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COMMUNICATING PERFORMING ARTS
ORGANIZATIONS IN THE DIGITAL ERA: THE
STRATFORD FESTIVAL CASE

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe and understand the challenges involved in developing a communication strategy and increasing audiences for performing arts organizations in the digital era. We have revised some of the literature available regarding digital marketing and promotion for the arts, taking into consideration how the customer journey is deeply transformed because of the boom of the digital media. To have a better understanding of the key points to have a successful communication strategy in the arts nowadays, it is studied the case of the Stratford Festival, the North America's largest classical repertory theatre company. This is remarkable case of performing arts organization with a strong strategy especially in two areas: the communication of the company using digital media and their strong audience development programs.

KEYWORDS

Marketing for the arts, performing arts, communication strategies, digital media, digital marketing, promotion of cultural organizations, digital customer journey, audience development, The Stratford Festival.

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INTRODUCTION

COMMUNICATING PERFORMING ARTS ORGANIZATIONS IN THE DIGITAL ERA: THE STRATFORD FESTIVAL CASE

This study aims to describe and understand the challenges involved in developing a communication strategy for performing arts organizations. The uniqueness of the cultural product requires a special attention to the media and the type of message to elaborate. Since some art expressions do not have massive audiences, it is needed also a deep knowledge of the public to address the cultural product. In some cases, the complexity of the cultural product makes difficult to find an appropriate channel to locate the message. For instance, the solely use of a poster to promote a new contemporary theatre performance may be limited, since in this case a picture and few words are the only tools available to explain the entire art proposal. Most art organizations do not develop big communication campaigns, due their scarce financial resources, which makes impossible to invest in massive and costly media, as television or other channels that might be more suitable to communicate innovative art proposals.

Taking this scenery into consideration, digital media seems to offer many possibilities for arts organization willing to achieve better their communication goals. Many of these organizations nowadays are considering the new media channels and digital platforms as vital part of their communication strategy. These digital tools may represent a solution to achieve audiences, within an appropriate channel and at low costs. The new media is certainly changing the customer experience in many ways, making this experience more social and complex. Thanks to social media channels, nowadays arts organizations may know, almost immediately, the perceptions of the public about the cultural product. The wisely use of this information can be a real advantage for developing the cultural product and an appropriate communication strategy.

The communication strategy of an art organization is fundamental to reach new audiences and keep the loyalty of the frequent public. However, promotion activities by its own could be not enough to increase audiences and ensure the sustainability of the field in long term. This is one of the reasons why audience development programs have a vital importance for art organizations. In this sense, this study also aims to understand the relations between the communication strategy and the audience development programs within performing arts organization.

It is very valuable to analyze successful cases of performing arts organizations that have managed to develop a communication strategy with good results, even though the many challenges of the field. Studies in this matter may help to understand the key points to have a successful communication strategy in the arts nowadays. The case study considered in this research is the Stratford Festival, as a prestigious performing arts organization in North America and as a remarkable case of theatre company with a strong strategy specially in two areas: the communication of the organization using the digital media and the audience development programs.

The Stratford festival is North America's largest classical repertory theatre company based in Stratford- Canada with more than 50 years in the field. They produce classics, contemporary dramas and musicals, with special emphasis on the plays of Shakespeare, in their four distinctive venues within Stratford. The theatre company has a large marketing department with a specialized team for digital media, a particular case in cultural organizations that demonstrates the importance they give to innovation and new media. Regarding the audience development aspect of the company, the organization has built quality educational programs according to their different type of audiences, which evidences a real concern for increasing their public and ultimately contribute to the development of the community.

The location of Stratford Festival makes the case even more rich to analyze. Stratford is an outstanding case of a city revitalized by the arts. The Stratford Festival has positively change the image of the city, transforming Stratford in an important destination for tourism and the arts. In season 2016, the Stratford Festival reached an attendance of over half-million ¹ which demonstrates the impact not just in economic terms, but in the social development of the city.

For all these elements, I consider that the Stratford Festival has identified the key aspects to build a sustainable cultural organization, which makes this case very valuable to study on. I deem that developing studies in these aspects may offer some future roots to elaborate more efficient communication strategies for performing art organizations, considering new media and audience development programs. In this sense, productive investigations in this field could help to enlarge audience for cultural organizations and ensure the future of the sector in long term.

¹ <https://www.thestar.com/entertainment/stage/2017/03/25/stratford-festival-records-fourth-consecutive-surplus.html>

RESEARCH'S OBJECTIVES:

1. Understand the challenges of communicating a performing arts organization in the digital era:
what are the key points to have a successful communication strategy in the arts nowadays?
2. Discover if the new media are changing the costumer journey in a significance way
3. Understand the relations between audience development programs and the communication strategy of a cultural organization

CHAPTER I: THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter, will be developed the theoretical framework of the research which includes literature related to the main concepts in this work: marketing with focus on promotion and communications, digital marketing for cultural organizations, customer journey and audience development theory.

COMMUNICATIONS AND PROMOTION WITHIN THE MARKETING PLAN

The promotion or communication of an organization is a fundamental part within the marketing mix which represents the set of basic tools in any marketing plan. For starting, I will mention the definition of our main object of study. The term marketing is very wide and commonly well known, although it may be useful to give a brief definition for locating better the object of study, as the one offered by the American Marketing Association: “Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large” (AMA 2013). This research will be focus on the process of creating and communicating offerings within the marketing activity. The marketing plan and strategy are always in line with the vision of the organization– what does the arts organization want to be known for and by whom. The vision will determine the type of artistic product which needs to be created and the audiences which need to be attracted to this product (Steidl and Hughes 1999).

As it was mentioned before, promotion is an area included within the marketing plan, specifically as part of the Marketing Mix, which is developed after the setting of goals and strategies of an organization. The marketing mix is the set of tools and techniques used in combination to create a marketing campaign. It refers to the famous “Four Ps” formula: product, placement, price and promotion. The decisions about these instruments are fundamental in the marketing plan and each of them should be consistent in presenting the arts organization and its products as an integrated program (Steidl and Hughes 1999).

As part of the marketing mix, promotion refers to the communication and advertising of the product, the artistic or cultural product in this case, and it may include paid advertising, public relations, sales promotions, direct marketing, on site promotions and digital media initiatives, among other types of activities. The particular features of the audience and the organization’s marketing goals are fundamental to determine the right communication strategy and execution.

This study is focus on communication strategies for cultural organizations using digital media, specifically in the performing arts field. Since the particular nature of the artistic product, marketing theory needs to take also in consideration the special characteristics of this industry as the audience and the communication channels that are appropriate to reach them, which together create a successful strategy. It may be useful to remember some of the main aspects why a strong marketing strategy is vital for arts organizations. An adequate marketing strategy is a main tool to get information about the audience and it may help to create strategies to enlarge it. In case of less known arts expressions, such as contemporary dance for instance, marketing is fundamental for creating an audience and help to the sustainability of the field. Moreover, a right marketing plan might help to obtain more sponsorship or financial support for the organization.

Taking into consideration the creativity of the product in the arts field, it is expected also a creative strategy and execution of the communication plan, which should be in line with the projected image of the organization (Steidl and Hughes 1999). For instance, it is expected from a contemporary art gallery to have a very visual and esthetic website, since this platform is one of the main tools to gather information about the gallery. To have a creative and visual website should be consistent with the image of innovation and sophistication of a contemporary art gallery.

THE ROLE OF DIGITAL MEDIA IN THE MARKETING PLAN

“...It is not about technology. It is about arts practice and engagement in a society that has entered an age where digital technology has affected life profoundly” (Nordicity-Canada Council for the Arts 2016:4).

Technology is changing society in different ways. As a result, industries are shifting their business models, making them more appropriate to the challenges of the new era. The term disruption may be suitable to describe the deep impact of new technologies in business models and its disruptive effect as consequence of adapting new processes and the proliferation of new technologies. Arts and creative industries are also changing in many aspects, although the one most debatable nowadays is how is changing the way to engage with public because of new media. Generally, these times may be seen as good ones for any industry willing to engage deeply with its public, due the multiple possibilities of digital media regarding communication and marketing tools. Certainly, the technology disruption could be seen also as an opportunity for organizations, which should adapt or even transform to succeed in the digital world (Nordicity- Canada Council for the Arts 2016).

In this section, it will mainly discuss the importance of new media for marketing and why it should be considered useful for marketing the arts, and the different ways in which cultural organizations are using the multiple tools offering by digital media nowadays.

Digital media is relatively a new field, and in this section, it will be summarized some of the most relevant literature related to digital marketing for the Arts. In this sense, it has been consulted online articles elaborated for some of the most outstanding cultural organizations in countries such as UK, Australia and Canada.

The opportunities that new media is offering for marketing the arts are multiples and sometimes complex. For taking the best advantage of digital media, it is substantial to understand the importance of these tools within the marketing plan and why they should be considered useful for communicating cultural organizations. These are some main aspects why digital media should be considered fundamental for promoting the arts:

- Digital media provides specialized information

Nowadays, new media channels are starting to make easier for organizations to provide specialized information according to their customer. For the customer's side, digital media is also making easier for customers to find the information they need without much effort. Thus, organizations can elaborate better the message for any segment of their audience, tailor their message and make it understandable for the audience through an appropriate platform. For instance, the concept for a new contemporary art exhibition may be difficult to transmit to a public not familiar with the field. However, an interactive video may help to make understandable this concept, video that could be published in a platform addressed for the appropriate audience, such as the cultural section of a digital newspaper or Facebook ads for users interested in arts and culture. In this way, new media not just provides specialized information, but also makes easier to disseminate the message for the right audience.

- New media offers valuable information for a better knowledge about audiences

Some of the positive aspects of the new media is that these channels make easier the collection of information about the customer and the measure of results of digital campaigns. For instance, the free tool offered by Facebook "Facebook analytics" provides crucial information about an organization's community: demographics and engagement according to the content. In the same way, Google Analytics provides fundamental information about the customer behavior while visiting a company's website and the user experience. This both digital tools provide crucial information that helps to understand better audiences, what they think, what they are talking about in social media or if a specific promotion is appealing and easy to understand for the customer. Now all this information is free and easy to access at any time.

- Engagement with audiences

Thanks to digital media, audiences are closer to organizations than ever. New digital media channels, especially social media ones, are making possible to create deepest relationships with audiences, having conversations instead of one-way communication as traditional media offers. As a result, digital media channels are providing a more participative experience. Social media offers new ways for audiences to express their affinity for arts organizations (Nielsen Online- Australia Council 2011), which could be a real advantage for the sector.

- More opportunities to reach a bigger and diverse audience

The multiple opportunities that new media offers nowadays are also related to the multiple reach of these channels. Digital communication tools are making possible to reach a bigger, more diverse and

even more international audience. This in the past would have represented unaffordable costs for a small organization, but it is possible now without having a large amount of investment.

- Different ways to create awareness

An integrated online presence that includes for example a curated website, active social media channels and a mobile strategy may certainly boost the awareness of an organization. Firms may play an active role during the digital activities of their audience, taking advantage of the new and creative tools to get the attention of the public during the decision-making process.

- New media helps to build word of mouth

Audiences are talking actively online and this represents a good opportunity for cultural organizations for listening what communities are saying and joining these conversations. Organizations can even test what kind of initiatives may have potential and receive critical feedback. However, one of the most important roles of organizations in the digital world could be represent a real support for the customer, sharing tips, answering questions and offering advice or guide during the customer journey. Social media channels are the best platform for doing so.

- More possibilities for enrich the customer experience

Thanks to digital media nowadays is possible to offer an experience beyond the gallery, the museum or the stage. Organizations can provide more content around the cultural experience, thus enriching the overall customer experience. It is more than attending a play in a theatre, is also watching videos backstage on Facebook, asking directly questions to the actors on Twitter, taking pictures in a special framework the day of the show and sharing pictures on Instagram the next day of the play. Offering a more participative experience to audiences and ultimately making arts more participative are crucial advantages of digital media for marketing the arts. Many companies are offering the opportunity for customers to become co-creators of the products through digital media channels, and in this way, they are achieving a deep engagement with their communities. The increasing desire for interaction and creative engagement is a big opportunity for cultural organizations, and enriching these experiences is one of the main advantage of digital media.

- New media helps to reduce marketing and promotional costs

Without doubt, one of the most evident benefits of digital marketing tools for organizations is the possibility to reach audiences without spending a large amount of money. This is crucial especially

in the cultural sector, where organizations are always struggling between the development a quality offer for the public and the limit income resources. Thus, digital media channels may be the perfect ally in this issue.

After mentioning some of the main aspects why digital media plays a crucial role for marketing the arts, now it will be stated some of the main activities that cultural organizations are currently developing using digital tools.

- Developing a window to the world through an institutional website

Maintain a website is a basic and crucial tool for promotion of any organization nowadays. Through visiting a website, we may have an impression of the success of the company. The esthetic of the website's design and the user experience, could tell us if the company is investing money in this important channel, thus if a company has the enough resources to invest on it. Cultural organizations are developing more elaborated platforms, including online shops or specialized sections for receiving donations.

- Paid search and online display advertising for increase awareness

Organizations are using digital media as ways to catch the attention of their audience via internet through Social Media, search engine or display ads. Digital Media may be present in any time of the customer journey, making easy to create interaction between the customer and the organization. Search engine plays a main role at the beginning of the customer journey when audiences access to internet to look for information about any cultural product. Thus, having digital ads that guide the customer during this first contact may be vital in the buying decision.

- Provide extra material for enriching the experience

As mentioned before one of the main functions of digital media is the possibility of enriching the customer experience. For doing so, organizations provide different type of extra interactive material such as videos or live streaming that allows to bring to life the artform. Other materials could be blogs for cultural criticism or mobile campaigns where audiences can engage even during the art event. Moreover, organizations use digital media for expanding the cultural product, which is the case of exhibitions online or theatre plays available online.

- Social Media

Being active in social media channels is one of the main activities that organizations do as part of their marketing strategy. Audience leave comments, create and share content and this help to create

buzz: “Social media do what traditional forms of marketing does not do; create a viral buzz through the sharable nature of information on social networks” (Pew Research Center’s Internet & American Life Project 2013: 30). Through social media, organizations promote their activities and events, build audiences and generate web traffic. Nowadays social media is also an important tool for audiences to discover events, working as a reminder of upcoming ones, which represent a very useful tool for arts organizations and their activities.

- Educational content

Organizations are using digital media tools also for educational purposes, providing study materials for schools or making available researches in the field for academic purposes in general. This content plays an important role in audience development strategies which most cultural organizations consider central in their vision.

- Email marketing

Organizations are doing vast use of the audience visitor contact for sending e-mail, newsletter and special offers addressed to the privileged group of customers whose information is included in the database.

- Collection of data for monitoring the organization’s profile and understand the customer behavior

Many organizations use social media as a social barometer, to monitor the online conversations about their organizations. Moreover, the data obtained by website analytics such as traffic and visits are fundamental to understand the customer behavior online, how they use the website, the duration of their visits, the pages that attract more traffic and where users exit the site. These metrics are useful for designing better websites and improving the user experience, making these platforms more user friendly, efficient, or visually attracting, a main feature to enrich the customer experience.

To sum up, it is evident the main role that digital media is playing for marketing the arts. Cultural organizations that have started to use of these platforms can recognize the value of a strong marketing strategy including new media. The ultimate role of technologies for cultural organizations is disseminate the arts and make them more accessible. However, there are some costs of technology that organizations should face, even though most of the digital media channels are free of charge. For having a successful digital marketing strategy is required to keep update these platforms, maintain the content and having the trained staff for doing so. Thus, digital channels are not so free cost as they may be seen. Organizations need to have the enough resources for affording the costs of technology.

Additionally, it is also important to know the role of every digital platform. Having accounts in many social media platforms will not automatically make an organization successful. It is required also to understand the function of every channel and the type of content that should be consistent with the strategy and goals of the company. The infinite possibilities of technology make necessary to recognize that digital media is not an end, but instead represents ways or tools for developing a successful marketing strategy

THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY

The myriad of communication channels now available as result of the boom of digital media, are transforming the traditional customer journey. Because of the multiple touch points that digital channels are creating, customer journeys are becoming more complex and social in nature (N. Lemon & C. Verhoef 2016). Nowadays customers peers are a deep influence in the customer experience, online influencers such as Tweet Stars, Instagram Stars or bloggers play a main role in customers perceptions about products or services. As a result, organizations have less control in the overall customer experience and the customer journey.

In this study, it will be considered the customer journey definition made by N. Lemon & C. Verhoef, as compilation of the most renowned studies in the topic: “customer experience is a multidimensional construct focusing on a customer’s cognitive, emotional, behavioral, sensorial, and social responses to a firm’s offerings during the customer’s entire purchase journey” (2016: 71). The customer experience or customer journey is a dynamic and interactive process divided in 3 stages: pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase. In each stage, customers experience individual contacts or touch points, but only some of them are controlled by the firm.

The explosion of touch points because of the boom of digital media could make difficult to delineate where the customer journey starts or finishes. However, it is crucial to identify these touch points, especially the critical ones, in order to obtain better outcomes for the organization. For instance, an institutional website that usually plays a main role as first touch point in the customer journey, should be a well-designed and organized platform that includes all the most relevant information to be a successful first contact. If a customer enters for first time to a organization’s website and do not find the information about the product which he is interested on, or the opening hours of the institution, is possible that the interest in acquiring the product diminishes.

Moreover, these multiple digital touch points are more social, external and independent points where organizations usually cannot exert control. In these cases, it is important that organizations identify these platforms and consider within their marketing strategy. For instance, even though it may be not possible to control conversations in social media, having an institutional profile is vital for allowing the organization to be at least present in the platform, thus creating more possibilities for the organization of being part of the conversations online.

Lemon & C. Verhoef also mention another consideration for organizations in order to create stronger customer experiences which is related to the creation of a seamless customer experience. Designing a continuous experience through channel integration can create a more memorable and stronger customer experience. A billboard of a new theatre show with a call to action to a well-designed and user friendly website, where are available videos and extra content of the play and where is even possible to book tickets online, may have more chances of being a successful than another play that is not considering an online support for traditional advertising.

The Australia Council for the Arts has developed a national study “Connecting arts audience online” where it is introduced a model of customer journey for audiences attending art events, taking into consideration the digital media. It may be appropriate to revise this model in this study due the perfect connection with the type of cultural organizations that we are studying:



(Nielsen Online- Australia Council 2011: 6)

1st stage- Awareness

In this stage, the customer hears for first time about the event through a friend or other media such as word of mouth, print, TV or newsletters.

2nd stage- Research

In this stage the customer searches information about the event and takes the decision whether attend it or not. Internet plays a main role in this stage nowadays, through surfing the internet the customer can research about the artists or events, look photos and videos or checking online reviews. In the

study made by the Australia Council was found that search engines are the most popular way to seek information by audiences in Australia (2011: 7). This behavior is similar in many audiences around the world.

3rd stage- Booking

These days is more common that people buy their tickets online in advance through ticket outlet websites. Mobile ticketing is also getting more popular giving the possibility to customers for doing the booking wherever they are.

4th stage- Preparation

In this stage the customer gets organized for the event in anticipation. Customers usually do that through internet, watching videos or photos for having a “sneak a peek” of the event. Within internet the customer also gets some practical information regarding the event such as parking available or restaurants near the event, information that at the end helps to enjoy more the cultural experience.

5th stage- At the event

During the event the customer also searches more information about the artists or the event through internet. Audiences are willing to share the excitement of participating in the event through social media, and this will continue grow as far the mobile internet continues increasing.

6th stage After the event

In this last stage, customers revive the experience of attending the art event and start to consider the next one. They share videos or photos to revive the event, talk with others about it and do recommendations. They plan the next event and may even purchase the tickets immediately.

AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

Audience development is a term vastly used in the arts field nowadays. The most renowned arts organizations are certainly considering programs for audience development which is strongly connected with creating an impact in the community. The term basically refers to the creation of strategies for increasing the public for arts expressions which ultimately lead to the sustainability of the field. For this study it will be useful to review some of the most important definitions for this concept made by some of the most important arts institutions and professionals in the field.

The Arts Council of England define audience development as: "...an activity which is undertaken specifically to meet the needs of existing and potential audiences, visitors and participants and to help arts organizations to develop ongoing relationships with audiences. It can include aspects of marketing, commissioning, programming, involvement in decision making, education, customer care and distribution" (Arts Council of England 2016: 3). As we see, the creation of relationships with potential audiences as well as the existing ones are important to consider in the audience development activity of an organization. However, the most important part of this concept may see the interrelations among different departments within an organization such as marketing, education or customer care as part of audience development activities which implies the broad scope of the term.

In the book "The Guide to Audience Development" Heather Maitland, a renowned lecturer and arts consultant has offered the following definition for the term in study: "Audience development involves breaking down the physical, psychological and social barriers which stop people participating in or attending the arts. Artists, education workers and marketers share a belief that audience development is a planned process which enhances and broadens specific individuals' experiences of the arts". In Maitland's definition is important to highlight the 3 actors that are involved in the audience development vision: the artists, educators and marketers. This implies that audience development strategies are broader than merely one department within the organization.

The England's national audience development body, the Audience Agency, gives the following definition for the audience development term: "... a planned, organization-wide approach to extending the range and nature of relationships with the public, it helps a cultural organization to achieve its mission, balancing social purpose, financial sustainability and creative ambitions" (The Audience Agency 2017: 33). In this definition is remarkable the link between the mission of the organization and the audience development approach in order to achieve social, financial and creative purposes.

One definition that may encompass a more integrated vision of the term is offered in “Audience Engagement: Working Towards a Definition” by Brown, A.:

“Audience engagement is both educational and participatory. It is about creating opportunities for audiences to interact physically, emotionally, spiritually, and intellectually with the form beyond the role of being an observer. It is about empowering audiences to better appreciate and connect with the meaning and impact of the art experience. Audience engagement practices may be tied to specific performances, but also may occur independently. Some practitioners in the field see audience engagement as blurring the line with the art-making itself. Audience engagement transcends and interconnects the conventional activities of marketing, programming, education and outreach in new ways. It deepens relationships with existing audiences and also builds connections among prospective audiences. It is actively two-way rather than presentational, and plans in good faith that a more knowledgeable and involved audience will lead to better sales or donations and will attract new faces. The outcomes of engagement practices, however, are not attendance or ticket sales alone, but impacts.”

In this case audience engagement and audience development are similar concepts. Something that may be important to highlight in this definition is the educational and participatory component of the term. Audience engagement programs creates opportunities for audiences to interact, a 2 ways dynamic which differs of being a merely observer of the arts. By empowering audiences, they receive more tools to better connect and appreciate the arts. Other important aspect in Brown’s definition is that audience engagement overlaps with other areas within an organization such as marketing, education or programing. However, audience development is more than those areas which makes evident the broad scope of the concept. It is about building stronger relations with existing audiences and creating connections with potential ones. The outcomes of strong audience development programs are more than sales and attendance, they are relating with the creation of an impact in communities. For all these aspects, in this study it will be used the Brown’s approach to the audience development concept.

For creating an audience development strategy, an organization needs to develop a plan that should be focus in which audience will be reached and how they will be reached. The plan should reflect the nature of the work in the organization and should have a direct link with the organization’s mission. Regarding the audience development plan, the Audience Agency states: “... an audience development plan is more than just an expression of how we do it. It is a forward-looking statement of intent and

key to delivering public purpose, to staying relevant and resilient. The plan – and importantly the process by which we arrive at it – is a route-map for change, for growing audiences, increasing reach, building deeper relationships and doing those things to the best of our abilities, resources and the combined effort of our colleagues and stakeholders” (The Audience Agency 2017: 2).

In this way, an audience development plan is considered a route map, open to variations on the road, of combined efforts to develop strong relationships with audiences. As any strategic plan, an audience development plan has a mission and goals, that could be social, educational, creative or financial. The plan has also strategies and specific actions that combine programming, marketing, communications and educational activities, which gives a sense of the collaboration that should be among the responsables of these areas to make an integrated plan. Finally, an audience development plan includes an evaluation stage where the progress is measure with a possibility of adapting approaches or even the goals themselves.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

After revising the overall theoretical framework, we have stated the following research questions:

1. How could be described the customer journey for performing arts organizations?
2. What are the more challenging aspects to develop during the elaboration of a communication plan?
3. What are the communication channels that may achieve better results for performing arts organizations?
4. Are there any differences between the physical audience (people that attend the shows) and the digital one (community in digital platforms or social media channels)?
5. What are the more important elements to consider for developing a strong communication strategy for performing arts organizations?
6. How are the new technologies changing the customer journey and the way to address audiences for performing arts organizations?
7. What type of relations emerge between the audience development programs and the communication strategy within a cultural organization?
8. What are the key elements to considering for an education program with good results?
9. What is the impact in the community of educational projects in performing arts?
10. Are the new media helping to achieve better the communication and organization goals for performing art organizations?

CHAPTER II: CONTEXT OF STUDY

THE STRATFORD FESTIVAL

CONTEXT OF STUDY

THE STRATFORD FESTIVAL

The Stratford Festival is the North America's largest classical repertory theatre company, located in Stratford, Ontario, Canada. During its 65 seasons, they have produced classics, contemporary dramas and musicals, with focus on the plays of William Shakespeare. The company has four venues in Stratford:



Festival Theatre, 1800 capacity



Studio Theatre, 260 capacity



Avon Theatre, 1083 capacity



Tom Patterson Theatre, 410 capacity

History of the theatre

In the early 1950's Tom Patterson, a journalist from Stratford has the idea of creating a festival theatre with Shakespeare as the main theme. This project was born as an attempt to bring new life to the city and improve the economy of the area. Patterson received advice from England and after being in contact with the famous British director Tyrone Guthrie, he convinced Guthrie to come to Stratford to evaluate the viability of the project and this last ended up becoming the first artistic director of the Stratford Festival.

The Festival was legally incorporated on 1952 and Guthrie recruited actors from across Canada to start with the first season of the Festival Theatre which opened on July of 1953.

Although, the journey to completion of the artistic project was not easy, the Stratford Festival has attracted some of the world's most celebrated actors and has being the starting point of success for many young actors.

Along the journey the other venues of the theatre were incorporated, starting with the Avon Theatre in 1956, then the Tom Patterson theatre in 1982 and more recently in 2002 was added the fourth venue: The Studio Theatre.

ORGANIZATION

The 2 main roles in the organization are the Artistic Director Antoni Cimolino and the Executive Director Anita Gaffney. During the season the staff in the Stratford Festival is around 1000. The organization is divided in the following departments²:

- Directors' office
- Advancement (membership and fundraising)
- Audience development
- Communications
- Corporate sponsorship

² <https://www.stratfordfestival.ca/AboutUs/Company/SeniorManagement>

- Administration
- Finance, facilities, & information Technology
- Marketing
- Publicity
- Production
- Design
- Properties
- Scenic art
- Scenic carpentry
- Stage crew
- Wardrobe
- Wardrobe maintenance
- Wigs & makeup

Audience Development or customer service is one of the biggest departments in the organization with 240 people in the last season of 2017. The box office staff, parking, reception, ushers among other teams are part of this large department. In Chapter IV it will be described in deep the functions of this department.

Within the Finance, facilities, & information Technology department is included the Information Technology and Application Development, which among their functions helps with the maintaining of the website and has participated in the development of the new website on 2015, that was produced entirely in-house. This team is exclusively dedicated to new technologies which evidences the innovative approach of the organization.

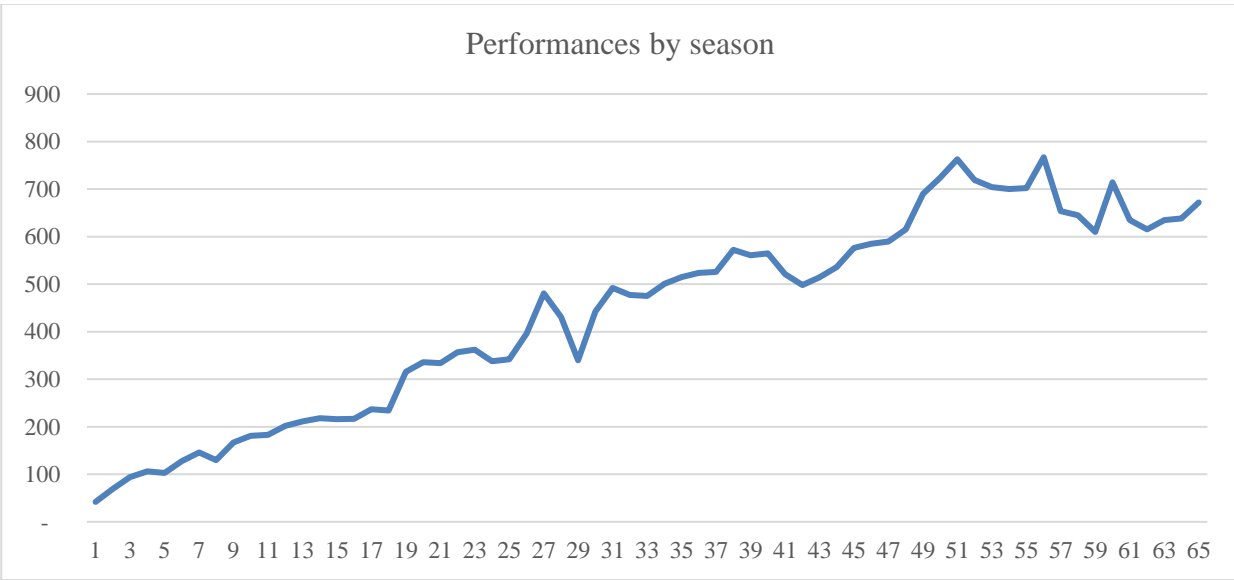
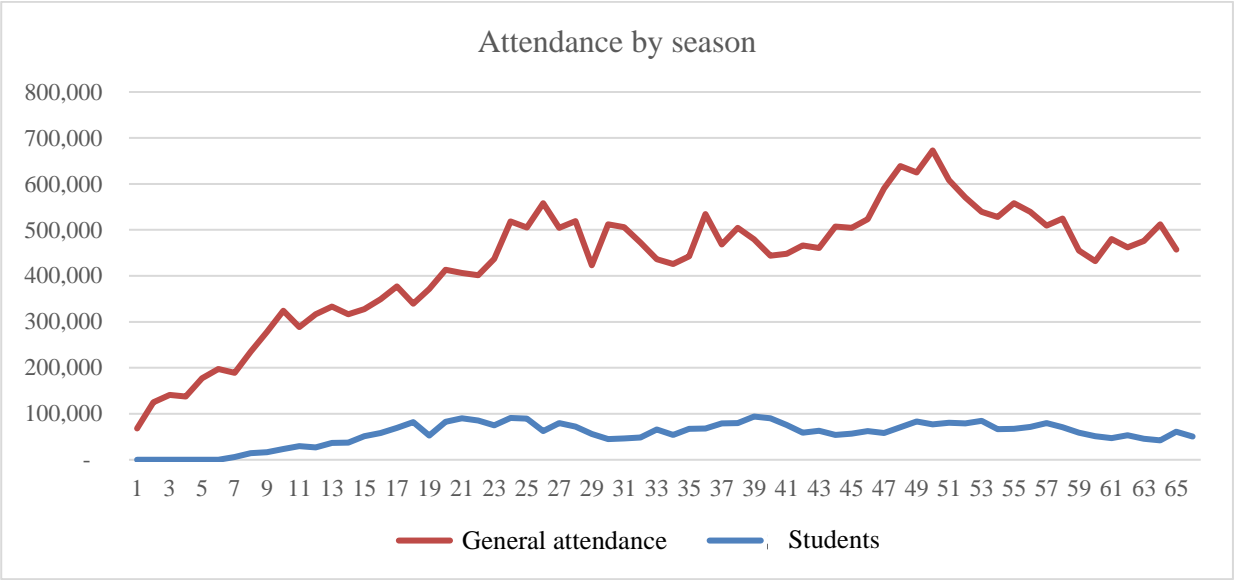
It is important to mention that the organization has a clear position to keep all the work in-house. They have people working in all the aspects for bringing a play to life such as set and customer designers, dressmakers, carpenters, builders, technics for sound and lights, etc.

The Stratford Festival in numbers

We have collected some quantitative information about the organization during the research visit to Stratford and from official sources online. This is a summary of the most relevant figures for this study

During season 2017

Shows	14
# of performances	672
Weeks for the season	30
Forum events	+200
People working in the organization during the theatre season (April- November)	+1,000
People working in the Marketing and digital Department	19
People working in the Audience Development Department	240
People working in the Education Department	5
Attendance	456,905
Students attendance	50,191
Revenues in 2016	\$62,400,000
Revenues from Memberships programs 2016	\$14,000,000
Revenues generated from the Audience Development Department	Around \$1,000,000
Total of attendance from the beginning of the theatre (1953) to the present	27,894,771



CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this research is mainly qualitative but includes also a quantitative part. Regarding the qualitative method, there were conducted interviews to some of the key roles in the management of the Stratford Festival, in order to understand the dynamic of the work and the marketing approach of the company. Since it is directly studied the aspects of the marketing and audience development programs of the theatre, the people interviewed were:

- Marketing Manager Digital: Aaron George
- Director of Audience Development: Sarah Hamza
- Director of Education: Lois Adamson
- Director of Marketing & Digital: Gursharan Flora

Each participant has been interviewed for around 60- 90 minutes about the main aspects of his/her department, the Stratford Festival's audience, communication strategies and digital media, the challenges and projects of the department, among other specific topics related to the research questions.

Regarding the quantitative method, it was collected relevant data about the theatre company such as audience demographic, and also some figures regarding the business plan, for instance: attendance, revenues, source of incomes and investment in marketing and digital media.

An important part of the first-hand information for this research was collected directly visiting the company in January- February 2018, as part of a research trip to Stratford- Canada. Once there, the data was collected and the interviews were developed. The interviews were conducted to each actor individually and were recorded and transcribing afterwards for doing the analysis of the material. The majority of the information was collected at the Festival Theatre, the main venue of the Stratford Festival, where are located the administrative offices, among other important areas such as the costume department, workshop and rehearsal halls and the largest stage of the theatre.

Being physically present in the theatre offices helped to conduct better the methodology of this research, collecting data from first hand and receiving directly the impressions and dynamics occurring within the 4 venues of the Stratford Festival. Thus, having the interviews directly conducted by the researcher in real time helped to reduce some bias within the research instrument that may happen with interviews through mail or Skype for instance. In this sense, the environment of the

interview was more comfortable for the participants and the research has been more flexible regarding the possibility of including more topics of discussion during the interviews, according to what was observed during the visit. In the same way, having the researcher in the location made easier to access to some sensitive data as the information related to the business plan of the organization. Sharing this type of private information to external parties is not a common practice for companies and having the researcher “in situ” certainly helped in this aspect.

The second-hand information for this study, the theoretical framework, was mainly gathered from online articles published by private and public renowned organizations such as The Arts Council of England, The Canada Council for the Arts or the American Marketing Association. Since information about digital media and marketing for the arts is relatively new, there was considered mainly information published by organizations in some of the countries where the arts field is very developed, thus it is available more literature about the topic, such as UK, Australia, Canada and the United States.

INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED

These are the guide of questions for the main materials to gather the first- hand information for this study: the interviews conducted to the Stratford Festival's directors. We have divided the questions of the interviews according the subjects proposed in the research questions.

Interview 1: Aaron George - Marketing Manager Digital Stratford Festival

About the department

For having a general view of the Stratford Festival, we made some general questions about the organization of every department.

- For how many time have you been working in the Stratford Festival?
- What are the main functions of the digital department?
- How many people is currently working in your department? What criteria is considered for the division of the teams?

The audience

These questions intend to know the main characteristics of the Stratford Festival audience and discover if there are any differences between the “offline” community and the online one.

- How would you describe the audience of the Stratford Festival?
- Are there any differences between the physical audience (people that attend the shows) and the digital one (community in digital platforms or social media channels)?

The customer journey

This question tries to approach the topic of the customer journey for performing arts organizations.

- How it could be described the Stratford's customer digital journey? When does it start/ finish?

Communication with audiences and digital media

These group of questions intent to understand the digital marketing strategy of the Stratford Festival and the impact of the digital media in the overall communication strategy of the theatre.

- How is the process for a Stratford's digital marketing campaign for a new season/ show?

- What are the communications channels the obtain better results within the digital marketing plan?
- Would you describe the digital marketing strategy for the Stratford Festival?
- What is the role of digital media within the marketing department? How would you consider it is changing the customer experience?
- Could you tell me some of the Digital Marketing campaigns with most outstanding results?
- How would you consider is changing the way to approach to the audience because of the new technologies?
- How would you consider the new media is helping to achieve better the communication and organization goals for performing art organizations?

Results

The results and the successful of a marketing campaign are 2 element that are directly related, in this sense we have some questions to guide this topic.

- How are measured the results of the digital marketing plan?
- How would you evaluate the results of the current digital marketing strategy?

Budget

Even though, the economic aspects of the organization are not one of the topic for this research, we wanted to have some general ideas about this aspect in order to understand the importance of the marketing department within the organization and the resources available for this department.

- What is approximately the percentage of the budget invested in the promotion of a new show/season regarding the digital media?

Best practices or recommendations

For having a better idea of what makes the Stratford Festival a successful case in the sector and for understanding better what good practices could be applied for other organizations, we asked all the departments about recommendations according to their areas.

- According to you experience, what are the key points for a successful digital marketing campaign for performing arts organizations?

Future and challenges

We are interested in knowing the future panorama for performing arts organizations and the biggest challenges in every of the departments study.

- What would you consider are the most challenging aspects of your department?
- What has been the most challenging situation faced in your department during your term of office?
- What would you consider are in general the challenges that should face the marketing department of performing arts organizations nowadays?
- What is your vision of the future for performing arts organizations?

Interview 2: Sarah Hamza- Director of Audience Development

About the department: General questions about the organization of the Audience Development Department

- For how many time have you been working in the company?
- What are the main functions of the Stratford's Festival Audience Development department?
- How many people is currently working in your department? How are divided the work teams?
- How it could be described the Audience Development strategy of the company?

The audience

- How would you describe the audience of the Stratford Festival?

The customer journey

- How it could be described the Stratford's customer journey?

Communication with audiences and digital media

- What would you consider is the theatre's competitive advantage more appreciated for the audience?
- How the theatre usually receives the feedback from the audience? Have there been any unexpected findings?
- According to your experience, what is the right way to communicate with the Stratford Festival's audience?
- How would you consider is changing the way to approach to the Stratford's audience because of the new technologies?

Relations among departments

One of the goals of this research is understand the relations between the audience development and the marketing one. This question tries to serve this goal.

- How are the dynamics of work between your department and the marketing one?

Impact of the theatre in the community

Even though it is difficult to know the exact impact of a cultural organization within a community, we would like to have some ideas regarding this aspect.

- What are the criteria/ tools to measure the impact of the audience development programs in the community?
- How have been developed the relations between the theatre and the Stratford's community?

Results

- How would you evaluate the results of the audience development strategy during the last years?

Budget

- What is approximately the percentage of the budget allocated for the audience development department?

Best practices or recommendations

- What are the key elements to considering for a successful audience development strategy?

Future and challenges

- What would you consider are the most challenging aspects of your department?
- What has been the most challenging situation faced in your department during your term of office?
- What would you consider are the challenges that should face the audience development departments of performing arts organizations nowadays?
- What are the future projects for the department? Is the theatre interested in some specific audience to address these projects?
- What is your vision of the future for performing arts organizations?

Interview 3: Lois Adamson- Director of Education Stratford Festival

About the department

- For how many time have you been working in the company?
- What are the main functions of the Stratford's Festival Education department?
- How many people is currently working in your department? How are divided the work teams?
- How it could be described the strategy of the Education department?
- What are the educational programs that are offered during the year?

The audience

- How would you describe the audience of the Stratford Festival?
- How would you describe the audience of the theatre educational programs?

The customer journey

- How it could be described the Stratford's customer journey?

Communication with audiences and the digital media

- How do you usually communicate the educational programs to your audiences? What are the communication channels that have better results?
- How would you consider is changing the way to approach to the Stratford audience because of the new technologies?

Relations among departments

- How are the dynamics of work between your department and the Audience development one?

Impact of the theatre in the community

- What would you consider is the biggest impact of the theatre's educational programs in the community?

Results

- How are measured the results of the education programs?
- How would you evaluate the results of the current education strategy of the theatre?

- Could you mention some of the educational programs with more outstanding results so far?

Budget

- What is the percentage of the budget invested in the Education department?

Best practices or recommendations

- What are the key elements to considering for an education program with good results?

Future and challenges

- What would you consider are the most challenging aspects of your department?
- What has been the most challenging situation faced in your department during your term of office?
- What would you consider are the challenges that should face the education departments of performing arts organizations nowadays?
- What is your vision of the future for performing arts organizations?

Interview 4: Gursharan Flora- Director of Marketing Stratford Festival

About the Stratford Festival Organization

It was not possible to interview the Executive Director of the Stratford Festival, but we could receive some general information about the overall organization of the company during the interview with Gursharan Flora. In this sense, the questions in this interview includes also some general ones regarding the management of the theatre.

- For how many time have you been working in the Stratford Festival?
- How many people is currently working in the organization
- How would you describe the dynamic of the work within the company?
- What are the more important values in the organization?
- How could it be described the business strategy for the Stratford Festival? What would you consider are the strengths of the organization?
- What are the more challenging aspects of managing an organization such the Stratford Festival? What would you consider are the more sensitive departments within the organization?

- What would you consider are the pillars for the sustainability and success of the Stratford Festival?

About the Marketing department

- How many people is currently working in the marketing department? What criteria is considered for the division of the teams?
- What are the main functions of the marketing department?

The audience

- How would you describe the audience of the Stratford Festival?
- Are there any differences between the physical audience (people that attend the shows) and the digital one (community in digital platforms or social media channels)?

The customer journey

- How it could be described the Stratford's customer journey? When does it start/ finish?

Communication with audiences

- Would you describe the marketing strategy for the Stratford Festival?
- How is the process for a Stratford's marketing campaign for a new season/ show?
- What are the communications channels the obtain better results within the marketing plan?

The digital media

- What is the role of new media in the company?
- What is the role of digital media within the marketing department? Would you consider it is changing the customer experience?
- How would you consider is changing the way to approach to the audience because of the new technologies?
- How would you consider the new media is helping to achieve better the communication and organization goals for performing art organizations?

Relations among departments

- How are the relations/ dynamics between the audience development department and the marketing one?

- What would you consider is the role of the audience development strategy within the marketing strategy of the theatre?

Results

- How are measured the results of the marketing plan?
- How would you evaluate the results of the current marketing strategy?

Budget

- How has been developed the sustainability of the theatre? What are the source of incomes where the theatre relies more? (ex. ticket sales, donations, public funds, etc.)
- Were the revenues of the last years positive for the sustainability of the theatre?
- What is approximately the percentage of the budget invested in marketing of the theatre?
- What is approximately the percentage of the budget invested in the promotion of a new show/season?

Best practices or recommendations

- Could you tell me some of the Marketing campaigns with most outstanding results?
- According to you experience, what are the key points for a successful marketing campaign for performing arts organizations?

Future and challenges

- What has been the most challenging situation faced for the theatre during the last years?
- What has been the most challenging situation faced in your department during your term of office?
- What would you consider are the most challenging aspects of your department?
- In the case it would be possible to receive a considerable fund for the theatre, which would be the department/ project where you first invest the money for?
- What are the future projects and challenges for the theatre?
- What would you consider are the challenges that should face performing arts organizations nowadays?
- What is your vision of the future for performing arts organizations?

CHAPTER IV: ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

ANALYSIS

In this chapter will be developed the analysis of the material collected after revising the theoretical framework, developing the research questions and applying the research instrument.

The content of the analysis is divided in 11 groups:

1. THE ORGANIZATION

The Stratford Festival is a large theatre company, they currently have 150 people as full-time staff, and during the theatre season (April to November) all the staff is around 1000 people.

As organization in the creative industries, the dynamic at the workplace is very creative and dynamic. It is not the same work every day, the artistic product is always changing with every season which leads a number of transformations and adaptations too. During our short visit to the organization, it gave the impression of being an exciting place to work, the environment is certainly very creative, the staff look very comfortable and happy of being part of the work team. The environment is also a sort of informal, they seem to have a very horizontal communication, so everybody may visit the offices of the other team and getting inspired by the work of the other colleague.

The values

Regarding the values of the organization, they clearly distinguish 2: creativity and respect for other people's work. Creativity is the motor of the organization, creativity for the work on stages and for the promotion of this work. They try to innovate in the artistic product and also in the marketing department, for instance in the creation of the digital media planning or in the website as the Director of Marketing states: "Stratford Festival doesn't do the usual, so if we do a brochure is the best ad that you would ever see. We did "Guys and Dolls" really acrobatic and energize, a different version of Guys and Dolls. So, one thing that we really value is taking something that people think they know and turning into something unique, so the creativity and the uniqueness is a really strong value". (G. Flora 2018)

The long respect for other people's work is also a strong value within the organization: "this is one of the only places where people really care about each other" (G. Flora 2018). They are interested in a collective work, the art and creativity as result of this that can inspire all the organization. They try to keep the position as leader in the sector and the largest repertory theatre in North America.

The Business strategy

The business strategy of the Stratford Festival is focus on the product and the enrichment of the customer experience all the time. They state that people come to the theatre because of the high quality of the work, so they want to continue to provide new and interesting work for them, supporting the arts and ensure to continue keeping the quality of the work. Their key strategy is ensuring that the product is central all the time, so they concern also about having a pricing model which is in line with the market, they try to not exclude any audience because of the price. In this sense, they constantly develop promotions, so they can have a successful pricing for everybody and no one may find difficult to come to the theatre.

As another important part of the strategy, they try also to enrich the experience of going to the theatre: in this sense, it is not just coming to see the play, is also participating in a former event, make a tour to the wardrobe and stages, have lunch in the theatre, attend a concert, etc.

The strengths

All the directors interviewed agree that the main strength of the company is the talent on the stages, they consider that the Stratford Festival has the best actors and actresses which is the key element for the success of the company. The marketing plan is also considered another strength for the organization, they are always trying to enrich the customer experience and innovate. For instance, they have developed the idea of providing a product in different format and now some of the plays are available on life stream or are projected on cinemas: <https://www.stratfordfestival.ca/WatchandExplore/OnDemand>. Finally, the company deems that the education programs of the theatre is also a strength, kids and schools are a key audience for them. If people have a great theatre experience when they are kids, it will feel natural for them to come later as adults.

The pillars for sustainability and success

In this aspect, it is mentioned again the art and work on the stages as the main pillar for the success and sustainability of the theatre. Therefore, it is crucial that they ensure to continue with an innovative work.

Other pillar for the theatre is fundraising and membership programs since they receive considerable revenues through this channel³. Thus, it is truly important for them to keep the loyalty of the patrons and create strategies for bringing new ones.

Finally, digital media projects are also considered a pillar for the Stratford Festival. The organization stands out for its innovation in this area, there are not many companies in the sector that take advantage of this media so well as them. They especially value their social media channels, because of the size of the community online and the interaction in these platforms.

2. MARKETING, AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

The interviews were conducted to the directors of 3 departments within the Stratford Festival: the education department, the marketing and digital department and the audience development department. Additionally, the Digital Marketing Manager was also interviewed, since he is in charge of the digital marketing team which is included in the marketing department.

In this sense, the following are the most important characteristics of every department:

Department	Size	Division of teams	Functions	Strategy
Marketing and digital	19 people	-Graphic design -Direct marketing -Digital and brand -Web and social (digital marketing)	Selling tickets and meet the budget through the revenue. Sell the season and all the elements involved in the process of bringing the season to life (media plan, promotional activities, etc.) Promote the Stratford Festival brand.	Is focus in the artistic product, the shows and the actors.

³ During 2016, the Stratford Festival received revenues from Memberships programs of about \$14 million:
<https://www.thestar.com/entertainment/stage/2017/03/25/stratford-festival-records-fourth-consecutive-surplus.html>

Digital Marketing	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Digital Marketing Manager -Digital Marketing coordinator 	<p>In charge of the social media channels and website (content creation and user experience).</p> <p>Buy advertising in internet</p>	<p>Guides by the overall marketing strategy. Specifically, making the easiest possible the process of buying a ticket online, user experience is involved in the process.</p>
Audience development (Customer service)	Between 200- 250 during the theatre's season (from April to November)	<p>Anyone that interact directly with the public is audience development team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The ushers - The parking team - Culinary staff - Bar staff - Event staff - The 2 shops of the theatre - The box office -The call center - The reception desk - Mail room 	All the functions that interact directly with the guests.	<p>Customer service perspective: Enhance our guests' experience by offering an environment of artistic escape.</p>
Education	5 + teachers (contracted by project)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Director - Associate director - Administrative manager - School booking and study guides - Post secondary and groups 	Supporting and fostering engagement in young people and the people to care about them, as their teachers and parents and the learning that can happen through theatre.	Engage more students making them and their teachers feel the theatre is the place for them, and something that they really want to develop in the curricular at their school.

Marketing and digital

Marketing is a considerable large team, a particular case for arts organizations. The 19 people that integrates the area is divided by teams, where that direct marketing and digital are the most important

ones, since the positive results they bring to the organization. The department has the same main functions than in any industry, as the selling of the product, just applying this context to the arts. As the director of Marketing states, the particular fact in this sector is that the product always changes, they have a new season and new plays every year. This makes different and exciting the work every day, but also challenging because is needed to change the positioning constantly and how to promote the product, so it is required to be creative all the time.

Their main function is very clear for them, is selling the much possible tickets in every year season. For doing this they focus in their particular product, the art of the stages: the shows and the actors. They state that every show is a brand, but the most important one is the Stratford Festival brand, so the biggest focus is on this and that all the communication should be consistent with the positioning of the company's brand.

Digital team

The Digital Marketing team is a fundamental part of the Marketing department. Since they are not for profit organization, they state that they cannot afford to have a biggest team. However, having 2 persons dedicated exclusively for digital marketing is still not so common in a sector as the arts, where resources are always scarce. The director oversees the website and improving the user experience, whereas the digital marketing coordinator is specifically in charge of the strategy and content for the social media channels. The theatre invests in advertising on internet, so one of the important functions of the digital team is also buying advertising on internet such as Google ads or Facebook ads.

The strategy on digital is guide by the overall digital marketing. In the digital team they mainly focus in making the easiest possible the process of buying tickets online, they state that is very important to show all the amazing work the theatre is doing, the plays and the actors, but it is crucial that at the end of visit to the website, the customer would be able to make a purchase. In this sense they are always improving the user experience of the website, make it very friendly and intuitive, thinking in the profile of their audience who perhaps may be not so familiar with advance technology.

Audience Development or customer service department

Perhaps this is the department with an organization more particular in the theatre. The literature available regarding arts organizations define similar the functions of an education department with an audience development one. However, it was a surprise to find that in the Stratford Festival, the audience development department has the functions of a customer service department. This is a

unique case because it is not common for a theatre to have a special department for customer service. Certainly, theatres have box office, bar or parking staff but the interesting fact here is how the company has organized these areas putting all of them together under the umbrella of customer service. It is very likely that this fact has been helping to develop a premium service and to differentiate the type of customer experience in The Stratford Festival.

The large team of around 240 (in season 2017) has different specific functions and includes all the roles that interact directly with the customer. However, all the department has a primarily role of customer service. The Director of the department emphasize that they are trying of not being divided by teams, a fact that in the past has brought some problems:

“We are trying to be not divided, we worked very divided when I first started working here and that was a problem for us, for the customer service perspective. When you come to the theatre and you have a question: “where is the washroom?”, you go and ask someone with the Stratford Festival badge on, if that person says “and just trying to do my job and will not talk to them”, that is a problem for us. So, this is actually very connected with the very different roles, so we say “everybody of us has a primary role of customer service” and we have different ways of serving that role, that may be selling a ticket, I may help you find your seat, I may help you park the car and getting a drink in the bar, but if you ask an usher to help to find your seat and then you ask: “I would like a glass of wine, how much it is?” I expect that usher is able to answer this question... so we are really working in being very aligned as audience development department and that supposed to teach for the individual department, trying make themselves an umbrella as much as possible... we are trying hard that customer service is across the department” (S. Hamza 2017).

The strategy of the department could be enounced as: “We are an escape and people come here to have fun” (S. Hamza 2017). They recognize that people are in holidays and since the location of the theatre, the public is making a special effort for going there, because they truly like the theatre. In this sense, the audience development department tries to improve this experience: “certainly enhancing, but never detracting from the arts of our stages” (S. Hamza 2017). It is clear the customer service perspective of the theatre, they deliver an unique product and they also intend to offer an unique experience when the audience is on site.

Education

The education team is composed for 5 members and the main function of the department is creating and supporting engagement with young people. As part of their strategy they want to make feel their audience that the theatre is a place for them, putting in evidence why the theatre is special and why they should include the theatre activities in the curricula at the school. For executing this strategy, they develop several education programs addressed to students all the way up to post-secondary level,

university and college students, including also teachers and academics. These are some of the main education programs in the Stratford festival:

For students of primary, secondary and post-secondary level:

- Enrich programming during student visits or field trips: workshops, talks, tours and prologues (workshops before the show).
- Summer camps or Shakespeare school
- University courses in the theatre
- Library lectures theory for academics

For teachers:

Support for teachers and study guides for professional development

For general public:

- Workshops and panel discussions when the public come to see the play.
- The Forum: series of programming to enhance, enrich and support the work on the stages. The activities for The Forum includes table talks and workshops.

The education department is mainly focus on young audiences but education in the organizations includes more actors. They also develop programs for the general public, their regular patrons. This group is very interested in learning:

“... in terms of the education department we really focus on schools, post-secondary and under but education here I think happens more broadly than that, our audiences are quite interested in education and learning and enrichment... Our audience is a very engaged audience... they really want to connect, they want to learn, they want to talk about the plays, they want to hear the opinion of an expert who created the piece or are doing research on it...” (L. Adamson 2018).

This audience love classical theatre and love the Stratford Festival, they make the trip to Stratford and when they are in the theatre they want to make the best of the experience, so they participate in talks, workshops, tours, they have lunch to talk about the play and so on, these types of activities are very welcome for the audience. So, it is evident that the Stratford Festival audience is a very engage one, in the following section we will talk deeply about the theatre’s audience.

3. THE AUDIENCE

The Stratford Festival knows very well their audience, they make this statement and it is corroborated in the way how all the director agrees with the characteristics of their patrons in very detailed way. The theatre's audience is very diverse and is changing, goes from school students to well-off people in their 50's onwards. However, the majority part of their audience are seniors that live in urban centers, specifically in the local area of Toronto, Kitchener and the US. They state that have the same traditional demographic for live theatre as similar organizations, because these type of activities suits more in an older stage of live when someone has more time and money to spend. More specifically, the Stratford Festival audience are theatre enthusiast, who love classical theatre and Shakespeare and are able to travel for seeing theatre.


An important group of their audience is composed of school students on field trip, since as part of the curricular activities, students in the area do a field trip that includes visiting the Niagara falls, the Parliament in Toronto and the Stratford Festival. This represents a big advantage for the company and they pointed out that the first experience with theatre for many people is in school trips, so they are trying to make this experience memorable.

As a result of a demographic study made by the company, these are the most important findings about the Stratford Festival Audience:

Gender 68% female - 32% male	Age Range 45 - 64 years old: 48% 25- 34: 16%
Vacation Habits 66% do cultural tours (exhibit, festivals, etc.)	Geography 50% come from Ontario
Occupation 47% are professional (doctor, lawyer, teacher, engineer)	Household Income 43% of audience has household income of \$100K+
Group size Average size of group coming to the theatre: 2.1	Entertainment Preferences 93% live performances 83% museums/galleries

Psychographics 77% travel to relax 76% Visit other countries to experience their culture	Education 48% hold a Graduate or Professional degree
Leisure activities 86% enjoy walking	Books read 75% enjoy reading Biographies & Histories

Considering all this information, if we would like to do an exercise of personification of the specific type of customer who represents the main audience of the theatre, this person would be:



Designed by Freepik.com

The Stratford Festival's principal patron

A woman in her 60's who lives in Toronto area, is a professional and has a well-off position. Her children are grown up, thus now she has more time for herself, enjoying activities such as travel and experience new cultures, walk, read and doing cultural activities as visiting museums or galleries. She is a theatre enthusiast and attends the Stratford Festival every year in company of her husband, doing a small trip for a weekend.

Taking in consideration all this information, we can observe that the Stratford Festival has develop a product perfect for their type of audience. For instance, the company has attracted people who likes to travel, in order to visit the theatre, they do a trip of at least 2 hours (if they come from Toronto, as the majority of the audience does), it makes sense that this public love to read histories & biographies, since Shakespeare plays are classicals.

The Stratford Festival has had a very loyal audience for their 65 seasons but they are aging, so one of the main objectives for the company now is bring younger audiences, as many organizations in the sector. Observing the demographics of the theatre, there is an interesting group in the range of 24 to 34 years old, who may fit in the characteristics of their main patrons and right now represents the 18% of the Stratford's audience. Many of these people may be successful young executives who do not have kids yet and have the resources of time and money required to become a patron.

Regarding the possibility of differences between the online audience (people that interact in their social media channels) and the “offline” one (people that attend the shows), they stated that there is not such differentiation in the theatre: “If you have one marketing approach, you cannot make that distinction” (G. Flora 2018)). In this sense they try to offer an integrated experience, in which what the audience experience online feel also equal offline. They do not want to generate confusion for their audiences, so when the public is in the theatre, they can feel that the interaction is always with the Stratford Festival.

In Facebook, the main social media channel of the theatre, the demographics of the community is very aligned with the physical one, this is related also to the fact that the digital media buy of the company is targeted to their specific type of audience, so accordingly the audience online is mainly the same as the traditional patrons. Certainly, not all the current customers are very digital friendly, but the theatre is very interested in having a digital approach. They constantly think in how it would be the future customer for the theatre, for example in 20 years from now, the patron of the theatre will be a person of 70 years old (who now is 50), and he will not be the same as a 70-year-old in 2018. This future 70-year-old will be more attracted to technologies, so they are starting to create strategies according to this.

4. THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY

It was not easy for the Stratford Festival directors to pointed out one specific customer journey that may follow strictly all the audiences. As it was seen in the first chapter regarding the customer journey, because of the boom of digital media and its multiple touch points, this journey is becoming more complex and perhaps difficult to delineate. However, the directors mention some of the most common paths that follow the Stratford Festival Audience during the customer journey. For describing more this, the model of customer journey for audiences attending art events of The Australia Council for the Arts, that we revised in the first chapter, may be very useful and could be applied for the Stratford Festival:

The Stratford Customer Journeys

	Students	Regular patrons (not so digital friendly)	Digital Users- The Digital Journey
Awareness	Many teachers know already about the Stratford Festival and have intention to include a visit to the theatre as part of the curricular activities for their students.	-Word of mouth: someone talks about the theatre maybe a teacher or friend -Billboards, streetcars, buses with advertising - If they have visited the theatre before (so the theatre has contact information): mail, telephone or email.	Display search campaign: Google search words/ Google display
Research	Teachers look for more information in the website.	They call to the theatre and talk with a representative.	Search on Google or social media channels where they can find ads of the theatre
Booking	Teachers book the trip for their students online or by phone.	By phone, then they receive the tickets by mail.	In the website
Preparation	Study guides in the website, communication through e-mail or telephone.	Constant communication through email or phone.	Constant communication through email
At the event	Apart from seeing the play, students usually participate in workshops, talks, tours, etc.	The organization try to make all things easy for them as the parking or finding a seat. They offer amenities (bar and restaurant) or other activities as talks about the play, the Forum, concerts, etc.	Displays screen with content in the lobby of the theatre, social content (Ex. snapshot filter)
After the event	Teachers share the information of the field trip with their teaching staff in school.	Email survey and invitations to make reviews.	Follow up campaigns, invitations to share reviews on social media or the website.

The digital customer journey is becoming crucial within the Stratford Festival. This is corroborated in the fact that 55% of the of the tickets are buying online⁴. Therefore, we can observe that most of

⁴ Information provided during the interview with Gursharam Flora, Director of Marketing of the Stratford Festival

the Stratford audience is digital friendly, perhaps not so heavy users of technologies, but they are familiar with the principal technologies

The Marketing team agrees that the digital journey is a very comprehensive one, has different paths and multiples touch points and basically depends of where the customer is. There is no one journey in the digital path: "... I think the first stone of our stage, is where the customer, and this guides the customer journey, so whether is awareness, purchase and we try to have a touch point in each step of that life cycle." (A. George 2018)

The organization mainly develops display search campaigns on Google to create awareness at the beginning of the customer journey. Once the customer is in the website, the journey could be more customized, maybe this person checks information about one particular show, so the next time when the customer is in other website, he will see an ad of the show, inviting to buy a ticket. The theatre uses targeted advertising for doing this. Apart from buying, other actions are also proposed in these ads, as create an account in the website, so the company can have more information about the customer and customize more the message according.

Once the customer is on the theatre the day of the play, they proposed some activities to continue the digital journey. For instance, they have an area in the Theatre's lobby where the public can take pictures and then share on social media. They try to improve constantly the overall customer experience, so they can make the theatre memorable.

At the end of the journey, the Stratford Festival invites the attendants through email to share opinions about the play and post about it.

Regarding the customer journey that students may follow, the theatre does not approach directly to this public, in this journey the teachers play a main role of connectors. The teacher is in charge of doing the booking of the trip for the students and once in the theatre, the Stratford Festival is in charge of create the engagement through its number of activities. If the experience is satisfactory, the teacher will share information in the school and more groups of students will come.

What is fundamental in this journey is that for many people the first contact with the theatre is on school trip, so if the experience is positive is more probable that this person come back in a later stage of life. The Audience Development director mentions an interesting journey for customers during their different stage of life. She states that after this first school trip, the public do not usually reconnect with this audience after many years, unless they become keen of theatre, so is around their

20's or in middle age when people has discovered whether they love theatre and decide to come back. Then they lose contact with this audience again for many years when they first have children, since the time is scarce in this stage of life. This audience come back after many years, when their kids are older and they have again time available to enjoy attending activities such going to the theatre.

For the offline or traditional customer journey, this was more clear to delineate, but still there is no just one journey that all customers strictly follow. At the beginning the journey is usually word of mouth which creates awareness in the audience, the Stratford Festival has 65 years and is very famous in Canada and the world over. But the company does not take this fact for granted and they also develop a strong campaign for every season, they create many advertising pieces as billboards and panels that are located in the areas where the majority of the audience is (ex. Toronto): "... we're just trying to become a part of your sort of environment, so you think about us in the back of your mind and then you may hear from someone of the theatre, "this fantastic production, you have to come to Stratford and see this play..." (S. Hamza 2018).

This audience usually buy the tickets by phone, they talk with a representative of the theatre about the type of plays they like, their favorite actors or shows, etc. Between the booking of the ticket and attending the event, in the preparation phase, there are many touch points, the theatre communicates constantly during the preparation phase by phone or email, so the customers can make the best of the experience. For instance, they send an e-mail saying thank you for the buying, they send details about the parking, they recommend the events during the day of the visit (ex. talks, workshops), they present the amenities in the bar and it is even possible to buy food or beverages in advance, the customer pays online, and he/she can avoid to do long lines in the bar. The organization wants to make the easiest possible the journey for the customer in all the phases. After attending the event, the customer will receive survey and an invitation to do a review. Once the customer has attended one of the performance the theatre has information contact of this person, so the next time he/ she will receive information of the new season by mail, and some days after a call of the theatre to invite him/ her to visit the theatre again.

The Stratford Festival has designed a seamless customer experience, they have a clear channel integration and they do not limit their communication to just digital media or offline media. During the customer journey, the organization has multiple touch points, maybe this fact is what has allowed the theatre to deliver a more memorable and stronger customer experience, which as result create loyalty with the current patrons.

They accomplish the promise of the artistic product and want to offer something else, trying to go beyond the expectations of the audience: “The customer journey is one of our constant communication and reinforcing what the expectation is and providing other options as well, so when they get here, they feel like they’re going to have a full experience” (G. Flora 2018).

5. COMMUNICATION WITH AUDIENCES

The Stratford Festival’s competitive advantage

The competitive advantage of the organization is clearly the location. Stratford is a charming small theatre city, with a beautiful nature scene where it is possible to walk all the downtown in around 30 minutes. Most of the hotels, restaurants and shops in the area are theatre based, so one may find Shakespeare items to buy for instance. This is certainly a different experience to people that come from big cities as Toronto or Detroit, where many of the public lives. They really appreciate the “small town experience”, and this allows the company to offer a very immersive experience with theatre, once the public make the commitment to make the trip to Stratford. People do not come to the city by work or tourism, 93% ⁵ of the visitors go there specifically because of the theatre, they make a conscious decision to do the trip which make them very receptive to the arts. Once there, people usually stay for few nights, which allows to participate in the many activities proposed by theatre. Each season they have around 200 former events as panel talks, workshops, concerts etc.

This is the main advantage of the company when it works well but represents also a challenge because as starting point they need to convince people to go to Stratford, to commit to participate in the experience, which is not always easy.

Best communication channels

The Stratford Festival do most of the forms of advertising: they advertise on newspapers and billboards, they have used TV ads (but not anymore), they project trailers of the new seasons on cinemas, they do direct marketing as mail and telemarketing and currently they are putting a special emphasis on digital media channels.

⁵ Conference Board of Canada Economic Impact Study

In an omnichannel environment like this, the Director of Marketing states that it is difficult to know what are the communication channels that have better results. They develop a big marketing campaign where all the channels are integrated, and in this sense, it would be difficult to consider the efficiency of just one of them, direct marketing sometimes leads digital actions and it would be difficult to know if a call was more effective than a display ad, for instance. They are currently developing analytics for measure the efficiency of their communication channels but so far, they do not have data that corroborates which channel is the better for the audience.

However, the directors have the impression that Social Media channels are becoming the best way to communicate with their audiences nowadays. Even though, the organization has a senior audience and one may think this public is not so digital, they state that women over 50s are an important group on Facebook, so targeting the message for the audience in this platform is very important.

Together with Social Media channels they also consider that direct marketing is one of the most effective channels for the audience. Currently the effectiveness of this channel is decreasing, but telemarketing and mail used to be a major way to reach the audience. Theatre representatives used to maintain long conversation with the public by phone, talking about the many aspects of the theatre, but now this channel is decreasing popularity because people are not answering the phone so often than in the past.

Process of a communication campaign

The Stratford Festival develops a communication campaign for each new season. Every year they launch a new message and creative concept for the new season that serves an umbrella for every show. The strategy goes around the idea of how to bring the new season to life and the media plan and promotional activities for doing this.

Specifically, the main stages for creating a new season campaign follow this path: Everything starts when the artistic Director, Antoni Cimolino sets up the new season, deciding what is going to be on stages. Once the decision is made, the key heads of the marketing department have a meeting to start to think how to bring the season to life, how to do the positioning of the shows and the images they will use for that. This is follow by a photoshoot of images for the seasons. In this process they work with an advertising agency called “The Garden” <http://thegardencollective.com/>. They work together in the positioning of the shows, content and the creative concept for the season. The agency helps to

create the images, write the copy and develop the visual assets for starting the promotion of the new season. The following step is the creation of the media plan that includes all the main channels they use as printing or digital media. This takes effect on January- February, when they start to promote the show. After this, they are always working in how to promote the shows, they have meetings every week for working in the plan for the next week, they develop many tactical work during all the time of the season.

6. Digital Media

Role of new media and impact in the customer experience

Driving awareness to the brand and create more engagement with audiences are the main roles of digital media for the organization. As we have revised in the theoretical framework, the Stratford Festival also sees the benefits of digital media in the way how now is easier for customers to being heard and share opinions, it is 2-way communication which is certainly changing the customer experience.

Thanks to the new media tools it is also easier for them to address their specific audience and to build new one. They really value the flexibility that allows new media, so it is possible to adjust the message as it goes, and all of this is really changing the way to market their artistic product.

How is changing the approach to audiences because of the Digital Media?

The organization has seen changes in the approach to audiences in the way in how to engage people. They can be more personal in the message in the message and being more proactive and immediate in doing response and conversations with patrons. They have available now more diverse and rich formats to tell richer stories. Theatre is a very visual product, so pictures and videos are the perfect format for that. However, they state that there is certainly a change in how to approach audiences, but the change is more in form than in content: “It hasn’t really changed what we say but it has change how we speak to them” (G. Flora 2018).

Is the new media helping to achieve better the communication and organization goals?

The Director agrees that New Media is helping to achieve the communication and organization goals. They see especial contribution in how they can meet their target and attract new audiences which at the end influences in the revenue. Moreover, digital media is also helping them in the building of the Stratford Festival brand and in the overall promotion, providing a richer experience through the different ways to showcase their work and engage the audience

7. RELATIONS AMONG DEPARTMENTS

The Education, Marketing and Audience Development Department work very close together in continuous collaboration. They mainly work in discovering what makes the theatre special and relevant for their audiences, looking for opportunities to improve the experience in the theatre, how to make the theatre more appealing and fun for young audiences, so they can feel they belong to that place. The Education Department relies in the expertise of the Marketing Department to attract audiences to the theatre and relies too in the expertise of the Audience Development department to offer an excellent customer service.

The marketing and audience development department have 2 integrated and distinctive roles: the marketing team is in charge of creating strategies for attracting and bringing audiences to the theatre. Once the public is there, the audience development department is in charge of managing the customer experience, making sure that the overall communication strategy is consistent. The audience development team has the main role of building relationships, managing the customer experience and executing the marketing strategy, communicating the mood of the season or the promotions to the audience, for instance. Both teams work in the marketing plan and in the patrons communication plan, they need to be always in the same page so the communication channels and what customers finds on site feel the same, so the overall customer experience is consistent.

8. IMPACT IN THE COMMUNITY

Defining the impact of a cultural organization within a community is always difficult task. The Stratford Festival does not have yet clear measures regarding the topic, but they do see the impact of their educational programs in the increasing engagement with teachers and students. Thanks to the educational programs, the local community can have access to highly skilled teaching artists, who

work in the local schools. They specially have seen the impact of the program “The Forum” in the community, it is observed a real exchange between the audiences and the work of the artists.

At the beginning of their activities, 65 years ago the Stratford Festival developed strong relations with their community. By that time, the theatre was not such a big company as in the present and the community was more involved in the project, they adapted their homes to create small hotels or restaurants and welcomed the artists and the public. They really embraced the Festival, but as the theatre started to grow up, big hotels and restaurants started to come and this close relationship with the community was affected. Certainly, the community sees the benefits of the theatre, these are some facts regarding the impact in just economic terms:

- 90% of visitors to Stratford come for the Festival
- 91% of visitors eat out in a restaurant when visiting Stratford
- Conference Board of Canada Economic Impact Study found that for every ticket purchased to the Festival \$280 was spent in the local economy

Even though the clear positive impact of the theatre in the community, both parts need to work together in figuring out their roles. The theatre is in charge of selling its artistic product and the community is in charge of selling everything else that happens in Stratford, the music festivals, the restaurants, shops, so they both can offer a great experience to visitors and attract more people to the city, which is at the end the common goal for both parts. It has been difficult to match completely the needs of the Festival and the needs of the community, so for the future they are both working in adapting to the common needs as part of the same community.

9. MEASURES OF RESULTS IN THE DEPARTMENTS

The organization is in a period of changes, it was difficult for all directors to talk about the results or specific tools of measure

Audience Development

The Audience Development Department has changed its strategy in the last years, so now they are working in developing tools to measure the results of all these changes. From a general point of view, there are some facts that indicate the results are positive so far. For instance, the last year the organization had a reduce in tickets sales, but at the same time they had an increase in sales for food and beverages, so less people were coming but they were spending more, which may indicate that

they are happy with the service. When the department sees increase in sales in the areas they manage as the restaurant or shops, they assume they are doing a good job and that the overall department is having good results.

Currently, the department is working in developing different type of tools to measure the customer service. One of these tools is the customer service reports which are intern tools to receive the feedback of the patrons and it is recorded by the audience development staff. These online tools help to record and follow up actions regarding the customer service. For example, if someone complaints about receiving a cold sandwich in the cafeteria and at the end this customer receives a 10\$ coupon to spend in the bar, all the actions between the complaint and the solution will be recording and monitoring. All these actions are summarized in a monthly report and send to individual departments, so all the organization can be informed about it and everybody can have a big picture of what is working or not. However, most of the time, these reports are just complaints, because it is not usual that people reach the staff for good comments, it is mainly the opposite case. So now the department is working to create measure tools that can offer a broader picture of the success and challenges of the service.

The organization has seen the importance of offering a high quality of customer service, they do not currently ask things related with the service they provide for example the wine or the food, the conversations with customer is mainly about the artistic product, but all the aspects around it are also equal important. They understand that having a negative service will affect deeply the business: “so in Stratford right now we would like to have more qualitative evaluations from our customers, to reach feedback what’s great what’s not, talk more about our service standards ... do you like it or not, so how do we serve you better?...we have to be excellent in everything we do, not just in our stages because we’re so far away, and we have to be that much better than everyone else” (S. Hamza 2018).

Education

The Education Department has a clear vision of the way to measure the results of their strategy and educations programs. Some of the practical aspects they see to define the success of a program is if the students are coming back, if they have intention of doing the program again. Moreover, they are always evaluating if the educational programs are accessible and affordable for all audiences, and they can see this aspect in the way more people is coming and coming back for doing the programs. They are always looking for ways to do programs financially sustainable for the theatre.

However, the most important aspect they are looking to evaluate in the department is the quality of the audience experience, when they are in the theatre. For doing this, they have different measures, according to the program, they usually do surveys and qualitative work to know what students are learning and how they feel in the theatre. It is also important to connect all the work they are doing, the work in the stages, in the educational programs, the work with teaching artists and how is all connected with the experience of the audience seeing a show: “One thing that we’re always looking at in the education department is how the work we’re doing is connecting to the work on our stages. So, for example, how is the program we’re doing with students in Toronto affecting the students’ experiences when they’re here? How are we bridging the work that they do with the teaching artist in their classroom with their experience as an audience member seeing the show?” (L. Adamson 2018).

About the results of the department, it is hard for them to measure quickly the work they are doing in the education programs, they would need to measure the results over a long period of time. Additionally, it is particularly difficult to talk about the results in the department because, the team has recently changed of Director, so the vision and strategy is changing right now.

Marketing and digital

The key indicator in the marketing and digital department is revenue and the revenues they can obtain from a specific campaign. In this sense, all the KPI’s are focus in this indicator, such as ticket sales or the new members they can add to the membership programs. The last year the theatre has an important decrease in attendance, so currently the marketing department is making key changes in the overall strategy to face these challenges. They do not have results so far of these initiatives, but they will have it the end of the season.

Regarding the digital area, the theatre has a very defined performance measures and they are not always focus on revenues, the key goals depend of the campaign and the channels. To mention some of the performance indicators, in social they usually do user generated content campaigns, so in this case they see the reach of the campaign, impressions and interactions as comments, likes and shares. In the website, they usually measure how much time people spend in specific web pages, in which pages they block and the general experience in the platform. About the specific tools to measure these indicators, they collect some of the best platforms for them as Google Analytics that serves as map of revenue and user experience and Facebook analytics dashboards.

In digital media, they are very positive about the results of the current strategy, they have seen growth as organization and return of investment in digital channels. They have seen many good results thanks

to social media channels, specially Facebook: “Facebook, this has for the last year one of the big revenue platform for us and it helps us to reach audiences and not just looking an engagement messaging but also marketing messaging and advertise to them.” (A. George 2018)

10. BUDGET

Sources of income, budget and revenues

The Stratford Festival generates their own resources of incomes, they do not rely strongly in public or private funds as many organizations in the sector. Their productions are very expensive, for every season they have around 12 shows, many of them running at the same time, and they just have 7 months, the duration of the season, to generate all the revenues. It is a challenging panorama, but they have created a strong product and business strategy which have allowed them to be 65 years in the sector in a continuous growing of the company.

Around 50% of the revenues of the theatre are generated from ticket sales. The other half is a combination of membership programs or fundraising and a small portion of public funding from the government. They have many programs to make donations to the theatre, but the most popular are the memberships. By paying an annual fee, patrons can become members of the theatre and can get several benefits such as free tickets, invitations to exclusive events, souvenirs or priority booking for tickets with 2 months ahead of the general public. The annual fee for membership varies from \$75 to \$1499, and the number of benefits increase according the range. It is very outstanding here the large number of members of the different type of programs to make donations to the theatre, which allows the sustainability of the organization and also demonstrates the strong commitment and engage of the community with the theatre.

That revenues are a challenging aspect for the theatre, as for many not for profit organizations. They had 3 years of growth in revenues from 2014 to 2016 and then in 2017 they had a very deep decline of 10%. However, 2017 it is not considered a bad year, they still did better than other seasons, but not so good as the year before. They do not know the exactly reasons for this decline, these reasons could be related to the product or more to environmental factors as people preferring other outside activities or digital entertainment. Therefore, this year they are implementing new strategies such as the selling of tickets in advance. One indicator of success at the beginning of the season, is the high attendance during the first months because of the word of mouth that this create which will help for good sales during the whole season.

Regarding the specific budget of every department, since they are a not for profit organization, they do not have a traditional business model and is difficult to see the division of the budget according the different departments. Even though there are some clear figures as in the case of the Education Department, where the budget for the department is about 1.5% of the overall operating budget. The Marketing and digital budget is about 10% of the revenue budget, and in the case of the Audience Development department, they generate a profit of 1 million dollars to the organization.

11. BEST PRACTICES

We have asked the directors about the key elements for a good strategy according their different departments and some of the best examples of programs or campaigns with better results within the organization.

Key elements for a strong customer service strategy

The audience development department sees as fundamental having the customer in the center of the strategy, being customer oriented rather than task oriented. They have seen the problems of having a task-oriented team in the past and how the customer experience could be distorted because of this. They also consider a key element in the strategy being very adapted to various situations, since they deal with customers all the time in the theatre, they have experienced that there is never 100% right way to handle something, depends of the particular situation. But the similar factor in every situation is that they try to put always the patron's need first: "The customer service strategy is making sure we adapt to the patrons needs that are first than our needs, is really their needs first and how you can accommodate them". (S. Hamza 2018)

Key elements for a strong education programs

As we have seen, the Stratford Festival offers a variety of Education programs, very different among each other, in this sense the key elements for success strongly depends of the type of program. To have a better understand of what makes an education program with good results, we will briefly mention one of the most successful education program in the organization: The Shakespeare School. This program is a summer camp for theatre learning and practice, where students have also the opportunity to see Stratford Festival performances and meet the actors and culminates with a

presentation for family and friends. For considering this program a success, the theatre evaluates several factors:

“... what makes (The Shakespeare school) a good program, the things we need to consider here are the experiences of the students coming, and what makes that a good experience for them. So, we need to consider who can afford to be here and whether we are appealing to a diverse audience, or it is often the same people coming back? We also need to think about what the teaching artists are providing - what kind of pedagogy it is forming their experience, how are they being taught, how are their voices being heard, how are they developing their skills within that, how are they being challenged? And then, how are we, as the Stratford Festival, as the education team, supporting the teaching artists? What are the resources that we are offering, what training? How can we make sure that they are able to be the best teachers they can be? Those are things we consider. With our summer programs, the students come together for one, two or three weeks and there is a presentation of a piece at the end. So, one thing that we’re always considering is the piece itself in relation to the process of building it. **What matters most to me is if the kids have fun, learn and feel engaged in the process of building a piece. It matters less to me how good that piece is. The process is the focus. Often, if you have a good process, you have a strong piece.** Then, of course we assess our resources. What time, money, and human resources are required to create a program and what kinds of systems and tools are we using o make sure that we are able to continue to offer this kind of programming in the future?” (L. Adamson 2018).

As we can see what is most important in education programs is the experience of the kids during the process, how they engage and learn and also how the theatre manage their resources to offer good quality of programs accessible for different type of audiences.

Key elements for a successful marketing strategy

The Marketing and Digital department has a clear vision of the key elements for a successful strategy. They state that these elements are not different as the ones for any organization or brand. There is a basic structure that is important to follow in any business and also applies for a theatre, it is fundamental to know the target and elaborate a message according:

“I think all is about targeting, messaging, communication and follow. I think that is a structure that you can apply to a theatre, so we know our Shakespeare buyers, we know how they like to be spoken to, why our Shakespeare buyers want to buy one extra ticket, I can put together communication for them, we know our customers very well, so I think is always the same, who you are speaking to, why you are speaking to them, what you are going to say, that is kind of structure we have taken and we look for in our campaigns” (G. Flora 2018).

In the Digital area they also follow the same path, with a special focus in defining very well the goal for every campaign as engagement, revenue generation or attracting new audiences. They consider

fundamental tracking analytics and reports, so it is possible to optimize the campaign and make improvements. Since the easy access to data is one of the biggest benefit of digital media, they really take advantage of this for being more proactive.

Regarding the best marketing and digital campaigns, some of the most successful have been the launching of the new season for members, the reviews campaign and the digital campaign “which character are you?”. The first campaign was a success because of the deep impact in revenues, they usually launch the season first for the members of the theatre, the ones that make an annual donation to the organization. This exclusive group have the chance to book tickets first than the general public and they usually buy the best and more expensive tickets, so this campaign had a high effect in revenues. The review campaign occurs when the season has already started, and the theatre starts to receive reviews from different media. Last year they have a remarkable review campaign for the show “Guys and dolls”, they receive good reviews from different sources, one of them was the New York Times, which strongly help to increase the sales for this show and they even extend the number of presentation for this show. The review campaigns work as re-launch of the season, so people have a new excuse to talk again about the shows and the theatre can use these reviews to promote more the shows. Finally, the digital campaign “Which character are you?” during the season 2016 was also a success because of its good overall results. This was an user generated content type of campaign which seems to work very well for them on social media. It was a quiz of 5 questions on Facebook to know which character of the play the user could be. It was an easy, quick and very inductive campaign, taking in consideration the target that may not be so digital friendly and like simple actions. The campaign has a reach of 200 000 people and around \$8000 in direct revenues from the campaign with just a small investment of around \$1000. This is an example of campaigns that work for the theatre on social media. Audiences like to interact, share results and create their own stories from some initial content that the Stratford Festival can provide to encourage the engagement.

12. FUTURE AND CHALLENGES

Challenges for the organization

The overall major challenge that is currently facing the Stratford Festival is a decline in attendance. This factor is not different than in other cultural organizations, they state that many of their counterparts in ballet or opera houses in Canada have the same problem. Last year they have a decrease in attendance of 18% which as result brought a 10% of decline in revenues. The theatre is

always struggling to maintain their revenues per year by increasing all type of initiatives that may be welcoming for the public, for instance increasing former events or offering a new product as the Stratford Festival Video on Demand.

How to attract younger and more diverse audiences is the big challenge for the Stratford Festival, as for many performing arts organizations nowadays. In the new digital era, the organization understands that there are more entertainments available for digital users, so platforms as Netflix also represents a competition for arts organizations. They are currently working in getting funds for developing a study of the digital space, they would like to know what changes they could do in the product to make it more exciting, so digital users may leave their space to come to the theatre. They would like to younger audiences experience what is like to come to the theatre and they believe is possible, making their work more accessible and more interesting for a demographically and diverse audience

We asked them what would be the first project or area in which they would invest money, in the case they would receive a considerable fund. They have a very clear answer to that: capital for the new theatre and investment in the acting company or the art on the stages. This answer gives us some indications of what is the more important and urgent aspect within the organization. There is a decline in attendance that may not be related to the product, but is because of the artistic product that people come there. They understand people come to the theatre for the communal experience of watching a play and they are constantly looking for an excellence in the product they provide. Thus, if possible they would invest more money to improve this product, whether attracting better actors, directors or having a new stage, in this last the organization is currently working on: the renewal of the Tom Patterson Theatre Centre Project.

Regarding the challenges for the different departments within the organization, money and scarce resources are similar factors for all of them, something common for many cultural organizations. In marketing and digital, they mention the fact of having a short period of time for making revenues and the location of the theatre are challenging situations. They need to have everything done, in a short period of time and with the available resources. Moreover, commit people to go to the Stratford Festival is challenging, as we have revised in the sections before. People really need to love the theatre for make the commitment of doing a trip to the Festival. Additionally, in the marketing team they also see the digital media as a challenge for every cultural organization because of its constant change and evolve. As a result of this, people's behaviours and use of digital media also change, so they need

to learn and be informed constantly. For digital marketing there is not a standard template that works for every organization, so a constant learning is required.

In the Education Department, they also see the scarce resources as a challenge because they need to enrich the impact of education programs with less resources. Inevitably they need to choose which programs to do and in which audiences to focus because of the limit resources, even though they want to engage with all different type of audiences. They consider all performing arts organizations are having challenges regarding the teacher training and the access for students to field trips. Teachers are not being trained to teach the arts and they need to look ways for support teacher education. Moreover, it is getting more expensive for students to leave the school to go to museums, gallery or theatre and this is a big challenge for the sector.

Finally, in the Audience Development or Customer Service Department they consider one of the biggest challenge manage a large group of people and dealing with people. The staff deals every day with all different type of people and situations that are not always easy, so make the 250 people in the staff believe in customer service could be difficult. The work team really needs to be passionate about the theatre and the work, so that can be transmitted in the relations with customers. This should be a common issue for many organizations that offer a service to customers, but especially for the ones with focus in customer experience.

Projects

The building of the new Tom Patterson Theatre is the current biggest project for the theatre. They used to have operations in this venue in the past but because of its current old and fragile conditions, they are now planning to do a completely reconstruction to convert this space in a magnificent venue for the theatre.

Apart from this, another project for the theatre is impulse the revenues in the online shop. They sell many classical theatre and Shakespeare items in this platform, products that could be appealing for people that not necessarily have visited the theatre before, they are interested also in international audiences for this platform. If this project work, the revenues could go directly to improve the artistic work or for a training program for staff in the audience development department. Finally, one of the most important projects for the theatre is developing a premium offer in all the aspects of the

organization, as a premium theatre. They want to reflect the high quality of the work on stages in the offer in the bar or the restaurant.

The future for performing arts organizations

The Stratford Festival is very positive about the future for performing arts organizations and they are enthusiastic about the possibilities of new technologies for the sector:

“In the Stratford Festival, there is a positive view of technologies because it is helping us to create new relationships with customers and also in finding new customers who previously may not have known about the Stratford festival or may not have an experience here. This allows an opportunity to open a new world to them, and also allows an opportunity to use technology and knowledge... In summary increase audience” (A. George 2018).

Performing arts organizations are currently incorporating digital technologies into marketing, production on stages, or in consumer experience- on site. They need to adapt, change and learn how to use these tools specially for increasing audiences and improve the customer experience which would be some of the most valuable use of technologies for the sector. As we can see, technology is a major topic in the performing arts organizations and goes beyond the marketing department. However, the Stratford Festival states that organizations need to do a balance in the use of technologies, they should innovate without taking into consideration the current audiences:

“... we need to think about different ways of approaching technology into production while not alienating our product for our audience, because our current audience still expect the traditional doing of theatre, they want everyone quiet in the theatre when they go in, future audience probably will not want that (...) it is a bit struggle for the arts in general and not just ballet, opera or life theatre, all of them have these problems. How a kid of nowadays would deal with the theatre environment in the future? So, I think it is an interesting journey, how we keep us relevant?” (S. Hamza 2018).

In such challenging industry, in constant change, where cultural organizations are pushing boundaries in the arts, there is also a panorama full of opportunities. Taking this scenery into consideration is relevant for organizations to wonder how an artform would look like in the future, which probably dramatically change from now. This is one of the biggest challenges for the future that the Stratford Festival is taking into consideration, and the whole sector should be also prepared for.

13. ANALYSIS OF DIGITAL CHANNELS

The Stratford Festival is very active on Social Media. After revising their social media channels, it is evident the well manage of these platforms and the strong digital strategy behind. These are the current digital platforms of the organization:

❖ **The Stratford Festival Official Website: <https://www.stratfordfestival.ca/>**



This is the principal digital platform of the organization. All the information that a customer would need is there, from the information about the shows to how to organize the trip to Stratford and the history of the theatre.

The information is presented from a customer perspective, the question “What would you like to do today” is implied as soon as we enter in the website, and the answers are presented very clearly in the different sections of the platform: see what’s on in the theatre, watch, visit, learn, support or know more about the Stratford Festival. The website is very intuitive and user friendly, all the information is well organized and easy to find. It is evident the constant work in the user experience of the platform since its launch in 2015, as the Digital Marketing Manager mentioned in the interview. While navigating the website, it is clear also one of the biggest function of the website: the selling of tickets. The “buy tickets” or call to action button is very easy to find from entering to the website and the whole process of booking a ticket is also very simple.

❖ Facebook (+142k followers)



This is the main social media channel for the organization, as it was mentioned in the sections before, this is one of the channels where the organization has seen better results. They have a large and very active community of more than 142,000 followers.

The page of the organization is very lively and modern, they post very esthetic videos and pictures with different content about the theatre, the new season and shows, the actors, the process of producing a theatre play, promotions, but not just this. Additionally, they also publish conjuncture content that may be relevant for the community, for instance, greetings to the audience in special days as Christmas or Women's day or news about Ontario's culture panorama. They publish different content around 5 times per week and there is no post that is not well receive for the community, usually the content receives many likes, comments and shares. About this last action, it is outstanding the number of shares that receives a publication of the organization on Facebook, as it is well known in digital marketing a "share" is even better than a like or a comment, because makes the content more viral.

They are very innovative in this channel making different initiatives to keep engage the audience. At the beginning of the year the theatre is preparing the new season, so there are no shows presenting at that moment. So even though, one may say that there is not much content to publish on Social Media during that period of time, since there are no shows presenting yet, the Facebook page is very active in that period with variety of content related to the preparation of the shows. For instance, they do live transmissions from the prop shop with details of the production of the plays or publications with pictures of the draft design of the customs for the new season. They know how to create stories with

every detail of a play and how to engage the community, so people may feel part of the creative process for the shows.





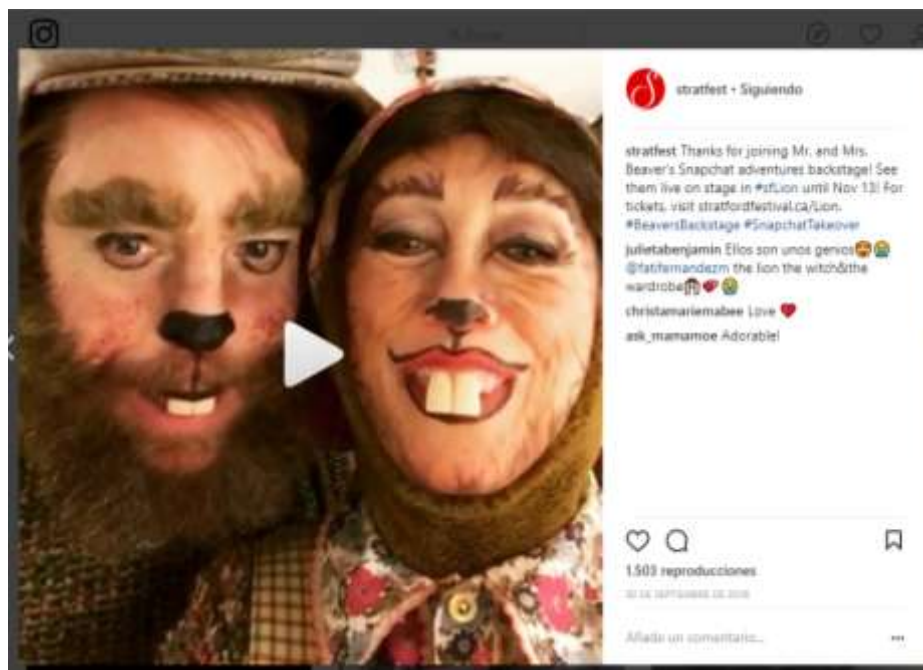
Twitter (+24k followers)

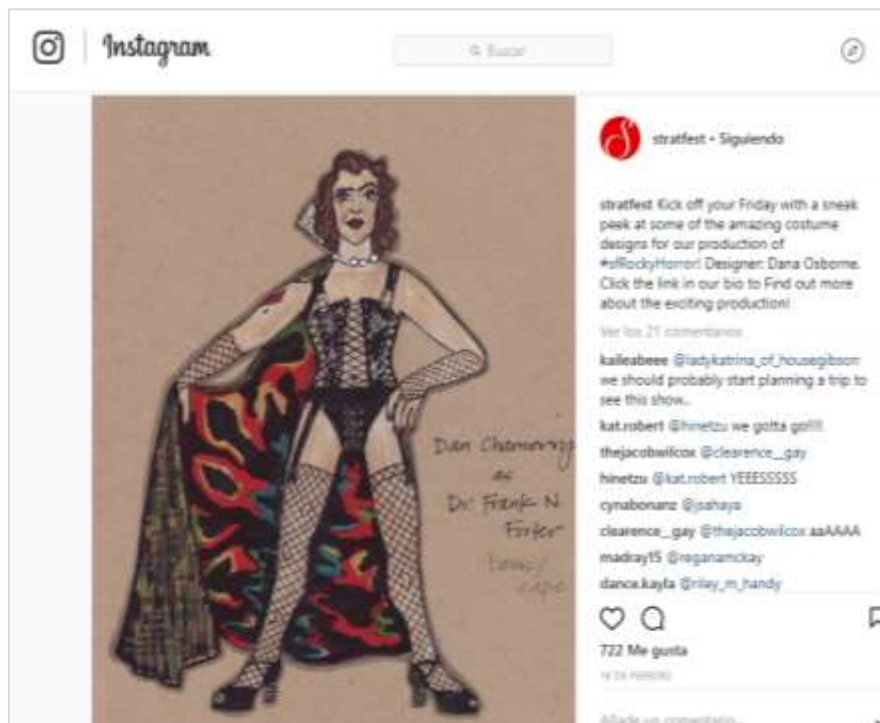
Twitter is a platform where the organization is expanding and growing and represents the second biggest social media channel for the organization regarding the size of the community. The Stratford Festival is also very active in this channel, the community is not as big as in Facebook, but they are also very active. In this channel is published content about the theatre, reviews of different media and opinions of the community about the experience in the Stratford Festival, which is a very important use that the organization gives for this platform. With a retweet of an user's post within a community of 24,000 followers, the user can feel a "star" for a moment, which certainly creates more engagement.



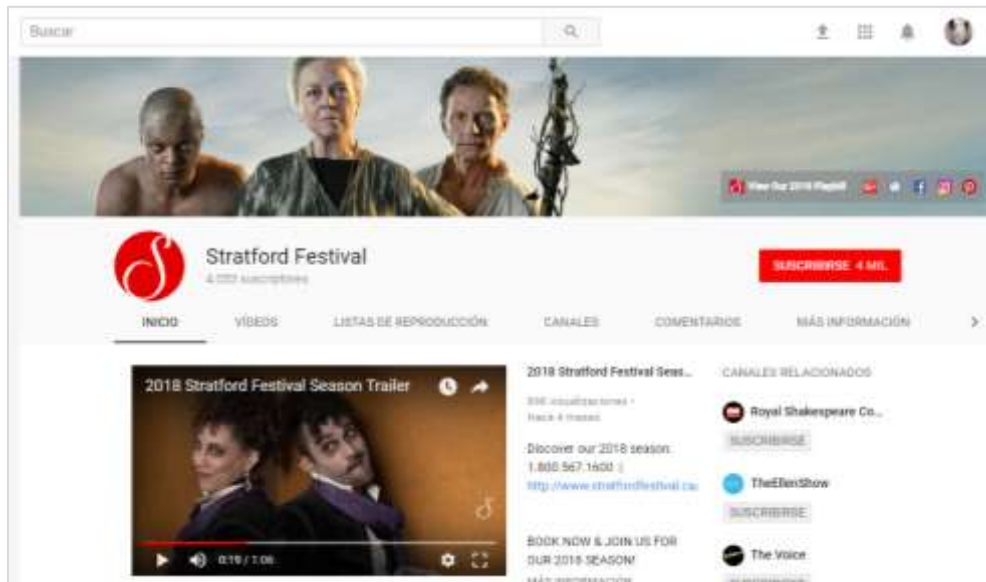
Instagram (13k followers)

One of the main function of this platform for the organization is reaching younger audiences. They have a community of more than 13,000 followers, the number of interactions is not as good as in Facebook, but this is a platform where the organization is starting to work more deeply on. The type of content they publish here works as sort of “diary” of the daily type of activities that happen within the theatre, as the productions of the shows, the training of the artists, the design of customs, backstage, etc. For doing this, the organization is developing a heavy use of the function “Instagram stories” which work perfectly with the type of content they want to share. Through this tool, the theatre can publish a series of photos or videos that will disappear after 24 hours, and allows them to be very detail with their various interesting activities, without being excessive, they can also add draws, stickers or emoticons that makes feel the content informal and more appealing for young audiences.



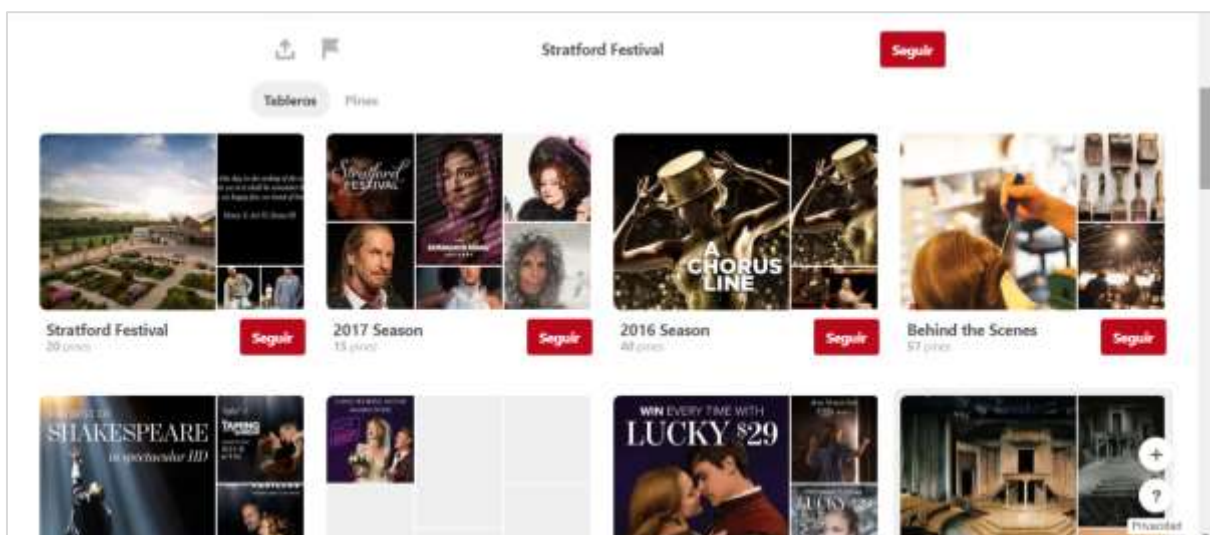


YouTube (+4k followers)



The YouTube channel of the organization serves as repository of their various videos: trailers of the season, “sneak peek” of the shows, news of the theatre, interviews and also some of the conferences during the Forum programs. They have more of 4,000 subscriptions in this channel, they have reach an important community even though it is not easy for cultural organizations to have large number of followers on this channel, since they do not produce videos as their central activity.

Pinterest (700 followers)





Even though, Pinterest is not such popular social media channel as Facebook, the theatre is taking advantage of this platform for showing more specific details of their artistic product. The Stratford Festival has a very visual product and the boards of Pinterest are the perfect window to show it.

RESULTS

After revising the theoretical framework and the case of the Stratford Festival, we will try to answer the research questions elaborated at the beginning of this study. These results are just some roots about the main topic in this research, they do not intend to be absolutely facts that can apply in the whole sector, but perhaps some paths to follow for future researches in the topic.

The customer journey for performing arts organizations

The model of customer journey for audiences attending art events of The Australia Council for the Arts may be apply for any performing art organization: Awareness, research, booking, preparation, at the end and after the event, is the common path for this type of events. As the Stratford Festival case demonstrates, a focus during the preparation phase is strongly important to develop a memorable customer experience. A constant communication with the customer before the event, helps him to be prepare for the experience and make the best of it. Organizations should look for ways to enrich the customer experience, going to the theatre is a special event and customers should feel relax and happy while being there, so making this journey the easiest possible and being a really support for them is fundamental to create a unique customer experience.

The challenges of elaborating a communication plan for performing arts organizations

The main challenge for elaborating a communication strategy in the sector is the scarce resources. Organizations need to have everything done in short time with the resources available. This is a common situation that face many cultural organizations, which is more challenging in the performing arts sector for the high costs of the artistic product. Other big challenge in the elaboration of the communication plan is the omnichannel environment in which need to exist an organization for succeed in the digital era. The traditional media is still relevant, but organizations need to incorporate the new media available if they want to welcome a more diverse audience. In this environment, with a myriad of communication channels it may be difficult to know which tool is the best for reaching the audience and this also represents a big challenge.

Best communication channels for performing arts organizations

As it was mentioned before, in an omnichannel environment where one offline channel may lead to another online one, it becomes difficult to know exactly which communication channel is the one that brings better results. However, what is clear is that organizations need to work in a channel integration for offering a consistent customer experience and address different audiences. In a sector that is

always changing, a combination of channels with a strong strategy behind seems to be the best way to communicate with audiences. The increasing success of social media channels is also evident, and it is corroborated for the Stratford Festival too, there is not a certainty that this media represents the best communication channels with their patrons, but they are seeing the outstanding results of these platforms, specially Facebook, for reaching and engage with audiences.

Differences between the physical and digital audience

At the beginning of this study, there was an intuition that, the digital audience or the communities of cultural organizations in social media channels may be different of the actual audience that attend cultural events. This believe was support for the fact that most of the public attending opera, ballet or theatre are seniors and the fact that social media channels are more popular for young people. However, after studying the Stratford Festival case, it was more clear that the existence of these differences is not always a certainty, and it should not be the ideal case for organizations. If there is one marketing approach, a strong media plan and a clear knowledge of the audience all the efforts should go for reaching the audience of the organization and there it should not be differences between them. Not all the patrons for cultural events are very digital friendly but there is a strong presence of them in these platforms, they are also a very active community.

Key elements for developing a strong communication strategy for performing arts organizations

Even though, the performing arts is a particular sector, the basis of a marketing plan can also apply here. Certainly, we need to take into consideration the uniqueness of the artistic product, but as in every organization, what it is required for develop a strong communication strategy is also elaborate clear goals, a deep knowledge of the audience and the elaboration of a message according. For a digital marketing approach, it is also fundamental to track the results as the campaign goes, so it will be possible to improve the campaign or make some variations if needed.

New media and its influence in the customer journey

Because of the boom of new media all the customer journey is affected. The basis phases of pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase remains, but now there are multiple digital channels available and therefore multiple touch points. The customer journey is now more complex, even difficult to delineate completely, but also brings more opportunities for organizations to increase the engagement with audiences. Now is also easier to know the feedback of the customer during the whole journey, digital media presents a two-way communication, which allows organizations to be always in touch

with customers. This represents an opportunity for more engagement with audiences, if the organization is delivering a good customer experience, but also represents a challenge if there are some weaknesses during the customer journey.

Relations among education, marketing and audience development (customer service) strategies

The Education, Marketing and Customer Service departments work in constant collaboration for create a common vision of what makes the theatre special and the place to be for the audience. They work together to improve the experience of the audience. The education or audience development department, is mainly in charge of the engagement and learning process of young audiences, whereas the marketing and customer service department are focused in all the audiences. Marketing is in charge of attracting audiences and, once on site, the customer service department manage the overall experience of the audience, building relationships and trying to always deliver an excellent customer experience which should be consistent with the overall marketing plan.

Key elements for education programs with good results

Even though, the key elements for an education program with good results always depend of the type of program, which seems always crucial is the process and the experience of the students while participating in these programs. Since most of this audience are young people, it is important that they have fun while doing these programs and developing their skills. Thus, what is more important for education programs is the engagement with the audience, the learning process and the accessibility to these programs. It is a main concern for cultural organizations being accessible for all type of audiences, so considering this factor in the creation of education programs is also very important.

Impact in the community

It is always a very complex task to define the impact of a cultural organization, or cultural activities in general in a community. However, it is clear for arts organization as the Stratford Festival, to see some indicators of their impact in the community. For starting, education programs and having the expertise of skilled teaching artists working in schools, has a deep impact in the community. Additionally, having an exchange between the artists and the community through former events have also a strong impact within a community. The economic impact is also a considerable aspect in the case of the Stratford Festival, but what is more remarkable is how an initiative like this can revitalize

a city and becoming the main reason for visitors to come. There are also other examples like this around the world that corroborates how the arts can be a driver for the development of a community.

Impact of new media in the communication and organization goals for performing art organizations

After revising all the information available in this study, we can conclude that the new media are certainly helping to achieve the communication and organization goals for performing arts organizations. Specifically, the digital media is facilitating organizations to reach their target and discover new audiences which at the end has a direct effect in revenues and in the sustainability of the organization. But perhaps the most outstanding fact is how the relationships among cultural organizations and their audiences are changing because of the digital media. These new tools allow to enrich the customer experience and create more deep relations with customers, increasing the engagement with them and with this, their connection and loyalty with an organization.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS

After the revision of the literature available about digital marketing and cultural organizations and the study of the Stratford Festival case, we may delineate some roots for a successful communication strategy in Performing Arts organizations:

- Offering a seamless customer experience through channel integration seems to be the best way for organizations to develop a strong marketing strategy considering the variety of online and offline media and offering a strong customer experience. It is necessary to consider where the customer is during all the phases of the customer journey and elaborate a message according.
- Being customer oriented in performing arts is fundamental in order to keep the loyalty of the public. The Stratford Festival knows very well its audience and they have kept their loyalty for many years. This is certainly one result of their strong customer service strategy, they know that they are delivering an experience and they take care of all the phases during the customer journey, creating multiple touch points with their audience and trying to enrich always the experience, so at the end this experience could be considered a premium one. They try to achieve the customer expectations and offer something else.
- Traditional media is still relevant for the current audience of performing arts organizations. It is easy to corroborates how is the audience of theatre, ballet or opera, just attending one of these shows. As in the Stratford Festival, most of this audience are seniors, people over 65 years old, in a stage of life when they have more time and money available. Thus, communication in the sector cannot be just focus in digital media, because not all of this audience may be digital friendly. However future audience in the same range of age will be more digital, and if organizations want to attract younger people, they should certainly think in digital media, because is where this audience is nowadays. It is fundamental to have an equilibrium between the new technology and the traditional media to continue attracting these two diverse audiences.

Regarding the customer journey, we may conclude that the digital media is certainly deeply affecting this experience:

- The basic phases of the customer journey remain the same, but the myriad of digital channels, or touch points changes the overall customer experience.
- This change brings many opportunities for cultural organizations to increase the engagement with their audiences. There is a 2-way communication during the whole journey, organizations can receive the feedback of the audience, know what is working, what it is not and improve the experience all the time.
- The new media available could help also to enrich the customer experience, there are many news and exciting ways to show the very visual artistic products, give more details about it and support the customer all the time during the customer journey.
- The changes in the customer experience because of the digital media brings many opportunities, but also some challenges. Organizations need to be prepared all the time to receive the feedback of the customers, that may be not always positive and have an answer or solution to that. If there are some weakness during the customer journey all the customer experience could be affected.

Another aspect to study in this research was the relations between audience development programs and the communication strategy of a cultural organization. As it was observed in the Stratford Festival case, the educational programs are focus in engage with young people and increase this group of audience. But an audience development department can also have the functions related to customer service, as the Stratford case. In this sense, we may conclude that there are strong relations between the audience development, education and marketing departments within a cultural organization. The 3 departments should share the vision of what makes the theatre special and the right place to be for the audience. They work together to improve the experience of the audience in the theatre. Attracting this audience to the theatre is one of the main function of the marketing department, whereas engage and learning is the main function of the educational department. Once the audience is on site, the customer service department is in charge of delivering a high-quality customer experience, building relationships with these audiences and ensure all the time a high quality customer experience consistent with the marketing plan.

Having a strategy in audience development and educational programs is fundamental for any performing arts organizations. As it was mentioned, the common audience in this sector is aging and attracting new public is fundamental for the sustainability of the sector. The Stratford Festival has identified this fact and they are taking advantage of the benefits of school trips to develop a memorable first experience with the arts, so in the future it will feel natural for the kid to come back to the theatre.

There are many challenges for performing arts organizations nowadays, but there are 2 principal questions that can follow all the information revised in this study: how to innovate in the artistic product and in the promotion of this without losing current audiences that may be not so familiar or comfortable with this change? And, how a performing arts organization can successfully compete in the digital era among all the new digital entertainments that are perhaps more practical or economic accessible?

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is difficult to give some recommendations for an organization such the Stratford Festival, that seems to have a strong strategy in all the aspects regarding a cultural enterprise. After revising all the information available of the company, we believe that their main problem of declining of attendance is not related with a quality declining of the artistic product or the service offered. It is more likely that this issue is a direct effect of the new entertainments available because of the new media, as the sense that the organization has. Thus, how to compete in panorama like this is a complex and urgent task. We have identified some roots that can be more explored for the theatre in order to be more competitive for the challenges of the Digital Era:

- There is an important segment of the target, young adults between 25 and 34 years old, segment that may become one of the main audience of the theatre with the help of a special strategy for them. It is true that the principal audience of the Stratford Festival are seniors, but this other group of young adults, that currently represents the 16% of the audience, has also potential to become regular patrons of the theatre, since many of them may be successful young professionals with time and economic resources available. It may be valuable to consider a strategy with focus in attracting more audience in this age range.
- Together with attracting the type of audience mentioned before, the possibility of including more diverse theatre pieces may be recommendable to evaluate. The Stratford Festival is well known for being a classical theatre, in this sense it would not be reasonable to change the whole product, but just including some more contemporary pieces in the repertory may increase the attention and participation of young audiences. The inclusion of more family shows it would be also a big opportunity for the theatre to attract more diverse audience.
- Audiences that attend the Stratford Festival are always in a trip, so offering more variety of travel packages would make easier the experience of going to the theatre. There are currently travel packages offered not directly by the organization, and even though these packages have a very premium offer, they may be excluding some audiences because of the high costs. Creating more affordable packages could attract younger people that may be also interested in the theatre city experience. Partnerships with local hostels or bed and breakfast hotels could help in this initiative.

- People usually go to the Stratford Festival in groups, frequently by 2, so it is likely that special offers for groups would be well received for the audience. Increasing promotions like special discounts for bringing a friend, family or the famous “2x1” are perfect for the Stratford audience. The audience needs to do a trip for going to the theatre and it is very unlikely that they go alone. For young audiences it is very fun organize group trips, so maybe competitions on social media for winning ticket for a whole group of friends could be successful. It might be something like: “Tag the group of friends which you would like to go to the Stratford Festival and win tickets or a special lunch in the theatre restaurant!”
- The last recommendation takes into consideration the fact that the city of Stratford has many high-quality restaurants. For this, elaborating special promotions together could be benefit for all the parts. Some ideas could be giving coupons to spend in the local restaurants for the public in some of the shows or in the forum events. Maybe a coupon for a free glass of wine in one of the best local bars could be a way to start.

The Stratford Festival is a successful case of cultural organization that is overcoming the many challenges of the Digital Era. The company has a lot of potential to continue growing and maintaining its role as one of the biggest leaders in the performing arts sector.

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