Live Music Audiences in Johannesburg

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Background

Audiences
Marketing and PR
Arts venues and events
Youth and digital
UK – Australia – sub-Saharan Africa
18 – 25s represent a large, existing and potential new audience for live music venues
Yet they are often described as one entity, defined by their ‘race’, age and education level.
Barriers to attracting younger audiences - racial, spatial and economic legacies of apartheid
3 questions

How do you understand and segment audiences in a more meaningful way?

What knowledge/practice exists?

What appetite is there for audience development?
Contribution to scholarship

- Lack of body of knowledge around audiences in SA and across the Continent
- Research which touched on audiences:
  - 2013 Songlines: Mapping the South African Live Performance Landscape
  - 2008 Gauteng Creative Mapping Project: Mapping the creative industries in Gauteng
  - 1988 South African Music Industry
  - 1998 Creative South Africa
  - 2010 Public participation in the arts survey
  - 2010 Songlines Mapping of the South African Live Music Circuit
  - 2011 Labour Market Review: An investigation into the nature of the employment relationships in the South African creative industry
  - 2015 Artstrack No. 7 report
  - 2016 It Starts with a Heartbeat
Case studies

Small to medium venues supported by Concerts SA: Soweto Theatre, Afrikan Freedom Station, The Orbit and Niki’s Oasis.
The academia underpinning the research
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<th>Engagement with art</th>
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Hedonic experience or consumption

Authenticity

Artistically-led, audience focused
Sandell and Dodd’s Barriers
Institutional
Personal and social
Perceptions and awareness
Environmental
Findings and implications
Finding

Young people of the same age and ‘race’ have different motivations to attend live music.

Social interaction at live music is common to all respondents, however it is often the secondary motivation behind an emotional or spiritual/self-actualisation motivation.
‘There’s always the chance of meeting new people... also meeting people with similar interests makes listening to music a little more great, a little more pleasurable.’
Emotional motivation

‘When you actually listen to people live, it’s very different, you feel special. It’s like you really connecting with the artist and the music’
Self-actualisation

‘Well, the biggest one is definitely to escape from real life. When you go to a live music event it just feels like you’re stepping into another world and you can just forget about everything’
Implications

Venues should tailor their messages for each audience as well as the type of experience they seek at the venue.
Implications

Venues could benefit from targeting audiences with different motivations through their programming. Eg. Nescafe Red Mug Sessions at The Orbit.
Finding

Motivated to see live music to have a close visual and sensorial connection with the artists performing.

The music genre and knowledge of the artist are strong motivators for young people to attend specific live music events or venues.
Finding

They demand quality sound and a strong artist performance at live events, demonstrating a deeper knowledge of artists and their music.
‘I feel like musicians really have to come through and really perform. I mean like you get musicians who are very lazy, and that’s quite disappointing if you paid a lot of money’
Implications

Create opportunities for engagement prior to the event through unique content or a meet and greet session pre or post performance.

Plus good sound and production quality.
Finding

Hedonic experience - desire a feeling of space to move and the freedom to interact with live music in their chosen way.
‘I like open air events. It just feels a little more atmospheric. It feels more open in a way, larger and wider. More unrestricted’
Implications
Preference for open spaces could explain the growth of attendance at music festivals in South Africa.
Implications

They prefer venues which offer diverse experiences as they wish to engage with the venue in different ways throughout the event.
Implications

Venues could combine indoor and outdoor spaces for live music events similar to the Soweto Arts and Craft Fair or ensure the venue has some space with fresh air or skylights which promote a sense of openness despite being indoors.
Authenticity is a vital ingredient in developing relationships with audiences.
Finding

Authenticity could be the degree to which:

- they felt the venue wanted them in their space;
- they had the freedom to dress in a way that made them feel comfortable;
- they were given options in how they could experience the event.
Finding

Rejection of Sandton or northern suburban venues as they perceived the audience was not authentic, rather motivated by wealth and perceptions of wealth.
‘I don’t like places in the North, they’re fake. It’s just like, I don’t vibe with it. I like going to a party and knowing that I can go there with my Converse All Stars and have the time of my life without feeling like I’m underdressed’.
Finding

Authentically-diverse audience, they preferred not to attend ‘race-dominant’ events.
'I think I’d be less comfortable going to Pretoria, because I'm used to the Joburg crowd. You can’t really break the social barriers – sometimes - when you get to places and it becomes quite hard. It’s just that fear and the discomfort would be a barrier'
Finding
Perceived social class appeared to be a consideration in terms of whether they felt the venue was open to them.
‘I think when it comes to venues, I think class is a more significant determinant of whether or not you’re welcome in a place these days’
Implications

Young people’s search for uniqueness in the venue, experience and artists.

Targeting audiences through influencers of young people such as bloggers or fellow up-and-coming creatives could be one strategy aimed at attracting young people searching for uniqueness.
Implications

The venue’s actual audience needs to reflect their positioning.

Ensure the venue markets its events through multiple communication channels and in a range of locations across Johannesburg.
Finding

Place monetary value on live music - willing to pay between R50 and R400.

No young interviewee preferred free events, in fact one person perceived them to be unsafe.
Finding

Expressed a desire to attend live music performances more frequently than they currently do - on average every 2.5 months.
Finding

Physical barrier - lack of public transport as a major barrier.

Lack of public transport at night also creates a perceived lack of personal.
Finding
Perception and awareness barriers – race and heritage ie. Niki’s Oasis is seen by the young people as an important venue of cultural significance for the black community.
Finding

Institutional barriers – lack of consistent programming and promotion.
I don’t feel they communicate enough with us to let the outside world know what’s going on there. Most of the time it’s a friend telling me something is going on or I bump into it on Facebook but not enough as they only post one post per gig so you often miss things and there is no follow up’
Implications

Timing of events
Student or under 25’s pricing strategies
Dynamic ticketing models
Dedicated youth-focused events on non-peak evenings such as mid-week
Membership schemes
University programmes
Implications

Government or industry audience development programmes such as Orange Wednesdays in the UK or Brazilian cultural coupon scheme
With thanks

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Images: Livity Africa and Lake of Stars.