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Classical Music Consumption: Application of a Wide Rational Choice Model

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Outline

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1. Research Question

- The audience for classical and opera music is not a random selection of the population.
- It is older, has higher education, comes mainly from the middle and upper classes and there is a slight overrepresentation of women

Table 1: The Explanandum: Audience Composition

	Classical Concerts	Opera
Median Age	54	41
Percentage of Women	55	58,5
Percentage of Workers	0	0.5
Percentage of Self-Employed	8	8.5
Percentage of Persons with secondary education (Hauptschulabschluss)	6.3	8.9
Percentage of Persons with University Degree	60	40
N (Studies)	23	18

Rössel/Hackenbroch/Göllnitz 2005

- Is an Explanation of this audience composition with reference to rational choice theory possible?
- Contrast between narrow and wide models of rational choice
- Empirical analysis based on an a mail survey of the population of Leipzig and on a collection of audience studies

2. Theory: Narrow and Wide Concepts of Rational Choice

Basic Principles of Rational Choice Theory (Opp 1999; Esser 1999)

- Preference Proposition
- Constraint Proposition
- Decision Rule

Table 2: Narrow (homo economicus) and Wide Versions of RC: Assumptions (Opp 1999)

Narrow Version	Wide Version
Only egoistic, economic preferences are relevant	All kinds of preferences may be explanatory factors
Only economic constraints are relevant	All kinds of constraints may be relevant
Only constraints explain behavior	Constraints and/or preferences may explain behavior

● The study follows the method of decreasing abstraction (Lindenberg):

(1) Narrow version of rational choice:

Situation: Behavioral set is differentiated by prices. Decision model: Only economic preferences and constraints are taken into account.

(2) Narrow version of rational choice plus signaling:

Situation: Behavioral set is differentiated by prices, visiting the opera is an institutionalized signal of high status and respectability. Decision model: Narrow model of rational choice and signaling benefits and costs are taken into account.

(3) Wide version of rational choice:

Situation: Behavioral set is differentiated by prices, visiting the opera is an institutionalized signal of high status and respectability, musical socialization differs between families and leads to structured preference differences.
Decision model: wide version of rational choice (different types of preferences) is taken into account.

3. Data and Methods

- Comparative analysis of 42 audience surveys (secondary analysis)
- Mail survey in Leipzig (2000)
- Study commissioned by the “Oper Leipzig”
- Low response rate 21 %
- Opera enthusiasts and persons with higher education overrepresented
- Dependent variables are dichotomized: visiting the opera, visiting the concert hall, listening to opera music at home
- Audience composition is operationalized by four variables: education, income (equivalent income according to the new OECD scale), age, gender (reference category: male)

- Operationalization of preferences following Opp's studies on social protest

  Musical preference: Preference for classical or opera music

  Music identity: Feeling of identity with classical music audience and feeling of belonging

  Normative incentive: Having the attitude that friends and acquaintances should have a preference for classical music

  Social incentives: number of persons in the network with a preference for classical music

- As a further constraint the travel distance from place of living to the city centre was taken into account

4. Empirical Analysis

(1) Narrow version of rational choice

Since the behavioral set is only differentiated by prices and the decision rule takes only economic preferences and constraints into account, the audience composition should vary strictly according to the level of entrance fees.

To study this assumption we are able to conduct an experimentum crucis:

Comparison between the audience structure of regular concerts and opera performances (with regular entrance fee) and the audience structure of a concert taking place on a regular bases but with a rather symbolic entrance fee (1 €).

Table 3: Entrance Fee and Budget Constraint: An Experimentum Crucis

	Classical Concerts	Opera	Concert with „free“ admission
Median Age	54	41	57
Percentage Women	55	58.5	59
Percentage of Workers	0	0.5	1
Percentage of Self-Employed	8	8.5	10
Percentage of Persons with Secondary education (Hauptschulabschluss)	6.3	8.9	3
Percentage of Persons with University Degree	60	40	59
N (Studies)	23	18	1

Rössel/Hackenbroch/Göllnitz 2005; Göllnitz

→ Prices do not matter at all! The narrow version of rational choice (homo economicus) is not able to explain the audience composition.

(2) Narrow version of rational choice plus signaling: In this situation the behavioral set does not only differ according to price, but also in its signaling value. However, status signaling is only rational if it is visible: The determinants of listening to opera music should differ between visiting the opera and listening to such music at home.

To study this assumption the social determinants of visiting the opera and of listening to opera music at home are compared.

Table 4: Status Signaling: Opera at the Opera or at Home? (Logistic Regression Models)

	Concert Hall	Opera	At Home
Education	2,092***	1,354***	1.148
	(22.71)	(8.27)	(1.38)
Age	1,026***	1,014**	1.051***
	(7.82)	(4.61)	(37.62)
Gender	1,566*	1,169	1.999***
	(2,97)	(0.55)	(9.38)
Income	1,148	1,134	1.011
	(0.95)	(1.46)	(0.01)
Pseudo-R^2	0.139	0.056	0.176
N	431	431	426

* p < 0,1; ** p < 0,05; *** p < 0,01; Wald statistic in parantheses.

→ The effect of vertical status disappears in the model for listening to opera music at home. Visiting the opera and the concert hall is partially driven by status signaling (see also: Roose/van der Stichele 2010).

(3) Wide version of rational choice

In this model we take different types of constraints and especially preferences into account.

→ The variables of the wide rational choice model are able to fully explain the audience composition of the opera and partially the audience composition of classical concerts.

Table 5: A Wide Rational Choice Model of going to the Opera and Concert Hall (Logistic Regression Models)

	Classical Concerts I	Classical Concerts II	Opera I	Opera II
Education	2.092*** (22.71)	1.584*** (7.18)	1.354*** (8.27)	1.058 (0.21)
Age	1.026*** (7.82)	1.003 (0.08)	1.014** (4.61)	0.992 (1.05)
Gender	1.566* (2.97)	1.006 (0.00)	1.169 (0.55)	0.772 (1.116)
Income	1,148 (0.95)	1.187 (1.16)	1,134 (1.46)	1.134 (1.154)
Travel Dist.	---	0.931 (0.85)	---	0.894* (3.00)
Music Pref.	---	1.522*** (7.69)	---	1.48*** (8.38)
Music Id.	---	1.208** (4.24)	---	1.30*** (9.19)
Norm. Inc.	---	1.277*** (8.20)	---	1.15*** (5.75)
Social Inc.	---	1.317** (4.11)	---	1.35*** (6.76)
Pseudo-R^2	0.139	0.339	0.056	0.281
N	431	431	431	431

* p < 0,1; ** p < 0,05; *** p < 0,01; Wald statistic in parantheses.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

- Persons with above average education, older persons and members of the middle and upper classes are overrepresented among the audiences of classical concerts and operas.
- It is not possible to explain this audience composition by solely referring to narrow models of rational choice (homo economicus) – experimentum crucis.
- The vertical aspect of the audience composition (education) seems to be mainly driven by status signaling.
- The horizontal aspect of the audience composition (gender, age) can be explained by reference to a differentiated set of incentives.
- However: sample.
- Method of decreasing abstraction leads to an explanatory powerful model. However, only a wide model is explanatory helpful. Theoretical integration.