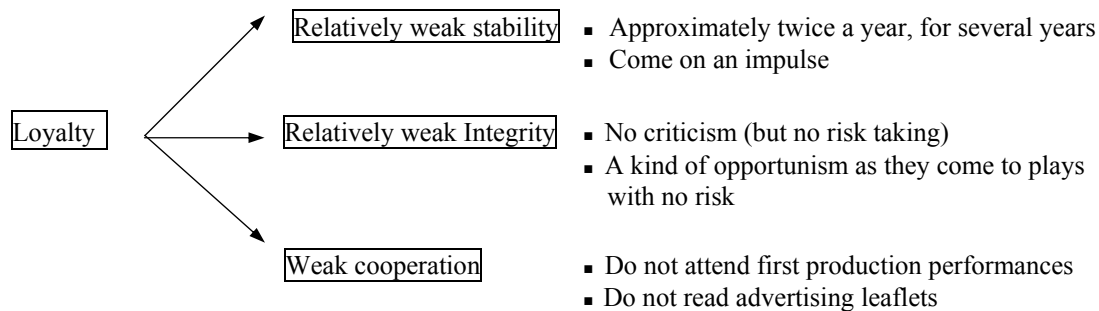


Figure 3 bis
Demonstration of Loyalty of Non-member Clientele, Uninformed



Discussion

The demonstrations of “true” loyalty: consistent subscribers

The discourse of the participants of the three groups shows concrete and differentiated expressions of the three dimensions of loyalty. Among them two in particular can enrich the propositions of N’Goala (2003); the first is an expression of integrity in a situation of adversity, the second an expression of cooperation.

- Who’s to blame? An expression of integrity in case of dissatisfaction

In our field, the question of placing the blame in case of a let down appears to be discriminatory. In fact, the consistent subscribers shoulder the responsibility when they feel let down by a performance: they do not put the blame on the programming but rather on the lack of clear-sightedness of their own choice. On the contrary, former subscribers consider the Croix-Rousse Theatre to be to blame in two respects: bad programming and misinformation.

Blame attribution in case of disappointment is, in our particular field, a concrete expression of the sympathy of spectators with the theatre and therefore of their integrity towards the latter. When clients shoulder part of the responsibility of the disappointment, they show their integrity towards the partner. On the contrary, if they throw all the blame on this partner it is an absence of integrity which therefore becomes apparent.

- Accept the risks of participation: an expression of cooperation

Cooperation is a very important stake for a service company as its performance depends partly on the co-production of the client. Propensity of the latter to invest the right resources can be limited by the risk perceived of a performance falling short of their expectations.

Consistent members show their acceptance of risks. They are aware of the risks of a performance falling short of their expectations when they choose to go to see a first production. Their past experience has taught them that surprises linked to first productions can be good or bad. However these spectators feel it is their duty to be there at these first productions. Certainly, preferential pricing limits the financial losses resulting from a disenchantment but not the other losses: time spent, emotions felt,...

These spectators accept to take more risks than those of the other groups.

It is exactly on this question of risk acceptance that the first and second segments of spectators diverge. Occasional subscribers also express their interest for first productions and acknowledge that the Croix-Rousse Theatre has an original and creative programme. However they express the wish to not take the risk: the level of risk perceived holds them back from choosing first productions.

All Long-lasting Relationships Do Not Necessarily Express the Client's Affective Commitment

Among former subscribers, we observe demonstrations of commitment or loyalty that are weaker than that of consistent members. They are not however totally absent. Former members show a certain stability in their relationship with the Croix-Rousse Theatre. The analysis of their discourse reveals several clues of the dominant logic which brings about their behaviour: the cost/benefit approach. They implicitly make reference to this in relation to the subscription system: simply reading the forms is an "effort" that is not worthwhile. They also call to mind the system's absence of advantages: the cost of losing freedom is not compensated by a desired advantage in price reduction. This same cost/benefit approach can explain their greater aversion to risk linked to first productions and the greater sensitivity to satisfaction or dissatisfaction in relation to a performance.

The works of Bendapudi and Berry (1997) offer an analysis framework for these observations. Based on an ambitious *précis* of the two perspectives which influence relationship marketing – the economic (particularly neo-classical) on one hand and the psychological one on the other – these authors identify two possible driving forces in all relationships: dedication or constraint. These two driving forces lead to different

outcomes: constraint can simply determine the stability of a relationship, on the contrary choice also determines the quality of the relationship.

When a relationship is maintained according to its cost/ benefit ratio the driving force of the relationship is constraint and the switching costs appear to be particularly determining of the future stability. In contrast, when the driving force of the relationship is choice or dedication, it is trust which becomes the determining factor of the evolution of the relationship.

This analysis is akin to the one proposed by Allen and Meyer (1990) in organisational literature and more particularly in the field of employee/employer relationships. They too observe that long-term relationships can be guided by two logics: choice or necessity. In the first case they speak about an affective commitment, in the second, a continuance and a normative commitment. If the two categories of commitments have the same consequences in terms of stability, it is otherwise concerning work behaviour: motivation and performance are both positively correlated to the affective commitment and negatively to the continuance commitment. Customer commitment may lead to different outcomes, depending on the reasons which push clients to take on a commitment - true loyalty is allied with affective commitment.

Commitment and Subscription

The hypothesis of Garbarino and Johnson (1999) according to which the contractual relations of clients of a theatre reflect their level of commitment is found only partly confirmed in our field. Our analysis enables the identification of affective commitment as the driving force of the relationship for consistent subscribers while the driving force of the relationship for former members is simply a weak continuance commitment.

It is on the segment of non-members that our results particularly differ from those of Garbarino and Johnson. This heterogeneous segment can be divided into two subgroups: the first is made up of customers weakly committed to the Croix-Rousse Theatre. The second subgroup breaks away from the first: stability, integrity and cooperation demonstrated by these clients reveals a high affective commitment; however these same clients affirm their aversion to becoming subscribers.

In our empirical approach, if the choice of becoming a member is shown to be significant of a level of high affective commitment, on the contrary, the choice to not becoming a member does not allow the assertion that spectators have a weak level of commitment to the theatre.

Furthermore, the propos held by the first subgroup of non-members show that a membership can be taken out under the effect of constraint or necessity and not of choice. In this case, it is the expression of a continuance commitment or of a cost/benefit calculation. This situation is brought to mind in reference to institutions other than the Croix-Rousse Theatre. For other theatres, membership is perceived as an obligation to be able to access the most well known performances in their programme. The membership becomes the cost to meet to access the advantage of well-known performances. The membership of these clients will last as long as the constraint lasts: they can therefore show considerable stability! On the other hand, constraint being the driving force, we cannot assert that these members will also display cooperation and

integrity. As a result, it is likely that for some theatres the segment of long-standing subscribers is more heterogeneous than the segment we have observed at the Croix-Rousse Theatre. Therefore a systematic correspondence does not exist between subscription and commitment; contractual relations do not necessarily reveal a level of commitment: what then is the link between membership and commitment?

Works carried out on the subject of loyalty programs in general (Gustafsson, Roos, Edvardsson, 2004, Richards 1998) deal with the same questions. These works question the capacity of a loyalty program to really influence customer commitment towards brands or only to ensure repurchase, i.e. the stability of the relationship. They observe the opportunistic behaviour of certain clients subscribing several loyalty programs in order to deal the best hand for everyone.

A subscription, like a loyalty program, once it has been subscribed to, represents a switching cost. As such it may lead on to a continuance commitment on the behalf of the customer but not necessarily an affective commitment. The psychosocial theory of commitment (Joule and Beauvois, 1989) explains this phenomenon; an act – here, to take out a membership – commits its author in so far as this act takes on a certain importance, where it is chosen freely and weakly justified or rationalised.

The psychosocial theory of commitment brings to the fore an essential point: the motivation of clients to take out a membership. When a membership is taken out by a rational calculation (prices, for example) or by necessity (to access certain performances, for example) it could beget a continuance commitment but not an affective commitment (Joule and Bauvois, 1989). And yet, a continuance commitment is not sufficient for an innovative theatre like the Croix-Rousse which over and above stability needs integrity and cooperation from its spectators to be able to produce new first productions. It may even prove to be counter-productive (Meyer and Allen, 1990) in terms of cooperation or integrity. In contrast, when a client chooses freely to take out a membership, without this relying on an economic calculation enabling him to rationalise and justify his choice, his affective commitment will be reinforced (Joule and Bauvois, 1989). These results should be considered by theatre directors when designing their subscription system: depending on how attractive the subscription, it will either foster continuance commitment or affective commitment, both commitments leading to different outcomes.

Loyalty and Variety: Limits of Loyalty Strategies in Performing Arts

For customers, loyalty to a partner means accepting to reduce one's choice: loyalty is in opposition with variety search (Sheth and Parvatiyar, 1995). In numerous markets – and in particular in services – this renouncement is the price to pay to limit perceived risk. What is the situation in performing arts? Can variety search be sacrificed to the advantage of security? The discourses of the three client segments leave us to think that loyalty to an institution does not reduce risk; on the opposite, it may lead to reduce variety: this is a major limit to any attempt at developing customer loyalty in the performing arts. Therefore, when designing a subscription system, considering associating several theatres as partners should be privileged.

Conclusion

This article seeks to characterise the outcomes of customer loyalty for performing arts institutions, through a concrete example, that of the Croix-Rousse Theatre of Lyon. The analysis is done through models intended to take into consideration the situation of loyalty in the service sector as a whole. Our study, founded on a single empirical situation, which is obviously contingent, has the virtue of being exploratory. However, although our work tends to differentiate the outcomes of loyalty in relation to the type of contractual relation, it does not show the link between these outcomes and the determinants. Nevertheless, two principle contributions of our work should be underlined.

Firstly, our research shows that the implementation of models of customer loyalty in services allows us to apprehend the specific case of performing arts. Our empirical situation does not permit us to gather elements justifying an approach of specific loyalty to this industry. Therefore, we note the completeness and the sparseness of the definition of loyalty proposed by N'Goala (2003) to describe the variety of attitudes and behaviours of different groups of spectators in relation to a theatre. Secondly, our first results allow us to take into account the fact that a relationship does not always result from a choice and can result from a constraint. The model developed by Bendapury and Berry (1997) integrates these two dimensions and allows us both to be aware of the relations driven by choice and relations born from constraint. That's why it seems to be broader and more appropriate to describe the durable relationship between a client and his service provider than other models anchored in the relational paradigm.

Moreover, our results are consistent with previous research on loyalty programs in which continuance and affective commitments have been distinguished (Meyer et Allen, 1990 ; Joule et Bauvois, 1989). In the field of performing arts, the commitment from rational motives entails the stability of the relation, but it guarantees neither integrity nor cooperation. This is not the case for affective commitment. Therefore, the design of a subscription system should be adapted to the outcomes of loyalty a theatre director wishes to foster. Finally, our results suggest that a limit to loyalty strategies in performing arts is that the reduction of variety a customer must accept when taking a subscription is not compensated by the reduction of risk and uncertainty.

Another contribution, of our study is that our results enable us to formulate two guidelines for further research to qualify and subsequently to broaden the models of N'Goala and Garbarino and Johnson. First, our empirical analysis contributes to the works of N'Goala, by fostering his definitions of integrity and cooperation. Integrity (in addition to the absence opportunism and negative word of mouth) can be revealed around the question of blame attribution in case of dissatisfaction. Commitment is demonstrated by attribution bias. The cooperation can be interpreted by the acceptance of risk linked to all customer participation to a service provider. Finally, our analysis raises the question of the relationship between the different outcomes of loyalty revealed by N'Goala. Are stability, integrity and cooperation independent dimensions or, on the contrary do they interact with each other? In this case, what are the links and the interactions which are developed among the three dimensions of loyalty?

Further, even if we do not test all the variables of the model of Garbarino and Johnson (1999), we remark that the hypothesis which posits that the contractual relation of customers reveal their level of commitment towards the theatre, is only partially

confirmed by our empirical study. This result emphasises the contingent character of both research.

Obviously, these two propositions to broaden the models of Garbarino & Johnson and of N'Goala still need to be confirmed. Our study also traces and opens future research perspectives on the theme of developing loyalty in services.

Acknowledgement

The authors gratefully acknowledge helpful comments and suggestions from Gilles N'Goala. They also thank the Croix-Rousse Theatre team and the EM Lyon teaching & Research Assistants – Delphine Bolle and Olga Bruyaka - for their support.

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