

# Section 1: Research Digest

Market & Marketing Research

## Beyond the Division of Attenders vs Non-Attenders

### A Study into Audience Development in Policy and Practice [UK]

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#### Objectives

This paper attempts to review current thinking about audience development and to consider the effectiveness of audience development policy as it has so far developed.

#### Methodology

The first part of this study is based on a desk research-based review of relevant literature, including policy documents, annual reports and research reports. The second part is based on an audience development case study carried out by the author.

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#### Summary

Resources recently made available for audience development have led various arts organisations to undertake a range of audience development projects. However, the term "audience development" is being used in a number of ways and can mean [i] cultural inclusion, [ii] extended marketing, [iii] taste cultivation and [iv] audience education. The author argues that audience development has been based on the liberal humanistic idea of culture for all. This is in contrast to a sociological view of culture which sees culture as a means of marking differences between groups of people. Participation in culture is based on "cultural competence" which is acquired through family socialisation and education. Culture for all leads to a product-led approach, whereas the sociological view leads to a target-led approach.

The second part of the paper is a case study of a particular audience development project - involving Birmingham

Contemporary Music Group - for which the author interviewed members of the group and members of the audience and attended concerts. The "audience development" concerts all took place in rural Shropshire and formed a "taste cultivation" project with an audience of relatively well-educated members. They attended because they already liked music, because the concerts were close to their homes and because they were satisfied with the concert experience. Following the interviews the author divides audience members into "enthusiasts" [c15%], "non-committals" [c15%], "intellectuals" and "rejectors" [c70% combined] but found little to suggest that many audience members, as a result of these concerts, are likely to become regular attenders of this kind of music.

The author concludes that audience development requires a long-term commitment and more precise goals. It may produce failures as well as successes but this is necessary to develop a full picture of how different aspects of audience development can operate in different contexts and with different kinds of audience. A full programme of audience development research is also needed to inform future policy - on the dynamics of audience creation and progression and on the relationship between people and the arts and whether interest leads to self-motivated exploration.

#### Availability

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