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"A STROLL DOWN MEMORY LANE": A REVIEW OF MARKETING PRINCIPLES IN GHANAIAN THEATRE

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ABSTRACT

Classical theatre marketing has been a phenomenon since the emergence of Greek theatre. This involved various means of selling theatre performances. Although marketing principles in theatre patronage are key in selling performances to a prospective audience, there is a dearth of research on it locally. Also, as observed, some theatre companies do not utilise these marketing principles in marketing their performances. Thus, they end up running at a loss and not satisfying the targeted audience members. To investigate this problem, this paper seeks to trace the evolution of theatre marketing from Ancient Greek to the present day. It also explores how marketing principles can be adopted and applied in theatre marketing in selling Ghanaian theatre. The paper adopts a qualitative framework and approach. The participants are selected using purposive and convenience sampling techniques. Data is gathered using semi-structured interviews and document study for analysis. From the analysis, findings indicate that some theatre companies in Ghana employed similar marketing strategies to sell their plays. This enable them to promote their performances through radio, print, television and social media proficiently. It also revealed that marketing principles adopted in theatre, play a major role in selling every performance to satisfy an audience and generate expected revenue.

KEYWORDS: Audience, Ghanaian theatre, marketing principles, performance, theatre marketing

INTRODUCTION

In the recent past, profit marketers have revolutionised marketing activities from product-oriented to customer-oriented so that they can meet market demand (Bernstein, 2014; Fraser, 2004; Byrnes, 2009; Pick & Anderton, 1996; Chong, 2002). The consequences of the evolution left many non-profit organisations with no choice but to find ways to also compete for the attention of the customers. Again, the development in profit marketing activities also led most non-profit organisations to venture into the search of other means to execute and regulate their marketing activities to the benefit of the audience and organisation. Many performing arts organisations have realised that they can equally adopt marketing principles developed by profit-making organisations to address the market demand. These marketing principles include estimating audience demand for the product, producing the product, pricing the product, and promoting and distributing of product which this paper attempts to elaborate on. The paper traces the evolution of theatre marketing from Ancient Greek to the present day. Also, it considers how marketing principles can be adopted and applied in theatre marketing in selling Ghanaian theatre. To further elaborate the discussion, the paper draws on typical examples from England and Ghana where necessary, using existing literature and interviews conducted by the authors.

Theatre Marketing from Ancient Greek to 21st Century: An Outline

Before profit marketing principles were adopted into theatre marketing, there were barely set standards or processes of how their marketing activities were executed and regulated to meet market demand (Byrnes, 2009; Fraser, 2004; Chong, 2002). Also, because theatre happened to be the only source of entertainment known to many at that time, less effort was needed to persuade an audience to watch a performance. Besides, what was considered to be theatre marketing in the time past, is not necessarily regarded to be marketing in recent times but rather mere selling of activities. For that reason, those theatre marketing activities were not executed with the customer in mind. This is because theatre performances in the early days were for religious purposes so patrons did not have to pay for patronage.

Historically, records date back to Ancient Greek when sponsors such as Greek Thespis, independent jury and independent sponsors, the choragus, established a project organisation to manage performances and supervise over 10,000 audiences (Fraser, 2004). Subsequent periods equally followed with the same marketing strategy without any official publicity but yet received massive turnout. It was until the golden age of theatre in the Elizabethan era (around the 1800s) that globally many theatre companies started adopting a new means of marketing their performances. For that reason, there was a change in management, which brought about new marketing strategies. Subsequently, new theatre management who emerged globally were mainly entrepreneurs with the sole objective of making profits. Evidence suggests that these entrepreneurs brought different kinds of theatre performances, as well as marketing strategies that will increase the audience capacity (Byrnes, 2009; Fraser, 2004; Adjahoe, 2017; Sutherland, 2014).

In the end, England in particular witnessed an increase in theatre buildings, which were massive enough to accommodate a larger audience in a single performance. Additionally, as a means to entice the audience into the massive theatre buildings, the entrepreneurs resorted to displaying and distributing playbills or call programmes to a target audience at several venues. Owing to the new strategies developed by the theatre managers, over 4000 audiences were recorded during a single performance in England (Fraser, 2004). In Ghana, the narrative was similar, however, the only difference was instead of the playbill, many theatre entrepreneurs used brass band performers who paraded through towns inviting audiences to theatre activities. In

addition, what many witnessed in Ghana also was a massive crowd or audience who flocked to the theatre to watch their Empire Day performances organised by the colonial society (Sutherland, 2014; Adjahoe, 2017). In general, performance in the Elizabethan era was tied to stage techniques and an impressive set design and acting. According to Byrnes (2009), audience satisfaction was not the focus of many theatre managers, but on the staging techniques, which perhaps the audience loved and patronised theatres in large numbers. This period is considered the second era in the history of theatre marketing.

A number of research indicate that the third era marked the beginning of professional theatre because many actors turned into managers and shifted marketing strategies which many theatre companies (Chong, 2002; Byrnes, 2009; Fraser, 2004; Adjahoe, 2017; Sutherland, 2014). Although some of these actor-manager motivations were to offer pure entertainment, for many, they realised that theatre if well organised and publicised properly will generate income for the actors and theatre companies. Thus, major paradigm shifts in theatre management and theatre marketing. According to Chong (2002), mainly using word of mouth, these actor-managers will go to any length to market a theatrical performance to the audience. These marketing activities would include sales, advertising, public relations, media, and consultancy, between the audience and the company. Additionally, the majority of performances were in the form of travelling theatre, publicising the performances was chiefly encouraged by mailshots promotion, posters publication and brass band publicity in countries like Ghana. In Ghana, although scanty literature exists, it is noted that pre-publicity would involve a 'masked bell-ringer wearing a billboard', which was cheaper than the brass band in the era before (Adjahoe, 2017).

Evidence suggests that the actor-manager position worked well into the twentieth century when these managers started facing challenges, which had to do with the second world war and numerous coup d'états in some countries (Adjahoe, 2017; Fraser, 2004; Byrnes, 2009). These challenges affected the income of most theatre companies. Therefore, many professional theatre companies had their performances subsidised by the government whilst leaving the amateur companies to fund their own performances. For amateur companies, some were privileged to be supported by local authorities, whereas others devised other means of generating funds. In Ghana, Sutherland (2014) narrates that the government gave the arts council of Ghana the mandate to develop a national theatre movement, leaving amateur companies to manage their affairs. She noted that the council provided the movement considerable amount of money to manage various theatre activities including the training of theatre personnel (Sutherland, 2014).

On the other hand, Adjahoe (2017) posits that amateur theatre companies exhibited their shows at marketplaces or other places of gatherings. She further presented that the publicity activities performed by these amateur theatre companies included printing of scenery that depicted snippets of scenes from the actual performance. The printed scenery came in the form of posters or signboards hanging on the side of buses, buildings and electric poles at any vantage point in towns and villages. This attracted the audience, regardless of where the play was staged. Typically, Ghanaian posters or signages would have a theme of domestic nature printed on a piece of fabric as seen below in figure 1. It is noted that the early days of concert party performances in Ghana, were mostly in three folds such as musical, comedy, and drama. According to Agovi (1990), as cited by Adjahoe (2017), the Concert Party tradition represents the early form of performance in Ghanaian theatre history. It is noted that the Concert Party tradition had its inspiration from native Ghanaian dramatic elements and contemporary issues from the 1900s to the 1920s. Thus, advertisement boards or posters could be a representation of any of the three performances listed below in figure 1. Adjahoe (2017) posits that most of these musical bands had their performances in a story form. Therefore, popular musicians like Nana Ampadu and his African Band and the City Boys Band performed their songs as such for the concert party shows. This is because most

of their songs composed had storylines and themes.

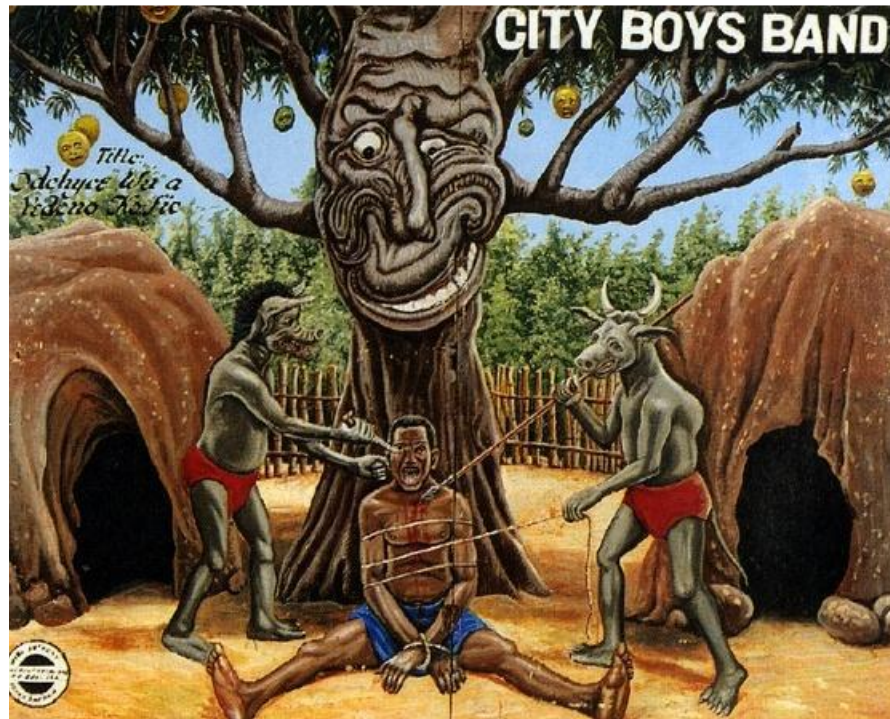


Fig. 1:

A billboard, designed by Mark Anthony, advertising a show by City Boys titled "Odehyee Wu a Yedeno Ko Fie" (If a royal die we take him home)

(Source: Retrieved from www.jsonline.com/artcity as cited in Adjahoe, 2017)

In England, some amateur companies employed similar activities by using posters and billboards to equally attract an audience to watch a performance (Fraser, 2004). Also, the theatre manager hanged posters and billboards in town. The fourth theatre marketing era began from the 1990s to the current twenty-first century. Notwithstanding the fact that some of the professional theatre companies receive about 80% sponsorship from the government, records suggest that all the rules of engagements or the marketing principles adopted from profit organisations were applied by both professional and amateur theatre managers (Byrnes, 2009; Chong, 2002; Fraser, 2004). Apart from the marketing principles which many used to regulate marketing activities, the era also witnessed an increase in technology usage in theatrical performance such as the inculcations screen projections and mixed media.

Adoption of Marketing Principles in Theatre

Until the term marketing started circulating from the 1950s, theatre like any other performance arts organisation would spend a chunk of their capital on adverts in the media (Chong, 2002; Byrnes, 2009; Fraser, 2004; Bernstein, 2014). Thus, advertising on radio, television, the dailies and sometimes spend time parading the towns. Other theatre companies also had either press release announcing the upcoming event or a photo or two that could be sent to the local papers announcing the dates of upcoming performances (Byrnes, 2009). Additionally, pulling an audience into having an intimate theatre experience demanded a teamwork effort from backstage and front-of-house crew (Fraser, 2004). Also, the cast and crew would paste posters at any

potential venue and vantage point. Flyers were sometimes distributed and few advertisements were placed in the newspapers or low-cost brochures mailed to audiences, (Byrnes, 2009). These were done with the view of attracting audiences whose turnout could not be defined after sums of money and time have been spent on these adverts (Byrnes, 2009).

Over time, many theatre marketers began to realise that theatre like any other business, is a risky business and customer-centred. Thus, the need to develop tactics to maximise profit (Byrnes, 2009; Fraser, 2004; Bernstein, 2014). As a result, these theatre marketers began to participate in a whole new range of theatre marketing activities such as raising the profile of the theatre company, attracting sponsorships and engaging in kind of advertisements and promotional activities. Around the same period, performance arts marketers such as Keith Diggle, Danny Newman, and Alvin Reiss equally realised that some of the marketing theories used in profit organisations could be applied in non-profit marketing to maximum profit (Chong, 2002; Pick & Anderton, 1996). Newman and Diggle were both performing arts marketing consultants, who wrote several books on how to market and fund the performing arts. As performing arts marketing consultants, Diggle and Newman highlighted the need for promotional activities that will increase audience capacity. Newman, in particular advocates for promotional and pricing that will stimulate demand, and he suggested that this can be done through selling. Diggle, on the other hand, believes that advance tickets for a theatrical performance can be sold to the audience in advance to increase audience capacity (Chong, 2002). Chong (2002) reports that Diggle's assumption is based on the premise that if the audience could anticipate the date, time and duration of a performance than they will think that there is limited space and that will give them a reason to buy a ticket in advance. Hence basically affirming the notion that theatre marketing from the 1960s through the twentieth century involved the selling of tickets, some advertising, and promotional activities just to increase audience capacity but not for customer satisfaction.

However, as the audience became more complex and discriminatory, they started being selective, and responsive to custom-tailored options and that made marketers change their marketing strategy (Bernstein, 2014). Eventually, marketers were forced to be more relationship-oriented, thereby focusing on how to keep a consumer coming back for more. In recent times marketing has moved from collaborative oriented to encouraging consumers to participate in the company's development of products and communications' (Bernstein, 2014, p. 34). Therefore, in line with the new role audience have occupied in marketing in the twentieth-first century, marketers have a different definition of marketing and that involves combination of selling and marketing activities.

In the year 2008, American Marketing Association defined marketing as series of happenings, rules and procedures for creating, collaborating, transporting and switching of offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and societies (Byrnes, 2009; Bernstein, 2014). Bernstein (2014), in disagreement posits that this definition could be translated to mean that the role of marketers is to educate and change attitudes, but that role belongs to management and not marketers. According to Bernstein (2014), although along the line, marketers may assume those roles in order to gain audience trust, he opines that should not be the ultimate objective of marketing. Therefore, Bernstein suggests that marketing should be defined as rather an investigation, planning, operation and regulate programmes designed to create, build, and maintain beneficial exchange of relationships with target audiences (Bernstein, 2014). Further, Bernstein (2014), explained marketing as a procedure in which a firm relates to its customers in a creative manner to produce and gain some profit. The whole concept is to satisfy customers within an organisation's mission and objectives (Bernstein, 2014). Apart from the new definition of marketing, theatre companies have also adopted marketing principles used by profit marketers. These principles cover advertising pricing, channels of distribution and other basics that suits the

requirements of the target audience (Chong, 2002).

Principles of Marketing: A Pivot in Theatre Marketing

According to Byrnes (2009), marketing principles are explained as the collection of activities an organisation undertakes in order to provide fulfilment to clients in a given market (Byrnes, 2009). Byrnes proposes that these marketing principles can be manipulated to suit an organisation purpose. However, Nwamuo (2003) suggests that the first marketing principle to be considered is the product which is the play. This is because it links the audience to the theatre organisation. Also, without a play there is no audience and therefore theatre companies will at run a loss. For that matter, the play has to be produced with certain conditions and requirements that will ensure that customers and companies are satisfied (Nwamuo, 2003). In the opinion of Nwamuo (2003), some of the basic specifications and requirements to consider are knowing when to launch the product and when a product is complete for an audience to patronise. The product maturity stage takes place after the first three or four days into the rehearsals which gives actors some days to be comfortable with their roles (Nwamuo, 2003). Furthermore, the maturity process also allows the company to make sure the actors and all other logistics are ready and in place (Nwamuo, 2003). This implies that the product maturity process involves just the company.

As submitted earlier, twenty-first-century marketing is a collaboration between the organisation and audience. Probably, this explains Nwamuo's suggestion that after a company realises that the product is matured, the play must be launched so that the audience will be included in the production process. The next principle is to estimate an audience demand for the product with the assumption that the higher its demand the higher the consumption which register's the organisation's success. As a result, scholars such as Bernstein emphasises on the need for art managers to develop audience-organisation marketing strategies, that focuses on creating memorable experiences for the audience to increase audience demand regardless of the season (Bernstein, 2014). Additionally, in developing useful marketing strategies, research helps to reduce risks and uncertainties (Nwamuo, 2003; Bernstein, 2014). Although no literature has confirmed this claim, perhaps going through the benefits of an organisation derived from conducting market research warrants the early art marketers to adopt the marketing principle in theatre to prevent an unforeseen challenge. Nwamuo (2003) and Bernstein (2014), outline other purposes of research in marketing which enable to identifies loyal theatre patrons determined by the frequency of attendance. Also, it gives an idea of the best time, venue in staging the performance and rate to be charged.

Further, research in marketing provides invaluable feedback on the image of the theatre company or organisation. At the core of the research plans or strategies, are variables that address organisation aims and prospective audience needs and wants. For the organisation, the strategic plan must involve the theatre company accessing and understanding the needs and wants of a prospective audience (Byrnes, 2009; Nwamuo, 2003; Bernstein, 2014). The company's plan must adequately question and answer most issues that focuses on audience satisfaction as well as fit into their long-term goals (Byrnes, 2009; Bernstein, 2014). Notwithstanding, in theory, it is viewed that the better match of wants and needs of the product or service, the greater audience satisfaction. In the opinion of Byrnes (2009), addressing all the issues rooted within the organisation strategic plan and audience satisfaction plan must equally be flexible and adaptable to changing conditions in any market environment. Similarly, to be able to estimate audience demand there must be some form of data gathering and analysis which will highlight audience needs and want (Byrnes, 2009; Bernstein, 2014; Fraser, 2004).

In many instances, the methodology adopted by marketers includes observation, which

involves marketers planting ushers at the front of house or in the audience, so that audience behaviour and reaction during a particular performance can be observed and recorded from a distance. Some marketers also adopt the focus group approach and scheduled questions are posed by a skilled moderator. Previously, these moderators were mainly marketers trained to have unique skills for questioning and producing in-depth responses from the groups involved (Bernstein, 2014). However, in recent times the moderators are not only marketers, but could also either be sociologists, psychologists, economists, or arts researchers who are trained in areas that assist theatre companies in understanding their audience (Bernstein, 2014). What these experts or consultants do is to systematically develop a research questionnaire, which solicits several opinions from the audience who attend a performance which analyse and interpreted as part of data collection. (Bernstein, 2014; Fraser, 2004). Therefore, looking at the key role played by these consultants, many organisations reserve part of the marketing budget for data collection and analysis. Subsequently, questions from consultants can range from what attracts a person to purchase a ticket and why some audience members attend a performance only once and choose not to come back? Other questions are also based on factors that create audience satisfaction and inspire loyalty to a performing arts company (Bernstein, 2014).

Some marketing researchers take the approach of interviewing the audience on the phone or conducting a transactional survey. Usually, the transaction surveys are conducted when an audience contacts the organisation to purchase tickets or request information (Bernstein, 2014). The transaction survey has become useful for some theatre companies who wants to track various audience and their ticketing purchasing behaviour. In England, what most theatre organisations do when adopting a transactional survey strategy is to provide questionnaires at the box-office and the information gathered is store in a computerised system (Fraser, 2004). The information gathered is later analysed and used to build a relationship with the audiences (Fraser, 2004). Later on, the findings are used to address the needs and wants of prospective audience. As highlighted by Bernstein (2014) some of the variables that theatre or arts marketers employ when analysing and developing strategies to reach the prospective audience needs include audience demographics such age, race and sex. For instance, questions under individual preferences requires answers to one's occupation, economic status, lifestyles and experiences. It must be noted that these factors influence audience decisions on whether to attend a performance or ignore it (Bernstein, 2014). Similarly, if an audience perceives that the play is wholesome for his or her age or gender, then they will patronise the play. Sometimes it may be surprising to realise that prospective audience did attend a particular performance because they feel the play is avant-garde or too serious for one's psychological state (Bernstein, 2014).

In the end, most companies use these findings to determine the play choice, ticket pricing, packaging and the best promotional activities to be adopted by the theatre company (Bernstein, 2014; Nwamuo, 2003). Typically, most research conducted for business firms indicate that the needs and wants of the customer could either be functional or psychological. However, in theatre, most audiences' needs and wants identified usually fall under psychological needs (Byrnes, 2009). The psychological needs and wants focuses on the intangible reward the audience derives from the organisation and performance. Hence, if a prospective audience envisages that the play will not adequately address his psychological needs, he or she might boycott the performance. For that reason, Bernstein (2014) suggests that apart from considering the favourable needs and wants of the audience, theatre companies must also focus on the variables that equally prevent audiences from attending a performance. Therefore, some of these answers solicited from the audience enable the experts either enforce or break down barriers that affect audience attendance (Bernstein, 2014). In the same vein when the needs and wants are identified, a company can either decide to stress on the product or the ticket price or the paramount promotional activities to adopt (Byrnes, 2009).

The next marketing principle is pricing the product for the play. Pricing the product or the play involves searching for appropriate means to increase organisation profits. For that reason, producing a play is expensive, therefore the company must think of possible means of retrieving much of the capital invested to be able to finance another performance. As matter of fact, some of the theatre companies that receive support from other funding organisation even needs a successful investment record to attract sponsors. Pricing of the product involves both direct and indirect expenditure for producing the play or production cost (Nwamuo, 2003; Bernstein, 2014). The production cost includes estimating the wages to be paid, cost of material for each technical crew, a venue to be rented, cast welfare, transportation, as well as cost of advertisement. Based on the estimate realised from the production cost, will the theatre company then make some projection of how much a ticket will cost. Additionally, with the introduction of online ticketing in recent times, many theatre organisations also rely on audience participation on any of the social media platforms to put a value on a performance ticket (Byrnes, 2009). Accordingly, a ticket price must be maximised enough to recover revenues or realistic percentage of the production costs which basically depend on what a theatre company consider reasonable in terms of cost recovery (Bernstein, 2014).

Nwamuo (2003), suggests that some objectives theatre companies should set before the final ticket price is announced to attain maximum cost recovery. Therefore, the first objective is Market penetration, which involves having an idea of how to create and maintain audience satisfaction. This is because if the price is high and the audience does not get satisfied, the possibility of losing an audience is high. The second pricing objective is known as the Market skimming, which aims at selling ticket as quickly as possible in order to retrieve cost of product. Moreover, the third objective is known as Early cash objective which shows when the organisation realises that criticism may affect audience capacity if the play is prolonged. Hence, the theatre company devices a means to retrieve their expenditure before bad publicity affects audience turnout. Another pricing objective that Nwamuo (2003) suggests which might be useful is what he terms as Satisfying objective. That is when the theatre company makes a decision to reward its audience with another performance free or discounted or any other incentive that leaves audiences satisfied. Above all, Bernstein (2014) also recommends other things that regulate pricing for maximum cost recovery. This must also include choosing a price based on what other competitors are charging to assess whether they are taking less or more. Other situations to determine pricing could be seat allocation, time and special event. As a result, with a difference price in arrangement for seats, time and other special events aside the main performance, will also help in the cost recovery (Bernstein, 2014)

The final marketing principle to be considered is promotion and distribution which is very expensive and time-consuming (Nwamuo, 2003; Pick & Anderton, 1996; Fraser, 2004; Bernstein, 2014). Generally, the underlining factor of this principles is to come up with a series of promotional activities to draw audience attention to the play and the organisation. Additionally, the process also involves the management and marketers to decide on how information on the play and the organisation will be packaged and sent to audiences. Packaging involves presenting the company's vision and mission in a manner to create a positive impression on prospective audience. Bernstein (2014), identifies three criteria which companies must set when packaging to their products. These includes *centrality*, *quality*, and *market viability*. Bernstein (2014), explains that, centrality is making sure that a programme or activity is essential to the organisation's mission and vision. Relatively, 'quality' of the programme must be standardised to meet the companies' own standards and those of other competitors. Market viability is the degree to which the marketer ascertains sufficient audience size who have the potential of growth regardless of any uncertainty. These criteria when followed would confirm to the audience that a theatre company organised and

delivered on its promise (Bernstein, 2014).

Hence, management and marketers must also consider the best packaging and distribution format to adopt before any promotional and distribution activities begin. For that reason, this format might help the company to predict the kind of class of audience and the satisfaction they will gain after attending the show. Usually, the major elements that creates a lasting impression on the audience with regards to packaging are the actors and actresses, venues for the performance, the play and some promotional activities. For promotional activities, Pick and Anderton (1996), advices that the advertisement and promotional activities have to be ready and accessible at different venues from the start of rehearsal until the performance is over. Promotional and advertisement involves disseminating information to the public as to where to purchase tickets and attend the production. The time to start any promotional activity solely depends on the number of weeks a production company has before opening night. For most theatre companies they begin the promotional activities with the launch of the play and end on the final night of the performance. Following the launch, the theatre companies then indulge in other forms of promotional and advertising activities.

In the case of Nyansapo Theatre Group (NTG), Nutakor explained that since the company has monthly productions, the promotional and advertisement process normally takes four weeks of campaigning. Before the four weeks starts, the campaign or publicity team comes up with a publicity plan. The plan is then sent to management for approval before the team starts executing the plan. According to Nutakor, with the execution, the first two weeks is mostly reserved for getting non-theatre audience to do face marketing and bulk SMS (Short Message Service). Face marketing involves visiting various institutions to invite the audience to the show. During the visit, the team take contact numbers of the potential audience send them bulk SMS (Short Message Service) on the upcoming performance. Within that same week, the team also targets first-time audiences at their last performance. The third and final week is for all prospective audiences, that is those to be considered as regular and unusual patrons who are also contacted through SMS (Short Messages Service).

In addition to the SMS and face marketing, Nyansapo Theatre Group (NTG) like any other theatre company sometimes places adverts in newspapers, magazines, radio and television. Other avenues of advertisement include electronic and hardcopy mail, flyers, posters, billboards, and brochures, with inscriptions visible enough to stay on the minds of the targeted audience even after watching the performance (Nwamuo, 2003; Pick & Anderton, 1996; Bernstein, 2014; Fraser, 2004). For instance, if the publicity team is advertising through the use of posters, it should not be crowded with images and letters, but rather simple enough for an audience to identify the needed information. The essential information on the poster must include a description of play genre, the title of the play, opening dates, venue, hours of opening, ticket prices, contact details, name of Production Company and exclusive amenities at the venue. These must be accurately captured to avoid any miscommunication among targeted audience as seen in below in figure 2 and 3. Fraser (2004) and Nwamuo (2003) are of the view that a good poster must have the potential to be detailed enough. That is the information must be communicated properly in a manner that attracts an audience to patronise a play and enjoy afterwards.



Fig 2

Sources: <https://www.ghmoviefreak.com/nyansapo-productions-return-with-if-god-is-ghanaian/whatsapp-image-2018-07-18-at-12-43-08/>

Access date: 5/7/2020



Fig 3

Source <http://dentaa.blogspot.com/2013/>

Access date: 5/7/2020

Aside the leaflets and other advertising means used by Nyansapo, other theatre companies also device innovative concepts or promotional activities just to reach their prospective audience. These include distributing car stickers, organising float at malls, or stunt activities at any available venue. Mostly, the distribution of such leaflets and the promotional activities are time consuming and expensive (Bernstein, 2014; Byrnes, 2009; Fraser, 2004). However, with the introduction of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp, other theatre companies are also using these handles to reach prospective audience. The benefits of these platforms are that they offer the cheapest advertisement in terms of distribution cost and printing. Additionally, these platforms reach audience faster at any convenient place and time as compared to the traditional or conventional system of advertisement. Also, these platforms enable theatre companies to cut down on travelling expenses that is mostly incurred by the publicity team when distributing leaflets or performing some promotional activities.

The second packaging element that needs to be considered before sending any information to the audience is the venue for the performance. Evidence suggests that about 60% of audience, choose to attend a performance based on the kind of venue offered by the theatre company (Bernstein, 2014). She emphasised that the choice of venues for a performance must be accommodating and easily accessible. As a result, if an audience perceives that the venue is not accommodative enough, they may decide not to attend the performance. Audience comfortability is usually tied to seating arrangements, bathroom facilities and car parking spaces. For accessibility, the audience may consider whether the physically challenged can easily access the venue, if the venue is in a safe neighbourhood and reliability of location amenities. Apart from the performance venues, the consistency of ticket distribution venues for the purchase of tickets is equally essential to some audience members.

The third packaging element to consider is the play to be performed. Usually packaging the play starts from rehearsals through to the final opening night. During rehearsals, actors go through the reading of lines, blocking, dropping script to finally acting without a script. All in an attempt to make sure that cast and crew are well packaged during a rehearsal before the opening night. The decision on whether the play will be distributed in wholesale or retail is another crucial packaging element that the marketer and management should consider before the production's opening night (Nwamuo, 2003). Primarily, the decision involves whether to show two plays in a night, for the price of one. For instance, Roverman Production's advertisement poster as seen above in figure 3, presented information on the use five weeks to show five plays, with one show to attract a discount, if an audience decides to watch all the five performances. Apart from the number of shows to be agreed upon, marketers and management must also consider other logistics such as actors' appearance in public promotional activities, actors' wellbeing, and crew readiness before the opening night. On each opening night, the marketers make sure that daily the performance is staged without any hitches. This is with a reason that most audiences use their experiences to judge company reliability and consistency as time goes on (Bernstein, 2014). Hence, marketers need to make sure that play starts on time; play narrative does not change from what the company has speculated. Additionally, marketers and management must also ensure that sound, acting, costumes and set design are well packaged and presented in a manner to give the audience the satisfaction for good criticism.

For some decades now, due to maximum exposure, many theatre companies are using technology (digital and virtual theatre) to package and distribute their plays as well (Bernstein, 2014; Dixon, 2011). Through online staging, some theatre companies are able to stream live performances to audiences across the world amidst unforeseen challenges. For instance, in Ghana, amid the recent COVID-19 pandemic era, policy makers placed the ban on public gathering as part of one of the preventive measures. Therefore, theatre companies relied on digital and virtual means to stream live performances to prospective audiences. Also, patrons were not able to watch performances live in physical theatre auditoriums. For instance, Roverman productions offered its audience free virtual performances as an alternative. It is noted that for the virtual performance, Roverman produced two shows in a day which recorded over seven thousand audiences globally. As emphasised by Dixon (2011) theatre companies in other parts of the world specifically, England, have been using the internet to showcase a live performance to the audience globally. In his article, *Truth-Seeker's Allowance: Digitising Artaud*, he illustrates how these companies employ technology to combine virtual backgrounds, lighting, sound equipment and effects to project actors double on a screen. Apart from using the internet to distribute and package performance, many are also using the internet to distribute performance tickets. In Ghana, Nutakor from Nyansapo production expressed that although this sort of ticket selling poses some challenges, they are convenient, reliable and cheaper.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is obvious that marketing principles adopted in theatre marketing makes the performance of a play much simpler, more accessible and straightforward. Therefore, from play conceptualisation to distribution, it is increasingly becoming an obligation for theatre companies to hire professionally trained specialists. Specialists who are knowledgeable in the designing of the marketing mix to ensure a theatre company's profitability and existence in the current entertainment market. Similarly, an assessment of the posters produced before and after-theatre marketers adopted the marketing principle, present a clear difference in the manner in which information is captured. Arguably, the posters employed before the inclusion of marketing principles adopted in theatre marketing gave less information and seem overcrowded. In contrast,

the posters used after marketing principles were adopted in theatre marketing, are not overcrowded and provides more information. Additionally, with the introduction of technology, theatre marketers have the luxury to incorporate virtual means of reaching an audience. Hence, making the theatre marketing process more straightforward for an organisation to ensure audience satisfaction.

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