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Branding the performing arts in the digital age: Lessons from the Opéra de Paris

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ABSTRACT

Digital age creates a new context for performing arts organizations. They have to imagine innovative marketing strategies to draw audiences' attention. The objective of this communication is to question how legitimate cultural organizations can manage their brand and what levers they can use to address news challenges. Relying on a new brand management paradigm, named "community paradigm", we focus on a case study methodology. The "3^e Scène", the Paris Opera 3rd stage, a fully digital creative platform, appears as a good illustration of the new community branding paradigm. Multiple data were collected and analyzed: interviews with 3^e scène stakeholders, secondary data and systematic observation of all 3^e scène contents. By adopting a disruptive approach and offering content inspired and created by crowdcultures, the brand resonates with its time while connecting with wider audiences.

Key words: Branding, Digital, Performing Arts, Paris Opera.

Introduction

Creative and Cultural industries are growing in a digital change context. It is imperative for them to seize digitalization opportunities in order to survive in the competitive environment of tomorrow (Moreau, 2013). Digital area offers an easy and immediate access to a wide range of cultural contents and facilitates the building and growing of networks and communities particularly among young generations (Colbert and St James, 2014, Holt, 2016). Social medias increase pace and intensity of collaboration leading to the birth of crowdcultures. Those gather subcultures (built around new practices and ideologies) and art worlds in which artists of various fields work together to generate major creative breakthroughs (Holt, 2016). All those changes lead to a new digital order¹ in the Cultural field characterized by a decrease of “legitimate” cultural practices (opera and classical music for performing arts) particularly among young audiences but also with more time devoted to communicate, stay informed, play and access cultural contents. As a consequence, the market appears more and more saturated with supply far exceeding demand.

This “digital age” creates a new paradigm for brand management that has been studied in commercial setting. With this new brand management, brands generate cultural relevance interacting with crowdcultures where consumers are empowered and linked to each other in digital communities (Quinton, 2013; Erdem et al., 2013, Holt, 2016; Leeftang et al., 2014). This drives brand managers to question their identity, their values, and renew their branding strategy. The brand management in this new area has not been studied in the field of cultural consumption. We then focus on this question in asking **how legitimate cultural organizations can manage their brand in this new area and what kind of lever could they use to fit with new challenges.**

We have developed a research based **on case study methodology** (Yin, 1994; Eisenhardt, 1989; Perry, 2000). We choose to study the case of Paris Opera because this is a traditional and famous institution of performing arts but also an innovative one, who has adapted its strategy to the changing environment (Agid and Tarondeau, 2008). In september 2015, the Paris Opera has launched a free digital platform: the “3^e Scène” (the third stage) to “*build a new stage in the digital world (...) to continue its dialogue with the public and also to make new friends. The 3^e Scène spectators live all around the globe, speak every language, and love art in all its forms*”². In this paper, we analyze this unique and daring initiative and offer insights to branding performing arts in the digital area.

The paper first depicts how digital area has created new rules for branding. This conceptual framework drive to raise new branding rules and challenges in focusing on cultural sector. We then present our qualitative methodology based on the case of Paris Opera. The analysis drives us to explain how the Paris Opera manages the observed changes in its environment and to what extent it is implementing a new branding paradigm with 3^e Scène We conclude in discussing branding strategies in performing arts organizations.

1. Conceptual framework

Cultural organisations face today three main challenges: attract audiences (keep current audiences and attract new ones), raise funds (public and private financial resources) and spread high cultural contents in an “easy” and pleasant manner (Tajtakova and Arias-Aranda, 2008; Voss and Voss, 2000). Marketing is becoming essential for art organizations to fulfil these challenges.

1.1. Marketing in Performing arts organizations: unique challenges

One of these specific aspects of marketing in performing arts is to implement process and tool gathering interests of different stakeholders: local governments, sponsors, current audiences, potential audiences, medias, critics, providers, competitors and internal stakeholders (Bessana et al., 2018). Marketers have to develop stakeholder’s engagements and to this end, audience development is essential. But audience development is a hard mission for what is called “difficult brands” (Preece and Johnson, 2011; Camarero et al., 2012; Harrison and Hartley, 2007). Difficult brands are characterized by (1) a constrained availability (available only at particular times and in specific places) and (2) a high

¹ In Culture & Médias 2030, Prospective de politiques culturelles, Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication, 2011.

² <https://www.operadeparis.fr/en/3e-scene>

uncertainty (experiential products that have to be consumed to be evaluated, high perceived risk). Because of the constrained availability performing arts organizations are forced to “*maintain connections between the consumer and the brand when the product is unavailable*” (p. 19). And, on the other hand, marketers have to convince audiences about the quality of the offer to lower perceived risks. Preece and Johnson (2011) suggest two avenues for action: **create a persistent presence** in the consumer mind between two performances (flyers, tools of relationship management, web, social networks...) and **reinforce the sense of community** around the brand (in developing events before and after a show, in organizing meeting and stimulate conversations within community members, social networks...). Which could be done with social networks and digital tools (Kolb, 2005; Hanna, Rohm and Crittenden, 2011; Preece and Johnson, 2011; Muniz and O’Guinn, 2001; Erdem et al., 2015). To summarize, performing arts has to undertake marketing strategies in order to make a balance between a huge number of stakeholders. Not all cultural organizations are able to implement efficiently a “digital strategy” (Preece and Johnson, 2011), but when they do so, this drive to better performances in terms of audience development (Bresana et al., 2018).

1.2. How digital age creates a new context for performing arts marketing.

New technologies have implemented new ways to communicate with others, to exchange products, to work, to consume, to spend time but also to learn and to access knowledge and information which suggests organizational changes (Rieffel, 2014). What are the new challenges for cultural organizations in terms of audience development and marketing? To what extent, traditional cultural organizations (operas, theatres ...) are affected by this digital transformation?

First of all, we notice the birth of the age of “**infinite cultural contents**”. New technologies have deeply affected the nature and depth of “contents” available for individuals in order to develop their knowledge or to have fun and spend time. Today, consumers can access a large choice of “cultural content” (videos, music, virtual gallery of art, books, ...) easily, quickly and “on demand” (Farchy, 2011). New competitors appear for difficult brands such as performing arts organizations. More generally, for content providers (media, cultural organizations, artists, education ...) this drives to what economists called a new “**economy of the attention**”. Attention is a rare resource and marketers have to find efficient means (as digital tools) to gain and maintain the consumer’s one (Besana et al., 2018).

A second major change for cultural organizations is that digital transformation has created a new audience configuration. Economists use the words “**fragmented audiences**” to explain that digital transformation have raised a multiple of communities. Holt (2016) explains that mass culture has been replaced by a huge number of micro communities sharing a common interest (around espresso, birds, BBQ...). Those crowdcultures gather subcultures (community of people around new ideologies and practices) and art worlds (cultural entertainment). They are not new but they have expanded with digital and now they challenge legitimate cultural organizations (theatre, operas, movie industry...) by offering new contents and ideologies.

Another major change that affects cultural organizations is the rise of **an autonomous artistic creation**, far from legitimate institutions, the “cultural entrepreneurship” (Gehman and Soublière, 2017). Today, artists can easily connect with each other inside “artistic communities”, and collaborate to create “artistic universes” (Holt, 2016). These groups are autonomous, share their creations with their fans directly without media or intermediaries and their artistic production is in line with popular taste (because of the frequent interactions with audiences) (Biraghi, Gambetti, and Pace, 2018). This is challenging for traditional art organizations that could not remain on the outside of these artistic communities. This new context forces cultural organizations to find innovative strategies to “draw audiences’ attention”, to connect with micro communities and to face a new system of art production and diffusion. This implies a new brand management.

1.3. Branding in the digital age: a new paradigm?

How to manage brand in the digital changing environment? This question is becoming central in marketing literature. Some researchers announce the birth of a “new brand paradigm”. Quinton (2013), pursuing Louro and Cunha (2001) work on brand management paradigms, is one of them. He has developed a framework to set rules of brand management in digital area. He mentions a **new paradigm of brand management**, named “**community paradigm**”. Based on his work and the one of Holt (2016)

we identify key points to understand how to manage a brand in this new context. In line with previous development, we focus on performing arts.

Firstly, authors are unanimous in considering that branding in the digital age implies to reconsider relationships between consumers and the brand. Indeed, the figure of an empowered consumer emerges, a consumer who wants to actively participate, **co-create the brand** meaning and exert a control over brands and himself (Allen et al., 2008 ; Holt, 2003 ; Edelman, 2010). Consequently, the traditional vision of brand management where the brand is “an asset owned and controlled by a company” is called into question (Fourny Arrivé, 2017). As Christodoulides (2009) says “*Brand managers soon realized that the hierarchical, one-sided communication model applied to mass media was unsuitable for the dynamic nature of computer mediated environments* » (p. 141). Consumer is the dominant partner in the brand experience, consumer chooses how and when to engage with the brand (Quinton, 2013).

The role of brand manager is more to encourage **open discussions** between the brand and the consumers **inside brand communities**. Indeed, it is largely acknowledged that brand is at the core of relationships between community’s members (McAlexander et al., 2002). Thus, in this environment, marketing has to encourage multi-layered interactions with digital communities.

Another rule in this new brand management paradigm is to consider that the brand has a lot of “partners” to interact with, brand has to become a “**hub**”. For example, in the cultural context, Wiid and Mora-Avila (2018) describe the art organisation as a hub that should develop networks and connect different partners: artists, audiences, governments, funders... Wider et al (2018) use the metaphor of brand as a rhizome explaining that “brands as ongoing processes of social interaction among continuously interrelated heterogeneous stakeholders contributing to ever-changing, multi-faceted brand reality” (p. 4).

A fourth element of brand management in digital area emerges: the **consumer experience**. Quinton (2013) outlines that, in digital age, the brand experience has to be “total”, including direct (buying, using, promotion) and indirect (reading reviews, website, discussions forums ...) contacts with the brand. Brand should be present at all of the consumer experience stage: before, during the experience and after the consumption. It implies that brand has to demonstrate its connectivity to consumers in order to enter “in the consumer daily life”. But customers are not the only target of brand management. Brands should adopt a broader view including varied audiences.

Traditionally, the brand manager was focused to build a brand image that fit with consumer identity. Brand symbolism was a key concept for brand manager. But, in the digital age, and based on what has been previously mentioned, the **brand authenticity** is becoming essential in brand management. This is the fifth key point of the new brand management paradigm. Consumers, who can access easily and rapidly a wide range of information about products and brand, are in search of authenticity and trueness (Quinton, 2013).

Quinton (2013) also outlines a new statement of brand management in digital area, the necessity of **brand performance metrics**. Indeed, because the frontiers between virtual and physical environment are becoming blurred, brand managers have to enrich traditional brand metrics with new KPI. Digital metrics provide a proactive vision of brand and have to be integrated in the brand management (dashboards live data). All those components of the new brand paradigm are summarized in table 1.

Table 1: Rules of brand management in digital area

New brand missions	Underlying conception of branding
Co-creation of brand meaning with consumers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowered consumer • Accepting a loose of control in the brand management process • Consumer is a dominant partner
Establishing dialogue with communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open discussion inside brand communities • The brand is a core of relationships between community's members • Multi-layered interactions
Establishing a hub between partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network of partners / Hub • The brand facilitates the relationships between all of the partners
Focusing on consumer experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brand is present in the consumer daily life • Customer is not the unique target • Widening the experience with the brand
Demonstrating brand authenticity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting back to basics • Sharing information with audiences, no lie
Measuring brand performance online and offline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital metrics are consistent KPI • Real time brand management

2. Case study presentation and methodology

Our research is grounded on a case study methodology (Yin, 1994) defined as “a research strategy focused on understanding of the dynamics in a unique context” (Eisenhardt, 1989). This research allows us to comprehend the emergence of the project through multiple decisions levels and various stakeholders. We studied in depth the case of the Paris Opera for two reasons. First, the Paris Opera is a famous and successful cultural institution with a strong brand (92% high occupancy rate, 840,380 members of the audience, €4.27M free operating cash flow, €16M for sponsorship in 2017³). Second, this institution has entered the digital age 10 years ago, first with its website (online ticket purchase, online magazine, videos, interviews etc.), then with social networks (more than 1M followers on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, +39% those two last years⁴) and finally with the creation of a third stage, la 3^e Scène (100% digital stage).

Unique in performing arts, the 3^e Scène offers a new stage of creation and broadcasting besides the two existing stages (opéra Garnier and opéra Bastille). This is a free digital platform dedicated to artistic creation and experimentation. All the artworks are inspired by the Paris Opera universe (sometimes in a very subtle way) and have been created by artists coming from a wide range of arts (visual artists, photographers, actors, writer...). They are shown on multiple broadcasting channels (Youtube, website, dedicated app...). Until now there has been two seasons, a first one with Dimitri Chamblas founder of 3^e Scène and artistic director and then a second one since spring 2016 with Philippe Martin as the artistic director who owns his own motion picture company, Les Films Pélleas.

For our research, we decided to analyze this case study through the prism of branding paradigm. We then rely on the conceptual framework presented above exposing the components of the branding paradigm in the digital age. We analyze to what extend the 3^e Scène is an answer to the new rules of branding emerging in the literature.

Concerning data gathered to analyze the Paris Opera case study, we used multiple sources for the triangulation of data sources. First, we have undertaken semi-structured interviews with 3^e Scène stakeholders (table 2). Secondly, we collected and analyzed secondary data: media articles, press interviews, communication tools, annual activity report. Finally, we have done a systematic observation of all 3^e Scène contents (more than 50 artworks: art video, animation, documentary, fiction and portfolio lasting from 2-3 minutes to more than 25) to identify artists, artistic genres, number of views plus all of artists videos interviews (18) provided by 3^e Scène in which they explain their artistic approach and present their own vision of Paris Opera and 3^e Scène.

³ Les Echos, L'opéra remplit ses salles et sa caisse, 15 mars 2018.

⁴ In article Le Monde op cité 3 mars 2018

Table 2 : Profile of interviewees

Names	Functions
DC	Artistic Director of 3 ^e Scène, sept 2015 - april 2016
PM	Current Artistic Director of 3 ^e Scène since spring 2016
AM	Curator and producer
DK	Project Manager 3 ^e Scène, Les Films Pélleás/
FC	Project Manager 3 ^e Scène, Paris Opera
KB	Visual Arts Artist

3. Main Results

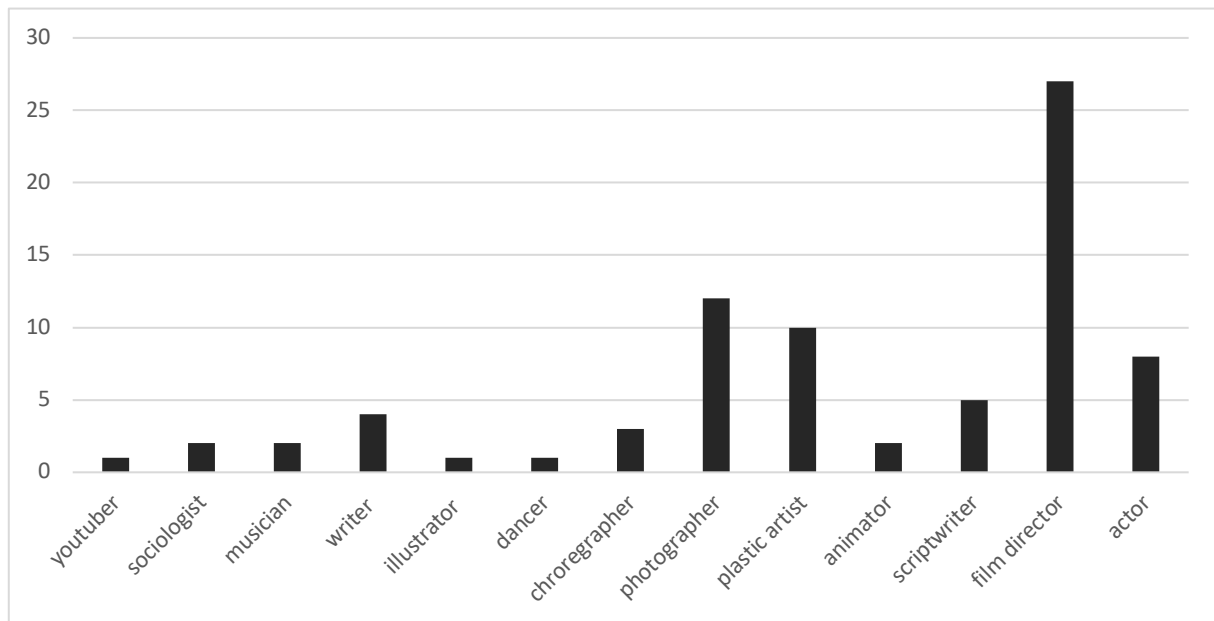
3.1. The 3^e Scène: a virtual stage to answer digital changes

As presented earlier in the literature, the digital change has led to three main consequences : a never-ending proliferation of cultural contents that makes more and more difficult for brands to capture audiences' attention, the rise of crowdcultures (subcultures and art worlds) and an increasing autonomous artistic creation far from legitimate Culture.

We can notice that interviewees are all well aware of those changes and of the necessity of surfing on new tendencies. Young people are used to access Culture quickly and with short formats. They show a strong taste for aesthetic (Instagram is very popular among them) and they consider internet as “the” place for creativity and freedom. Those new ways of consuming arts imply for cultural institutions to connect the digital and the physical world by understanding and leveraging the codes and tools of communication, “*to give access to Art in a younger and more modern way*” (FC). But they also admit that it is more and more difficult to become audible and that a communication strategy has to be implemented to advertise artworks of 3^e Scène. That's why a budget is now allocated to promote each new artwork by targeting specific audiences on Facebook or Youtube.

The 3^e Scène has been created to offer artists coming from a wide range of arts domains (even a youtuber) a unique opportunity to create artworks and a place to show them to their audiences and new ones. As recommended by Holt (2016), a brand has to innovate and offers new ideologies shared by crowdcultures (subcultures and art world) if it wants to implement efficient branding strategies. 3^e Scène offers a way of creating “*a new repertoire*” (DC) for Paris Opera, different from what we are used to. By inviting artists far from the Paris Opera register (table 3), 3^e Scène adopts a disruptive approach of communication as recommended by Holt (2016) and demonstrates its willingness to open to new arts fields and also to new audiences. This daring has been widely admitted by the contributors of 3^e Scène during their interviews as the word “*openness*” is used by many of them to describe the platform.

Table 3: A wide range of contributors' profile⁵



This diversity of artists not only facilitates the emergence of new ideas but also transforms the 3^e Scène in a lasting digital record, a testimony of our time: *Adieu Bohème* evokes terrorist attacks in Paris, *Le Fantôme*, the minorities difficulties with integration, *Les Indes Galantes*, the underground dance called Krump⁶. 3^e Scène has thus been described as “... a kind of collection that tells the story of an era, that illustrates the cultural policy, the life of a house and this is what I consider as the most beautiful answer to how we can document what is happening now”. (DC).

The 3^e Scène enables also Paris Opera to reach new communities and new audiences. As pointed in the literature, this is crucial for Cultural institutions to attract new audiences (Tajtakova and Arias-Aranda, 2008 ; Vos and Voss, 2000) which implies to break down barriers. By mixing genres, Paris Opera is trying to shake the hierarchy of arts and to modify its image of an ultra-specialized place just dedicated to ballet, classical music and opera. Stephane Lissner, current Director of Paris Opera, explains that the main goal of 3^e Scène is “to invite artists whose vocation is not to work with Paris Opera to talk to audiences whose vocation is not to attend Paris Opera⁷”. The digital platform helps Paris Opera to touch directly audiences where they are instead of waiting for them to come to the opera. Because of its characteristics (easy and fast way to spread videos), internet is seen as an “accelerator to touch new audiences” (DC). But this is only possible if the content is made to fit communities’ interests, which makes the 3^e Scène unique. It offers completely new artworks and not performing arts captions as it is commonly done. It offers Paris Opera the opportunities to reach international audiences. For that purpose, a partnership has been concluded with Air France who is presenting 3^e Scène artworks (not only from French contributors but also American, British, Thai, Lebanese, Japanese, Canadian, Belgian and Algerian).

According to our secondary and primary data, 3^e Scène offers a new way to seize opportunities of Digital to pursue several objectives:

(1) To reach new audiences here and abroad interacting with communities sharing common interest, to open young people to new forms of art, to help them tame the institution. In *Les Indes Galantes*, a very successful video with more than 392 000 views on Youtube, Krump dancers are performing on the opera of Garnier stage with the music of Jean-Philippe Rameau, a 17th century composer which

⁵ 18 artists belong to one unique art field, 17 to two and the others to three and more.

⁶ Krump is a streetdance that appears in Los Angeles ghettos after 1995 riots.

⁷ In an interview given to the radio France Culture on January, 11th 2019.

makes PM says “*And suddenly, the name of Rameau will have sounded like something extremely contemporary and lively and not like an old-fashioned thing*”.

(2) To modernize the image of Paris Opera. Stéphane Lissner is well aware of the necessity to question the Paris Opera identity. He aims to fight against a preconceived image of “*a place seen as a bastion dedicated to well-educated audiences familiar with the legitimate Culture*”. Not only potential audiences but also artists themselves could have lots of prejudices. The rapper Abd-el-Malik, has admitted having a stereotyped image of Paris Opera: “*We see Paris Opera as unattainable particularly for people with same background as me*”.

(3) To open the Opera to new artistic fields. 3^e Scène aims at finding new energies by collaborating with artists from various backgrounds for the digital platform and sometimes more. Thus, C. Cogitore, a young French movie director, has first created an art video for 3^e Scène in 2017 and now he will stage *Les Indes Galantes*, a real opera-ballet, in 2019.

(4) To ensure a permanent presence as recommended by Preece and Johnson (2011) and thus to go beyond the constrained availability of Performing arts. Videos remain accessible on internet. It is still possible to watch all artworks and the current artistic director don’t hesitate to relaunch one that has not reached enough views the first time.

(5) To leave a lasting print of the history of the institution at a specific time as it has been already explained.

3^e Scène appears as unique, it is described as “*an atypical object*”⁸, an “*UFO*” (FC) but also as an “*experimentation*”, “*an invention*” (PM). Until now there is no equivalent for a cultural institution. Therefore, it seems relevant to question it regarding the components of the new “community branding” paradigm.

3.2. 3^e Scène: an integration of the new community branding paradigm?

Digital changes have lead researchers and practitioners to re-think branding paradigm by centering it more and more on communities (Quinton, 2013; Holt, 2016). It encompasses six missions for the brand (previously exposed in table 1) that could be found in the analysis of content.

Establishing dialogue with communities appears clearly in our interviews but the dialogue occurs mainly between Paris Opera and artists/artworlds as the collaboration between them is the core of the 3^e Scène “*calling artists from various fields*” (AC). Paris Opera aims at connecting with potential consumers through the platform and many artworks have been well received by targeted audiences, but we can’t know if those communities are really discussing about Paris Opera. The comments on Youtube are not eloquent. There are just a few (less than 10) for most of videos and they focus more of the artwork and the artist than on Paris Opera. There is one exception for the last video *Le Fantôme* from Jhon Rachid, a French youtuber, humorist, who addresses young people. Launched at the end of april 2019 on his channel, it has reached more than 519 000 views in a month and it has been the subject of more than 2 800 comments. This is a great opportunity for Paris Opera to reach Rachid’s community of followers but most comments are about the artist and the movie instead of the Opera.

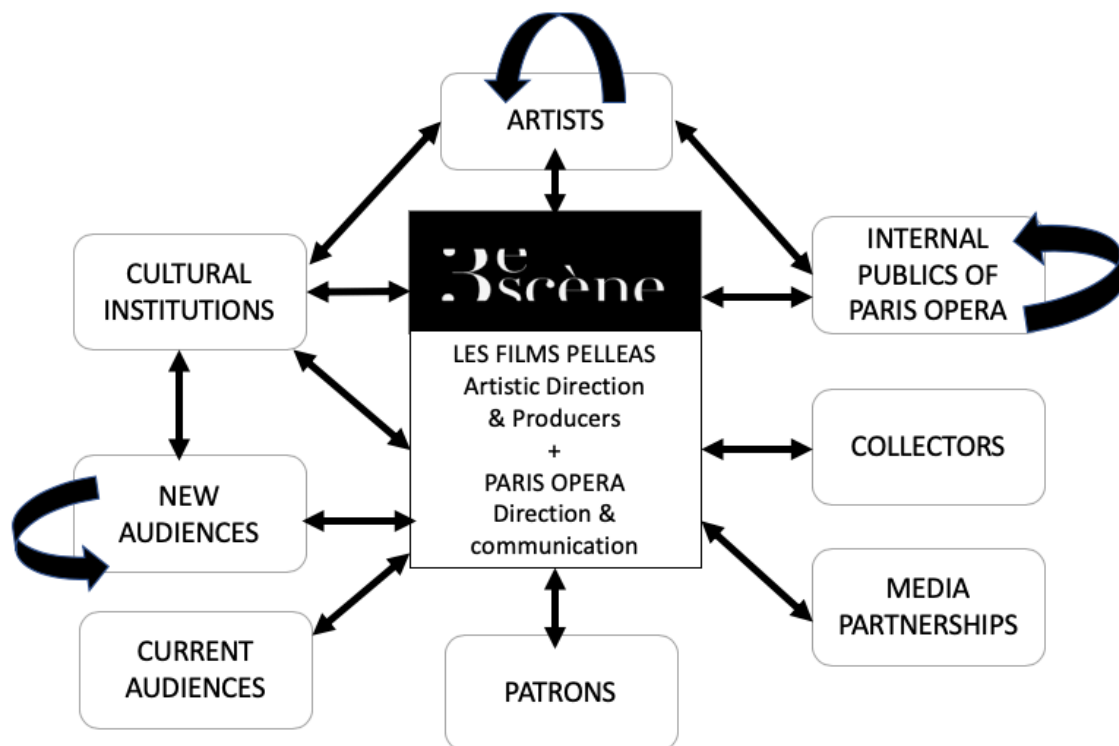
The interviews strongly support the idea of **co-creation of brand meaning but more with artists** than with consumers. As previously explained, with 3^e Scène, Paris Opera gives “*Carte Blanche*” to artists who, in return, should only keep a link, even very little, with the Opera “*They told me that I was free to go in any direction I wanted, and that was amazing*” (KB). Artists contributions differ a lot. Some have decided to show buildings in their artworks, the visible (architecture) but also the invisible (foundations, 6th underground floor, workshops), others people of the Opera (visible: dancers, pupils, singers, conductor, musicians but also invisible: technicians, craftsmen), or the legends (phantom, lake). Some focused more on the affect (stage fright, public’s reactions) while others have chosen a more conceptual approach as J. Prévieux, a French visual artist, who studied the movement in *Patterns of life*. All artworks have in common to support **brand authenticity**, to defend the DNA of Opera. Despite those subjective visions, the brand is not lying to consumers and offer them trueness to answer their expectations (Quinton, 2013). “*I wanted to start from a truth, the one of the conductor*” (J.S. Bron for

⁸ In Le Figaro du 18 avril 2016 « Danse libre avec les artistes », de Arianne Bavelier.

Vers le Silence). “I wanted another relationship with the building” (S. Laudendach for *Vibrato*). That implies for the brand a **lost of control** on what is said: “Through their eyes, we better understand who we are (...) Thanks to their exploration, it will give us new ideas and imagination” (DC). That confirms that the 3° Scène could not be considered as another tool of brand content for Paris Opera. Brand content implies a strong editorial line from the brand to structure the speech (Fourny Arrivé, 2017). For 3° Scène, the role of Artistic Director is more to find artists to collaborate with, artists who will offer something new than to define what should be said. There is no censure.

What is interesting is that the project went beyond the former expectations and has created new forms of interactions with stakeholders: artists spontaneously offered to work with the Opera, artworks have been exposed in museums and festivals, employees started to collaborate with artists, art collectors bought artworks... The 3° Scène could be seen as a **hub** facilitating connections with and through stakeholders as shown in figure 1, encouraging discussions and collaborations in communities.

Figure 1 : The 3° Scène and his stakeholders : a hub.



The brand also provides a **“total” experience** not only to current customers but to wider audiences. 3° Scène offers the possibility to be exposed to a highly experiential product wherever you are and whoever you are, a real fan of opera or a neophyte. It allows Opera to generate strong emotions as interest, surprise, excitement... “People are at home and they receive the movie. The 3° Scène has this power, this power that has been dreamt for long in the cultural field, to enter directly to people’s home” (PM). This experience provided by the institution could occur on internet but also for real as many artworks have been showed in festivals and museums as the private Fund of Hélène and Edouard Leclerc in Britany who presented an interactive exhibition dedicated to 3° Scène in April 2016: “What was nice in Landerneau was the ricochet of artworks, artworks created for internet but with the help of a performing arts institution, and then artworks that were coming back to an exhibition context” (AC). The platform is also an occasion for the Opera to bring “non-audiences” inside the Opera to perform for artists artworks, outside of the traditional programme. C. Cogitore has invited Krump dancers to perform on Garnier stage “I wanted to give them the stage of the opera” and J-G. Periot has asked a group of women from suburbs to sing on the stage for his documentary *De la joie dans ce combat*.

The last component of the new community branding paradigm is the necessity to manage **digital metrics** for the brand. Since the second season, metrics are driving more and more the attention of the artistic director and his team. Metrics offer the possibility to better know who is watching the videos (profile, country) and how they are watching them (how long and on what channel).

To summarize, 3° Scène appears as a good illustration of the new community branding paradigm. By adopting a disruptive approach and offering content inspired and created by crowdcultures, the brand resonates with its time while connecting with wider audiences.

4. Lessons for branding performing arts in digital area

Lots of corporate brands have invested money in branded content without meeting with success (Holt, 2016). They failed to anticipate the power of crowdcultures and the necessity to interact with them. If a Cultural institution wants to emerge from the huge mass of contents available on internet and reach new audiences, it has to use the same tools and speak the same language of them which means offer targeted content that will infiltrate communities. This is what Paris Opera did with 3° Scène. It implies some cultural changes for brands.

The necessity to innovate. Brands should not be scared to take risks. The idea of a free creative platform arises with the question of how to link Paris Opera-arts-Digital-new audiences. It started with a very light and flexible structure, there was just a few persons in charge: Dimitri Chamblas, the artistic director, a Benjamin Millepied's friend, the new dance Director at this moment, working with producers outside of the institution and the communication department of the Opera: *"We thought we will try to find funds quickly and at the same time to start "making", even if we have not funds already"* (DC). We found the same spirit among the new team of the second season, *"We go ahead based following our intuition, taste"* (PM), even if the structure has evolved (a project manager inside the Opera, a project manager working with the current artistic director, a bigger budget allocated to the communication strategy, a better attention dedicated to digital metrics). The two different artistic directors illustrate **the obligation to keep renewing yourself**.

The acceptance of losing control. To be accepted by communities, brands should accept to open their doors to new ideas, new arts and also new languages even if they will encounter oppositions from inside the institution or from current audiences. The freedom given to artist is certainly one of the main reasons of the success of 3° Scène.

The patience to wait for results. 3° Scène is often described as a *"laboratory"*, an *"experimentation"*, a long-term project. With Digital, it is expected to measure quickly the ROI. However, success of such a platform to achieve defined goals (do attract new audiences) could not be evaluated only with digital metrics.

That leads us to conclude with the limits of our study. We did not have the possibility to get access to all confidential digital metrics (profile of viewers) and measure the impact of viewing such videos on the image of the Opera and the intention to attend a performance. Future research should be more focused on the reception of such artworks: current audiences who could feel awkward with the disruptive speech of the brand and potential audiences interested by arts but not the traditional ones. It will suppose to study comments on Youtube, what is said about the 3° Scène and Paris Opera on internet. It can also be suggested to conduct a qualitative study among young people exposed to 3° Scène to better understand the impact : *"Congratulations for this artwork, it was incredibly beautiful! The ballet, the opera, the music, guys from suburbs, humor, emotion, everything is there... Thanks for this moment"*⁹.

⁹ Comment on Youtube of *Le Fantôme* from the French-Algerian youtuber Jhon Rachid.

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