Psychology of entertainment
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An imaginary line can separate the chapters of this dissertation in two parts, where the first two chapters form the first part and the last two chapters form the second part. This division could be termed as a shift in the unit of analysis. In the first two chapters the possible applicability of two completely different methods is evaluated. Here are the respective methods the subject of study, in other words unit of analysis, whereby the applicability concerns the primary goal of this dissertation: the development of a model for the processing of cultural products. The last two chapters are concerned with the development of this model, whereby the relevant model the subject of study is, or in other words the unit of analysis. In this thesis, the assumption that cognitive processes play a role in the evaluation of cultural products is the most fundamental. In order to enable the development of this model, first the potential usability of two possible approaches for studying the cognitive processing of cultural products, were evaluated: an exploratory sequential approach and a confirmatory questionnaire approach.

Chapter 1 contains the evaluation of the sequential approach. The method proposed by Dijkstra and Taris is evaluated on its construct validity, the extent to which the method measures what it professes to measure. In this chapter it is demonstrated that the method does not lead to unambiguous results, and that this method consequently is completely unsuited for further application in scientific research.

The second chapter evaluates the possibilities offered by a questionnaire approach for the measurement of cognitive processes. By evaluating Sternberg’s accepted process theory of intelligence, a view is formed of the extent to which a questionnaire approach reveals cognitive processes. Seeing support is found for Sternberg’s theory, it is presumed that the questionnaire approach can be useful in
researching cognitive processes.

In the last two chapters of the dissertation the last method is therefore used for the ultimate objective, the development and testing of a model for the cognitive processing of cultural products, also known as re-creative cognitive processing.

Chapter 3 contains the pilot version of the model that describes the cognitive processes that form the basis for the judgment of works of art (literature, theatre, architecture). In this first version it is assumed that the processes responsible for re-creative cognition are: encoding, comparison, modification and performance. These processes are activated in the three domains of consciousness of the art-observer (reader, viewer, listener), known as: the rational, affective and imaginary domains. On the basis of two studies several hypotheses derived from the model are empirically tested, with regard to esthetic judgments of literary texts. In the first study, a somewhat modified model is supported by the results. Correlations with cognitive tests and personality details show signs of convergent and discriminant validity of the measured cognitive processes. In the second study there is support for the hypothesis that the extent of activity of the four cognitive processes within the three domains of consciousness during the reading, is positively related to the appreciation of the literary text.

The results of this pilot gave rise to improving the model through replacing the non-fitting coding scale with an anticipation scale. The model is investigated in the last chapter. The studies described in chapter 3 are repeated. Also the anticipation scale appeared to fit in the model. Subsequently a questionnaire for the cognitive processing of films was derived from the model for re-creative processing of cultural products. Through replicating the described studies with the film questionnaire, additional support for the overall approach was received, in addition to an indication for external validity. Finally, the film question list was applied in an experiment where two films were shown, a film that was valued lowly and and film valued highly by the international film public. Research was conducted in to what extent the appreciation for a film can be predicted through the separate processes and domains. In the experiment, it appeared that the modification scale could not predict the appreciation of the movie, this in contrast to all other scales that can indeed function as predictors for the esthetic appreciation of a cultural product. These findings give more insight to what could form the basis for the evaluation of cultural products. In
the future, cognitive profiles for art works could point to which processes an art product exactly affects in order to reveal the exact working of such a product. Possibly artists could use this knowledge to work more effectively and create art-products that are more highly valued. They to whom these thoughts are still improbable dreams of the future, can be possibly cleared up by some of the simulation research of creativity. Worthwhile simulation programs for scientific discovery and jazz music already exist. Given the fact that the quality of a cultural product almost must be defined by it’s measure of appreciation, the knowledge of the relationship between the re-creative processing of and appreciation can contribute to the further development and improvement of these simulation programs.