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Stage Arts Social Media Marketing - An Essential Measure to Ensure the Domain's Future Evolution-

Daniela Andreea CARABA¹

Abstract

Stage arts marketing and artistic marketing are new and under development concepts. They appeared as a result of the need for development and modern approach in order for the artistic products to survive on a competitive and dynamic XXI century market.

This paper aims at presenting and discussing one of the most practical measures that can be applied in order to ensure the domain's future evolution: the social media marketing approach in order to create and attract new artistic market segments.

The article includes a market research comparing stage arts attenders that were targeted in an online social media campaign with the attenders that came from offline different sources.

The paper concludes with extracting a separate profile on the two categories, the differences and similarities between them and, most importantly, observations and opportunities to be considered in future researches.

Keywords:

Social media, communication, stage arts marketing, online campaign, target audience

Introduction

Regardless of the fact that we consider the Romanian artistic market or we expand our focus on larger European markets, even universal markets, most of the market research analysis report a major audience's percentage at

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a mature age, very loyal, conservative and with good knowledge of the domain.

As a result an active universal high tendency to attract new and younger market segments that would ensure the future evolution of the stage arts domain had been frequently declared. There for, the communication methods should also be chosen and adjusted considering the behavior and preferences that define these new target audiences.

The common social media networking platforms: Facebook, Instagram, Tweeter etc. have become basic communication channels addressing young consumers, an advantage doubled by the financial accessibility or even the possibility to involve 0 costs.

How does the degree in which artistic institutions and organizations adopt social media communication campaigns, influence younger audiences ticket sell percentage?

Is the difference between attenders who are found on social media and attenders from different sources really relevant?

How can the informational content, the visual and aural materials be used by the social media communication campaigns in order to benefit of higher efficiency?

Literature review

The artistic marketing domain is a new and under development science with a high potential to evolve in the coming years. One main advantage in literature review is its authenticity and modern approach, but on the other hand, the available materials are few, incomplete and a bit unorganized.

Still, some authors have approached the matter with an interesting and practical point of view starting from the identified universal problems and the main issues stated by major artistic institutions.

Most common concepts mentioned include segmentation, consumer behavior and profile analysis followed by marketing research, communication, marketing mix variables, the artistic product view as a fusion between an artistic good and an artistic service etc

Alvin Toffler [1] contributed with a complex and detailed study upon the cultured and, therefore, artistic consumers behavior and analysis in the work *The culture consumers* where he provides a complete view upon the artistic American market in the '70 characterized by a cultural boom, as he describes it.

Several authors have mentioned the worrying trend in aging audiences and the immediate need to take action in order to attract and create younger market segments:

“There has been a rash of interest by arts organizations and arts researchers in how to attract young attenders (Harland and Kinder, 1999).” [4].

“If the repertoire has aged, then arts audiences are also ageing in line with wider demographic patterns. The growth in the ‘grey market’, broadly taken to mean the over-50s, is at its most obvious when a glance round the auditorium demonstrates clearly a relative scarcity of young people [2].

“Born between 1927 and 1945, the Traditionalists have among the highest rates of participations in live classical music, according to audience demographic research conducted by League of American Orchestras (Bernstein, 2014).” [5].

The common social media networking platforms: Facebook, Instagram, Tweeter etc. are basic communication channels addressing young consumers, an advantage that is doubled by the financial accessibility or even the possibility to involve 0 costs.

The main local Cluj-Napoca artistic institution’s approach style in this matter is now visible and interesting to observe and analyze. In 2015, the Romanian Opera was only vague present online. Today, the Romanian Opera’s online communication has improved and is based mainly on the social media Facebook network with good results.

The Hungarian Opera had previously, even before 2015, added this communication channel to the communication campaign but the over loaded message content, usually bilingual, is still a challenging, hard to solve communication barrier, perhaps without considering a more clear segmentation approach: target loyal mature Hungarian audience, young Romanian/Hungarian target audience, young international audience etc.

The concept of *segmentation* is presented as key marketing aspect most marketing and artistic marketing works.

“The market segmentation is mentioned as being one of the key elements of modern marketing and is, as mentioned, the process of dividing the market into several groups and/or segment(s) based on factors such as demographic, geographic, psychological and behavioural factors. By doing so the marketers will have a better understanding of their target audience and thereby make their marketing more effective (Gunter and Furnham, 1992: 1)“[3, p. 1].

“This is due to the fact that by using the analytical process that puts customers first, the marketer will get more satisfied customers and thereby gain a great advantage over competitors (Dibb and Simkin, 1996: 3)” [6].

In order to get a better understanding and results, it is essential to first of all consider the receiver. We cannot address the entire market and there cannot be a message or product that suits the entire stage arts audience market (Vorzsak et al, 2006) [7]. A performance or advertisement that is appealing to adults can be hard to understand and unappealing to children, a complex 3-4 hours werdian opera might be overwhelming for first time attenders and a modern style short operetta could be considered hard to accept for elder loyal attenders reluctant to change.

There is no perfect solution to satisfy them all but if we divide the market into recognizable representative segments and then act accordingly or we might even choose between the segments considering what we can best and more competitive do, in order to highly reduce the risks.

There are several ways a market can be segmented. Some of the most common approaches categorize segmentation by age, gender, and ethnicity [5].

Segmentation by gender would take into consideration how both men and women process information and choose to attend or not a performance. It was discovered that the great majority of participants in arts are women and they prefer communication messages that include a storyline involving an every-day life episode.

On the other hand, men are more inclined to prefer short and straight messages, funny and creative concepts and would decide by evaluating advantages and disadvantages for each option. The final decision will be taken through an eliminating process.

The Cluj-Napoca Romanian's Opera general management strategy states three main objectives:

1. Programs intended to maintain current loyal attenders, over 50, mainly women, conservative, well educated and reluctant to change;

2. Programs intended to educate and develop the future public: activities and performances for children;

- 3. Programs intended to attract/create current younger audiences**

At a second look, we can observe that objective number two could be included in the last objective and treated as a special category of objective number three. As a result, that separates the general strategy into two main directions: keeping loyal audiences and attracting new audiences and, as a result, making the need to adapt communication campaigns to the younger's segments behavior even higher.

In online communication, campaigns the attempt to attract children segments would most of the time target their parents, perhaps the same

target audiences in objective three presenting a different artistic product, performances that would benefit their children.

Other examples worth researching could also include independent stage arts performance organizations.

Material and methods

The current paper shows a first step in applying and concluding the above concepts on a local level. The research base was the independent opera performance “La Serva Padrona” that took place on 16 November 2017 on Music Academy “Gheorghe Dima” studio stage. [web 1: <https://www.facebook.com/La-Serva-Padrona-1095791773793295/>]

Shortly, from an artistic product point of view, “La Serva Padrona” performance is a one hour comique opera with 3 main characters. The plot is simple and the action fun and easy to follow. The opera itself has played a main role in opera music history, considered to be the base of inspiration for following productions like “Il Barbiere de Sevilla” and “Le Nozze de Figaro”.

For the research based representation there was no entrance fee but the participants were asked to fill in a research questionnaire [web 2: Complete online form link: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc7eN6nFOR3fOBtHgZVjDNaa_bQmHFEtuEIoiel7ll6Tz2Q/viewform]

The study was applied on a total of 150 attenders. The collected range consisted of 74 questionnaires. A part of the questionnaires were filled online on social media Facebook platform and another part in the performance hall before and after the performance.

After comparing the two categories of collected data, several observations regarding the online (targeted) attender’s profile, the similarities and relevant differences between the two, could be extracted and observed.

For a more simple understanding and following of the study I used the term online

Figure 1. Information source

attender(s) to refer to the participants that have filled the questionnaire online, before the performance, and the term offline attender(s) for the participants that only filled the questionnaire at the performance hall.

Figure 2. Information source

In support for this separation decision, I used the results collected in questionnaire question “How did you found out about this performance?”:

“The great majority (70%) of the participants that have filled the questionnaire online have also declared to have found out about the performance on Facebook. The rest of 30% were either informed by a friend or have read an online media article.

In regard to the participants that have filled the form directly at the performance hall, it appears that 41,30% have heard about the performance from a friend or by recommendation, 4,3% read a media article, 4,35% saw a poster, 30,43% found out from other sources and only 17,39% saw the advertisement on Facebook.

As a result, the online collected data is a relevant basis for the online (informed) artistic consumers while the offline obtained data is representative for the attenders that prefer references and other sources besides the online and social media tendency.

For the data processing, charts and figures I used mostly Excel functions, Google Forms and Google Docs and the social media Facebook platform, precisely, Fecebook page “La Serva Padrona” [web 1] and Facebook “La Serva Padrona” event [web 3: <https://www.facebook.com/events/125235258113350/>]

Figure 4. Age distribution

What is your age segment?

Results and discussions

Figure 3. Gender distribution

Considering the obtained online data results, the main traits of the attendee's typology are shortly described based on the following charts and graphics.

The most frequent attendees are women, 73,9% compared to only 26,1% male attendees (figure 3).

The 20-25 and 26-35 years old segments sum a 69,6 % majority. There are no online attendees over the age of 55 or under 15 years old (figure 4).

The general tendency for the online segment is to attend opera performances quite rarely: every couple of months, **a few times a year** or even once in a couple of years.

There is also a worth considering segment of 13% representing first time attendees as a proof that the social media platform is a source to attract newcomers (figure 5).

Most importantly, the great majority of online attendees do not have friends or family members in arts 71% not working in the artistic field and 91% have no artistic studies or training leading us to conclude that the public has little expertise in the domain, is open to new experiences and there is a high request for informing and educating these new segments (figures 6 and 7) .

Figure 5. Attendance frequency

How often do you attend opera performances?

Therefore, an efficient solution to this matter could be to provide and post educative online social media content containing information about plot, composer, interpretation, general terms,

Figure 6. Artistic knowledge distribution

Do you have artistic studies?

Comparing online / offline collected data

1. The gender criterion

Figure 8. Online gender distribution

After comparing the data collected separately for both online (figure 8) and offline (figure 9) (informed) public, in regard of gender there are no significant differences recorded. The percentage male-female stays almost the same: 28% M –

Figure 7. Family artistic background distribution

In your family or entourage are there artists working in this field?

etiquette, performance structure, artistic vision etc.

72 % F in online and a very close 26,1% M – 73,9% in offline. The significant gap between the male and female attenders is most likely caused by different factors besides communication platforms or means.

2. The age criterion

Figure 9. Offline gender distribution

Figure 10. Online gender distribution

Figure 11. Offline gender distribution

Table 1. Online gender distribution

Age Categ.	Online D.	%	
<14	0	0.00	
15-19	2	8.70	
20-25	6	26.09	
26-35	10	43.48	
36-45	1	4.35	73.91
46-55	4	17.39	
56-65	0	0.00	
66-75	0	0.00	
>75	0	0.00	
		23	

Table 2. Offline gender distribution

Age Categ.	Offline D.	%	
<14	0	0.00	
15-19	0	0.00	
20-25	13	28.89	
26-35	12	26.67	
36-45	10	22.22	77.78
46-55	3	6.67	
56-65	5	11.11	
66-75	2	4.44	
>75	0	0.00	
		45	

The obtained age data, provides more differences between the two categories comparing online data listed in figure 10 and table 1 with offline data listed in figure 11 and table 2.

Even though both online and offline attenders that represent the great majority in both situations, are included in 20-25, 26-35, 36-45 age segments approximately 74% in online and 77% in offline, there are some significant modifications regarding the minor age segments.

There is an 8,7% presence for the 15-19 age segment that only appears in online leading to the conclusion that the teenaged category can be targeted using social media communication. Perhaps a review of the message format and style could lead to an increasing percentage.

There is a 11,11% present only in offline representing the age group of 56-65 and a 5% that represents attenders included in the 65-75 age segment. As a result, it is clear that in order not to lose these segments, one must also keep the traditional offline communication means like posters and newspaper articles.

The most significant age segment, with the highest percentage recorded for young audiences was registered in online communication for the 26-35 age group. There is a smaller percentage for the same age category present also in offline communication but, for a more efficient and reduced cost strategy, it is best to invest in online means when targeting this particular age segment.

The children's segment, <14, is absent in both online and offline categories. This can either mean that in order to target children a completely different strategy and approach is needed, or the artistic product itself does not appeal for this segment and it is best not to spend resources in this direction before this aspect is being clarified.

3. Online/Offline Attendance Frequency

Figure 12. Online attendance frequency distribution

Online (Attendance Frequency)

Figure 13. Offline attendance frequency distribution

Offline (Attendance Frequency)

Surprising, the study shows that the greater percentage in both online (figure 12) and offline (figure 13) tends to attend only a few times a year. Moreover, attendance frequency appears to be more balanced in the online category. Universally the more mature age segments are considered to be more loyal and frequent attenders. This result shows either that our culture is an exception to this tendency or that there might be different causes for the situation: the access to the performance hall, the chosen time for the performance, other artistic events that might have taken place in the meantime etc

from the online campaign, 13% compared to only 8% from offline segment. Investing in online to attract newcomers is more efficient.

4. Artistic background and knowledge

In addition to the previous observations regarding this matter, the

Figure 14. Online/Offline artistic background

Figure 15. Online/Offline artistic knowledge

study also shows that the online attenders (figure 14) have a lower artistic background and knowledge also by comparison to the offline attenders (figure 15) that have declare a more substantial artistic background.

The need for a more basic

educative communication campaign is relevant for the social media online segment. The offline attenders might appreciate more specialized information if required or perhaps asking for their opinion and input in order to keep them involved and interested.

Conclusions

The universal need to attract younger segments for artistic performances is an active local matter too. In order to achieve this objective the segmentation concept and a researched consumer's profile is needed in order to obtain the best results.

The short research has proven that the social media platform best targets age segments between 26-35 years old at the moment characterized by a low attendance rate, low knowledge and no artistic background but open to new experiences, curious and fascinated by the genre. This approach offers the stage arts the opportunity to explore and make the best of a slightly touched new universe that has the potential to ensure its long term existence and success.

Moreover, since a high percentage of the attenders have declared to have been informed by friends and family members, the social media platforms also offer 0 cost possibilities to stimulate volunteering and the word of mouth online promotion.

While the offline campaigns require higher efforts in order to soften the intangibility that follows an artistic product, the online social media campaigns can easily provide tangible proof by posting pictures, videos, short interviews etc and maintain a constant active interest of its online audiences with significant lower amount of costs.

The informational content, the visual and aural materials used by the social media communication campaigns, can benefit of higher efficiency if:

1. They start based on a study following the consumer's perception level, preferences and behavior;
2. They take into consideration the service feature of the artistic product and act accordingly in order to soften the characteristic intangibility;
3. They use strategies that stimulate volunteering and the word of mouth promotion.

The faster the artistic institutions adapt to this trend, the higher the market segment they now have the opportunity to attract, educate and keep for a long term perspective.

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