

**FROM CLICKING “YES I AM ATTENDING”,  
TO ACTUALLY ATTENDING: AUDIENCE  
DEVELOPMENT FOR INDEPENDENT THEATRE  
ORGANISATIONS IN JOHANNESBURG  
- THE PLACE OF FACEBOOK.**

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## THENX: SKETCH COMEDY COLLECTIVE

 Trending on Facebook: Videos going viral

 Over 10k Likes on Facebook Page

 Facebook event invitations sent out for theatre shows

**BUT...**


Likes and clicks *Don't* translate into attendance


# THE CHALLENGE


- 👍 Is Facebook an effective tool to build audiences for theatre?
- 👍 What motivates someone to click “yes I am attending” on Facebook?
- 👍 What motivates someone to actually attend A theatre show?
  - 👍 What are the existing barriers?
- 👍 How has the technological evolution impacted theatre production, consumption and distribution?
- 👍 What effective strategies could small independent theatre organisations employ to broaden, diversify and deepen theatre attendance (audience development)?

## SOME QUESTIONS

 Mixed Method: Qualitative and Quantitative

 Tools: In- depth interviews, Focus groups and Online Survey

 Sample: Arts managers, artists, students, experts on social media marketing, theatre and audience development, Facebook followers

 Limited to existing and potential audiences who are Facebook participants

# METHODOLOGY



Organisations whose founders have **little or no business awareness** because **of lack of market knowledge** and the complexity or multi-layered nature of the market itself;



Are **passionate about theatre**;









Struggle with the **tension between creativity and commerciality**;



On the one hand, **value their position within fringe theatre** as cutting edge, **distancing themselves from mainstream theatre whilst seeking recognition in the form of wider audiences** and a more established positioning in the market

(Dickson al, 2010).

## INDEPENDENT THEATRE (ORGANISATIONS)

-  **Theatre(western format):** no longer accessible to all people, theatres mostly in urban areas
-  **Negative Perceptions:** “Art is an elitist hobby”/”Frivolous activity”
-  **Poverty and Unemployment:** Over half of South Africans live below the national poverty line and more than 10% live in extreme poverty 26.5% people are unemployed
-  **Lack of Arts Education:** Lack of (critical) arts curriculum in schools
-  **Lack of Transformation:** Equal access for blacks and whites/men and women/disabled
-  **Technological Disruption:** Digital economy changing the way theatre is produced, experienced, promoted and distributed

# CURRENT CONTEXT

## AUDIENCE MEMBERS ARE NOT BUMS ON SEATS!



Stakeholder who may want to support the arts in any way, or who have an interest in their development -(HILL, O'SULLIVAN & O'SULLIVAN, 2003)



Group of spectators/body of listeners- (BUSINESS AND ARTS SPONSORSHIP TOOLKIT (2013))



A group of individuals gathered together at a certain time and place for no purpose other than to see the performance/show- (WILSON, 2007:4)

**NB: AUDIENCE SEGMENTATION TO HELP BREAKDOWN THE EXISTING & POTENTIAL AUDIENCE**

# AUDIENCE

## Framework: Theory of Human Motivation-Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



**Key Drivers:** Sense of community, love of art, socialisation, escapism etc.



**Trends:** Networking opportunities, Heightened moments, Customised/Personalised experiences etc.





**Barriers:** Access, Transport, Ticket Price, Timing, Competition etc.


“Other people go to theatre to remember others to forget” -  
(Respondent)

# AUDIENCE KEY DRIVERS AND BARRIERS



 Involves breaking down the physical, psychological and social barriers which stop people from participating or attending the arts- (Maitland, 1997:9).

 Changing the structure and composition of audiences to achieve democratic participation in the arts and to engender greater levels of trust and commitment (loyalty) among existing and fledging audience groups - (Hayes, 2003:1).

 Audience development should be considered as a holistic and integrative activity that requires skills of marketing, education and programming – (Rogers, 2001).

# AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT



An activity which is undertaken specifically to meet the needs of existing and potential audiences, and to help arts organisations to develop on-going relationships with audiences; it can include aspects of marketing, commissioning, programming, education, customer care and distribution- (Arts Council England, 2011:2)



**DIVERSIFYING, BROADENING AND DEEPENING** attendance.




Four Pillars of Audience Development:  
**ARTS EDUCATION, TASTE CULTIVATION,  
(EXTENDED) MARKETING AND CULTURAL INCLUSION** – (Kawashima, 2000)

# AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

 Thorough understanding of the audience

 Continuous and practical process

 Requires a collaborative effort and should involve the whole  
organisation / sector

 Needs effective monitoring and evaluation processes

# AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT



An example of a social networking site defined as group of internet based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of web 2.0; and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content- (Paquette, 2013:3)



Facebook is considered both social media (the tools or the platforms), and social networking (the way users engage on these sites) – (Burke,2013)



Those digital media that are interactive, incorporate two-way communication, and involve some form of computing- (Logan, 2010:4).

# FACEBOOK

FINDINGS...



*“Social media is a place for people to play and it’s a place where people don’t have to commit”- (Respondent)*



*“Liking” is a low level commitment; a passing, fleeting thing on your phone” - (Respondent)*



People click on Facebook while doing a million other things whereas theatre attendance requires full commitment on different levels; financially, physically and emotionally...

# LOW LEVEL OF COMMITMENT



46.88% of the Facebook survey participants who responded to events said that they were interested in attending the event at the point of responding;



23.96% of the respondents clicked “going” because the event looked interesting,



15.63% because I want to get information about and leading up to the event,



9.38% because a Facebook “friend” sent the invitation.

Liking” a page on Facebook essentially serves as an opt-in mechanism for on-going communications with the owner of that page- (Poynter, 2011:339).

# PEOPLE CLICK FOR VARIOUS REASONS



From **“YES I AM ATTENDING”**, **“MAYBE”** & **“NOT ATTENDING”**  
to **“INTERESTED”** then **“GOING”** & **“IGNORE”**

By selecting the “interested” option, you are indicating to the event organiser that you are interested but cannot decide yet. And if you click “interested,” you will receive notifications and updates from the events. Selecting “maybe” seemed ambiguous about whether you would actually show up to the event.




Change in algorithms: Only a select few people appear on your timeline or are able to see your posts


## NEW DEVELOPMENT TO THE FACEBOOK EVENT




 “Link traditional media with new media” – (Respondent)

 Facebook is affordable but not always reliable

 Organisations should not only be involved with the online community, but also with the offline community to extend their relationship and customer’s loyalty -(Pradiptarini, 2011:5).

 Different audience segments prefer, use and have access to some platforms and not others.

 Audiences enjoy interacting with the artists but seeing people’s faces on TV and hearing their voices on radio goes a long way.

**FACEBOOK ON ITS OWN IS NOT  
ENOUGH TO BUILD AUDIENCES**



M&E is often considered the “ last step” when in fact it should be integrated throughout the process (allows you to keep in touch with your evolving audience and to design strategies based on real evidence)

**A big plus for Facebook:**



Facebook Analytics/Insights: People, Places and Post Reach etc.

**Evidence based research is NB!**

# MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Cultural Inclusion	Taste Cultivation	Arts/Audience Education	Extended Marketing
Fewer Barriers: everyone is “allowed”	Great platforms for trailers/Teasers	Sharing interesting links related to the arts/organisation/show	Electronic word of mouth: Influencing and reviews
Wider audience reach	Behind the scenes action	Responses to comments/questions	Building, interactive, on-going relationships
<b>Changed algorithms</b>	<b>Cultivation for online participation</b>	<b>Too much traffic and people on FB to “play”</b>	<b>Instant bad reviews or feedback</b>

## FACEBOOK IN RELATION TO FOUR PILLARS OF AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT



Real time and geographical proximity of attendance and participation might be a very old way of thinking about patronage – (Respondent)



Digital Theatre: accessible to audience regardless of geographical, social or economic boundaries & responds to the increasing competition



While new media is seen to be disruptive towards an art form that thrives on the live experience, they are also opening up new opportunities for a re-definition of theatre consumption, production and distribution.

# RETHINKING PARTICIPATION



Facebook is a very important, interactive, two-way communication channel between organisations and their audiences.



Transcends various barriers: geographical, language and socio-economic



Offers insights which are crucial for M&E purposes

### HOWEVER...



Low level commitment = no real commitment

**FACEBOOK IS A GREAT TOOL but not *the* tool: Audience Development requires a more nuanced and rigorous effort from different platforms. It is a collaborative effort that requires all stakeholders on board!**

**IS FACABEOOK AN EFFCETIVE TOOL  
FOR AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT?**