

Cultivating theatre audiences through online activity

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This research as conducted by **Alex Turrini, Isabella Soscia and Andrea Maulini** at **Bocconi University, Italy, SKEMA Business School, France and Piccolo Teatro di Milano, Italy**

Summary

This paper looks at the profile of theatregoers who were classified as ‘tech savvy’ by the authors. This segment tended to be younger, more omnivorous and less familiar than the traditional theatregoer. The paper found that the web can be used to deepen the level of engagement with audiences, market to infrequent attenders and possibly address the challenge presented by an aging audience for the traditional arts.

The research is based on the results of an audience survey conducted at Piccolo Teatro in Milan (the largest repertory theatre in Italy)

The research tested a range of hypotheses: that those in the tech-savvy segment were more likely to be younger, male, live outside the host city of a venue (because the web does not respect geographical distance), be a cultural omnivore (or ‘all-rounder’ as they term them), a subscriber and more satisfied with the last performances they saw. The survey collected a range of demographic data and details about respondents' cultural engagement. Tech savvy-ness was determined by whether or not the respondent had subscribed to the Teatro’s online loyalty scheme (the authors concede this was an imprecise metric). The results yielded a sample of 528 people (210 of whom were identified as tech-savvy).

Overall, the demographic profile of the tech-savvy segment was broadly similar to the general audience

The results on age profile were complex. The tech-savvy were more likely to be all-rounders – though not genuinely omnivorous in their tastes (which were more concentrated around the traditional arts). Subscribers were over-represented in the tech savvy segment (possibly because the web enables a deeper level of engagement with an organisation). The tech-savvy were also more satisfied with their most recent experience (probably not because that experience was better but because their expectations had been appropriately set in advance thanks to the preview opportunities provided by the web).

Keywords

theatre **Italy** **audience** **survey** **online**

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