Families could be the saving grace the arts sector needs, “don’t ignore them” urge experts

Tuesday 29 September, 2020

Research conducted by the Family Arts Campaign and Indigo, who has conducted the largest UK research study into audience intentions during COVID-19, suggests families are a willing and important audience segment at risk of exclusion.

The research talked to over 200,000 audience members about their attitudes to missing live events, how they were engaging with culture during lockdown and when they anticipated returning to live events in the future.

Uniquely, family audiences recognise the sense of urgency in providing cultural experiences for children, whose creative development is vitally important to them.

“This could be an opportunity for the culture sector to rebuild their audiences,” says Anna Dever, Head of the Family Arts Campaign, “Cultural organisations have an opportunity to develop interesting and interactive experiences for families, particularly around digital and outdoor activity. The data suggest that family groups are more interested than ever in arts and cultural experiences and are actively looking for things to do in person and online. It’s important we don’t ignore or overlook families in these challenging times.”

Significant findings from the study suggest:

- Indoor social distancing is hard work for family audiences, with audiences considering it too difficult to adhere to restrictions in indoor public settings
- But families are much comfortable than most to embrace outdoor events, even if they’ve never been to them before with 96% saying they’d be open to new outdoor offers

“I would love to see some outdoor, family-orientated, socially distanced daytime performances in the coming few months, I’d be happy to pay the same as for an indoor performance... we are fed up with screen time,” said one audience member.

- The Christmas panto or a similar experience is very important to this audience as a tradition and way of being together. 55% of family respondents already had bookings for festive performances.
- There is an opportunity to try new ways to engage families online. Although less than half of family audiences have experienced culture online, however, 75% are interested in trying it out in future.
- Online activities that are activity-based (think workshop style or arts and crafts), interactive and they can do as a family are attractive to families. Family groups were also more likely than any other audience group to pay a similar price for an online experience as a live one.
- A third of family bookers have seen their income reduced during COVID-19, and so are particularly concerned to see refunds or credit notes being offered on future bookings.

Katy Raines, Partner and Co-Founder of Indigo said, “Our research shows that families are an engaged and receptive audience, and perhaps more willing to try (and pay for) new experiences digitally or outdoors than other audience segments. They are acutely aware of the impact of a creative void in their children’s development, and so I would urge our cultural sector to review their family offer and think creatively about how they can provide memorable, fun and safe experiences for families.”

The Family Arts Campaign and Indigo will host a free webinar “Welcoming Back Family Audiences” on Tuesday 13 October in partnership with the Arts Marketing Association (AMA).

Organisations and artists are invited to share learning, ideas and examples on how these findings can help welcome families back to cultural experiences. Following the webinar, a full report on family audiences during Covid-19 will be released.

Sign up for the webinar here: https://www.familyarts.co.uk/training-events

Read the headline findings on the Indigo blog: https://www.indigo-ltd.com/blog/act-2-family-audiences

To receive the full report on its release in October, sign up to the Family Arts Campaign mailing list:

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