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EXPLORING THE MOTIVES OF YOUNG AUDIENCE FOR THEATRE ATTENDANCE

Abstract:

This paper presents scientific research at the national level in the Republic of Croatia, i.e. the analysis of the motives for the arrival of the younger age group, the generation Y so-called millennials and generation Z's in city and national theatres. The institutions of culture in the Republic of Croatia are always trying to find the best way to contain existing and attract new audiences. The aim of this paper is to investigate the development of young theatre audiences, i.e. their motives, but also the obstacles of attendance in to city and national theatres.

Keywords:

Theatre; generation y; generation z; audience development; marketing in culture

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Introduction

In the field of marketing in culture, it is important to represent and popularize cultural and artistic achievements and to encourage a contact between audience and art, works of art, and cultural institutions. It is therefore important to explore "distance of producers and consumers", and market access to culture imposes a requirement to encourage consumption due to higher economic returns as well as institutions whose products are marketable (exhibition, performance, etc.). Promotion activities are facing a "fertile ground" for implementation because the theatres in Croatia should have a creative, low-cost and interesting promotion, but they should also explore what promotional activities are most appealing to the younger audience (especially generation Y). Every theatre has its own mission and vision. The task of marketing in culture i.e. promotion activities should be that as large as possible number of potential users (today and future visitors) should familiarize themselves with a mentioned mission and vision, and also as much as possible audience.

Cultural institutions, specifically theatres, which are in focus of this research paper, are struggling to find the best way to approach and attract the audience, in particular the young audience (Generation Y and upcoming Generation Z).

The paper comprises seven chapters. Chapter 1 is the introduction, followed by a description of theatre marketing, including its definition and

past studies, in chapter 2. Chapter 3 and chapter 4 give a description of Generation Y and Z and audience with cultural institutions attendance motives. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 focus on methodology, research results, discussion and conclusion.

The purpose of this paper was to investigate how Generation Y and Z were developing as a theatre audience and how were they attracted to the national and city theatres in the Republic of Croatia.

Theatre marketing

One of the first marketing studies, conducted by the Ford Foundation to establish the impact of ticket prices and other factors (such as visitors' incomes) on theatre attendance and audience, dates back to 1974. Other authors explored the same topic in the 1980s and 1990s. Some of the authors looked into ways how leisure substitutions such as reading, cinema, and recreation affects the arrival of audience on performance in the theatres [1,2,3]. On the other hand, in the literature it can be found the impact of visitors' education on theatre attendance [4]. Searching for further literature, how the ticket prices effect on theatre subscribers and non-subscribers [5], and the analysed impact of the quality of theatre plays on attendance [6]. More recently, some of the authors looked into the motivation that attracts visitors to theatres [7], explored the use of websites to attract the young target audience to the theatre [8] and

investigated the impact of social media promotion on theatre attendance [9].

The main concept of marketing in the theatre is defined by the management, depending on theatre type (national, regional, urban, music, children's, etc.) and management principles (administrative, managerial, project or entrepreneur). The type of theatre has no significant impact on creativity in marketing, merely setting certain frameworks and target groups, while the management principle is of crucial importance in this respect. On the other hand, marketing can and should have a positive impact on the theatre's business and help the management build the principles of organization and management, production, overall business, and the general image of the theatre, define the sales and marketing programmes, the public relations concept and advertising campaign, create repertoire politics, visiting programs, tours and participation at festivals, and define the course of the theatre's research and development [10].

Business tactic is the essence of marketing in theatres. This implies the tactic of successful selection of marketing tools and the manner of communication with the environment [11].

Marketing in theatres is the procedure of selling tickets or services to the viewer (the consumer). The same author asserts that marketing in theatres uses tools like promotion, advertising, public relations and audience relations [12].

The above author hypothesises that theatre marketing is based on sales but also on successful communication with the viewers, which ultimately can contribute to attracting viewers and selling tickets and services. In order to have a successful marketing plan, every person working in marketing in the theatre needs to have precise answers to the questions above. These answers can raise awareness of the state of marketing in the theatre and provide better guidelines for future marketing activities and future marketing plan.

Regarding theatre marketing, research and planning are the main functions of marketing in the theatre. Research identifies the real needs of the specific environment for which the product is intended. There are no universal approaches and unique models; research is conducted specifically for each individual case, project and environment, with only general principles applying to the marketing of cultural products. Planning allows theatres to make a good marketing plan, but before they start working on the plan, they need to answer the following questions: Do we need a marketing plan at all?; What is our business and what are we doing at this moment?; What do we want to accomplish in the next five years?; What are our products?; Who do we produce them for?; What is the value for our consumers?; What would they actually want to buy?; What do we actually sell them?; What limitations is product sales faced with?; What do we know about our market and how?; How much information do we have about our competition?; Do we know the advantages of the market compared to the competition?; Do we differ

from the competition and if so, how?; Do we have any marketing plans anyway?; What are our marketing priorities?; What do we want to say about ourselves?; Who do we want to communicate with?; What will we use the available marketing resources for?; How do we get to the buyer?; Do we have an idea of what we really want from our advertising?; What will we focus on in advertising?; How do we communicate with the media?; What can we learn from the competition? [13].

In order to have a successful marketing plan, every person who works in marketing in the theatre needs to have precise answers to the questions above. These answers can raise awareness of the state of marketing in the theatre and provide better guidelines for future marketing activities and the future marketing plan.

Generation Y and Z

The chapter will give over view and critical opinions both of the generations.

Generation Y refers to the generation born from the early eighties (around 1983) to mid-nineties (around 1996), also known as “the millennials”. The author of the paper considered the reflections of several authors on Generation Y for the purposes of this paper and gave critical opinion.

Generation Y thinks and learns differently from the preceding generations, due in particular to the rapidly changing, highly technological environment in which they have been raised. The authors of this paper strongly agree with this statement. In the same paper, the above authors assert that Generation Y has not lived in a world

without computers, the Internet, DVDs and cell phones, which the authors of this paper agree with to some extent, because Generation Y did not spend its childhood in the time of the internet (the internet just started to break in), but only started to use the internet, DVDs and cell phones in their adolescents years (as opposed to Generation Z, who had access to all of the above from early childhood) [14].

Also, Generation Y is the most educated, well-travelled and technologically sophisticated generation in general [15]. The author of this paper strongly disagree with this view, because the so-called Alpha Generation (born from 2011 to 2025) has the features authors Postolov et al. (2017) ascribe for Generation Y.

Moving on the up-coming generation Z, they are born from the mid-nineties (around 1996) to early millennium (around 2010), also known as “the iGeneration”, “Digital Natives” and “Gen Wii” [16]. Key formative trends for this generation are: social media, skill gaps, global mind set and infinite diversity [17]. Although, some of the authors claim that this generation never lived without internet [18, 19], the author of this paper strongly disagrees with that claim.

Audience and cultural institutions attendance motives

Audience research is plaque by loose, woolly terminology that often perpetuates ambiguity and hinders attempts to cohere a scholarly community around it. What is interesting to observe, however,

how audience behaviour and expectations are changing, as the next generation “of prosumers” matures and factors such as big data, co-creation, participation, digital engagement, and live streaming continue to impact the on the sector [20].

Further on, what are the needs, motivations and drives for cultural institutions attendance, can be found in the table below.

Audience needs and motivations	Driver and type of engagement
Feeling part of special community of interest	Spiritual
Ritual	
Escapism and immersion	
Being ethically challenged	
Reflection	
Access to creative people and process	
Aesthetic pleasure and development	
Passing on the legacy to the children	
Quality me - time	
Tingle down the spine moment	
Having a visceral response	
Feeling the chemistry and the buzz	
Empathy	
Getting an emotional hit	
Being moved	

Being drawn and in engaged	Emotional
Mimesis and personal relevance	
Exploring human relationships	
Nostalgia	
Storytelling	
Developing world view	Intellectual
Being intellectually challenged	
Self - improvement	
Learning about history or current issues	
Stimulating others	Social
Enhanced socialisations	
Quality time with family and friends	
Dinner with a show	
Good customer service	
Partaking in a live experience	

Table 1. Needs, motivations and drives for cultural institutions [21]

In table 1 it can be noticed how the cultural institutions attendance is a complex matrix of human emotions and stimulations. Nowadays, especially the storytelling (emotional) and escapism (spiritual) are important motivators and drivers for cultural institutions attendance because the audience is trying to emotionally connect with the event (whatever is going on, whether a performance, show, exhibition etc.) and by this act to escape just for a moment from the reality.

Methodology

The aim of the paper is to better understand the motives of young audience theatre attendance and also which role play's the advertising activities in the mentioned part.

The survey was conducted in the Republic of Croatia during January 2019 and February 2019. The instrument used for data collection was a highly structured questionnaire by using the pen-and-paper method completed by students (23- 33 years old) at the following universities: University of Osijek (Faculty of Economics, Academy of Arts and Culture and Faculty of Humanities and Social Science) and University of North in Varazdin (Public Relations Department). The questionnaire was completed by 612 respondents. From the total sample, 285 concludes the Generation Y and 327 Generation Z. The data are analysed using methods of descriptive statistics and nonparametric statistics.

Based on previous research findings, the author tested four hypotheses of the paper and draw conclusions about the hypotheses:

H1: The most common obstacle for Generation Y to visit the theatre event is the lack of time.

H2: The most common obstacle for Generation Z to visit theatre event is lack of interest.

H3: Generation Y prefers a recommendation from a friend to be drawn to events in theatres.

H4: Generation Z prefers social media advertising to be attracted to theatre events.

In the first part of the questionnaire, the focus was on demographic characteristics (10 questions). The second part of the questionnaire put the emphasis on promotional activities of the theatre (27 questions), while the third part of the questionnaire addressed standpoints about the audience (19 questions).

Variable	n	%	n	%
Men	84	29.5	91	27.8
Women	201	70.5	236	72.2
Total	285	100	327	100

Table 2. Sample description - gender

The sample on which the study was conducted on Generation Y, which consisted of (70.5 %) of female respondents and (29.5 %) of male respondents, and also Generation Z, which consisted of (72.1 %) of female respondents and (27.8 %) of male respondents.

Variable	n	%	n	%
Full time student	193	67.7	301	92.3
Part time student	92	32.3	26	7.7
Total	285	100	327	100

Table 3. Sample description - student status

Table 3 show that the majority of respondents from Generation Y are full-time students (67.7%), while other respondents are part-time students (32.3%). From Generation Z they are (92.4%) full time students and (7.9%) part time students.

Variable	n	%	n	%
Yes	203	71.3	177	54.2
No	55	19.3	150	45.8
Total	285	100	327	100

Table 4. Sample description - own income

The last table in this chapter show that, in Generation Y most students have their own income (71.3%) and are financially independent, but the rest of the respondents do not have financial independence (19.3%). In category of Generation Z most students also have their own income (54.1%) and are financially independent, but the (45.8%) are not financially independent.

Results

This chapter presents the results of the research and the validity of the hypotheses.

Variable	n	%	n	%
Lack of time	115	40.3	51	15.5
Lack of interest	47	16.5	117	35.7
Lack of information	26	9.1	57	17.8
Price	18	6.3	35	10.7
Poor quality of the program	55	19.3	23	7
Insufficient number of performances	19	6.6	28	8.5
Theatre is too far away	5	1.7	16	4.8
Total	285	100	327	100

Table 5. - Obstacles in visiting the theatre events

According to the data in Table 5, the first hypothesis “the most common obstacle for Generation Y to visit the theatre event is lack of time” can be

confirmed. The lack of time (40.3 %) may be due to the fact that Generation Y are in the phase of being young parents and they do not focus on cultural events. However, further data can be read to indicate that Generation Y has a major lack of interest (16.5 %) coming to the theatres because of the poor program quality (19.3 %).

The results also show that the second hypothesis “the most common obstacle for Generation Z to visit theatre event is lack of interest” can also be confirmed. The lack of interest (35.7 %) can be connected to the fact that this generation has lack of longer contraction and it is hard to keep their interest. Although, the Generation Z confirmed they have lack of interest for theatre events, the percentage of their programme judgment was quite good, only (7 %) considered that the theatre has poor programme quality.

Considering the quality programme, the above information can be a further basis for future research, both of generations can resolve what the quality of programme means to them (do they prefer more drama, comedy, opera, musicals, etc. in the program).

Variable	n	%	n	%
Friend recommendation	110	38.6	45	13.8
Social media	45	15.8	120	36.7
Official web site	31	10.9	35	10.7
TV	11	3.9	9	2.7
Radio	21	7.4	15	4.5
Paper News	15	5.3	7	2.2
Poster	19	6.7	21	6.5
E-mail newsletter	33	11.6	75	22.9
Total	285	100	327	100

Table 6. - Information and advertising for developing interest in theatre events

Respondents were asked about the manner of informing about theatre events and were offered eight different ways of informing (Table 6). The respondents were able to choose one answer that describes their ways of informing about cultural events. Reading the data in this table, third hypothesis "Generation Y prefers recommendation from a friend to be attracted to events in theatres" can also be confirmed because the highest percentage of respondents answered that they are most attracted to an event because of friend recommendation (38.6%). Another study from 2013 year [22] confirms that Generation Y prefers the recommendation of an event, i.e. face-to-face communication. Therefore, it can be seen that the situation has not changed so much from 2019, i.e. the generation has not become more technologically dependent. On the other hand, the Generation Z tells another story. Most of them prefer information and advertising via social media (36.7%), so due to that information, fourth hypothesis can also be confirmed. They are more technologically dependent.

After the shown results, it can be concluded how the strength of the research methodology was noncomplex, cost effective, precise and inexpensive analyse, while on the other hand the weakness of the methodology was the preparation of the questionnaire.

Conclusion

Culture and the audience themselves are developing at a place where people meet, so the leading people of cultural institutions, city and

national theatres in the Republic of Croatia, and Generation Y and Z must find themselves "halfway", which means that leading people in theatres should invest more time, energy and financial resources in getting to know their audience (and eventually getting development guidance), and Generation Y and Z should invest their time in the leisure culture. In the process of getting to know and develop their audience, leading people in theatres may ask themselves how far they are willing to go to get to know their audience, whether the audience is aware of the mission, vision and artistic values of the cultural institution, also whether the cultural institution is ready to tailor the program to their audience, etc. These are just a small number of questions that executives need to answer to further develop their audiences. Through the results of this research, theatre executives can realize which the best advertising tools are for mentioned generations.

Looking at the limitations of this paper, it can be seen that the group of respondents was homogeneous, i.e. all of the respondents were students, of similar age, education and personal income. This information may be linked to further research recommendations, namely the creation of a heterogeneous sample of respondents that will vary with the existing respondents in terms of demographics, educational level, etc. Also, the recommendation for further research may relate to the quality of the theatre program, i.e. what for Generation Y and Z means poor and good program quality (as stated earlier in the paper) and that said generation make its recommendations to

executives (intendants, directors, etc.) to create more interesting program for young audience. Also, this paper provides another basis for future research, identifying important influences for better understanding of advertising activities in theatres.

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