

Chapter 2

Methodology

2.1 Introduction

The inclusion of “1989” in the title of my thesis emphasises a focus on the marketing of the *Four Seasons* recording released in that year. As a participant in the unique marketing campaign for the *Four Seasons*, I felt it appropriate to adopt a Case Study method as my research design and I took a multi-method approach to support this strategy. My thesis is business orientated, that is, research which is relevant to the classical music business, and one which focuses, to use Bryman and Bell’s definition, on ‘*aspects of this field that have a social science orientation.*’³² By applying both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection, I was able to reach, as Kelenman and Rumens suggest: ‘*a more open-ended vantage point from which the researcher can survey a horizon of possible points of contact between the two research traditions.*’³³ My aim has been to use the *Four Seasons* original marketing plan as a point of departure in order to find out how marketing techniques in classical music businesses developed subsequently. I am defining ‘marketing’ as part of business and management research, a definition supported by Maylor and Blackmon who define this genre of research as ‘*accounting, finance and economics; human resources and organisational behaviour; strategy and international business; marketing; operations, management science and information systems.*’³⁴

³² Bryman, A and Bell, E. (2003), Business Research methods, Oxford 2007, OUP, p.xxvii

³³ Kelenman, M. and Rumens, N. (2008), An introduction to critical management research, London 2008, Sage, p.123

³⁴ Maylor, H. and Blackmon, K. (2005), Researching Business and Management, New York 2005, Palgrave Macmillan, p.6

2.2 Thesis structure

The methodological structure of my thesis is reflected in four key areas of the classical music industry and mirrored in the order of chapters:

- i/ a comparison of pre and post *Four Seasons* marketing campaigns (Chapter 3);
- ii/ a focus on the influence of trading over the internet and its development on business practice in the classical music sector (Chapter 4);
- iii/ an analysis and comparison of the two principal classical music broadcasting networks (BBC Radio 3 and Classic FM) and how their management teams have adapted their own business models since 1989 (Chapter 5);
- iv/ an examination of the financial contribution that classical music makes to the UK economy, highlighting the sector's business acumen (Chapter 6).

2.3 Sources

My thesis includes a number of important sources:

- i/ Primary material originating from individuals in the classical music profession through conversations and interviews in order to show synthesis with secondary research data; the value of this material to my research is derived from these individuals' first-hand experience of working in the classical music business. The practitioners I approached were either individuals I had worked with in the past, or were professionals I had not met before. They were representative of an area of the music business relevant to my research. None rejected being asked. I took notes from the telephone calls or face-to-face meetings or kept material sent to me on email. A brief directory of the practitioners includes orchestral managers, record company executives, individual retailers and the Entertainment Retailers Association (their trade body), and other trade bodies (such as the Musicians' Union and British Phonographic Industry). Additional organisations that I consulted were the BBC, Classic FM and a former DCMS employee, Arts Council Officers and companies concerned with online activity (including individual performers, Classical.com, PLAY.orchestra and Second Life).

Acquiring first-hand data from these sources provides a contemporary input into my research.

ii/ Reports and Government data including documents and surveys from music businesses offer important secondary data because the material sets a context in which to place classical music within the overall music business. Information was extrapolated from the DCMS, BBC, Classic FM, Arts Council, ERA, BPI, Rajar and Forester Research, published either in hard copy form or on the web.

iii/ Further secondary material is garnered from statistical information, looking in a limited way at how the music consumer's habits are adapting to changes in the way the music business sells its product and vice versa. Results from surveys from the ERA and DCMS in particular are valuable because they indicate that as online buying increases, so the role of the traditional retailer has had to adapt in order to keep its customer base. Other research material includes books and newspaper articles, especially interviews and biographies of those with knowledge of the music business.

2.4 Breadth of research

The primary method for my data collection comprised observation and semi-structured interviews over an eight year period. This framework for my research offers an ethnographical aspect to my methodology. According to Maylor and Blackmon: *'this type of research, gathering data to answer questions that are themselves suggested by the data, is consistent with the ethnographic approach to business and management research.'*³⁵ The participants who informed my knowledge came from a cross-section of the music business including orchestral managers, record company executives, broadcasting organisations and trade bodies. Former EMI colleagues who worked on the *Four Seasons* campaign and those who worked on the Three Tenors releases are also included. This gives my thesis a strong practitioner focus. The evidence derived from the participants

³⁵ Maylor, H. And Blackmon, K. (2005), Researching Business and Management, New York 2005, Palgrave Macmillan, p.139

traces a series of changes in the way classical music had been marketed since 1989. My conclusions emerge from the data offered by my participants and documentation along with my own knowledge and experience in the field. My thesis does differ from a cultural ethnography in that my role as a participant observer is limited to that of reflecting on my own experience within the *Four Seasons* case study after the event, rather than being based on observation conducted at the time. I contrast this method with a critical engagement of recent projects I have worked on, in a professional capacity, on campaigns in which the scale and resources were markedly different but where my reflective method allowed critical engagement. My research methodology is also descriptive in that the method of data analysis is contingent on a critical analysis of the personnel I had contact with. My interpretation of their responses gave rise to a critical appraisal of marketing methods employed in the classical music industry, showing how marketing practices had become more pop orientated since 1989.

2.5 Methods of research

My methodology has four areas: Case Study; Reflective practice; Reliability; and Mass culture theory.

2.5.1 Case Study method

The heart of my thesis is the specific case study of Nigel Kennedy's recording of Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* released by EMI in 1989. My analysis and the conclusions drawn from the case study are a contribution to knowledge. As one of the project managers for this particular recording, I am in a unique position to critically evaluate the marketing process of the *Four Seasons* campaign in order to assess its long-lasting influence on subsequent classical music projects. The conclusions drawn will indicate that the project was of huge significance on the classical music industry. This effect is especially relevant to the changes in business models in the classical record business in the early 1990s and, as the decade progressed, to other business models within the classical sector. The use of both qualitative and quantitative data analysis is suitable to case study method, as

counselled by Yin: *'case studies can be based on any mix of quantitative and qualitative evidence.'*³⁶ Maylor and Blackmon comment that case study research uses multiple sources of collecting data through interviewing, observation, and archival research.³⁷ I have used multiple data collection methods in my analysis of the *Four Seasons* case study. Collection of data through interviews (both in person, via telephone and email) and note taking provided the material for a rich in-depth examination of how classical music moved towards being sold through the employment of pop marketing techniques. The emerging new style of selling classical music, heralded by the *Four Seasons* is an example of market orientation. Kenny and Dyson comment that through market orientation *'the firm attempts to direct its efforts towards satisfying customer needs in a competitive manner. This action is designed to ensure, as far as possible, long-term survival rather than short-term profitability...'*³⁸ This is an interesting description of market orientation which is applicable to what occurred in the classical music industry. Chapter 3 will demonstrate how classical music divisions within major record companies re-structured their classical departments into two teams. One team was responsible for pure classical music recordings and the other for strategic classical music releases; the latter were projects which had a populist feel to them and had the potential to sell in large quantities at a faster rate than their more traditional classical siblings. In effect, the record companies viewed the market in a non traditional way for the classical music genre.

My data analysis gives a perspective of the business as it was in 1989 and the early 1990s, and then charts marketing developments that have impacted on classical music marketing procedures in the first decade of 21st century. In so doing, a further case study is relevant. This is the recording of the first Three Tenors concert, performed in 1990 to

³⁶ Yin, R.K. (2003), Case Study Research Design and Methods, London 2003, SAGE Publications, p.15

³⁷ Maylor, H. and Blackmon, K. (2005), Researching Business and Management, New York 2005, Palgrave Macmillan, p.243

³⁸ Kenny, B. and Dyson, K. (1989), Marketing in small businesses, London 1989, Routledge, p.19

mark the final of the FIFA world cup competition. The company responsible for the recording, Polygram Classics (later Universal Classics and Jazz), used the opportunity to market the release to a wider consumer base than to just the traditional classical consumer. The combination of both case studies (one from a charismatic instrumentalist, the other via three opera singers) will show that the popularity of classical music was enhanced by these projects and resulted in changes to traditional marketing and promotional patterns in the business models of classical music organisations. This second evaluation is less exhaustive because the project was itself an early result of the reaction to the *Four Seasons* as will be seen. The tracing of these patterns is valuable to both academia and industry and as such offers research that illustrates and evaluates, through descriptive analysis, the *Four Seasons* phenomenon.

2.5.2 Reflective practice

My case study method is appropriate because of my experience as a former press and promotions manager for EMI Classics between 1987 and 1995, and for a year at Decca Classics in the same role. This time period encompassed working directly on the *Four Seasons* recording, and witnessing at first hand the influence on other classical music campaigns after its success. Close involvement in the range of classical music projects for which I was responsible at EMI (and the conclusions I draw from them for my thesis) is a reflective process, allowing me to contemplate my own role through data collection, as well as semi-structured interviews with relevant participants in classical music projects at that time. Daymon and Holloway indicate personal experience through reflectivity as a main tool of qualitative research and my contacts in the music business encouraged me to pursue this method.³⁹ Personal experience further enhanced my data gathering through my employment as the press officer at Decca Classics, prior to my employment at EMI, and subsequently as a consultant for Warner Classics. This method offers value

³⁹ Daymon, C. and Holloway, I. (2003), Qualitative Research Methods in Public Relations and Marketing Communications, London 2003, Routledge, p.100

to research not yet undertaken in the sector. My research has an historical perspective coupled with my personal involvement and employment at the time, allowing me access to those who have witnessed the changes in classical music models.

Further research using a reflective method is included in the semi-structured interviews taken between 2001 and 2002, in which I analysed the broadcasting sector of the classical music industry. Speaking to key personnel in the classical music broadcasting field, I explored the business operations of BBC Radio 3 and Classic FM in order to understand the changes that had occurred in both organisations' methods of trading since 1989. I was involved in freelance classical music projects in broadcasting at the time and because the interviewees were directly available, it was logical to begin my research in this area.

2.5.3 Reliability of research

Yin comments on four tests for the criteria of judging the quality of research designs. These are Construct validity (establishing correct operational measures for concepts studied); Internal validity (establishing that the conditions which occur in the case study lead to other conditions subsequently); External validity (whereby a theory is established in the findings); and Reliability (showing that the data collection can be repeated with the same results).⁴⁰ With the *Four Seasons* case study as its point of entry, my research fulfils these criteria. Clearly, as one of the project managers of the case study, I had to guard against over-influencing my respondents and therefore sought to include non-loaded open questions as part of my data collection. Apart from this, the 'so-called' subjectivity has a fundamental underpinning in providing a rich contextual background as a participant observer in the sector. The examination and corroboration of material offered by these practitioners of my initial conclusions in being part of the *Four Seasons* campaign gives my research an objective analysis. Yin comments that

⁴⁰ Yin, R.K. (2003), *Case Study Research Design and Methods*, London 2003, SAGE Publications, p.34

Internal validity is only a concern for an investigator who is trying 'to determine whether event x led to event y .'⁴¹ This is relevant in my method whereby event x represents the *Four Seasons* case study which leads to y , defined as subsequent classical music projects using non-traditional marketing tools. My experience in the music business gives me an overview of developments in the classical music industry as do the conclusions drawn from my semi-structured interviews.

A series of questions was asked of the participants in order to both draw on their experience of current music business practice, and to reflect on changes since 1989. It should be noted that as these were semi-structured conversations, either through email, face-to-face, or over the phone, the questions were a guide and did not necessarily follow a rigid order of questioning for each person. The participants were willing and experienced professionals in the classical music field. The full list is included in Appendix 67 and individuals are referred to during the course of my thesis. This method focuses on what Bernard describes as '*direct, reactive observation*'⁴², thereby acquiring information on people's attitudes and how their methods of conducting business changed post the *Four Seasons*. This method offered credibility to my findings and conclusions in that the results are derived from working practices in the classical music industry.

These methods led me to conclude that there was a sea-change in the classical music industry during the period of my research; I am confident my inference that 1989 was a pivotal year is valid. The reliability of the External validity test is seen in both the support of a further case study (the Three Tenors recording of 1990) and material of subsequent classical music marketing projects (detailed in Chapter 3). Finally the

⁴¹ Ibid. p.36

⁴² Russell Bernard, H. (1994), Research Methods in Anthropological qualitative and quantitative approaches, London 1994, SAGE Publications, p.310

documentation supporting my research is methodical and thorough, both pre-requisites for the Reliability test. In particular, the original marketing plan for both the *Four Seasons* and material from the Three Tenors campaigns are included as are a number of other projects up to 2009, indicating a range of classical music initiatives developing over the last 20 years.

2.5.4 'Mass' culture perspective

The consideration of 'mass' culture as a method is worthy of attention. In particular the term is germane in considering how developments in the classical music industry have expanded the traditional classical music sector into a 'mass' cultural phenomenon since the 1989 case study. In business, as Fineberg succinctly puts it: *'whether we call art and culture high or low, those things that cannot support themselves in the market place are threatened.'*⁴³ Classical music is a form of culture and in my thesis I illustrate the gradual extension of business principles in the sector over the last 20 years in order to support itself in the market place.

Supičić refers to 'mass' culture in terms of 20th century music and the phenomena associated with contemporary musical life. He applies the term not only to pop music but also states that *'nowadays it seems to be used with ever greater frequency in connection with "serious" or classical music.'*⁴⁴ This is a relevant point to my research because the direction of marketing campaigns to seek audiences who were not necessarily interested in classical music is exemplified in exactly what was aimed for in the *Four Seasons* release. My thesis explores the emerging aspect of a 'mass' culture perspective in classical music organisations through a critical analysis of marketing campaigns and practitioners' interviews. My resulting assumptions portray the growth of non-traditional classical music marketing techniques in order to broaden the customer base.

⁴³ Fineberg, J. (2006), *Classical Music, Why Bother?*, Abingdon 2006, Routledge, p.20

⁴⁴ Supičić, I. (1987), *Music in our Society*, New York 1987, Pendragon Press, p.155

The practitioners whom I interviewed were aware of the importance of expanding their own market, in order to reach a larger consumer base. The record companies (especially EMI and Polygram) were instigators of a 'mass' market approach.

Laing cites Miège's explanation of the record companies bringing to the market '*a large number of different items in the expectation that profits from the small number of hits will compensate for the losses incurred by unsuccessful titles.*'⁴⁵ The restructuring of the classical record companies, identified in Chapter 3, is an illustration of this definition, that is focusing on one specified recording that was regarded as the potential hit, the income from which would cover the losses of the more expensive classical music recordings. I provide a critical evaluation of marketing methods employed by classical music organisations in order to expand their traditional market, and ultimately reach a 'mass' market.

2.6 Potential limitations

There are limitations to my methodology. The majority of participants have known me over many years and were able to offer responses which could be viewed as sympathetic in order to accommodate any pre-conceptions I might have had to the outcome of my research (rather than provide unbiased data which I could then interpret objectively). However, my findings bring a unique perspective to my thesis. They show that the strategy of including contributions from participants directly involved in the classical music business does offer a strong element of reliability derived from the responses. The results give a unique insight into classical business practice in the 21st century which emerged from the *Four Seasons* campaign.

My case studies have followed the procedure for reporting case studies opined by Yin,

⁴⁵ Laing, D, (2003), editors Clayton, M., Herbert, T. and Middleton, R., Music and the Market The Economics of music in the Modern World, London 2003, Routledge, p.312

who states that the study must be significant.⁴⁶ Significance is defined as interpreting the characteristics of both the *Four Seasons* and Three Tenors case studies as being unusual at that time. Yin goes on to state that ‘a single case study may have been chosen because it was a revelatory case—that is, one reflecting some real-life situation that social scientists had not been able to study in the past.’⁴⁷ This expresses exactly the nature of the *Four Seasons* case study. The latter is portrayed in the financial success of the *Four Seasons* recording (through the number of discs sold).

2.7 Conclusion

Overall my methodology is a multi-faceted one, anthropological in aspect through semi-structured interviews and statistical data, leading to a valuable insight into how the classical music business has developed since the 1989 *Four Seasons* case study. The approach has been reflective through my own experiences and research sources. Both elements support my belief that classical music organisations changed their ways of marketing post the *Four Seasons* recording. The early part of my data gathering was a reflective analysis of my involvement with the *Four Seasons* campaign and included contacting relevant practitioners on both that project and the Three Tenors recording. The interviewees were forthcoming and willing to provide material where appropriate. As a result of these interviews, my methodology became concerned with scrutinising information on internet trading and examining the data available. The conclusions I drew from this area, and also from Government and music organisations’ reports on trends in the music industry, indicated little information on the classical music sector compared to its pop counterpart.

An added strength of my research lies in a longitudinal perspective. The value of critical analysis over a period of significant change in the classical music industry is part of my

⁴⁶ Yin, R.K. (2003), Case Study Research Design and Methods, London 2003, SAGE Publications, p.161

⁴⁷ Ibid., p.162

contribution to knowledge. The conclusions of my methodological process have resulted in portraying the classical music industry as an important contributor to both general music and cultural segments within the UK. Furthermore it shows a specialist area in the music business adapting its business techniques in order to drive its business forward.

The information garnered gives a useful indication of the direction in which classical music businesses have progressed in their ability to reach a more diverse consumer base. Furthermore, the data derived from classical music organisations, in particular from official press statements and documentation from appropriate organisations, adds weight to my central argument that marketing models have adapted significantly post 1989. The methodologies employed in my thesis give an overview of the classical music industry, and the areas that require additional investigation post PhD make this document a unique contribution to knowledge.