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Connecting a diverse programme with diverse audiences

Bespoke segmentation modelling helps Sadler's Wells talk to its audiences with personalised precision across venues and genres. Sebastian Cheswright Cater explains how.

Sadler's Wells has partnered with The Audience Agency to develop and implement a bespoke segmentation model that will help us better understand and communicate with the diverse audiences visiting our three London venues (Sadler's Wells Theatre, The Peacock Theatre and Lilian Baylis Studio).

Over the past 20 years we have transformed the way dance is presented. Since 2005 we have brought over 160 new dance works to the stage, and audiences of over half a million now visit our three London theatres each year. Since the launch of our new membership scheme last year we have an attractive proposition to offer, but we needed to adopt a more segmented approach to increase subscriptions and loyalty.

Because our programming incorporates dance in all its forms, we knew that bespoke segmentation would be important in connecting a diverse artistic programme with diverse audiences. Our desire was to better understand how audiences behave across our full range of genres and venues, identifying how to connect with them on a personal level in the context of their broader cultural consumption.

We chose to partner with The Audience Agency so that any work undertaken could have wider applications beyond the initial scope. With access to dynamic, nationwide data, profiling

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audiences artform-by-artform, region-by-region, The Audience Agency can continue to support the development of the segmentation over time.

A practical approach

Sadler's Wells is a charity, and with over 70% of our annual income being generated through ticket sales, keeping a commercial focus is key to our financial stability. Integral to the segmentation brief therefore was the requirement that the approach be meaningful, practical and have an impact on the bottom line.

It was essential that the segmentation could work within our existing tech infrastructure - primarily our CRM system Tessitura. While we always had big ambitions for this project, for it to work the benefits had to be understood by the whole organisation, and it had to be practical enough to be used daily by the marketing campaigns team.

To this end, we are working with Baker Richards to embed the results using its Segmentation Engine software. The tool integrates seamlessly with our CRM system, allowing the campaigns team the flexibility to pull lists of segmented audience members, both for regular segmentation like recency and frequency, and from The Audience Agency's new bespoke segments.

Data research

The Audience Agency began by delving into the vast amount of data we have within Tessitura itself. A process of cluster analysis identified groupings of bookers with the most in common, along with key differentiating factors. Analysis by frequency, genre attendance, venue attendance and transaction value produced segments differentiated according to their core behaviours. Over-layering this with demographic, geographic and lifestyle data instilled an even deeper understanding of the groupings.

The Audience Agency then further contextualised these findings by analysing the groupings' broader cultural behaviours, using Audience Finder's big dataset drawn from over 700 UK arts organisations.

We then began using The Audience Agency's national database Audience Finder to send post-show surveys to every booker, collating feedback on experience and motivation from more than 25,000 individual responses from over 100 productions within a year. This significant volume of

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demographic data could be anonymised and then fed into the bespoke segmentation profiles to realise a 360 degree view of each segment, taking in untapped potential in the marketplace as well as possible routes for infrequent flyers and 'first class' customers alike.

The survey data not only renders our own segmentation profiles far more detailed, but enables us to give our touring organisation partners a more focussed view of their audiences in turn. This information can feed into Audience Finder, meaning that the profile of dance audiences nationwide can be understood in far more detail than ever before.

Connecting the dots

The final link in the chain involved connecting the newly understood audience segments to their media consumption habits so that marketing campaigns can be meaningfully targeted. Our media agency AKA undertook the research, using MOSAIC and TGI data tools, to create a detailed breakdown of which media types and titles were most relevant to each of our new audience segments, making future media planning all the more effective.

The project to date has taken around 18 months, from initial briefing, through to researching and creating the bespoke profiles, to implementation. The resultant 11 separate segmentation profiles range across the spectrum, from customers who are loyal to one genre or venue, to frequent attenders and ultimately membership prospects.

Next steps

Embedded segmentation models like this yield ever greater rewards over time and we will continue to work together to monitor efficiency. Consultancy Director Penny Mills, who led on this project, is particularly enthusiastic about the future of the partnership: "It's been exciting to see the new segmentation profiles work in practice, and then to be able to enrich them with further data. We'll be able to adjust profiles based on experience and to reflect changing behaviours as a result of more targeted communication."

We aim to use the new segmentation profiles to change customer behaviour in a variety of different ways. While a huge amount of work has gone into creating these new segments we are just at the outset of this initiative. The real work begins when we start using it to reach out to

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our customer base in new ways. It will be really exciting to try new approaches, testing and correcting as we go along, to gradually deepen our connection with our audiences. Watch this space...

Written by Sebastien Cheswright Cater, Director of Marketing & Sales at [Sadler's Wells](#).

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This article, sponsored and contributed by The Audience Agency, is part of a [series](#) sharing insights into the audiences for arts and culture.

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