Ivan Stoyanov*

POPULARITY: A FACTOR IN THE MARKET POSITIONING
OF THE ARTIST (Discussion)

Abstract: Popularity is a key variable for the performance of the cultural and creative market. It expresses the relationship between the artistic work and popularity among the real audience, demonstrating whether the artist is recognizable. In turn, when this magnitude is high, it makes the artist preferred and sought after. Popularity becomes important in the economic side of culture and arts. Achieving the desired levels happens by taking a group of measures. Devising a proper strategy depends on having an objective amount of information about popularity.

Keywords: popularity; artist; visual art; formula.

Introduction

The cultural diversity and spiritual heritage of humanity evoke feelings of admiration and adoration for those who created them**.** For a number of reasons, many talented artists fail to perform for the public and remain unknown. Intangible barriers of a systematic nature can be pointed to as the reason why the world has not witnessed the genius of many creative natures.

Knowing how the audience focus their attention on the artist and whether they recognize him/her at all can be a valuable guide. This is where the value of popularity comes to the fore. This is an aggregate quantity for us. The sum of its constituent parts conveys a quantitative value of the position of an artist or work of art among the public. In our opinion, popularity is made up of the sum of two quantities: visibility per unit of time and the readability of the unit. Creating a popularity discovery formula as a basic orientation tool would benefit anyone seeking to break into the arts and culture market. The quantities are coefficients and a probability indicator. A detailed definition is given in the main text.

General Overview of the Problem

Contemporary art has developed and differentiated its types and forms. On the one hand, advances in science and technology have had an impact on how the results of human labour are presented, accessed, used, and disseminated. On the other hand, demand, market niches and sales have undergone revision and reorganization. Changes in supply, demand and affordability have become an opportunity and/or a threat. Celebrity, understood as popularity, and its constituents are gaining importance as a magnitude orientation.

Demand and preferences for information acquisition among the active generation have been restructured, and new digitally organized forms and tools are being imposed. Consumer interests are re-

* **Ivan Stoyanov** – Assistant Professor, PhD, St. Cyril and St. Methodius University of Veliko Tarnovo, Faculty of Economics, Business Management Department; e-mail: i.stoyanov@ts.uni-vt.bg

thought in the direction of unique and non-commercial products. A particular phenomenon is the increasing popularity of new forms of art and culture, such as virtual arts, among the population. The visual arts and their representatives feel the need for visibility, regressing towards popularity. Sources of demand, acquisition and market nomenclature lie in the field of marketing and market research. It is also necessary to provide quantitative, statistical formulas for calculating the magnitude of popularity.

No matter how aesthetically high quality an artefact is or how capable and talented the artist is, without having a reputation among connoisseurs, collectors, and the general public, it will not be launched and sold. Materialization in the market and high accessibility to platforms for expression and presentation are an open door to high levels of celebrity. Therefore, popularity becomes a leading variable and indicator of a product/artist's success in the art market.

This study attempts to summarize a quantitative way to calculate the level of popularity. The formula differs from classical marketing techniques and methods in that it has the ability to complement them or they provide data for calculation. The results obtained are put into a pre-formed scale to form an estimate.

We adopt statistical and econometric theorems and models in the field of forecasting socio-economic phenomena and volume prediction to draw quantitative series in measuring popularity. The structure calculated on different types of norms served us as a guideline on how to ensure a quantitative measurement of intangible quantity. The formulation has validity for the field of visual arts, which does not limit its scope. Once adapted, it can be applied to all fields of arts and culture, tangible and intangible heritage.

Our scientific view is that the more accurate one categorizes the popularity of a micro- or meso-entity, the more effective measures will be taken to enhance it or to achieve sustainability. Finding the value of popularity demonstrates to an artist where a work is positioned relative to the general conjuncture of the art market, cultural and creative consumption. It tracks what the interest is and how high or low the audience and user preference is. A high coefficient makes the units known and preferred, while a low one reflects ignorance and distrust. The value serves as an objective metric for drawing up a promotion plan or strategy to reach a wider audience. To become effective, the quantitative results are put into an evaluative framework, which is an interval scale of measurement as it characterizes the measured objects by an absolute property in a discontinuous order. This allows for further analyses and evaluations, for example by means of Bravet's linear correlation coefficient.

Hypothesis and Methodology

Hypothesis: popularity is the sum of simultaneous and parallel action of related and originally unrelated phenomena and circumstances. The increase in variables creates a growth effect in the outcome – popularity. The hypothesis has not been practically proven. This opens up the prospect for in-depth scientific discussion and research to confirm or reject it.

Methodology: comparative study and content analysis of works on popularity and celebrity. The second step is the adaptation of quantitative models for the evaluation of aggregate analyses to the object of study. Then, conclusions are drawn based on the results, and an evaluation framework is created by using the 10-point evaluation scale.

Popularity is the fact that something or someone is liked, enjoyed, or supported by many people.[1] It is the quality of being well-liked and having a lot of friends and admirers.[2] Therefore, it can be defined as a quality that represents its intangible character. The dynamics of social and economic processes provide the opportunity to acquire attributes of greatness. Adhering to this statement, popularity contains quantitative relations between objects with direct and indirect impact on another object. Popularity should not be identified with image and reputation. The two quantities play an important role in determining the nature of popularity, but they must be distinguished from its common definition. Popularity comes from the Latin word *popularis*, meaning *common*. Following the semantics of development, we find a connection with the word *populus* (people). In this context, popularity is perceived by us as a common notoriety or familiarity among people. It refers to the mass population of a country or continent. It also

---

[1] https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/popularity (Accessed 4 Dec. 2023)

[2] https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/popularity (Accessed 4 Dec. 2023)

expresses whether a person without professional competence in the field of art and culture, when hearing an artist's name or work, will confirm that they are aware of them. The magnitude we present does not contain an estimate of positivity or negativity. Therefore, if a group of people indicates that an artist is familiar to them, this makes him/her popular. In other words, popularity represents the knowledge of the general public about the existence and action of an artist or work.

When entrepreneurship is perceived as a process securing the development and sustainability of an artist, popularity becomes important. Entrepreneur popularity refers to the public's knowledge of entrepreneurs, i.e. how well known they are. The amount of information available to consumers about entrepreneurs depends on the latter's popularity, resulting in alternative knowledge bases for consumers to judge and evaluate entrepreneurs.[3] Shaping the public image of entrepreneurs means expanding their personal popularity and ultimately assisting companies in gaining the favour of investors.[4] Turning positive reputation into celebrity will increase the range of demand and preference for an artist (analogous to entrepreneurship). The ability to formulate a favourable image and public acceptance will increase the acceptance of the artist's work in highly critical circles of connoisseurs and collectors (potential investors in future projects). The progression of popularity and demand is directly proportional. Based on the above, it can be concluded that increased popularity leads to an increase in demand in all titles of culture, art, and economic life. Effective work on improving the indicator in question adds value to the audience's aspiration to acquire or to use. An important condition for gaining public recognition is the quality of the exhibit or exposure. Maintaining this metric will reinforce the belief of the positive image gained. Actions of growth in popularity without compliance with the requirements of the audience, the public for quality, forms the so-called "false positive image." Celebrity in such cases is short-lived, as it grades towards regressive denial and produces negative opinion at a later stage.

There are the activities of tracking the popularity trends of an entity, orienting it in the factual setting, and positioning it in the scale of preferences of counterparties in the market. Popularity is a unit that can quantitatively describe the acceptance of an artist and/or work by the population. It passes through the prism of evaluation in the categories of known and unknown. In entrepreneurship, by analogy in art, it is a degree of awareness and recognition. Entrepreneur popularity refers to the degree of public awareness of individual entrepreneurs. When their popularity is different, the amount of entrepreneur information acquired and possessed by investors is also different, leading to different knowledge bases for investors to judge and evaluate entrepreneurs.[5] Information becomes the main source for development and expansion of popularity. Presentation channels are key in information collateral for individual artists. Differences define different levels of awareness, forming heterogeneous knowledge bases. The assessment of art and culture is built on evaluative indicators.

The benefits of the consumption of culture and art cannot be directly traced by the audience. The impact is manifested at an emotionally sensitive level. The lack of directly perceived utility makes it difficult to objectively categorize popularity. The mass citizen makes a quicker and more adequate assessment of something that has direct utility – an object, a household, an administrative or business service. Cultural and creative items, with the exception of music, movies and games, are not prioritized (the average individual is considered). The reason lies in the low thresholds of popularity and accessibility to cultural artefacts and their creators – contemporary visual culture and arts. Many times, conclusions are drawn through intuitive descriptors or cultural and social attributes of the social group. Feeling and emotion as social measures are variously shaped in different social groups and in the individual. The public's objective position towards a cultural and creative subject should be measured through quanti-

---

[3] **Briley, D. A., and Aaker, J. L.** When Does Culture Matter? Effects of Personal Knowledge on the Correction of Culture-Based Judgments. *Journal of Marketing Research*, vol. 43(3), 2006, pp. 395–408. https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkr.43.3.395

[4] **An, J., Di, H., and Liu, G.** The Influence of Entrepreneurs' Online Popularity and Interaction Behaviors on Individual Investors' Psychological Perception: Evidence from the Peer-to-Peer Lending Market. *Frontiers in Psychology*, vol. 12, 2022, art. 825478, p. 4.

[5] **Kašperová, E.** Impairment (In)Visibility and Stigma: How Disabled Entrepreneurs Gain Legitimacy in Mainstream and Disability Markets. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, vol. 33(9–10), 2021, pp. 894–919. https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2021.197

tative values. They give a correct idea of the intangible location of an artist/work in the perceptions of the mass audience. Emotional paradigms are accordingly taken into account when obtaining a numerical expression of quality, value, and popularity.

Calculation of Popularity

The formula proposed for determining popularity focuses on culture and the arts, but it has the potential to be applied and adapted to other socio-economic areas of human life. Therefore, in the analysis and evaluation of popularity, a clear distinction is made between different types of areas of human activity and productivity.

The concept of the vision corresponds to the formulation of an immediate context between all the groups of actors with a direct and indirect impact on the popularity and accessibility of culture, art, cultural heritage and CCIs. The reflection used by the author evolved into the formulation of a distinct research perspective – a scientific hypothesis. Assumption: Popularity is a coefficient (Kp) of direct proportionality between visibility per unit time (Vt) and the readability[6] (Ru) of the unit (the work, cultural product/artefact), or Kp = Vt * Ru. Readability is an indicator of how well an artist's message or the content of a work is understood and perceived. It indicates whether the audience understands his/her ideas and adopts his/her views. It also demonstrates the audience's awareness, the preposition of the user. The total popularity of the artistic unit x is:

$$\mu \, \mathbf{Kpx} = \frac{\mathbf{Kpx1} \, + \, \mathbf{Kpx2} + \ldots \mathbf{KpxN}}{\mathbf{n}}$$

According to the general assumption (scientific research hypothesis), the magnitudes creating direct proportionality are a product of the action of social phenomena existing as a composite.

Visibility is the point of access to the product or the artist who created the product. It could be perceived as a brand point. The variability of accessibility is direct or indicative (visual – immediate touch). It is a measure of interaction with stakeholder groups, after which an attitude is acquired and created by a pre-selected communication form. Visibility for a time interval is considered a complex and dynamically changing product of three dimensions – accessibility (A), information collateral (IC) and correctness (C). The formula in our view is:

$$\mathbf{Vt} = \frac{(A^2 * \mathbf{IC} * \mathbf{C})}{\mathbf{T}}$$

Accessibility is perceived as a value with a higher weight; therefore, it is squared. T is the time unit for which the indicators of A are reported; IC and C are statistical coefficients to reflect data rows.

A is the degree of possibility of use by the largest number of people, without making additional modifications to the exhibition system, of works, artefacts and cultural and creative wealth through information means, including access to acquisition or use. A is also a measure of access to culture and arts through an area (a tool, which can be a gallery, a museum, and, according to our vision, a digital bank with an internet access point), which is used to analyze the ease of movement until reaching the use phase, acquisition, and satisfaction. Accessibility for us is the sum of the starting action index (i), the ability to reach spheres/areas of interest (o), and the collateral area index (s).

The information collateral (IC) is a statistical coefficient that conducts a quantitative and qualitative assessment of a unit of information. It refers to processed information, satisfying people's need for acquiring and/or obtaining knowledge, sensitive insight, and understanding of facts. IC is the presentation of valuable information that cannot be obtained elsewhere or would be obtained with more effort and investment of an additional resource (e.g. time). The quantitative measure is symbol volume, number

---

[6] It reflects the user's view of the information content presented to him/her and represents a mathematical probability coefficient.

of images, and number of passes through reach points, related to the effective volume of information and ease of absorption that is best perceived by humans. It is an index of the proportional distribution of meaningful data, the time it takes to reach them, and the degree of perception and understanding of information. The qualitative indicator is measured through a statistical coefficient for satisfaction/dissatisfaction and approval/disapproval of the received information content.

Correctness (C) is an indicator (mathematical and statistical) of the accuracy and correctness of the system volume of presented information, and the technology of functioning of the system without deviation from the presented information on functional and content capacity. It responds to the ethical and quality presentation and use of service about CCI, culture and art. The credibility of the information, secured by orientation in large information flows and based on facts and arguments is expressed through the coefficient C.

Readability (Ru) is a complex category since some of the works of culture and art are not intended for the mass audience. Therefore, a full understanding cannot be expected from every person. The high degree of differentiation and separation of the perceptual models has an impact on the inferred magnitude. In our opinion, high indicators of the readability of a work can be expected from a wider circle of people who have seen it. Increasing the parameters of the Ru magnitude is achieved through measures and actions by curators, art historians and cultural scientists in the transmission of information in a form understandable to people outside the sphere of visual and applied arts and cultural industries. It is measured with statistical tools after collecting data from surveys and empirical studies. The following factors have an impact on Ru: clarity of presentation of culture, art, and cultural heritage; the ease of perception of explanatory information and presentation material; easier to find additional data or the object of people's interest; a wealth of symbols and visualization tools to explain or represent a process, share, artist, work. It is found by correlation analysis as a statistical quantity to the most probable unfolding by the "probability theory."

The popularity coefficient (Kp) requires the collection and processing of valid and reliable data. The use of the formula is depersonalized in terms of pollution and subjectivism. The main aspects of formula application are outlined and presented in Table 1 called "Segments Using the Kp Formula." Aspects are those elements that ensure the validity of the implement and the quality of the result obtained. The categorization of elements is subject to enrichment and further development. Practical use will provide valuable guidance for future development of the artist's vision.

Table 1. *Segments Using the Kp Formula*

Item name	Contents	Importance[7]
Sources	Evidence gathering must take place in an environment that provides guarantees of trustworthiness. Reliable sources represent a true and correct point of view.	**3,7**
Data collection methodology	The data collection approach determines the quality of use. The right instruments ensure the reliability of the results obtained. A precise choice of methods will minimize deviation from factual reality.	**4,2**
Processing technology	Competence and experience in data processing are critical to obtaining up-to-date and accurate information. The way of working must take into account the characteristics and distinctive features of the object to which the formula is applied. The lack of capacity determines the need to seek experts and organizations with qualifications in statistics and mathematics.	**4,6**
Verification of the results obtained	Kp users must confirm authentication after receiving the enforcement information. Data verification assists in more efficient calculation.	**4,3**

---

[7] The assessment is made on a scale of 1 to 5. It is possible to optimize it.

A Practical Framework for Using the Kp Formula

The globalization process is continuously evolving and is not "frozen" in one place. It is one-sided to consider globalization a purely economic phenomenon when it comes to studying it in terms of its origins, scope and consequences.[8] Globalization has changed the standards of distribution and dissemination. The diffusion of coverage and the use of alternative channels to obtain information make the processes of analysis and opinion gathering more difficult. In applying the formula, it is important to approach the collection of information data responsibly.

Digitization and the availability of large datasets help to track the tendencies that are the focus of our study. Developed economies stand out for maintaining and updating data on their economic processes, including those related to art and culture. For example, since 2014, the European Commission has been monitoring Member States' progress in the digital field through the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) reports. Each year, the DESI includes country profiles that assist Member States in identifying areas requiring priority action.[9]

The above instruments and policies cover statistical data by economic sector or area at the macro level. National and European statistical offices process information on culture and the arts; for instance, Eurostat presents data on the volume of sales of visual art artefacts. The data are per country, which does not give a clear picture of the positioning of the private case, i.e. there is no information at the micro level.

Finding popularity through the hypothesis presented focuses on micro relationships and dependencies. This will create a path between the macro indicators of visual arts and the positioning of an artist in relation to them. The study of dependencies and interrelationships between objectively existing processes and phenomena in science and especially in economics is of great importance. It makes it possible to examine in-depth the complex mechanism of the causal functioning of a number of socio-economic phenomena.[10] The interrelationships discovered will serve to chart a path for enhancing individual popularity.

Sources of information are paramount to the application of the formula. Considering the socio-cultural characteristics of the target group will facilitate the collection process and increase the representativeness of the data. Figure 1 offers a practical application of our hypothesis in a real-world setting.
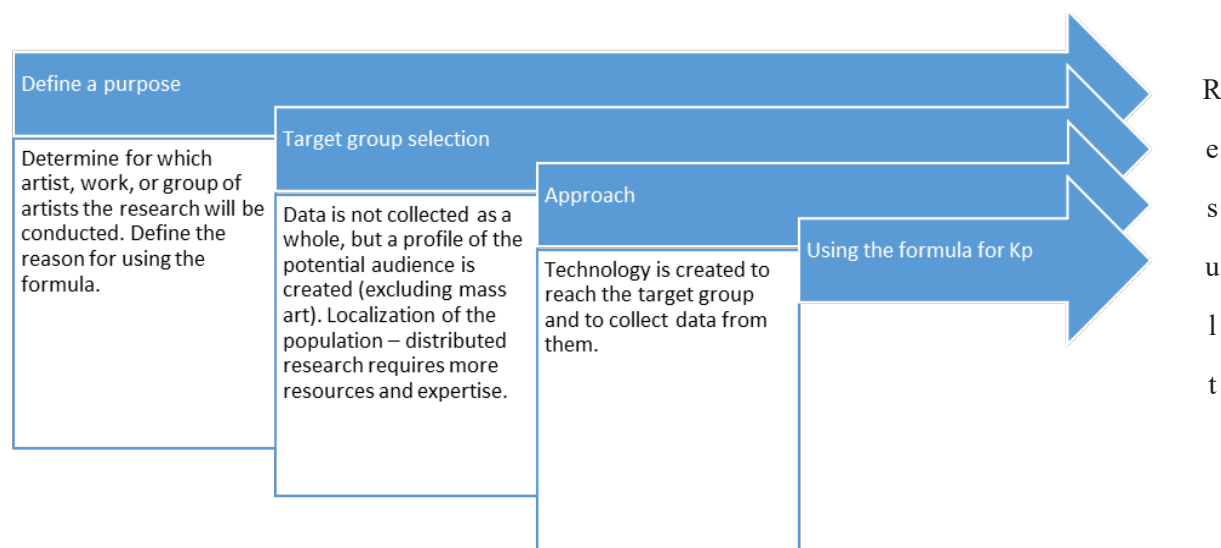

Figure 1. *Framework for Practical Use of Kp*

[8] **Byanov, I.** *Global Economic Changes* (in Bulgarian). Veliko Tarnovo, I&B, 2019.

[9] **Byanov, I., and Byanova, N.** Digitisation of the Bulgarian Economy in the European Union. *Scientific Conference of the Department of General Economic Theory*, Issue 1. Varna: 2022.

[10] **Minchev, N.** Application of Mathematical and Statistical Methods in the Analysis and Forecasting of Socio-Economic Phenomena. Veliko Tarnovo: Sira, 2011.

Sources of information are key criteria in the application. Users have a group of options for data collection. The diversification of distribution of accesses provides a basis for a realistic view of the positioning of an artist, a creative work in the "celebrity–notoriety" line.

Credible sources, according to the author, are those that have an interest in using some form of cultural and creative segments. The selection of the sources in question is made on the basis of their activity. The profile created points out the researcher whom to contact for references. After profiling, the focus nests and tools of work should be identified. The structure and composition of the respondents' location environment also affects the representativeness of the data. The totality of conditions and factors in an individual administrative or geographical unit influences the internal rating scale. Personal criteria, which are a consequence of a person's development and his/her social and group environment, frame the understanding of the subject matter under consideration. The perception of visual art messages and aesthetics is not at the same level in all communities. The cultural system determines the acceptance or rejection of a visual work, respectively an artist. Taking into account all features of individual environments and human populations will facilitate the validation of our hypothesis in practice. Defining and detailing the directions of the popularity formula is a necessity for its proper use. The directions we have set out in the initial stage should not be limited to these cases. Examples of application are given in Table 2.

Table 2. *Areas of Application of the Kp Formula*

1. New/young artists on a regional or national scale
Exploring the perception of magnitude popularity of a young author. It boils down to a limited exploration among major consumers of visual products on a regional and national scale. Initial positioning on a popular–unpopular scale is tracked. Artists with first appearance are considered.
2. Established artists on a regional or national scale
The extent to which they have been able to develop their popularity is verified. The aim is to validate whether there is an uptake and what the trend is. Assumptions are compared with factual reality.
3. A new work of art or collection
Relevant to Item No. 1 of the Table. The difference is in the object of evaluation.
4. New artist/visual work internationally
The study is voluminous, so its validity is checked by examining sources with similar indicators, but segmenting different sources by similar profile; diversified examination of sources from different geographical areas.
5. Established artists at the national level, stepping on the international stage
Analyzing the perception of a nationally known individual among a new audience or market; relevant to the front position.

Fields of application are divided by scope and career stage. The collected facts are transformed into data, which are assigned to co-locations. This produces the values that will find a place in the formula. The popularity rating is made on a 10-point scale. The application of the formula therefore requires that this condition be taken into account when collecting data (by questionnaire or other form of evaluation). If higher indicative scores are chosen, then the scale will be in the order above 10. The evaluation does not contain negative items or categorizations. The suggestion of defining the popularity price in the form of a scale is an example. This means that it is subject to updating and optimization (e.g. in the quantitative values used for individual indicators). We apply the use of the classical form of distribution of scores from 0 to 10. This is an example for future users of the formula. The rating scale is visualized in Figure 2.
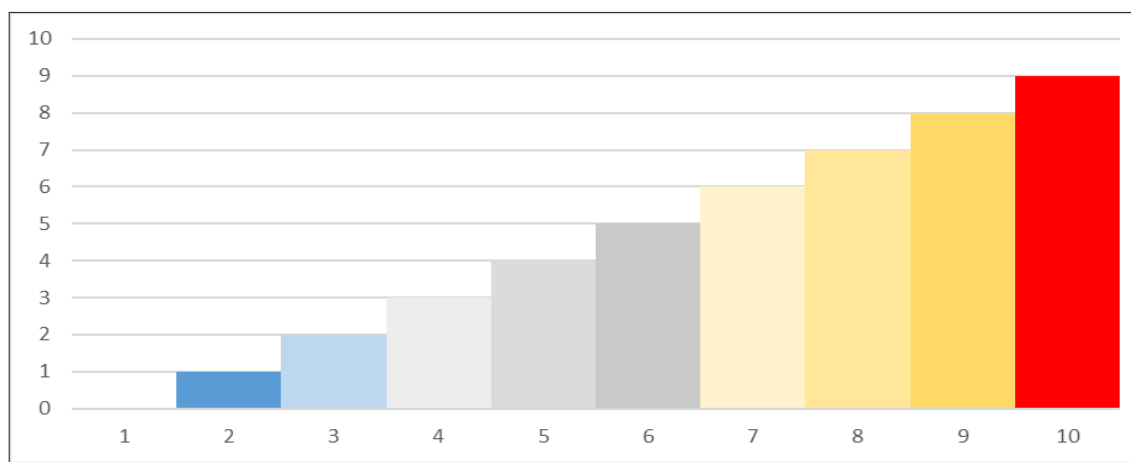
Figure 2. *Kp Formula Score Scale*

0–3 – setting low popularity levels. It indicates that an artist or work of art is not popular. The indicator demonstrates obscurity and hence low demand and usage; an alarming degree that shows that work needs to be done on visibility and recognition.

4–6 – low to medium level of popularity. An artist or work of art has their popularity, but in a limited range of consumer audiences; a worrying degree which indicates that work is needed on visibility and recognition (to improve what has been achieved). However, the foundations have been laid and need to be built upon.

7–9 – Medium to high visibility and celebrity for an artist or work of art. They are recognizable by a wide range of users and audiences and strive to maintain a level and to retain a degree of popularity.

10 – The peak has been reached. Few artists can boast about such an achievement. These levels are inherent to world-renowned authors.

Conclusion

Finding popularity is a starting point to figure out how an artist is positioned among audiences and connoisseurs. The study provides an objective and realistic picture and can be used for future optimization actions. Success in arts and culture is about being known and recognized. The author becomes the bearer of a positive image and high reputation. So too will budding artists seek to be endorsed or supported by a popular figure in the cultural and creative sector. Our expertise is to support artists' efforts by providing them with a quantitative tool. This tool attempts to give insight into the individual artist where he/she is in the information circle of the audience. The primary task is to prove the validity of our hypothesis and to approbate it in a real environment.

REFERENCES

Briley, D. A., and Aaker, J. L. When Does Culture Matter? Effects of Personal Knowledge on the Correction of culture-based judgments. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 2006.

Byanov, I. *Global Economic Changes* (in Bulgarian). Veliko Tarnovo: I&B, 2019.

Byanov, I., and Byanova, N. Digitisation of the Bulgarian Economy in the European Union. *Scientific Conference of the Department of General Economic Theory*, Issue 1. Varna: 2022.

Cambridge Dictionary: https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/popularity

An, J., Di, H., and Liu, G. The Influence of Entrepreneurs' Online Popularity and Interaction Behaviors on Individual Investors' Psychological Perception: Evidence from the Peer-To-Peer Lending Market, *Frontiers in Psychology*, vol. 12, 2022, Article 825478.

Kašperová, E. Impairment (In)Visibility and Stigma: How Disabled Entrepreneurs Gain Legitimacy in Mainstream and Disability Markets. *Entrepreneurship & Digital Development*, 2021, vol. 33(9–10).

Minchev, N. Application of Mathematical and Statistical Methods in the Analysis and Forecasting of Socio-Economic Phenomena. Veliko Tarnovo: Sira, 2011.