



# **Reimagining Customer Relationships**

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National Arts Centre (Ottawa)**

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# Session Agenda

**3:30** Welcome and introductions

**3:35** A new framework for building customer loyalty

**3:55** An orchestra's view of the research – a conversation with Christina  
Bellevue of National Arts Centre Orchestra

**4:05** Discussion

**4:30** Wrap-up



**Research commissioned  
by National Arts Centre in  
Sept. 2023**

# Three methodologies

- Review of scholarly literature on loyalty in the arts and other sectors
- Inventory of experiments with new types of customer relationships in the arts sector, including expert interviews\*
- Survey of 2,112 NAC ticket buyers (across all product lines)

\*Access Alan Brown's new paper, "The Atomization of Loyalty and the Future of Customer Relationships in the Performing Arts" at:

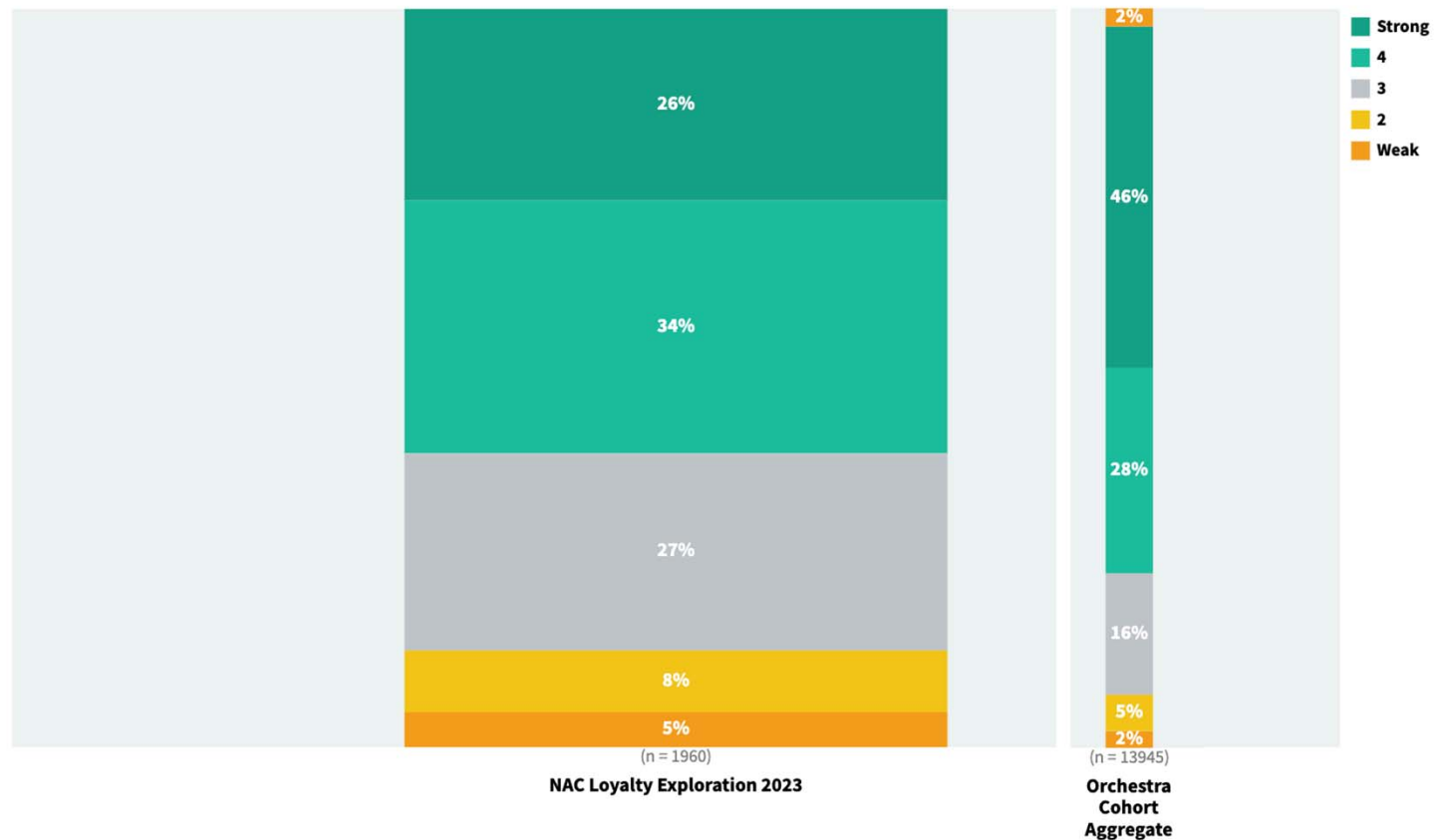
<https://wolfbrown.com/newsletters/audience-outlook-monitor/the-atomization-of-loyalty-and-the-future-of-customer-relationships-in-the-performing-arts/>



**What does the survey of  
NAC patrons suggest  
about loyalty?**

# Overall, loyalty to NAC is moderate to strong, and consistent with what we see for other presenters; but significantly lower than what we see for orchestras

Overall, how strong is your bond or feeling of affiliation with the National Arts Centre?



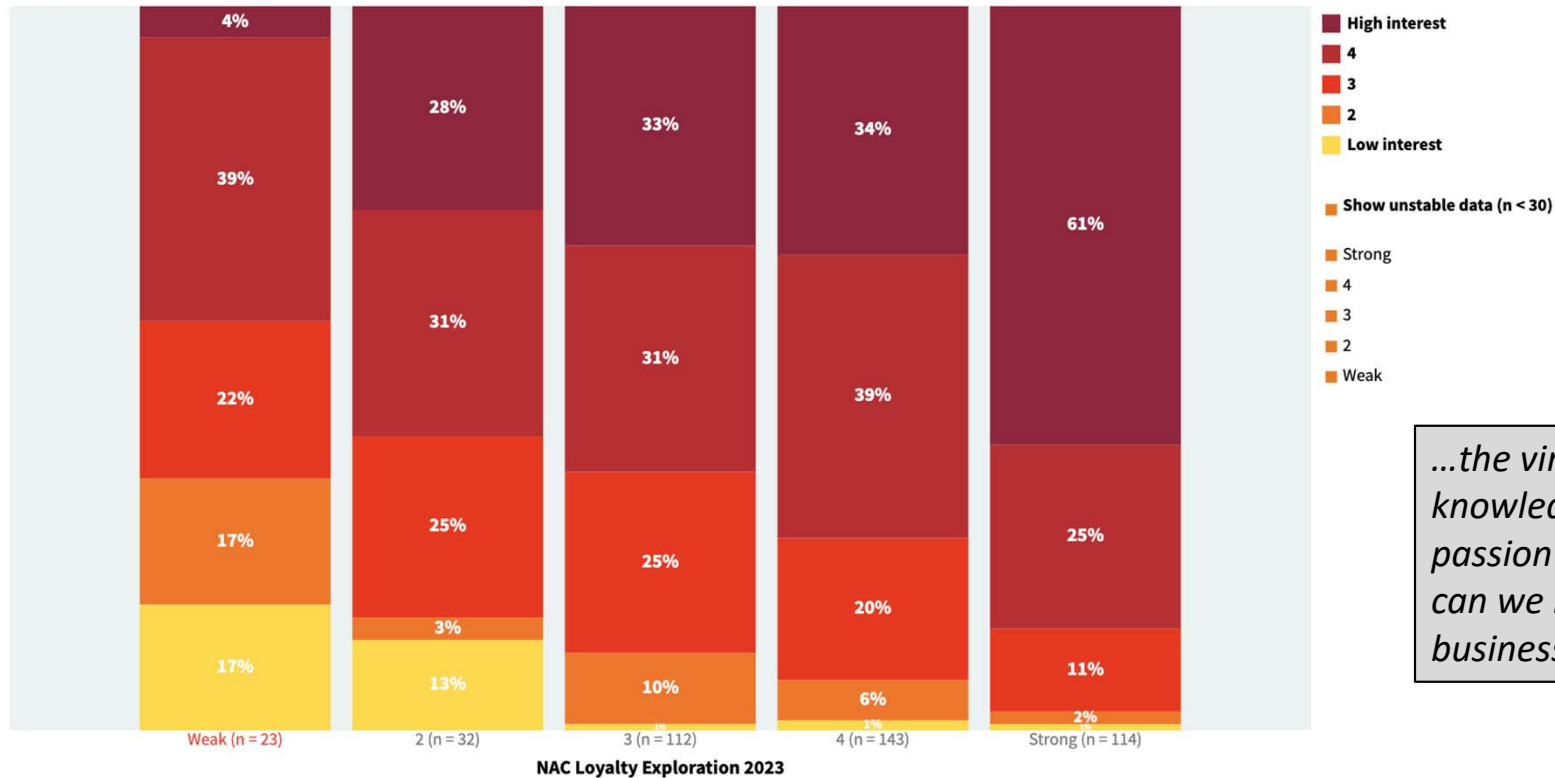


# **The virtuous circle of knowledge, frequency, passion and loyalty**

# Interest in deepening one's appreciation for classical music rises with loyalty

Overall, what is your level of interest in deepening your knowledge of or appreciation for classical music in the coming years?

Filter: NAC Bond



*...the virtuous circle of knowledge, frequency, passion and loyalty... how can we **not** be in the business of education?*

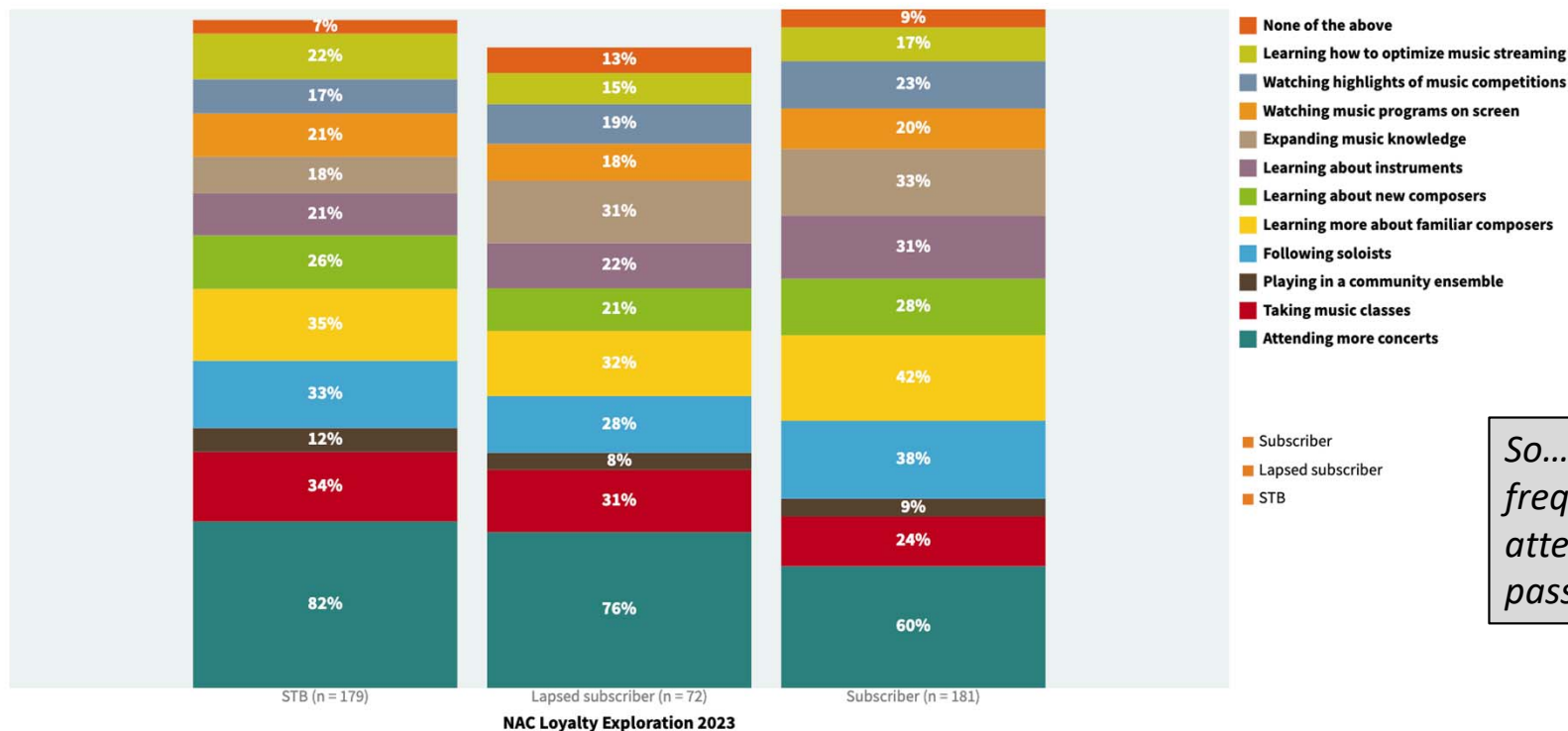


# Single-ticket buyers are just as interested in learning more about classical music as subscribers

Following is a list of activities that you might do in the future to fulfill your personal interests in classical music. Select those you're very interested in doing. (select multiple)

Filter: Subscriber Status

Note: columns on 'select multiple' questions will not total 100%.



*So... don't confuse frequency of attendance with passion for the art.*

# Survey results suggest several pathways towards loyalty

- Reward frequency
  - Frequency (habitual attendance) breeds familiarity, which can lead to feelings of loyalty in different forms, which can be supported by good customer service, good amenities, low friction
  - Starts with transactional drivers, but can transition to relational drivers
- High level of experience fulfillment (e.g., differentiation through audience engagement, post-attendance f/up, etc.)
- Deepening one's appreciation for the art through education and active participation



# **Towards an arts-specific model for loyalty**

In thinking about frameworks for loyalty, our analytical approach was to see where it naturally occurs

# Affinity accrues to genres and styles of music, dance, theatre

e.g., Latin jazz, hip-hop dance, Baroque music

Taste is the foundational asset on which loyalty is built

# Affinity accrues to individual artists and companies

People can develop strong relationships with artists and companies

This is one area where presenters have an advantage, but they don't always use it

Here is where audience engagement can play a role

# Affinity accrues to venues and spaces

Why do people form emotional bonds with spaces? Because of their technical capabilities? Acoustics? Seat comfort?

# Affinity accrues to formats, especially if they are effectively branded

The most exciting branding work in the arts sector is happening at the product level (e.g., SoundBox, Sensorium)



# Affinity accrues to instruments (e.g., harp, cello, percussion)

Many people have personal experience with instruments, and fascinations with unusual instruments (e.g., organ, harp)

# Affinity accrues to cultural traditions and diasporas

Irish music, African dance, etc.



# **A new definition of “loyalty”**

*Loyalty is the sum of all the bonds and connections that people make with an arts organization and its programs, spaces, formats, etc.*

# Affect generalization – a critical concept

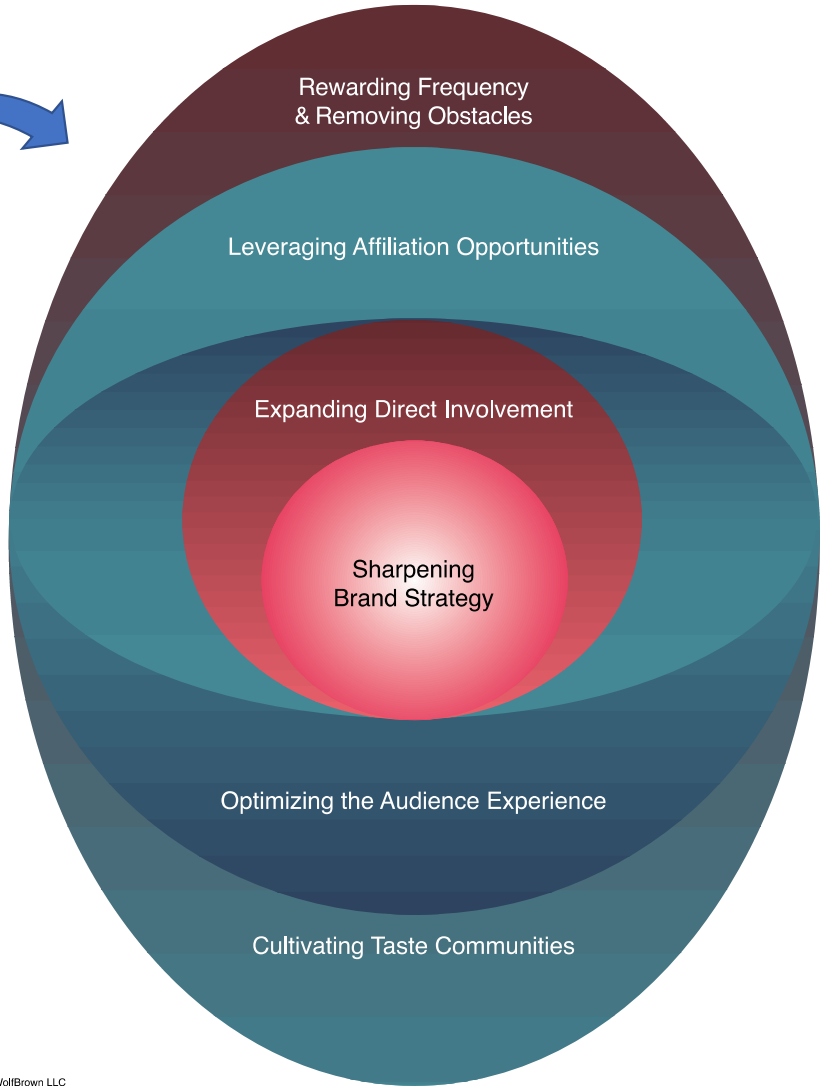
- Affect generalization is a common phenomenon in which affect toward one object spreads to related objects. (Ren et al., 2012)
- There may be opportunities for arts organizations to bring objects of affinity closer to audiences, and thereby increase loyalty via *affect generalization*



# **A new framework for building loyalty**

**A Conceptual Framework for Building Loyalty**

Marketing and Programmatic Points of Entry



# 1. Sharpening Brand Strategy

- Brands facilitate the attachment of loyalty to an object, and play a foundational role in any loyalty strategy
- The most exciting branding work in the arts sector is happening at the product level
- What are your branded connection points with the public?



## 2. Expanding Direct Involvement

- A small percentage of individuals will take advantage of opportunities to get personally involved in the organization's work
- In doing so, they'll act out their own core values, and act as ambassadors in the community
- This could be as simple as participating in crowdfunding campaigns, or different kinds of volunteer activities

### 3. Leveraging Affiliation Opportunities

- How might people in your community actively identify with your organization, even if they're not able to attend as frequently as they'd like?
- Affiliation opportunities must be purpose-driven and align with patron's core values
- This might include low-cost membership programs, affiliations framed as donor groups with a specific focus, self-directed interest groups managed through social media, etc.

## 4. Cultivating Tastes Communities

- Audiences can be understood as a set of constantly evolving taste communities
  - An individual's tastes are idiosyncratic, and change over time
- Organizations can tap into existing taste communities, and can create new ones through education and programming initiatives
- When educational activities are tied to mainstage programming, only ticket buyers can benefit from the learning
  - In fact, many people are hungry to learn more about the art, whether or not they can attend regularly
- What taste communities would you like to cultivate over the coming years?  
How can we monetize them?

# What sorts of Taste Communities might an Orchestra curate?

- A group of people interested in learning about exciting new composers and compositional trends from around the world
- A group of people interested in spirituality in music across the centuries
- A group of people interested in the role of music in child development
- A group of people interested in music and memory care
- A group of people interested in the music of different cultures around the world (i.e., ethnomusicology)
- A group of people interested in following technological developments in music visualization
- A group of people interested in percussion
- Etc., etc. – affinity groups can be carefully curated and ever-changing

## 5. Optimizing the Audience Experience

- Ensuring that ticket buyers and their guests have a deeply fulfilling experience when they do come is a building block of loyalty.
- This encompasses everything from excellence in customer service to the full range of pre- and post-engagement activities
  - e.g., How would you support patrons in memorializing their experiences, so they can access memories?
- This is one of the few ways that arts presenters can build loyalty apart from the artists/titles they offer.

## 6. Rewarding frequency and removing barriers

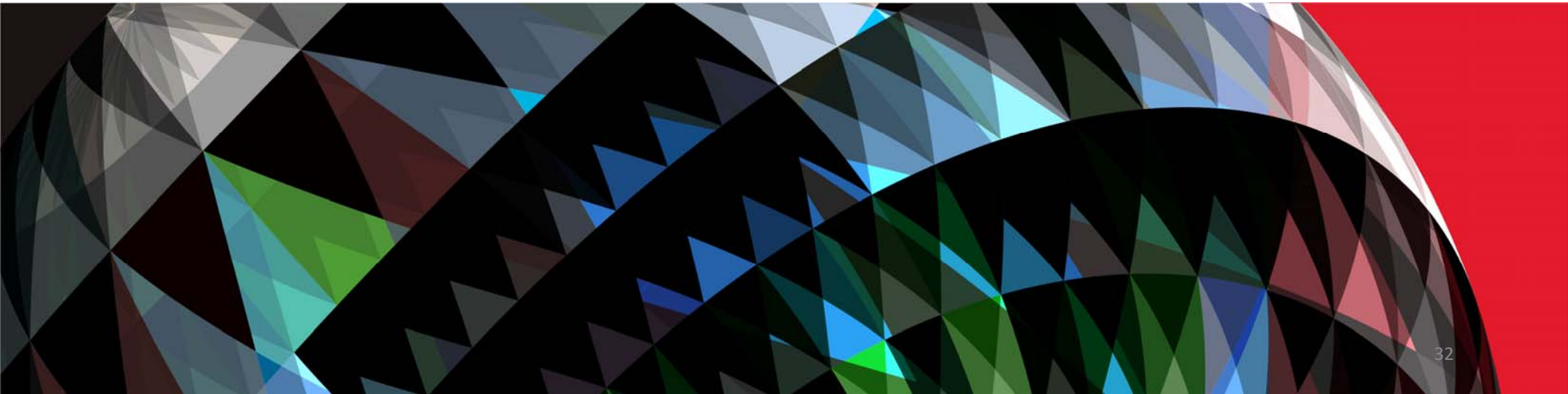
- This aspect of loyalty holds many of the more familiar sales practices aimed at increasing frequency of purchase, including:
  - Price incentives
  - Priority seating
  - Discounted ticket bundles for target segments
  - Rush ticket programs
  - Rewards programs
  - Parking and transportation incentives
  - Various trial and bring-a-friend offers



# **New research expands on patron's tastes and preferences**

Look for the “League Insights” summary of the March 2024 survey within several weeks

# In Conversation with Christina Bellevue





# Questions for Conversation with Christina Bellevue

- The NAC Orchestra is part of a larger, multi-disciplinary organization. How is this work resonating within NAC?
- As a marketing leader for a large orchestra, I imagine it's a little overwhelming to think about adopting this framework, because its so far reaching. Is there a good starting point?
- What's in your brand portfolio, in addition to the orchestra's institutional brand? (e.g., Playlist concerts)
- Can you see possibilities for affinity groups led by influencers?
- Can you foresee a time when orchestras curate "taste communities" as carefully as they curate their artistic programs?