

Theater Zuidplein

A short study on how Theater Zuidplein in Rotterdam places audience at the centre of the institution.

CENTER FOR KUNST & INTERKULTUR

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KEYWORDS

Community rooted, audience led, building capacity, co-creation, by choice and by surprise.

SYNTHETIC DATA

Organisation	Theater Zuidplein,
Year of establishment	1997
City and Country	Rotterdam, the Netherlands
Culture Branch:	Theatre and performing arts
Legal status	Funded Municipal public organisation
Venue Size:	Grote Zaal (cap. 585), Kleine Zaal (cap.170), Café (cap. 200) New building to be taken over from 2019.
Number of Employees:	FTE: 31,1 in 2015 + app. 80 volunteers
Locus and facilities:	Rotterdam, Zuidplein
Form of financing:	Government (Rotterdam), cultural funding (projects), earnings from hospitality, rental and ticket sales. 56 % of the income came from ticket sales in 2015.
Economic Turnover:	€4.485.000, - a year.
Number of arrangements:	291 events a year (2015), mainly guest productions visiting.
Annual number of visitors:	85.183 (2014) 78.601 (2015)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Theater Zuidplein is a venue presenting theatre, music, dance, movie, stand-up, cabaret, talents, festivals and more for a predominantly urban audience, who are not frequent visitors at a theatre or venue. The theatre also run educational programs for children aiming at very diverse groups of interest. There is a clear focus on contemporary expressions, on the 'now'! Objects or issues that lives or influences the society in any given 'now'.

Theater Zuidplein's mission statement sets a stage for everyone: We 'break the stage open' through presenting and producing theatre and training options for truly anyone and any talent. This is anchored in the theatres vision: *Theatre is the mirror of our society.* Theatre

Zuidplein as the mirror in which people recognizes themselves. The place where they can celebrate who they are.

The theatre has formulated a strict AD related vision, targeting people who are not familiar with or have little knowledge about theatre using the Mosaic, a Dutch audience methodology. They call their main target audience 'New audiences'. The theatre cooperate with them, together they initiate, produce and present cultural offers about today's society. Besides the visiting professional shows the theatre provide amateur, semi-professional and (aspiring) professional (theatre) talent the opportunity to have a work experience in making and carrying out professional performances.

GOALS AND ACHIEVEMENTS / WHAT THEY WANT!

Theater Zuidplein's main goal continues to engage new audiences with art and culture and make them relate to what's at stage and come back for repeat visits. But the theatre also aims at creating a larger cultural anchorage in a national perspective.

For 2017-2020 their visitor numbers are expected to grow by an average of approximately 83,000 in 2013-2017 to around 105,000 by the end 2020 (moving to a new building in 2019/2020). The theatre aims at keeping a balance between 'new audiences' and an audience by habit equal to the existing level: 69% / 31%.

They achieve that by producing and presenting theatre offerings, whether in the theatre or out of it, to which new audiences can relate. But also by entering into a nationwide collaboration with various representatives of the arts and culture sector that is focused on achieving the same goal through quality and co-creation.

MAKING IT HAPPEN / HOW DO THEY DO IT?

Theater Zuidplein's uses the MOSAIC target group segmentation system. MOSAIC divides Dutch consumers into groups based on their shared socio-demographic and socio-economic characteristics, behavioural data and neighbourhood characteristics. These groups differ from each other in stage of life, socio-demographic data and cultural orientation. From having had a quite specific market-oriented approach focusing on the largest audiences in Rotterdam the use of MOSAIC pointed in the direction of new audience opportunities. Through new programming practice they increased their number of new visitors and among national and European peers the title "leader of attracting new audiences." Relevance put on stage became a path for the programming.

Overcoming the first challenges of addressing new audiences and building a sustainable relationship with them, the next steps turned out to be difficult in terms of the professional environment in the Netherlands, since there was little understanding for the artistic and performative implications of a changed practice and narratives resonating within a more diverse audience. Using the MOSAIC as a way to understand the audiences became a way of redefining the theatre itself.

An obstacle has been the limited resources from the visiting companies to increase public outreach and to finance productions for a new audience. It has increasingly become more difficult to get productions financed. Sponsors are more likely to sponsor mainstream and culturally preserving offers. Since 2013, the theatre started self-producing an annual theatre production to new audiences as a way to find new ways of engagement.

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This report is part of a transnational EU study on how small and midsize cultural institutions and festivals places audiences at the centre of their institution and activities.

The views expressed in the report are the sole responsibility of Niels Righolt as a researcher in the study and in no way reflect the views of the European Commission.



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