

# XV Marketing and competition

The relationship of marketing with Old Indian texts on giving and taking deserves a special chapter. On the one hand, *gurus* and Brahmins can be considered as marketing actors. On the other hand, ideas from *dānadharmā* may themselves be fruitful for modern marketing.

## A Marketing

Marketing textbooks and the marketing instruments are dominated by the familiar 4Ps (introduced by McCarthy (1960)). The 4Ps are “product”, “place”, “price”, and “promotion”—summarily addressed as the “Marketing Mix”. Van Waterschoot & Van den Bulte (1992) have proposed an “Improved Classification of the Marketing Mix” (pp. 88–91), which I present here. These authors (p. 89) identify the following “instruments”:

- product instruments (configuration of something valued by the prospective exchange party)
- distribution instruments (placing the offer at the disposal of the prospective exchange party)
- price instruments (determination of the compensation and sacrifices to be brought by the prospective exchange party)
- communication instruments (bringing the offer to the attention of the prospective exchange party and influencing its feelings and preferences about it)

This classification has proved useful and provides the basic structure for marketing thinking and teaching all over the world.

## B Marketing for *ācāras*<sup>665</sup>

### (1) The *ācāra* and his *dānagrahaṇa*

The *śiṣya* (student in his *guru*'s house) is enumerated among the five different kinds of labourer. See <122>, p. 87. Scharfe (2002, p. 277) explains: “The word [*guru*] originally meant ‘heavy, weighty,’ and calls to mind the Latin expression of a *vir gravis*, ‘a weighty man,’ i.e. a man of importance and dignity.”<sup>666</sup> The *guru* “who teaches young boys and men in his house the sacred texts of the *Veda*, is called an *ācārya* – meaning literally either the man ‘who teaches the right conduct’ or, more likely, ‘he who must be approached’ ”.<sup>667</sup>

In this section and the next, we cover the relationship of an *ācārya* with his pupils. See Figure 4 and compare with the upper left pattern in Figure 2 (p. 143). In particular, we consider the *ācārya* as an economic agent who employs what we would nowadays call marketing techniques.

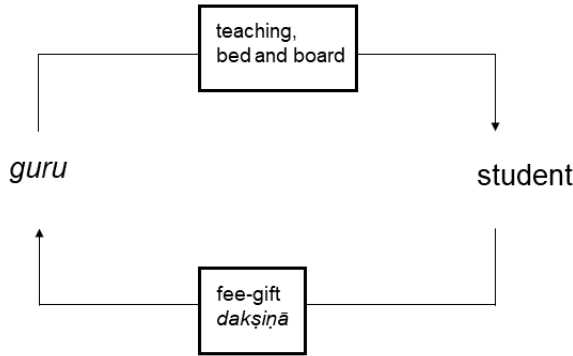


Figure 4: The *dakṣiṇā* in return for teaching, etc.

With respect to the giving and taking between teacher and pupil in Buddhist texts, see <180> and ĀUJA 4.71, 84–88. In contrast to the “material needs” of ascetics and brahmins (see <181>), neither *dakṣiṇā* nor *dāna* for teachers are explicitly mentioned in ĀUJA. Here, we focus on the Brahmanical context. Keeping in mind the unclear attribution of *dāna* and *grahaṇa* to actors in many exchange relationships (see section XIII.A), the *dāna* offered by the *ācārya* includes three components:

(a) Teaching of the *Veda*:

According to ViDh 27.15–17 and ĀDh 1.19, the period of study begins before the pupil is 8, 11, or 12 years of age, depending on whether the pupil is a Brahmin, a Kṣatriya, or a Vaiśya, respectively. The length of study varies. If one requires 12

<sup>665</sup> This section borrows freely from Wiese (2022a).

<sup>666</sup> Note that Sanskrit *guru* and Latin *gravis* derive from a common Indo-European word.

<sup>667</sup> Scharfe (2002, pp. 277–278)

years for each of the three *Vedas*, one has to study for 36 years. Manu 3.1–2 says: “He should carry out the observance relating to the three *Vedas* at his teacher’s house, an observance lasting thirty-six years, or one-half or one-quarter of that time, or else until he has learnt them. After he has learnt in the proper order the three *Vedas* or two of them, or at least one, without violating his chastity, he should undertake the householder’s order of life.”<sup>668</sup>

(b) Rituals:

*Veda*-teaching occurs in the framework of well-established rituals.<sup>669</sup> In particular, the beginning of the student’s stay in his teacher’s house is called *upanayana* (“leading [the student] near [the teacher by his guardians]”). The end of one’s studies is often marked by a ceremony called *snāna* (“bath”) or *samāvartana* (“returning [home]”).

(c) Bed and board:

The students obtain lodging and food at the *guru*’s house. In return, the students had to beg for food and to provide personal services to the *guru*. These services and the humility that comes with providing them may also be considered a product given (!) to the students.

The *guru*’s *grahaṇa* as an *ācārya* has three components:

(a) Begging for alms:

One of the student’s tasks is to beg for alms. For example, *ĀDhS* 1.3.25 enjoins: “Morning and evening he shall go out to beg with a bowl, soliciting from those who are not degraded or heinous sinners, and bringing all he receives to his teacher.” It is likely that the begging efforts were successful. In any case, householders were asked to react sympathetically to students begging *gurvartham*, i.e., “for the sake of his teacher”.<sup>670</sup> It may have even been dangerous not to give (see <95>). Nevertheless, if the student is not successful, it is the teacher’s duty to give him food. Thus, alms begged for by the student are an uncertain income for the teacher.

(b) Services in the *guru*’s house:

According to *ĀDhS* 1.4.24, “he should say when he goes to sleep: ‘I have taken care of the man who takes care of the Law.’ ” *ĀDhS* 1.6.1–2 goes on to stipulate: “Every night he should get his teacher ready for bed by washing and pressing his feet, and, when permitted, lie down to sleep himself”.

(c) *Dakṣiṇā*:

Before a student leaves his teacher’s house, he is expected to present a gift. The instructions to a departing student might have been as follows:

“After the completion of Vedic study, the teacher admonishes his resident pupil: ‘Speak the truth. Follow the Law. Do not neglect your private recitation of the *Veda*. After you have given a valuable gift to the teacher, do not cut off your family line. [...] Treat your mother like a god. Treat your father like a god. Treat your

668 MDh 3.1–2, Olivelle (2005)

669 An overview of Hindu *śaṃskāras*, including educational ones, is given by Pandey (1969).

670 This is stipulated in Manu 11.1–2. See Olivelle (2005, pp. 215, 837).

teacher like a god. Treat your guests like gods.’<sup>671</sup> Interestingly, stealing for the teacher’s benefit might be allowed under certain exceptional conditions.<sup>672</sup>

## (2) The *ācāras* (and other Brahmins) as economic actors?

It is only realistic, I claim, to assume that learned Brahmins were competing against each other with respect to both students and the king (see sections V.C and V.D). In line with this assumption, the Upaniṣads depict learned Brahmins as economic actors. The teacher’s prayer in the Taittirīya Upaniṣad contains:

⟨212⟩ *ā mā yantu brahmacāriṇaḥ svāhā |*  
*vi mā yantu brahmacāriṇaḥ svāhā |*  
 [...] ||  
*yaśo jane ’sāni svāhā |*  
*śreyān vasyaso ’sāni svāhā ||*<sup>673</sup>

Students, may they come to me! Svāhā!

Students, may they flock to me! Svāhā!

[...]

May I be famous among men! Svāhā!

More affluent than the very rich! Svāhā!<sup>674</sup>

The successful teacher might be called *yaujana-śatika*, i.e., a *guru* for whom students travel a long distance—one hundred *yojanas*.<sup>675</sup> However, a *guru*’s orientation towards marketing and business would have been frowned upon and comes at a cost. A Brahmin can profit from Vedic knowledge in either this world or the next, but not in both:

⟨213⟩ *yaś ca vidyām āsādyāsmiṃl loke tayā jiven na sā tasya paraloke phalapradā*  
*bhavet | yaś ca vidyayā yaśaḥ pareṣāṃ hanti |*<sup>676</sup>

When someone acquires vedic knowledge and thereby gains a livelihood in this world, that knowledge will give him no reward in the next world, as also when someone uses his vedic knowledge to tear down the fame of others.<sup>677</sup>

Refer to section III.C on the *mīmāṃsā* understanding of *dharma*.

671 TU 1.11.1–2, translation by Olivelle (1998, pp. 296–299), where “gift” is here used to translate *dhana*.

672 ĀDhS 1.7.19–21 says: “After learning as much as he can, he should present the fee for vedic study, a fee that is procured righteously and according to his ability. If his teacher has fallen into hardship, however, he may seize it from an Ugra or a Śūdra. Some maintain that it is lawful at all times to seize wealth for the teacher from an Ugra or a Śūdra.” Note: An *ugra* has a *kṣatriya* father and a *śūdra* mother according to KAŚ 3.7.22.

673 TU 1.4.2–3

674 Olivelle (1998)

675 See Scharfe (2002, pp. 281–282).

676 ViDh 30.39–40

677 Olivelle (2009)

### (3) The *ācāra*'s pricing policy

The concrete amount of *dakṣiṇā* is left up to the student. This arrangement may well have been to the advantage of the teacher, by some process of gift differentiation (corresponding to price differentiation in microeconomics or marketing). That is, a student from an affluent family could and typically would give more generously than a student from a poor family. Apparently, while a *dakṣiṇā* is a fee paid to the teacher, it is also a gift:

⟨214⟩ *tathā pātraviśeṣeṇa dānaṃ syād uttarottaram |*  
*gurumātrpitṛbrahmavādināṃ dīyate tu yat |*  
*tal lakṣagūṇitaṃ vidyāt puṇyaṃ vā pāpam eva vā ||*<sup>678</sup>

Moreover, a gift becomes greater and greater in accordance with the excellence of the recipient. Thus, one should know that when a gift is given to one's teacher, one's mother, one's father, and a Vedic savant, each time the resulting merit or sin becomes increasingly a hundred-thousand times greater.<sup>679</sup>

Thus, there are good reasons for giving generously to one's teacher.

### (4) The *ācāra*'s communication policy: attention

A *guru* may win a philosophical debate—thus attaining the king's favour, as well as attracting students and followers (see chapter V.D). A second method of winning students is presented in the Upaniṣads:

⟨215⟩ Śvetaketu, the son of Āruṇi, came one day into the assembly of the land of Pañcāla and approached Jaivali Pravāhaṇa while people were waiting upon him. Seeing Śvetaketu, he said: "Son!" Śvetaketu replied: "Sir?" Jaivali asked: "Did your father teach you?" Śvetaketu replied: "Yes."  
 "Do you know how people, when they die, go by different paths?"  
 "No," he replied.<sup>680</sup>

Jaivali keeps on asking questions to which the boy has no answer. Jaivali invites the boy to stay, but the latter runs off to his father Gautama and tells him about it.<sup>681</sup> The father goes to Jaivali and some bargaining begins:

⟨216⟩ Jaivali gave him a seat and had some water brought for him. Then he presented him with the refreshments due to an honored guest and said: "We will grant a wish to the Reverend Gautama."  
 Gautama said in reply: "Now that you have promised to grant me a wish, tell

678 LDK 2.30

679 Brick (2015)

680 BĀU 6.2.1–2, Olivelle (1998)

681 BĀU 6.2.2–3, Olivelle (1998)

me what you told my boy.”

“But that, Gautama, is in the category of divine wishes,” responded Jaivali. “Why don’t you make a wish of a human sort?”

Gautama replied: “As you know, I have my share of gold, cows, horses, slave girls, blankets, and clothes. Do not be stingy, your honor, in giving me more than that—in giving me the infinite and the boundless.”

“Then, Gautama, you will have to request it in the correct manner.”

“I come to you, my lord, as a pupil.”

With just these words did the people of old place themselves as pupils under a teacher. And Gautama lived there openly as a pupil.<sup>682</sup>

In the end, Jaivali does not win the boy as student, but his father instead, presumably for a generous remuneration.

### (5) The *ācāra*’s communication policy: feelings and preferences

In Ancient India, the feelings and preferences of a *guru*’s customers towards him were quite positive. In particular, the value of teaching was well-accepted:

<217> *vittam bandhur vayah karma vidyā bhavati pañcamī |*  
*etāni mānyasthānāni gariyo yad yad uttaram ||*<sup>683</sup>

Wealth, kin, age, ritual life, and the fifth, knowledge—these are the grounds for respect; and each subsequent one carries greater weight than each preceding.<sup>684</sup>

Indeed, the teacher has a treasure to offer:

<218> *vidyā ha vai brāhmaṇam ājagāma*  
*gopāya mā śevadhiṣ te ’ham asmi |*  
*asūyakāyānrjave ’yatāya*  
*na māṃ brūyā vīryavatī tathā syām ||*  
*yam eva vidyāḥ śucim apramattaṃ*  
*medhāvinam brahmacaryopapannam |*  
*yas te na druhyet katamac ca nāha*  
*tasmai māṃ brūyā nidhipāya brahman ||*<sup>685</sup>

Now, vedic knowledge came up to the Brāhmaṇa and said: “Guard me; I am your treasure. Do not disclose me to a man who is envious, crooked, or uncontrolled. Thus I shall wax strong.

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682 BĀU 6.2.4–7, Olivelle (1998)

683 MDh 2.136

684 Olivelle (2005)

685 ViDh 29.9–10

A man you know to be pure, alert, wise, and chaste, a man who will not become hostile toward you under any circumstance—only to such a man should you disclose me, O Brāhmaṇa, as to a guardian of your treasure.<sup>686</sup>

In this manner, the product (the teaching of Vedic knowledge) should not be given lightly to just anybody. This adds to the impression of having something very valuable on offer.

Another avenue of influencing the students' outlook on learning from a teacher is via ancestor worship. The value of *Veda*-teaching and reciting is enhanced by the following observation:

⟨219⟩ *śiṣyena brahmārambhāvasānāyor guroḥ pādopasaṃgrahaṇaṃ kāryam |*  
*praṇavaś ca vyāhartavyaḥ |*  
*tatra ca yad rco 'dhīte tenāsyājyena pitṛṇāṃ tṛptir bhavati |*  
*yad yajūṃṣi tena madhunā |*  
*yat sāmāni tena payasā |*  
*yac cātharvaṇaṃ tena māṃsena |*  
*yat purāṇetiḥāsavedāṅgadharmaśāstrāṇy adhīte tenāsyānnena |*<sup>687</sup>

At the beginning and at the end of a vedic lesson, the pupil should clasp his teacher's feet and recite the sacred syllable OM.

And within this context, when he recites Ṛg-verses, by that his ancestors become sated with ghee; when he recites Yajus-formulas, with honey; when he recites Sāman-chants, with milk; when he recites Atharvan-formulas, with meat; and when he recites Purāṇas, Itihāsas, Vedic Supplements, and Legal Treatises, with rice.<sup>688</sup>

Other aspects of winning pupils or followers are argued for by theoreticians of religion. Stark & Finke (2000, p. 112) note that “confidence in the explanations offered by a religion will be greater to the extent that its ecclesiastics display levels of commitment greater than that expected of followers.” In the Indian context, the *guru* is supposed to possess the highest moral, intellectual, and spiritual qualifications. Thus, according to the Upaniṣads, the teacher should be “well versed in the Vedas, and focused on *brahman*.”<sup>689</sup>

## C Marketing for prospective *pātras*

Within the *dharmadāna* framework, giving to worthy recipients is encouraged. On the one hand, the texts prescribe how and by whom giving is meant to be practiced. The

686 Olivelle (2009)

687 ViDh 30.32–38

688 Olivelle (2009)

689 MU 1.2.12, Olivelle (1998)

manifold advantages of giving are dealt with, or alluded to, in texts of various traditions. On the other hand, the Brahmins had to make themselves eligible as donees. They had to engage in some form of self-marketing.<sup>690</sup> Indications of such self-marketing activities are also evident from the texts. Self-marketing by receiving Brahmins is prevalent in the age of Kali:

⟨220⟩ *kr̥te pradīyate gatvā tretāyāṃ dīyate gr̥he |  
dvāpare prārthayati ca kalau cānugamānvite* ||<sup>691</sup>

In the Kṛta Yuga, a donor goes to the recipient and gives; in the Tretā Yuga, a donor gives a gift in his home; in the Dvāpara and Kali Yugas, a recipient begs, but in the Kali Yuga, the recipient must also pursue the donor.<sup>692</sup>

Consider ⟨102⟩ and ⟨103⟩. From the givers' point of view, these quotations enjoin the merit-seeker to exercise care in the receiver-selection process. From the receivers' perspective, they tell the Brahmin the qualities that he needs in order to be a worthy *pātra*.

Thus, one might apply the following textbook marketing instruments:

- product instruments  
The *dharmadāna*-receiving Brahmins obtained dharmic gifts due to their virtuousness. In a sense, they themselves were the product. They needed to engage in self-marketing in order to be considered “worthy”. From another perspective, their product was the merit promised to the donors.
- distribution instruments  
Successful Brahmins obtained dharmic gifts from neighbours and passers-by. In order to attract the attention of potential donors they needed to be located appropriately.
- price instruments  
The concrete amount of a dharmic gift is to be decided by the donor and should be in line with his means. Due to the inherent gift differentiation, this arrangement would benefit the Brahmin, just as it benefits the *ācārya* (see subsection XV.B(3)).
- communication instruments  
The worth of the merit obtained by the giver was clearly a function of his belief (*śraddhā*, see section VI.B).

## D Competition between Brahmins or churches

One might think that Brahmins and other potential receivers would try to ward off competitors. This seems to have already been relevant in Vedic times (see ⟨40⟩). An-

<sup>690</sup> This has been observed by Thapar (2010, p. 103).

<sup>691</sup> LDK 1.63

<sup>692</sup> Brick (2015)



other indication is <99> from *dānadharma*. It can be understood as an endeavour to keep other, unworthy recipients at bay. The reader is also directed to chapter XVI, where one learns about the marketing activities and competition undertaken by *gurus* with respect to a king.

Zaleski and Zech (1995) summarise the theoretical and empirical work on church giving. They focus on the question of whether competition between religious churches increases or decreases giving to said churches. There are three arguments as to why a monopolistic church may result in a more religious society and hence in more giving to one's church. Firstly, note "a monopoly church's ability to penetrate all of a society's institutions, both religious and secular". Secondly, there may be grounds for "the fear that competition among churches may be destructive and harm the credibility of religion in general" and "destroy the taken-for-granted elements of religion in a society".<sup>693</sup> The latter is Berger's idea of a "sacred canopy".<sup>694</sup> Together with basic Brahmanism, it seems that the Indian *dānadharma* permeates Hindu society, with no real separation of religious and secular spheres. Of course, Brahmanical tenets have been threatened by heterodox belief systems. But, even when such a threat emerged, the theories of *dāna* were remarkably similar within Indian traditions (of Brahmanical, Buddhist, or Jain affiliation) and remarkably different from many Western traditions, as has already been observed by Heim (2004, pp. xvi–xxi). Thirdly, the opportunity to choose between different religious affiliations may be connected to search and information costs. In particular, a potential donor needs to identify worthy Brahmins (<103>).

Inversely, competition may be beneficial to church giving for another three reasons. Firstly, as with product differentiation, people differ in their religious tastes. It is not quite clear how Brahmanism fares in this respect. There is a basic general understanding of *karman*, *dharma*, and the like. However, the six orthodox *darśanas* differ to varying extents. On top of that, there are the heterodox beliefs, such as Jainism, Buddhism, and the *Cārvāka* philosophy (see section III.C). Secondly, monopolistic churches might become "lazy" as do monopolistic firms. It seems that the framework of *dānadharma* set in place a highly-competitive environment, where individual Brahmins had to prove their *pātratva*—the fact that they were worthy recipients of gifts. Thirdly, a monopolistic religion that is connected to the worldly power may prove unpopular, at least among those not benefitting from the particular policies pursued by said powers. Then, a distance between worldly power and the recipients of gifts may be helpful. Now, while Hindu kings were sometimes known to give generously to Brahmins or Buddhists, the *dānadharma* ideology mainly addresses laymen, who are supposed to give to individual Brahmins or to Buddhist *saṅghas*.

693 For these quotations, see Zaleski & Zech (1995, pp. 351–352).

694 See Berger (1967).

## E Modern marketing theory from the *dānadharma* perspective

This section tries to connect (i) Old Indian theories of gifting with (ii) a new manner of structuring marketing ideas. This particular perspective is instructive for both *dāna* theory and marketing. More concretely, in place of the traditional 4P Marketing Mix (price, product, place, promotion) introduced in section A, I suggest an alternative *dānadharma*-inspired approach. Why not structure the vast marketing knowledge according to the six bases or motivations (*adhiṣṭhāna*), as listed in <94><sup>695</sup>

One would then take a customer’s perspective and ask about his or her motivations for deciding on an object that is for sale. He may buy for either one or a combination of these six motivations: duty (*dharmā*), worldly gain (*artha*), passion (*kāma*), shame (*vṛīḍā*), joy (*harṣa*), and fear (*bhaya*). One way to proceed may be to use the new classification as the overarching structure and to employ the 4Ps within each of the six elements.

Consider Figure 5, which links the six motivations with the “aims of life”, as mentioned in section III.A. Partly building on that figure, I now offer a few remarks on this alternative manner of structuring marketing topics along the bases (motivations) of giving spelled out in the *dānadharma* literature.

Turn first to the marketing for customers motivated by duty (*dharmadāna*). If customers act for otherworldly motives (“duty”), Old Indian concepts may be helpful

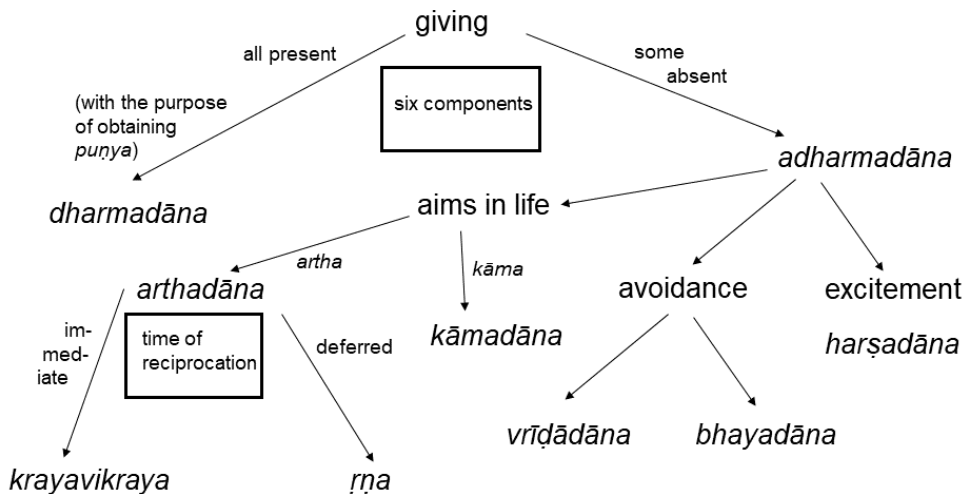


Figure 5: From dharmadāna to harṣadāna

695 It seems that the Buddhist list of four defilements of giving or gifting (as seen in <188>) is less relevant for this purpose.

in devising marketing strategies for charities.<sup>696</sup> In particular, marketing strategies could revolve around the concept of becoming or remaining a *pātra*. We are then dealing with the self-marketing strategies of youtubers, influencers, celebrities, politicians, and the like. See also section C. Furthermore, the triple-debts ethics (subsection VII.E(3)) may provide ideas as to how to make people pay for duty reasons. Of course, one needs modern arguments and modern presentations. Potentially related is charity marketing that employs shame (*vrīḍā*). However, it seems that “fear, guilt, and shame appeals” are of limited effect.<sup>697</sup> The avoidance motive (see Figure 5) is also present when somebody gives for reasons of fear (*bhaya*). It seems that the marketing tools expedient for extortion or blackmail have not been covered thus far, at least not under the heading of “marketing”.

For customers motivated by worldly reward (*arthadāna*), Indian texts provide rather modern perspectives, as is clear from chapter VII and from section XIII.C. A particular example is the rescission management that firms such as Amazon need to engage in. Furthermore, debt payment and interest rates (see sections VII.E and XIII.D) are of lasting relevance. Finally, the problems of mistrust and asymmetric information have been very clearly foreseen by *arthaśāstra* authors (see the latter sections of chapter XVIII).

With respect to passion (*kāma*), consider ⟨94⟩. Here, the relevant marketing problem should concern the application of the 4Ps to the craving of men for “women, racing, hunting, or playing dice”.<sup>698</sup> One may speculate as to the common denominator of these passion goods/activities. Presumably, they are about enjoyment and fun, rather than addiction. Giving for reasons of joy (*harṣa*) seems closely related to giving out of passion. Customers are motivated by joy if they buy/give “after seeing or hearing pleasant things”. It seems that this particular type of marketing deals with the spontaneous giving that street artists endeavour to elicit.<sup>699</sup>

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696 See, for example, Morris et al. (2001).

697 See Brennan & Binney (2010).

698 See Belk et al. (2003).

699 But joy might also be relevant to lots of other goods, for example groceries, as examined by Hultén & Vanyushyn (2011).