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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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ABSTRACT

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

Without an audience, theatre is meaningless; however, getting that audience to the theatre can be challenging; especially for small scale independent theatre organisations that often don't have access to the necessary skills and budgets. This research report considers the potential place of Facebook in audience development. It investigates whether Facebook, as a social networking platform, can function as an effective tool to help small scale independent theatre organisations to broaden, deepen and/or diversify audiences. Additionally, it explores audience motivations, key drivers and barriers, and how they influence theatre attendance especially in a South African context.

The research report follows a mixed method approach which includes in-depth interviews, focus group discussions as well as an online (Facebook) survey to try and find ways to curb the issue of declining audiences. It concludes that audience development requires a thorough understanding of audience needs, drivers, trends and barriers as well as commitment from the entire organisation and sector; that developing audiences is about building on-going and mutually beneficial relationships between audiences and organisations, and that appropriate monitoring and evaluation systems need to be put in place. The report also concludes that Facebook can be effective in helping organisations to reach new audience segments, providing a platform for communication between organisations and their audiences, and for marketing; but proposes that Facebook should be included as one aspect of the holistic audience development plan.

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