

Research Note

## Classical Music Concert Attendance and Older Adults

### *A Goal-Directed Approach*

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#### Abstract

Older adults are a lucrative consumer market. In finance and health markets, considerable attention has been devoted to understanding their preferences and the factors that influence their decisions and behaviors. In a classical music concert context, older adults are extremely important; despite accounting for half of all attendees in most countries, little theory-based research explains classical music attendance in general and by these older adults in particular. Using the Model of Goal Directed Behavior (MGB) as a foundation, we collected data from attendees and propose a revised model to capture the behavioral processes involved in the formation of positive word of mouth communication among these consumers. A modified version of the MGB predicted 57% of the variance in word of mouth and the model/data fit statistics were acceptable suggesting that the revised MGB is a robust and viable option when considering leisure behavior or engagement.

**Keywords:** *Word-of-mouth behaviour, structural equation modelling*

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## Introduction

For well over a decade, orchestral organizations have been concerned about declining audiences at classical music concerts (Dempster, 2000; Kolb, 2001). The high costs of production, increasing demands for returns on their contributions by governmental and private sponsors (Lindblom, 2009), and the aging of the current audiences all combine to create challenges for this particular art form. Crappell (2011) argues that “we must avoid the expectation that the general population will automatically gravitate toward the inherent value of classical music” and instead suggests the classical music industry should communicate clearly with consumers in easily understood ways (Crappell, 2011). For such communication strategies to succeed, they need to reflect a good understanding of consumer characteristics; in the case of classical music, demographic aspects provide particularly interesting possibilities for exploration (Hayes & Slater, 2002; Pennington-Gray, Fridgen, & Stynes, 2003).

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, classical music attendance between 2005 and 2010 increased steadily among consumers aged 65 to 74. A U.K. study revealed that older people were overrepresented in classical music audiences, and in France, the Ministry of Culture notes that half of all concert goers were 55 years or older (Limelight, 2012). In developing countries, this trend is also apparent; older adults worldwide appear more financially secure and more willing to spend on leisure consumption than younger consumers (Pearce, 2008), making them of great interest to leisure marketers and managers alike (Huang & Tsai, 2003).

Research related to classical music in arts and leisure literature focuses on demographics (Kolb, 2001), ethnicity (Van Wel, Linssen, Kort, & Jansen, 1996), performance quality, consumer satisfaction (Barlow & Shibli, 2007; Radbourne, Glow, & Johanson, 2010), economic versus experiential value (Walmsley, 2013), and the role of cultural capital (Caldwell & Woodside, 2003). Although useful from a practitioner perspective, much of this research lacks a sound empirical underpinning; to address this gap, we apply the model of Goal-Directed Behavior (MGB), an enhancement of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), to explicate the mechanisms that initiate desires to attend classical music concerts and foster post-attendance positive word-of-mouth behavior among older adults.

To the best of our knowledge, no published studies apply the MGB to older adults, though research into older adults behaviors and decision-making processes using the TPB is considerable, with a predominant focus on areas such as technology usage, exercise, health, finances, and investments (Conn, Tripp-Reimer, & Maas, 2003; Kim, Reicks, & Sjoberg, 2003; Pennington-Gray et al., 2003; van Dam, van der Vorst, & van der Heijden, 2009). This broad, diverse literature makes it difficult to formulate coherent hypotheses or propositions relevant to this study. Specifically, no consistent terminology exists because various studies use terms such as senior, older adults, aged, and Baby Boomers. We find no consensus about what chronological age delineates different samples and the geographical locations also vary across studies. Finally, we find no studies that have applied the TPB to understand classical music concert audiences, and we posit that the actions associated with retirement investments, exercise, or eating convenience foods do not translate easily to a classical music consumption experience.

### Model of Goal-Directed Behavior (MGB)

The TPB has a long connection with leisure research. The earliest reported empirical work was published in the *Journal of Leisure Research* and *Journal of Leisure Science* over two decades ago (Ajzen & Driver, 1991, 1992). The TPB continues to play a significant role in leisure theory development and application (Henderson, Presley, & Bialeschki, 2004; Vagias, Powell, Moore, &

Wright, 2014). From a TPB perspective, behavior is driven by an intention to perform the behavior that in turn is influenced by the attitudes one has toward behavior, the amount of control one has over performing the behavior, and the extent that the behavior is endorsed by influential others. Despite the popularity and efficacy of the TPB, it also contains some limitations. To address these shortfalls, Perugini and Bagozzi (2001) extended the TPB to include anticipated emotions, past behavior, and desires, thus forming the MGB (Bagozzi, Dholakia, & Basuroy, 2003; Perugini & Bagozzi, 2001). Anticipated emotions motivate goal setting and initiations toward behavior-related processes (Perugini & Conner, 2000), and past behavior is a proxy for a habit that initiates automatically in the presence of relevant environmental cues or if a relevant goal is salient (Aarts & Dijksterhuis, 2000). Desires provide a direct impetus for intentions, conveying the effects of attitudes, subjective norms, anticipated emotions, and perceived behavioral control (PBC) on intentions (Perugini & Bagozzi, 2001). Desires are vital for explaining individual decision making (Perugini & Bagozzi, 2004), because they represent the motivational state of mind by which appraisals and reasons to act transform into motivations to do so.

The MGB consistently explains more variance in intentions and behaviors than the TPB (Perugini & Bagozzi, 2001, 2004), and we test its applicability to a classical music concert context, using word-of-mouth (WOM) behavior. Word-of-mouth behaviour has been defined as informal communication between individuals that involves an evaluation of goods or services. It has been associated with shared values, trust, and commitment and is closely linked with customer satisfaction (Eisingerich & Bell, 2007) and for Radbourne, Glow, Johanson, and White (2009), it is the most successful form of promotion for the arts. Both practitioners and academics recognize that WOM communication has a powerful effect on consumer decision making (Brown, Barry, Dacin, & Gunst, 2005) and behavior, and as such we consider it an appropriate outcome construct for this study.

Given the paucity of work in applying psychosocial models in general, and the MGB specifically, to examine classical music concert attendance we propose a single research question to guide the subsequent investigation:

**R1:** Will the model of goal-directed behavior provide an effective means for predicting the word-of-mouth behavior of older adults in a classical music context?

## Methodology

### Procedure

Fifteen organizations involved in the production and performance of classical music concerts were identified through the Arts Council of Australia and were invited to participate in this study. The organizations included both large symphony and philharmonic orchestras and smaller chamber and youth orchestras, and they distributed a link to a soft copy of the questionnaire through their customer databases. To participate, the respondents must have attended at least one classical music concert in the previous 12 months. No incentives were offered.

### Sample

In terms of age, 80% of the sample was born between 1946 and 1964 and can be categorized as Baby Boomers. Despite the large demographic, numerous studies have shown that members of this segment share similar interests (Patterson & Pegg, 2009) and values (Sperazza & Banerjee, 2010). Moreover Reisenwitz and Iyer (2007) reported no significant differences in a variety of behavioral variables in those born between 1946–1955 and 1956–1964. It is generally accepted

that knowledge of the leisure preferences of the Baby Boomer segment is of utmost importance to the future of leisure planning (Patterson & Pan, 2007). Of the sample, females accounted for 60%, and 80% of respondents had university undergraduate or postgraduate qualifications. The remaining 20% had secondary qualifications. Over 40% of the sample had an income of less than US\$36k per annum; these figures signal that classical music attendance is not solely the domain of those in higher income brackets. The organizations were reluctant to provide details of their customer databases and this precluded the use of a probability sampling method. It was a convenience sample that consisted of 248 completed responses.

### Instrumentation

The scales for the various constructs were selected from high-quality research and adapted to our study context (see Table 1). A pilot study indicated that the alpha coefficients for all constructs were above the recommended level of .70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994) and the correlations across constructs were as expected, with the exception of negative anticipated emotions. We found no significant relationships between any of the negative emotion items with desire or WOM, which makes sense on further reflection. That is, why would anyone attend a concert if it evoked anticipated negative feelings? The negative emotion scale was therefore removed. Following the advice of (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003), we took several precautions to avoid common method bias such as counter balancing the order of questions from different scales and randomly reversing the anchor points on some items. We also made minor adjustments to the wording of some items, based on suggestions from experts in the field. For example, some scales were designed for an exercise context and these needed to be adapted to classical music. The final version of the questionnaire is available by personal communication.

**Table 1**

*Source of the Scales Used in this Study*

Construct	Source
Attitudes	Norman & Conner (2006)
Subjective norms	Elliott, Armitage, & Baughan (2007)
Anticipated emotions	Bagozzi et al., (2003)
Past behavior	Perugini and Bagozzi (2001)
Perceived behavioral control, desires, and intentions	Perugini and Conner (2000)
Word of mouth	Harrison-Walker (2001)

### Data Analysis

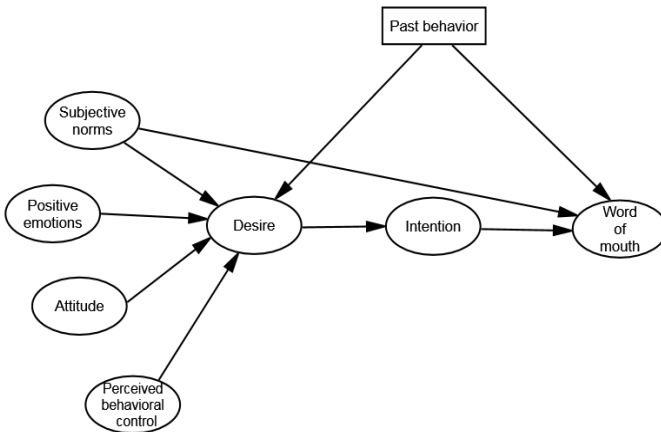
We used structural equation modeling with maximum likelihood methods to estimate the model parameters. After removing seven cases that had a large number of incomplete responses we inspected the measurement models using confirmatory factor analysis in AMOS 22. We also addressed assumptions about multicollinearity, outliers, and normality. The average variance extracted (AVE) and construct reliabilities were greater than the recommended .50 and .70 levels,

respectively (Hair, Anderson, Babin, Tatham, & Black, 2006). The AVE for each construct also exceeded the squared correlations between each construct and all other constructs in the model. These findings together confirm the convergent and discriminant validity of the measures. The final sample consisted of 241 responses. As suggested by Hair et al. (2006), we use incremental and absolute indices to assess model fit and in addition to the chi-square/degree of freedom ratio and we adopt the Tucker-Lewis index [TLI] and root mean square error of approximation [RMSEA]. Given the sample size and number of observed variables in this study (25) a chi-square/degrees of freedom ratio  $\leq 2$ , a TLI of .95 or better and a RMSEA  $< .08$  indicate an acceptable model fit.

## Results

The model produced a chi-square value of 470.33, with 215 degrees of freedom, a ratio of 2.18 to 1. The fit indicators suggested the data fit the model marginally well (TLI = .930, RMSEA = .069). The predictors explained 25% of the variance in WOM behavior. Given the central role of desires in the MGB we tested the mediation assumption by estimating another model that included all direct paths; a significant difference between the chi-square values of both models would indicate that the mediation model is not optimal and that a more appropriate model exists. This method of testing mediating hypotheses in structural equation models is straightforward and stringent (cf. Baron & Kenny, 1986; Perugini & Conner, 2000).

The second model produced a chi-square value of 383.55, with 208 degrees of freedom, a ratio of 1.84 to 1. The difference between the two models was highly significant, which indicated room for model improvement. A re-estimated model with nonsignificant paths removed produced a chi-square value of 392.76, with 216 degrees of freedom and the model fit indicators were acceptable (TLI = .952, RMSEA = .058). The predictors explained 57% of the variance in WOM behavior, representing a vast improvement on the previous model (See Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** The Model of Goal-Directed Behaviour

## Discussion

We questioned whether the model of goal-directed behavior would provide an effective means for predicting the word-of-mouth behavior of older adults in a classical music context; it does not, but with relatively minor adjustments we presented a model that had a very good statistical fit and explained 57% of the variance in WOM behavior. Moreover, the entire process—from questionnaire design to data and model cleaning and analysis—was stringent and based on well-accepted practices. In this note, we briefly discuss the findings and present some directions for further research.

Our findings indicate the MGB was not optimal in predicting WOM in a classical music context. In particular, the findings challenge the inclusion of negative anticipated emotions in a leisure context in which consumers have considerable volitional control over a pleasurable activity. From a theoretical perspective, removing negative emotions does not dramatically weaken the model for such contexts, because affect is addressed in anticipated positive emotion component. Some studies have used up to 10 items to capture negative emotions (Perugini & Bagozzi, 2001); from a practical perspective, removing 10 items likely improves data collection efforts, by reducing respondent fatigue and the potential for error (Hess, Hensher, & Daly, 2012).

In addition, we found that subjective norms directly influenced WOM behavior and were the strongest predictor; such findings have not been reported elsewhere (Walker et al., 2006). Some researchers have argued that subjective norms are the weakest component of the TPB and that they be dropped from the model completely (Walker, Jackson, & Deng, 2007). Moreover, in prior studies using the MGB, desires mediated the effects of subjective norms. Subjective norms are defined as perceived social pressure to engage or not engage in a behavior (Ajzen, 1991). We attempt to explain the subjective norms—WOM relationship in a classical music context by considering the status culture literature.

The classical music genre is a relatively high culture, elitist, and prestigious activity (DiMaggio & Mukhtar, 2004; Johnson, 2002). In a Weberian tradition, status culture encompasses shared and distinctive traits, tastes, and styles; people within a group mobilize to appropriate scarce resources and thereby form and solidify their social networks and membership in them (DiMaggio, 1982; O’Cass & McEwen, 2004). Word-of-mouth communication about attending a classical music concert may be more about reinforcing a person’s position within a social group, rather than spreading the word about classical music. More tests of the relationships between these constructs in similar contexts is necessary to confirm this explanation.

The other significant predictors of WOM were intentions and past behavior. The intentions–behavior link is well documented (Ajzen & Driver, 1992) and we have shown here that the more frequently people over 50 attend concerts, the more likely they are to communicate their positive experiences. Desires fully mediated the effects of emotions and attitudes on intentions however despite being a significant predictor of intentions we found no relationship between perceived behavioral control and desires.

Intentions involve some form of planning or commitment (Perugini & Bagozzi, 2001), both areas where a person can exercise some degree of control. Desires are more a state of mind where reasons for undertaking an activity are transformed to energize intentions and as such may not be as controllable. But why does perceived behavioral control predict desires in exercising and dieting contexts and not in classical music? With the information at our disposal we cannot answer this question. Replication studies in similar context would confirm if this finding was sample specific or a stable pattern.

To address Hayes and Slater's (2002) call to "... focus on strengthening the franchise with existing arts audiences..." (pg. 1), our findings suggest that word-of-mouth behavior can be enhanced primarily by devising appropriate communication or relationship building strategies to influence subjective norms. Additionally, the more frequently one attends classical music concerts the more likely they are to talk positively about it and offering free or discounted seats to selected people can increase attendance frequency. Finally, intentions have a significant impact on WOM and intentions can be strengthened by focusing on the drivers of desires not previously discussed, namely attitudes and anticipated emotion.

## Conclusion

Older adults are a lucrative consumer market; in finance and health markets, considerable attention has been devoted to understanding their preferences and the factors that influence their decisions and behaviors. In a classical music concert context, older adults are extremely important; despite accounting for half of all attendees in most countries, little theory-based research explains classical music attendance in general and by these older adults in particular. Using the MGB as a foundation, we collected data from attendees and proposed a revised model to capture the processes involved in the formation of positive WOM behavior. The model presented here extends the Theory of Planned Behavior in important ways, and the findings suggest there is potential for further application in the leisure research domain.

Despite the benefits derived from this research, there are limitations that need to be considered and these provide research opportunities. In particular, work that applies the model we have presented to other leisure contexts such as museum or art gallery visitation or outdoor activities such as hiking or fishing would help identify common themes and assist in theory building. Moreover, research that employs longitudinal or experimental designs could establish the stability of the model over time and verify causal relations between constructs reported here. A qualitative investigation that takes a deeper look at the role of subjective norms in the formation of WOM behavior would greatly assist in understanding, and perhaps bridging the status culture and psychosocial literature. Over 80% of the sample in this study were Baby Boomers, born between 1946 and 1964, and further research should investigate how smaller age categories within this segment, and indeed age segments outside the Baby Boomer segment such as Generation X, respond to a broader range of consumer behaviors, such as loyalty, repurchasing, and complaining.

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