

Identifying Aspects Contributing to Live Theatre Ticket Purchases of South African Students

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Abstract

The sustainability of live theatre has become a great concern for the future of the arts due to a decline in live theatre ticket sales, ageing markets, and the now more recent closures and/or limitations on theatre activities during the global COVID-19 pandemic. To ensure the future sustainability of live theatre, live theatre producers and marketers are obligated to explore new/underutilised market segments and identify the aspects that contribute to the purchasing of live theatre tickets of each identified market segment. The student market is one market segment, currently in a phase of their lives where they are open to new experiences and have more freedom of choice on what they spend their money on compared to high school learners. However, the student market segment is not prioritising live theatre as one of their preferred social activities and also, very few live theatre productions are presented specifically with this market segment in mind. This article therefore aims to identify aspects contributing to live theatre ticket purchases of South African students between the ages of 18 and 24. Using a convenient sampling technique, 601 questionnaires were collected from students enrolled at two tertiary education institutions in South Africa. The results revealed eight (8) factors: Family/Socialising, Marketing, Genre and Style, Production Compilation, Explicit Content, Personal Comfort, Monetary facets, Leisure Experience. From these results, Monetary facets was rated as the most contributing aspect to live theatre ticket purchases. From previous studies, this aspect has also been identified but not as the most contributing aspect. The findings of this study contribute to the gap in student purchase behaviour literature and more specifically, to literature pertaining to South African students as a live theatre market segment. The results of this study will enable live theatre producers and marketers to create theatre productions that attract and encourage live theatre attendance of this particular market.

Keywords: Purchase behaviour, market segmentation, student market, live theatre

Introduction

Live theatre productions have been in existence for many years (Mazeikiene, 2017) however, ageing markets, limited exposure to live theatre from an early age, tougher economic times, the COVID-19 pandemic, and changing needs of consumers are just a few of the aspects

impacting consumer's general purchase decisions and even more their purchase decisions relating to live theatre ticket purchases (Pompe et al., 2019). Live theatre is seen by many market segments as a non-essential product, especially among lower-income earners such as students, and the priority to spend money on live theatre tickets compared to other social activities such as music concerts and cinema is currently not a priority (Jordaan et al., 2015; Wakefield & Wakefield, 2018). Early exposure to the theatre also instils a love for the arts (Botha et al., 2012) however, according to Lissitsa and Kol (2016) limited exposure to live theatre is provided by parents to their children from an early age. Williams and Page (2011) also state that exposure to live theatre through educational opportunities such as school trips is sometimes the only way early exposure to live theatre productions is provided and these opportunities are not always integrated into the curriculum followed by most schools. These challenges have to some extent or another resulted in live theatre not being a priority among young consumers, directly threatening the sustainability of live theatre as we know it today (Chiu et al., 2015).

Within South Africa initiatives have been undertaken to encourage live theatre availability to audiences in all parts of the country through the introduction of different live theatre platforms (Slabbert et al., 2011). These platforms include professional theatres, arts festivals, and community theatre venues such as informal venues including school halls, campus amphitheatres and outdoor venues (Pretorius, 2012). However, even with these platforms available the empty seats during productions cannot be overlooked (Viviers & Botha, 2019). Also, with ever-increasing production costs, live theatre producers are necessitated to explore newer alternatives to keep theatre alive (Botha et al., 2012; Du Plessis et al., 2017).

One such approach is the exploring of new or underutilised attendee markets for live theatre productions (Kinnunen et al., 2018). One particular and promising market segment is students, who are currently recognised for creating their own lifelong brand loyalty patterns, trying new experiences, being highly influential in their social circles and quickly becoming the next dominant consumer market in the very near future (Stoyanov & Stanoeva, 2016). It is further evident from the literature that research relating to the purchase behaviour of students is deemed important but is complex, as the purchase needs and motivations are very different compared to older consumer markets (Xiao et al., 2015). For this reason, various studies have indicated that further research into the purchase behaviour of the student market segment is critical to better understand this market segment and ensure that product providers adapt their product offerings in order to attract and maintain this market segment (Dalziel, 2016; Lee & Huang, 2015; Nursyirwan & Ardaninggar, 2020; Sharp, 2013). Also necessitating this study is the fact that although these studies focused on the student market segment, the identified aspects either relate to physical product purchases or the studies were conducted internationally, leaving a gap in South African theatre literature. With limited research available and the sustainability of live theatre being threatened, this article aims to identify aspects contributing to live theatre ticket purchases of South African students.

Literature review

In today's market environment, it is evident that consumers have a diversity of needs, and all sectors within the economy speak directly, through the products and services on offer, to these needs to ensure success (Marshall & Desborde, 2019). However, to be successful, specific market segments must be identified to create a more focused approach (McDonald & Dunbar, 2010). This process is known as market segmentation (Dibb & Simkin, 2016). Through market segmentation, product providers and marketers identify market segments that have similar characteristics, allowing the development of a product and marketing mix to be particularly attractive to the identified market segment (Ernst & Dolnicar, 2018). The value of market

segmentation lies in the opportunity for product and service providers to conduct a more detailed analysis of the purchase behaviour of the specific market segment (Botha, 2011) and researchers conducting studies within events, and more specifically live theatre, have proclaimed the importance of purchase behaviour studies as being beneficial to the live theatre provider and the consumer equally (Botha et al., 2014; Pompe et al., 2019). Within tourism and events, of which live theatre is part of, a successful market segmentation approach is to place focus on the socio-demographic and behavioural variables including age and age-orientated interests (Saayman & Dieske, 2015). Roberts-Lombard and Parumasur (2017) highlight that when age is taken into consideration as a segmentation variable, product providers can identify needs as the market, lifetime value of a consumer towards a specific offering can be determined more accurately and, as the needs of the specific age group changes, new product development opportunities will arise and be identified quicker. With this in mind, the importance of age as a market segmentation variable is of great value to live theatre providers and marketers in South Africa (Jordaan, 2015). Also, with the already mentioned importance of investigating the student market segment, deeper knowledge of the student market and the aspects influencing art purchases of this particular market segment is necessary.

An overview of the student market segment

Previous studies have used different age brackets when conducting research focusing on the student market segment as the opportunity to enrol as a full-time student at a tertiary institution is not restricted (Bevan-Dye, 2021; Jordaan et al., 2015; Ndofirepi & Matema, 2019). To ensure a more focused approach for this study the definition of Heyns (2010) will be used in the context of this study. According to Heyns (2010:10), a student is “a person between the ages of eighteen and twenty-six years of age, enrolled full-time for a tertiary education qualification”.

Students are open to unique social experiences (Xiao et al., 2015) and this opens a gap for experience-orientated product providers to introduce this market segment to new, never seen before, experiences (Naumovska, 2017). Due to social influences, students are very brand orientated when they make their purchase decisions (Parment, 2013) and have shown brand loyalty, especially towards locally produced products and socially responsible projects (Naumovska, 2017). The student market has also been exposed to the internet for most of their lives (Balakrishnan et al., 2014). According to Naumovska (2017) students are well informed about the availability of unique services and experiences due to their ability to make use of different apps and online search platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Google search and Google Play Store. It is also evident that students, due to their use of technology and wish for convenience, desire limited human interaction during their purchasing decision compared to their predecessors (Sullivan & Hyun, 2016). Students also prioritise their spending primarily on technological gadgets compared to any other product, service or experience including live entertainment (Schreck, 2018).

When students do consider purchasing tickets to attend live entertainment, including live theatre, the price of the ticket and the discount on offer to students is a main contributor to their purchase decisions (Sinclair & Adams, 2011). Stangl et al. (2017) add that value for money has proven an important purchasing aspect for this particular market. According to Bednall et al. (2012), the genre of the production is also an important aspect for students. Students want to be moved during a production, be able to relate to the topic and be presented with interesting characters (Upton, 2010).

These are however limited aspects identified and very few of these studies have been conducted among South African students. The need to further identify aspects influencing the purchase behaviour of art-related offerings, and more specifically live theatre, as well as to

measure these against a specific market segment still exists within the South African context. Once this is done, only then live theatre producers and marketers can create a more focused production and marketing approach for this specific market segment and in turn create a lifelong commitment towards live theatre productions (Bukvic et al., 2017; Kruger & Saayman, 2015).

Aspects contributing to art-related purchases

Various purchase behaviour models have been developed to identify aspects that contribute to consumers' purchase decisions including the theory of buyers' behaviour (Howard & Sheth, 1969), the consumer decision-making model (Engel et al., 1995) and a model of consumer behaviour (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010). However, due to the uniqueness of art-related purchases such as live theatre, these aspects are different and unique and not always included in traditional consumer behaviour models (Lee & Huang, 2015). An in-depth literature review revealed three (3) models making specific provisions for a wide range of influential aspects contributing to art-related purchases (See Table 1). According to Botha et al. (2014) finding an approach where various aspects are covered within one model is the ideal scenario however, since each individual's purchase decision is complex and involves a mix of attitudes, intentions, constraints, and behaviours as well as the impact of past experiences this has to date not been reached.

As seen in Table 1 below, the RAND participation model aims to depict the behavioural process through which a consumer's decision to engage in art-related products develops over four stages namely background, perceptual, practical and experience (McCarthy & Jinnett, 2001). Within each of the four stages the consumer is influenced by specific aspects. According to Han et al. (2018), not all art consumers are influenced by the same aspects within each stage, but the model is of value due to its ability to reduce the influential aspects and contribute to better strategic planning for art product providers. The consumption systems model of buying-consuming experiences also includes behavioural aspects however, this model proposes that consumptive motives and buying-consuming activities also influence engagement with art products (Caldwell, 2001). This model is a systems-based model aiming to understand the thoughts, feelings and actions associated with attending performing arts (Botha et al., 2014). As a result of the processing of information and learning, the three components of this model are embedded in the long-term memory of the consumer and predicting the buying-consuming experiences becomes easier for performing arts providers (Botha et al., 2014; Caldwell, 2001). The ticket purchase behavioural model for South African arts festivals is the only model pertaining to art consumption in South Africa (Botha, 2011). This model identifies thirty-three influential aspects as indicated in Table 1. The model specifically focuses on the influential aspects of the South African art consumer market and in turn, makes it easier for art providers and marketers to ensure a more strategic approach to creating art-related offerings (Botha, et al, 2014). Although these aspects are identified above, none of these studies focused on a specific age category of the respondents. According to Naumovska (2017), the age of the consumer directly impacts their purchase behaviour and this important variable should not be overlooked. It is therefore imperative to further investigate these aspects among a market segment of a specific age such as the student market.



Table 1: Models pertaining to aspects that contribute to art-related purchases

Model	Engagement aspects	Sub-sections to the aspects	
RAND Participation Model (McCarthy & Jinnett, 2001)	Background	Socio-Demographic aspects	Education, income, occupation, gender, life-cycle stage.
		Personality aspects	Personal preferences and unique characteristics.
		Socio-cultural aspects	Group affiliations and identities.
		Previous experience	Prior experiences with the arts.
	Perceptual	Personal beliefs	The benefit of art participation, cost of participating in arts.
		Social norms of reference groups	Friends and family's acceptance of arts participation.
	Practical	Decision to participate	Evaluation of arts participation opportunities against obstacles that include: lack of programme information, high cost, lack of time, and inconvenience.
	Experience	Reaction to the arts experience	Evaluation after consumption of the art product against the knowledge of particular art, the value that was given to the social aspect, degree of personal fulfilment, development of individual creativity and personal transformation.
Consumption System Model of Buying-Consuming Experiences (Caldwell, 2001)	Behavioural triggers and constraints	Intra-personal aspects	Social class, occupation, ethnicity, age, involvement, personality.
		Interpersonal aspects	Social interaction with several companions, relationship with companions, frequency and timing of interaction, knowledge of similarity in tastes and preferences of companions.
		Product aspects	Style of production, the reputation of performers, number of performers, duration, interior décor, facilities, staff, atmosphere, programme, catering, merchandise, other patrons, physical environment, producers charisma, venue, price, product class, day of the week, time of day, show structure, show setting.
		Situational aspects	Availability of time, money, energy, good health, mood, childcare, transport.
	Consumption motives	Enrichment	Enjoyment, curiosity, understanding.
		Reduction	Avoiding negative experiences of decreased arousal, relaxation, recuperation, and escapism.
		Communion	Seeking positive experiences relating to people, things and events.
		Distinction	Superiority, social comparison, status, prestige.
	Buying-consuming activities	Acquiring	Critic's reviews, subscribing to membership, perusing advertising.
		Experiencing	Assessing the skill of performers, appreciating a symphony, sensing the excitement of other patrons.
		Integrating	Reading a press article about a performer, contributing to the show by giving a standing ovation.
		Expressing	Exchanging ideas with a companion, affiliation with the audience, buying a box seat.
		Socialising	Chatting to friends about the show.
	A Ticket Purchasing Behaviour Model for South African Arts Festivals (Botha, 2011)	Monetary facets	Ticket prices, affordability, willingness to pay.
Media		TV/radio discussion, TV advertisements, written reviews, festival guide/newspaper/website, award-winning shows, word of mouth.	
Internal motives		Attending productions with family and friends, to see as many productions as possible, follow up shows, desire to see performers in real life, to support colleagues/friends/family in the show.	
Quality facilities		Accessibility of venue, quality of venue facilities, accessibility of ticketing system/services, the efficiency of the internet-based ticketing system and value for money for shows.	
Festival programming		Preference for a specific genre, timeslots of production, the overall compilation of the festival programme, "once-off" or "special edition" show/production.	
Festival experience		Ability to schedule productions in advance, sufficient leisure time at hand, atmosphere/spirit experienced at the festival, festival image/brand.	
Production credentials		Familiarity and reputation of the actor/cast/artist/musician in the production, familiarity and reputation of the playwright, author or composer.	

Source: Authors' own compilation

Research methodology

For this study, a quantitative research method was followed using a self-administered questionnaire. With this study being exploratory in nature this research method is sufficient for the goal of the study. Two South African tertiary education institutions, one private institution situated in the Western Cape province and one public institution situated in the North West province, were selected. These two institutions were chosen as students registered at these institutions are exposed to regular live theatre productions either on campus or in close proximity to the campus. Collectively these institutions had a total of 44 376 students registered for full-time qualifications. A non-probability sampling method, more specifically a convenient sampling technique, was used (Berndt & Petzer, 2011). The sample size was determined using the formula by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) and for this population a sample size of 381 is sufficient.

A new measuring instrument was created to address the research question. The aspects included in the questionnaire were based on the studies done by Botha (2011), Caldwell (2001), Kruger and Saayman (2015) and McCarthy and Jinnat (2001). These studies were chosen due to their relevance to unique aspects influencing art product consumption and the study done by Kruger and Saayman (2015) specifically addressed the South African student market. The questionnaire consisted of two (2) sections. Section A addressed forty-nine (49) aspects that contribute to the purchase of live theatre tickets (See Table 2). Respondents had to use a 5-point Likert scale to indicate the extent each of the individual aspects contributes to their live theatre ticket purchases (1: Do not contribute at all to 5= Highly contribute to my decision). In section B respondents had to indicate the average price they are willing to pay for tickets to specific types of live theatre productions (See Table 3). The self-administered questionnaires were distributed between 23 July and 30 November 2018 and as the collection of data was before COVID-19 restrictions, physical distribution took place. Three trained fieldworkers on both campuses assisted with the distribution of the questionnaires. Each fieldworker identified prospective respondents on each campus and used a screening question to determine if the prospective respondent have bought a ticket to attend at least one live theatre production in the last 12 months. If the respondent indicated “Yes”, they were requested to participate in the study. A total of six hundred and one (601) usable questionnaires were retrieved between both campuses. The data collected was captured in Microsoft Excel and analysed in SPSS 25.0 (SPSS, 2018). For this study, an exploratory factor analysis and descriptive statistics were performed.

Results and discussion

Factors influencing live theatre tickets purchases of students

An exploratory factor analysis was done using forty-nine (49) aspects to identify broader factors and to reduce the data for the purpose of analysis. For the exploratory factor analysis, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) method was used to determine whether the pattern matrix was suitable for a factor analysis. The KMO should lay between 0 and 1, and this study presented a KMO of 0.899 showing high reliability (Field, 2007: 639). Where any item cross-loaded with more than one factor, loadings were interpreted and selected where best suited. For each factor, the Cronbach Alpha coefficients (> 0.6) and statistical mean values were determined (Field, 2007; Nunnally, 1967; Tustin et al., 2005) and all aspects loaded with a mean value greater than 0.2 and revealed eight (8) factors, each with a Cronbach Alpha (α) higher than 0.6.



Table 2: Results from the exploratory factor analysis

Factor label	Factor 1 Family/ socialising	Factor 2 Marketing	Factor 3 Genre / style	Factor 4 Production compilation	Factor 5 Explicit content	Factor 6 Personal comfort	Factor 7 Monetary facets	Factor 8 Leisure experience
Attending live theatre productions with family and friends	0.546							
The opportunity to share a unique experience with family and friends	0.374							
To support family or friends participating in the live theatre production	0.297							
Radio interviews		0.658						
The reputation of a festival		0.485						
Emails/newsletters sent to me		0.652						
Word-of-mouth		0.302						
Newspaper advertisements		0.638						
Television advertisements		0.625						
Websites		0.573						
Posters/banners		0.547						
Facebook posts		0.510						
Twitter posts		0.509						
Printed programme		0.266						
Fresh “border shifting” work			0.789					
Abstract productions			0.660					
Love stories			0.639					
One man/one woman shows			0.509					
Minimalist sets (open for own interpretation)			0.409					
Live theatre productions written by well-known playwrights				0.440				
Live theatre productions with well-known actors or celebrities				0.724				
Ensemble productions				0.266				
Intensive use of audio/lighting/visual effects				0.641				
Live theatre productions of well-known producers				0.596				
Multimedia projections (AV) support during a production				0.545				
Quality venues				0.521				
Productions that contain music				0.521				
Productions containing humour				0.509				
Full and realistic sets				0.422				
Accessibility of venue				0.398				
Young emerging actors				0.361				
Foul language used in productions					0.847			
Suggestiveness, nudity and sex in a production					0.844			
Break times during a production						0.578		
Refreshments available during the live theatre production						0.273		
Visibility during the live theatre production						0.543		
Allowance of children during the live theatre production						0.488		
Use of air conditioning in the venue during the live theatre production						0.482		
Availability of downloadable electronic programme						0.444		
User-friendliness of ticket purchasing system						0.397		
Financial constraints							0.851	
Student discounts							0.665	
Ticket price							0.477	
The opportunity to relax								0.700
To break away from everyday life								0.672
To surround myself with people with similar interests								0.644
Previous experience								0.373
I am a great supporter of the arts								0.294
The atmosphere during a production								0.390
Cronbach Alpha value (α)	0.630	0.813	0.715	0.843	0.749	0.637	0.628	0.790
Mean Value	3.57	3.18	2.97	3.69	3.11	3.56	3.81	3.70

The factor analysis (Table 2) revealed eight factors. Monetary facets (α : 0.628; Mean: 3.81) contributes the most towards students' live theatre ticket purchases. Within this factor, aspects include financial constraints (0.851), student discounts (0.665) and ticket price (0.477). Research done by Baldin et al. (2018) support this and state that monetary aspects such as price and value for money are very important to students when purchasing live theatre tickets. This is due to students having to fund their own purchasing of entertainment offerings with money they earn from having part-time jobs. According to Wakefield and Wakefield (2018), students are even more inclined to seek value for money when they have to make purchases using their own hard-earned money compared to purchases made when their parents pay. Leisure experience is the second-highest contributing factor (α : 0.790; Mean: 3.70) and within this factor individual aspects which rated the most important include the opportunity to relax (0.700) and to break away from everyday life (0.672). This finding is also supported by Kruger and Saayman (2015) and these authors state that attending live theatre productions provide attendees with the opportunity to relax and escape from their daily tension. The third-highest contributing factor is Production compilation (α : 0.843; Mean: 3.69) and the highest-ranking aspects include live theatre with well-known actors or celebrities (0.724) and intensive use of audio/lighting/visual effects (0.641). Yen and Teng (2015) found that celebrity involvement with products and even more specifically, live theatre productions, has proved to encourage a specific market, known as celebrity followers which consist mostly of consumers up to the age of 24 years old, to purchase such products or attend live theatre productions, no matter the quality or end result of their experience. The student market is motivated by their need to see their favourite celebrity live and be as close as possible to this person during a live theatre production (Brown & Knox, 2017).

Family and socialising ranked as the fourth factor (α : 0.630; Mean: 3.57) in this study. This factor includes aspects such as attending with friends and family (0.546) and the opportunity to share a unique experience with family and friends (0.374). According to Van Acker et al. (2016), family is an important contributor towards live theatre ticket purchases. Burger (2015) also states that live theatre productions offering family togetherness and socialising opportunities sells more live theatre ticket sales.

Personal comfort ranked as the fifth factor in this study (α : 0.637; Mean: 3.56) and includes breaktimes during the production (0.578), visibility during the production (0.543) and the use of aircon in the venue (0.482). According to Botha et al. (2012), comfort is an important contributor for live theatre attendees and can lead to the re-purchase of live theatre tickets. The study of these authors did not indicate comfort as a factor on its own, but this was included as an important aspect within the factor Quality facilities. This factor however ranked third most important in their study. Marketing (α : 0.813; Mean: 3.18) ranked as the third smallest contributing factor within this study and includes aspects such as emails/e-newsletters (0.652), Facebook posts (0.510) and Twitter posts (0.509). This finding is supported by previous studies conducted among teenagers and according to Stoyanov and Stanoeva (2016) students are less inclined to react to traditional media as they are very technologically advanced. Baek et al. (2017) add that the student market prefers online social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and other forms of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) to assist their decision-making process and base their final purchase decision on the information gathered from these platforms.

Explicit content (α : 0.749; Mean: 3.11), consists of only two aspects namely: I purchase tickets to productions containing foul language (0.847) and I purchase tickets to productions with suggestiveness, nudity, and sex (0.844). According to Snowball et al. (2010), female theatre attendees are much more inclined toward family-friendly productions while men attending live theatre productions are more open to purchasing tickets to live theatre

productions containing sex, nudity, and foul language. The smallest contributing factor was Genre and style (α : 0.715; Mean: 2.97) which include fresh border shifting work (0.789), abstract productions (0.660) and love stories (0.639). Genre as a live theatre ticket purchase contributor is supported by previous studies done within live theatre research including Baldin et al., (2018), Botha, (2011), Grisolia and Willis (2016), and Viviers and Botha (2019). The importance of Genre as a contributor to live theatre ticket purchases is different in each of these studies.

Table 3: Ticket price based on the type of production on offer

	R70<	R70-R90	R90-R100	R110-R130	R130<	Mean Avg Value
Drama productions with renowned local actors	27%	22%	28%	12%	11%	2.57
Drama production with less renowned local actors	46%	28%	17%	6%	3%	1.90
Music production with renowned local singers	17%	23%	27%	23%	10%	2.88
Music production with less renowned local singers	36%	34%	19%	8%	3%	2.08
Dance productions	28%	26%	27%	12%	7%	2.43
Production with international singers/actors	13%	5%	13%	17%	52%	3.90
Musicals in a popular theatre	15%	8%	20%	29%	28%	3.46
Arts festival production	19%	18%	32%	21%	10%	2.86
Student production with student singers/performers	51%	25%	15%	5%	4%	1.86

As seen in Table 3, the majority of respondents (52%) indicated that they are willing to pay R130 or more for productions with international singers or actors. If musicals are hosted in a popular theatre, 29% of respondents indicated that they are willing to pay between R110 and R130. Fifty-one percent (51%) of respondents indicated that they were willing to pay the least (R70<) for productions with student singers/performers.

Price is always an important aspect that directly impacts the experience of the consumer (Du Plessis et al., 2017). The willingness to pay a specific price for art-related product offerings such as live theatre tickets has also become an important area of investigation to not only encourage strategies to ensure a definite purchase, but also determine how consumers calculate the value of art-related experiences (Kruger & Saayman, 2016). Various studies have indicated the importance of price on art consumers' purchase decisions including work done by Antrobus and Snowball (2011), Grisolia and Willis (2011), Jordaan et al. (2015), Scheff (1999) as well as Werck and Heyndels (2007). However, all these studies have only determined the importance of price but none of the studies connected a monetary value that live theatre audiences are willing to pay. The results of this study reveal a monetary value connected to different types of productions and provide better direction towards the price that South African students are willing to pay for tickets to different types of live theatre productions.

Implications and recommendations

Purchasing behaviour research among art consumers has been receiving increased attention in both international and South African literature due to the uniqueness of influential aspects contributing to art product consumption compared to aspects influencing physical product purchases of consumers (Botha et al., 2012; Botha et al, 2014; Caldwell, 2001; Pompe et al, 2019). Research among aspects influencing art purchases with a focus specifically on younger market segments such as students, is still very limited, especially within South African academic literature (Jordaan et al., 2015; Kruger & Saayman, 2015). This study, therefore, contributes to filling the gap in academic literature pertaining to the aspects influencing students to purchase live theatre tickets and provides valuable insight into this specific market

segment. The results of this study also contribute to a better understanding of students as a market segment to industry role players and provide South African live theatre producers and marketers insight into the aspects they need to incorporate in their productions and marketing campaigns if they want to attract and retain this specific market segment. Incorporating these aspects into live theatre offerings is a valuable strategy to ensure that the arts stay alive.

From the results, it is evident that the most important aspect which should be considered by live theatre producers and marketers is monetary facets. This is not the first time that the association between money and the student market has been identified, although these studies were not done among South African students (Stangl et al., 2017; Wakefield & Wakefield, 2018). It is therefore imperative that when determining the price, and the intended experience associated with the price charged for the live theatre ticket, the level of income of the market should be assessed. From a supply side, it is no secret that the ticket price is one of the main sources of income for live theatre productions however, tough economic times are forcing live theatre producers and marketers to obtain additional funding which can be in the form of sponsorships or membership opportunities. This will alleviate the financial pressure and allow live theatre ticket prices to accommodate the need and ability to pay for live theatre tickets by the student market. Sinclair & Adams (2011) notes that making provisions for student specials or discounts can increase ticket sales and therefore this should be on the priority list of live theatre producers and marketers. Compiling student theatre packages should also be considered where students pay a special fixed rate for a package deal consisting of more than one pre-selected live theatre production. This will increase live theatre attendance and encourage continuous exposure of students to multiple live theatre opportunities. Incentives can also be allocated to students, for example, wine vouchers, if the students purchase a certain number of live theatre tickets.

The production compilation should also be of high priority when organising live theatre productions where students are the intended market. Productions that contain humour, music, intensive use of audio, lighting and visual effects will also attract more students and live theatre producers should incorporate this into their productions. This research also indicated that students are willing to pay R130 or more for live theatre productions with an international cast compared to R90 to R100 for a production with an all-local cast. Although this finding is interesting, the feasibility of including international cast members in a production without affecting the affordability of the live theatre ticket is not always possible in South Africa. If possible, live theatre producers can consider international cast members but live theatre marketers should ensure that these international cast members are used as an integrated part of their marketing campaign. In the case where this might not be possible, live theatre producers should consider providing live theatre productions at popular professional theatres such as the Teatro theatre at Monte Casino in Johannesburg, The Time Square Sun Arena situated at Menlyn Maine in Pretoria, Grand West Casino in Cape Town. All these venues are in close proximity to various universities and provide world-class facilities for live theatre productions. Live theatre producers should also consider renowned local actors when doing their castings and should include actors which are popular among students such as Armand Aucamp, Marlo Minnaar, Marion Holm and Waldemar Schultz. Festivals as a popular live theatre platform should also not be overlooked and now, with COVID-19 regulations being eased, popular arts festivals such as Klein Karoo National Arts Festival and InniBos are hosted again.

Conclusion

In a time where live theatre producers and marketers are seeking new markets to attract and aim to increase live theatre attendance, the results of this study are very informative and beneficial to the future success of the arts. With the purpose of this study in mind, to identify

aspects contributing to live theatre ticket purchases of South African students, the results indicate that students are influenced by monetary facets, leisure experiences and production credentials. The results also provided insight into the price students are willing to pay for specific types of live theatre productions. For future research, the results of this study offer the opportunity to investigate other new markets, including teenagers, that can be attracted to live theatre productions and identify the unique aspects that influence their live theatre ticket purchases. This is just another strategy to encourage early exposure to live theatre and ensure the sustainability of this important form of art.

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