

The Audience Panel: Results from our first focus group

How do NI audiences find out about arts and culture events?

Not only do we send a monthly poll to our Audience Panel, we also have occasionally real, live conversations with them, where we can hear about what they think, with their own words. This time, we asked them **how they find out about arts and culture events and what makes them buy a ticket.**

Newsletters are a big thing



Newsletters are most respondents' number 1 source to find something to do. When they sign up to arts and culture newsletters, it is to get information on events, often because of a connection to the organisation.



The optimal frequency of newsletters is **once or twice a month**, or weekly if the venue has events on all the time. It depends on the organisation and what's on. Most like to receive information about arts and culture events **well in advance** so they can plan/buy tickets. Most agreed that as long as they don't get emails everyday, they aren't annoyed. (They know they can just click off and not read it). Organisations shouldn't be afraid to email their audiences (obviously so long as they don't do it too often).



What NI audiences like about newsletters:

- It keeps them informed and can serve as a **reminder** to book tickets.
- It makes them feel **part of a community** and more involved with the organisation.
- The convenience of it being **digital** and having it sent straight to their inbox.
- When it comes to newsletter content, besides event information, they enjoy the **behind-the-scenes** content (e.g., links to musicians' videos on YouTube) and want this to continue even after Covid.



We've also asked them how newsletters can be improved:

- **Do** stick with a theme to keep it short and straightforward – a few people mentioned they can sometimes be long/repetitive.
- **Do** list the cast members for theatrical events – this can pique people's interest.
- **Do** list run times of the event/show – this will help people make a decision to attend if they need to arrange alternate transport (e.g., take a bus/train home) or babysitters. Similarly, do add a link to your accessibility page or include your access information in the body of your newsletter.
- **Do** add links to additional content such as YouTube links to artists' work. "I'd see something I don't know much about, watch Youtube first on a show for a comedian. If it makes me laugh I'll book a ticket. Some of the emails contain links to YouTube, it's really helpful."
- **Don't** include events in an email if they're sold out (it's disappointing to audiences)

What other channels do people use to find out about arts and culture events?



Social media isn't king, and email isn't dead – people may be more likely to pay attention to an email rather than to your organisation's social media posts. Most aren't likely to go through all organisations' separate social media channels to find out information. They may follow you but they will only be scrolling through your posts.

Organisations shouldn't underplay the power of **social recommendations via social media**. People trust their friends have good taste. Encourage your audiences to share about their plans or visits on their own social media page.

Music fans tend to follow bands/artists they like on social media and this is how they usually find out if they're performing locally.



Other channels include **local newspapers, word of mouth** (via friends/family, social media, or a Whatsapp group of like-minded friends) and **leaflets/flyers/posters** at coffee shops or venues.

Other important things to consider



Participants talked a lot about **trust**. Audiences trust the cultural organisations they subscribe to and attend. The more they trust them, the more likely they are to attend something new/unfamiliar.



NI audiences aren't keen on **discounts**. If they saw one, they might go for it, but it's not a priority and it will not convince them to go to something. Other factors come into play when deciding to buy a ticket.



What convinces them to buy tickets?

- The artist
- The price of the ticket if it's to try something new
- How friendly the venue is to families
- If their friends are already going