Connecting: arts audiences online

Research summary

RESEARCH

AWARENESS

BOOKING
Contents

Introduction
About the research
Introducing the audience ‘journey’
A framework for understanding this research

The Opportunities

The opportunities for arts organisations

Get their attention
with enticing ways to promote events

Build word of mouth
by fueling the conversation about arts events

Engage your audience
by inviting them to play, or just say what they think

Enrich their experience
by offering audiences video and mobile content

Connect the dots
by using an integrated marketing strategy

Make it easy
for audiences to find you online and to plan their outing

Know your audience
and tailor messages and platforms to suit their needs.
Introduction

The digital era has brought exciting changes to our lives, and certainly to the arts. Our previous research, *More than bums on seats: Australian participation in the arts*, found that one in three Australians is using the internet to engage with the arts in some way, confirming a key opportunity for our sector.

With *Connecting:// arts audiences online* we set out to investigate this further. We wanted to see how arts organisations can use the internet to build audience engagement and drive attendance. We want to understand the role of different online channels in a vast media environment and see where the priorities might lie. Does the internet mean the end of the glossy program or the season brochure? Should art organisations build apps, advertise on Facebook or stream their events online? And what results can be expected from such efforts?

The research results provide an evidence base to enable us to move forward with confidence in this constantly evolving digital era. It’s exciting to consider the opportunities presented by new tools and platforms, like mobile technology, and to measure audience interest in these. The results provide a sense of what the future might hold.

What is clear is that despite changes in technology the underlying desire that audiences have to connect and engage with the arts has not changed. But the new technology and platforms are making this quicker, easier and more open. Audiences are now connecting directly with artists and event creators, contributing to events, and many are even keen to experience events online.

As a part of our commitment to delivering practical, action-oriented research that creates value for the sector, we designed this national study to be as useful as possible to arts organisations, artists and more. This influenced everything from the scope to the survey design, and our ultimate delivery of the research alongside case studies, the blog and a series of workshops around the country.

We’ve put the audience member at the heart of the study and looked at how they’re using the internet at each stage of their ‘journey’ from first awareness, through to planning their night out, and sharing their experience after an event. We’ve explored a range of attendance opportunities, from gigs at the local pub, to visiting galleries, the opera, experiencing theatre and dance performances, and heading to festivals by the beach. We’ve asked them about websites, social media, videos, email, mobile technology and apps.

Alongside the research, we’ve pulled together some industry experts to show you the latest tools and how to use them. We’ve gathered a range of case studies of arts organisations doing creative new things online – and reaping the rewards. There are many more examples out there – and we’d love to hear about them. I’m confident whatever your situation, you’ll have something to learn from, or share with others on the blog.

As with arts audiences, we’re excited by the opportunities of the digital era and hope to continue engaging with you in this area. In this research, we’re testing out what we have learned – and flexing muscles we didn’t know existed. I hope you can join us at a workshop, have your say on the blog, join us in conversation on Facebook or Twitter or visit the research hub and ask us a question.

Regards

Kathy Keele
CEO, Australia Council
‘I always like to make a day of it - it’s the most exciting thing I’m doing this month.’
‘I come across events in flyers and billboards, you see it every couple of days and think, ‘why not?’, next thing you’re at the event.’
About the Research

Our in-house research team worked with experts in online market research Nielsen Online to do this project. In addition to surveying over 2,600 arts attendees they relished the opportunity to meet arts audiences in Sydney, Parramatta, Brisbane and Geelong and talk about how they use the internet when they attend arts events. These conversations were used to develop two separate studies. The first focused on how audiences used the internet to engage with the arts, and the second measured how arts organisations are currently using the internet to engage with audiences.

The studies were conducted between September and December 2010 and included:

- data analysis and literature review
- 12 focus group discussions with arts attendees
- online survey of 2,683 arts attendees
- review of the online presence of the organisations we regularly fund.

The audience study surveyed people about their attendance at 22 different types of arts events from these five forms - visual arts and crafts, music, dance, theatre and literature. The survey results were weighted against the ABS Census by age and gender. Read more about our method.
Introducing the audience journey

We developed a model of the journey that a person takes when they attend an arts event based upon what audiences told us.

We asked audiences about how they decided to attend, what they did in the build up to attending, during the event, and also after the event.

We asked each person to consider one type of arts event they attended in the past year, and to tell us how they used the internet at each stage. We explored websites, social networking, email, mobile technology and apps, as well as traditional (offline) channels. Through this we formed a clear picture of how the internet is used for the arts – by different people for different types of events.

Our aim is to encourage people to move through the journey and then start planning what arts event they will go to next.

The six stages of the journey
Introducing the audience journey

Awareness - First hearing about the event through a friend or other media
- four in ten find out about the event through online media
- word of mouth and print media are still the biggest drivers of awareness
- e-newsletters are the best way to create awareness online
- social media is an opportunity, and young people are already on board.

Research - Finding out more about the event and deciding whether to attend
- three quarters use the internet to research the artist or event
- search engines are the most popular way to seek information
- videos, photos and audio give a taste of what to expect
- online reviews and recommendations help with the decision.

Booking - Buying a ticket to the event ahead of time
- most of those who booked tickets did so online
- ticket outlet websites were mainly used
- seating plans enable audiences to choose their own seats
- audiences are interested in mobile ticketing solutions.

Preparation - Anticipating the event and getting organised
- almost three quarters use the internet at the preparation stage
- ‘hyping up’ through video clips, photos and background on artists
- practical info like online journey planners, parking and restaurant offers are important
- mobile apps help to plan things on the go.

At the event - Getting more information and sharing the experience
- a third use the internet at the event – and more are interested
- seeking information about the event or artists online
- using Facebook to share the excitement
- as mobile internet becomes universal this will continue to grow.

After the event - Reliving the experience and considering the next event
- two thirds use the internet after the event
- sharing video and photos to relive the event
- talking with others and recommending the event
- planning the next event and purchasing tickets.
Framework for understanding this research

Each opportunity impacts upon the audience at multiple stages of the journey. For example, enriching audience experience through sharing video of performers can inspire them before, during and after the event. This is shown in the table below.

Ways to use this research
You might like to use this research to:
- review your resource allocation
- prioritise your marketing wish list
- develop a new audience engagement strategy
- learn a new online technique
- share your success stories.
‘I’ll go to more things when I get emails about it... I’ll get on email lists and then I get sent things and that reminds me.’
‘I definitely look up video of the previous year’s concerts or festivals. I look mainly on You Tube, sometimes on Facebook.’
The opportunities
The opportunities for arts organisations

We identified seven key opportunities for arts organisations to build their online presence based upon our synthesis of the research results and conversations with the sector:

- **Get their attention** Audiences rarely seek out information about arts events. Arts organisations must use memorable and enticing ways to promote events using a mix of old and new media.

- **Build word of mouth** Audiences are talking online more than ever before. Social media provides unique opportunities for arts organisations to fuel the conversation about arts events.

- **Engage your audience** While the old media approach was to ‘send’ messages to promote events, the new media approach is to have a conversation. Arts organisations might invite the audience to play with them, or just tell them what they think.

- **Enrich their experience** Video content is a powerful way for arts organisations to give audiences a taste of something new, or a way to relive an event. Mobile technology means audiences can access rich content anytime, anywhere.

- **Connect the dots** Multiple platforms mean that arts organisations have more opportunities to connect with audiences, but a well integrated strategy is key to holding an audience’s attention.

- **Make it easy** The internet can make life easier for arts audiences. Arts organisations can help audiences to find out about them, book tickets, and find practical information before they attend.

- **Know your audience** While almost everyone is using the internet for the arts, different groups are using it in different ways – arts organisations who know their audience can tailor messages and platforms to suit their needs.
If I’m interested in seeing that particular person then I’ll Google it and see when they’re actually coming out.
Get their attention

‘Video gives you a quick preview of what you might expect to see and that would entice you to go… “Wow, that looks really great I’m really wanting to go now.”’
Get their attention

Lack of awareness of events is a significant barrier to attendance. Audiences rarely seek out arts events to attend – the message needs to be pushed to them in a memorable and enticing way. An integrated online presence and mobile technology can ease them through to the research and decision making phase, like no other channel.

What we learnt...

It is perhaps surprising that most people still discover an arts event in the first place through print media (56%) or friends, relatives or colleagues (50%). This means that traditional media remains an important way of generating initial awareness.

The internet also can’t be ignored as a source of awareness with 40 percent of people discovering events through e-newsletters, ticket outlet websites, Google searches, emails from friends or Facebook updates. E-newsletters or alerts are the most frequent way people become aware of arts events online, regardless of their age. A significant 20 percent of people became aware of an event through an e-newsletter, with most of those being from a ticketing outlet.

While word of mouth is mainly face to face or over the phone, online social media is approaching e-newsletters as the most important online source of awareness for those under 24 years.

Older audiences are more likely to receive e-newsletters from media outlets, venues and government organisations; while younger audiences receive them from promoters, event organisers, musicians and ticketing outlets.

Ways of becoming aware of arts events

People attending any arts event in the past 12 months n=2,271

- Printed materials (collateral and advertising) 56%
- Word of mouth 50%
- Online 40%
- TV 30%
- Radio 28%
- Outdoor advertising 20%
- Came across the event spontaneously 16%
- Other 4%
Visual arts attendees are more likely than other attendees to use search engines at this early stage of the journey while ticketing websites are strong sources of awareness of live music, theatre and dance events. Facebook is a less important source of awareness of theatre and dance events, but more important for live music events.

Mobile content has also started to emerge as a source of event awareness. Already 11 percent have been made aware of an event via a mobile app and a considerable 18 percent are interested in apps to support awareness. Currently half of the arts audience have an internet capable phone – this is expected to grow significantly.

After first becoming aware of an event, many forget about it unless they are reminded or prompted in some way to find out more. There is potential for mobile content to bridge the gap between the initial awareness of an event (through offline media like billboards or posters), and the online environment where audiences can find out more, invite others and ultimately book their tickets.

### What can help...
To find out how it is done check out these blogs by industry experts:

- Best practice e-newsletters
- Search engine optimisation 101
- Social media strategy
- Promoting your online assets offline
- Mobile apps for the Arts 101.

### Ways of becoming aware via the internet

Arts audiences who became aware via the internet n=850

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search Engine</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email from friend/relative/colleague</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ticketing Website</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email Newsletter</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Griffin Theatre captured their audience’s attention with an e-newsletter:

‘Our e-newsletter communicates the idea that we are a theatre that specialises in new writing and has a sense of fun and wordplay at the same time. Anecdotally there has been a positive response to the articles. People have said that they really enjoy them. Next to our headline article, which is generally an interview with a cast member or director, our most popular content is our ‘Secret Squirrel’ column that gives theatre background and gossip. There is always a spike in sales with the e-newsletter going out.’

Jen Cannock, Marketing Manager
Griffin Theatre Company

‘Online is second for me, once you know it’s on, then you go to the Internet to find out more.’
Word of mouth

‘I wanted to see a DJ so I posted the link up on my Facebook to see if anyone else wanted to go, and then we went together’
Word of mouth is a powerful force at every step of the journey. Now, through social media, arts organisations have a unique opportunity to fuel the conversation, encouraging recommendations, facilitating sharing, responding to feedback and listening to what their audiences are saying.

What we learnt...

The potential to fuel word of mouth is clear from the numbers of people talking about events online. About one third of arts audiences use the internet to talk about arts events. This is happening before deciding to go, during preparation and, importantly, after the event itself.

A small number of arts audiences are using the internet at events, to talk to others and broadcast their attendance. This is set to grow, with mobile internet usage expected to increase from half to most of arts audiences by the end of 2011.

Facebook is by far the dominant social media platform, with 78 percent of arts attendees having used it. It’s the number one platform people use to invite others, share opinion and recommend events, and more people discuss arts events on Facebook than by email.

Facebook is particularly important for young people attending live music events. They receive invitations and check whether others in their friends list are going. This is important because their friends’ attendance at these events can often be the deciding factor for their own attendance.

While Facebook usage is more sophisticated among younger arts attendees, there is widespread use amongst older arts attendees as well, with 64 percent of arts attendees aged 55 and over actively using it.

Types of online word of mouth

Before deciding to go, communicated with others
Before attending, encouraging others to attend
At an event, updated your Facebook status
At an event, broadcast your location
After an event, told someone what you thought
After an event, recommended the event

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Done online</th>
<th>Interested to do online</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before deciding to go, communicated with others</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before attending, encouraging others to attend</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At an event, updated your Facebook status</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At an event, broadcast your location</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After an event, told someone what you thought</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After an event, recommended the event</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

People attending any arts events in the past 12 months n=2,271
Accordingly, most arts organisations are establishing themselves in this space, with almost 90 percent of the reviewed organisations having a Facebook presence, of which 69 percent had made a wall post within the last week.

While just over one quarter of arts audiences have used Twitter at some stage - half no longer use their account, and only 11 percent of arts audiences say they ‘often post things on Twitter themselves’ and eight percent use it to view things that other people have posted.

But while the majority of audiences aren’t on Twitter, it has potential to reach a much broader audience than just Twitter users. Exposure can be maximised through the use of integration software and Twitter feeds, and interesting content often reaches the mainstream media. One in two arts organisations has a Twitter profile, with an average of 621 followers. Literature organisations are the most prolific tweeters and have gained more followers than those in other artforms.

**What can help...**

To find out how it is done check out these blogs by industry experts:

- Word of mouth: how to encourage it
- Audience to audience communication
- Facebook 101
- Social media strategy
- Twitter 101.

‘My friends will hear of an event and post it on Facebook and get as many people to come as possible...If you see an event and check the guest list to see how many of your friends are going, you will want to go’
What you are doing...

The Australian Ballet uses social media to fuel word-of-mouth about new works:

‘We always start our social media campaign as soon as we possibly can, so that word about the show will spread. Photos on Facebook give people the opportunity to comment on their favourite dancers – and that’s when we see most of the activity. When we pop a photo up, we will see a sales spike that is directly attributable, and that’s exciting.’

Kate Scott
Marketing and Communications Manager
The Australian Ballet
‘It would be fantastic to chat to cast members online, to get some interaction, answers to questions…’
Engage your audience

While the old media approach was to ‘send’ messages to promote events, the new media approach is to have a conversation. Arts organisations might invite their audience to play with them, to create something inspired by their work or perhaps to say what they think. Or organisations can showcase their artistic talent by opening up the voices of artists in their company through social media. For most people, attending the arts is a social activity and they want to extend this into the virtual world.

What we learnt...

Some people want to see and feel an arts experience before they decide whether to attend. Video brings to life the artform in people’s living rooms on demand and takes some of the risk out of trying a new production, artist or company. It was found to be an effective way to educate and introduce new audiences to theatre, dance and music.

The increasing use of internet-capable mobile devices makes it easier for audiences to go online and engage with others, even in the midst of the arts experience. At present, almost one in three attendees are doing this while at an arts event. They’re sourcing information or receiving it from event organisers, logging into Facebook to post comments, photos or video footage, or to browse others’ comments about the event.

Amongst those who aren’t online while attending an event – there’s a strong interest in doing this in the next 12 months.

One of the surprises was the extent of online engagement after the event. We found that 34 percent of audiences had shared their own photos, audio or video online after the event, and a further 15 percent were interested in doing so during the next 12 months. This is a clear opportunity for arts companies to engage, to keep the conversation going, continue the excitement and entice the audience back again.

There is a demand for online interaction between audiences and event artists or creators throughout the journey. This is essentially a modern day version of the ‘meet the cast backstage’ concept, yet able to be conducted before, during and after the event.

Online interaction with artists and event organisers

During the research phase, interact with artists and event organisers
- 15% done online
- 33% interested to do online

During the planning phase, interact with artists and event organisers
- 14% done online
- 28% interested to do online

At the event, received information from the event organisers
- 17% done online
- 22% interested to do online

At the event, engaged with the creators or contributed to the event
- 8% done online
- 20% interested to do online

After an event, interact with artists and event organisers
- 10% done online
- 28% interested to do online

People attending arts events in the past 12 months n=2,217
Engage your audience

There are many ways to provide opportunities for audiences to have a conversation online – both on your website and through social media. One in ten arts organisations provide consumer reviews on their own website. The highest incidence of consumer reviews is on the websites of literature organisations, with book reviews being the most common.

While this type of interaction comes more naturally to younger attendees, older audiences (aged 25 years and above) still need promotion and a reminder to interact and share content online.

Social media provides a new way for audiences to express their affinity for arts organisations. More than one in five arts attendees are ‘online fans’ of arts organisations. This includes being a friend or ‘like’ on Facebook, a follower on Twitter or a fan on another social media site. The number of online fans exceeds the number of arts organisation subscribers (16 percent). A high proportion of online fans recommend arts events to others - 59 percent have done this online after the event.

What can help…
To find out how it is done check out these blogs by industry experts:

- Having a conversation on social media
- Building an online community
- Making friends and keeping them
- Dealing with negative comments
- We love you because you love us: rewarding fans.

“I was really disappointed because I really enjoyed the film and I wanted to talk to people about it afterwards. I left wanting more. The curtains closed and everyone just went home.”
What you are doing...

The Meanland project uses social media to engage more deeply with the audience for their ‘Reading in an age of change’ events.

‘Embracing the platforms that our audience use is central to our aim of instigating a broad and varied public conversation about the future of reading. There are limits to how in-depth you can go at a one hour event, and the blog allows us to pursue the debates more fully. With comments and linking we can enhance the conversation, and interact with our audience in ways we wouldn’t be able to do at events’

Jeff Sparrow
Co-founder
Meanland
Enrich their experience

“You could get an app for art galleries… that helps you go through the gallery and explains what you’re looking at.”

PREPARATION

AT THE EVENT

AFTER THE EVENT

RESEARCH
Video content holds huge appeal and is a powerful way to give audiences a taste of something new, an inside scoop, or a way to relive and remember an event. Mobile technology means audiences can access online content anytime, anywhere, and presents arts organisations with new tools to enrich arts experiences.

What we learnt...
Arts audiences are seeking video through all stages of the journey – one in two people sought out images, video or audio when deciding whether to attend an arts event. Almost as many viewed video after attending an event.

While all ages are actively seeking out online video content, younger audiences are nearly twice as likely as those aged 55 years and over to seek out video during the research stage. Those aged 25 and above are likely to need prompting and reminding to view video content in relation to the events they attend. Promotion of online video via printed materials, outdoor advertising and even announcements at the event are useful ways to build awareness and visitation of online video content.

YouTube provides arts organisations with an additional method of distributing and promoting video content. Seventy percent of arts audiences have used YouTube – and many people go straight to YouTube for video content, rather than searching the web more broadly. More than a third of arts organisations have a YouTube channel.

Ways of using online video, images and audio

| Before deciding to go, found images, video or audio | 49% |
| At an event, uploaded a photo, or video to a social networking site | 13% |
| After an event, shared your own photos, video or audio | 34% |

People attending any arts event in the past 12 months n=2,271
Mobile technology provides new and interesting ways to enrich an audience’s experience of live arts events. Audiences are eager to use the internet to engage with the creators or contribute to the event in some way. They’re also interested in receiving and finding information online while at events. Smartphone owners are interested in apps to share their experience with others and interact at events. 

There’s an increasing desire for interaction and creative engagement – and there is an opportunity to enrich experiences by harnessing user-generated content.

Importantly, arts audiences want to keep engaging after events, to extend, relive and remember the experience. Providing an enriched experience at this point is a crucial factor in keeping the audience interested and getting them to take another journey.

These behaviors are more spontaneous amongst younger audience groups. Older audiences are interested in these opportunities, but they require continued reminders and education of the resources available to them.

---

**What can help...**

To find out how it is done check out these blogs by industry experts:

- Tasty video bytes: A taste of your art through video
- User generated content
- Mobile apps for the Arts 101
- Videos 101
- Best practice for mobile app design, navigation and functionality.

---

‘I want to find the background before I go…draw me into the story, give me a reason to go and enjoy it.’
What you are doing…

The Queensland Art Gallery uses digital and mobile technology to enrich visitor experiences at QAG and GoMA

‘Since our ‘21st Century: Art in the First Decade’ exhibition, we’ve continued to use digital technology to enhance audience experiences – and not just for our major international exhibitions. We have free wifi throughout both galleries, a purpose built app, and QR codes in key exhibitions and collection displays. It’s an integrated approach based on our philosophy about audience access and supporting visitor interpretation of the works.’

Celestine Doyle
Executive Manager, Marketing and Business Development
Queensland Art Gallery/Gallery of Modern Art
Connect the dots

‘It’s easy to navigate and you can see exactly what interests you and go straight to it.’
The arts audience is engaging with multiple platforms at every step of the journey, meaning that arts organisations have more opportunities to connect with them. It’s crucial for each platform to link to the other seamlessly – from physical collateral, to your website, to your Facebook account, to your online booking. This is the key to holding the audience’s attention and giving them a rewarding experience that encourages them to book, and to book again.

What we learnt...

Marketing strategies and tactics need to be designed with the user experience at the forefront, and with the specific utility of each content platform firmly in mind. For example, making decisions about the role of an arts organisations’ own website as opposed to the role of their Facebook presence, YouTube presence or Twitter communications. From here, an integrated and cohesive approach can be designed to ensure that the communications strategy is efficient and effective.

There is a noticeable gap between the number of arts organisations that have social media assets and the number of arts organisations who promote those assets on their own website.

Arts organisations’ website and social media integration (percent)

Organisations regularly funded by the Australia Council November 2010
Of those organisations with a presence on Facebook, only 79 percent have been found to provide a Facebook link on their own website. Similarly, of those with a presence on Twitter and YouTube, only 75 and 60 percent have been found to provide a respective link on their own website.

The inclusion of links to social media from an arts organisations’ own website serves two purposes. They provide a functional means of easily reaching the organisations’ social media presence, but they also improve the brand credibility of the arts organisation. Many people commented that simply seeing key social media brand logos on an organisations’ site immediately lifted their perception of the organisation.

For some audiences, seeking online content is not a spontaneous behaviour. For this reason, promotion of online content and engagement opportunities via email and mobile marketing (including partnership activity with ticket vendors and venues), cross promotion via Facebook, YouTube and other social media, and promotion of online content using traditional methods (e.g. within event programs, printed material, outdoor advertising) should form part of an arts organisations’ marketing strategy. This is particularly important to educate audiences outside the youth segment (i.e. audiences aged 25 years and above) who are less likely to consider online content without prompting.

With the increasing integration of social media platforms (i.e. aggregation services like TweetDeck and HootSuite), Twitter content has a greater opportunity to be read by non-users. In addition, tactics such as embedding Twitter feeds into arts organisations’ own websites provide further opportunity for Twitter content to be read.

What can help...

To find out how it is done check out these blogs by industry experts:

- Online integration strategy
- Promoting your online assets offline
- Social media strategy
- Adding your event to other sites
- Your website is no longer the destination.

‘Become a fan I love, but you link to Facebook and then you’ve got to go to another website and that takes you to another site and in the end you just disconnect... Whereas you were interested but because it took too many steps so it turned you off.’
Sydney Festival linked their social media and other online elements, creating a natural extension of the festival experience.

‘Using the Festival website as a social hub - with feeds from Facebook, Twitter and YouTube channels - played a crucial role in improving the Festival’s marketing and audience connection. It let audience members talk about, share and book shows with their friends, and become a part of the Festival community. Now Facebook and Twitter are the second and third highest referrers to our website (Google is still the first) - whereas before this was generally mainstream media or search.’

Jill Colvin
Head of Marketing, Communications and Digital Strategy
Sydney Festival
‘Apps are great. I picked my shows and booked them on my phone straight away.’
Make it easy

Research shows that arts audiences won’t book a ticket for an event if they don’t get what they need. The internet provides unique opportunities to make it easy for these audiences. Search engine optimisation can help audiences find the information they need. Good integration and partnerships can also help audiences to move from the research to the booking stage of their journeys. Providing comprehensive practical information to audiences in advance can assist in creating memorable experiences.

What we learnt...

Functional information such as weather, transport and parking details may not seem sexy or interesting to provide, but it’s in high demand among arts audiences. Sixty two percent use the internet to find this information, with nearly 20 percent visiting an arts organisation website to find it.

Despite this, relatively few arts organisations provide venue information on their websites. Less than a third provide information about public transport and less than a fifth provide information about nearby cafes or restaurants.

Easy online booking with clear seating plans is important to audiences, and transitioning them to and from ticket outlets is a critical part of the journey.

There are often many stakeholders involved in a single event - the artists, arts organisation, venue, promoter and booking agent may each have a role. Creating a seamless transition from one website to another is an important step in creating a favourable audience experience.

Search engines are the key starting point for most internet users. Search optimisation should be a core focus for arts organisations to ensure that their content is easy to find. This includes the various types of content as well as different platforms, e.g. images, video, audio, blogs, discussions etc.

Apps used for arts events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Have used</th>
<th>Interested to use in future</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To find restaurants/bars to visit before an event</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To make travel arrangements to attend an event</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To find out about arts events</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To buy a ticket to an arts event</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

People attending any arts event in the past 12 months who have an internet enabled mobile phone n=1,312
The internet – and in particular, mobile technology, provides a range of opportunities for arts organisations to make it easy. Already, there’s strong adoption of mobile apps in relation to arts events, with strong interest in apps to support ticket purchases, program customisation, interaction and content sharing, to name just a few.

What can help...
To find out how it is done check out these blogs by industry experts:

- Mobile ticketing
- Practical information that should be on your website
- Best practice for mobile app design, navigation and functionality
- Search engine optimisation 101
- Web usability.

‘I spent ages trying to find out where the seats were and in the end I just gave up. It’s not like it’s a $10 ticket – you’re paying lots of money for a seat and you don’t even know where it is.’
What you are doing...

Adelaide Fringe developed an iPhone app to make it easy for people to book events:

“We wanted the Adelaide Fringe in people’s back pockets all the time, so we created an iPhone app. Its easier to buy tickets and find venues, allowing people to research, browse and book from their phones. I am really happy with the results. This year we achieved 20,000 downloads of the app, adding up to 120,000 sessions’

Belinda Redman
Marketing Manager
Adelaide Fringe
‘We learned more about what people wanted and used the results to focus our marketing efforts.’
Know your audience

While almost everyone is using the internet for the arts, different groups are using it in different ways. Live music audiences rely more on rich media, Twitter is biggest among literary event goers, and visual arts and crafts audiences are hungriest for online engagement at events. Knowing your audience can help you tailor your messages and platforms to meet the needs of different groups.

What we learnt...

Visual arts and crafts audiences are less likely to engage online in the lead up to events. Their spontaneous attendance means there is an opportunity for galleries to promote mobile content on the day at the exhibition/fair.

Those attending live music are more likely to conduct online research to plan and build excitement. There is a younger skew for music due to its appeal to 18-24 year olds, resulting in strong use of the internet overall, including in follow up to attending a live music event. Music audiences are very interested in mobile apps for building awareness of events, online ticket purchase and also for travel and transport planning.

Literary festival audiences are older, media savvy, and use the internet at all stages of the journey. They have higher use of mobile phones, Facebook and Twitter to engage in the events they attend. Recommending the event online after attending is popular among literary events audiences and they’re also interested in mobile content and apps.

Online usage by art form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Visual arts and crafts %</th>
<th>Theatre and dance %</th>
<th>Literary events %</th>
<th>Live Music %</th>
<th>Festivals %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Booking</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At the event</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After the event</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

People attending any arts event in the past 12 months. Visual arts and crafts n=628, theatre and dance n=576, literary events n=184, live music n=810, festivals n=475
Theatre and dance audiences show strong interest in online interaction in the research and preparation stages, but are less keen to interact during or after the event. The challenge is to encourage online activities after attending an event.

Indigenous event audiences and community arts event audiences both have a strong engagement with the arts overall and are more engaged with the websites of arts organisation during the awareness stage. They are also more likely to become aware of arts events through an article/story on a website. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander event audiences are more likely to become aware of events via printed materials or come across an event spontaneously; while e-newsletters to community arts audiences are more likely to come from a government organisation or local council.

Whilst online engagement comes less spontaneously to older people, online content and activities holds a lot of appeal, again highlighting the importance of promoting your online presence in any offline materials.

There is also relatively consistent use of apps across most age groups, with the exception of those aged over 55, who are substantially less likely to have made use of mobile apps.

Those with a disability or serious illness are less likely to use ticketing websites and more likely to book over the phone or attend an event where booking is not required. They are also more likely to be interested in experiencing an arts event online, and just as likely to be open to paying for such an experience, despite their lower than average level of income.

Know your audience

What can help...
To find out how it is done check out these blogs by industry experts:
- Managing e-marketing lists
- Social media strategy
- Online integration strategy
- Social media and customer service
- We love you because you love us: rewarding fans.

‘I’ll go to more things when I get emails about it... I’ll get on email lists and then I get sent things and that reminds me.’
Queensland Performing Arts Centre (QPAC) surveyed its audience to get to know them better:

‘After the show we emailed audiences a survey to help us build a relationship with and better understand our first-time bookers. We learned more about what people wanted and used the results to focus our marketing efforts. So if they were interested in “drama” or “comedy”, we sent them information about events coming up. In a short period 14 percent of the first-time bookers had re-booked for another event at QPAC. This compared to an average of five percent prior to the initiative.’

Lisa Campbell
Online Marketing Manager
Queensland Performing Arts Centre
Want to find out more?

Part of our role in supporting the arts is to generate research that creates value for the arts sector, and adds new knowledge to the field and provides insight and direction for policy, practice and innovation.

Visit our research hub to find out more about this research and other information on the arts.

Contact: Dr Nick Herd, Director Research and Strategic Analysis
Email: n.herd@australiacouncil.gov.au
http://connectarts.australiacouncil.gov.au

About the images

As a part of Connecting arts audiences online, emerging photographer Dave Cheng captured arts audiences at Carriageworks, the Tim Olsen Gallery and the Red Orchre awards.

The Australia Council would like to thank audience members and arts organisations involved in this project.