BEST MARKETING PRACTICES FOR BUILDING A STRONG AUDIENCE-BASE
FOR RUBBER CITY SHAKESPEARE COMPANY

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Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

In this study, the best marketing practices for growing a strong audience-base for Rubber City Shakespeare Company in Summit County, Ohio are explored. The Rubber City Shakespeare Company is used as a case study in order to serve as a stand-in for newly formed non-profit organizations. Doing so will allows this study to provide real-world examples of potential marketing issues arts organizations might encounter and how those issues might be resolved. This was accomplished through analyzing demographic data collected by RCSC from their patrons over the course of a six-month period and comparing it to national arts marketing data in order to provide suggestions as how to improve the organization’s marketing techniques. In addition, profiles of the marketing strategies of Great Lakes Theater and the Ohio Shakespeare Festival were created, in order to provide examples as to how comparable arts organizations in the region utilized their marketing strategies in order to build their respective audiences. Finally, RCSC’s current marketing strategies were analyzed and then compared to the both national and regional data in order to provide RCSC with suggestions as to how they may improve their marketing practices and build a stronger audience-base.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the United States, many young theatre artists attempt to start their own theatre companies in the hopes that they will be able to build a successful and sustainable nonprofit organization. However, once these artists finally assemble a production team and begin to produce theatrical works, they find themselves struggling to build a strong audience-base with which they can grow their organization. While fundraising, finding a suitable base of operation, or assembling an active board of directors, could be any of the number of reasons that the nonprofit theatre company may be struggling to get their organization off the ground, this study will focus on marketing challenges such organizations may face.

Non-profit arts marketing is a wide-ranging subject that has been written about by a number of marketing professionals over the past forty years, any attempt to cover the breath of that subject in one graduate thesis would be a difficult undertaking. In order to focus the scope of this study, the current marketing techniques of Rubber City Shakespeare Company, a recently created arts organization in Summit County, Ohio were analyzed in order to recommend the potential best marketing practices they might employ to build a strong audience-base for their organization.
Operational Definitions

Before this study can begin analyzing Rubber City Shakespeare Company, the term “best marketing practices” must be defined. The definition of “marketing” from the American Association of Marketing is “the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large” (“Definition of Marketing,” ama.org). The term “best practices,” according to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary website can be defined as “a procedure that has been shown by research and experience to produce optimal results and that is established or proposed as a standard suitable for widespread adoption” (“Best Practices,” Merriam-Webster.com). For the purposes of this study, the two definitions are combined to create a working definition for “best marketing practices,” that definition is:

“an activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large that has been shown by research and experience to produce optimal results and that is established or proposed as a standard suitable for widespread adoption.” (“Definition of Marketing,” ama.org), (“Best Practices,” Merriam-Webster.com)

Rubber City Shakespeare Company: A Case Study

In this section the history, development, and marketing practices of The Rubber City Shakespeare Company will be discussed in order to create an accurate snapshot of the organization in its current state. Rubber City Shakespeare Company, or RCSC as it will be referred to throughout this study, is a 501©3 Nonprofit theatre company located in Akron, Ohio. The organization’s mission statement is as follows:
Rubber City Shakespeare Company’s mission is to bring affordable Shakespeare and classical drama to the Akron, Ohio, area. Through the use of our "Free Shakespeare" program, we will stage Shakespeare and other classical works that will be accessible for everyone. The "Free" Shakespeare project includes free staged readings throughout the year, and Pay-As-You-Like-It performances for each production in an artistic year. Using Shakespeare's plays and other classical drama as an educational tool, we strive to inspire the next generation of theatergoers and performers, while also producing and providing entertaining classical theatre for the northeast Ohio community (“About Us”, rubbercityshakes.com).

While RCSC primarily serves Summit County, the organization pulls in patrons from Cuyahoga, Geauga, and Medina Counties as well. They produce 6-7 Shakespearean or Classical productions per artistic season. The organization currently has a five member part-time staff with Dane CT Leasure (Artistic Director) and Casey Robinson (Managing Director) serving as the sole members of the administrative staff. While they can only be legally compensated for 20+ hours of work each week, they both put in additional hours out of their personal schedules in order to keep up with the demands of the organization. RCSC also provides modest stipends for its performers, stage managers, and designers. It is the organization’s long-term goal to become a fully functioning equity theatre in order to provide the highest quality performances so that it can achieve its mission to educate and inspire the next generation of theatre professionals. RCSC is a relatively young organization as it is currently producing its fourth consecutive artistic season. In order to understand RCSC’s growth over the past several years, a focus on the history of the organization is helpful.

Current Artist Director Dane CT Leasure created the Rubber City Shakespeare Company in 2013. RCSC was originally intended to be a travelling Shakespearean summer repertory theatre, similar in style to The Cleveland Shakespeare Festival. It was Dane’s hope to travel throughout Akron’s park system in Akron and southern suburbs.
providing free/affordable Shakespearean performances to those underserved communities. Unfortunately, due to budget and lack of understanding on the side of park administrators, Dane’s original idea became unfeasible. However, undeterred by those obstacles, Dane used his professional connections at The University of Akron to stage Rubber City’s first production of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* in one of the lecture halls at the university.

That production led to RCSC’s first artistic season, which included the aforementioned production of *Midsummer* and a production of *Twelfth Night*. Those two productions garnered a total attendance of 100+ patrons for each production. It was during this period that RCSC decided that it would begin charging patrons for tickets and focusing their efforts on securing a permanent performance venue.

In 2014, RCSC began its second artistic season with a staged reading of *Julius Caesar* followed by summer repertory productions of *Much Ado about Nothing* and *Romeo and Juliet*. During this period, RCSC continued to perform in the lecture halls of the University of Akron. This caused Rubber City’s production teams a number of difficulties, as they would have to strike sets and costumes after every performance. In addition, the lack of easy to access patron parking and the operational frustrations of moving from lecture hall to lecture hall were becoming major obstacles for the organization. Fortunately, the two repertory productions had a combined total attendance of 278 patrons. Due to the success of the second summer repertory, RCSC was able to use the profits from the two productions to move a new home, Summit Art Space.

In the fall of 2014, RCSC opened its first two productions in Summit Arts Space with its repertory productions of *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Tis Pity She’s a Whore*. 
The new location provided a number of benefits to the organization, such as parking right next to the performance space, handicap access, office space for the administrative staff, storage space for sets, props and costumes, and more artistic agency over the performance space than they had at the university.

RCSC continued to produce shows at the Summit Art Space from fall of 2014 until the summer of 2016. During that period, RCSC made a number of accomplished important feats in terms of their growth and sustainability. They managed to attain their 501©3 nonprofit status, and RCSC produced their first musical *Aida*, which was, to date, Rubber City’s highest attended event with a total attendance 599 patrons. Other major events during this period were bringing current Managing Director, Casey Robinson on staff. In terms of expanding their marketing efforts, RCSC began utilizing social media more heavily, producing short video trailers for each production, taking professional production photos, and marketing through direct mail and radio ads.

Moving into 2016, RCSC wanted to focus more on production quality, which was one of the major challenges that the Summit Arts Space venue. The multi-purpose room, where RCSC produced all of their programming, has a very low ceiling, which made theatrical lighting a challenge. The sets of RCSC’s productions had to be relatively simplistic and mobile, as they had to be struck the day of the final performance to allow the other nonprofits renting the administrative space access to that room. The owners of the building would not allow RCSC to build any set that had to be anchored to the floor. The productions often had to be scheduled around other events in the multi-purpose facility, which caused Dane some difficulty with season planning. These and a number of other factors led to RCSC deciding to move their company to yet another location.
Beginning with their 2016 production of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, RCSC announced that they were moving to The Well: Community Development Corporation located on the east side of Akron. Since the move, RCSC has staged four productions including their second most well attended event, an adaption of *A Christmas Carol*. RCSC has proven itself an adaptable and resilient organization in its first four years of development, but as the focus of this study is marketing, it must now paint an accurate picture of how RCSC developed its current marketing strategies.

**The Development of Rubber City Shakespeare Company’s Current Marketing Strategies**

During RCSC’s 2013 season, when they was still performing at the university, their marketing efforts were primarily e-mail, social media, and paper-based. Dane, and then Managing Director Chris Simmons, focused much of their marketing efforts on getting posters hung throughout the campus, as most college campuses are a poster-friendly environment. In addition to hanging posters, they e-mailed performance notices to the Northeast Ohio Performing Arts list, and created Facebook events for both of the productions they produced that year.

When RCSC moved into Summit Arts Space during its second artistic season, the organization switched from using posters for event promotion to using rack cards (small postcard-sized show advertisements). They would circulate those rack cards through the Akron public library system and drop them off at a number of coffee shops throughout the city. The organization also expanded their reach online by creating the Rubber City Shakespeare Company Facebook page, launching their website, and beginning the practice of utilizing free online event listings sites such as Cleveland.com,
summitcountycalendar.com, and eventful.com. While all of these improvements in marketing strategy were good for RCSC’s brand, performance attendance between those first two artistic seasons held at an average of 124 patrons per production.

In 2015, with RCSC’s production of *All’s Well That Ends Well*, Dane and Chris Simmons increased their marketing efforts with the addition of purchasing 30 second radio ads with WKSU and creating a relationship with Seatstir.com. Seatstir.com is a volunteer seat filler website that serves the Midwestern United States by providing discreet seat fillers to performance venues at no charge to the venue. The benefits to RCSC for working with Seatstir.com are threefold; RCSC can decide which performances Seatstir members will be invited to and the number of tickets they are provided with. Those patrons attending on behalf of Seatstir.com can potentially donate to RCSC, purchase concessions, and/or purchase items from the RCSC store. Finally, with the additional Seatstir members in the audience, the venue’s attendance would appear to other patrons to be greater than the normal ticket sales may have originally allowed, thus making the venue appear more professional and help spread positive word of mouth about the venue.

In the area of social media, Dane began taking photos during rehearsals and creating short production trailers to be used as promotional content on Facebook and YouTube. It is also interesting to note that, *All’s Well That Ends Well* was the first RCSC production to run for a full three weekends with ten performances in total. These additions to RCSC’s marketing strategy led to their first significant jump in attendance with *All’s Well That Ends Well*’s total attendance reaching 195 patrons.
Due to this boost in attendance, RCSC decided that for the 2015-2016 artistic season that they would bring on a marketing director. The researcher and author of this thesis, served in that position from April through October of 2015. During this period, the marketing director created RCSC’s YouTube channel, Twitter account, and changed the format of the RCSC newsletter to the current “Meet the Actors” interview style in order to shift the marketing away from advertisement to content creation. The Marketing Director also suggested that RCSC to begin direct mailing its rack cards a subscribers list, that practice was adopted during the fall 2015 production of *Macbeth*. Unfortunately, the administrative budget could not continue support the expanded staff that Dane had hired in early 2015, so the Board of Directors decided that in order to protect the sustainability of the organization those staff members would need to be let go.

From their production of *All’s Well That Ends Well* in the spring of 2015 to their move to the Well: CDC in the summer of 2016, Rubber City Shakespeare Company has continued to utilize many of these strategies to continue to grow its audience-base with varying levels of success. On a positive note, with the exception of *Women Beware Women*, which had an attendance of 141, attendance for RCSC productions has never fallen below 190 patrons per production. However, their attendance numbers have varied wildly since their 2015 production of *Macbeth*. This study intends to discuss this issue along with a number of others in order discover whether RCSC has a strong audienceship.

Other than the aforementioned rapid shifts in attendance, RCSC has accomplished many impressive feats in regards to their marketing during its short existence. The organization has grown its mailing list to 350 subscribers; the total reach of its Facebook
posts as of December of 2016 is 20,481; and their highest attended production thus far has been RCSC’s first musical *Aida*, which brought in 599 patrons. While these are all excellent accomplishments, there are certainly areas within RCSC’s overall marketing strategies that could use improvement. For instance, the average open rate of RCSC’s e-mail blasts is only 29.3%. With a list of 307 people that is roughly 207 people who are not opening RCSC’s e-mails. The organization currently has two YouTube channels. One of which has not been updated since the fall of 2015, while the other only has one video from their production of *Aida*. RCSC has created quite a bit of video content in the four years since their inaugural season, the fact that it is not all consolidated to one up-to-date YouTube channel appears to be a big missed opportunity for the organization. In addition, RCSC’s Twitter account, which currently has 151 followers, appears to be lacking the kind of relevant content that generates a high volume of retweets, likes, and shares. These issues, along with a number of other issues related to RCSC’s marketing will be discussed. This study is, however, not exhaustive. It is only intended to provide a snapshot of the organization’s current marketing strategies. While RCSC’s marketing may benefit from some suggestions to improve its effectiveness, the organization has certainly laid the groundwork to utilize some potentially impactful marketing strategies to assist them in developing a stronger audience-base for the future of their organization.

The Challenges of Building a Strong Audience-base in Summit County

Based on current data from *census.gov*, Summit County is Ohio’s fourth most populous county with 541,968 people living within its borders. About 78% of that population is over the age of 18, with 16.6% of those adults being over 65 years of age.
In the area of gender, 51.5% of the population is female, and when considering Summit County’s educational demographics, the percentage of population aged 25+ years with a Bachelor’s degree or higher is 30.3%. In addition, the median income in Summit County is $50,765. (“Quick Facts: Summit County,” Census.gov) This information is highly useful when comparing it to national demographic trends among arts patrons.

When considering national demographic data collected by Eugene Carr and Michelle Paul from 10,000 arts patrons in their book *Breaking the Fifth Wall: Rethinking Arts Marketing for the 21st Century* they concluded that of the average arts patron, “Two thirds of respondents were women, and nearly half are over the age of 55” (22). When considering Carr and Paul’s education data the authors discovered that “the arts audience is highly educated. Half of the respondents have graduate degrees and another 33 percent have at least a bachelor’s degree” (23). Finally, in the area of income they found that “The average household income of this group is also high. Even though a third of respondents chose not to answer the question, 57 percent of those who did fell in the $50,000 – $150,000 income range” (23). When these national trends are compared with the data collected from Summit County’s population it is logical to conclude that RCSC as an organization is in a strong position to potentially service a large audience.

However, there are some major challenges specific to Summit County RCSC must overcome in order to build a strong audience-base.

Summit County may be the fourth largest county in Ohio, but it is fixated just south of Ohio’s most populous county, Cuyahoga County. Cuyahoga boasts such prestigious arts organizations as Playhouse Square, The Cleveland Play House, Great Lakes Theater, Cain Park, The Cleveland Shakespeare Festival, and Cleveland Public
Theater. Another source of competition is that almost every major suburb in Cuyahoga County has a relatively successful community theater located within its boundaries. Adding to this, the city of Cleveland, where most of these organizations are located, is only 30 miles north of Akron, Summit County’s most populous city. With this oversaturation of theatrical programming, there are a number of organizations pulling audience attention away from Summit County’s theatrical offerings. This one of the major problems RCSC must overcome.

Further contributing to the competition that RCSC faces, as of 2016, they no longer the only arts organization in the city of Akron producing a year-round slate of Shakespearean productions. From 2014 to 2016, RCSC was the only nonprofit theatre company in Akron producing a year-round season of Shakespearean/Classical productions. Only during the summer months would RCSC have to compete directly with another theatrical company known for producing Shakespearean works, as the Ohio Shakespeare Festival (OSF) produces a repertory of two Shakespearean productions out of their Stan Hywet Hall and Gardens location.

Things began change in the summer of 2016 when Actor’s Summit, one of RCSC’s competitors announced that they would be closing their doors after 17 seasons of operation. This news was originally very positive for RCSC, as Actor’s Summit was the closest theatrical organization to RCSC in terms of distance, being only few blocks away from their Summit Arts Space location. There was even the possibility that RCSC might be able to acquire Actor’s Summit’s former space at Greystone Hall and move their organization to that location.
The administrative staff at RCSC met with the Visitors Bureau, who runs the Greystone Hall space, and toured the facility. While the cost of running the space at Greystone was a potential issue for Rubber City, there was some discussion the Visitors Bureau that RCSC could possibly rent the space to other nonprofit organizations. Unfortunately, that was not to be, as OSF was able to move on the Greystone space and acquired it over RCSC. In September of 2016, OSF officially announced that they were moving to Greystone Hall and would be using it to produce a year-round season of Shakespearean works. While there are some major differences between the two companies that may allow RCSC to function alongside OSF as one of the two Shakespeare producing organizations in Akron, this direct competition has the potential to be an obstacle to RCSC’s future success.

Another major obstacle that RCSC suffers from is one that many other small arts nonprofits struggle with, a small staff. Currently, RCSC has two part-time administrative staff members, Dane CT Leasure (Artistic Director) and Casey Robinson (Managing Director). The two of them share the responsibility of marketing the organization along with their other responsibilities of creating, reporting, and following the budget for the organization, fundraising (although the board of directors assists in this regard), and directing/producing RCSC’s theatrical season. Fortunately, they do have several part-time staff members and independent contractors who serve as production designers, costumers, and stage managers that they can call on to assist with the productions so the workload does not rest entirely on their shoulders. However, with a budget of roughly $45,000, 13% of which is devoted to marketing, and a 28-hour workweek between RCSC’s artistic and managing directors, the time they have to focus their efforts on
marketing the organization is extraordinarily tight. Especially when one compares RCSC with organizations like OSF or Great Lakes Theater who have who have a much larger staff and run on budgets of $98,372 and $3, 815,141 respectively. (United States. Department of the Treasury, guidestar.org)

This study recognizes these challenges in marketing resources and positioning for RCSC. It is the intention of this study to provide recommendations based on both the data collected by RSCS and analyzed by the researcher and national marketing trends in order to provide RCSC with recommendations to assist them in building a sustainable audience-base. With these recommendations, RCSC may be able to continue to compete and thrive amongst the other performing arts organizations in Summit County.

The Importance of the Study

This study is relevant to students recently graduating from a collegiate performing arts program and seasoned theatre professionals as it the career goal of many artists to create and establish a sustainable theatrical producing organization. These students and professionals may not however have a guideline to develop a set of successful marketing practices in order to build a strong audience-base for their organizations. By collecting national marketing research, analyzing the case study of Rubber City Shakespeare Company, and comparing the marketing strategies of successful local theatre companies, this study sets out to develop a number of recommends of successful strategies that can be used to build a strong audience-base. With these recommendations and proposed marketing techniques almost any start-up arts nonprofit in the United States should be able improve their marketing strategies in order to survive their first 5-years of existence.
The two major questions this study intends to explore are: “What are best practices in marketing for small Shakespearean theatre companies in the Midwestern United States?” and “How can these marketing practices for small Shakespearean theater companies inform Rubber City Shakespeare Company’s current marketing techniques?” In exploring these questions, Rubber City Shakespeare Company has the potential to serve as a model for other small start-up theatrical organizations and lead them in cultivating a strong audience-base of their own.
CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The subject of marketing has been discussed by a multitude of authors. Some have even narrowed that focus to discussing the most effective tactics for marketing performing arts nonprofits. This study will narrow that focus even further to discussing improvements to the marketing techniques of a small performing arts nonprofit in Summit County, Ohio. The key issues to evaluate when comparing Rubber City Shakespeare Company’s (RCSC) marketing practices with the best practices of the national arts marketing community are:

- Is RCSC communicating its mission and branding effectively?
- How focused is RCSC’s marketing efforts on appropriate target markets in Summit County?
- Is RCSC using its marketing resources such as web, e-mail, print, and social media to effectively engage their audience?
- Are there any marketing strategies that RCSC is neglecting that they could be using to build their audience-base?

While this section will not answer these questions for RCSC specifically, it will delve into how to these questions could be answered for any small business or nonprofit
organization. Doing this will give this study a strong point of comparison as to what the best marketing practices are at a national level in the world of nonprofit marketing.

In order to answer these questions, this study has consulted a number of recently published texts on the subject of not only nonprofit marketing, but also marketing as a whole. These texts break down the many facets involved in the marketing of a business or, in the case of this study, a nonprofit performing arts venue. In addition, they provide insights as how to improve an organization’s current marketing efforts. In order to discuss these aspects in the most easy-to-understand method possible, this study will focus on the five major facets of nonprofit marketing: Mission, Audience/Demographics, Direct Mail/Newspaper/Radio, Web/E-mail, and Social Media. Since all nonprofit organizations start with a single person and an idea that eventually evolve into a mission statement. The following section presents research on ways that mission statement can be turned into an effective marketing tool.

Mission Statements

Every arts nonprofit has a mission statement, as it is a basic requirement for every organization to attain nonprofit status from the U.S. government. However, many nonprofit organizations write a mission statement, use it to gain their non-profit status, and then they post it on their website not using it for any active purpose other than to legally prove the organization is a non-profit. According to Guerrilla Marketing for Nonprofits by Jay Conrad Levinson, Frank Adkins, and Chris Forbes, this is a huge missed opportunity.
Guerilla Marketing for Nonprofits is a comprehensive guide to marketing a nonprofit organization in the 21st Century. The authors of the book use the metaphor of “Guerilla” (the Spanish word for warrior) Marketing to discuss creating a culture within a nonprofit organization that uses every asset at its disposal and every contact it has with its audience as an opportunity for effective marketing. They go so far as to suggest that if said culture is cultivated within an organization the resulting passion of the staff tends to cause audiences to gravitate to the organization due to the clarity of their new “guerilla” message. This study found this book to be an excellent resource as it provides a multitude of tips, tricks, and actual examples of nonprofits that have used similar strategies as those presented in Guerilla Marketing for Nonprofits to great effect. The book also offered many suggestions as to how an organization can connect with its clients through their programing, fundraising, and volunteer recruitment efforts. This section of the literature review centers on Levinson, Adkins and Forbes’ thoughts on writing a strong mission statement and using it as an effective marketing tool.

According to Levinson, Adkins, and Forbes, an organization’s mission statement is its very first opportunity to market themselves to potential patrons. In the authors’ words:

Your cause can be the most important one in the world, but people won’t be interested in what you are doing unless you can make a meaningful connection with them. You need to find a compelling and inspiring way to describe why you exist, what you do, and why it makes a difference in the world (Levinson, et al., 59).

For this reason, it is important for nonprofits to write a strong clear mission statement as it is an organization’s rallying cry to pull their followers, or in the case of this study audience, to their cause.
To go a step further, the mission statement can be used to accomplish a number of necessary functions within the organization. As stated in *Guerilla Marketing for Nonprofits*, a well-written and conceived mission statement can help with strategic planning and capacity building. It allows an entire administrative and volunteer staff to work toward the same objectives and heavily affects how they treat their audience. The mission should also help the organization build a stronger brand message, as it should permeate all of the organization’s media and communications. With all that positive functionality coming from one statement about an organization, the next logical question for an arts organization to ask itself must be, “how does one write a strong clear mission statement?”

Before an organization writes its “Guerilla” mission statement, the authors suggest the organization evaluates its situation by performing a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis. Once this analysis is performed, the organization should have a clear picture of what it does well in terms of its programing and people resources. Using the data an organization has collected from its SWOT analysis Levinson, Conrad, and Forbes offer a method for writing a clear and concise mission statement that should easily communicate any organization’s purpose to their intended audience. On page 69 of *Guerilla Marketing for Nonprofits*, they suggest that an organization write a short three-sentence “guerilla” mission statement:

- Why do you exist?
- What does your organization do?
- What difference does it make?

To add greater clarity to Levinson and company’s three-sentence “guerilla” mission statement, this study will explain the meaning behind each sentence. When they ask,
“why do you exist?” they are suggesting that an organization discuss its passions in one sentence. It is a basic statement explaining why an organization does what it does, and why what it is doing is important.

Answering the second question, “what does your organization do?” seems simple enough, but what really sets an organization apart here is what activity or service the organization provides that no else can. If a nonprofit wishes to set itself apart from other organizations providing similar services and attract a strong and faithful audience-base, they must clearly define what they do, as this will lead to the organization finding their niche. A marketing niche, as defined by Businessdictionary.com, is “A small but profitable segment of a market suitable for focused attention by a marketer. Market niches do not exist by themselves but are created by identifying needs or wants that are not being addressed by competitors and by offering products that satisfy them.”

It is a commonly held belief that a person cannot be everything to everyone, yet many nonprofits attempt to do this very thing by assuming they are here to serve everyone. While that may be true in a general sense, every nonprofit has a specific goal they are working toward and that goal is going to resonate the strongest with a specific niche of the population. The more clearly the mission statement outlines what the organization does to accomplish the goals of the first sentence of the “guerilla” mission statement the more attracted that organization’s niche will be to that organization’s programs and services.

Finally, an organization must outline their impact with the third sentence, “what difference does it make?” This statement explains to an audience how the organization’s existence improves their lives. This is one of the most vital parts of the “guerilla”
mission statement as one of the most important messages an audience needs to hear is why they need a product. In the world of arts nonprofits, this translates to why the audience need to purchase tickets to a performance, or pay a fee to be a part of an organization’s educational programing. Without a personal reason for a patron to need an organization in their lives, it will be far easier for them to choose not to purchase a ticket, make a charitable donation, or even give up some of their time to volunteer.

Once an organization has condensed its mission down to these three basic concepts, it will be in a much stronger position to sell their programs, services, and their entire organization to a perspective patron. If the message is clear enough, there is a possibility that a patron may become immersed in the passion that the organization’s staff shares for the cause. This connection between patron and organization will lead to building a strong audience-base for that organization.

**Audience and Demographics**

Having a clearly defined mission is an excellent first step in building a strong audience-base. However, every patron that walks through an organization’s front door, sees one of their social media posts, or reads about them in the newspaper is an individual with their own experiences, culture, and socio-economic background. These individuals each respond differently to the messages they encounter. In order for this study to advise an arts nonprofit as to what strategies they should be using to build their audience-base, it must first discuss the potential audiences arts nonprofits are most likely to serve and the types of messages they respond to positively.
While *Guerilla Marketing for Nonprofits* has an excellent breakdown of each of the major generational segments of people alive today, three other works will be heavily referenced in this section. *Marketing for Millennials* by Jeff Fromm and Christie Garton offers a large amount of content about the Millennial Generational Segment as it takes an in-depth look into that generation’s habits, socio-economic status, and cultural make-up. In addition to Fromm and Garton’s work on the Millennial Generation, this study will also reference arts audience data collected by Eugene Carr and Michelle Paul in their book, *Breaking the Fifth Wall: Rethinking Arts Marketing for the 21st Century*. It has an entire chapter filled with art marketing survey data that will prove relevant to this section. The full text discusses many of the new social media and computer innovations that have taken place since the late 1980s in the world of arts nonprofit administration and marketing, while highlighting the most effective practices that can be used to building audiences in the performing arts. Finally, this study will pull information from *Arts Marketing Insights* by Joanne Scheff Bernstein. Bernstein’s work was published in 2007, so it should be noted that some of the marketing trends mentioned in the book shifted drastically after the global economic recession of 2008. However, the book provides a number of excellent examples of organizations using creative marketing strategies to build their audiences and much of the demographic insights still hold true about the segments discussed in Bernstein’s book.

Finding an audience and discovering the most effective messages to get them to invest their time and money in an organization is one of the most difficult tasks that a marketer must undertake, as it is easy to send the wrong message to an audience member, and once that trust is broken, it is very difficult to rebuild it. The best way to find the
right message to send to compel them to give their time, talents, and money to the organization is to get to know the patrons of the organization. Now meeting with everyone on a personal level would be very time consuming and impractical. Therefore, the best method to get to know an audience is to find the commonalities they share and learn the board psychological triggers that cause them to feel positive about an organization. Then a marketer must use that data to create compelling messages to lead potential audience members to take the positive action of involving themselves with the organization.

In order to learn some broad characteristics of potential audience members, this study will discuss some broad demographic trends found in the works mentioned above. According to the survey data of 23 arts organizations from across the U.S. found in *Breaking the Fifth Wall: Rethinking Arts Marketing for the 21st Century*, the average arts patrons are older adults, in fact, “two thirds of respondents are women, and nearly half are over the age of 55. Only 13 percent are under the age of 35” (Carr and Paul, 22). In the area of educational attainment, “the arts audience is highly educated. Half of the respondents have graduate degrees, another 33 percent have at least a bachelor’s degree. By comparison, only 9 percent of general population of the United States has graduate degrees” (Carr and Paul, 23). Finally, in the sphere of household income, Carr and Paul report that a high percentage of their respondents fell between the $50,000-$150,000 income ranges. By combining these bits of demographic data, this study finds that on average arts patrons are “highly educated, mostly female, with a high average household income” (23).
This means that the average arts patron falls in one of two major generational segments, the Silent Generation (born between 1925-1945) and the Baby Boomer Generation (born between 1946-1964). *Guerrilla Marketing for Nonprofits* discusses the history of each of these generational segments and the types of marketing messages they are most likely to respond to positively. At present, the population of the silent generation is dwindling, as they fall between the ages of 71-92. However, as they may be some of an arts organization’s most loyal patrons, as loyalty is common trait amongst their generation, they are still relevant to this discussion. According to Levinson, Adkins, and Forbes’ book this generation’s defining characteristics are that they believe in hard work, being frugal with money, creating opportunities for their friends, and they trust institutions more than they trust individuals. If an organization wants to make a strong connection with this group, some of types of communications that they respond to positively are organizations getting endorsements from respected leaders in the community, showing respect for this generation’s contribution to the current success of an organization, and laying out a long-range vision for the organization. One of the most important things to be remembered about the Silent Generation is not to underestimate or overlook them because, while they may be not be around for much longer, they are highly influential voice in the United States.

The most important generation for arts marketer learn to communicate with are the Baby Boomers. The Baby Boomer Generation, according to Levinson, Adkins and Forbes’ book, currently make up about 78 million people in the United States and are a median age of 62. According to the data collected by Carr and Paul in *Breaking the Fifth Wall*, the average arts patron is most likely to fall within this generational segment. It is,
therefore, extremely important that performing arts marketers learn as much as possible about this generation. Some of the defining characteristics of this generation are their need for personal gratification, purpose-driven attitude, civic-mindedness, and willingness to spend money. These are all important personality traits for arts organizations to recognize, as they are vital to the survival of the nonprofit. In order to understand each trait more thoroughly, this study will quickly breakdown the meaning of each of these Boomer traits based on the information found in *Guerilla Marketing for Nonprofits*:

- **Moralistic** – Boomers tend to see everything through the prism of right vs. wrong and good vs. evil. A good way to get a Boomer’s attention is to spotlight injustice.

- **Purpose Driven** – Boomers are driven and hardworking, and tend to think a person needs to pay his dues and work his way to the top. Position is the outcome of creative action, hard work, and dedication.

- **Personal Gratification** – Many Boomers value relationships for what they get out of them emotionally or in how they help develop themselves. When relating to people, the loyalty of friends is highly valued. Boomers also want respect from others for their achievements.

- **Spend the Money** – Boomers are focused on the present more than the future. For this reason, they have always had the tendency to spend more than save. They want to spend in ways that have a measurable impact on the present.

- **Civic Minded** – Boomers care deeply about human rights, fairness, humane practices, and building trust. They will join organizations that agree with their values and they love working to right the world’s wrongs (Levinson, et al. 78-79).

While they are not as relevant as the points above, there are other two important traits of the Boomer Generation that are worthy of note. While they are not actively opposed to new technology, they are playing catch up with it. It may take them time to adapt to new technologies, but once they do, they tend to be very proud of it and inform all of their friends. Also Boomers are far more distrustful of large institutions than the Silent
Generation as this generation gave rise to the anti-war and hippie movements; when communicating with them make personal connections, highlight the organizations best practices, and if an organization has a novel approach (anti-establishment) to the art that the organization creates, try to focus on it.

Thus far, this study has focused on the two generations that most likely make up the vast majority of the current performing arts audience; however, another aspect of arts marketing is building the audiences of the future. The two generations that make up the future arts audience are Generation X and the Millennials. Generation X was born between 1965-1979, and lived through the period of the 20th Century when divorce became culturally acceptable and reached prominence. Also due to a number of political and religious scandals such as Watergate, Enron, and Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker scandals, they tend to be a very cynical segment that has a high tendency toward self-reliance and an expectation that the money they are investing and/or donating is being used as effectively as possible.

This segment may provide some serious challenges to the arts marketer as they have a high level of distrust toward institutions and feel that their leaders may not have achieved their position of power due to competency, but through political maneuvering. As mentioned earlier, this generation has a tendency toward being cynical and needs a transparent organization willing to build trust with them. They also have difficulty making commitments due to the amount of them that come from divorced backgrounds. These difficulties with making commitments may be one of the factors that contribute to the low subscribership amongst this generational segment. Some tactics that resonant with this group are highlighting the effectiveness of the leadership of an arts organization,
creating a sense of transparency as to how their donations are being used within the organization, and expressing to them how valuable their money is to the organization. Due to the high self-reliant of this generation, organizations should find ways to express respect for their generation and applaud their individually and self-reliance by making them feel in control.

Finally, this study must discuss the largest, most diverse and tech-savvy generation in American history, the Millennials. Born between 1980-1996, this generation has 86 million people within its ranks, roughly 25% of the American population. Millennials also have much higher percentage of Hispanic and African-Americans within their segment than any previous generation. They are becoming so influential that their generation was widely credited for being instrumental in helping to elect America’s first African-American president Barack Obama.

Jeff Fromm and Christie Garton’s book Marketing to Millennials provides an in-depth look at this generation and what marketing messages they respond to. Millennials, unlike Gen Xers are highly optimistic about the future. They are not only tech savvy, being the first generation to experience widespread computer and internet usage for much of their lives, but are also the primary technical advisor and teacher in their households. If an organization wants a member of an older generation to start using a new piece of technology, it will more than likely be the Millennial of the household to teach them how to use it. They are often highly respected by those older generations for their adaptability and understanding of new technologies.

The two most important concepts to understand when relating to Millennials are the concept of the participation economy and creating a relationship and sense of value
with an organization. Millennials are the primary users of social media outlets like Facebook and Twitter. This creates an instant avenue for connecting with patrons and receiving instant feedback from them. The dilemma that many organizations face with social media is how to use it effectively to increase ticket sales. One of the most effective ways of doing this is creating what Fromm and Garton call a “brand advocate” is through building a relationship with patrons by embracing the new participation economy. (Fromm and Garton, 81-82) If an organization just is advertising its programming, this will often result in low social media connectively. A far more effective tactic with Millennials is creating relationships with them, content creation, and participatory discussions. Millennials are looking for blogs to read about an organization, stories about lives the organization has affected positively, immediate responses to inquiries about an organization, and gestures that show that their business is valuable to the organization. These strategies will elevate an organization’s reputation with this segment, and result in the patron becoming a “brand advocate.” According to Fromm and Garton, a “brand advocate” is a small marketing agent who will provide a multitude of positive word-of-mouth both online and off.

Another important factor to Millennials is value, as the economic downturn of 2008 hit their generation the hardest. According to Fromm and Garton, “Millennials are willing to spend…but they want a good deal, and will often buy luxury goods off-price at places like T.J. Maxx or outlets. They’re like stalkers when it comes to getting a good deal on something they really want” (147). Two factors that are important to the millennial mindset are looking good amongst their peers and feeling that their experiences provide them with a sense of fun and adventure. Therefore, it is important
for the arts marketer to fulfill these needs while at the same time providing a sense of value to Millennials. Due to the prevalence of social media, Millennials are highly influenced by their peers. This is one of the reasons making “brand advocates” out of them is so important. Millennials also crave a sense of adventure, as Fromm and Garton put it:

Not all Millennials are getting to pursue the laissez-faire lifestyle as much as they’d like, due in part to the lingering effects of the economic downturn. However, their general sense of adventurousness still manifests itself in their interest in other cultures, exotic foods, and novel activities they can enjoy closer to home (129).

This generational trend among Millennials is fantastic news for arts marketers, but it is important to find a balance of adventurous and exotic programming at a price that the average Millennial can afford.

Before this study finishes its discussion of demographics, there are two important subcategories within each of these generational segments that are worthy of discussion, gender and ethnicity. According Joanne Scheff Bernstein in *Arts Marketing Insights*:

Research shows that more than 80 percent of purchasing decisions in the United States today are made by women. Furthermore, since the late 1980s, women have been earning 57 percent of the college degrees awarded and about half of the professional graduate degrees. Today, women bring in at least half the income in a majority of U.S. households and control 51.3 percent of the private wealth in the United States. The largest wealth transfer in U.S. history is occurring as baby boomers inherit from their parents. Because women outlive men, family assets will be concentrated in the hands of boomer women. Undoubtedly, women are the largest and important market segment, and marketers should seriously consider what approaches are most effective in reaching women (Bernstein, 40).

Based on this information, credence is given to the old adage in the art community that women tend to be the ones who pick the shows and buy the tickets, and they just drag the men along with them. To capitalize on the female demographic, Bernstein suggests that marketers take into account what types of messages women respond to positively. When
making purchase decisions women tend to be more detailed when processing information and can notice more peripheral information than men can. They therefore respond to subtle marketing with a comprehensive list of product benefits, where men on the other hand respond to simple direct messages than highlight a single product benefit, as they tend to be highly goal-oriented and want information that helps them make quick simple decisions. Women also tend to respond well to stories, as they like to hear them and share them. When marketing to women it is important to create a narrative with an emotional element, as emotions tend to make a deeper connection in their psyche. Women also have a tendency to recount ads with strong visuals, sound bites, and stories easier than men do. This information is highly valuable when considering an organization’s content creation strategy in regards to its marketing.

As for minority groups, there are a high percentage of minorities among the millennial generational segment. The largest ethnic minority amongst the millennial segment are Hispanic-Americans. According to Joanne Scheff Bernstein:

The U.S. Hispanic population grew more than four times as fast as the U.S. population as a whole between 1990 and 2002. With an estimated 38.8 million Hispanics in the in the United States in 2002, Hispanics are now the largest single minority group in the country, and this population is expected to continue to grow at a more rapid rate than other populations segments, with a projected population of eighty-one million by 2050 (43). Since this figure was given, Hispanic population in United States has grown by 17.8 million according to the figures from census.gov from July 1, 2015. The Latino population is growing, and therefore it would be a mistake for arts marketers to overlook their segment. In Scheff’s book, it presents survey data that suggests that the Latino community is extremely family-oriented saying that, “89 percent of Latinos believe that relatives are more important than friends, compared with 67 percent of non-Hispanic
whites and 68 percent of African-Americans” (Bernstein, 44). She recommends that the best ways to reach out to their community would be to market family-oriented programming, pricing, and scheduling. She also found that Hispanic-Americans have a strong response to marketing material and programming that resonates strongly with Hispanic identity and culture and they tend to respond positively to bilingual promotional materials rather than to those printed entirely in Spanish.

The next largest minority segment of the U.S. population is that of the African-Americans. The current population of African-Americans in the United States is roughly 42.3 million people (Census.gov). That means that black Americans make up 13% of the U.S. population. As their income and education achievement increases, their wish to be a part of the arts community increases as well. Some important factors to consider when attempting to reach the African-American community is that spiritually is highly important to them. Like the Latino community, they to wish to see programming and marketing that has an understanding of and respect for African-American culture and history. They also want to see themselves represented in an organization’s advertising as it makes them feel welcome. The trends amongst arts organizations according to Arts Marketing Insights are that:

The significant number of African-American theatres and dance companies across the United States attests to strong interest among this market segment in the performing arts. Many predominantly white organizations are working to attract African-Americans to their performances by incorporating works by African-Americans on their stages, by casting people of color in their productions, by diversifying their boards and staff, and by reaching out to this segment in their local churches and community centers (Bernstein, 45).

This discussion of demographics could easily become a study of its own, as the LGBT community, singles, people with families, and the multitude of other potential
audience segments have not been covered here. As this study is primarily focused on the Summit County-area of Ohio, this amount of demographic data will suffice for now. To move forward in the discussion, this study must now discuss the most effective methods that can be used to reach the aforementioned communities. Throughout much of the 20th Century, the most effective marketing tactics were through paper-based and analogue media, such as newspaper ads, direct mail brochures, posters, and radio ads. With the invention of the internet and the dawn of the 21st Century, audiences have paid less attention to this type of media. So the question this study must ask is, “does the marketing of the 20th Century still work?” or should organizations created in the 21st Century only utilize 21st Century marketing tactics.

Marketing Techniques of the 20th Century: Do They Still Work?

The answer to the question “do the marketing techniques of the 20th Century are still effective tools to reach the audiences of the 21st Century” is yes and no. The major marketing techniques of the 20th century such as direct mail campaigns, print newspaper advertising, and radio advertising began experiencing a major transition with the introduction of the digital age. While there are many who are ready to claim that these industries are either dead or dying, the current state of affairs is not so black and white. If an arts marketer wishes to utilize any of these types of communication, the key to success at this point appears to be precise targeting and creativity.

Of the three major marketing channels, the newspaper industry is experiencing the most turmoil. According to an article from Journalism.org on the state of the news media in 2016 by Amy Mitchell and Jesse Holcomb:
Eight years after the Great Recession sent the U.S. newspaper industry into a tailspin, the pressures facing America’s newsrooms have intensified to nothing less than a reorganization of the industry itself, one that impacts the experiences of even those news consumers unaware of the tectonic shifts taking place (Mitchell and Holcomb, “State of the News Media 2016”).

The article is a multi-faceted look at the current state of all news media with links to informative data sheet articles on specific areas of news media such as radio, television, digital, etc. In the section in which they discuss data regarding the newspaper industry, they state that:

In 2015, the newspaper sector had perhaps the worst year since the recession and its immediate aftermath. Average weekday newspaper circulation, print and digital combined, fell another 7% in 2015, the greatest decline since 2010. While digital circulation crept up slightly (2% for weekday), it accounts for only 22% of total circulation. And any digital subscription gains or traffic increases have still not translated into game-changing revenue solutions. In 2015, total advertising revenue among publicly traded companies declined nearly 8%, including losses not just in print, but digital as well (Mitchell and Holcomb).

This news is disconcerting for any arts marketer deciding whether or not taking out a newspaper ad is a worthwhile strategy for their organization; however, if one digs deeper in the data on newspaper industry, they may find that there is still some hope as to whether using newspaper advertising is still a viable option.

One of the linked data sheets to Mitchell and Holcomb’s article, “Newspaper: Fact Sheet” by Michael Barthel examines the newspaper industry’s data and breaks the information down into demographic categories, economics, and digital readership. In terms of the audience for print media, Barthel found that “weekday circulation experienced a decline not seen since the immediate aftermath of the Great Recession. Average weekday circulation fell 7%, the most since 2010. This drop was due entirely to print circulation, which declined by 9%, while digital circulation increased by 2%” (“Newspaper: Factsheet”). According to the demographic data Barthel presents, daily
readership has been in steady decline across the board since before the turn of the century in terms of age, education level, and ethnicity. However, what is interesting to note is that Barthel’s trends show that while daily readership has dropped, the demographic areas in which daily readership remains the strongest are in people over the age of 65 with still 50% still reporting daily readership followed by people falling between the ages of 55-64 reporting 38% daily readership. This is positive news for arts marketers when considering that the average arts patron’s demographics tend to fall in line with the largest segments of daily readership. Where the area of educational achievement is concerned, anyone who has reported having at least some college to attaining a postgraduate degree readership is holding steadily between 31-39%. Amongst the major ethnic groups, daily readership while continuing to decline, reports 31% of white Americans are daily readers while only 27% of African-Americans and 18% of Hispanic Americans are reading their newspaper on a daily basis. This data suggests is that while newspaper readership is on the decline, a large segment of the population is still using it. A significant portion of that population demographically speaking falls within the of the average arts patron. So the take away here is that while newspaper advertisements are certainly not going to help an arts marketer reach the audience of the future, it can find a strong and loyal segment of the population by using at least some newspaper advertising.

Another marketing strategy that is beginning to sound antiquated is the physical direct mail campaign. The U.S. Postal Service is yet another industry that has been struggling to adapt the massive changes in their industry with the dawn of the digital age. In an article written by Kevin Kosar for rstreet.org, he reports that:
Mail volume plunged not long after the Great Recession hit in late 2007. The reason is simple: more than 90 percent of mail is sent by businesses. In the years since, mail volume has not grown. It remains more than 25 percent below its peak and a high percentage of mail volume is advertising mail, which is not very profitable (Kosar).

In this easy to understand, data driven article where Kosar lays out the current financial crisis within the United States Postal Service. He reports that, “the Postal Service had no debt in 2005. Come 2012, it had hit its $15 billion legal debt cap. With too little revenue coming in and expenses too high, debt piled up” (Kosar, “Four Charts Explain the Postal Service’s Financial Struggles”). Two major factors that contribute to the decline in the postal industry are the wide-spread adoption of using e-mail for direct mailing campaigns to help businesses cope with the recession, and the prevalence of the positive branding message of “going green” by moving more and more formerly paper-based processes to electronic mediums and therefore decreasing the impact on the planet. The strategy of “going green” is a highly attractive one for organizations who wish to appear relevant and want to attract the Millennial and Generation X marketing segments as their demographic segments tend to be far more environmentally conscious than their elders. The factors mentioned above have all led to a decline in businesses utilizing direct mail services, and are major contributing factors to the industry’s decline.

Another challenge many small nonprofits struggle with when it comes to implementing direct mailing strategies is return on investment. According to costowl.com, postcard direct mailings (which is what Rubber City Shakespeare Company currently uses) cost an average of 50 cents to $1 a piece including postage. Now imagine that a small nonprofit organization has a mailing of 300 people and has five programs a year. If the organization sends out a postcard for each of those programs, they are
looking at an expense of $1,500+ per year. If everyone who receives the mailer buys a ticket, then the expense would be worth it. However, there is little guarantee of that. Depending on the response rate to the mailer will depend on whether adopting the tactic will be a good investment for a nonprofit. In an article by Juliette Kopecky called, “An investigation Into the ROI of Direct Mail vs. E-mail Marketing [Data],” she runs an experiment where she compared the return of investment of a direct mail only campaign with an e-mail only campaign and a mixed direct and e-mail campaign. She found that while an e-mail only campaign got the lowest response rate of 23%, the ROI (Return on investment) was $2,600 due to the comparatively low cost of an e-mail only campaign. Her direct mail campaign on the other hand, had a 24%, response rate, but only had a $27 ROI. This suggests that the e-mail campaign performed 95 times better than the direct mail only campaign. In terms of the cost effectiveness of direct mail, going digital appears to be the better option.

Before using this data as a reason to give up on direct mail campaigns, Valdimir Gendelman provides some excellent advice for the future of direct mailing in his article, “Print’s Not Dead: Print Marketing Will Thrive in 2014 and Beyond.” Gendelman reports that, “direct mail continues to be used heavily, with a 43% share of total local retail advertising. And, according to a Pitney Bowes survey, 76% of small businesses say their ideal marketing strategy encompasses a combination of both print and digital communication.” In his article, he suggests that small businesses not do away with direct mailing, but be more creative with how they are using it. For example, Gendelman suggests direct mailers start adding QR (quick response) codes to their mailers as it allows them to use their print mailers to connect their patrons directly to their website. He
even suggests that marketers go even further than that, “these technologies can also be used in more creative ways than simply connecting your audience to a website. They can be used to distribute files, play videos, or activate augmented reality features that encourage your audience to explore and engage, as well as share with others” (Gendelman). He suggests that an organization can even connect their print media with their social media by adding customer comments and testimonials from their social media pages to their print materials. In Gendelman’s article, he suggests that as there are fewer businesses using direct mail organization’s direct campaigns may stand out more among its competitors if they continue to use it. His final suggestion may seem a bit obvious, but is worth mentioning, art marketers should not just consider their direct mail campaigns as the only avenue to utilize print marketing. An organization can print its logo on products they sell such as commemorative glasses, bumper stickers, key chains. These products give patrons an immediate connection to that organization, and free advertising for the organization every time a potential patron encounters the item. While direct mailings may not always be the most cost effective means to connect with an audience, it is clear that it still has a number of benefits and its effectiveness may only be limited to the imagination of the arts marketer.

The last major marketing channel heavily used during the 20th Century that is affordable to the average sized nonprofit is the radio advertisement. Fortunately, for the arts marketer the radio industry is handling the transition to digital media far better than the newspaper and U.S. mail industries. According to Nancy Vogt’s report, “Audio: fact sheet” from Journalism.org on the state of the radio industry, “Traditional AM/FM terrestrial radio still retains its undiminished appeal for listeners – 91% of Americans
ages 12 and older had listened to this form of radio in the week before they were
surveyed in 2015.” The transition to more digital and satellite radio sources have had
some effect on ad revenue however, “with traditional “spot” advertising (ads aired during
radio broadcasts) in decline and digital revenue on the rise. However, for all the gains in
digital, spot advertising still accounts for three-quarters of all radio revenue. Digital
(station website advertising) amounts to less than 10%” (Vogt, “Audio: fact sheet”).
With this much listener loyalty to radio, it would seem prudent for arts marketers to use
radio ads as part of their marketing strategy.

Before this study claims that utilizing radio will be a viable strategy for arts
marketing, it should consider how effective marketing on the radio actually is. In 2013,
Neilson.com conducted a study on the effectiveness of radio advertising. They collected
Neilson listening data from 72,748 people’s response to ads from 10 separate retail
brands. “The study found that advertisers gained an average $6 return for every $1 spent”
(Nielson.com, “For Advertisers Radio is Worth Listening to”). However, some retailer’s
ads were significantly more effective than others were, however those retailers on the low
end of the ROI spectrum were mainly food vendors. Another important factor in the
effectiveness of the radio advertising, according to Neilson.com’s study, was that of
“recency.” Their study found that the closer to the time of purchase the consumer heard
the radio ad, the higher response rate it had. Neilson.com reports that:

The study found that radio had an immediate impact in delivering a powerful
sales lift when the audience heard the ad within a few days of purchase. A
consumer exposed to an ad within one day of purchasing increased the brand
share by 9 percent, while messages delivered 28 days prior to purchase only
increased share by 3.4 percent (“For Advertisers Radio is Worth Listening to”).
This is extremely positive news for arts marketers as it cuts down on the length of time they need to run a radio ad. One further piece of data the Nielson.com study found was that radio ads had a tendency to have a higher response rate from African-American and Hispanic listeners than other segments within the general population. Comparing the data from each of these studies leads this study to conclude that radio advertisement remains an important marketing channel in the 21st Century.

Based on the information presented in this section, it has been demonstrated that the marketing channels from the 20th Century, with the exception of radio, are in a serious transition period. However, while they may not be nearly as effective as they were 30 years ago, they still can provide a lot of positive response that an arts marketer can utilize in their marketing strategy. If an organization uses newspaper ads sparingly for events they expect an older population segment to attend, use creative solutions to have their direct mail campaign stand out from the crowd, and write effective well-timed radio ads, they should be able to use each of these three channels to grow their audience-base.

In the preceding section, the transition to digital marketing and the impact e-mail has had on the marketing channels of the past has been explored. The invention of the Internet and the wide adoption of e-mail as a communication method have had a major effect on the world of nonprofit marketing, therefore this study will now focus its attention on the most effective marketing strategies for website and e-mail marketing.

**Website and Email Marketing**

The Internet has truly revolutionized the world of nonprofit marketing. In the past, an organization would have to spend much of their marketing budget to take out ads in
newspapers, create and distribute direct mailing campaigns along with number of other expensive and labor-intensive practices. The Internet now allows an arts organization to sell tickets online, connect directly with its patrons through social media, e-mail programming information, fundraising requests, and provide online discounts directly to patrons through their personal computer or mobile device. There are so many ways that the Internet has changed arts marketing and made it far more inexpensive than it was in the past. It is, therefore, important that this study spend time discussing how to utilize the internet effectively to market an arts organization.

While social media marketing will have a section of its own, effective e-mail and website marketing will be discussed in this section. The books and articles this study will use to discuss this topic are *Breaking the Fifth Wall: Rethinking Arts Marketing for the 21st Century* by Eugene Carr and Michelle Paul, discussed earlier in this chapter, and *Web Marketing All-in-One For Dummies* by John Arnold, Ian Lurie, Marty Dickinson, Elizabeth Marsten, and Michael Becker. *Web Marketing* is an excellent resource for effective web marketing techniques. The book is comprised of eight separate books on topics such as web analytics, social media marketing, e-mail marketing, and mobile marketing bound together in a single comprehensive guide. Each topic is presented in the usual *Dummies* style, with the sections being easy-to-read and filled with supporting images and graphics relevant to the topic being discussed. The book also contains links to websites with supporting information or examples of the book’s content in practice. This study cannot recommend this work enough if an arts marketer is intent on expanding their knowledge of effective web marketing techniques.
An appropriate starting place for this section’s discussion of Internet marketing will be to focus on what practices result in an effective website for an arts organization. When designing an arts organization’s website, the first step one must take is to go back to the mission statement and read it again. “How do the words in the mission statement make you, as an arts marketer, feel?” “What images come to mind?” “What types of people do you imagine would come to this organization’s programming?” The arts marketer’s job is to answer all of these questions and translate those answers into the organization’s branding and website design.

Now, branding as defined by Arnold and company in Web Marketing All-in-One for Dummies “Is simply getting prospects and repeat customers to see and remember your product as the only solution to their specific problem or need. Other alternative items might be similar, but nothing on the market is exactly like what you offer” (52). There are a number of ways to convey this information through an organization’s website by using taglines, logos, colors, photos, layout, and more.

“Taglines and slogans are short phrases that convey important ideas to customers” (Web Marketing All-in-One for Dummies, 52). Arnold’s text suggests that an organization should create its tagline even before it begins designing its logo, as the organization’s tagline should be the idea that the organization is attempting to convey through its logo. To create an effective tagline, review the organization’s mission statement and try to boil down what the organization does better than no one else does, or try to find an exciting way to express in a few short words a unified idea of who the organization is. If a tagline is successful, the audience will never forget it, and those words will be irrevocably tied to the organization. Some effective taglines have included
Debeer’s, “A Diamond is Forever,” the California Milk Processor Board’s, “Got Milk?”, and Nike’s “Just Do it.” If any of these taglines sound familiar and immediately cause one to think of the product and/or company they are connected with than one can see the power of a good tagline.

Once an organization has created a strong tagline or slogan, it is time to develop a branded logo. Why does an arts organization need a logo? According to Web Marketing:

Perhaps one of the most overlooked elements of doing business in general – let alone online – is the importance of having a meaningful logo. Many internet-marketing gurus will tell you not to waste your time or money producing a logo. However, if you are promoting a company on the web, a good logo is a vital ingredient: It helps you communicate a lot about your business to a website visitor in a fraction of a second. When people see your logo (or lack of one), they can immediately rate various elements of your business in their minds (53).

A well-designed logo can instantly cause patrons to associate positive or negative attributes to an arts organization. What is important is to control the words and ideas that patrons associate with an organization. If an organization is laidback, fun, and is a safe place for families to visit, then the logo should reflect that. However, if the organization creates edgy, highly politicized content that college students and young adults would be interested in then an arts organization should create their logo to reflect that atmosphere as well. An important tip when beginning the process of creating a website for an arts organization is that many web designers will often not begin working on the website unless the organization submits a logo for the website, which is yet another reason why logos are an important marketing tool for an arts organization’s website.

Two more highly important elements to creating an effective website are an arts marketer’s use of color and high impact photos. Colors illicit emotional reactions from potential patrons, it is therefore important to make color an important part of the
organization’s branding strategy and logo creation. Here is a quick breakdown from Web
Marketing of some basic colors and the emotions they convey:

- “Blue suggests honesty, trustworthiness, calming, and loyalty” (56).
- “Black displays authority, sophistication, power, elegance, and technical prowess” (56).
- “White symbolizes purity, peace, and youth: neutral and clean” (56).
- “Red excites with passion, energy, and excitement” (56).
- “Pink suggests innocence, softness, and sweetness” (56).
- “Green invites feelings of nature, growth, and regeneration” (56).
- “Dark Green however, implies wealth and conservatism” (56).
- “Yellow is optimistic and cheery, yet can come across as too dominating if overused” (56).
- “Purple is associated with wealth, sophistication, and mystical, spiritual tones” (56).
- “Brown is genuine, although it often emotes sadness” (56).
- “Orange conveys happiness, freedom, creativity, playfulness, and confidence” (56).
- “Gold as you would expect, suggests expensive taste as well as privilege” (56).
- “Silver also emotes prestige but is cold and more scientific” (57).
- “Gray has a more corporate, somber, and practical appeal” (57).

An excellent exercise for an arts marketer to take on would be to examine the feel and
atmosphere of their organization and their website, and evaluate whether the color they
intend to use for their website create a cohesive emotional impression that matches the
branding of their organization.
Another great way to design an effective website is by using what Web Marketing calls high impact photography. What is meant by the term “high impact” are photos that illicit an emotional response. Since Breaking the Fifth Wall discusses this practice with a specific emphasis on arts organizations, their words will be used to suggest the best practices in website design, “Your site should give a patron the feeling or flavor of what the experience will be like at the performance itself. One of our respondents said, “Give me the feeling like I’m there.” You can best do this through photography or design, not through words” (Carr and Paul, 74). The authors suggest that the photography used on an arts organization’s website be big, dramatic photos with a sense of motion. While good website photography may be expensive, the phrase “a picture is worth a thousand words” holds some validity in this case, and is one of the arts marketer’s best weapons when creating an effective website.

The last and most important aspects to creating an effective website are ease of use, layout, and information. Information is the most basic piece of content all websites need in order to effectively engage their patron, therefore it will be discussed first. The website for any arts organization should list their address, a way to contact the organization, programming information, and a method in which to purchase tickets. Without this basic information in an easy find location, an arts organization’s website is likely to be ignored by potential patrons. When a patron visits an organization’s website, they are usually there to find out more information about the organization. If they cannot find the information they are looking for easily, the organization may have lost a potential patron due their lack of basic information, which can illicit the impression that the organization does not conduct themselves in a professional manner. This logic can
also translate to the layout of the website as well. When considering whether the website’s layout is easy to comprehend, arts marketers should ask themselves a few questions. “Are the drop down menus are clearly marked?” “How many menus and pages does one have to click through to find the information they are looking for?” There is a general rule of thumb when designing a website that if it takes more than 3 clicks to find a piece of information then is it likely that a patron may get tried looking for it and give up on the website. Study the lay out of the website, if it is confusing or hard to navigate a potential patron is likely to feel the same way. One of the best ways determine whether an organization’s website is easy to use is to get some friends together, and give them some piece of information to find on the organization’s website and let them find it, then talk to them about the experience. This is a cheap way of doing market research because if one finds that their friends have difficulty navigating a website, the average patron will most likely find it difficult as well.

Besides ease-of-use in website navigation, it is highly important to make sure the software used for ticket purchasing is easy to use, has as few steps as possible to finish a transaction, and sends the patron a confirmation e-mail when the process is complete. According to Paul and Carr:

The ticket-buying experience is actually a central component of building relationships with your audience. It’s the moment when all of the cumulative effects of your marketing come together. It’s what you’ve been striving for: to get patrons to transact with you and buy a ticket (85).

Some suggestions that Paul and Carr make to insure that an arts organization has a simple, professional, and smooth online ticketing system are being sure of the processes clarity, transparency, simplicity, certainty, and consistency. Clarity consists of informing the patron as to where they are in the ticket purchasing process. This can be achieved
easily with a progress bar, a page number (page 2 of 3 for example), or any other clear indicator of how many steps they have to take to complete a transaction. Transparency refers to being as clear as possible as to what the customer is purchasing. Patrons do not like additional fees, add-ons, or taxes, so if these are a normal part of an organization’s ticketing system make sure that the patron knows about them as early in the process as possible. One major barrier to purchases online tickets is when a patron thinks they are going to buy a $15 ticket and then find out the actual ticket costs closer to $25, due to transaction fees. Simplicity refers to limiting the number of steps involved in the ticket purchase process. For example, some organizations have log-ins and accounts for subscribers that they expect their single ticket buyers to use as well. This can lead to sales loss, as the average patron does not always want to create an account with an organization to purchase if they are a first-time ticket buyer, therefore keep the process as simple as possible. Certainty refers to making sure that ticket purchasers receive a confirmation e-mail; nothing builds better trust than sending a confirmation number or e-mail so that the patron is sure that their transaction was successfully completed. Finally, consistency refers to extending an organization’s branding throughout the ticketing process. It is important to try to avoid sending potential patrons to a completely different vendor or website when purchasing their tickets. Patrons feel safer when they know that the organization they are purchasing a ticket from is the same organization whose programming they are attending. When an organization has to use an outside vendor for their online ticketing software it is important that they choose someone who will use the arts organization’s branding through the entire purchasing process. If an organization
keeps these tips in mind while developing and/or re-branding their website it can turn their website, from a basic informational page to an effective marketing tool.

E-mail, since its invention, has changed the way that everyone on the planet communicates with each other, and has since become the method of communication most preferred by arts patrons. In *Breaking the Fifth Wall*, Carr and Paul record that 42% of their respondents felt that e-mail was the most effective method for keeping up-to-date on an arts organization. Even more interesting, they report that nearly 80% indicated that e-mail was the most effective method for finding out about arts events last minute. In addition, as discussed earlier, the ROI on e-mail communication is much higher and is equally as effective as direct mail. With e-mail communication being such an important tool for the arts marketer, it is important to make sure that those e-mails are as effective as possible.

The first and most important aspect to e-mail marketing according to Paul and Carr is building a large recipients list. An organization can create interesting, engaging, and effective e-mails, but if they have a small recipient’s list there is only so much reach they can have. So then, “how does one build a bigger recipients list?” Most patrons who are already interacting with an organization are usually willing to give their e-mail address to that organization; the organization only has to ask. Here are some suggestions as to creative ways to collect e-mail addresses from patrons from *Breaking the Fifth Wall*:

- “An organization can put an e-mail sign-up sheet at their ticket booth, coat check, gift shop, or concession stand.”
- “They can have volunteers in the organization’s lobby with sign-up sheets greeting patrons and wearing t-shirts that say “sign me up,””
• “They can offer a free concession stand item in exchange for an e-mail address.”
• “There can be a sign-up option in the footer of every staff e-mail or an organization can make a connection with a similar nonprofit and swap e-mail lists with them.” (Carr and Paul, 50)

One of the only ways to make sure an organization’s e-mail marketing is effective is to have a large recipients list.

Another important strategy in regards to e-mail marketing deals with the content itself. The two best ways to improve the content of an organization’s e-mail marketing is by being interesting and professional. One method to make e-mail marketing more interesting is to be creative with the e-mail’s content. Patrons tend not to respond as strongly to e-mails that just give them basic information about programming, they want to feel connected to the organization. They want to know something that the average person who walks into the organization off the street might not know. There are a number of creative ways to connect with audience members through e-mails. An organization can report interesting news regarding changes in the organization. They inform subscribers of historical context or interesting facts about the organization’s programming. Some other effective tactics for improving e-mail content are offering discounts and sales to e-mail subscribers, creating a mascot that represents the organization and creating e-mails written from the mascot’s perspective, or reporting on goings-on in the lives of subscribers and showing what the organization is doing to meet their needs.

Two additional aspects of being interesting in e-mail marketing are targeting specific audience members and writing effective subject headers. Subject headers serve
two major functions to the e-mail marketer, they give the potential patron a quick glimpse as to what the e-mail is about, and they explain why the e-mail is relevant to the reader. Some basic tips to use when writing an effective subject header are:

- Directness
- Clarity with regards to e-mail’s content
- Writing a short enough subject header to fit within the average e-mail system display (about 50 characters),
- Consistent formatting (especially if the e-mail is a part of a repeating newsletter)

When an organization’s recipients list is large enough, an organization can attempt A/B testing the effectiveness of their subject headers. This can be accomplished by sending targeted e-mails with slightly different language to the two halves of the recipients list, and seeing how the two different approaches affect the e-mail open rate. This practice can be used until the organization finds that the open rate has increased by a significant number.

Another aspect of effective e-mail marketing that Carr and Paul discuss is professionalism. The three techniques that go into professional e-mail marketing are timing, design, and proofreading. This study will not waste time explaining the importance of proofreading as any arts marketer worth their salt knows that a lack of proofreading is the easiest way to give impression that an organization is not professional. As for design, Carr and Paul say, “the real key to e-mail design is to do everything you can to make sure your patron sees the information you want them to see.”

What they mean by this is to understand that not all e-mail real estate is created equal. The average person does not usually read an entire e-mail. Based on Carr and
Paul’s findings, 74% of people did not look past the beginning of the e-mails they read. Knowing this it is important. The most relevant information should be placed near the top of the e-mail so that it stands out amongst all the other information presented. If possible, the arts marketer should design their e-mails to limit scrolling as much as possible, since only about 24% of people read the entire e-mail anyway. Another quick tip, is to be careful about putting all the most relevant data only in image form. Some e-mail systems are unable to load certain images and sometimes block images. It is, therefore, important to make sure that all the most relevant information is placed in the body of the e-mail. An arts patron can easily skip a beautifully designed e-mail with a bunch of blocked images and no information. Lastly, it is important to discuss timing, as professionalism can be easily expressed by when an e-mail appears in a patron’s inbox. If an organization has a performance opening on a Friday, the patron should be receiving an e-mail about it on Wednesday or Thursday; the more an organization plans on when they are going to send out their e-mails, the more time they will have to create content for them and improve their quality. If an arts marketer uses the aforementioned tips provided by this study, *Breaking the Fifth Wall* and *Web Marketing All-in-One for Dummies* they will be taking the first steps to turning both their e-mail and website into effective audience-building tools.

**Social Media Marketing**

Before concluding this discussion of online marketing there is one more major subject area that to be covered, social media marketing. Since the introduction of the Internet, social media has had a profound effect on society. Facebook, the world’s largest
social media site, has grown from a small Ivy League collegiate social network to a massive worldwide social network that has changed the way people communicate. Twitter on the other hand has turned micro-blogging into a massive industry. YouTube.com has become the go to website for video content creation and has expanded to a vast network of online reviews, educational videos, comedy sketches, and much more. Since the mid-2000s, these sites and many others have completely changed world communication. The world of marketing has been transformed as well, as each of the networks have provided a way to directly connect and instantly communicate with customers that they simply did not not have prior to the existence of these networks. These sites have connected so many people, that it is of vital importance for arts marketers learn how to leverage these sites, as they are a perfect way to connect with younger audience segments.

To discuss these social networks, information gathered from three separate works, Facebook Marketing by Brian Carter and Justin Levy, Facebook Marketing All-in-One for Dummies by Amy Portfield, Phyllis Khare, and Andrea Vahl, and Twitter Marketing for Dummies by Kyle Lacy will be cited. Carter and Levy’s work is an excellent introduction to Facebook marketing. It discusses Facebook’s incredible journey from small social collegiate network to global social entity. The book goes on to discuss the Facebook’s many features and provides insights as to how to utilize them effectively for Facebook marketing campaigns. The book closes by giving a number of Facebook pages worth visiting to show the books’ suggested best practices in action.

Facebook Marketing All-in-One for Dummies is yet another marketing book written in the Dummies patented style. This book contains 9 different works on a number
of Facebook marketing-related subjects such as *Claiming Your Presence on Facebook*, *Building, Engaging, Retaining, and Selling to Your Community*, *Making Facebook Come Alive with Events and Contests*, and many more. This book goes even more in depth on the subject of Facebook marketing than Levy and Carter’s book. While the book discusses a number of subjects, some of the most relevant subjects the book discusses are tips to providing excellent customer service using Facebook, running a successful contest using Facebook, and setting up, using, and designing a successful business page on Facebook. This book is essential read for any arts marketer planning to use Facebook to market their organization.

Finally, the other work by *Dummies* to be discussed here is their volume on Twitter marketing. Lacy’s book explains how to use Twitter.com and how effective it can be when used to market an organization or product. There are suggestions as to how to expand an organization’s Twitter network, and the best ways to create Twitter content without appearing to be a spammer. *Twitter Marketing for Dummies* is an extremely helpful guide to understanding how to use Twitter in a meaningful way that can eventually lead to increased revenue for an organization or business.

While Facebook.com can be used in a number of effective ways to market an arts organization, the three major features this study will discuss are business/events pages, running Facebook contests, and using Facebook ads. Two of the easiest ways to market an organization on Facebook are to create a business page for the organization and advertise the organization’s programming through Facebook events. This study will assume that the reader has enough basic knowledge of Facebook and does not need a tutorial as to how to set up either of these types of pages, therefore it will move forward
to discuss ways that arts organizations can use their Facebook pages to build their audience-base.

The most important thing to understand about both Facebook and Twitter is that they are social networking sites where people go to interact with their friends. This creates a difficult situation for marketers, as they need to answer the question, “what makes someone want to be friends with a business?” One of the major annoyances for people who use Facebook and Twitter are spammers, or businesses that have no interesting content to share other than selling their products. The average person has enough media literacy to recognize when they are being advertised to. If an organization is not careful about over advertising their programming it can lead to them being unfollowed, unsubscribed, unfriended, or blocked. So how does a business develop a relationship with its customers and still create revenue for itself? Fortunately, arts organizations have it easier here as they are often connecting with their community through their programming and are therefore building personal because of it. Their efforts support individuals, and because of that, nonprofits have stories to share online. These personal connections can be translated into ticket purchasing revenue by effectively using both Facebook and Twitter. In order to do this an art marketer must adopt the philosophy “content is king.”

Much like a personal connection on Facebook or Twitter, an arts organization should look at its page as a way to get to know them. Therefore, here are some simple methods to improve an organization’s Facebook content. Upload photos to the organization’s Facebook page. For an arts organization this would translate into uploading photos of their current production, but it can extend even farther than that.
According to *Facebook Marketing* by Carter and Levy, an arts organization can, “upload photos of your team at work, create a photo tour of your office, take photos of events (they) sponsor, speak at, or participate in” (135). This will show the organization connecting with their community and create great conversation pieces that can lead to sharing amongst friends. One important tip when posting a photo to Facebook, if there are a number of key players involved in the photo tag them and check in at the location where photo is being taken. Doing this will maximize the organization’s reach. Another great piece of content that can be used to connect with a Facebook audience is video sharing. Arts organizations can just create sneak peaks of their programming, but there are also a number of other ways to use video content to help an organization stand out. Create interviews with industry leaders, conduct monthly educational videos based on a topic related to the organization, upload customer testimonies, or create a full season preview when announcing the organization’s annual theatrical season. Any of these are great ways to improve an organization’s Facebook content. If the organization really wants to engage with its audience on either Facebook or Twitter ask them questions. This will increase response rate and provide the organization with a lot of qualitative marketing and programming data about their audience. Finally, a great way to improve engagement on Facebook is through providing exclusive content. If an audience member can only find a juicy piece of information or promotion through Facebook that gives them more incentive to connect with the organization there.

As for Facebook events, which most small organizations use to promote their programming, this is one best uses of an organization’s Facebook marketing budget. Any event an organization creates through Facebook can be boosted with a Facebook ad.

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Rather than trying to boost regular posts on Facebook, an organization can boost only their programming-related events and therefore use their marketing budget more effectively. Facebook ads are useful because for a small fee of $3-$20 they can reach between 200-5,000 Facebook users. As a marketer, Facebook provides a number of demographic controls for ad campaigns so if an arts organization has a clear understanding of who their target audience demographic is they can use those controls to promote directly to them. Some organizations can run an ad just promoting their venue in general, but this may only be useful during the first year or two of an organization’s existence. By the third year, word-of-mouth should have spread far enough across a community for an organization to develop some type of reputation amongst members of the community, therefore not need to promote its venue.

Another set of positive tactics to connect with audience members is through creating coupons, discounts, contests, or sweepstakes and running them through Facebook. The difference between contests and sweepstakes are “a true contest in which there’s some vote to choose the winner or a sweepstakes in which the winner is chosen at random” (Porterfield et al., 404). Depending on what an organization’s Facebook marketing strategy is will depend on which type of contest they choose. According to Porterfield and company’s book, “a contest increases your community involvement by having users vote and may drive more of the entrants’ friends to your page” (405). In contrast, “a sweepstakes is better than a contest for your Facebook community or e-mail list. In typical sweepstakes, entrants provide their names and email addresses, and possibly like the Page, to access the entry form” (Porterfield et al., 405). If an organization has something of value to give away to their audience members such as free
tickets, gift cards, promotional baskets, or gift shop items, these items can be given away as prizes. In exchange for giving away these items, an organization can collect valuable marketing benefits in return, such as increasing participation, more likes, more newsletter subscribers, and more buzz around the organization. The same information applies to any discounts or coupons the organization makes available through their Facebook or e-mail channels. All of these tactics can be used to great effect to improve the organization’s Facebook presence. Moreover, the more people an organization reaches through Facebook more likely that organization is to see an increase in its ticket sales.

As for Twitter, many of the same rules apply as with Facebook, nobody likes a spammer, so when creating a marketing strategy for Twitter make sure to use direct programming promotions sparingly. The two most important marketing strategies to keep in mind when using Twitter.com are building a strong following and learning to engage the organization’s current followers by tweeting and retweeting interesting content. There are several ways to build a strong Twitter following; first, try importing the organization’s e-mail contact list, then go to a website like listorious.com and type a few keywords related to the arts organization. The website will create a list of Twitter users who have that information linked with their profiles. Another suggestion would be to find a few local members of the community on nearbytweets.com; this site can help the organization find Twitter users in the community because this site allows users to search by location. Finally, one might try to track down industry leaders and the organization’s local competition, see who is following them, and investigate the types of content they share and/or retweet. These tactics could help to build a much stronger following on Twitter.
When looking for effective content to share on Twitter there are a couple of rules to follow. First, refrain from connecting the organization’s Facebook and Twitter accounts. According to each work surveyed in this study, this is a bad idea. Both mediums may be similar, but they have different followings and different content expectations, and if both the Facebook and Twitter accounts all have the exact same content, what incentive does an audience member have to join both websites? As for creating strong Twitter content, there is no set rule to what works and what does not work, but here are a few tips that will keep the organization’s Twitter followers interested. Share other people’s content. If an organization shares the content of its Twitter followers, they are more likely to feel that the organization is personally invested in them. Especially if that content says something positive about the organization. It is also important to leave enough extra room in tweets so they can be retweeted. If an organization makes sure to compose tweets that are between 75 to 100 characters long, the content can be retweeted with ease. Research suggests that it is important to use hastags (#) when posting on Twitter. Hastags are words that connect an organization’s tweets to lists of tweets about certain subject matter. When the organization’s tweets pop up on these lists, it helps potential followers find the organization’s page. It is important to create a unique voice for the organization and express it in every tweet. To accomplish this arts organization’s should just experiment until the organization see an increased following or retweet rate amongst their tweets. The most quality content on Twitter is honest, has a sense of humor, is topical, and engages its followers by sharing their content and posting content that is relevant to them. If an arts marketer uses these guidelines
when using Twitter, they will vastly improve their social media presence and engage their followers.

Before moving on to the conclusion of this chapter, this study will briefly touch on using YouTube.com for video content sharing. If an organization is creating video content and posting it to Facebook or Twitter, it might be prudent to create a YouTube channel for the organization. Creating a comprehensive YouTube channel for an organization’s video content can be beneficial to the organization. If an organization is constantly creating programming with well-known names attached to them, for example *A Christmas Carol* or *Macbeth*, those keywords can lead potential patrons to the organization when the organization’s content appears in the search results for those terms. A consistent YouTube presence also shows growth and history. An aspect of creating quality content on both Facebook and Twitter is about sharing the story of the organization. What better way to show the evolution of and celebrate the history of the organization by posting its video content on YouTube. When an organization has a single YouTube channel featuring all its video content it gives the impression of growth, consistency, and personality. Most importantly, YouTube allows an organization to build and control its brand, which are all excellent tools to help an organization to build a strong audience-base.

Each of these social networks has had a transformative effect on the world and has changed the way human beings communicate with each other. It is important that any arts marketer learn these sites and hone their skillset to leverage them correctly in order to build a strong audience-base for their organization.
**Conclusion**

At stated at the beginning of this chapter, the subject of arts marketing has been written about by a number of authors with various theories as to how to market an arts organization effectively. The clear through line to all their work has been how marketing has changed over the past 30 years from a message pushing enterprise to a process of relationship building in order to create interest and trust. Much like the old marketing adage, that word-of-mouth is the strongest form of advertising it seems that the audience of the future wants to be a part of the marketing process. They also want to build strong relationships with the individuals who work at an organization rather than trusting a large corporate entity. So the Important to remember about building that personal relationship with patrons in order to build a strong audience-base for the organization are:

- Be honest – customers will not trust an organization if it is not telling them the truth about what they are buying.

- Share the organization’s passions – If the organization is excited about the impact it has on the community share that excitement with the audience; positive emotions are like a virus they spread and people are attracted to them.

- Know the audience – Everyone wants to feel like the organization is speaking directly to them and their needs. Do research and connect with the community. If they feel personally supported, they will support the organization.

- Have a personality – People are attracted to personality, and if the organization has interesting people that work there, share them with the audience.
If an arts organization can follow these simple guidelines when creating their marketing message along with the suggestions and tips mentioned earlier in this chapter, they will be well on their way to building a strong audience-base for their arts organization.
CHAPTER III

DATA COLLECTION

For the past two years, the primary researcher involved in this study had unprecedented access to Rubber City Shakespeare Company and its staff. This access included serving as the company’s Director of Marketing in 2015; having personal and professional relationships with its staff and board members; performing in and directing RCSC programming; and through analyzing survey data RCSC collected from its audience members collected during the theatrical runs of *The Tempest* and *A Christmas Carol* in 2016 and *Cymbeline* in 2017. This has allowed the researcher to collect a great deal of both quantitative and qualitative data in regards to Rubber City Shakespeare Company’s marketing techniques. In this chapter, that data will be presented so it can be analyzed in the fourth chapter of this study. It can then be determined whether RCSC’s marketing practices are effective in their endeavors to build their audience-base.

Marketing Rubber City Shakespeare Company

Before discussing the survey data RCSC collected from its audience members in 2016 and 2017, this study will first breakdown the current marketing techniques utilized by RCSC to build its audience-base. The organization currently splits the duties of marketing the organization between Managing Director, Casey Robinson and Artistic
Director, Dane CT Leasure, as they are currently RCSC’s only two administrative staff members. RSCS operates on a budget of $45,000, and roughly $4,500-$5,800 of that budget is devoted to marketing the organization. With this modest budget, RCSC uses a number of marketing tactics in order to entice audiences to purchase tickets to their programming.

The organization’s direct mailing list currently has 350 recipients. While in the past RCSC initially sent out one mailer per show to save costs, they now send out a two-show mailer to advertise their productions. See images below for examples:

Fig. 1 – Rubber City Shakespeare Company Direct Mailer *A Christmas Carol/Cymbeline* (Front)
RCSC generally keeps the same ancient paper look to its print mailers with an image representing the production’s concept or general storyline centrally located on the mailer. The logo is prominently displayed at the bottom of the mailer with the dates of the production, and in the case of the Women Beware Women mailer, the contact information of the organization. The front of the mailers have consistently followed this format because Dane believes that this format will set RCSC’s mailers apart from other organization’s mailers and that if they remain consistent with this formatting, it will make RCSC’s branding instantly recognizable. An interesting aspect to note about the Women Beware Women mailer is that the fading around the show image is much less pronounced than the A Christmas Carol/Cymbeline mailer making the photo cropping seem much more obvious in the Women Beware Women mailer.
As for the back of the mailers, RCSC usually includes the name of the production, a small calendar laying out the dates and times of the performances, the address of the performance venue, contact/ticket purchase information, and an acknowledgement of and logo of their community sponsors. A few interesting aspects of the mailers to note is the move from black and white text on the back side to color, and the misspelling of Dane CT Leasure’s name on the *Women Beware Women* mailer. See images on page 60 for examples:

![Rubber City Shakespeare Company Direct Mailer A Christmas Carol/Cymbeline (Rear)](image-url)

Fig. 3 – Rubber City Shakespeare Company Direct Mailer *A Christmas Carol/Cymbeline* (Rear)
Additionally, RCSC also creates a season brochure at the beginning of each of their theatrical seasons. Similar to the show mailers, the brochure features the ancient paper background with different colored texts and varied fonts to express the concepts/themes of each production. There is a short but intriguing synopsis of each production along with comprehensive ticket purchasing information on the inside of the brochure. The exterior of the brochure has all the productions listed on the front, the center is formatted for mailing with each production on the dates listed yet again, and the final column features comprehensive donation/membership information plus the exclusive features of member donation levels. A few interesting aspects to note about this 2016-2017 brochure are that the address listed is RCSC’s Summit Arts Space address, meaning that the season brochure was released before the move to the Well CDC.
was announced and/or potentially conceived. In addition, the program used to format the brochure does not seem to be able to adequately center align each column making the text on each end column seem a little too close to the edge of the brochure to be ascetically pleasing. See examples below and on the next page:

Fig. 5 – Rubber City Shakespeare Company 2016-2017 Season Brochure (Exterior)
As for newspaper and radio advertisements, RCSC currently promotes its productions through WKSU, Kent State University’s NPR and classical music public radio station. While Rubber City does not currently advertise its productions in any local newspaper, Kerry Clawson of the Akron Beacon Journal and David Ritchey of the West Side Leader have reviewed their productions several times. Using WKSU to promote RCSC is a potentially intelligent move at the part of the organization. As according to WKSU’s website they serves, “more than 20 Ohio counties and parts of Western Pennsylvania, 89.7 WKSU operates from the station’s broadcast center in Kent and via repeater stations at 89.1 WKSV in Thompson, 89.3 WKRW in Wooster, 91.5 WKRJ in New Philadelphia, 90.7 WNRK in Norwalk, and via translator station 95.7 W239AZ in Ashland.” (“About Us”, wksu.org) Utilizing this station can give RCSC significant reach. According to Dane CT Leasure, the RCSC also ran ads through 91.3 The Summit
for their production of *Aida* as it is an Elton John rock musical, and Leasure felt the station would be an appropriate fit for that production as it is a rock/pop/folk variety station. However, RCSC has not used them to promote their productions since *Aida* was performed in spring of 2016.

The reviews RCSC’s productions have been varied. Kerry Clawson’s reviews tend to be highly positive and she seems to enjoy RCSC’s conceptual takes on their various productions. Here is a section of Clawson’s review of RCSC’s production of *The Twelve Dates of Christmas* from 2015:

Twelve Dates is as fun and flirty as Mary, a modern-day woman who won’t settle for just a warm body. The show has a solo type of Sex and the City premise, but without the pure outrageousness and high fashion of those girls’ exploits. The comedy, which contains some profanity and references to sexual situations, is recommended for mature audiences only (Clawson, “*Holiday theatrical fare at opposite ends of spectrum*”).

On the other hand, David Ritchie’s reviews have not been quite as positive. Mr. Ritchie’s reviews, while still recommending the productions, are often filled with negative statements about the productions and/or the company. For example, in his review of RCSC’s 2016 production of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Ritchie had this to say, “The cast needed one or two more weeks of rehearsal. Spencer Tracy was told by an experienced actor, “Until you learn to act, speak loud enough for people to hear you.” I would give that advice to this cast” (Ritchie, “*Rubber City Shakespeare opens season in new theater*”). He then went on to say of the costuming of the production, “If you can’t trust your playwright, don’t do the show. This is how I feel about producing period pieces. This production was costumed in modern clothing. This prevented the production from having the integrity of a Shakespearian production” (Ritchie, “*Rubber City Shakespeare opens season in new theater*”). A few more examples of his apparent
distaste of RCSC’s productions came in his review of their 2016 production of *A Christmas Carol*. While the review was generally positive, overall Ritchie ended the review with this statement, “This is an interesting production of a classic story, although the production is less than perfect. Perhaps the director needs some help” (Ritchie, “*Rubber City Shakespeare staging Dickens holiday classic*’). The director Ritchie is referencing in this comment is Artistic Director Dane CT Leasure. While positive reviews of RCSC’s productions are always good for the organization, these comments by Ritchie have the potential to effect potential audiences member’s opinion of RCSC’s brand.

In the realm of digital marketing, RCSC uses a number of techniques to market their programming. RCSC has a website, an e-mail recipients list of 307 people, Facebook page, Twitter account, Instagram account, puts events listings on a number free online events listing sites, and RCSC creates video trailers for each of its productions and posts them a day or two before the production opens on Facebook and YouTube. RCSC’s website rubbercityshakes.com offers tabs with menus that within 2-3 clicks can take a patron to any piece of information they may need find about the organization from ticket purchasing, educational workshops, auditions, and upcoming events. The site is relatively easy to navigate, and the steps required to either contact the organization or purchase tickets are short and simple. While the site does have up-to-date information on which programming is currently taking place at RCSC, the site is relatively sparse in its visual content. Other than the home page, which has a prominent photo of RCSC new church location in the Well CDC (Figure 7), much of the site is simply text on a white background (Figure 8). There are little to no high impact photos throughout the site with
only a call for support donation video on the Support Us page (Figure 9) and a few production photos in the Education (Figure 10) and Contact Us pages. Otherwise, it is a serviceable website.
Rubber City’s e-mail recipients list as stated earlier currently consists of 307 people. Most RCSC e-mail blasts are performance reminders that generally are scheduled to appear in patron’s e-mail boxes a day or two before a production is set to open or as a reminder that a production is in its second or third weekend at RCSC. Other e-mail blasts from RCSC have included the move to the Well CDC, the occasional
promotion, and membership/donation calls to action. RCSC’s e-mail blasts are relatively well timed and without error. For the most part their most important content is featured at the top of the e-mail, a good practice as it limits scrolling which, as mentioned in chapter 2, most e-mail readers tend to avoid doing anyway. Almost every e-mail communication ends with an opportunity for the audience to either share the e-mail with another person or connect to RCSC’s Facebook and Twitter accounts. One commonality amongst most of the RCSC e-mails is the cast interviews for each production. RCSC interviews their cast members and their allows them to express their opinions on concepts relating to the production in order for the audience to humanize the company and get to know the actors. RCSC’s e-mail open rate over the past year has been 29.3%, with a 2.3% click rate. For a few examples of RCSC’s e-mail blasts see Figures 11-13 below and on the next page:

Fig. 11 – Rubber City Shakespeare Company E-mail Blast *Exciting News from Rubber City Shakespeare Company*
Of RCSC’s social media channels, they seem to utilize Facebook and Twitter most actively. The organization consistently posts photo, video, and review content on their Facebook page. The page currently has 790 likes and has 15 reviews all of which are five star, and has a total reach of 20,481. On Twitter, RCSC tweets and retweets
content about once a day, and like its Facebook account, they promote their video, photo, and review content along with any community outreach events they take part in. RCSC’s Twitter page has 160 followers, 113 likes, and has had roughly 226 published tweets since they joined in April of 2013. Both social media sites can be viewed at facebook.com/rubbercityshakes/ and twitter.com/RubberCityShake.
On the other hand, RCSC has been neglecting their Instagram and YouTube accounts. Even though RCSC has produced video trailers for each of their productions, their official YouTube channel has not been updated since their 2015 production of *Macbeth* (Figure 16), and they seem to have an alternate channel with the production trailer for their 2016 production of *Aida* on it (Figure 17). Each video on the channel has over 100 views, so it may be in RCSC’s best interest to start putting their content back on YouTube. As for Instagram, RCSC has not posted any photos since September of 2016, even though the organization currently has 120 followers. These channels may not be a priority in terms of ticket revenue, but they certainly improve the organization’s branding and if used properly are avenues to move potential patrons from these sites to the website for a ticket purchase.

Fig. 16 – Rubber City Shakespeare Company YouTube Channel (Primary)
Now that this study has laid out RCSC’s current marketing strategies and the channels used to promote ticket sales, it can now present how those tactics, or lack thereof, have affected ticket sales within the organization. Through discussions with Dane CT Leasure, artistic director of RCSC, this study was able to compile ticket sales data from each of RCSC’s 20 productions since the company formed in 2013. When looking at the data, which can be seen in Table 1 on the following page, one can see that while RCSC’s attendance has been gradually rising since the beginning of 2016, their attendance has been fluctuating quite a bit. See data table and graph of RCSC attendance rates on the next page:
In order to add some context to the data, there are a few possible explanations as to why RCSC’s attendances have so rapidly shifted for certain productions. During the early history of RCSC, each production only had a very limited run. For example, *Julius Caesar* in 2014 was only a one night staged-reading. When considering the possible...
attendance had the show run longer, the numbers might be very different. As for the rest of the productions, the first production in RCSC’s history that had more than five performances was *The Taming of the Shrew* in 2014. Since that time, RCSC has been extending the run of each production to 8-12 performances depending on the production and its potential popularity. Another factor to note is that while RCSC has been using social media, NeoPal, and production posters since 2013, it was not until their production of *The Importance of Being Earnest* in 2014 that they began using rack cards placed around the community to promote their shows. Then in 2015 for their production of *All’s Well That Ends Well*, they expanded their marketing efforts to include radio ads, professional photography, using Seastir.com, and creating video trailers for each production. With the introduction of each of these elements, RCSC’s attendance has appeared to experience a slight upward tick.

A few noteworthy productions experienced either exceptionally high or low attendance rates, and the circumstances surrounding those productions may explain some of the rapid shifts in audience attendance beginning in late 2015. The first major jump in attendance occurs during RCSC’s production of *Macbeth*. At the time, RCSC had a part-time Marketing Director and the Artistic and Managing Directors did not have to share the duties of marketing the organization between them. In addition, *Macbeth* being a well-known Shakespearean play dealing with the supernatural was performed during the month of October; therefore, the potential popularity amongst audience members at the time was obvious. With RCSC’s next production *The Twelve Dates of Christmas*, the organization had let go of their marketing director due to budgetary concerns and the remaining staff members began sharing the marketing duties. In addition, *Twelve Dates,*
which performed in December of that year, is a one-woman adult-oriented Christmas-themed production. This choice may have seemed like a good move at the time as RCSC’s production of *The Importance of Being Earnest* did not perform as well as expected during the same timeslot, so doing a Christmas show seemed like a better move. Due to the production not being family-friendly, there only being one actress in the production, which limits word-of-mouth, and with competition from a number of well-known Christmas-themed productions performing throughout the Akron-Cleveland area, *Twelve Dates* only brought in 192 patrons. The attendance was an improvement to *Earnest’s* 145, but appeared to be disappointment next to *Macbeth’s* 303. Fortunately, RCSC followed *Twelve Dates* with their highly successful production of *Aida* RCSC’s first musical and most attended production at 599 patrons. The only additional advertising for *Aida*, other than their normal techniques, was a couple of extra videos made during rehearsals and running some radio ads on 91.3 The Summit in addition to running ads on WKSU. Since then RCSC’s attendance has stayed consistently above 300 patrons except for three productions. *Women Beware Women*, *The Tempest* and *Cymbeline*. In the case of *Women Beware Women*, the play is a rarely performed piece by Thomas Middleton, and was added very late to RCSC’s third season. These factors may have heavily contributed to that production’s low attendance. As for *The Tempest*, both Great Lakes Theater and Ohio Shakespeare Festival had recently done productions of that play, so it is possible that *The Tempest* had low attendance due to market over-saturation at the time of its performance. In the case *Cymbeline*, it is one of William Shakespeare’s lesser known and less often performed plays. What can be gleamed from
this data is that while RCSC’s audience base appears to be about 150 patrons, they are running at an average patron rate of a little over 200 patrons per production.

Based on the attendance data study collected from RSCS, it was discovered that RCSC has a rough audience-base of 213 patrons per production. To find the most effective means of communicating with and expanding that audience-base, this study explored who the audience of RCSC is. To uncover that information, this study analyzed survey data collected by RCSC during their 2016 productions of *The Tempest*, *A Christmas Carol*, and *Cymbeline* in 2017. From October of 2016 through February of 2017 RCSC surveyed their audience to examine their demographic make-up (gender, age, income, education), which marketing channels lead them to attending the production, and their overall satisfaction with RCSC’s programming. The three productions in question had a combined attendance of 838 patrons and the study received responses from 26 patrons leaving the study with a 3% response rate. While a 3% response rate might not be the most representative sample of RCSC’s audience, much of the data does fall in line with national arts organization demographic trends, and is therefore much more significant due to that comparative data. Here are the results of that survey:
Based on the results collected in RCSC’s survey, it appears that much like the national data collected by Carr and Paul in *Breaking the Fifth Wall*, almost two-thirds of the respondents are female. Similarly, the vast majority of the respondents when recording their demographics in Figure 20 on page 80 reported that they were over the age of 45. In addition, RCSC has a statistically significant response rate among 19-25 year olds as well, this is most likely due to RCSC’s connection and proximity to the University of Akron.
When considering RCSC’s patrons income and education (Figure 21), they are relatively well off, and generally well educated. With 38% of RCSC’s patrons reporting annual incomes in the $60,000+ range, they are definitely serving an audience high average annual income. One interesting thing to note here is that 38% of the survey’s respondents record having an income at or below $40,000 per year, which this study would consider middle-class to low-income households. This is good news for RCSC’s mission statement, as one of its major tenants is to provide affordable classical productions to the residents of Akron. If patrons from these income brackets feel the price of RCSC’s shows are affordable enough to attend then this is quantitative evidence that Rubber City Shakespeare Company is fulfilling its mission statement. In the area of education, RCSC’s audience is relatively well educated. Based on the data presented in Figure 22 on page 81, 88% of RCSC’s audience has at least had some college and 44% have attained a graduate degree or higher.
In Figure 23, the survey found that, as expected, the vast majority of RCSC’s audience lives in Summit County Ohio. However, at least 23% of RCSC’s audience is coming from Cuyahoga County, and 7% are coming from Medina County. In the “other
category” which represents 23% of respondents, RCSC patrons reported coming from Stark and Lake Counties.

Finally, in the area of demographics the survey found that RCSC’s patrons are relatively frequent arts attenders. They were asked how many theatrical performances they attend per year, and at least 54% of RCSC’s audience answered that they attended four or more performances annually. It should also be noted that 34% of their audience reported that at least attended 2-3 performances per year. See Figure 24 on the next page for the data:
When it comes to the effectiveness of RCSC’s marketing efforts for the three productions surveyed, the study found that word-of-mouth is still the most effective means of attracting audience members to a production. In Figure 25, the survey reported that 61% of respondents, when answering the question of “how they heard about the production?” answered that they either knew someone in the production or had the production recommended to them by a friend. Interestingly, 11% of the audience members said they heard about the production through the newspaper. If RCSC is not currently running ads in the newspaper, then the study must conclude that those audience members heard about the production based on a theatrical review provided by Kerry Clawson or David Ritchie. While David Ritchie may be a good connection to have as his reviews allow RCSC’s productions to be promoted in the West Side Leader, as mentioned earlier, he tends to make negative comments that could affect the audience’s perception of RCSC’s brand. He may not be a reviewer RCSC should invite in the future. Another strong marketing channel for RCSC is their website as they inform 12%
of their audience members about their productions through that channel. Perhaps an area of expansion for RCSC might by revamping their website. See data below:

![Effectiveness of RCSC Marketing Channels](image)

**Figure 25 – Effectiveness of RCSC Marketing Channels**

Before moving on to the next section, RCSC’s audience return rate and satisfaction should be discussed. According to the survey results, much of RCSC’s audience first time attenders (63% of respondents) report only attending 0-1 RCSC productions annually. This means that only 37% of RCSC’s audience are regular attenders, so that average 213 patron audience-base is only about 37% of RCSC’s audience. In order to build RCSC’s audience-base this number must be increased.

There is good news for RCSC, as according to their survey data, audiences are not only pleased with RCSC’s programming, but they have a high likelihood of return. If the data from Figure 26 and 27 are compared, the audiences at RCSC clearly enjoy their programming and their experience at RCSC made them likely to return. According to the data presented in Figure 26, 96% of RCSC’s audience either liked or loved the programming they experienced on the date they attended it. All 100% of RCSC’s audience reported that there was a strong likelihood of them returning to the organization or another performance. This coupled with RCSC’s 100% 5 star reviews on their
Facebook page leads this study to conclude that, at least from the audience’s point-of-view, RCSC is producing quality performances that their audiences enjoy, and their experience with the organization as a whole must be enjoyable enough to facilitate their return to the venue. For more data on this section, refer to figure 26-28 on page 86 and 87:

Fig. 26 – RCSC Patron Annual Attendance Frequency
Based on the research collected about RCSC’s audience and marketing techniques, it is appropriate to conclude that RCSC should consider their target demographic to be the well-educated females of Summit County that are above the age of 35 with a strong focus on those 55+. As for RCSC’s marketing, it appears that as RCSC has expanded their marketing efforts, their attendance has increased. However, what is important to note, is that audiences seem most attracted to the experience of RCSC’s
programming rather than its marketing, which would explain the high satisfaction rate and high rate of word-of-mouth market attraction. This being the case, RCSC may want to attempt to refine its marketing techniques to start focusing on the unique experience of attending a RCSC event, which could have the added benefit of expanding word-of-mouth amongst their target demographic.

Summit County Research

As reported in the previous section, the vast majority of Rubber City Shakespeare Company’s audience members are residents of Summit County, Ohio. If RCSC wishes to expand its audience-base this study must attempt to determine whether RCSC’s target demographic of well-educated, females with a high annual income, aged 35 and over are a large enough demographic segment within Summit County. According to census.gov’s July 1, 2015, population data, Summit County currently has a population of 541,968 people. When that data is broken down into male and female, this study found that Summit County’s female population makes up 51% of that population. That data can be found in Figure 29 below:

![Summit County Gender Demographics](image)
The age demographics of Summit County are slightly more difficult to determine as Census.gov breaks them down into 3 major segments under 18, 18-64, and 65 and older. The data presented shows that about 17% of Summit County’s population is 65 and older. This falls in line with the largest segment of RCSC’s audience with only a gap of about 10 years. That percentage translates to 92,134 potential patrons falling within RCSC’s largest age segment. With 61% percent of Summit County’s population being roughly 330,600 people, if we assume that these segments remain relatively consistent at each age, this study feels confident that roughly 73,460 could be added to that number to account for the decade wide year gap. Therefore, RCSC has about 100,000 potential patrons in Summit County that fall within its largest age segment. With the addition of potentially pulling in patron from the lower segment of 35-55 out of 330,600 people results in RCSC having the potential of reaching a large number of patrons within their target demographics. See Figure 30 for the supporting data:

![Summit County Age Demographics](image)

While the survey conducted at RCSC did not focus on race, it is important to have an understanding of the racial make-up of Summit County. White Americans make up
the vast majority of Summit County’s racial make-up at 79%, followed by a 14% African American population. The two other important racial demographics that make up Summit County’s population are Asian and Latino Americans coming to roughly 27,098 residents. See Figure 31 on page 87 for the data.

When considering Summit County’s income demographics not much data was provide by census.gov. However, the information this study found was that Summit County’s median income is $50,765 and the county has a 14% poverty rate. Also, the percentage of owner occupied homes in Summit County is 66.3%, which means a large percentage of Summit County’s population are earning enough income to own their own homes.

In the area of education, Summit County’s demographics do not match RCSC’s as readily. Only 30.3% of Summit County’s population has attained a Bachelor’s degree or higher, however, that still translates to 164,216 people. This means that while Summit County’s population as a whole may not be as educated as RCSC’s audience there is still
a large segment of that population that RCSC can target as potential patrons. Also 60.6\% percent of the population have at least achieved a high school diploma and have possibly had some college education, so demographically speaking; RCSC’s target demographic should be relatively plentiful in the Summit County area. See Figure 32 for Summit County education data:

![Summit County Educational Demographics](image_url)

Fig. 32 – Summit County Educational Demographics

Based on the data collected from the U.S. Census Bureau’s website Census.gov, Summit County Ohio has a large population of females that fall within RCSC’s target demographic of educated females aged 35 and older. The county and its population does not appear to be suffering from a great deal of economic hardship, but even if it were, RCSC positioned itself to cater to low income families with its Pay-As-You-Like-It evenings where patrons can pay whatever they are able to afford to see a performance. So based on the data this study has collected in this section, Summit County is a good region for RCSC to position itself to serve its target market and there is room for audience growth among the current population demographics of Summit County.
Marketing Profile: Ohio Shakespeare Festival

In order to compare the effectiveness of Rubber City Shakespeare Company’s marketing techniques, this study finds it necessary to profile two competitor organizations to RCSC, the Ohio Shakespeare Festival (OSF), and Great Lakes Theater (GLT). This section will focus on discussing the marketing techniques utilized by the Ohio Shakespeare Festival. To give a quick background on OSF, the organization became a nonprofit in 2004 and up until this year produced a repertory of Shakespearean theatre every summer. As mentioned earlier in this study, in October of 2016 OSF moved from their summer home at Stan Hywet Hall and Gardens to Greystone Hall in downtown Akron to begin their inaugural year-round season with *Robin Hood: An Adventure with Music*. Based on researching their marketing materials, interviewing OSF’s associate producer Tess Burgler, and attending events at OSF, this study was able to assemble an accurate picture of OSF’s current marketing techniques.

OSF’s mission statement says:

> The Ohio Shakespeare Festival regards the actors, the script, and the audience as the quintessential elements of the theatre. As a professional theatre company, we are dedicated to articulating the inherently theatrical components of Shakespeare and his fellow playwrights throughout the ages in a manner that enables the collected imaginations of the artists to meet the collective imagination of the audience in a public celebration that transforms the world in which we live (“Mission”, [ohioshakespearefestival.com](http://ohioshakespearefestival.com)).

This translates to OSF’s commitment to traditional Shakespearean programming, as OSF uses a single Renaissance-inspired unit set to produce every one of their Shakespearean productions. In addition, OSF provides SHAKES-BEER performances, open-mic events in which members of the OSF company perform drunken readings of Shakespearean scripts, sing drinking songs and perform their comedic green shows. In the area of
education, OSF provides monthly weekend workshops on different aspects of Shakespearean cannon and performance for children from age six to high school. They also provide a student matinee series, a 60-minute version of a Shakespearean production for schools to attend. For adults, once a month they provide Monday Fight Night, a 90-minute evening of learning stage combat skills from swordplay to found objects to war hammers. Overall, OSF provides a lot of varied programming in order to connect with its audience and fulfill its mission.

In the area of marketing, Tess Burgler is the company member solely in charge of that department. According to Tess, OSF’s marketing budget is roughly 10% of their overall budget, which comes to an annual marketing budget of $9,800. OSF has done a lot with that limited budget; however, they have found that their major demographics are females between the ages of 30-60. By using this knowledge, OSF and Tess in particular found that the most effective marketing strategies were:

Consistent advertising and content across all media outlets (having a style guide and sticking to it--this is especially easy when only one person is making all the content.) Anything personal (actor spotlight interviews, backstage photos, etc) works really well on social media. We work hard to have a "fun" voice in our content while still making it clear that we take our art seriously. Connecting with our audiences on a personal level (which I would argue is easier for a Shakespeare Company, especially if they are using original practices and direct address in their performances… That is a distinct connection with the audience that then you can incorporate into media and marketing.) Offering things in our media outlets more often then we ask for things. (Example given: free study guides, pictures, coupons, videos, etc.) (Burgler).

Tess utilizes these techniques to great effect through OSF’s major marketing channels. In terms of which channels she finds most effective, she said that some radio stations are more effective than others are, positive reviews in newspapers are key to driving ticket sales, e-mail and social media are important channels to maintain a conversation with
OSF’s audience, but word-of-mouth is truly the most effective method for building their audiences. Tess believes that what sets OSF apart from other organizations is, “The voice; clever/witty content; beautiful pictures; personal connection to the artists...establishing the brand based on the company members/people before anything else; honest language; consistent internet presence” (Burgler).

Many of these techniques are clearly expressed through OSF’s website, which is filled with professional photos of OSF actors in mid-performance. Each photo clearly expresses an emotion, and promotes a fun and inviting atmosphere. See figures 33-35 on pages 93-94:

![OSF Website Screenshot](image.png)

Fig. 33 – Ohio Shakespeare Festival Website (Homepage, Top)
OSF’s website is easy to read, with a good balance between white space and content, making the text pop off the screen. Their programming is easy to find, and can be accessed with less than three clicks. In addition, OSF’s logo is prominently displayed in the upper left corner of the screen, with the clever design with the O representing Ohio in
the shape of the state. Another excellent addition is OSF’s tagline, “Don’t Read Shakespeare, See Shakespeare Live.” It is short, memorable, and serves as a call-to-action, which are all recommended qualities for a tagline to have. This branding and clever voice is carried through to OSF’s marketing materials with their season brochure also having the same types of performance photo and having the tagline prominently displayed. OSF’s social media accounts are equally impressive, as they consistently update audience members of promotions, events, and as Tess stated, have actor spotlights, backstage photos, and more. See examples of OSF’s Facebook and Twitter accounts below and on page 96:
As for OSF’s YouTube account, for the past year the organization has posted monthly content including production trailers, rehearsal videos, and actor spotlights. The channel is consistent and up-to-date, see Figure 38 below:
Based on each of these examples, it can be said that overall OSF has a strong sense of their branding and voice, and this is one of the many reasons that they have been able to expand their season from summer theatre to year-round artistic seasons.

Before the discussion of OSF is concluded, this study should share a story of OSF’s marketing in action, and the reaction of the researcher. On February 10, 2017, the author of this study attended a performance of *Lone Star* at the Ohio Shakespeare Festival. The organization was hosting an industry night promotion provided through a grant by the Akron Summit Convention and Visitors Bureau to encourage out-of-towners to visit downtown Akron. If a patron was from an Ohio County other than Summit, they were offered free tickets to one of OSF’s fall repertory productions, a free drink from their bar, and the ticket could be used as a coupon for a free appetizer at Nuevo Modern Mexican Restaurant located across the street from Greystone Hall. The researcher took advantage of each of these deals, and each promotion added value to the evening whether that be monetarily or experience related. Upon entering Greystone hall, the first thing the researcher noticed was that the company had hidden an ipod behind a plant in the lobby which was piping in county-western music in order to bring the audience into the world of the production as they entered the lobby. The lobby itself was decorated with Shakespearean themed art and had classical costumes on display; while television sets in the lobby displayed upcoming OSF productions. The staff, which included Tess, her husband Joe Pine, and her father and mother, Terry Burgler and Nancy Cates were all onsite, were friendly, and ready to answer questions and discuss the company. The performance was well produced and the actors did an excellent job bringing the piece to life. Overall, it was an enjoyable experience, and if the researcher is anything like the
average audience member, there is a high likelihood of him returning to another production at OSF and recommending their company to others.

Marketing Profile: Great Lakes Theater

The final organization worthy of profiling in order to compare their techniques to Rubber City Shakespeare Company is Great Lakes Theater in Cleveland, Ohio. Great Lakes mission is to, “through its main stage productions and its education programs, is to bring the pleasure, power and relevance of classic theater to the widest possible audience” (greatlakestheater.org). Started by actor John Lithgow’s father Arthur in 1962, Great Lakes Theater has been Cleveland’s top classical company for much of that time. They have grown from a small Shakespearean company located in Lakewood Civic Auditorium into one of three major theatrical organizations located in Cleveland’s Playhouse Square District. Great Lakes has for over 50 years evolved as an organization both in its programming and its marketing. While a discussion of Great Lakes’ history and marketing changes over time would be enough for a thesis in itself, this study will provide a snapshot of Great Lakes’ current marketing techniques in order to provide another basis for comparison for Rubber City’s marketing techniques.

Great Lakes is currently running on a budget of roughly $4,000,000, and has a relatively small marketing staff with Todd Krispinski serving as the Director of Marketing & Strategic Advancement and at least two staff members to assist him in those duties. Great Lakes, due to its long history of producing Shakespearean and Classical productions in the Cleveland-area, have deemed themselves “Cleveland’s Classical Company,” not necessarily a catchy tagline, but it carries weight and history. Great
Lakes provides a year-round season of Shakespearean and classical productions including two musicals, two Shakespearean productions, and one classic play per season. The company also provides through its educational programming a number of opportunities to connect with its audience. Great Lakes provides school matinees, requested classroom workshops, and their Classics On Tour series which travels to several different schools, libraries, and theaters across the Northeast Ohio area to teach children about classic theater.

Across Great Lakes’ many marketing channels, they are very consistent with their branding, always using the same purple background with white text, while also making sure to mention their residence at the Hanna Theatre as it is a meaningful venue among the Cleveland community, and is part of Cleveland’s continued downtown development and restoration strategic plan. All of these choices associate Great Lakes’ branding with wealth, sophistication, and a general feeling that they are a historical and proud community staple. As for the marketing of their programming, each production is given a professionally branded photo that gives the audience an immediate impression of the concept of the production and expresses a general sense of atmosphere. For examples, see figures 39 and 40 on page 101:
Great Lakes’ website is easy to navigate, but in contrast to RSCS and OSF, limits scrolling by placing the most pertinent information as close to the top of the screen as possible. Similar to OSF, Great Lakes fills its website with professional photos from their productions that give an immediate impression of each production. However, while OSF promotes an atmosphere of fun, Great Lakes photos are darker and focus generally
on one actor’s face set to the right of the screen. This is most likely done on purpose as Great Lakes has great control over their branding and formatting. This uniformity of marketing is commendable as it trains the audience to know what to look for consistently. It promotes lack of confusion and controls audience attention. It is a good strategy for a company that has built long relationships with its audience and community as Great Lakes has.

Great Lakes social media outlets are equally uniform. Their Facebook page is filled with backstage and production shots of current shows being produced at Great Lakes. Their Twitter account has a wonderful cover photo of Great Lakes actors involved in performing a big musical number. They not only retweet interesting theatre-related articles, but their page is filled with their own content as well. This has resulted in Great Lakes having 3,700+ followers on Twitter and over 5,000 likes, and has 175 reviews that are either 3 star or above on Facebook. Even Great Lakes YouTube account is well put together with the same cover photo from their Twitter account and monthly videos that accumulate viewers the longer they are on the site. For example, their trailer for *Wait Until Dark*, which is currently running at Great Lakes, has 780 views, while their video from *Bat Boy* published 6 years ago has 3,025 views. YouTube.com is certainly a strong channel for Great Lakes to build their branding image. To see examples of Great Lakes social media accounts, see images 41-43 on pages 103-104:
Fig. 41 – Great Lakes Theater Facebook Page

Fig. 42 – Great Lakes Theater Twitter Page
Fig. 43 – Great Lakes Theater YouTube Channel

Clearly, Great Lakes Theater has used their resources to create an effective, consistent, and strong brand and image for themselves. However, Great Lakes has one major obstacle to audience building that needs to be addressed. This obstacle is price. Tickets prices at Great Lakes Theatre run on a scale from $13-$65 per ticket; however, $13 tickets are only for students, the cheapest adult ticket price is $30. Each ticket purchased comes with a $6-$7.50 dollar additional fee, and when one factors in parking in downtown Cleveland where free parking is rare, an inexpensive night at Great Lakes for a pair of average adult patrons can be over $100. Great Lakes does not appear to be suffering as an organization because of this, as many of their patrons seem willing to pay these prices, for Great Lakes quality of service and production value. However, unlike RCSC and OSF, price can definitely be an obstacle for reaching some audience members at Great Lakes Theater.

Great Lakes Theater as this study has discovered has had a long history, strong branding, and uses adaptable marketing strategies to have survived so long in their
community. Their patrons value their quality of productions and respond positively to GLT’s positioning as “Cleveland’s Classic Company.” These factors combined have led to Great Lakes Theater’s success and contributed to their long-lasting sustainability in the Cleveland community.

Now that the arts marketing research presented by authors like Fromm, Garton, Bernstein, and Porterfield has been discussed, and the demographic data collected by RCSC’s audience survey has been analyzed, this study can begin to formulate recommendations of best marketing practices for both RCSC and other young arts nonprofits. By utilizing the aforementioned data, along with Census.gov’s data on the demographic make-up of Summit County, this study can attempt to determine which marketing techniques could most effectively reach RCSC’s target audience. Finally, RCSC’s current marketing techniques can be compared to the marketing techniques of comparable arts organizations, such as Great Lakes Theater and The Ohio Shakespeare Festival, in order to determine their effectiveness in reaching an audience. Through these methods, this study can offer suggestions as to whether RCSC’s current marketing techniques are effective, and if they are not, suggest ways in which they can improve. This study can also determine which general marketing practices are effective for young nonprofits in their attempts to grow their audience-base. Each of these topics are discussed at length in the final chapter of this study.
CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this study was to explore the marketing practices of Rubber City Shakespeare Company in building a strong audience-base for their organization. The first goal in that endeavor was to determine whether RCSC had a strong audience-base to begin with. This was accomplished through collecting attendance data from Rubber City Shakespeare Company’s twenty productions over the last four years, and analyzing their current marketing channels and strategies to determine whether their current marketing practices were effective. In order to determine whether RCSC is using effective marketing practices, their current marketing strategies were compared to the best practices of national arts organizations and local ones like Great Lakes Theater and Ohio Shakespeare Festival. To supplement that data, this study analyzed data collected by RCSC from their patrons during three of their recent productions in order to determine whether RCSC’s demographics proportionately matched the demographics of Summit County, and whether their audience’s demographic makeup were similar to arts organizations at the national level. Only by doing this could it be determined whether the best practices recommended at the national and local levels would be appropriate for building a strong audience-base for Rubber City Shakespeare Company. In the following section, the data this study has collected will be analyzed to determine whether RCSC’s
marketing practices are effective, and if the organization needs to make any improvements to their current strategies.

**Rubber City Shakespeare’s Marketing**

In order to determine whether RCSC’s marketing is effective, it is necessary to analyze the data this study has collected from Rubber City Shakespeare Company, and use it to determine whether they have a strong audience-base, who that audience base is, and whether RCSC is positioned to effectively connect with that base. To determine whether RCSC has a strong audience-base, the ticket and demographic data collected from RCSC from their first production of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* to their most recent production of *Cymbeline* was analyzed. Considering the attendance data collected from RCSC in figure 18 on page 75, the RCSC has an average attendance of 203 patrons per production. That average applies to RCSC’s entire history. However, taking the average attendance of each of RCSC’s seasons, a definite growth trend emerges.

![Average RCSC Annual Attendance](image)

**Fig. 44 – Average RSCS Annual Attendance**

Based on this data, with the exception of their 2014-2015 theatrical season, RCSC has been experiencing consistent growth amongst their audience-base. It is possible that
during the 2014-2015 artistic season that the company’s administrative staff was learning to balance good programing decisions with effective marketing practices. The company also made their first big location move during that period, so it is possible that these factors could easily account for the patron loss. However, RCSC made up for that loss by doubling its average attendance the next season. They were able to continue the steady growth trend in their current season by adding roughly 30 more patrons to their average annual attendance. Based on the data presented in Figure 44, this study can reasonably conclude that RCSC does have a strong audience-base of 290 currently, and that audience-base is expanding.

In order to recommend effective marketing tactics to that audience-base, it is necessary to discover who that audience-base is. To accomplish this data was compiled from Figures 19-24. The survey results concluded that 63% of RCSC’s audience is female as opposed to the 32% of male respondents. The age average age of RCSC’s patrons is 35 and older as they make up 76% of their audience. About 40% of their audience makes an annual household income of $60,000. The audience has a high educational attainment with 62% of their audience achieving a Bachelor’s degree or higher. RCSC’s patrons are also regular arts attenders as 55% of them see an average of four or more theatrical productions per year. In addition, the vast majority of their patrons come from Summit County, Ohio. By cross-referencing the data, this study has concluded that the average RCSC audience members are females, 35+ years of age, are well educated, of middle-class income, and are frequent attenders of arts events.

This study can also conclude that by comparing this data with that of Figures 29-32, it can be deduced that there is a large segment of this audience among the Summit
County population where the majority of RCSC’s audience lives. With Summit County’s population of 541,968, how many possible audience members RCSC might have access to could be calculated? There are roughly 276,000 females in Summit County, and 215,594 of them are over 18 years of age. If the 30% of them that have achieved a Bachelor’s degree or higher is factored into number of females in Summit County, it can be inferred that RCSC has the potential to reach about 64,000 possible audience members that fall within or close to their core demographics in the Summit County region alone. This means that RCSC is well positioned to reach a wide audience-base with their marketing.

Based on data Eugene Paul and Michelle Carr collected in *Breaking the Fifth Wall: Rethinking Arts Marketing for the 21st Century*, they concluded that the average arts patrons tend to be well-educated, affluent, females over the age of 55. This data falls in line with both the demographic data collected by this study from RCSC’s patrons and coincides with the information provided by Tess Burgler at Ohio Shakespeare Festival. This means that the suggestions for effective marketing provided by OSF and any number of the works mentioned in the literature review of this study (Chapter 2) are valid resources to utilize to provide suggestions to improve the effectiveness of RCSC’s marketing techniques, and help them continue to expand their audience-base.

One important factor to note when analyzing the ticket sales data is to consider the qualitative factors that might affect the attendance of each of RCSC’s events. By examining the attendance data provided by Dane CT Leasure, this study can say with assurance that RCSC currently has an average audience-base of roughly 290 people based on their current annual attendance average. Based on this data, the marketing efforts of
Rubber City Shakespeare Company have been successful concerning its basic function of informing potential patrons that an event is occurring, and providing them with some sense of enticement to choose to attend RCSC’s events. However, when analyzing the data, it can also be surmised that Rubber City Shakespeare Company’s seems to experience rapid attendance growth during periods in which they make effective programming decisions. For example, attendance increased rapidly during RCSC’s productions of *Macbeth*, *Aida*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, and *A Christmas Carol*. A case can be made that each of these successes were programming-based. With the exception of *Aida*, each of these productions were thematically relevant to the period of time in which they were produced. For example, both *Midsummer* and *Macbeth* are two of Shakespeare’s most universally popular productions. They were also performed during seasons of the year in which their respective plots and themes would resonate with audiences, *Macbeth* being performed in mid-October for the Halloween season and *Midsummer* in mid-August. *A Christmas Carol* is a generally considered a Christmas classic that can be enjoyed by the entire family and was performed in December of 2016. *Aida*, on the other hand, is a well-known musical by Elton John and Time Rice, and may have sold well for multiple reasons. Generally, musicals tend to sell well across all theatrical venues. In addition, *Aida* had not been recently produced in the Northeast Ohio area, this afforded RCSC with the added benefit that many their audience members had not seen *Aida* performed live before. However, when RCSC performs a production like *The Tempest* or *The Twelve Dates of Christmas*, their attendance figures fall back into that 150-200 patron attendance range. Some suggestions as to how Rubber City Shakespeare Company might improve their existing marketing techniques in order to
help increase the attendance have been provided in APPENDIX A of this study. In the next section, this study will analyze the data collected through its research of national arts marketing trends in order to provide some general examples of best practices in the field of arts marketing.

Analysis of Best Practices in Arts Marketing at a National Level

Through analyzing the data provided by the number of sources utilized in this study, it is possible to provide some suggestions as to what are the most common best practices used to help arts organizations build strong audience-bases. As discussed in chapter 2 of this study the first two places to begin developing strong marketing tactics are through knowing the audience of the organization and analyzing the mission statement in order to create a unique brand for an organization. The research gathered by this study concluded that some of the most useful techniques to help an organization gain a better understanding of their audience are through surveying and interviewing their patrons. If an organization creates an open dialogue with their audience they are more likely to not only connect with that audience by making them feel important and valued by the organization, but they will also gain valuable insights as to how they are viewed by their audience, what strategies they could undertake to better serve that audience, and ways in which the organization may need to improve. Also by surveying the audience it is possible to discover broad demographic trends among them, and to perform research as to which messages and marketing strategies resonate the strongest among the organization’s key demographic segments. With this knowledge, the organization will be
able to experiment with marketing messages to find the best tactics to connect with their potential patrons.

Along with creating with creating an open dialogue with the audience an organization might choose to analyze their mission statement in order to make stronger connections with their marketing, mission, and programming. As discussed in chapter 2, one of the many ways to connect with a potential patron is to share the organization’s passions with them. A patron who believes in an organization’s mission is far more likely to be loyal to that organization and their mission. For example, an organization like Karamu House in Cleveland, OH has positioned themselves to providing programming aimed specifically on the African-American community. It is not only part of their mission, but there is a key demographic segment of the population being served through their mission. By making clear marketing choices, based on a mission statement, as to who the organization serves the organization and its marketing will position itself to serve a specific and loyal niche market. Without these key choices an organization is likely to experience an ebb and flow effect in their attendance figures. They are likely to see a trend of patrons who are interested in specific programming attending, but then they may not return until another program that interests them is performed. For these reasons, examining an organization’s mission statement and creating a strong branding/positioning message from it is an important step to building a strong audience-base.

Once the ideas of who an organization’s audience is and who the organization intends to serve are solidified, it is then possible for the organization to begin developing effective marketing strategies. Based on the research gathered by John Arnold and
company in *Web Marketing All-In-One For Dummies* logos and taglines are still effective branding strategies for organizations. Once an organization has determined who their audience is, they can use the emotional qualities of specifically chosen colors to create a brand for their organization on their website, direct mailers, Twitter and Facebook accounts. They can take a well designed logo that effectively illustrates the atmosphere of the organization and use it on those same marketing channels. A witty tagline used on those same channels along with adding them to the organization’s e-mail signature and radio ads can leave a lasting impression with potential patrons. This study mentioned a number of notable taglines in chapter 2 and has shown that both GLT and OSF utilize taglines in their marketing as well. Therefore, this strategies appears to have merit as so many organizations use them to stand out among their peers. With well designed and placed logos, brand colors, and a tagline and arts organization can create an effective branding strategy that could allow the organization to more readily stick out in the minds of it’s patrons and help build a stronger audience-base.

With those key strategies in place the organization might only need to utilize the most effective marketing channels available to them in order to reach potential patrons. As discussed in chapter 2 it is imperative that an organization has a website. Based on the research from *Breaking the Fifth Wall* and *Web Marketing*, in order to make that website as effective as possible an arts organization should remember to provide all the basic information that a potential patron would require to contact, purchase tickets, and attend an organization’s programming. To give off an impression of professionalism all communications with the organization and all text on the organization’s website should be proofread and up-to-date. In addition, the organization should consider adding
professional images from their programming in order to not only create an atmosphere of what attending a performance would feel like for a patron, but attempt to have photos of actors expressing emotions in mid-performance as patrons more readily connect with human faces. If an organization chooses to synthesize these tactics with a strong branding strategy and a simple online ticketing process they are likely to have an effective website.

As for Email, Facebook, and Twitter the research this study gathered pointed to three major strategies when dealing with each of these channels. One major suggestion was to treat each channel as a separate marketing tool with a distinct audience. To do this an arts marketer should use experimentation to find content that is most effective for each channel. In the research collected from *Breaking the Fifth Wall*, *Facebook Marketing*, and *Twitter Marketing* the authors all suggested that the most effective method of reaching an audience through these channels were through interesting content. The concept of interesting content does vary from channel to channel, but the types of content that stand out amongst other social media accounts are photos, video content, a unique voice, interviews with industry leaders, personal stories, and special offers. If an organization can find these types of content and create an effective strategy to use them through their varied online marketing channels, they are likely to find their attendance figure increasing throughout their theatrical season. It is important to mention the subjects of individualization and direct communication with each of these marketing channels. One important aspect of Facebook and Twitter is the direct, real-time communication that can be had with an organization’s audience. These website allow for quick conversation with audience members, personalized communication, and fast
resolution of customer service issues. Each of these benefits can create a stronger relationship with audience members and lead to future brand loyalty. In addition, arts marketers can experiment with individualization with their e-mail marketing. If a patron were to receive an e-mail thanking for attending a particular production with a suggestion of a future production they might enjoy, it could lead to the patron feeling valued by the organization and increase their willingness to return.

Finally, when choosing the to use classic marketing channels of 20\textsuperscript{th} Century, such as newspaper, radio, or direct mail research suggests that it is important to choice wisely. There is often an expense when using any of these marketing channels and while their effectiveness is varied, it is very important to know an organization’s audience before proceeding to use any of these communication methods. Radio, as this study’s research has shown is still an effective means of communicating with potential patrons. Online radio source have been growing in prominence offer the past decade leading this study to conclude that radio advertising is still an effective marketing channel for arts marketers. While direct mail has been waning in its effectiveness some of the research provided by Valdimir Gendelman in his article, “Print’s Not Dead: Print Marketing Will Thrive in 2014 and Beyond,” suggests that the medium is still a viable means of communicating with an arts organization’s audience. What he suggests is that if an organization can make their mailers unique and individualized there is a strong chance that their efforts will stand out from other organizations that are turning away from the medium. This study has mentioned that the ROI is not as strong with direct mail as with e-mail, but if the organization has the funds, a joint e-mail/direct mail campaign could increase ticket sales more than performing either strategy on their own. In the case of
newspaper advertising, the research suggests that the younger the audience-base for an arts organization is the less effective this medium is. Therefore, this study recommends that an arts organization only consider using newspapers if they can identify a large enough demographic trend among their audience-base to justify using this channel. Otherwise, an organization’s marketing budget could be utilized on a more fruitful marketing channel. While the world is currently in a transition period of how technology is affecting marketing, this study still finds that some classic marketing methods are useful when effectively marketing arts organizations.

Through the analyzing survey data collected by RCSC along with national marketing data from a number of sources, this study suggests that the practices mentioned in this section are likely to yield positive results when attempting to build a strong-audience-base. While only a snapshot of each method could be discussed, there is in-depth research available on each topic for any arts marketer looking to expand their knowledge on any particular subject discussed here. It is the hope that this study has provided some enlightening data on the subject of arts marketing and will assist young organizations in building a strong audience-base for their organization so that the arts community in the United States can continue to expand and be successful in the 21st century.

Conclusion

This study set out to answer the question, “What are the best marketing practices this study can recommend to Rubber City Shakespeare Company in order to help them build a strong audience base?” By extension, this study sought to provide insights for
young nonprofit organizations on marketing strategies that would assist them in potentially strengthening their own audience-base. Through research and interviews, this study determined that RCSC has a strong audience-base of 290 patrons, which they have built through their current marketing strategies. This study therefore recommended some methods they can utilize in order to expand that audience-base and entice them to attend their lesser known productions. If RCSC, and by exention, other young arts nonprofits, experiment with implementing these recommendations into their current marketing strategies, they may be able to not only continue to expand their audience-base, but strengthen their already existing marketing tactics. It was always the hope of this study to assist RCSC in becoming a stronger and more sustainable organization as it moves into its fifth year of existence. The data provided and discussed may not only assist RCSC in growing their audience-base, but may provide important tools and marketing techniques for other young theatre companies to use in expanding their own audience-bases. Hopefully, these efforts can only aide the arts community in Northeast Ohio in their continued growth and sustainability.
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APPENDIX

Recommendations for Improving RCSC’s Marketing Strategies

1) General Recommendations
   a. Answer the question “Who is Rubber City?”
      i. Analyze mission statement
      ii. Who does Rubber City serve? (Audience)
      iii. What does RCSC do differently/better than other area nonprofits?
   b. Answer the question “Who is our niche market?”
      i. Use demographic survey data.
      ii. Do marketing research to discover best communication methods with niche audience.
   c. Create a stronger branding strategy.
      i. Create tagline.
         1. Examples:
            a. “We do Shakespeare…Differently.”
            c. “Shakespeare as You’ve Never Seen It Before.”
      ii. Use RCSC logo more prominently in marketing materials.
d. Develop strong/unique “voice” for RCSC.
   i. Discuss how RCSC’s programming is different from similar organizations.
      1. Interesting concepts:
         a. *As You Like It* (Woodstock)
         b. *Macbeth* (post WWI tire factory)
         c. *Tempest* (Impressionist painting)
         d. *Lear* (Gender swapped lead actress)
            i. RCSC’s audience is primarily female, and women as a demographic tend to respond positively to gender swapped roles traditionally played by men.
      e. Use Mission Statement in marketing.
         i. Promote educational programming.
         ii. Experiment with date of Pay-As-You-Like-It performance to best serve low income residents.
    2) Direct Mail
       a. Currently uses strong marketing methods, continue with current strategy.
    3) Website
       a. Create sense of atmosphere.
          i. Patrons respond to websites that make them feel as if they are attending a production at the venue.
       b. RCSC’s logo should be more prominently displayed on homepage.
i. Top left corner generally the strongest position.

c. Make sure all branding is uniform.
   i. RCSC’s name, logos, taglines’ font, color, and formatting should match everywhere they are used on the website.

d. Use more performance photography.

e. Utilize more animations and/or collages of performance photography.

f. Create branded photos for each RCSC production.

g. RCSC should model other pages after their EDUCATION, CONTACT US, GALA pages for examples of best website practices.

4) E-mail marketing

   a. Increase open rate (29.3%) and click rate (2.5%)
      i. Send out “buzz” generating e-mail a week or two before production opens.

      ii. Avoid actor profiles as they are becoming repetitive.

      iii. Create video content exclusive to e-mail subscribers.

         1. Educational content.

         2. Designer interviews.

         3. Sneak preview of production or season announcement.

         4. Actor interviews in video format.

5) Newspaper marketing

   a. Newspaper articles are ineffective in reaching an audience.

   b. Production reviews are effective.
i. Expand number of prominent critic reviewing RCSC’s productions.
   1. Christine Howey
   2. Roy Berko
   3. Andrea Simakis
   4. Bob Ableman
   5. Kevin Joseph Kelly

ii. Due to negative comments, avoid inviting David Ritchie to Shakespearean productions.

6) Facebook
   a. RCSC currently uses effective marketing techniques on their Facebook account.
      i. Profile photo is logo.
      ii. Content is up-to-date.
      iii. Interesting content is created by RCSC (production photos, reviews, radio interviews, and more)
   b. RCSC could share more interesting content related to their programming.
      i. Videos on historical context/production background.
      ii. Comedic videos.
      iii. Educational content.

7) Twitter
   a. RCSC effectively retweets content.
      i. Patron comments.
ii. Articles about RCSC.

iii. Shares production photos.

b. Could increase frequency of tweets.
   i. Helps to build “buzz” for upcoming productions.

c. RCSC could find more varied types of content to share.
   i. Production design rendering photos.

d. Use Hastags to connect RCSC’s content to Twitter users that are interested in similar content.

8) Youtube
   a. Create one Youtube account for RCSC
   b. Upload all production trailer from *All’s Well That Ends Well* to present.
   c. Keep up-to-date.