# Dimensions of Aesthetic Experiences

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Consumption experience has taken a growing importance in consumer behaviour analysis and consumer research (Evrard and Benavent, 2002). In marketing management, specific methods and processes, focussed on experience construction and control have been implemented under the name of "experiential marketing" (Schmitt, 2003). In the artistic field, the importance of the "aesthetic experience"[i], grounded in the encounter of artwork and audiences, has been recognized since a much longer time (the birth of "aesthetic" being dated from eighteenth century). This field may considered as an inspiration for the extension of the concept of "experience" to other categories of goods and services (Evrard, 2003).

This communication aims to propose an identification of the main dimensions of aesthetic experiences based on a phenomenological approach which consists of collecting small essays describing consumption experiences in the field of arts and entertainment.

The sample includes 30 essays which were written by the respondents on the basis of very broad instructions (What was the choice process? Describe the experience and your feelings during the experience? What was your evaluation of this experience?). Each respondent was free to choose the experience analysed. The size of each essay was approximately 5 pages. Different areas were chosen by sample participants (museums, performing arts, movies).

Two modes of content analysis have been used in the empirical part of the paper:

− Exploratory : a thematic analysis, intratextual and intertextual, has led to the elaboration of an analytic grid and the identification of dimensions which may be general or specific to each artistic area ;
− Confirmatory : in this section, which has been restricted to movie consumption, two predefined analytical grids will be used (see appendix 1 and 2) ; the first one comes from the analysis of the components of consumption value which have been empirically validated in the context of movie consumption (Aurier, Evrard and N'goala, 2004) ; the second one is the "experiential grid" which aims to link the modes of interaction between the consumer and the product or service (SEM, Strategic Experiential Modules) and the categories of managerial actions (EXPRO, Experiential Providers).

The empirical results of the confirmatory phase show that more textual items may be classified by the "value grid" than by the "experiential grid" ; this may be interpreted as the fact that consumers do not spontaneously mention the managerial dimensions which contribute to the building of their experiences. In the results of the "value grid", a wide domination of intrinsic components, in particular self-oriented (i.e. hedonic/aesthetic) has been observed.

**Table 1:**
**The Components of Consumption Value**

|  | **Extrinsic** | **Intrinsic** |
|---|---|---|
| **Self-orientation** | Utilitarian<br>Knowledge | Hedonic/Aesthetic<br>Experiential stimulation |
| **Others orientations** | Self-expressiveness<br>Social link | Social practices<br>Spirituality |

**Table 2:**
**The Experiential Grid**

- SEM : Sense/Feel/Think/Relate/Act
- EXPRO : Communications/Identities/Products/Cobranding/Environment/
  Web sites/People

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*Notes*

[i] The denomination may be considered as simplificatory ; such experiences are not restricted to "aesthetics" (in the philosophical meaning), but may also include other dimensions, social for instance.

*References*

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