

UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS - VARNA
FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT
DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING

Hristina Dimitrova Aleksandrova

Marketing Influences on Consumer Behaviour in the Dance Arts Market

AUTHOR'S ABSTRACT
OF A DRAFT DISSERTATION
FOR THE AWARD OF THE EDUCATIONAL AND SCIENTIFIC DEGREE 'DOCTOR'
IN PROFESSIONAL FIELD 3.8. ECONOMICS,
SCIENTIFIC SPECIALTY 'MARKETING'

Scientific supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Maria Kehayova-Stoycheva

Varna

The dissertation has been developed in a volume of 262 pages, including 204 pages of main text, a 17-page list of references, and 41 pages of appendices. It includes a total of 55 tables and 31 figures. The references are 319 sources in Bulgarian, English, and Spanish.

I. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DISSERTATION

1. Relevance of the topic

In the contemporary marketing environment, consumers are constantly exposed to a variety of stimuli, while organizations continuously compete for their attention. Under dynamically changing and uncertain conditions, an in-depth study of consumer behavior is a necessary prerequisite for sustainable market presence. In this regard, it is essential to identify the stimuli and factors that influence consumer behavior in a specific market, so that organizations can direct their efforts appropriately (Ulzibadrakh, Z. & Szakály, Z., 2021). This requires a deeper understanding of both the conscious and unconscious processes that occur among consumers before, during, and after the purchase.

Since the first known truly scientific study of consumer behaviour and advertising, conducted by Harlow Gale at the beginning of the twentieth century, more than 500,000 scientific articles have been published in SCOPUS and Web of Science alone, examining various aspects of consumer behaviour. Despite the large number of studies related to the analysis of consumer behaviour and the influence of different stimuli on it (Sliburyte, L. and Skeryte, I., 2014; Caivano, J.L., 1998; Toh, B., Leng, H.K. and Phua, Y.X.P., 2022; Soeswoyo, D. M., & Choiri A., 2018; 2023), the analysis of factors and stimuli that influence consumer behaviour in the dance arts market is extremely underrepresented in the scientific literature, and dance art remains outside the main focus of researchers.

From a practical perspective, the organisations operating in the dance arts market are, for the most part, private micro and small organisations that have extremely limited human and financial resources, including in relation to marketing activity (Bennett, R., 2014, p. 59). As a result, the function of the marketing specialist is taken over by the owner of the school, the artistic director, or another member of the artistic team. The lack of professional expertise and systematic knowledge in the field of marketing implies that many decisions are made primarily on the basis of personal judgement and 'gut feeling', which increases the likelihood of ineffective advertising messages and potential losses (Fillis, I., 2002, p. 132). These limitations are also reflected in NSI data on the number of visitors to performing arts in Bulgaria: for the period 2012-2022, the number decreased by 76% (NSI). In the context of the European Union, in 2022 Bulgaria ranked last among EU member states in cultural activities and second to last in population participation (10.7%

participation) in live performances such as theatre productions, concerts, operas, performances, and other stage events (Eurostat).

In this context, the study can support reaching new consumer groups, optimising advertising materials, increasing awareness of training dance classes, strengthening cultural engagement, and improving the sustainability of dance schools.

2. Object and subject of the study

The object of study in the dissertation is selected aspects of the behavior of consumers of dance classes.

The subject of the study is marketing influences on consumer behaviour, with an emphasis on the influence of specific visual changes in advertising stimuli and their impact on consumers' attention, reactions, and desires in the dance arts market.

3. Aim and tasks of the study

The main objective of the dissertation is to propose an empirically tested conceptual model of the impact of specific changes in an advertising stimulus on different aspects of consumer behavior in the market for dance arts.

To achieve the stated aim and sub-aims, the following research tasks are fulfilled:

- 1) To develop a theoretically grounded conceptual model of consumer behavior when exposed to an advertising stimulus, integrating elements of the S-O-R, EKB, and AIDA models and adapted to the market for dance arts;
- 2) To outline the main characteristics and problems of the dance arts market in Bulgaria;
- 3) To develop a research design including preliminary studies (content analysis and expert evaluations) and a main study (an experiment using eye-tracking and biometrical device, followed by an online survey) and statistically to analyze the obtained data;
- 4) To construct variants of an advertising stimulus with three variables - main background colour, type of image, and presence or absence of price - and to conduct the experiment and the survey;
- 5) To formulate conclusions and recommendations for marketing strategies of dance schools based on the obtained data and analyses, related to optimising advertising content, managing the marketing mix, and segmenting consumers.

4. Research thesis

The thesis of the dissertation is that specific changes in advertising stimuli (changes in the main background colour, in the type of images, and in the presence or absence of price) influence the way

consumers of training dance classes perceive the advertisement; the distribution of visual attention; physiological reactions; positive emotional reactions and cognitive attitude toward the advertisement; and consumers' intentions to learn more about the training dance classes and to make a purchase. This makes it possible to derive a model of marketing influences on consumer behaviour in the dance arts market.

5. Methodology of the conducted studies

The methodology of the study is based on methodological triangulation (a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods) for collecting primary data, with the aim of overcoming the limitations of individual methods and ensuring a deeper understanding (Wedel, M. & Pieters, R., 2008).

The study is structured in three consecutive stages - preliminary (preparatory), main (field), and analytical - each characterised by specific objectives, methods, and techniques used. The following software was used for data collection, processing, and analysis: specialised software accompanying the eye-tracking technique and biometric device for registering and visualising indicators of visual attention and physiological reaction - Gazepoint GP3; LimeSurvey for creating and distributing the questionnaire; and IBM Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) Statistics, version 19, for statistical processing of the data.

Within the preparatory stage, two preliminary studies were conducted - expert evaluations and content analysis of existing advertising materials for training dance classes. The main purpose of this stage was to identify problem areas in training dance classes, trends in advertising materials, and to prepare the advertising stimuli to be used in the main study.

The main stage included two studies - an experiment using an eye-tracking and a biometric device, followed by an online survey to test the research hypotheses. The main purpose is to examine the influence of changes in the advertising stimulus (changes in the main background colour, the type of image, and the presence or absence of price in an advertising stimulus), on indicators of visual attention and physiological arousal under controlled laboratory conditions and, on the other hand, on positive emotional reaction, cognitive attitude toward the advertisement, the desire to learn more about training dance classes, and purchase intention. A sub-aim of the study was to identify the main factors (from the extended 7P marketing mix) influencing the choice of a dance school among different consumer segments and to analyse colour associations in the context of dance art.

In the analytical stage, the data from all stages of the study were processed and summaries, and also recommendations for dance studio owners were derived.

6. Main limitations of the study

- 1) *Limitations related to the object of study:* The focus is placed on organisations offering dance classes within the stage performing arts operating only on the territory of the city of Varna, Bulgaria. Sports dance i.e. competitive ballroom dancing, as well as folk and street/hip-hop dance, are excluded from the scope of the study. The latter two dance styles are excluded because, in essence, they are not solely stage dance styles; they are also performed in squares, at fairs and gatherings (for folk dances), and on the 'street', where street and hip-hop dances originate. Therefore, they cannot be classified entirely as performing dance arts. Sports dance is also excluded because it is officially classified as a sport rather than an art. The focus is placed on private organisations with an emphasis on amateur dance art that work with adults and/or children. By 'organisations with an emphasis on amateur dance art' the dissertation refers to all dance schools that are not professional schools and universities. Under 'amateur dance art', the author refers to organisations that conduct rehearsals fewer than five times per week and for no more than three hours per day.
- 2) *Limitations related to the subject of study:* In examining marketing influences in the dance arts market, the focus is placed on communications (advertising stimuli). Within the process of purchase decision-making, the study focuses on the stages of information search and evaluation of alternatives. Based on the Howard-Sheth model, exogenous factors (culture, subculture, and social class) can influence consumer behaviour, but they are treated as constants and are difficult to control. These factors often do not change in the short term and require in-depth sociological analyses that exceed the scope of the present study; therefore, they are not considered in the empirical research.
- 3) *Methodological limitations:* The eye-tracking and biometrical experiment was conducted in a laboratory environment and applied the forced-exposure methodology, which does not fully reflect real-life conditions in which consumers are usually exposed to an advertising stimulus. This may influence the results if the same study is conducted in an uncontrolled environment. The main study was conducted during the period 11.12.2024 - 23.05.2025.

II. STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF THE DISSERTATION

In accordance with the stated aims and research tasks, the dissertation is structured in the following sequence:

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER ONE. BASIC CONCEPTS, THEORIES, AND APPROACHES IN THE STUDY

- 1.1. Specifics of the “product” in the dance arts market
- 1.2. Development of consumer behaviour over the years
- 1.3. Degree of study of consumer behaviour in the dance arts market
 - 1.3.1. Theoretical framework and classifications of consumer behaviour models of end consumers
 - 1.3.2. Environmental factors influencing consumer behaviour
 - 1.3.3. Individual characteristics (as part of the “organism”) of consumers and their influence on consumer behaviour in the dance arts market
 - 1.3.4. Marketing influences (7P) on consumer behaviour
 - 1.3.5. Purchase decision-making process
- 1.4. Conceptualisation of consumer behaviour in the dance arts market

CHAPTER TWO. MARKET ANALYSIS AND METHODOLOGY FOR STUDYING MARKETING INFLUENCES ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR IN THE DANCE ARTS MARKET

- 2.1. Characteristics and analysis of the dance arts market in Bulgaria
- 2.2. Methodological approaches and tools for studying consumer behaviour in the dance arts market
 - 2.2.1. Review and analysis of empirical studies on consumer behaviour in the arts market
 - 2.2.2. Methodology of the empirical study
 - 2.2.2.1. Preliminary studies for identifying problems and trends in training dance classes and constructing advertising stimuli
 - 2.2.2.2. Research hypotheses and organisation of the main empirical study

CHAPTER THREE. EMPIRICAL STUDY OF MARKETING INFLUENCES ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

- 3.1. Profile of respondents
- 3.2. Influence of an advertising stimulus for training dance classes on positive emotional and cognitive reactions (S-R) and on the intention to learn more and purchase intention (S-D)
- 3.3. Influence of an advertising stimulus for training dance classes on visual attention (S-A) and physiological reactions (S-R)

3.4. Relationship between visual attention, physiological reactions, emotional reaction, cognitive attitude toward the advertisement, intention to learn more about the service, and purchase intention (H5)

3.5. Influence of organism factors on visual attention, reactions, and intentions (H6)

3.6. Criteria for choosing a dance school (7P)

3.7. Colour associations

CONCLUSION

Bibliography

Appendices

III. BRIEF PRESENTATION OF THE DISSERTATION

Introduction

Chapter One: Basic concepts, theories, and approaches in the study

The first chapter presents an analysis of previous studies and theoretical foundations related to different factors that influence consumer behaviour. The specifics of the product in the dance arts market, and more specifically of training dance classes, are clarified. Consumer behaviour models and their applicability to the object of study are reviewed and analysed, as is the development of consumer behaviour over the years.

In Paragraph 1 - Specifics of the 'product' in the dance arts market - the main characteristics of services in general are first reviewed. To clarify the position of dance arts within the performing arts, classifications proposed by different authors are analysed. Based on the review and analysis of these and other literature sources (Staneva, T., 2021; Georgiev, M., 2021; Solomon, M. R., 2018; Colbert, F., & St-James, Y., 2014; Walmsley, B., 2019; Wickham, M., Lehman, K., & Fillis, I., 2020; Moisio, S., 2021; Zaggelidou, E. et al., 2012; Toscani, G., & Prendergast, G., 2019; Kerrigan, F., Fraser, P., & Özbilgin, M., 2004; Bernstein, J. S., & Kotler, P., 2007; Tomova, B. and Andreeva, D., 2011, p. 6), the author identifies the place of dance art in the context of the performing arts and proposes an author's classification of dance school products. The classification is built on three criteria: (1) depending on the style; (2) depending on the interaction with consumers; and (3) depending on the level of knowledge and the age of participants.

It should be noted that the proposed classification has certain limitations. It is developed in the context of private dance schools operating mainly in an urban environment and covers only stage forms of dance art. Its limitations are manifested mainly in terms of the scope of the styles considered, as it does not fully reflect the specifics of some forms of dance art such as folk, street or sport dance i.e. competitive ballroom dancing.

The specifics of training dance classes as a service provided by dance schools are derived (Figure 1).

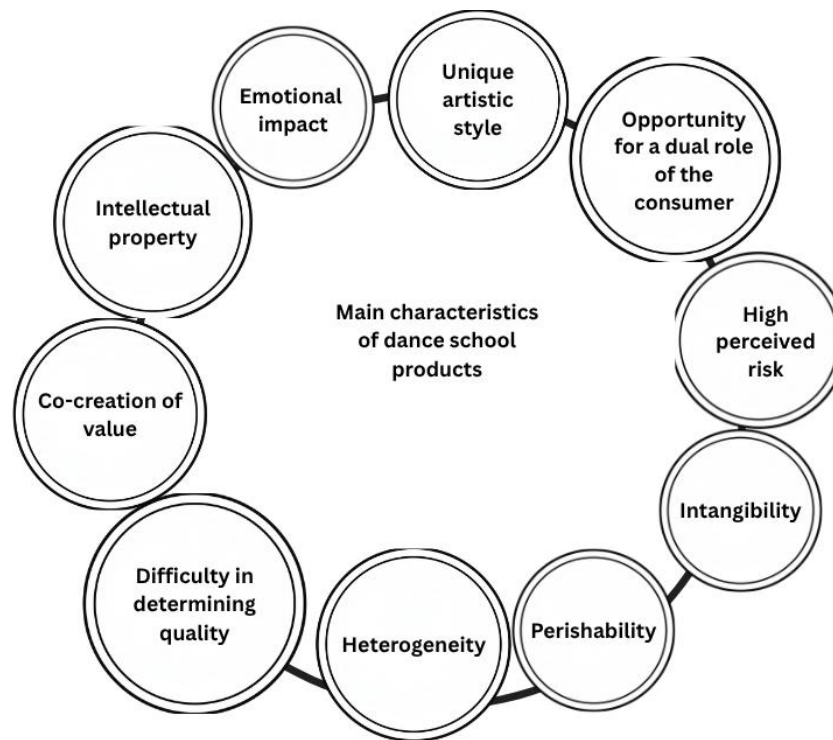


Figure 1. Specifics of dance school products.

Source: Summarised by the author.

Figure 1 summarises the main characteristics of products in dance art by integrating both classic characteristics of services and specific features. In addition to traditional characteristics, emphasis is placed on emotional impact, intellectual property, and a unique authorial style. These features determine the need for a more in-depth study of marketing influences on consumer behaviour in this market.

In Paragraph 2 - Development of consumer behaviour over the years - a chronological analysis of the development of studies related to consumer behaviour is made (Figure 2).

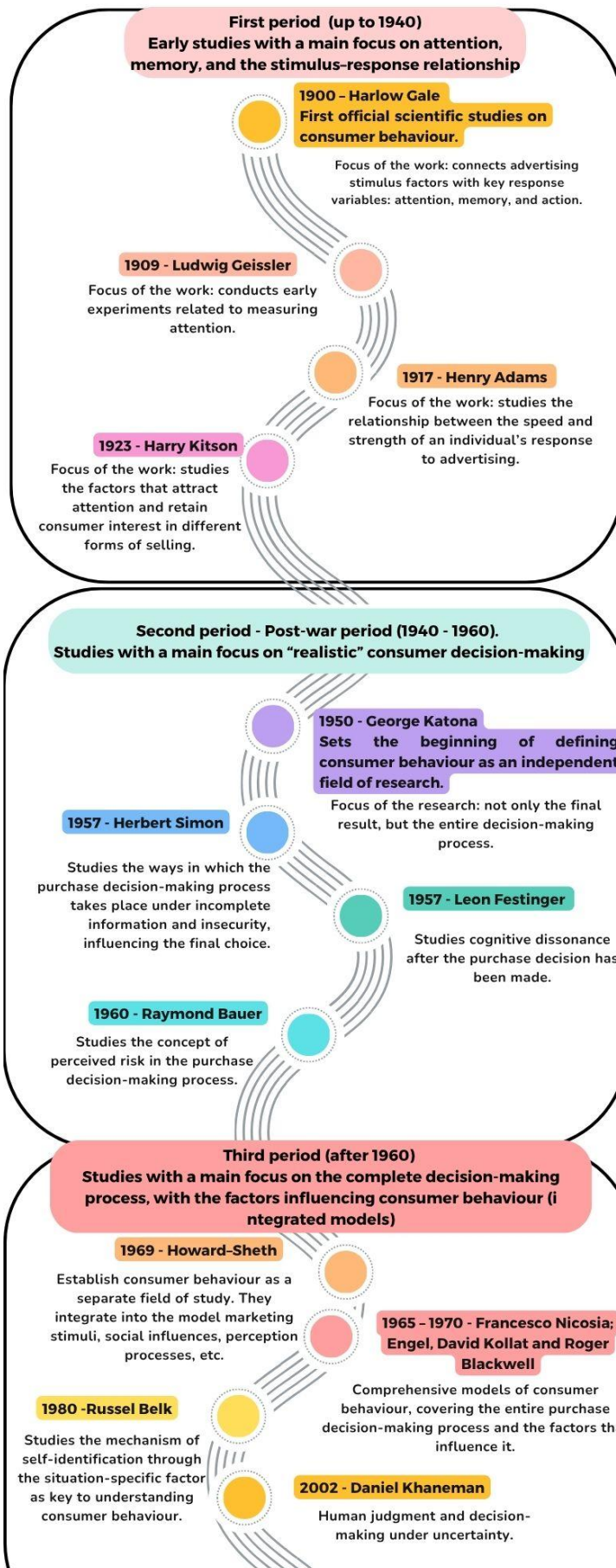


Figure 2. Development of research in the field of consumer behaviour from the end of the twentieth century to the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Source: Author's summary.

The development and classifications of definitions of consumer behaviour proposed by different authors are also examined. An author's classification of the definitions is presented. In the first group of definitions, the emphasis is placed on the external manifestation of consumer behaviour, or, as the authors state, on 'the behaviour that consumers display'. Although some authors in the first group (Engel, Blackwell, and Miniard, 1986) include internal components in their models, the definitions they provide focus on reactions and final consumer decisions. In the second group of definitions, emphasis is placed on 'mental and cognitive processes', 'experiences', and 'needs'. Over time, the focus in defining consumer behaviour shifts from primarily external manifestations to more comprehensive understandings that include cognitive processes, emotions, and social influences, providing a broader and more integrated view of consumer behaviour. This is particularly relevant in the context of dance art, where consumer behaviour is strongly influenced by emotional experiences.

In this sense, for the purposes of the dissertation, consumer behaviour in the context of dance art can be defined as: a process in which external marketing stimuli interact with an individual's personal characteristics and experience, affect the individual's attention, activate cognitive and emotional reactions, and lead to the formation of desire to learn more information and to participate in training dance classes or stage activities.

The retrospective review of consumer behaviour outlines the transition from strictly rational and economic understandings of consumer behaviour to models that take account of emotions, stimuli, and context.

In Paragraph 3 - Degree of study of consumer behaviour in the dance arts market - the theoretical framework and models of consumer behaviour in the context of dance arts are examined, together with environmental factors, individual characteristics, marketing stimuli influencing consumer behaviour in the dance arts market, and the purchase decision-making process.

This section of the dissertation presents a review of basic concepts related to marketing models of consumer behaviour and a brief overview of main models and classifications, thereby establishing a theoretical framework while preserving the focus on specific marketing influences in the dance arts market.

Based on the analysis of groups of consumer behaviour models, it can be concluded that their testing in the dance arts market is highly limited, and testing in the context of training dance classes is found only partially for specific models (Table 1).

Table 1

Limitations and applicability of consumer behaviour models in the context of the arts, education, and training dance classes

Model	Limitations	Available studies in different arts or education	Available studies in training dance classes
S-O-R	Too general; limited distinction between cognitive and emotional reactions.	Yes	Limited studies are available (satisfaction with online dance classes): Yu, N. & Liu, X., 2024, pp. 1-12.
EKB	Complex and difficult to test empirically; limited consideration of emotional reactions.	Yes (in education)	Not found
Howard-Sheth	Unclear cause-and-effect relationships; complex and difficult to test empirically; limited consideration of emotional reactions; treats attention only as a psychological state.	Yes	Not found
Nicosia	High degree of abstraction; difficult empirical testing; emphasises material aspects such as price and quality.	Not found	Not found
Anderson	Limited consideration of social and emotional factors; low applicability to contemporary services; focuses mainly on the post-purchase outcome.	Not found	Not found

Source: Summarised by the author

Based on the reviewed consumer behaviour models and the available examples of their empirical testing, the following summaries can be made: (1) the classic consumer behaviour models presented are detailed and offer useful analytical frameworks, but in most cases they are also too general and difficult to test empirically; (2) despite their theoretical value, there are insufficient empirical tests of the models in the arts market, while in the dance arts market such tests are practically not found. This limits the understanding of the specific stimuli and factors that influence consumer behaviour in this unique context and highlights the need for future studies and adaptation of existing models to capture the characteristics of consumer behaviour in dance art more adequately.

Consequently, the existing classic consumer behaviour models provide a valuable theoretical foundation, but they do not sufficiently capture the specifics of training dance classes as a product of dance schools. In this regard, later in the dissertation, based on some of the models discussed above, an attempt is made to derive a model of consumer behaviour focused on analysing the influence of specific changes in the advertising stimulus on consumer behaviour in the dance arts market. The model traces how changes in the main background colour, image type, and price information included in the advertising stimulus affect visual attention, physiological reactions, emotional and cognitive response, and desire to learn more and make a purchase in the context of training dance classes in the city of Varna, Bulgaria.

This paragraph also examines the main environmental factors, individual characteristics, and marketing influences (7P) that affect consumer behaviour in the dance arts market. A distinction is made between marketing and non-marketing influences (stimuli). It is clarified that within this dissertation the terms 'marketing influences' and 'marketing stimuli' are used as synonyms as both are organisation-controlled instruments through which the organisation purposefully influences consumers. In this sense, marketing stimuli encompass the elements of the marketing mix. Studies examining these stimuli in the arts market and specifically in dance arts are reviewed and analysed.

Based on the reviewed studies related to the influence of the marketing mix elements (7P), excluding the product element, on consumer behaviour regarding the products of arts organisations, summaries and adaptations are derived specifically for their influence in the dance arts market (Table 2).

Table 2

Summary of the influence of marketing mix elements (7P) on consumer behaviour in the arts market

7P element	Main conclusions	Studies
Place	The main components with the strongest influence on consumer behaviour are: distance to the building where the stage performance takes place; availability of parking; condition of facilities; seating in halls.	Brook, O., 2013, p. 104; Hall, E. et al., 2016; Byrnes, W., 2015; Zaggelidou, E. et al., 2013; Crossick, G., & Kaszynska, P., 2016; Scholarworks, S., & Stegemiller, T. M., 1995.
Price	Price is the most important factor in the purchase decision-making process (mainly in the stages of information search and evaluation of alternatives), even in the arts.	Warne, R. T., & Drake-Brooks, M. M., 2016; Hall, E., Binney, W., & Viecei, J., 2013; Zaggelidou, E., Tsamourtzis, E. et al., 2012; McCarthy, K. & Jinnett, K., 2001.
Price	Price is not the main determining factor in the purchase decision-making process (mainly in the stages of information search and evaluation	Globerman, S., 1978; Ronkartz, K. et al., 2019; Obreshkova, N., 2004; Hall, E., Binney, W., & Viecei, J., 2016, p. 33.

7P element	Main conclusions	Studies
	of alternatives), even in the arts.	
Price	Package pricing increases attendance by making attendance at artistic performances easier and positively influences consumer choice.	Hall, E., Binney, W., & Viececi, J., 2016, p. 32; Varbanova, L., 2004, pp. 138-139.
Promotion	In the online environment, dance schools mainly emphasise dance and dancers by uploading videos, photographs, and other visualisations of the artistic product.	Gagliano, A., & Frosch, J., 2020; Zaggelidou, E., 2013; Gu, C. et al., 2022.
Promotion	Despite the possibilities and use of online advertising, dance schools and other organisations still widely use print advertising through brochures, magazines, flyers, programmes, posters, etc.	Obreshkova, N., 2004, p. 91; Varbanova, L., 1998, p. 130.
Promotion	Private micro and small arts organisations typically have an extremely limited marketing budget and usually cannot afford to appoint a dedicated marketing specialist, which leads to a number of problems.	Bennett, R., 2014, p. 59; Fillis, I., 2002, p. 132.
Promotion	Personal contacts and relationships with consumers, and the “interactions between artistic philosophy and marketing practices”, have the most substantial and positive influence on consumers.	Fillis, I., 2002, p. 132.
Physical evidence	When presenting an artistic product on stage to an audience in a hall, attention should be paid to hall acoustics, lighting, stage floor, stage area, hall capacity, and access for elderly people and people with reduced mobility and disabilities.	Zaggelidou, E. et al., 2013, p. 226.
Physical evidence	For trainees, factors such as modern equipment, safety equipment, better interior design, a clean changing room, and the presence of a shower cabin are important.	Zaggelidou, E. et al., 2013, p. 226; Budakova, S., 2021.
Physical evidence	Most concerts/performances produced by organisations engaged in amateur dance art take place in public buildings that are often insufficiently maintained, leaving consumers with negative emotions.	Crossick, G., & Kaszynska, P., 2016.
Processes	The main elements related to processes in dance school products, specifically training classes, include: speed of notifying consumers when a rehearsal is cancelled; punctuality and consistency of rehearsals; adherence to the announced schedule; organisation of distributing and storing rehearsal clothing and props; regular provision of feedback;	Hristova, D., & Palamarova, P., 2023; Grădinaru, C. et al., 2016; Kusumawati, R. D. et al., 2014.

7P element	Main conclusions	Studies
	and a system for enrolment and enquiries.	
People	A characteristic feature of dance art is that when a creative stage product is created, it depends both on the choreographer/director and on the participants (artists/dancers), because it is a co-creative process. The vision of the choreographer/director must be appropriately combined with the technical preparation and temperament of the dancers.	Wickham, M., Lehman, K., & Fillis, I., 2020, pp. 17-18; Ulzibadrakh, Z. & Szakály, Z., 2021.
People	Employees (choreographers, directors, administrative staff, etc.) influence consumer behaviour through the way they speak, their qualifications, the clothes they wear, their overall appearance, the way they provide the service, friendly attitude, etc.	Nengsih, S. et al., 2024, p. 141; Lovelock, C. et al., 2011, p. 15.

Source: Author's summary

Considering the studied characteristics of products offered by dance and other arts organisations, several key directions requiring further research emerge. In analysing the main elements of the marketing mix of dance school products, a deficit of studies is observed in a number of areas: research on advertising as a stimulus influencing consumer behaviour in the dance arts market; research on the factors that lead consumers to choose one dance school over another in relation to the main elements of the marketing mix; research on the relationship between different consumer characteristics and choice criteria across the separate elements of the marketing mix, etc.

These insufficiently studied areas determine the need to conduct the present study, which aims to examine the influence of marketing stimuli on consumer behaviour in the context of training dance classes.

This paragraph also examines the purchase decision-making process and its adaptation specifically to products of dance schools.

In Paragraph 4 - Conceptualisation of consumer behaviour in the dance arts market - a conceptual model is proposed for studying the influence of marketing stimuli on consumer behaviour in the dance arts market (Figure 3).

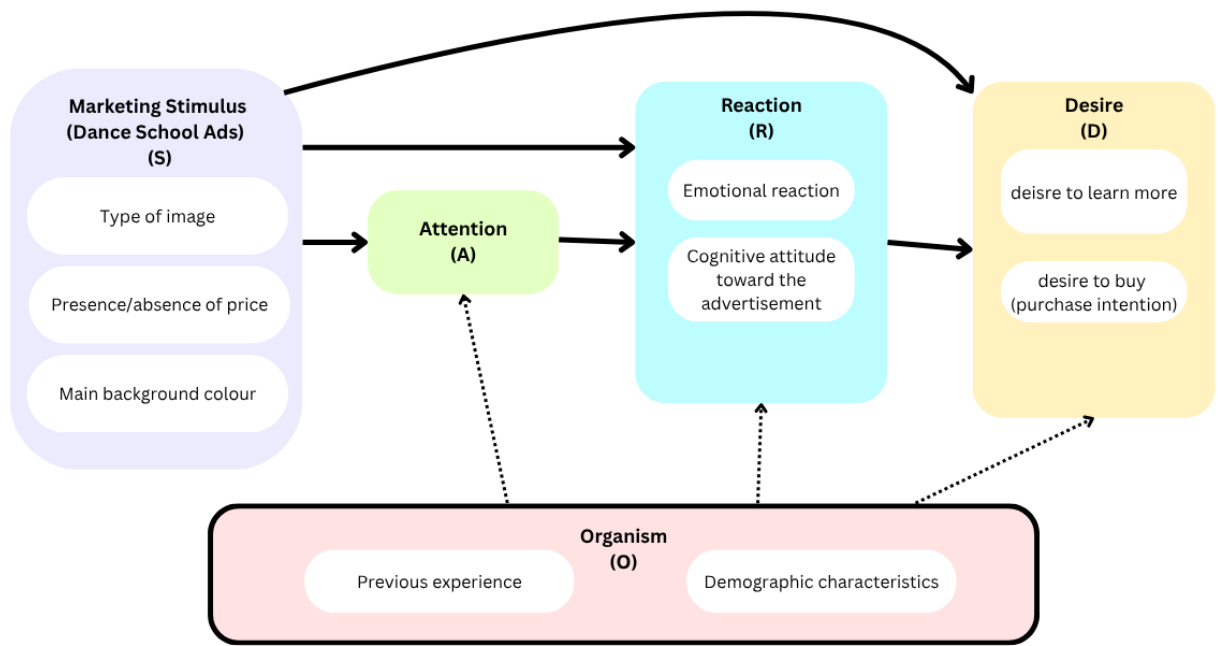


Figure 3. Conceptual model.

Source: Author's development.

The model integrates elements from the reviewed consumer behaviour models - the S-O-R model and the Engel-Kollat-Blackwell (EKB) model. In addition, elements of the AIDA model are included, as it is widely used in research on the influence of advertising content. In the present study, the AIDA model is not treated as an independent theoretical framework but is used to operationalise and better reflect the processes related to attention and the formation of intentions, adapting them to the purposes of the dissertation.

The main purpose of the study is to trace the influence of three independent variables in the advertising stimulus (main background colour, type of image, and presence or absence of price) on visual attention, physiological reactions, emotional reaction (positive emotional reaction), cognitive attitude toward the advertisement, intention to learn more, and purchase intention for training dance classes, while also considering the moderating role of prior experience and demographic characteristics.

The conceptual model follows the logic S-O-A-R-D: Stimulus (advertising materials with controlled changes) - Organism (prior experience, age, and gender) - Attention (visual attention to the advertisement and distribution of visual attention to separate elements of the stimulus) - Reaction (emotional and cognitive) - Desire/Intention (to learn more and to purchase training dance classes).

The proposed conceptual model summarises the main theoretical propositions and serves as the basis for developing the research methodology presented in Chapter Two.

Chapter Two: Market analysis and methodology for studying marketing influences on consumer behaviour in the dance arts market

The second chapter presents an analysis of the dance arts market in Bulgaria, an analysis of empirical studies on consumer behaviour in the arts market, and the methodology of the empirical study.

Paragraph 1 - Characteristics and analysis of the dance arts market in Bulgaria - aims to outline the main trends, key characteristics, and problems of the dance arts market in Bulgaria. To achieve this goal, the available official statistical sources and registers related to the sector in which dance art activities fall are reviewed and analysed, structured on several levels.

First, the sector is examined in the context of the European Union as a whole through indicators related to population participation in cultural activities, attendance at live performances, and the economic significance of the sector 'Arts, entertainment and recreation', which includes the main activities of dance schools.

Second, the development of the sector over the years in Bulgaria is analysed at national, municipal, and city levels. The economic weight of the sector and the existing statistical limitations, the number of performances, attendance, and number of groups are analysed.

In addition, the registers of the National Culture Fund and the municipal Culture Funds are reviewed to assess organisations' need for external financing.

Finally, online search trends related to dance schools are outlined to identify consumers' online interest in the sector.

Despite the limitations of the analysis, mainly related to the lack of a unified system for reporting organisations operating in the dance arts market in Bulgaria, which makes it difficult to form a comprehensive picture of the development of dance schools in the country, several main conclusions and key problems for the dance arts market in Bulgaria can be derived based on the collected and analysed data. First, the participation of the population in cultural and performing activities in the country remains low compared to other EU member states. Second, the economic weight of activities in the field of the arts is limited. Third, project activity and access to public funding for dance organisations are weaker than those of other forms of performing arts. A generally weak interest in dance art compared to other performing arts is also established, and the digital presence of dance schools remains insufficiently developed. These circumstances determine

the need to study marketing influences and, more specifically, advertising stimuli as an instrument for reaching consumers and strengthening interest in the performing arts and training classes, as well as a prerequisite for shaping future consumption of art.

In Paragraph 2 - Methodological approaches and tools for studying consumer behaviour in the dance arts market - empirical studies on consumer behaviour in the arts market are first analysed. Bulgarian and foreign studies related to the study of consumer behaviour and the influence of external factors in the arts market are reviewed and analysed, with an emphasis on the methodological part of these studies. The analysis includes publications covering different art forms because of the limited number of studies related exclusively to dance art from a marketing perspective. The studies reviewed cover a 50-year range (1974 to 2025). They were searched in the Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar databases, as well as through the bibliographies of other publications. A summary is made of the methods and techniques used for collecting primary data, sample size, and the specific art form on which each study focuses. First, from the point of view of the object of study, of the 25 studies included in the analysis, only 6 of them focus directly and exclusively on dance art. Second, in terms of the number of respondents, except for three studies (Han, Y. Sun, & Kim, J., 2021; Tubillejas-Andrés, B., Cervera-Taulet, A., & Calderón García, H., 2019; and Globerman, S., 1974), in which the number of respondents differs significantly from the others, the average number of respondents included in in-depth interviews is 26, in surveys 116, and in experiments 26. Third, in terms of the method or technique for collecting primary data, it can be summarised that of the twenty-five publications, the authors most often use survey - in 13 studies, of which 9 apply questionnaires and 4 apply interviews. In 11 of the studies listed above, qualitative techniques are applied, including in-depth interviews, focus groups, and/or expert evaluations. The experimental method is used much less frequently - in only 4 studies.

The review of empirical studies (section 2.2.1) identifies two key methodological gaps in the available literature. The first is related to the lack of studies focusing on the influence of an advertising stimulus on consumers of dance classes. The second is related to the lack of studies combining an experiment involving eye-tracking and biometrical measurement with a survey when analysing consumer behaviour in the arts market.

This paragraph also presents the methodology of the empirical study, which is built on three consecutive stages - preliminary, main, and analytical. In the preliminary stage, the independent variables are operationalised through expert evaluations (n=10) and content analysis (of 117 advertising materials). The results of the preliminary stage form the basis for constructing the advertising stimuli for the main study.

The main stage applies methodological triangulation, including an experiment with an eye-tracking technique and biometric device, and a survey, which makes it possible to trace unconscious and conscious reactions to the stimuli. The experiment (n=47) includes an eye-tracking technique and biometrical/physiological measurement and aims to study participants' unconscious reactions to an advertising stimulus - overall visual attention, distribution of visual attention, skin resistance, and heart rate. Data are collected using a within-subject design, i.e. all eight variants of the advertising stimuli are presented to each respondent. Each stimulus is displayed on the screen in front of the participants for 5 seconds. The main limitation of using such a design is that the results may be influenced by the so-called order effect (Duchovski, A., 2017, p. 206). This limitation is addressed by randomising the order in which the advertisements are presented to the individual participants, which also reduces the effect of loss of interest over time (Li, Q. et al., 2016; Miranda, A.M. et al., 2018). The limitations related to the experiment should also be noted. The sample size (n = 47) limits the statistical power to some extent, but it is standard for laboratory studies using eye-tracking technology. The laboratory setting, although necessary for controlling the experimental conditions, may lead to behaviour that differs from behaviour in a natural environment of exposure to an advertising stimulus.

The survey (n=217) measures participants' evaluations of their level of emotional reaction (with a focus on positive emotional reaction), cognitive attitude toward the advertisement, desire to learn more about dance classes, and desire to buy (purchase intention), as well as criteria for choosing a dance school and respondents' colour associations. Among the survey participants, 47 also went through the experiment, which allows the data from the two types of study to be linked for this subgroup.

The analytical stage includes testing the formulated hypotheses and additional research questions through Paired Sample T-test, MANOVA, correlation analysis, and descriptive statistics.

Table 4 presents the main groups of hypotheses tested and additional research questions, their relationship with the conceptual model, and the data collection method for testing them.

Table 4

Relationship with the conceptual model, groups of hypotheses and additional research questions with the testing method indicated

Influences/relationships in the model	Hypothesis/additional research question	Data collection method	Analysis in Chapter Three
Image type in advertisement → emotional response and cognitive attitude toward the	Related to the influence of an advertising stimulus on the levels of positive emotional reaction and	Survey and experiment (biometrical/physiological study)	Cronbach's Alpha; factor analysis; Paired Sample T-test

Influences/relationships in the model	Hypothesis/additional research question	Data collection method	Analysis in Chapter Three
advertisement (S→R)	cognitive attitude toward the advertisement (H1) and on physiological changes (heart rate and skin resistance) among consumers of training dance classes (H4).		
Absence/presence of price in the advertisement → emotional response/cognitive attitude toward the advertisement (S→R)	Related to H1 and H4.	Survey and experiment (physiological study)	Cronbach's Alpha; factor analysis; Paired Sample T-test
Main colour of the advertisement → emotional response/cognitive attitude toward the advertisement (S→R)	Related to H1 and H4.	Survey and experiment (physiological study)	Cronbach's Alpha; factor analysis; Paired Sample T-test
Image type in advertisement → intention to learn more/purchase intention (S→D)	Related to the influence of an advertising stimulus on intention to learn more about training dance classes and purchase intention (H2).	Survey	Paired Sample T-test
Absence/presence of price in the advertisement → intention to learn more/purchase intention (S→D)	Related to H2.	Survey	Paired Sample T-test
Main colour of the advertisement → intention to learn more/purchase intention (S→D)	Related to H2.	Survey	Paired Sample T-test
Image type in advertisement → attention (S→A)	Related to the influence of an advertising stimulus on visual attention and distribution of visual attention to individual advertisement elements (AOIs) among consumers of training dance classes (H3).	Experiment (eye-tracking technique)	MANOVA; Paired Sample T-test; Linear Mixed Model (LMM)
Absence/presence of price in the advertisement → attention (S→A)	Related to H3.	Experiment (eye-tracking technique)	MANOVA; Paired Sample T-test; Linear Mixed Model (LMM)
Main colour of the advertisement → attention (S→A)	Related to H3.	Experiment (eye-tracking technique)	MANOVA; Paired Sample T-test; Linear Mixed Model (LMM)
Attention → emotional and cognitive reaction (A→R)	Related to tracing relationships between visual attention, physiological indicators, evaluations of emotional response, cognitive attitude toward the advertisement, intention to learn more,	Experiment (eye-tracking and physiological study) and survey	Correlation analysis

Influences/relationships in the model	Hypothesis/additional research question	Data collection method	Analysis in Chapter Three
	and purchase intention under observation of the specific advertising stimuli (H5).		
Attention → Desire to learn more and purchase intention (A→D)	Related to H5.	Experiment (eye-tracking and physiological study) and survey	Correlation analysis
Reactions→ Intention/Desire (R→D)	Related to changes in evaluations of emotional response, cognitive attitude toward the advertisement, intention to learn more, and purchase intention under observation of the specific advertising stimuli (H5).	Survey	Correlation analysis
Influence of prior experience and demographic characteristics (O→A; O→R; O→D)	Prior experience and demographic characteristics influence variables measuring visual attention, physiological reactions, positive emotional reactions, cognitive attitude toward the advertisement, intention to learn more, and purchase intention (H6).	Experiment and survey	Sample T-test; ANOVA; correlation analysis
Ranking of criteria for choosing a dance school	Deriving main choice criteria according to the 7P elements of the marketing mix (additional research question).	Survey	Cronbach's Alpha; descriptive statistics; Kruskal-Wallis H
Colour associations	Deriving main associations for individual colours and the word "dance" (additional research question).	Survey	Cronbach's Alpha; descriptive statistics

*S - stimulus; A - attention; O - organism; R - reaction; D - desire/intention.

Source: Author's development.

Six groups of hypotheses and the corresponding specific hypotheses within each group are distinguished. The hypotheses are formulated in accordance with two principles: some of them are relational, with a specific expected direction of influence where the existing literature provides sufficient grounds for a specific direction, while others are descriptive, aiming to establish the presence or absence of a relationship where the direction has not been established.

Chapter Three: Empirical study of marketing influences on consumer behaviour

The third chapter presents the profile of respondents and the main results from testing the research hypotheses and additional research questions, and it also includes recommendations for dance school owners.

In Paragraph 1 - Profile of respondents - the distribution of respondents is presented on the basis of variables such as education, number of household members, income, previous experience, and current role. Frequency distributions were used to establish the respondent profile. In the sample (n=217), the gender distribution shows a predominance of women (86.2%) over men (13.8%), which is consistent with the stronger participation of women in the performing arts established in the literature (Kaali-Nagy, C. and Garrison, L., 1972; Andreasen, A. and Belk, R., 1980) and confirms that the sample reflects the real demographic profile of consumers of dance school products. In terms of age, the sample covers a wide range of participants, including respondents under 18 and over 55 years of age. The largest relative share consists of respondents aged 18-24, as they are the main group that independently enrolls in dance classes (Stafford, M.R. and Tripp, C., 2001). Participants aged 25-44 represent 30% of the sample and include both adults with an intention to dance and parents of children who make decisions about enrolling their children in dance classes. The distribution of respondents based on prior experience with dance art as participants shows that 75% have experience and 25% have no experience. This distribution reflects the real profile of art consumers whom an advertising stimulus for dance art is expected to reach to a greater extent in a real environment.

In Paragraph 2 - Influence of an advertising stimulus for training dance classes on positive emotional and cognitive reactions (S-R) and on the intention to learn more and purchase intention (S-D) - the influence of changes in an advertising stimulus on respondents' emotional and cognitive reactions, as well as on the desire to learn more and purchase dance classes, is examined. The analysis operationalises the S→R and S→D relationships from the conceptual model and tests hypotheses H1 and H2 and the corresponding sub-hypotheses H1.1, H1.2, H1.3, H2.1, H2.2, and H2.3.

The results regarding the presence or absence of statistically significant differences between the variables when observing different variants of the advertising stimulus are presented. Before proceeding to test differences in the mean values of the indicators, the results of the preliminary procedures for data preparation and verification are presented. Factor analysis is also applied to identify separate components. The results of the factor analysis show that two separate components (factors) stand out in the scale measuring emotional reaction after rotation. The first factor includes the variables: happy, excited, empathetic, sentimental, admiring, inspired, and charmed, which

reflect positive emotional reactions to the advertising stimuli for training dance classes. The second factor includes the variables sad and angry, which measure negative emotional reactions. For the purposes of the dissertation, respondents' positive emotional reaction to the advertising stimuli is tested.

In Paragraph 3 - Influence of an advertising stimulus for training dance classes on visual attention (S→A) and physiological reactions (S→R) - the influence of changes in an advertising stimulus on respondents' visual attention and physiological reactions is examined. The analysis operationalises the S→A and S→R relationships from the conceptual model and tests hypotheses H3 and H4 and the corresponding sub-hypotheses H3.1, H3.2, H3.3, H3.4, H3.5, H3.6, H4.1, H4.2, and H4.3. Results are presented from the analysis of whether statistically significant differences exist between eye-tracking indicators measuring visual attention and biometrical indicators measuring respondents' physiological reactions to the advertising stimulus across the eight variants of the stimulus. The aim is to establish whether any particular variant differs significantly from the others in attracting visual attention and in physiological reactions. At the next stage, to establish which change in the advertising stimulus leads to a change in the distribution of visual attention (eye-tracking indicators), the results of a linear mixed model are presented, as are the differences in mean values for the same areas of interest when the pairs of advertising stimuli are changed, using Paired Samples T-test. The results are also presented through a heatmap of the areas of interest to visualise the differences in the mean values of indicators of visual attention over the separate areas of interest in the advertising stimulus (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Heatmap of the areas of interest.

Source: Author's analysis.

The results confirm that visual attention is not evenly distributed among the separate elements of the advertisement.

In Paragraph 4 - Relationship between visual attention, physiological reactions, emotional reaction, cognitive attitude toward the advertisement, intention to learn more about the service, and purchase intention (H5) - the results of the tested correlations between indicators from the eye-tracking technique, the physiological study, and the evaluations of the level of emotional reaction, cognitive attitude toward the advertisement, intention to learn more about the service, and purchase intention are presented, operationalising the A→R, A→D, and R→D relationships from the conceptual model (H5). For this purpose, data from respondents who participated both in the experiment and in the survey are used (n=47).

In Paragraph 5 - Influence of organism factors on visual attention, reactions, and intentions (H6) - the results of testing the influence of organism factors (previous experience with dance art, age, and gender) on visual attention (Fix, Rev) and physiological reactions (GSR, BPM) are presented through T-tests (to establish statistically significant differences in the dependent variables Fix, Rev, GSR, and BPM with respect to the independent variables experience and gender) and ANOVA (to establish statistically significant differences in the dependent variables Fix, Rev, GSR, and BPM with respect to the independent variable age). Preliminary tests were conducted to check the assumptions of both tests (homogeneity of samples and normal distribution). The results of correlation analysis are also presented, according to which it can be concluded that there is a correlation between organism factors and indicators measuring visual attention and physiological reactions. The results confirm the influence of the organism on visual attention and physiological indicators.

In Paragraph 6 - Criteria for choosing a dance school (7P) - the results of the additional research question regarding the relative importance of the separate components of each 7P marketing mix element for respondents when choosing a dance school are presented. Key criteria for choosing a dance school by consumers (children, parents, and adult dancers) are derived based on the service marketing mix elements. The analysis is conducted both for all respondents and by respondent groups: (1) respondents with and without dance experience, (2) respondents from different age groups, (3) different genders, and (4) respondents performing different roles (parent or dancer). To establish whether the observed differences between groups are statistically significant, the Kruskal-Wallis H test is applied. It is used as a non-parametric test for comparing groups.

In Paragraph 7 - Colour associations - the results of the study of colours as visual stimuli and their associative relationship with the word *dance* are presented. The analysis aims to establish the relationship and similarities between the colours (pink, yellow, purple, beige), the word *dance*, and the associative bipolar variables, and subsequently to compare respondents' results with those from the preliminary tests, expert evaluations, and content analysis. The results of the present study are consistent with previous research showing that different colours evoke different associations that are reflected in the audience's preferences and interpretations (Caivano, J., 2017; Sliburyte, L. & Skeryte, I., 2014). The present study enriches the existing literature by adding the context of dance art and identifying specific segments suitable for effective targeting and segmentation of this specific market.

In summary, the third chapter presents empirical testing of the conceptual model through a combination of survey data, physiological measurement, and an eye-tracking experiment. Table 5 presents the hypotheses and sub-hypotheses tested, the relationships with the conceptual model, and the value at which the hypotheses are confirmed or rejected.

Table 5

Summary of empirical results according to the relationships in the conceptual model

Hypothesis	Influences/relationships in the model	Result	p-value
H1	Changes in the advertising stimulus lead to significant differences in the evaluation of positive emotional reaction and cognitive attitude toward the advertisement (S→R).	Confirmed	
H1.1	Main colour of the advertisement → emotional response/cognitive attitude toward the advertisement	Confirmed	p<0.01
H1.2	Image type in advertisement → emotional response/cognitive attitude toward the advertisement	Confirmed	p<0.05
H1.3	Absence/presence of price in the advertisement → emotional response/cognitive attitude toward the advertisement	Confirmed	p<0.01
H2	Changes in the advertising stimulus lead to significant differences in intention to learn more about training dance classes and purchase intention (S→D).	Partially confirmed	

Hypothesis	Influences/relationships in the model	Result	p-value
H2.1	Main colour of the advertisement → desire to learn more/purchase intention	Confirmed	p<0.01
H2.2	Image type in advertisement → desire to learn more/purchase intention	Rejected	p>0.05
H2.3	Absence/presence of price → desire to learn more/purchase intention	Partially confirmed (only stimulus → purchase intention)	p>0.05; p<0.05
H3	Changes in the advertising stimulus influence overall visual attention and the distribution of visual attention to separate advertisement elements among consumers of training dance classes (S→A).	Partially confirmed	
H3.1	Main colour of the advertisement → overall visual attention	Not confirmed for the current sample	p>0.05
H3.2	Image type in advertisement → overall visual attention	Not confirmed for the current sample	p>0.05
H3.3	Absence/presence of price → overall visual attention	Not confirmed for the current sample	p>0.05
H3.4	Main colour of the advertisement → distribution of visual attention to separate advertisement elements	Confirmed	p<0.01
H3.5	Image type in advertisement → distribution of visual attention to separate advertisement elements	Confirmed	p<0.01
H3.6	Absence/presence of price → distribution of visual attention to separate advertisement elements	Confirmed	p<0.01
H4	Changes in the advertising stimulus influence physiological reactions (S→R).	Partially confirmed	
H4.1	Main colour of the advertisement → physiological reactions	Not confirmed for the current sample	p>0.05
H4.2	Image type in advertisement → physiological reactions	Confirmed	p<0.05
H4.3	Absence/presence of price → physiological reactions	Not confirmed for the current sample	p>0.05
H5	There is a relationship between visual attention,	Confirmed	

Hypothesis	Influences/relationships in the model	Result	p-value
	physiological reactions, emotional reaction, cognitive attitude toward the advertisement, desire to learn more about the service, and purchase intention ($A \rightarrow R$; $A \rightarrow D$; $R \rightarrow D$).		
H5.1	Relationship between visual attention, physiological reactions, and evaluation of positive emotional reaction ($A \rightarrow R$).	Confirmed	$p < 0.01$
H5.2	Relationship between visual attention, physiological reactions, and evaluation of cognitive attitude toward the advertisement ($A \rightarrow R$).	Confirmed	$p < 0.01$
H5.3	Relationship between visual attention, physiological reactions, and evaluation of desire to learn more about training dance classes ($A \rightarrow D$; $R \rightarrow D$).	Confirmed	$p < 0.01$
H5.4	Relationship between visual attention, physiological reactions, and purchase intention evaluation ($A \rightarrow D$; $R \rightarrow D$).	Confirmed	$p < 0.01$
H5.5	Relationship between levels of positive emotional reaction and desire to learn more about training dance classes ($R \rightarrow D$).	Confirmed	$p < 0.01$
H5.6	Relationship between levels of positive emotional reaction and purchase intention ($R \rightarrow D$).	Confirmed	$p < 0.01$
H6	Influence of organism factors on visual attention, reactions, and intentions.	Partially confirmed	
H6.1	Prior experience influences visual attention and physiological reactions ($O \rightarrow A$; $O \rightarrow R$).	Confirmed	$p < 0.01$; $p < 0.05$
H6.2	Gender influences visual attention and physiological reactions ($O \rightarrow A$; $O \rightarrow R$).	Partially confirmed (only the organism $\rightarrow$ visual attention part)	$p < 0.01$; $p > 0.05$
H6.3	Age influences visual attention and physiological reactions ($O \rightarrow A$; $O \rightarrow R$).	Partially confirmed (only the organism $\rightarrow$ visual attention part)	$p < 0.01$; $p > 0.05$
H6.4	Prior experience, gender,	Rejected	$p > 0.05$

Hypothesis	Influences/relationships in the model	Result	p-value
	and age influence positive emotional reactions, cognitive attitude toward the advertisement, and intentions to learn more and purchase (O→R; O→D).		

Source: Author's summary

The results show that changes in advertising stimuli lead to significant differences in evaluations of emotional reaction and cognitive attitude toward the advertisement (S→R) and partially affect the desire/intentions of potential consumers (S→D). The influence of the stimulus on physiological reactions and attention (S→A and S→R) is not unambiguous and depends on the specific change in the advertising stimulus and the indicator studied. It is also established that visual attention is not distributed evenly among the separate areas of interest (AOIs), and an additional redistribution of visual attention is observed under certain changes in the advertisement. The results show that organism factors influence some indicators measuring visual attention (O→A) and respondents' physiological reactions (O→R), but no statistically significant differences are established between the evaluations of emotional reactions, cognitive attitude toward the advertisement, intention to learn more, or purchase intention across the segments considered (O→R and O→D).

The additional analysis of criteria for choosing a dance school and of colour and verbal associations expands the understanding of consumer behaviour in the dance arts market and outlines practically applicable directions.

Conclusion

The aim stated at the beginning of the dissertation is achieved through the development and testing of a model for studying marketing influences on consumer behaviour in the dance arts market. The research tasks set out have also been fulfilled. The present study contributes partially to filling the identified gaps in the scientific literature, since studies related to the analysis of marketing stimuli influencing consumer behaviour in the dance arts market, particularly visual attention, physiological reactions, emotional reactions, and cognitive attitude toward advertising stimuli for training dance classes, are currently limited and underrepresented in the scientific literature.

From a theoretical perspective, a conceptual model for studying the influence of the advertising stimulus on consumer behaviour in the dance arts market has been developed and tested.

The model is designed on the basis of elements from the AIDA, S-O-R, and EKB models and includes five main components: stimulus, organism, attention, reaction, and desire/intention. The model adapts classic consumer behaviour models to the context of dance classes by including attention as an intermediate component and by dividing reactions into physiological, emotional, and cognitive.

The analysis of the study data shows that the examined changes in the advertising stimulus influence some components of the model. The most clearly expressed influence is observed on positive emotional reactions, cognitive attitude toward the advertisement, desire to learn more about the dance classes, and purchase intention ($S \rightarrow R$, $S \rightarrow D$). Based on these results, main recommendations for the advertising materials of dance schools can be derived.

The results show that the main background colour is the variable that produces statistically significant differences in all four dependent variables. Advertising stimuli with a purple background lead to higher levels of positive emotional reaction, a more positive cognitive attitude toward the advertisement, and higher intention to learn more and purchase compared to advertisements using beige as the main background colour.

The type of image (real photographs of dancers or stylised images - silhouettes of dancers) also influences consumer behaviour. The results show that changes in image type mainly influence consumers' emotional and cognitive reactions and partially influence desire/intentions. Advertising materials using real photographs lead to higher levels of positive emotional reactions and cognitive attitude toward the advertisement compared to advertisements with stylised images. At the same time, however, the eye-tracking results show that consumers fixate more attention on real photographs, which can divert attention from other important elements such as price, age groups, contact information, and others. When silhouettes are used, a more even distribution of visual attention among the separate areas of interest is observed, which is consistent with the results of Pelau, C. et al. (2022) and Ferguson, J.L. and Mohan, M. (2020), related to visual attention when a celebrity is included in advertising materials. In addition, the analyses confirm that images attract visual attention faster and retain it longer than the other elements of the advertising stimulus (text, logo, price), which highlights the importance of their selection when developing advertisements.

The presence or absence of price in the advertising stimulus also leads to statistically significant differences in some of the studied components. Advertisements including price evoke higher levels of positive emotional reaction and cognitive attitude toward the advertisement for the dance classes. The results also show that the presence of price leads to higher levels of purchase intention for the service.

Based on the results, it can be concluded that the advertisements that evoke a stronger positive emotional reaction and a better cognitive attitude are those with a purple background, real photographs, and price included.

The correlation analyses confirm the existence of relationships between visual attention, physiological reactions, emotional and cognitive reactions, and intentions, but it should be taken into account that some of these relationships are extremely weak. This may be due to the smaller sample size and/or to the different nature of the studies measuring these variables.

The study also confirms the influence of organism factors on the remaining constructs of the model. Prior experience with dance art influences visual attention and physiological reactions. Consumers with prior experience retain their attention longer on the advertising stimulus, while consumers without experience show stronger levels of physiological reactions.

Furthermore, based on the results of the additional analysis of the criteria for choosing a dance school, recommendations for managing the 7P marketing mix can be derived. The results identify location, schedule, clear organisation of the training process, price transparency, cleanliness of the hall, and staff responsiveness as the most important factors in choosing a dance school. These results extend the study beyond advertising stimuli by including the remaining elements of the service marketing mix and ranking them according to their importance for consumers when choosing a dance school. In this analysis, statistically significant differences across different segments are also tested, and the results show such differences for a large part of the indicators, confirming the need for segmentation.

The results of the present study can serve as a starting point for specialists, dance school owners, and/or other team members who develop advertising materials for the dance school. In this regard, from a practical-applied perspective, the following recommendations for organisations in the dance arts market can be derived:

- 1) Image type matters for the distribution of attention to the other elements of the advertisement. If the aim of the dance school is to direct the focus to the images themselves, real photographs from concerts, performances, or other appearances should be used. If the aim is for consumers' attention to fall on contact information, price, age groups, or other elements included in the advertisement, it is recommended to use silhouettes or simplified images.
- 2) Choice of main colour in the advertisement. The results of the associative tests provide an empirical basis for selecting the main background colour of advertising materials. The data show that colour-dance similarity is context-dependent; that is,

when planning advertising materials, the target associative framework should be determined and the colour that shows the greatest similarity with the word dance within that framework should be used. Advertisements with a purple background lead to better results in terms of evoking a positive emotional reaction and, accordingly, a higher intention to learn additional information and purchase.

- 3) Including elements in advertisements that evoke positive emotions and an overall better cognitive attitude toward the advertisement leads to a higher intention to seek additional information about the school and to a higher purchase intention.
- 4) Although price is not a leading factor when choosing a dance school and in practice is absent as an element in many dance school advertisements, the results of the present study show that including price in advertising materials may lead to a more positive emotional reaction among consumers and a higher purchase intention.
- 5) Segmentation. It is important for dance arts organisations to segment their consumers also on the basis of prior experience, since, in line with previous studies (Theory, S. et al., 1999; Solomon, M., 2017, p. 173; Ryans and Weinberg, 1978; Andreasen, A. R., & Belk, R. W., 1980; Filippou, F. et al., 2010), the present study proves that there are differences in the impact of stimuli and in the importance of the various elements of the marketing mix when choosing a dance school between consumers with experience and those without prior experience related to the arts. This implies a need for different communication emphases depending on the audience currently being targeted.
- 6) The marketing efforts of dance schools in Bulgaria should not be limited solely to designing advertising materials. The results of the analysis of the 7P marketing mix elements show that consumers attach considerable importance to elements related to the actual experience of the service. The results of this analysis can also serve as a basis for information that should be communicated to current and prospective consumers of dance classes in the dance school's advertising materials.

Future research directions

The results of the present study can serve as a methodological framework and model for studying consumer behaviour in the market for other performing and cultural services (e.g. theatre, exhibitions, music classes, etc.) after the respective adaptations are made. Subsequent studies may also focus on increasing the sample by including different geographical territories and markets.

Another field for future research is testing the model by comparing consumers' reactions to different dance styles or differences in reactions between amateurs and professionals.

In summary, the dissertation shows that consumer behaviour in the dance arts market is formed under the influence of visual, physiological, emotional, cognitive, and behavioural components. The advertising stimuli used by dance schools are not only a means of attracting attention, but also an instrument for influencing consumers' reactions and intentions. Evoking an emotional reaction through the advertising stimulus is key to the formation of subsequent desire to learn more about the dance classes of a specific dance school and purchase intention. This confirms the need for careful construction of advertising content by dance schools in Bulgaria in order to attract new audiences and retain existing ones, which would support the overall development of future dance art in Bulgaria.

IV. STATEMENT OF THE MAIN CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE DISSERTATION

The following contributions have been identified:

From a theoretical perspective:

Proposing an innovative conceptual model (S-O-A-R-D) of marketing influences on consumer behavior in the market for dance arts, which adapts and integrates elements of classical theory. The model addresses the limited conceptualization of consumer behavior in the specific market for dance arts by highlighting the mediating role of attention between the stimulus and the responses, as well as by distinguishing between physiological, emotional and cognitive responses.

From a methodological perspective:

The simultaneous examination of unconscious physiological responses and conscious consumer evaluations, as well as the establishment of a relationship between them, through the integration of expert evaluations, content analysis of advertising materials, an eye-tracking and biometric experiment, and a survey within the empirical testing of the S-O-A-R-D model for studying marketing influences in the market for dance arts in Bulgaria.

From a practical-applied perspective:

Identification of factors from the 7P marketing mix that influence consumers in the process of choosing a dance school, which helps identify the criteria most important to consumers and on which organisations can focus when managing the marketing mix.

Identification of changes in advertising stimuli that influence the attraction and distribution of visual attention, consumers' emotional reactions, their intention to learn more about the service, and their purchase intention, which can support the creation of more effective advertising content. In addition, identifying the colours that evoke the closest associations with the word 'dance' can help dance organisations direct their efforts toward optimising advertising stimuli.

Establishing differences in the reactions of consumers with and without prior experience toward advertising stimuli for dance art can support the development of relevant marketing content for the separate segments.

The results of the conducted study can serve as a basis for studying consumer behaviour and optimising advertising stimuli in the markets for performing and cultural services after the respective adaptation.

V. PUBLICATIONS RELATED TO THE DISSERTATION

Scientific articles:

Aleksandrova, H. Dance School Choice: Exploring the Relative Importance of 7P Marketing Mix Elements Across Segments. Business & Management Compass, Varna: Science and Economics Publishing House, 69, 2025, 4, 44-59, online ISSN 3033-0106, DOI 10.56065/yh6vhs35.

Georgieva, H. Characteristics and Analysis of the Culture and Arts Sector, Specifically the Performing Dance Sector in Bulgaria [Electronic resource]. Business & Management Compass, Varna: Science and Economic Publishing House, 68, 2024, 1, 3-15, online ISSN 3033-0106, DOI <https://doi.org/10.56065/gr8bt572>.

Scientific conference papers:

Georgieva, H. Digital Marketing in Dance Art Schools in Bulgaria - Initial Assessment. Remarketing the Reality: Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference dedicated to the 25th anniversary of the Department of Marketing at University of Economics - Varna, Bulgaria, 17 June 2022, Varna: Science and Economics, 2022, 137-146, online ISBN 978-954-21-1134-4.

VI. DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I declare that this dissertation is entirely the author's own work and that, in its development, no works or publications by other authors have been used in violation of their copyright.