From transaction to enaction: reframing theatre marketing

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Acknowledgements

> We cannot see the world 'as it is' 'on our own' […] we can only sculpt it together, be taught how to carry on shaping it through the community's eyes, hands, tools, worlds, values and projects, be taught how to participate in exploring and transforming it – and ourselves – together' (Bottineau, 2012, p.12, original emphasis).

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Abstract

Drawing from the rich traditions of audience research and performance studies, this thesis proposes that art, and theatre in particular, is not a simple product that provides universal benefits to everyone, but one that relies on the situated interaction of individuals in a particular time and space. Thus, the current dominant transactional marketing model is not fit for purpose and contributes to the neoliberalisation of arts management as a whole – the primary focus of which is the quantification of impacts and communication of reductive benefits to current and potential markets. Instead of seeking to change the nature of theatre as a complex and interactive phenomenon in order to sell it better, this research explores the extent to which theatre marketing can be reframed to take into account theatre's inherent complexity and embodied meaning and sense-making processes. By applying theories from the enactive school of embodied cognition to the processes of theatre-making, audiencing, arts marketing and our understanding of cultural value, this thesis found that there is significant potential in reframing these terms anew as reliant on embodied and intersubjectively distributed languaging practices of audience, theatre-maker and cultural intermediary. The contribution of this project lies in the novel application of enactive theories to the marketing of live performance, as well as in the methodological framing of facet methodology within an engaged and embodied epistemology, which affords a qualitative mixing of methods within a longitudinal, participatory co-research design. This research thus has far-reaching implications not only for the practices of arts marketing in organisations and the wider sector, but also on our understanding of embodied cognitive processes of meaning and value-making within, and beyond, arts marketing theory, audience studies, and cultural policy.

My terms of engagement

> Engaging with something is always done out of a certain motivation, interest, and perspective. Because of this, the one who engages, in part, determines the thing (person, event, situation) they engage with. For the thing-engaged-with to be, then, in this relation, the engager lets it be, always in a particular way that is directly tied to the engager's own mode of being. This precisely means not to abandon the thing one is knowing, but rather to engage with it, and one can only do that *as* the particular engager one is (De Jaegher, 2019, p.850, original emphasis).

I'm angry with arts marketing. I'm angry with the fact that I did it for a fair amount of time (predominantly in venues) and felt like I did not get any better at it; the fact that the linear audience development plans and shiny campaign toolkits did not seem to bear any reality to my experience of the practice itself; that I had no idea if a campaign would bring in an audience, *any* audience, or if I would have to try and trick them into coming. That increasingly we conflate good artistic practice with practice that's just really well-funded; that it feels like we are still gaslighting our audiences by pleading for them to come to a show, only to not give two hoots about their experience of it. I'm angry that many theatre-makers and artists reduce the practice to a necessary evil that needs to be feared and avoided at all costs and that increasingly the value of arts marketing to organisational strategy is understood as an exercise of predicting whether something will sell…

Of course, feeling angry about something is also an act of love, of care – an act of engagement. In a way, I have abandoned arts marketing. Instead of doing it, I'm writing a PhD thesis about it. So, what makes it so special? It's a profession that some people see, at best, as putting a few posters up and learning the latest Facebook algorithms and, at the very worst, as trying to kill art to death by getting it to commercially submit. Of course, it is neither of these things, all of the time. But it is also both of these things, some of the time. Arts marketing can feel like a balancing act of two extremes: on the one hand, a practice of promotion – SELL! SELL! SELL! GET BUMS ON SEATS! – and on the other, a creative, nuanced, and beautiful invitation to engage that itself forms part of the art. Get it wrong and the finances' bottom line will know.

There's also a sort of thrilling power to it when you get it right: crafting the invitation to an event for a particular time in a particular space with a particular group of people and then watching this assemblage of people just really *hit it off.* Yet there is also a strange sort of feeling of being left out, like you are witnessing an audience and an artist enact their love for one another from the side-lines. It's probably because you are already thinking about how to sell the next show that's on in six months time (and pantomime*. Always* pantomime).

So perhaps I haven't abandoned arts marketing. As De Jaegher suggests, I am engaging with it, with all of its paradoxes and difficulties and insecurities. I am lucky to have the privilege and the inclination (and the funding) to sit within this tension, in this space, between the arts and the market; between the performer and the audience; between the posters and the performance; between transaction and enaction. To try and get a handle on it. And of course, I am doing this the only way I know how: *as* the particular engager that I am.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Arts marketing is hard and I *know* this, empirically and deeply. Over the course of ten years of working in theatre and arts centre marketing teams, I made my living project managing and developing core communications activity (such as website maintenance; brochure and leaflet design, printing and distribution; advertising, press and PR, and direct mailing) for individual show campaigns of all genres. This work was carried out alongside campaigns for the general activities of the theatre as a civic and community organisation (e.g. tours, education activity and development partnerships). Out of all the live performance events – including comedy, dance, drama, spoken word, family shows, live music, opera – by far the hardest shows to sell, requiring the most effort with unpredictable results, were the small- to medium-scale contemporary theatre shows. This was especially the case if they had no star name or familiar title to hook a broad audience's interest. The marketing team often found there was not enough time to spend working on each campaign. With our resources stretched thin and our time even more so, we were starting afresh with almost every campaign, or else working within reductive assumptions generated from data on (e.g.) people's past booking behaviour. Even when we were able to plan and evaluate our activity more strategically and work closely with the programming and creative teams to ensure that our audience development aims were aligned in the medium or longer term with the offer, sales remained variable and unpredictable.

It is very easy to get into a rhythm of regurgitating the same platitudes and hyperbole of 'arts-speak' when you work in arts marketing. 'It's a great night out', 'A must-see show', or 'It'll make you laugh and cry' are aimed at 'the audience' as if they were a homogenous group and notions of quality, and thus value, were universal for all. We would have conversations amongst staff teams as to why we liked or did not like a particular show, artist or company: what was it that gripped us? Why did we think that a particular bit of programming was boring or uninspired – or, conversely, was an exciting enough proposition to bring a new audience to the organisation? Yet these conversations often occurred in our silos as venue staff or creative/artist teams. Certainly the public-facing copy and image, casually referred to as the 'blurb' (which for the most part formed the basis of our communications activity) rarely reflected the richness, nuance and vibrancy of our descriptions of how we experienced the shows. And how could it? The marketing process, often seen as a necessary evil to get 'bums on seats', is conceived as a sales

pitch, rather than a conversation between living, breathing humans – each coming from their own unique viewpoint, shaped by a mix of lived experience and personal preferences.

Rather than simply carrying out conversations one-on-one, segmenting audiences into groups with common characteristics is a foundational marketing and audience development practice, helping to ensure that campaigns and communications activity is targeted most effectively and efficiently. In this sense, it is framed as a necessary compromise between approaching the audience 'as a great big homogenous mass and the audience as a million individuals' (Morris and McIntyre, 2010, p.1). As a result of what Lynne Conner argues is marketing science's strong influence on the 'steady capitalisation of arts institutions over the last 50 years or so', audiences are regularly and consistently conceptualised by organisations in purely transactional terms, as disembodied proxies for their demographic and behavioural (booking) behaviour (2022, p.57). In doing so, we place more value on a potential audience segment's power as a consumer over their potential meaning-making activities. Furthermore, what is not considered in this common sector practice is how these necessarily blunt categorisation tools also have the potential to do harm and continue to embed structural inequalities and racism (ibid, p.57).

Sector context

It is clear that the global pandemic has produced its own set of unique and unprecedented challenges for the arts and cultural sector, amongst others. However, there is increasing evidence of how the pandemic has exacerbated and worsened existing structural inequalities. The recently published 'Culture in Crisis' report by the Centre for Cultural Value found that the 'significant skills and workforce gaps' caused by the pandemic are likely to lead to the sector's 'imminent burnout' (Walmsley et al., 2022a, p.4). In particular, as argued by Lyn Gardner in a recent article for The Stage, many 'under-resourced and overstretched' venues are 'firefighting 24/7 and trying to do whatever they can to keep producing on far too little' (2022). Furthermore, the Arts Marketing Association, the professional membership body representing arts marketing professionals throughout the UK, recently reported that they saw a 103% increase in fixed-term contracts in the past year compared to pre-Covid (2018/19), suggesting that organisations are lacking confidence in their ability to offer long-term posts and job security to arts professionals (Arts Professional, 2022).

The report also importantly notes how job losses were not felt evenly, highlighting the sector's 'pre-existing inequalities, precarities and vulnerabilities', with the pandemic holding 'a mirror up to a deeply unequal cultural sector' and disproportionately impacting the freelance work force (Walmsley et al., 2022a, p.6). It is clear that the challenges of the pandemic continue to exacerbate existing inequalities in the sector, such as the disproportionate impact on artists from communities that have been systematically marginalised by the arts and cultural sector. One of the key recommendations of the Culture in Crisis report was a call for the establishment of 'regenerative' business models and the sacrifice of 'less producing and production' and 'less product and income' to ensure that the sector does not 'rupture at the seams' (ibid, p.7).

Like many arts workers, marketers too are being forced out of the industry due to harm to their mental health and wellbeing by unequal and discriminatory structures (The Stage, 2022). In a recent article for The Stage, published in February 2022, Holly Adomah Thompson talks of her recent experiences as an arts marketer over the pandemic, which she felt are indicative of how marketers are generally 'overlooked and under-appreciated' within the sector (Thompson, 2022, The Stage). Clearly, too, Thompson's struggles were further compounded during the pandemic as a result of broad deep-seated prejudice and systemic racism she experienced in the unpaid work she carried out as a consultant for various venues across London in response to the Black Lives Matter Movement (ibid). As someone with experience working as a marketing professional (although admittedly pre-pandemic), I identify strongly with Thompson's evocation of the well-worn saying that 'marketers are the first to be blamed if a performance isn't selling and the last to be congratulated if it is successful' (ibid). While the sector has a lot of work to do to rebuild after the pandemic, I would argue it is well-worn precisely because, for many practitioners, it typifies their experiences working as a marketer in the arts in general.

On an operational level, approaching marketing as publicity or sales may work to a certain extent, especially for arts centres juggling a lot of different products for different markets; often, there just is not enough time or resource to provide an in-depth campaign for each individual show and company. It may also work for those theatres that have well-established relationships with their audiences and access to large potential markets with similar values to those of the organisation, such as in large cities. Marketing then becomes a practice of letting an already-activated, culturally engaged mailing list know 'what's on'. Yet most of the time, as these informational campaigns rarely go far beyond raising

awareness of the event and illuminate very little about the artistic experience, the onus is put on the consumer to investigate further. This often results in only reaching consumers who are already engaged with the organisation, through a mailing list or other such function.

In their research into organisational behaviour relating to diversifying audiences, and the range of approaches and practices across UK and Australia, Glow et al. note the evidence that audiences for mainstream arts practices are in decline and that audiences remain predominantly white, middle class and middle-aged (2020, pp.147-148). It is for these such reasons that arts organisations have to resource strategic audience development aimed at broadening their audience base. This activity partly stems from a directive that is reinforced by public funding bodies such as Arts Council England to reflect government policy priorities. For publicly funded theatres within the UK arts ecology, there is a clear policy push towards diversification of audiences, especially in terms of ethnicity, class, age and disability (Halliday and Astafyeva, 2014; BOP Consulting and Graham Devlin Associates, 2016). Diversification of audiences is seen to be a key part of audience development strategies which aim to contribute to the ongoing relevance and sustainability of cultural organisations. In addition, as many UK theatres are publicly funded and operate on a not-for-profit basis, justifications need to be made in order to ensure that public money is being invested for the greatest good and benefitting the largest amount of people possible. The generally accepted rationale, especially given the policy turn towards cultural democracy (Hadley and Belfiore, 2018), is that the value and basis for the continuation of the public subsidy of the arts should be ‘dependent upon their broadening access in a democratic manner’ (Hadley, 2021, p.29). Yet despite this policy imperative, audience development does not seem to be making much impact on a sector-wide level (Hadley, 2021; Lindelof, 2015). Furthermore, many critics argue that not much is changing within organisations themselves; thus the arts have been the target of numerous critiques for their lack of diversity at both management and leadership level and at the level of audiences (O’Brien et al., 2020).

In a recent interview, Alan Brown described how England’s cultural policy is stuck in ‘an existential dilemma of cultural value’ (Brown and McDowell, 2022, p.134). We can see in this sense how cultural value, as articulated in the languaging of policy, is ostensibly a value-driven, rather than data-driven tool for decision-making (Gilmore, Glow and Johanson, 2017, p.292). Thus central to problems of arts marketing and management is

the underlying interplay of cultural values, cementing outdated notions of ‘quality’ and ‘excellence’ into the very fabric of UK cultural life. As we aim to uproot and question the dominance of these historic ideals, we are faced with a deeply political space, where ideologies clash and culture wars loom. In a recent article in The Stage, Lyn Gardner notes how venues and artists are working in a world where ‘certain sections of the population are increasingly hostile to the arts and to the liberal values it espouses’ (2022). A quick search of any mission statement of an arts organisation in the UK will uncover how the organisation aims to provide ‘high quality’, ‘excellent’, ‘transformational’ experiences for ‘everyone’, coupling powerful rhetoric and imagery to compel people to book their tickets. More directly, marketing involves communicating a set of benefits that we assume, as arts workers, are attractive to a potential demographic or segment of the market.

While these claims are not in themselves harmful, these assumptions become increasingly problematic when we consider who is making them. The lack of diversity of the cultural workforce as a whole, and theatre more specifically, is well documented. For example, a recent survey of arts management graduates found that the significant majority are white, female, heterosexual and able-bodied (Cuyler et al. 2020). As well as noting significant gender inequalities, O’Brien documented the absence of people of colour and those from working-class origins in the theatre workforce (2020).

Diversity narratives enacted within cultural policy are a particularly telling example of the power and harm of language and rhetoric. In her autoethnographic essay ‘This work isn’t for us’, Jemma Desai (2020) provides a blistering critique of diversity policy in the arts and cultural sector, talking of the flattening of difference and tokenisation of the presence of marginalised workers in the cultural sector. Drawing from her own experience working in the sector over the past 15 years, she offers an alternative to top-down rhetoric and narratives on inclusion by calling for a fundamental disavowal of the ‘language of establishment, business [and] political expediency’ (ibid, 2020). This, she argues, is key for the ‘embracing of a new more thoughtful and embodied one of humanity (and humility) and understanding’ (ibid, 2020).

While it is not within the scope of this thesis to provide a full critique of diversity rhetoric in cultural policy, practitioners and scholars alike have argued and experienced how culture operates as power, is an effective tool for oppression and contributes to growing societal inequalities (Jancovich, 2015; Graeber, 2011). In addition to various critiques on value

allocation and validation in cultural policy, there are calls for analysis of cultural policy as 'text, as discourse and as practice' (Bell and Oakley 2015, p.3). Others have called for a renewed focus on how culture replicates and reinforces inequality (O'Brien and Oakley 2015; Belfiore 2020). Despite recent policy shifts to cultural democratic ideals, notions of quality and value are still rooted in the democratisation of culture paradigm (Hadley et al., 2020, 2022). This 'ideological bedrock' determines not only how cultural policy is both conceived and enacted (Hadley, 2021, p.25), but also directly forms (and funds) the context in which the practice of audience development and, critically for this research, the practice of arts marketing takes place. Arts marketing and audience development can thus be understood not as functions or sets of technical processes of arts management but as functions of cultural policy (2022, p.143).

Theoretical context

Within management theory, marketing is framed as a fundamental process within the activities of creative and cultural organisations, offering at the very least survival tools and at most a holistic organisational strategy (Rentschler, 1998, 2007; Halliday and Astafyeva, 2014; Boorsma, 2006). Colbert and St-James describe how arts marketing emerged as a practice oriented towards the product of the artistic process, preserving the work's 'sacredness' and ensuring it sat outside the realm and influence of marketing processes (2014, p.569). While it began as promotional activity, the practice has broadened to encompass notions of relationship, experiential and segmentation marketing as well as understanding visitor motivations and pricing (Rentschler, 2007).

Over the past 100 years, 'marketing has moved from a goods-dominant view, in which tangible output and discrete transactions were central, to a service-dominant view, in which intangibility, exchange processes, and relationships are central' (Vargo and Lusch, 2004, p.2). Moving away from a consumption model based on rational choice (Halliday and Astafyeva, 2014, p.123), the role of the consumer has developed to become more interactive (Cova and Dalli, 2009), towards that of a 'prodsumer' (Bilton, 2017) or 'prosumer' who creates and gives meaning to products, services and experiences (Colbert and St-James, 2014, p.570). In contemporary culture, individuals are more self-dependent than ever when dealing with their social environments, expecting more agency and participatory opportunities with the disappearance of traditional cultural intermediaries (Bilton, 2017), and defining their cultural engagement on their terms – a direct result of a

globalised economy where there are more choices than ever for the modern consumer (Patriarche et al., 2014, p.73).

Yet outside of the management of marketing activity for arts organisations, arts marketing in particular is also a promising research discipline for exploring the discourse between arts and the market (O'Reilly, 2011, p.26). In order to further investigate how the arts navigate the organisational and institutional value frameworks informing practice, we can look to see who it impacts most directly: those arts workers fulfilling intermediary roles. The role of the 'cultural intermediary' was originally defined by Bourdieu to describe those working in institutions providing symbolic goods and services (2000, p.359). While the term has since been developed and applied more precisely, such as to those who work directly with socially excluded audiences (Durrer and Miles, 2016), others have applied the term more broadly, to acknowledge those workers who 'come in-between creative artists and consumers (or, more generally, production and consumption)' (Negus, 2002, p.502).

In his essay critiquing the over-use of the term consumption, anthropologist David Graeber suggests that 'those who write about consumption almost never define the term' and that because of this lack of clarity of definition, it is better to approach it as an ideology rather than an analytical category (2011, p.491). Emphasising the etymology of the term, Graeber points out that the word consumption is used to mean a 'taking over' or to 'destroy' and in the late 18th century was used in opposition to the term 'production', thus splitting the economy into two separate and discrete spheres: work/production and home/consumption (Graeber, 2011, p.490). What resulted is the absurd assumption that the main thing people do when they are not working is consume things:

> Why is it that when we see someone buying refrigerator magnets and someone else putting on eyeliner or cooking dinner or singing at a karaoke bar or just sitting around watching television, we assume that they are on some level doing the same thing, that it can be described as "consumption" or "consumer behaviour", and that these are all in some way analogous to eating food? (Graeber, 2011, p.489)

The neoliberal trick that Graeber is describing is positioning the choice of what to consume in a culturally democratic panacea as a freeing, liberating process. Rather than being duped by advertising messaging and clever marketing algorithms, 'simply swallow[ing] whatever marketers throw at them like so many mindless automatons', the promise is that

people are able to dictate their own lives, creating ‘their own meanings out of the products with which they chose to surround themselves’ (Graeber, 2011, p.490). In arts and culture, it is no different. Cultural consumption is heralded as a force for people to express creativity and diversity in their own cultural lives. The subsequent proliferation of academic marketing disciplines such as consumer culture theory and consumption studies can and do provide rich insight into how people interact with cultural institutions and situate their cultural engagement within their own lives. Yet conceptualising the creative process as one of production and, in particular, consumption is inherently problematic because it not only fails to acknowledge the nature of artistic ‘product’ and the malleability of producer/consumer roles, but also the joint processes of meaning-making and contextualisation in forming each artistic experience. Furthermore, the proliferation of this binary in our understanding of cultural value has undoubtedly been influenced by the work of researchers and policymakers alike who have tended to articulate cultural value either within the context of its production *or* in the context of its consumption (although there is growing interest in how the two interrelate) (O’Brien, 2014; O’Brien and Oakley, 2015).

As Rayner argues, when we conceptualise fixed roles for one another ‘it assumes stability and turns a complex relation into a simple one’ (1993, pp.12-18). This is particularly important to note for the arts because the arts are not a simple, one-dimensional product; they are ‘abstract, subjectively experienced, nonutilitarian, unique and holistic’ (Hirschman, 1983, p.50). This project will explore how this is especially true for theatre and live performance. Though these performances may have some consistent features such as a performer and an audience, this is not always a given in much of contemporary performance that aims to play with form, or the proliferation of digital or screened theatre that questions our traditional notions of what constitutes live performance and how it is experienced (Reason, 2004; Brown, 2007). It would therefore follow that the genus of value seen to reside in this ‘product’ would also be in continual flux. If we are to consider the value to be created through the experience of the product, or the wider social impact of the event, then we could easily see how the value of the same show could be articulated in various ways: for example, an opportunity to see an actor ‘up-close and personal’ or the experience of learning about another culture through a story. Indeed, sometimes the value can be defined in completely individual terms: the opportunity to go to the theatre as a break from the norm; to have a gin and tonic at the interval with a friend; or the feeling of

belonging evoked from the warm welcoming smile of the volunteer usher. More often than not, it is a combination of all these things[1].

Mirroring a shift in marketing towards consumer-centred value, the primacy of the artist as the author of meaning, the modernist consecration of the artwork and the suspicion of the audience is being contested in cultural studies as well as audience studies (Bilton, 2017; Colbert and St-James, 2014; Freshwater, 2009; Walmsley, 2019). As Lynne Conner maintains, 'the twenty-first-century audience is retrieving its historical position as the centrepiece of the arts apparatus' (Conner, 2013, p.2). Yet Conner argues that 21st century audiences are underprepared to take advantage of 'this potential renaissance in the meaning-making process' (ibid, p.3).

For instance, while Colbert and St-James argue that arts marketing is now moving away from the supply-sided, product-focused marketing assumption, they still maintain that a product focus for both organisations and marketing teams is useful when wanting to attract market segments 'seeking new and challenging experiences' as it allows the organisation to 'continually try to innovate' (2014, p.571). While it seems like a fairly common-sensical approach to segment potential and current audiences based on the types of experiences that they are seeking out, questions still remain around who decides what experiences are new and challenging for whom, and how these judgements are being made and evidenced on behalf of others. Indeed in an 'experience economy' (Pine and Gilmore, 2011), it could be argued that all artworks have the potential to be innovative, to create new and challenging experiences for those who want to engage in that way.

Of course, asking audiences what they want or think they might need (or more often what an arts organisation *thinks* they want or need) from an artistic experience is not so straightforward in practice. When it comes to arts and culture, prospective audiences may expect organisations to be ahead of the curve and provide an offer that excites them, surprises them, develops their aesthetic taste or transforms them in some way (BOP Consulting and Devlin, 2016). It could be argued that the complete disavowal of the role of the artist in determining the value of a particular arts product does not automatically result

[1] At risk of labouring the point, with the exception of the gin and tonic at the interval, it would certainly be strange to describe these as products, or even experiences, that we can readily consume.

in a more democratic definition of value. The ‘implicit duality’ of arts marketing as a profession (Hadley, 2021, p.1) means that even with a relational shift in marketing, or relationship marketing, we still rely on traditional transactional dynamics. Engagement practices are often conceptualised, and therefore measured and monitored, as metrics of loyalty to an organisation, levels of satisfaction and intention to repurchase or recommend (Rentschler et al., 2002; Brown, 2022).

Regardless of whether we depend on notions of art-as-product or experience-as-product, when we talk of consumers and producers we presume there is something discrete that can be consumed. As the transactional model is founded on the articulation and communication of universal benefits, it reduces the artistic experience to a list of impacts that are otherwise contingent, dynamic and based on the specific contexts of the experience and nature of the engagement. This practice is underpinned by the assumption that there is a transactional exchange of value between two clearly defined roles: artist-as-producer and audience-as-consumer, and that the former will provide the latter with these benefits and impacts in exchange for their investment (time and/or money). What this model fails to capture is these benefits are not a guarantee and therefore cannot be sold. They are, necessarily, a result of a process of overdetermining the potential experiences of others. While these processes are reliant on value judgements of a group of individual cultural intermediaries, it is nevertheless an approach that is institutionally sanctioned as best practice. It is a central function of marketing-as-selling and as such is a systemic issue. The current transactional model of ‘a motor of endless production’ (Graeber, 2011, p.492) only serves to reproduce the dominant transactional model, which front-loads value through the articulation and communication of an assumed set of universal benefits.

Instead of working out how to ‘sell better’, this project aims to reframe the dominant marketing model itself to better reflect the complex exchange of meaning and value imbued in interactions between audience, artist and venue, or relevant cultural intermediary. As Negus argues, cultural intermediaries are always working within the constraints of ‘established institutionalised structures of production’, consistently involved in the construction of what is to be commercial at that time (2002, p.506). The tension between an arts marketer’s role of balancing customer value with artistic value is illustrated in Boorsma’s notion of the ‘arts marketing pitfall’ (2006, p.74). Common arts marketing practice results in ignoring this tension altogether, pushing how the work is packaged, described, priced, delivered and enhanced rather than the product itself

(Boorsma, 2006, p.2), akin to the service-centred view (Vargo and Lusch, 2004) or what Bilton describes as 'the product surround' (2017, p.72).

In Bilton's book *The Disappearing Product*, he describes how, in this globalised, interconnected age, this blurring of producer/consumer roles has resulted in the declining value of content, which marginalises the role of artists as content creators and reinforces the primacy of the modern consumer: '[f]actors like speed, convenience, choice, accessibility, packaging and personalisation have come to outweigh the product they deliver' (2017, p.98). He argues that while other sectors such as mainstream marketing and management education undergo what he describes as the 'cultural turn' into which 'the "DIY" models of marketing and communication developed by artists and musicians are beginning to pass' (ibid, p.18), the creative industries on the whole are positioning marketing professionals outside or against the creative process. He argues the creative industries are not leading the cultural turn in marketing. In this sense, arts marketing is being left behind (Baxter, 2010, p.124).

Running against the tide of relational aesthetics, which calls for a shift of focus from the artistic object to the encounter (Bourriaud, 1998, as cited in Walmsley 2019a p.172), sociologist Simon Stewart suggests that when we research aesthetic value, we should 'keep the cultural object in sight' (2013, p.5). In a sense, this is what Bilton means when he describes how audiences' extended meaning and interpretations can often go beyond the intentions of the artists themselves, but yet remain 'umbilically connected to the product' (Bilton, 2017, p.82). If we consider more closely how all interact with the product in this sense, then we come closer to an understanding of the cultural object as one that is deeply intersubjective, contextual and, by its very nature, relational.

We need to heed Bilton's warning that by focusing on what he terms the 'extended product', marketers fail to engage with what makes the experience artistic. In their research into arts attendance and purchasing behaviour, Price et al. found that arts attenders often viewed events 'as a way of meaningfully filling free time' (Price et al., 2019, p.232). They found factors such as artform conventions and price, geographical region and availability of the arts, attending arts events with companions and personal preference for planning or spontaneously choosing activities, as well as factors such as 'convenience, cost, ticket availability and matching the arts event to their mood' among the most important influencing attendance (ibid, p.232). The research team noted how this provided

evidence that the programme itself was therefore not the dominant factor in people's decision-making. However, it could be argued that the other influential factors directly depend on the programme, and that this research is providing us with evidence that audiences are looking instead for ways to engage, or as Sedgman found in her 2018 research, that 'people do need to feel able to grasp how they are meant to be orienting themselves (physically, cognitively, emotionally) towards an experience in order to gain value' (2018a, p.317).

I would suggest that all of this shows us that it is clearly difficult, and perhaps not entirely necessary, to try and nail down the boundaries of where the artistic product ends and the non-artistic product begins. If we are to acknowledge that the value of a particular artistic or cultural product resides in the experience of it, then perhaps instead we should be looking to widen, or perhaps more accurately, to enrich our understanding of the product to account for this experience and engagement. Walmsley argues that the underlying assumption of arts marketing is no longer conceptually valid, and that what is needed is a rigorous and interdisciplinary conceptual exploration of the theories and practices of engagement (Walmsley, 2019b, p.44). This includes placing engagement central to the project of audience research, by guiding the field on ethical questions, on the need for a diverse portfolio of methods, on the rapidly evolving social role of cultural activity, and on the need to place audiences at the heart of enquiries into their own experiences (Walmsley, 2021, p.312). Building on the direction of travel in cultural value research towards capturing the experiential imprints of arts experiences (Crossick and Kaszynska, 2016), and the notion that cultural value does not reside in the cultural artefact itself, but rather is rooted in one's experience of it (Boorsma, 2006; Boorsma and Chiarvallotti, 2010), Walmsley argues for a reconfiguration of the arts marketing concept from one based on consumption to one based on enrichment via aspects of experience, exchange, environment and engagement (Walmsley, 2019b, p.44).

Research Approach

> The act of spectating is part of our natural cognition […] We offer ourselves as audience in a generous tribute to the performative nature of our fellow human beings (Reason et al., 2022a, p.3).

We have seen how arts marketing as a professional practice and research field originated with a product-led focus which has since shifted to a focus on the consumer, and processes of cultural consumption. However as critics such as Bilton have argued, the

resultant focus on the ‘non-artistic’, extended aspects of arts and cultural experiences illustrates the limitations of the application of the producer/consumer model on arts and cultural experiences. This thesis places a particular focus on the role of the cultural intermediary, as those who navigate the dynamics of the art and the market in their professional work, with the aim of displacing the notion of arts marketing itself as a simple, transactional exchange of value between producer and consumer. The project and its methodology draw from my own positionality as someone with professional experience in the field of the performing arts, building on the latest work in audience studies and cultural value research that advocates not only for a more processual, contextual conceptualisation of cultural value, but a focus on relational engagement and enrichment. The project’s premise is founded on the conviction that now is time to question not only our tactics and models of selling live performance, but whether selling is the right model at all. As a social phenomenon, I propose that we follow Hirschman’s argument that we should not attempt to reconstruct theatre itself, but rather to modify the concept of marketing to fit its essence (Hirschman, 1983, p.54).

We have explored how adopting a purely transactional model presents problems for arts marketing generally. What a person is actually purchasing when they buy a ticket to an exhibition in a museum or gallery, for example, is an opportunity to experience and engage with the artwork in a particular environment. This artwork might be framed or otherwise displayed in a way that enables a series of different engagements. Like all artistic experiences, the benefits, value and meaning that are then taken by the audience member are reliant on the qualities of it as a whole.

This is especially true of theatre and the performing arts which form an additional set of constraints: what we are ‘selling’ is an experience in a particular time and space, with a particular artist/s. It is the fact that roles are constantly in flux in theatre and performance that presents challenges for how we might ‘process and account for this multiplicity’ (Whalley and Miller, 2017, p.78). It is, as White et al. argue, a co-creation of three active agents: the audience, the artist performing on stage and the organisation itself (2009, p.779). Marketing of the performing arts thus has to be founded on a ‘three-way process of interactive communication’: artist/organisation to audience, audience to artist/organisation and audience to audience (Walmsley, 2019a, p.149). There are calls amongst practitioners and academic audience researchers alike for a clearer perspective on the dynamics of engagement between audience, artist and the environment through which they come

together in a live performance event (Brown, 2013, Walmsley, 2019a). This kind of research aims to develop a better understanding of emergent qualities of value on a number of levels. Firstly value emerges in the confrontation between audience and artist (Reason, 2004; Freshwater, 2009) in order 'to complete the work of art' (Boorsma, 2006, p.78). Secondly it aims to explore how the audiences' meaning-making journeys are shaped 'in equally complex ways by all the factors surrounding the production process' (Sedgman, 2016, p.16).

What's more, audiences for the performing arts are often treated as if they are a homogenous mass when they are in fact better understood to be 'gatherings of people' (Hadley, 2021, p.1) (see also Freshwater, 2009; Reason, 2004; Conner, 2022). It is important that any audience research acknowledges that these temporary communities are actually made up of a diverse range of individuals, each making sense and meaning in their own unique ways. Yet at the same time, the communality of an audience for the performing arts is one of its unique characteristics. In their recent publication about audiences for the contemporary arts, Pitts and Price suggest that for music audience research, 'there is novelty in viewing individual experiences through the lens of audience community (O'Sullivan, 2009; Pitts, 2005)' (Pitts and Price, 2021, p.14). This project aims to build on the body of work of audience researchers by focusing on the interplay between community and individual – that is, how we make meaning through and with one another.

Based on the theoretical framing that cultural value emerges from a dynamic, contextual and diverse set of complex viewing strategies, this research places a point of emphasis on the active nature of audiencing. It is thus heavily influenced by the rich and diverse field of audience studies that seeks to challenge the trope of the passive and homogenous audience (Conner, 2022). Furthermore, the interdependency of performer and audience in live performance is underpinned by an inherent intersubjectivity to the form. In this sense, this is neither an exclusively artist-centric nor audience-centric approach to understanding theatre. Rather, this study seeks to examine the interplay between these roles in order to reconceptualise the processes of audiencing to include instances of 'intersubjective doing' by active agents (Reason, 2010, p.19). It is this joint endeavour of art-making that this research is interested in. Instead of focusing on processes of production or consumption, we can begin to unpick where the two converge – how they 'interlock' (Walmsley, 2019a, p.11). In doing so, this research aims to explore how marketing can inform the ways

audiences orient themselves towards an experience, as well as how they can form a 'productive' partnership through interaction (Rayner, 1993, p.22).

Theoretical framing

In summary, this project aims to develop an understanding of the context in which theatre-makers, cultural intermediaries working in venues and audiences interact, and the processes by which they imbue these interactions with value and meaning through engagement with one another. This section describes how the project builds on a focus on engagement in both its theoretical and its methodological framing. Firstly, the theoretical framing of the project is underpinned by engagement as the foundational principle of meaning-making in embodied cognition: we enact meaning by grasping how phenomena may be engaged with by ourselves as acting subjects (Hutchins, 2010, p.434). Secondly, engagement also informs the methodological framing of this project by the use of Jennifer Mason's facet methodology (Mason, 2011) within an engaged epistemology (De Jaegher, 2019).

By moving away from our understanding of marketing as the dominant market exchange model of production and consumption, we can focus on investigating how audiences, artists and cultural intermediaries understand and articulate the artistic functioning of artworks and explore how audiences engage with symbolic meaning of cultural products (Boorsma, 2006; Bilton, 2017). Studying how audiences conceive of their and the artist's roles in the context of live performance, both inside and outside the actual performance event, enables us to understand further how they recreate meaning in the artwork for themselves; processes not so different, Bilton argues, as the imaginative processes of the artist making the work in the first place (2017, p.84).

Enaction, as a 'promising and growing paradigm in cognitive science', emerged in the early 1990s as an alternative to traditional cognitive theories of computational Theory of Mind and connectionism (De Jaegher and Di Paolo, 2007, p.485). It is seen to form part of the 4E school alongside embodied, ecological and extended cognition (Newen et al. 2018). However, the emphasis that enaction in particular places on processes of interaction for sense-making – and specifically the theories of 'participatory sense-making' (De Jaegher and Di Paolo, 2007, p.489) – makes it an ideal framing for this research.

The central premise of enaction is that we make meaning through interaction with each other, and our environments. In response to the lack of an enactive account for social cognition, De Jaegher and Di Paolo's theory of participatory sense-making describes how, through interaction with one another, 'new domains of social sense-making can be generated that were not available to each individual on her own' (De Jaegher and Di Paolo, 2007, p.497). The theory of participatory sense-making describes the processes through which linguistic bodies 'live out' and how one's cognition, and thus meaning-making processes, are implicitly involved the activity of others (Di Paolo et al., 2018, p.3).

As we will explore in the next chapter, the proliferation of the computational theory of mind and mind-body dualism has impacted many disciplines. In summary, traditionally our understanding of cognition – how we make meaning and sense of the world – is predicated on a computational theory of mind and thus reliant on a brain-based, transactional series of processes (Di Paolo et al., 2018). Language in this paradigm has been treated as individual containers of pre-coded meaning, or what might be described as an 'information transfer' model. It is plausible, although clearly out of the realms of this research, to suggest that the prevalence of this model of cognition has contributed to the formation of the transactional model in the first place, whether it relies on simple metrics such as the buying of a ticket, or even that the communications activity (and arts experience itself) has been successful in communicating (transferring) its intended message and/or benefits and impact. Similar to the way language is seen as pre-coded with meaning, so too are notions of quality and value in art perceived as pre-coded into cultural artefacts and/or the cultural producers themselves. Notions of what make good art 'good' and bad art 'bad' are therefore easily measured and art is easily instrumentalised, in the place of recognising the political and ideological process of valuation being enacted by institutions and policymakers.

On the other hand, enactive approaches to language, and specifically work on languaging by Didier Bottineau (2012), frame language not as discrete units of meaning that are 'deployed' from one agent to another in the transfer of information, but as (inter)action. Theories of participatory sense-making (De Jaegher et al., 2007) bring this idea into the social and intersubjective domain, allowing for an approach to the process of valuing which treats patterns of coordination and misinterpretation as equally significant in our understanding of social sense-making (Di Paolo et al., 2018, p.503). The enactive approach thus enables us to address one of the key shortcomings of the transactional

approach: the recognition of theatre as a social phenomenon, and experiences of artist(s) and audience(s) as interdependent. The potential contribution these enactive theories can make to our understanding of marketing centre around their process-led, rather than product-led approach to value. By applying theories of participatory sense-making, this thesis explores how we might reframe our understanding of the theatre space as one for engagement between these individuals, and for theatre as a specific genre of participation where each individual participates in the sense-making of others.

Theories on cognition and meaning-making through interaction, which characterises the enactive approach, can be applied to interactions between artist, audience and associated cultural intermediary. Following learning from audience, arts marketing and cultural value research, we can see how these interactions begin to challenge the binaries that are set up around producer/consumer, passive/active and audience/performer to begin to see how roles are enacted in more complex and nuanced ways. As there are binaries that are particularly embedded in the traditional, transactional practice of arts marketing, it is likely that there are implications for the work by cultural intermediaries, addressing a gap in research that explores their individual meaning-making processes and how they navigate the institutional framework of values. This could be, for instance, related to how particular aspects of the artistic experience are articulated and communicated in marketing and communications activity, and how they relate to the individual's own values and audiencing practices.

Key to the theoretical framework underpinning this research is the approach to cultural value as a process over a product, and so how these value articulations shift and change is another key focus of the research. The next section will explore in more detail how the methodology enables this kind of endeavour with a longitudinal research design. Similarly, as this is a process-centred study of value, how each of the active agents perceive their own roles and what part these perceptions play in their own meaning-making is an area of particular interest. The methodology therefore must ensure that there is an ability not only to bring these journeys together, but also provide some grounds for comparison. This relates directly to the instance of the event of the live performance itself, and how artists, audiences and cultural intermediaries 'package' their memories and experiences of the event, while still acknowledging that participatory sense-making is an ongoing and never-ending project of humans as 'linguistic bodies' (Di Paolo et al., 2018).

Research Questions

The research questions this project seeks to address are as follows:

How might an understanding of cognition and meaning-making in the enactive paradigm enable a reframing of the experience of contemporary live theatre as a complex and embodied set of sense-making interactions between artist, audience and associated cultural intermediaries? How might this in turn challenge the dominant transaction model of marketing theatre?

What broader implications might this enactive reframing have for the making, marketing and management of theatre within the cultural sector, and for our understanding and research of how individuals enact their own value(s) within their own cultural ecologies?

What are the processes of selecting aspects of the artistic experience to focus on in marketing campaigns, and how are these articulated in the framing of theatre as 'product'?

Do these value articulations shift throughout the marketing process, depending on the interactions between each of the three active agents?

How do audiences, artists and any cultural intermediaries navigate their roles and their own autonomous and individual sense-making processes in the making and audiencing of contemporary performance?

How do the processes through which audience members understand their experiences of contemporary theatre relate to the values represented in the marketing activities of artists and cultural intermediaries?

How do the processes of sense-making by audiences and artists, throughout the total art-making process and performance experience itself, relate to audiences' and artists' understandings of the theatrical event?

Methodology

The focus this project places on the social nature of sense-making aims to drive our understanding of theatre marketing forward by placing a point of emphasis of the interactions between the performer, audience and marketer as cultural intermediary. As a central location of sorts, a venue was selected for the purposes of this research. It was the professional location of the activities of the cultural intermediaries as well as providing a venue for a portion of the rehearsal and production activities of theatre shows. It also hosted the final performances of the shows themselves.

The venue that was selected for this research was HOME Greater Manchester Arts Centre in Manchester: a cross art form venue which aims to programme 'contemporary theatre, film, art, music and more' (HOME, 2020). The venue was established in 2015 after the merger of Cornerhouse and the Library Theatre, and is based on First Street in central Manchester. Like many publicly funded regional theatres and arts centres in the UK, HOME stages a mix of produced, co-produced and visiting performances, allowing for a greater variety of genres and types of shows (BOP Consulting, 2016, pp. 4-9). In addition to 5 cinemas, a bar/café over 2 floors, a ground-floor art gallery and book shop, events space and a box office reception area, HOME also houses two theatre spaces: Theatre 1 (T1) is an end on proscenium arch space with a capacity of 450, and Theatre 2 (T2) is a flexible black box studio space with a capacity of 130. HOME's mission statement declares that across the art forms of drama, dance, film and contemporary visual art, it places a strong focus on international work, new commissions, education, informal learning and talent development:

> Our ambition is to push the boundaries of form and technology, to experiment, have fun and take risks. We want to explore what it means to be human today, and to share great new art with the widest possible audience (HOME, 2020).

HOME was selected to be the venue case study for this research for a number of reasons, one of which was its artistic intentions to push the boundaries of form. Theatre is a diverse art form, that not only incorporates a range of media, but can also take a number of forms or modes of engagement in terms of the intended relationship between performer and audience. Furthermore, in their recent research conducted on audiences for the contemporary arts, Pitts and Price found that the way that the word 'contemporary is felt and experienced' by audiences does not map onto how the sector uses the word in

professional practice (2021, p.2). It was important therefore that the venue case study did not have too narrow or prescriptive a viewpoint when it came to what constituted a theatre experience. I judged that a more flexible approach to the theatrical form would provide me with the best chance of accessing theatre events from a range of artistic practices.

In addition, for the practicalities of this research project, I needed to develop relationships with theatre producing and marketing professionals within the organisation. To that end, as a large regional arts centre, it employed (at the time of the research) marketing and communications team of eight, and a theatre programming team of four. This size enabled a sufficient amount of access but was also large enough to not be a too onerous proposition for any one team or team member.

As this research is interested in how audiences navigate across the micro- and macro-contexts of meaning in order to make sense of their cultural experiences, it necessitated a phenomenological research approach based on an engaged epistemology (De Jaegher 2019). Shifting the research into the social domain in this way and conceptualising, as participatory sense-making does, language as action necessitated an embodied methodology. A key aspect of this research design is that the enactive context and staging of interactions places just as strong an emphasis on the different epistemologies and ontologies of the participants as it does the different methods used to situate these interactions. In this sense, the design is influenced by research carried out in the ethnographic research traditions and is more in keeping with participant-led design and co-research rather than being driven by an attempt to fit and integrate mixed methods data.

In particular, this project's methodology utilises the framing of sociologist Jennifer Mason's 'facet methodology', an original application not only within an enactive theoretical framework but also to the processes of marketing and audiencing live performance. Facet methodology, which Mason explains is not strictly a mixed-method approach in so much as 'facet methodology is not *any* kind of approach to *methods alone*, mixed or otherwise' (2011, 84, original emphasis) takes a qualitative and fluid approach to mixing a range of methods, which serve to afford and constrain particular interactions with research participants.

Facet methodology is thus well suited to the study of complex social research objects, but additionally this thesis examines how it is mobilised effectively in the enactive framework

to study the interactions between the three participant groups. It was important given the epistemological focus of the main research questions that are concerned with how enactive theories can be applied to the research object that the methodology allowed for both an ontological and epistemological fluidity. In short, I am primarily interested in *how* people make meanings and conceptualise and communicate them, rather than *what* meanings they produce.

The facets, or mini-investigations, that construct ways into the research questions enable us to consider how framing of questions influences what we see: 'the way we see shapes what we can see and what we can ask' (Mason 2006, p.13). In doing so this methodology builds on the work of the rich and diverse field of audience studies and aims to answer the call to build on self-reflexive, empirical methodologies (Sedgman 2019d). In this sense, this research is building on the work of previous audience researchers that look to explore the relationship between the theatre company or organisation's conception of its audience and empirical audience 'reception' (Reason 2010, Sedgman 2016, Snyder-Young 2019). While much audience research has studied cognitive processes in audiencing by capturing outputs of these processes and analysing them according to a quantitative logic (cf. Bek et al., 2018, Healey et al., 2022), facet methodology enables a qualitative mixing of methods within a longitudinal research design, relying on the 'most sophisticated type of human knowing' – how we engage with each other as sense-makers (De Jaegher 2019, Leigh and Brown 2021).

Note on key terminology

Audiencing: Even the etymology of the terms we use to describe the roles or 'modes of behaviour' (Fenemore, 2007a, p.39) of audience and performer are in flux. The words theatre and audience reference different modes of interaction within performance. On the one hand, spectatorship as the act of watching emerges from the ocularcentric or visual tradition of theatre performance, yet audiencing denotes a practice of hearing (Walmsley 2019a, p.6). Throughout this thesis, in accordance with the exploration of audiencing as active, embodied and processual and to describe the 'active pursuit of *being* an audience member' (Walmsley 2019a, p.7, original emphasis), I will be using the term audiencing.

Arts marketing: Hadley describes in his recent book how commercial marketing practice has been regarded historically as a 'toxic and highly undesirable… alien business practice' (2021, p.222) and he argues that this hostility to marketing as a term 'created the conditions for audience development's rise to prominence' (Hadley 2021, p.223). However for the purposes of this research, I am aiming to reclaim (or reform) the term, building on O'Reilly's (2011) broad definition of arts marketing to incorporate the discourse between the arts and the market.

Cultural intermediary: This research project as a whole draws from Negus' broad definition of the cultural intermediary as someone who comes '*in-between* creative artists and consumers (or, more generally, production and consumption)' (2002, p.503, original emphasis) and the study of marketing processes that form part of the artistic process (Fillis 2006). It is worth mentioning at this point that only National Theatre of Scotland had a dedicated marketing team. The other two smaller performing companies consisted of practitioners who performed a variety of creative and management roles, often alongside one another. Subsequently many of these individuals carried out marketing and/or producing activity at some stage during the process. Therefore in this sense, while this research does place a point of focus on those who work in a marketing team at a venue, it also incorporates this activity of the theatre companies as well.

Navigating this document

Chapter 2 outlines the broader disciplinary research context in which this research project and the questions it addresses sits. It is broken down into 6 sections, each exploring a different domain of the existing literature and research: marketing and the arts, evaluating cultural value, researching audiences, audiencing theatre and performance, sense-making and enacting meaning and participatory sense-making.

Chapter 3 outlines the particular methodological and ethical approach that this thesis takes in adapting sociologist Jennifer Mason's facet methodology as a framework in which to study the field-of-interaction between three groups of participants involved in the total art-making process: that is, audiences, theatre-makers and cultural intermediaries in this case theatre and marketing teams working at HOME. This section starts with an exploration of the embodied research design and the pluralist approach to methods the research takes, before introducing in more detail the key components of facet methodology. This chapter then outlines the processes of selecting case studies for the research, recruiting audience participants, and reflects on the construction of the facets. It also provides an overview of the timeline and the data generated within this project, before concluding with considerations of the ethical challenges and original contribution of this research project.

Chapter 4 forms the analysis and is structured as three facets, each starting with an introduction to the research questions that the facet aims to address, as well as providing a brief summary of the underpinning methodology. Each facet is then structured as a number of 'studies' and concludes with an overview of how the studies relate to key enactive theories. The facets are as follows: Facet 1 (Marketing as organisational practice and promotion), Facet 2 (Marketing as a site of cultural value conferral, and Facet 3 (The theatre event).

Chapter 5, entitled 'Layering the Argument', further explores key enactive theories across all three facets, and layers the argument by relating it to directly to participants' conceptions of their roles and researcher positionality. This chapter then explores the limitations and constraints of the research methodology and evidences the original theoretical and methodological contributions of the project which are then further developed in the conclusion chapter.

The final chapter of the thesis, the Conclusion, investigates further how these enactive theories interrelate and in particular it considers how the shifting facets – an inherent aspect of the methodology, was used as an analytical tool. This chapter also reflects on the limitations and constraints of the research; and outlines the original contribution and key implications of the research on sector practice and the respective fields of audience research, arts management, cultural value and policy.

The table below [Figure 1.1] provides details of the coding system used throughout the thesis to correspond with research activity.

Figure 1.1: Thesis data codes

Code range examples	Corresponding research activity	Date range of activity
DG1, DG2, DG3	Audience participant discussion groups	25 - 27 April
e.g. ONEDGAP01, SWIMDGAP03, RDRDGAP04	Post-show chats	8 - 10 May, 9 - 13 July, 13 - 21 September
e.g. ONEAP001, SWIMAP001, RDRAP001	Audience participant show response / interviews	8 May - 9 December
HOME_001 – HOME_44b	HOME activity (e.g.) interviews, observations	21 January - 3 December
e.g. ONE_001 SWIM_ 001, RDR_001	Theatre company activity (e.g.) interviews	1 February – 30 March (2020)
BJ_01: bullet journal or VJ_01: video journal FN_01: fieldnotes	Researcher journal	5 March – 9 December

Chapter 2: Research Context

Marketing the Arts

Arts marketing represents a research area with much cross-disciplinary potential and some academics argue it should look to embrace disciplines beyond its immediate frame of reference (Dennis et al., 2011, p.8). To not do this would be to risk the discipline becoming simply 'a tool-kit for arts marketing practitioners' providing 'the latest thinking from currently fashionable marketing sub-disciplines such as relationship or services marketing' (Kerrigan et al., 2009, p.204). In the previous chapter, we saw how conceptualising arts marketing theory in broad terms as a discourse between art and the market enables us a recognition of the role that cultural intermediaries play as one spanning the production and circulation of symbolic forms (Negus, 2002, p.507). We also explored how this conceptualisation highlights some of the central dilemmas of how to deal with the articulations of production and consumption (ibid, p.502), not least questions of cultural value. This broad focus acknowledges, as Fillis does, that 'internal marketing processes have been operating long before the artwork is produced' (2011, p.17). Even though some argue that the arts marketing process begins only when the artwork has been produced (e.g. Botti, 2000), back in the 1960s, Levy and Kotler concluded that '[n]ow it is more taken for granted that the marketing manager will have a legitimate and urgent interest in products and their development' (1969, p.67).

Marketing is traditionally conceived as a process through which organisations gain knowledge about the needs of a market, create an offering intended to fulfil these needs and then communicate perceived value through a range of advertising techniques (Hirschman, 1983; Nagyová, 2004; Rentschler, 2007). In response, the market fulfils the needs of the organisation by making use of its services. This is known as the traditional market exchange model (Boorsma, 2006). Many academics argue that this transactional exchange model is not fit for purpose when it comes to marketing the arts (e.g. Fillis, 2011; Boorsma, 2006; Nagyová, 2004). This is because the offer of an artistic experience, by its very nature, is extremely complex, offering a wide range of possible benefits. Artists, creative teams and venues are unable to guarantee a uniform experience across any given audience because of the subjective nature of individual cultural experience (Belfiore and Bennett, 2008; Colbert and St James, 2014; Walmsley, 2013a). As Hirschman neatly observes, art is not composed of 'objectively verifiable and similarly perceived

characteristics' (1983, p.47) but is embedded in a particular cultural and social context (Boorsma and Chiaravalloti, 2010, p.303). Furthermore, for the most part, it is very hard to ascertain the needs of an audience that are to be fulfilled by any artistic offer. In addition, if we consider it to be the artist's job to innovate, it may be counterproductive for an artist to attempt to meet the needs of a market (Belfiore and Bennett, 2008; Bilton, 2017). Indeed, many creatives are oriented towards fulfilling their own needs or those of their peers, rather than those of the public at large (Hirschman, 1983; Price et al., 2019).

In addition, articulating and communicating our experiences of these characteristics presents another layer of challenges, familiar to audience researchers and arts marketers alike. As Fischer-Lichte argues, the 'extra-linguistic' components of the aesthetic experience such as images, fantasies, memories, states of mind, sensations and emotions are by their nature 'translated into language with difficulty' (2008, p.159). Not only are these embodied sensations often resistant to verbal communication (Whalley and Miller, 2017, p.10), but the meanings of an experience are only accessible through conscious reflection (Reason, 2010). This poses a real challenge to audience researchers looking to access, capture and describe the audience experience.

Arts marketing as a discipline has thus shifted its focus away from the product towards the point of consumption. In the arts, this has resulted in the widespread use of relationship marketing (Rentschler et al., 2002) which aims to increase customer loyalty by systematically managing customer relationships in an emergent model of experiential marketing which 'is neither product-led, nor customer-led; it focuses on the experience of consumption where product and consumer converge' (Bilton, 2017, p.9). However, this repositioning of value at the point of consumption, and primacy of context over content, presents a tough strategic challenge for both arts management and marketing. As Bilton argues, the emergence of the experiential marketing model has contributed to the decline in value of the product and the marginalisation of creatives, by locating 'meaning and value of the product in the eye of the beholder, not the artist's intention' (2017, p.9).

However, building on the work of theorists Theodor Adorno and Max Weber, Simon Stewart argues that while culture and administration need each other, 'their ways of viewing the world are antithetical' (2013, p.2). This has implications for the practice of arts and cultural intermediaries working in marketing and management roles, who are 'bound by the structures of production' and much of whose own symbolic work producing images

and words in marketing and communications campaigns ‘offer the illusion of such a link rather than its material manifestation’ (Negus, 2002, p.507). Culture pays the price for being funded (either in a commercial setting or publicly funded) by being measured ‘in accordance with criteria that have nothing whatsoever to do with questions of immanent quality or value’, or what Stewart defines as the ‘formally rational’ value framework of capitalism (Stewart, 2013, p.2).

Evaluating cultural value

> [Arts and culture] …include both the broadest aspects of human existence, and the most particular. Culture defines us, our common values and collective way of life. At the same time, we enjoy specific cultural activities and art forms as a matter of individual preference. This double helix makes them a profoundly challenging area for governments to address (Meyrick, 2020).

As Meyrick describes in the quote above, there is a tension that manifests between providing robust research into arts experiences and fulfilling organisational obligations and policy requirements for comparative data (Gilmore, 2014, p.313). There has been a recent shift in UK cultural policy, at least in theory, from democratisation of culture – the proliferation of a value framework predicated on the values of a small minority of the population – towards a cultural democracy (Belfiore and Hadley, 2018). This rhetorical shift is demonstrated in titles of the last two ten-year strategies for Arts Council England (ACE): from ‘Great Art For Everyone’, where everyone should have access to ‘excellent’ art, towards ‘Let’s Create’, a direct call to action to co-create together. Nevertheless, like the former, the latter still does not make explicit how ACE defines notions of value through the acknowledgement of (high) ‘quality’ or ‘excellence’, admitting that excellence is ‘difficult to define and will mean different things in different contexts’ (Arts Council England, 2021, p.5). Indeed, as Brown points out, Arts Council England ‘are waking up and saying: “we’re not going to make value judgements like we used to. But we’re still going to fund the symphony and the opera and the ballet of course”’ (Brown and McDowell, 2022, p.134).

Therefore, as much as cultural democracy is founded on the implicit democratic principles of equality and fairness and thus a pluralistic view of culture, so too is it founded on the neoliberal principle of free individual choice (Hadley, 2021, pp.34-35). Of course, this is far from the case in the publicly funded sector, where value judgements are part and parcel of

the mechanism of government arts funding (ibid, p.36). Thus we can see in current policy documents, as much as in past policy, how quality and value are still regarded as inherent characteristics of a cultural product. The most recent and pertinent illustration of this is the launch of Arts Council England's 'Impact and Insight Toolkit', which was developed from the controversial 'Quality Metrics 2016 pilot study' and preceded the publication of the Arts Council's latest strategy 'Let's Create'. From September 2020, those National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) who are in receipt of more than £250,000 from the Arts Council were obliged to use the toolkit, intended to 'deepen their understanding' of how well their intentions align with the experiences of their peers and audiences (Arts Council England, 2018). These NPOs inputted data from audience surveys, rating levels of agreement with a standardised set of statements (including ratings of 'quality') onto a shared digital platform, allowing, in principle, for a sector-wide comparison of organisational performance and artistic quality. Its introduction as a mandatory system of quality evaluation for arts and cultural organisations in the UK sparked controversy within cultural policy scholarship as well as the sector more broadly, as critics argued that it placed too much faith in the general validity of methods, was a drain on resources (Phiddian et al. 2017a, p.178; Phiddian et al., 2017b) and there was 'endless' potential for misreading data (Knott, 2018).

In his book *Towards an Anthropological Theory of Value: The False Coin of our Own Dreams*, anthropologist David Graeber laments the fact that in a globalised, neoliberal market context, every human capacity may be seen to serve a monolithic system of measurement of a single standard of value (2001, xi). This 'business-as-usual approach to cultural value, that cultural activity 'obeys the "laws" of the marketplace, and that the price paid for it will therefore reflect the value it provides' is characteristic of the neoliberal foundations and administrative ethos of the problem of cultural value (Walmsley and Meyrick, 2022, p.235). Given the 'theoretical limbo' caused by a lack of a theory of value (Graeber, 2001, p.7), our go-to proxy is therefore more often than not 'market value', defined in economic terms. Within these terms, the institutions' interests will always be served at the expense of creativity: an inherently risky and unpredictable phenomenon (Bilton, 2017). While institutions might provide the resources necessary for artists to reach an audience and thus make a living, rather than just leaving them to it within the conditions of a free market, their creativity is arguably likely to be stifled by the demands of management; demands that are focused on enabling an organisation to flourish at the expense of artists (Stewart, 2013, p.48).

This ideological gulf is worsened by the systems of evaluation used by the sector, based on ‘the futile and indeed paradoxical objective of measuring what cannot be measured’ (Walmsley, 2022, p.126). A recent study of the use of evaluation in the sector found that only 18% of arts and cultural organisations share the results of their evaluations externally, beyond their immediate funders and stakeholders (McDowell, 2020, p.30). Walmsley and Meyrick call for a 'revolution in evaluation processes' and highlight 'a basic lack of understanding about what evaluation actually *is* alongside sometimes wilful, sometimes cynical, conflation of monitoring, reporting, research, evaluation, and advocacy’ (2022, p.234). This context has led not only to practitioners being unable or unwilling to share narratives of failure and learning (Jancovich and Stevenson, 2021), but also to a damaging situation whereby, in an attempt to simplify complex, plural and contingent value-making processes, many scholars ‘have strived to narrow the scope of audience research and delimit the inevitable contingencies’ (Walmsley, 2019a, p.47).

There has therefore historically been an (over)reliance on quantitative data to measure the performance of the arts and cultural sector. For example, the Taking Part survey, launched by the Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS), and Audience Finder, a sector-wide segmentation system pioneered by The Audience Agency, were both launched to give the arts and cultural sector a better understanding of cultural participation across the UK. Over recent years, a number of technological developments have allowed for better reporting and growing capacity to collect data on audiences within organisations. Understanding who audiences are in terms of their topline demographics or behavioural metrics on a basic, quantitative level essentially relies on data from box office and customer relationship management (CRM) systems. Box office systems tailor analytics reports to suit arts venues’ growing need for data on features such as booking behaviour (online/offline, number of tickets, amount paid, date booked), address, and demographic features such as age (e.g. student tickets, initiatives for young people, senior citizens discounts, etc). This is mostly because reporting back to funders plays a large part in the evaluative activity of arts organisations, and funders such as the Arts Council and Heritage Lottery Fund rely on large, aggregated data sets to inform funding investment on a national scale.

The UK is seen as an established world leader in this kind of audience research: as Hadley puts it, ‘[w]e live in an era of unprecedented levels of data on cultural consumption’ (2021, p.187). While the (quite justified) furore around the introduction of the Impact and

Insight Toolkit was a high-profile discussion crossing boundaries across the sector and academia, the overreliance on big data is far from a unique problem to the arts specifically. Mason argues the plethora of digital transactional data, generated in the processes of 'knowing capitalism' that wants to 'know everything', necessitates a more critical interest in the data and classifications that it is producing (Mason, 2011, p.86).

As a result of the global pandemic, there has been a profusion of research into audiences returning to venues in person, and engaging with digital artforms throughout lockdowns, such as The Audience Agency's 'Cultural Participation Monitor' (The Audience Agency, 2020) or WolfBrown's 'Audience Outlook Monitor' (WolfBrown, 2020). No doubt in many ways there is potential for this research to feed into our understanding of how cultural engagement plays a role in people's lives. Indeed, some noted how the pandemic provided opportunities for organisations to consider the role that they played in society more broadly and their business models more particularly (Reason et al., 2022b, p.543). Arguably the pandemic resulted in a sort of 'research whiplash' with a new set of research questions that suddenly arrived (Brown, 2022, p.140). Yet there is also a whole set of existing foundational questions that we are not asking, about how audiences attend and experience live theatre and performance and how they are forming their tastes (Brown, 2017).

The quantification of the unquantifiable happens not just in the collection of data generated by technology, but in the generation of data by researchers themselves. This can be seen in the use of the audience survey, a tool used repeatedly to research motivations for attendance, or the reasons why audiences 'consume' their cultural experiences in the way that they do. It is important to note that this method, like any, places considerable limits on what this research can tell us – in this case, about the nature of the cultural engagement. For example, in 2015, The Audience Agency's research found that 87% of performing arts audiences want to be entertained (Sharrock and Palmer, 2015). Being entertained, broadly speaking, can of course encompass all manner of modes of engagement – and arguably could be seen as a demand metric. Indeed, qualitative research by Walmsley into motivations behind theatre attendance found that the key motivating factor for participants was the pursuit of emotional experiences and impact, contesting previous findings in arts and leisure sectors which prioritised 'escapism, learning, enhanced socialisation and fun' (2011, p.335).

In her recent article on knowledge exchange within audience research, Sedgman notes how organisations' and the sector's 'internally-driven research' is often 'necessarily limited in scope' in order to prove impact by quantifying it, or when engaging with qualitative methodologies often serving an advocacy agenda (Sedgman, 2019b, p.106). This was certainly true to my own experience working in arts marketing. Research on an organisational level often takes the form of generic post-show surveys and ad-hoc anecdotal feedback from box office, technical and front of house teams. There are additional opportunities for face-to-face conversations between audiences and marketing teams, pre-/post-show talks, season launch evenings, development events, open days or press nights. These settings, however, are often conducive to a social atmosphere, or one centred around advocacy for the organisation or fulfilling educational objectives, rather than providing an appropriate forum for in-depth conversations about the artistic experience itself.

Audience studies began as an offshoot of media and mass communications research in the 1930s with research traditions in connected fields of media studies, communications studies and sociology subsequently developing (Sedgman, 2019a, p.464). This defined the direction of travel of audience studies as a field, which emerged from two distinct intellectual traditions: theoretical approaches including reception theory, and the empirical research tradition conducted in cultural and media studies (Reason et al., 2022a, pp.9-10). Freshwater notes the particular influence of the latter in cultural studies, which brought about a recognition of how a range of socio-cultural conditions such as 'class, gender, age, nationality, religious background, ethnicity, sexuality, geographical location and education' may inform an individual's viewing position (2009, p.28). In the 1980s and 1990s, influenced by the phenomenological philosophy of Merleau-Ponty, there was a shift in scholarship towards studying experience as it is experienced and embodied (ibid, p.27).

Nevertheless, research in both theoretical and empirical traditions has been critiqued for side-lining the audience voice. For example, Kaszynska attributes the historical reluctance in cultural studies to engage with first-person, phenomenal data to a lack of humanism: 'a suspicion of experience' that has 'to do with the methodological vision rather than scarcity of methods' (2015, p.257). We can see in the over-quantification of cultural value how this marginalisation of individual experience has been further exacerbated by social and economic instrumentalist agendas of public policy. Market research in the arts sector is largely focused on the drivers behind purchasing behaviour and consumer attitudes

(Baxter et al., 2013, p.116), based on quantitatively and reductively defined 'demand metrics', rather than by actual audience experience (for example, the cumulative benefits on individuals) (Radbourne et al., 2013, p.3). When audience responses to cultural events have been considered, it is often to demonstrate 'impact' of the effects of the experience or to lend weight to advocacy for and positive bias to the arts (Belfiore, 2020; Johanson and Glow, 2015).

Audiencing theatre and performance

In theatre and performance studies, critics have argued that the spectator is generally imagined through the ideals of the artist (Johanson, 2013), historically marginalising the audience and its response, and treating audience members as social categories rather than individuals (Reason, 2010; Sedgman, 2016; Sauter, 2002). Rancière notably argued that if we render spectators and audience members aesthetically passive, they also become intellectually and thus politically passive (1991, 2009). Kershaw too proposes that 'virtually all forms of Western theatre' and in particular 'mainstream' forms, have become 'increasingly irrelevant to communities and politics' due to the neutering of audiences by the protocols of audience membership (2001, pp.135-136). This obsession with audiences as passive is perhaps additionally influenced by the historic overdetermination of the transformative and aesthetic 'power' of the art/artist underpinning the product-led approach to marketing. By considering some types of events to be 'passivity-inducing', we smooth over the complexity of the audience experience, and ignore all the distinct kinds of activity that take place (Sedgman, 2018b, p.15). Notably, the valence of these terms should not go unnoticed: i.e. active audiences are seen as good, passive as bad (Reason, 2015, p.272) and many in audience studies critique the false binary of passive and active spectatorship (Freshwater, 2009; Whalley and Miller, 2017). Thus the increasing focus on audiences and recognition of their active nature challenges this historic notion that audiences are passive entities. As a discipline, audience studies now tends to conceptualise the act of audiencing as a navigation of cultural power and the audience member's own individual agency (Sedgman, 2019a, p.470).

Not too far away from discussions of audience agency are theatre practices that define themselves by the deliberate delineation of the 'active' roles that audience play as central to their form. We might start this list with a particular group of theatre practitioners whose techniques have aimed to cast audience members as active agents: for example, through

Bertolt Brecht's use of the political distancing effect in his epic theatre, or the framework of forum theatre of Augusto Boal. More recently, Hans Lehmann's 'postdramatic theatre' (2006) looks to create in its very form different possible subject positions for the audience member, and Blake describes the 'participatory companionship' at play in artisanal theatre (2014) which aims to incorporate participatory practice and play for audience and spectator alike. 'Immersive theatre' by companies such as Punchdrunk, or the use of gaming and play in Blast Theory's work, could also be considered to provide an immersive or experiential site-specific audience or participant experience (Adams et al., 2008, p.219). We could also include the rapidly expanding field of socially-engaged practice, which Bishop describes as art with social inclusion as its central purpose (2006, p.176), in this non-exhaustive overview of theatre practices that are often cited as examples of innovative co-creative practice, or culturally democratic practice, because of the casting of audiences in an explicitly active role.

Scholars have pointed out that often what is presented as participation in contemporary performance is not in fact the offer of a real creative contribution, but rather a scripted and pre-planned endeavour (Freshwater, 2009). Some practitioners, such as Blast Theory, argue that these limitations to the framework of engagement they design and the fact that audiences do not have the right to fully choose what happens in a show provides them with a necessary artistic tension (Adams et al., p.219). However as Alston describes, this limiting of participatory choice in immersive theatre (which he loosely defines as theatre 'that surrounds audiences within an aesthetic space in which they are frequently, but not always, free to move and/or participate') is underpinned by 'a tacit neoliberal politics' obliging them to participate 'in a situation that is not fully at their command' (2013, pp. 128-130). In this sense, Alston argues that participation becomes instead a site of reception, one predicated on hedonist and narcissistic values which makes immersive theatre all the more susceptible to being co-opted by profit-making enterprises (ibid, p. 130). These values are founded on a certain interdependency of audience members on each other's (bodily) presence (Liedke, 2019, p.8), but are just as present in the economic and structural parameters of interactions between performer and audience more broadly; for example in one-on-one performances (Gomme, 2015, p.281).

It is perhaps not surprising therefore that many companies and artists have 'latched onto the term as a catchy promotional hook' believing it provides the 'ideal model to meet changing consumer needs' (Walmsley 2019a, p.32). We can see this playing out in

Kershaw's development of Schechner's 'accidental audience', which he describes as 'a collection of individuals who have gathered mainly because they want to consume a particular cultural product' and thus inherently prone to pay for 'failure' (2001, p.150) or Santone's notions of the 'performative audience' seduced by the rhetoric of shared agency and authorship (2014, p.30). After all, as White argues, 'if a decision to participate, or how to participate, in a performance, is made on the basis of incomplete information where that information is withheld by another party, the agency is undermined: it is not based on an informed decision' (2013, p.63).

Just as immersive theatre often promises choices in how to engage, so too do models of co-creation in socially-engaged arts practice and production. In their book *Between Us: Audiences, Affect and the Inbetween*, Joanne (Bob) Whalley and Lee Miller argue that 'co-creative' theatre forms do not present the democratic, equal exchange that they purport to offer: '[c]o-creation may well sound like an opportunity for equality, but there is not a concomitant sharing of prestige or profit, or indeed any sharing of the burden of loss – fiscal or reputational – that might emerge' (Whalley and Miller, 2017, p.35). Due to the 'inherently uneven nature of the exchange between audience and performer' (ibid, p.9), they question whether the rhetoric of the co-creator, appearing to empower the audience, actually does not allow for an autonomous engagement to play out (ibid, p.35). Similarly, in her notable critique of Bourriaud's relational aesthetics, Claire Bishop argues that theatre with social inclusion as its central purpose needs to go further than just activating audiences with social interaction, or engaging them just for the sake of it, lest it be used as political legitimisation (Bishop, 2012).

In theatre and the performing arts, we are familiar with the idea of co-dependency of audience and performer. Fenemore describes how the dialogical inter-animation of artwork and viewer means that they only exist in relation to each other, but crucially *through* their interaction (2007a, p.39). In this sense, meaning is produced somewhere between the observed and the observer, the artwork and the spectator (Fenemore, 2007b, p.39). This is developed further by audience researchers in terms of meaning-making, with the argument that the audience is needed not just for the creation of the performance, but to actually complete it (Boorsma, 2006; Reason, 2004; Freshwater, 2009). While performance design – seen primarily as the domain of the artist – will no doubt constrain audience engagement with the theatre space and performers, it is important to note that equally audience engagement is not simply the 'inevitable outcome' of the design process;

that is to say, the complex viewing strategies of audiences are enacted both within and against the constraints of the audience invitation (Sedgman, 2018b, p.11). This is both an ethical and methodological endeavour: a focus on meaning-making that is also central to Conner's call for organisational change within the sector to acknowledge and afford the audience's right and need to 'publicly participate in the meaning-making process' (2013, p.70).

Moreover, within all these critiques and scepticism surrounding the claims of the democratising and liberating effects of participatory and immersive performance, scholars such as Freshwater still retain hope that contemporary theatre provides meaningful opportunities for participation, which for her resides in companies and performers learning to trust audiences 'offering them real choices and accepting that genuine participation has risks as well as potentials' which crucially, involves a certain level of vulnerability for all concerned (2011, p.409). Alston, too, concedes that even though immersive theatre encourages neoliberal opportunism, the 'sense of exposure or vulnerability aroused through audience participation' may have the potential to foster a sense of mutual vulnerability and accountability, and calls for a 'reassess[ment of] participatory ideology on both sides' (Alston, 2013, p.136-137). Similarly, in her review of the social and political value of socially engaged arts practice, Jen Harvie concludes too that there is 'great social potential that is worth identifying and promulgating' (2011, p.113). As she argues, if art can, and does (however unintentionally) support the 'ever-increasing' hegemony of a neoliberal capitalist agenda based on self-interest and elitism, then what is therefore required is a further unpicking of the 'complicated – and, sometimes, compromised' so-called democratic effects of this type of socially-engaged arts practice (Harvie, 2011, p.113-114).

Researching audiences

There is now a well-established body of empirical research on audiences for the performing arts, even if 'there has certainly been a *feeling* of absence' which might be the result of a 'partial disciplinary myopia' as 'a failure to look across the boundaries of subjects or methodologies' (Reason and Sedgman, 2015, p.117, original emphasis). Sometimes criticised for lack of methodological reflexivity, Sedgman argues that, on the contrary, empirical research has the potential to produce valuable insights into audience reception and to be reflexive of researcher and participant subjectivity (2019c). Indeed,

over the last ten years, there has been an increased call for more robust claims about cultural value in scholarship and policy by initiatives such as the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)'s Cultural Value project (Crossick and Kaszynska, 2016) and the Warwick Commission on the Future of Cultural Value (Neelands et al., 2015). In addition to methodological plurality and reflexivity, researchers working in this area have represented a shift to refocusing on experiential imprints of individual cultural experience (Kaszynska, 2015, p.262). By recognising cultural value as a 'wicked problem', Walmsley argues we can therefore access more fruitful conversations around cultural value in terms of how it can be reliably expressed (2019a, p.91). In fact, audience studies, as a broad church of methodologies, has seen a growth in both empirical and theoretical research on performing arts audiences in particular (Reason et al., 2022a, p.10). This project draws from this field, exploring how people experience the arts and how they are understanding its value, adding to a volume of work already being published in this area (e.g. Walmsley, 2013a; Crossick and Kaszynska, 2016).

Within audience research there is a call for more research into the cumulative impact of arts experiences, using a pluralist approach including mixing methods and more longitudinal and co-research studies (Gilmore, Glow and Johanson, 2017; Carnwarth and Brown, 2014). An ecological approach of audiencing across different locations and artforms, such as Pitts and Price's (2021) multi-artform study of contemporary art, frames individual experience as arising in the extended interactions of people in communities, society more broadly and their wider contexts (Sharpe, 2010, p.31). Ethnographic research traditions place a focus more on the emergent experience of the researcher and participant (Walmsley, 2016) and can be used effectively as a broad approach to researcher/participant interaction to open up processes of reflection (Reason, 2010; Walmsley, 2016). In audience research there is room for diverse methodologies and methods, putting the field in a particularly strong position to encourage methodological attunement to what different methods tell us about different aspects or processes of audiencing, as well as expanding our understanding of cultural value more generally (McDowell, 2022, p.264).

Broadly speaking, there is a rich history of application of the cognitive sciences to the arts and humanities. For instance, academics working in the fields of film and literature studies are drawing on research from the latest findings in cognitive science, neuroscience and neurobiology. Theories such as cognitive poetics and intertextuality have been well

explored in literature, including looking at reading as a shared cognitive process (Lyne, 2016) and more recently, reader consciousness studies (Kuzmicova, 2018). Researchers in reading studies are increasingly exploring the phenomenon of reading practice, such as Popava's study of acceleration/deceleration in reading which defines temporality in an enactive, phenomenological view (2015), and Nicklas and Behrens' investigation of immersion, absorption and flow in deep reading (2018). Film studies scholar Tobin has researched cognitive bias in literature and film and social cognition (2018), and Tan has explored joint action, interaction, alignment and synchronisation in film spectatorship in particular (2015).

We can see the impact of this 'cognitive turn' (McConachie, 2015; McConachie and Hart 2016) in the field of performing arts audience research too. For example, there is a large body of research looking at dance in particular: choreographic decision-making (Barnard and De La Hunta, 2017); audience response to dance performance (Vincs, 2013); as well as studies mapping cortical activity that occurs while watching dance (Brown et al., 2016). Borne out of Csikszentmihalyi's foundational work on flow experiences (1988), academics have looked at flow in dance performance (e.g. Warbuton, 2011) and flow in musical and theatrical improvisation (e.g. Branch, 2018). In addition, there is a well-established tradition in musicology of exploring the many connections between music and emotion studies in cognitive science (e.g. Born, 2011; Clarke et al., 2009). An area that has received a large amount of attention in both performance studies and audience research is kinaesthetic empathy, following the discovery of mirror neurons in animals and the growing consensus that they operate in a similar way in humans (Reynolds and Reason, 2012; McKinney 2012).

The scientific nature of many of these research methodologies involves the breaking down and measuring of aspects of experience: for example, by monitoring physiological and psychobiological data from spectators, such as their spontaneous movement or their heart rate while watching a show (Bek et al., 2018) or measuring the interactional processes between audience members, and between audience members and performers (Healey et al., 2022). But while these approaches have significant potential for mapping many aspects of the live performance experience, they openly do not aim to provide insight into the meaning-making behind these metrics. For example, Healey et al. readily admit that their methods require them to simplify the interactional process into one of displays (such

as movements of the head or the eyes), and messaging, rather than meaning-making within and through individuals (Healey et al., 2022, p.308).

Similarly, there has also been an increase in interdisciplinary projects between arts and science disciplines, further enriching the methodological and theoretical mix of this diverse field of audience studies. However, these interdisciplinary projects are often examples of research methodologies working in parallel rather than 'inter-methodologically' (Reason et al., 2013, p.43). In the review of the Watching Dance project, which spanned neuroscience and audience research, the team noted that while both methodologies can help to uncover connected things, they were researching fundamentally different things altogether (ibid, p.46). It is important therefore to note that there is a need for more methodological clarity in projects that bring together more than one methodological approach, if not only to better appreciate how each practice lays claim to specific knowledge, but also to utilise generative strategies to further our understanding of the nature of knowledge itself (McDowell, 2022, p.274).

This commitment to methodological plurality is key to audience research, especially if we consider how some proponents of the applications of cognitive science and neuroaesthetics to the discipline of theatre and performance studies make claims to objectivity, as though their work is getting at the 'truth' of audience experience, and seek to delegitimise 'articulated lived experience as a valid form of knowledge' (Sedgman, 2019c). This thesis posits that this is particularly the case for those methodologies that are founded on a computational model of cognition and a dualism between brain/mind and body. Mind-body dualism is based on the premise that our minds are private, and thus traditional theories account for cognition by describing the brain as the centre for processing sensory information delivered by the body (McConachie, 2015; De Jaegher et al., 2010, p.60). In this 'older stimulus-response model of human action' (McConachie, 2013a, p.7), cognition – and consequently our understanding of emotions, use of language and meaning-making processes – are understood as solely products of an 'abstract intellectual process' and our minds are endowed 'with abstract evaluative and meaning-generating powers' (Colombetti, 2010, pp.146-151). This notion of mind/body dualism is still today seen to be an 'inescapable fact about human nature' and one that is 'embedded in our philosophical traditions as much as in our shared conceptual systems and language' (Johnson, 2007, p.2). It is at the core of a pervasive 'common-sense realism': notably, that reality is independent, anterior to meaning-making, definite and singular (Law 2007, p.599).

Sense-making and enacting meaning

Enactivism was developed as a result of criticisms of the dominant computational theories of the cognitive sciences. Despite not adopting overly radical ideas, its application is not seen to be wholly consistent, with some scholars using vague definitions, being unaware of its limitations, or only cherry-picking or partially adopting some of the theories. Additionally, as it is a fairly new field, there are still some theories that are currently lacking in empirical research. My research aims to apply these theories to empirical research, to gain a deeper understanding of how they might apply to the interactions within cultural experience, and more broadly research practices. Enaction still has work to do here, and the latest theories of languaging and participatory sense-making are key to this.

Enaction, as an interdisciplinary theory, draws on the evolutionary sciences to explore the ways that our shared biologies (and with them, psychological predilections, genetic constraints and cognitive architecture) are intertwined with our socio-cultural environments (McConachie, 2015, p.65). Influenced by the ecological approach of Ingold, which describes the relational entanglement of things (Ingold, 2007), and by Merleau-Ponty's notions of embodiment in the phenomenological domain, enactivists explore how our experience, while experienced directly through our senses, is tangled up with the social, the cultural and the political. This is central to the enactive contribution of this project. If we are proposing an embodied understanding of audiencing, building on a rich tradition of work in this field, then we are understanding that we experience artwork in a holistic, embodied way, constantly responding to things that are physically present as well as those 'multiple fertile associations, feelings and memories' that may be evoked (McKinney, 2013, p.74). In this sense, theories from the enactive paradigm are by their very nature staunchly anti-reductionist, aiming to not separate the components of experience into sections.

In relation to the rest of the cognitive humanities explored earlier in this chapter, the theatre and performance studies discipline came relatively late to interdisciplinary conversations in cognitive studies (McConachie, 2013a, p.5). In terms of the creative process itself, there has been some research applying principles of enaction theory and embodied cognition, such as flow and conceptual blending, to performance and theatre studies; in particular, to inform theatre direction, acting, text and the rehearsal process (Lutterbie, 2011; Blair, 2009; Kemp, 2012). Theatre studies academic Maaike Bleeker

works in the post-humanist tradition that explores the performance of ‘things’ in a ‘distributed practice of knowing’, looking at the cognitive ecology of audience, performer and theatrical ‘objects’ (2018). Scenography is currently being increasingly referred to by scholars as a process (e.g. Aronson, 2005; McKinney, 2018) instead of a set product (Penna, 2018, p.xv) through notions of ‘expanded scenography’ (McKinney and Palmer, 2017), ‘invisible scenography’ (Lotker, 2015) and ‘groundless scenography’ (Penna, 2018, p.xv). This work describes the relational dynamic between environment and audience, enfolding into each other and unfolding from one another (Varela et al., 1991, p.217).

Gibson’s notion of affordances is helpful to understand how perception is formulated in an enactive paradigm and ultimately how we make sense of what we encounter (Bleeker and Germano, 2014). He describes perception as constituting a process of action adjustment between the agent and their environment, and thus objects (used here in the broadest sense to mean not the acting subject) are seen and understood ‘to be what they are by virtue of the ways they may be engaged by the acting subject’ (Hutchins, 2010, p.434). McKinney’s study of the scenographic spectacle illustrates how scenography can stimulate aesthetic engagement via embodied visual spectator responses through kinesthesis (2013, p.65), developing the body of research on kinaesthetic empathy in spectating (Reason 2012, Reynolds and Reason 2012) and our reciprocal relationship with our environments, objects, and space embodiment (Edinborough, 2016). Other compelling studies of performance phenomena in a post-computational mind context include Sutton’s research of stage presence, which defines it as ‘a situational, multidimensional and interactive aspect embedded in performing’ (Pini and Sutton, 2018) and research by Amy Cook, which explores how audiences conceive of characters in theatrical performance by using conceptual integration and blending (2018).

Enactive spectatorship is a burgeoning area of research in performance studies, most notably by Bleeker and Germano (2014). Although foundational in applying an enactive approach to spectatorship, Bleeker and Germano’s research focuses on the affordances of the performance environment, and less on audience experience itself. Leadership studies scholar Dagmar Abfalter also draws on cognition theory. She discusses the tradition of connecting leadership to cognitive science, citing work by Avolio, Walumbwa and Weber (2009), and frames the concept of leadership as one that is socially constructed, through a co-creation process in daily practice (for example, in a creative team), rather than being a personality characteristic of any individual: ‘[c]onsequently, concepts of leadership or

success as emerging in the narratives build on the respondents' understanding and construction of the concepts' (2013, p.295). In the commercial sector, marketing research has begun to incorporate new findings from cognitive science, in particular work on the unconscious and emotions demonstrated by EEG brain scans, and on cognitive dissonance in marketing theory and management (Kantur et al., 2011). Enactive applications of embodied theories of cognition to arts management are much less common, and actually non-existent in the world of theatre marketing specifically.

Sense-making and meaning-making have long been of interest to cognitive science, in particular in fields such as cognitive linguistics and cognitive semiotics. These fields employ empirical and interdisciplinary research practices to investigate meaning-making, primarily in a computational context, describing language as a series of 'sign vehicles' (Zlatev, 2009). There is evidence that enaction as an embodied cognitive approach is beginning to impact these fields, which rely broadly on a computational model of cognition that led one enactivist to describe them as 'too much in the head' (Bottineau, 2020). Evidence of this impact can be found in Zlatev's proposal for a unified cognitive semiotic framework, in which he rethinks the cognitive semiotic model in light of phenomenology, influenced by the principles of Merleau-Ponty (2012). Considering the rich tradition of semiotics in theatre studies, it is clear that enaction has the potential to impact further in these fields, moving away from a system of fixed signs and symbols seen to be inherent in the text itself and authorial intention as the determiner of meaning, to 'a convergence of interest in acts of reader/spectator interpretation' (Sedgman, 2019c) that is enacted across modes and contexts (McConachie, 2015). In the enactive sense, symbols are 'joint enactments that project new trajectories for collaborative sense-making' (Di Paolo et al., 2018, p.10).

Enaction is one of the 'Es' in the 4E school of cognition, alongside embodied, ecological and extended cognition (Newen et al. 2018). Indeed, we can see how easily the coding of meaning into language is based on an understanding of meaning and value as fixed (not emergent), disembodied (not embodied), and discrete (not extended). We have seen examples of work in this chapter already that have accounted for the first three 'Es' in our understanding of cultural value as embodied, emergent and extended. Building on this work, this thesis is interested in what contributions an enactive approach to cultural value can provide us to further our understanding of how we make sense of, articulate and communicate meaning and value through our sense-making processes.

It is therefore evident that an enactive approach accounts for meaning as a whole-body process. Articulated first by Varela et al. in their publication ‘The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience’ (1991), enactivists start with the notion that cognition is, in fact, an embodied process grounded in our sensorimotor interactions with our environments, implying that what we think and desire is practised, expressed and recognised in our bodies (as cited in De Jaegher et al., 2010, p.61). However, one of the key critiques of enaction in research is that it is often conflated and synonymised with embodiment and embodied cognition. Crucially for the purposes of this project and the specific enactive theories it looks to apply, enaction has not worked hard enough for language, as we will see in the next section of this chapter looking at sense-making in the enactive paradigm. Di Paolo et al. (2020) develop this further in their theory of linguistic bodies by moving from a 'presumed universality of the body' to a theory of diverse, unfinished, enactive bodies. Their aim is to flip the paradigm from 'language is embodied' to 'human bodies are linguistic’ (ibid, 2020).

The enactive theory of autopoiesis describes the relational dynamics of living systems that are needed for their survival, transforming it from a neutral space to one full of potential meaning (Weber and Varela, 2002, pp.117-118). As Colombetti explains, it is their ‘*concerned* point of view that generates *meaning*’ (2010, p.148, original emphasis). Thus our understanding of the meaning-making of embodied and situated bodies is both relational and active, but crucially, we have the means for both the production and the consumption of meaning. This is what Colombetti refers to as sense-making (2010, p.148). In order to recognise the potential of the enactive approach to sense-making that this project is founded on, we must recognise that the very definition of sense-making as a relational and active process moves beyond the rigid producer/consumer split that forms the foundation of the traditional transactional arts marketing model explored earlier.

In their publication ‘Linguistic Bodies’, Di Paolo et al. (2020) describe people as linguistic bodies, or more specifically as ‘a unique entanglement of bodies that live, move, act, interact and make sense’. They describe bodies not just in the biological sense (or what they would term organic or metabolic), but also sensorimotor, and for the purposes of this discussion, linguistic. Bodies here are used to portray a ‘continuity with how life organizes and individuates itself’ and thus are ‘striving to make sense happen in ways that are at once autonomous and heteronomous, dynamic and co-authored’ (2020). Through the

dynamic entanglement of organic, sensorimotor and intersubjective bodies, we can begin to build an understanding of ‘how and why things matter to us’ and generate ‘many of the productive tensions that fuel our sense-making’ (Di Paolo et al., 2018, p.3). In this sense, and through this entanglement, linguistic bodies bring all their cares and concerns to linguistic situations (ibid, p.3).

The theory of languaging underpins the enactive approach to sense- and meaning-making. Just as we have seen a shift in cultural value research to how we communicate and articulate cultural value, languaging positions our understanding of language as ‘embodied and intersubjectively distributed action’ (Bottineau, 2012, p.5), rather than pre-packaged, discrete units of meaning in a traditional, computational theory of mind. It allows us to conceptualise language and communication more broadly, not as a system that can be examined as a scientific object of scrutiny, but embodied, like any other form of ‘living cognition’ (Bottineau, 2010, p.270). Therefore, the world in this enactive paradigm is brought forth by our ways of communicating, and our joint action (Baerveldt and Verheggen, 1999, p.185), allowing us to reposition language as a process and behaviour ‘rather than as a static system of symbols and rules’ (Colombetti, 2014, p.1). Language as performative action is itself described ‘in the sense of a general sensorimotor living and cognitive experience; it includes physical doings as well as intellectual learning, sensations, emotions, judgements, and the like’ (Bottineau, 2010, pp.278-281). Like vision and hearing, perception is an active embodied and social process (Fenemore, 2017b; McKinney, 2013); so too is audiencing, involving constructional, dynamic meaning-making processes in a relational context (Bottineau, 2010, p.278). These processes may materialise as (embodied) signifying processes in language/s (Bottineau, 2020), but these are enacted in each case rather than followed as rules (Di Paolo et al. 2018, p.291). Or put another way, language 'as we know it' *is* action: an 'in-the-moment interactional achievement' (ibid, p.298).

Notions of languaging thus build on social constructionist thinking as well as the ideas explored earlier in this chapter around how reflective processes constitute experiences (Reason, 2010) and the long tradition of using ‘experiential reflections’ in cultural studies and sociology as a way of understanding lived reality (Sedgman, 2019c). Languaging is thus an enaction of meaning, not a representation of it. In Bottineau’s typology of languaging, he carves up these processes to include internalised mental discourses (introverted languaging), speaking and communicating with others (extraverted vocal

languaging) and writing (extraverted manual languaging) (2010, pp.271). Importantly for this study of meaning-making, languaging does not always necessitate the act of speaking or vocalising one's thoughts to others. It thus includes the intersubjective doing that occurs in all audiencing, regardless of whether or not audiences have been directly offered an explicitly interactive or participatory role in the action. Instead of treating the latter situation as if their activity is passive, in the enactive paradigm, audiencing is always active on an intersubjective level.

De Jaegher et al. define intersubjectivity as 'how we experience and understand each other and the world together' (De Jaegher et al., 2017, p.515), deeming it central to all aspects of languaging. Language is thus conceptualised as a domain of human meaning, not in that it reveals properties of a pre-existing world, but rather 'in our linguistic interactions we continuously regenerate the consensual domains in which we can recognize or acknowledge others' (Baerveldt and Verheggen, 1999, p.198). Through understanding meaning by its intersubjective enactment, we can recognise how meanings 'span individuals and are often created and transformed in interactions' (De Jaegher et al., 2017, p.516). Central to phenomenology is the understanding of experience as 'an account of "lived" space, "lived" time, and the "lived" world' (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, p.7). It presents us not only with an understanding of 'being', as a subjective entity, but also concerns itself with the intersection 'of my experiences with those of others though a sort of gearing into each other' (ibid, p.21). Thus the phenomenological approach can be considered inseparable from notions of subjectivity and intersubjectivity: to recognise the subjectivity of others, or perhaps more accurately to recognise others as acting subjects, is as much an epistemological imperative as it is a moral one (Baerveldt and Verheggen, 1999, p.200).

One of the main critiques of research working with enactive theories is that it is yet to account for this aspect of social meaning-making. In response to this critique and gap in enactive theory, De Jaegher and Di Paolo developed the theory of participatory sense-making (2007), which was further refined in their recent publication *Linguistic Bodies* (Di Paolo et al. 2018). They describe how linguistic bodies, through processes of autonomy, adaptivity, agency and participatory sense-making, are always constituting themselves through their activities in linguistic communities (Di Paolo et al., 2018, p.7). They do this by incorporating and incarnating the utterances of others.

Participatory sense-making

At the core of the linguistic bodies model is the idea that through interaction and regulation of our own autonomy, we are constantly navigating the tension between processes of incorporation and incarnation of the utterances of others. Incorporation is described as ‘self assertion of embodied agency through assimilation and accommodation’ (Di Paolo et al., 2020). Through this process, the utterances are transformed and the incorporating agent is also transformed. This is what Di Paolo et al., (2020) term incarnation, when one embodies another’s agency: ‘so others (both concrete and vague) become part of the sense-making along with their perspectives, attitudes, voices, gestures, movements, personalities, ways of relating and so on.’

We see in the linguistic bodies model an attempt to develop participatory sense-making to account for language as we know it as intersubjective action. Building on embodied notions of language, for example the orientational metaphors of Lakoff and Johnson (2003), and the relational metaphysics of philosophers like Alva Noë (2008; e.g. 'perception is action'), languaging as a collective engine of meaning-making – and subsequently our cultural and societal meanings – are jointly enacted through our cultural and societal structures and institutions. Thus, we might not live in the same social world, but our reality is social. And, as John Law argues (although not directly referring to enactive notions of cognition), these 'realities are being *enacted* with more or less difficulty into being' (Law, 2007, p.601, original emphasis).

This dialectical linguistic bodies model conceptualises how, as enactive sense-makers, we are constantly navigating the irresolvable tension at the heart of our intersubjective activity: between incorporation and the production of the 'self', and incarnation of the utterances (understood as embodied, not just linguistic) of others. These processes also occur within our interactions with the imagined 'other', for example in dialogue with the self, as Bottineau (2020) allows for in his typology of languaging. Utterances are understood in this context as ‘embodied social activities’ or acts, and they are braided through dialogue with oneself or others to construct meaning out of multiply-authored fragments (Di Paolo et al., 2018, p.256). This naturally destabilises the notion of a rigid, permanent self, as we weave utterances materially and meaningfully to involve each other, invoke the past and set up the future (ibid, p.257). These ideas are core to understanding participatory sense-making.

Theatrical events present an interesting site for exploration of such processes because they place at the core of the event the relationship between someone perceiving and what is being perceived (Bleeker and Germano, 2014, p.370). Firstly, as we have already seen, we are constituted as both subject and object in an active and dialogic process when watching other bodies on a stage: '[i]n seeing acting, we are also acting seeing' (Fenemore, 2007a). In addition, the staging and performance of the event is ultimately 'a deliberate creative process of staging audience perception', with experiences designed and 'constructed to position spectators in relation to what is performed' (Bleeker and Germano, 2014, p.371). In particular, Fischer-Lichte describes how the audience and performer experience one another, and themselves, as 'embodied minds', bringing themselves forward in their co-presence (2008, p.99).

This constant tension between incarnation and incorporation sits at the heart of participatory sense-making, and is essentially irresolvable – we are unfinished, diverse bodies, always learning, always creating and recreating ourselves. We manage this tension by co-regulation of interactors (and of ourselves, through the 'eyes' of others), which by its very nature is a precarious process, continually at risk of breakdown. Our realities, then, are enacted, but crucially they are enacted as 'consensual' domains of interaction (Maturana, 2002, p.17). As the incorporated flows of utterances that make up the linguistic agent are always the joint result of the personal enactments and patterns that live in the community, there is always the potential that these flows can be experienced in an impersonal way (Di Paolo et al., 2020).

Thus we can see the potential of this model in exploring how cultural intermediaries might navigate (or rather, incorporate and incarnate) languaging flows of their institution. We may enact symbols to direct sense-making at a given moment, as notions of objectivity and references to the 'real world' also emerge from operations between bodies, interactions and sedimented community practices. They too rely on our intersubjective experience with the 'en-languaged' world (Di Paolo et al., 2018). Although beyond the purposes of this research, the model gives us a framework through which we could explore how institutional languaging flows are en-languaged within particular bureaucratic or management processes, by particular enactments of cultural value. In this sense, the languaging flows belong to the institution as a linguistic community as much as to the individual; indeed they can be experienced by the individual 'as an alien power, an automatic doing or an unknown knowledge' (Di Paolo et al., 2020). The concept of

linguistic communities can help to articulate dynamics of dominance and power, as a result of the influence of others' identities on our own; an area that, as we have seen, is ripe for potential research in terms of how cultural value is enacted.

Returning briefly to the application to cultural value, we can see how enactivism allows for a grounding of otherwise potentially vague notions, such as meaning and value, by considering them as inseparable from the contexts on which they depend and from which they arise. More particularly, the ways in which we use words like value and meaning in relation to our own experiences involve, like all our languaging, complex processes of sedimentation and spontaneity that have to be enacted in each case rather than followed as rules (Di Paolo et al., 2020)

Similarly, the embodied, concerned point of view of linguistic bodies described in the enactive approach to cognition is fundamental to how we perceive and think. This has implications for our notions of (cultural) value which arise from discussions of identity: '[a] particular living identity is the origin of perspective on the rest of the world in which it lives; this perspective is the field of value for that life in the pattern of relationships in which is it living' (Sharpe, 2010, p.15). This identity, in the context of live theatre, may be temporarily constructed by the roles we play in the process and our sense-making processes as both afforded and constrained by our identities and roles.

In conclusion, this chapter has explored how much research in arts marketing, and a significant proportion of studies of cognition in theatre, performance and audience studies, is based on a computational metaphor of mind; our mind as a computer that processes information, and our bodies as the robots that respond to this processing. The idea of inherent quality and value residing in a product has dominated our understanding of cultural value in the democratisation of culture ideology, relying on the neoliberal conception of the cultural consumer of cultural products; products that hold, inherently, symbolic meaning.

There is a considerable body of empirical and phenomenological work in audience and cultural value research that aims to approach cultural value as embodied, emergent and extended but considerably less in the fourth 'e': the enactive tradition, where there is nevertheless considerable potential. Those working in the enactive paradigm posit meaning-making as an intersubjective process, enacted by humans as active agents in a

dynamic interaction with their environments and, crucially, with other humans. This thesis posits that theories of participatory sense-making of linguistic bodies have the potential to contribute to an enactive framing of value. In particular, these theories have implications for our understanding of theatre (as interaction), and as meaning-making and sense-making processes of all those who participate in one way or another. Indeed, it is these theories that provide the framework to understand marketing processes, theatre-making processes and ultimately sense-, meaning- and value-making processes as emergent and situational. They place the interaction of active agents at the centre of the enquiry, and in doing so they situate humans, in their everyday lives and well as in their cultural activity, as *always already* making meaning, as diverse, unfinished bodies (organic, metabolic, sensorimotor and intersubjective – or 'linguistic' – bodies). The work on theories of linguistic bodies reverses the emphasis from ‘language is embodied’ to ‘human bodies are linguistic’ (Di Paolo et al., 2018, p.312). It is still very new, and while this project was not designed to contribute to new knowledge on the topic, the theory is core to the project’s overall contribution to knowledge and supports the rationale for bringing together the theoretical framework, methodology and questions of sense-making processes enacted in cultural experiences, and the articulation and communication of meaning and value through marketing processes.

Finally, in a methodological sense, Di Paolo et al. build on Marx’s definition of concreteness to illustrate in the enactive sense how we understand something by viewing it in different contexts in different ways: ‘in the moment’, ‘contextual’ or ‘situated’ (Di Paolo et al. 2018, p.284). As this echoes the call for a more situated approach in studies of cultural value (e.g. Oliver and Walmsley, 2011, p.88) it thus describes the potential impact an enactive approach could have on researching cultural value, by foregrounding the experience of the event as its central point, in its wider context. The next chapter will explore how facet methodology enables a viewing of the research object in different contexts, or facets, within an embodied and engaged epistemological framing.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Research Design

> We have a penchant for seeing cognition most clearly when we see a system (organic or artificial) mastering the world, as in: dominating the distinctions to be made, categorising, building on the dichotomies, advancing logically. In short, when we see it dividing and conquering (De Jaegher, 2019, p.848).

The last chapter argued that the enactive paradigm, and theories of participatory sense-making and languaging in particular, present a unique opportunity to answer the call for a more situated, contextual, human-led approach to studies of audiences and cultural value. Aspects of the theoretical framework will be developed further and woven into this chapter, to make explicit how these theories informed the design of the methodology. This chapter explores how the construction and structuring of facets, as part of facet methodology, enables an approach to cultural value that is in keeping with this theoretical framework.

The research design breaks down the divide/s between the enlanguaged and institutionalised practices of marketing, audiencing and theatre-making by structuring facets or 'mini-investigations' that conceptualise them as participatory sense-making; as constitutive of 'the total art process' (Boorsma, 2006, p.73). Drawing from phenomenological research traditions, this project positions the research activity as sense-making in its own right, drawing on an engaged epistemology (De Jaegher, 2019) and embodied form of enquiry (Leigh and Brown, 2021). In this sense, the experiencing subject or Merleau-Ponty's 'embodied subject' is positioned at the centre of the enquiry, allowing us 'to redirect attention from the world as it is conceived by the abstracting 'scientific' gaze (the objective world) to the world as it appears or discloses itself to the perceiving subject (the phenomenal world)' (Garner, 1994, p.2).

Language as action: an embodied methodology

The focus on language as action does not mean that *what* people say is irrelevant altogether. Indeed, one of the key components of this methodology is to compare and contrast participants' reflections and the meanings that they constructed alongside the other participants. For the research with audience participants, there was also some

exploration of how these articulations of value and meaning changed. In order to unpick the incarnations and incorporations of utterances that illustrate participatory sense-making in action, drawing from particular words that participants used as part of their languaging flows was extremely useful to unpick how participants strived to communicate their experiences across all three participant groups.

As this research is situated within the interpretivist research paradigm, my study is not concerned with discovering universal objective 'truths' of experience. Any attempt in a methodology to break down specific components of communication and interaction such as gesture, vocabulary or expressive tone in order to then build up, corroborate or 'prove' a particular research narrative is incompatible with the epistemology within which the research is situated, because it fails to account for the context in which these components interrelate. This research is also not concerned with reconstructing or rebuilding these interactions from the 'bottom up' in order to further understanding of how they work; again, this would make the assumption that the researcher was able somehow to ‘step out’ of the interactions. It would essentially require a disembodiment on various levels; not least implying erroneously that the sense-making interactions existed as independent of the context in which they were enacted.

Many research projects dealing with interpretations of experience often have as a common theoretical foundation the notion of embodiment (Leigh and Brown, 2021, p.26). Furthermore, I explored in the previous chapter how the theoretical framing of this research presupposes an interest in the embodied nature of the research object: the enaction of cultural value in marketing and audiencing contemporary theatre. Leigh and Brown note that this is often the case with embodied inquiry (ibid, p.205). McKinney describes how an approach to the experience of the body is not a question of choosing between an ‘inside out’ or an ‘outside in’ approach, but rather acknowledging how these two approaches are inseparable (2013, p.65) – an idea that relates directly to the multimodality of this particular approach, which we can define as ‘multiple means of making meaning’ (Leigh and Brown, 2021, p.30).

A pluralist approach to methods

The initial structuring of sets of interactions, or 'facets', within this case study framework provides various contexts which afford and constrain a series of joint enactments of sense-

making. This is in keeping with the 'pluralist disposition in relation to method' (Mason, 2011, p.83) or, put another way, ‘being greedy in the search for data, knowledge and insight' (ibid, p.83). Rather than relying on one mode of legitimation, rigour in facet methodology is not ensured by generating a complete data set, or providing the maximum amount of data presented as knowledge. It is also not a direct result of the particular choice of methods that make up the research design, like a 'recipe for ensuring quality' (ibid, p.85). Instead, it places emphasis on rigour residing in the research processes themselves; for example, in reflexive methods employed by the researcher to show their 'workings out' in the analysis, thus becoming an integral part of this research design. In their facet methodology-inspired study of the rhythms of physical activity in mid and later-life, Phoenix and Bell helpfully summarise Mason's argument that the rigour of facet methodology in fact lies with the researcher's analytical process of 'identifying and showing where insights have come from, where and how alternative interpretations have been sought out, and the reasons why those pursued are deemed convincing to the research team and beyond' (Phoenix and Bell, 2019, p.48).

Inspired by Mason and Davies' (2009) conceptualisation of 'sensory entanglements’, this approach conceives of our embodied, multi-sensory experience as something that cannot be broken down into discrete pre-formed categories to be analysed. Rather, it is entangled with the sensory, the social, the cultural, the political, and crucially for this research, the tangible and the intangible. Steeped in the 'politics of rich cognition' (Hayler, 2018), knowledge is not understood to be possessed by individuals who can be therefore 'mined' as data, but rather generated in the relations and associations that they themselves enact. Analysis of this knowledge therefore requires a flexible and creative approach to methods (Mason and Davies, 2009, p.599).

Facet methodology

> The main premise of facet methodology is that we can use ‘flashes of insight’ gained through an exploration of strategically and artistically chosen facets of a problem – rather than attempting (and usually failing) to describe and document all dimensions of a problem in its entirety. The argument is that these ‘artfully’ chosen facets can offer strongly resonant and evocative forms of understanding and insight (Mason, 2018, p.4).

Developed by sociologist Jennifer Mason, facet methodology mobilises the visual metaphor of a gemstone, framing its fields of research as the constitutive, individual ‘facets’. These facets employ clusters of different methods, but do not aim to produce a complete data set, rather ‘a strategically illuminating set of facets in relation to specific research concerns and questions’ (Mason, 2011, p.77). Facets as thus ‘mini-investigations’ which look into ‘entwinements and contingencies’ that are thought to be ‘characteristic’ of the object of concern (Mason, 2011, p.79).

Mobilising the gemstone metaphor

Researchers use metaphors in their research design as a 'strategy for making interpretive practices discernible and for depicting relationships between multiple perspectives' (Aubusson, 2002; Schmidt, 2005 as quoted in Mann and Warr, 2017, p.548). For example, Beswick describes her development of fragmentation methodology, which allows her to coherently analyse in isolation facets of spatial experiences referred to as fragments (2014, p.56). Beswick draws on Lefebvre’s concept of space as a theoretical framing for the research, maintaining that the dialectical relationship between fragments becomes an insightful rather than reductive process: 'fragmentation works as a kind of “simplification”, which must be followed by a “gradual restoration"… allowing room for the complexity of the overlaid fragments to be recognised' (ibid, pp.56-57). Similarly, Mason argues in her critique of the gemstone metaphor at the heart of facet methodology that the metaphor acts as a strategy or tool for the researcher and should not be extended beyond the point of its use (Mason, 2011, p.80). It is clear that whichever metaphor is chosen for a research design, it should itself remain open to scrutiny, in terms of reflecting on the inherent assumptions that we make when we rely on a particular metaphor to structure our thinking. This next section provides a review of the ‘metaphorical entailments’ of the gemstone as a structuring tool for the research – not only in terms of their individual metaphoric characteristics, but rather between the characteristics in relation to each other and to the wider context (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003, p.25), and in particular how the metaphor suits the enactive theoretical framing of the research.

The defining criteria of a gemstone emerges from an understanding of a type of jewel that holds monetary value in modern society, and at the same time, is *valued*. Gemstones are considered to be precious, valuable, pretty. They are hard and unyielding in structure and are fairly rare. Yet these particular characteristics of gemstones may also be considered

as subsections of one another; for example, a gemstone such as a diamond may be considered to be desirable because it is pretty and rare. It may be considered desirable because it holds its integrity and is not easily destroyed – allowing it, for example, to be passed down through generations of a family as an heirloom. It may be considered pretty because of the way it changes its appearance when it is moved across a light source, reflecting and refracting the light in many different ways and colours. Thus it is the *combining of* these characteristics that we give the research object its particular qualities of value, not just because of any one of its individual or fungible characteristics.

Of course, even if you do not value a gemstone for the reasons described above, it still holds inherent value as an object when it is engaged with in some way; for instance, if you wanted to use it as a blunt instrument to break something. Culture, too, is often described in these terms when we articulate how a show has 'passed the time' or was at least an opportunity to have a gin and tonic at the interval. So in a similar way to a gemstone being of inherent value, we saw in the research context chapter how there has been a shift in cultural value research to the premise that there is value in engaging with culture, broadly speaking. This may not necessarily be in the monolithic, economic sense or in advocacy for the sector – as discussed in the previous chapter, the overdependence on which has led to a crisis in value in both policy and practice – but rather in a pluralist sense: value is emergent in specific contexts, dependent on a certain series of relational valuing processes enacted by the agents doing the valuing, and the context in which this process sits. The value emerges in a relational and situational context (Oliver and Walmsley, 2011, p.88; Walmsley and Meyrick, 2022, p.234), heralding the shift in cultural value research from value-as-satisfaction to value-as-engagement (Walmsley, 2019a). What's more, as Boorsma suggests, the act of researching audience experience itself presumes the artistic experience as valuable and worthy of researching (Boorsma, 2006, p.75). Moving away from questions about whether or not culture has value allows us to ask more interesting questions about the nature and related processes of cultural value. This research project too aims to move towards an *emergent* notion of value.

Facets

While the origins of facet theory can be traced back to behavioural science, facet methodology draws from sociology and different methodological and epistemological traditions such as ethnography, interpretive sociology, ecological anthropology and

sensory methodology (Mason, 2011, p.75). Arguably, these diverse methodological foundations are one of the primary reasons why facet methodology is well situated to explore complex social phenomena. For example, facet methodology has been applied to studies of critical associations or friendships (Mason, 2011) and family resemblances (Davies and Heaphy, 2011, p.14). The approach is therefore applicable to research objects that present challenges in terms of what constitutes them: as Davies and Heaphy argue in their study, ‘we show how different methods in different settings illuminated diverse linkages between personal narratives and broader cultural (and sub-cultural) concepts of how relationships ”should” be’ (ibid, p.5).

The research field in facet methodology is constructed through the combinations and constellations of facets that we might see in a cut gemstone. Each one represents 'an investigation into a facet of the problem, involving its own distinctive lines of enquiry, and ways of seeing' (Mason, 2018, p.45), enabling the methodology to include a multiplicity of epistemologies. A facet can be understood as ‘any of the definable aspects that make up a subject… or an object’ or as ‘a small plane surface (as on a cut gem)’ (Merriam Webster, 2022). It describes a particular aspect or feature of something which is a side, an aspect or a face of a larger whole, analogous to the way that facets constitute this methodological approach; they represent a series of 'ways in' to the problem, but do not aim to represent the whole problem. This makes it a promising avenue to explore the complex problem faced by cultural value research: implicit in this methodology is the recognition that 'the character and the politics of knowing' are 'constitutively incomplete' (Law, 2007, p.601).

Facet theory is an approach to data generation rather than data collection; as Mason explains, ‘[t]he agentic and purposeful casting of lights fits well with our idea that facets are designed, both strategically and artfully, to produce insights, rather than the more passive idea of our object of interest being illuminated by the collection of maximum data’ (2011, p.81). Not only does this allow us to disregard the possibility of collecting a ‘complete’ data set, it also correlates neatly with theories of enaction. In the same way that we enact meaning in our day-to-day lives, so too does the act of research cast frameworks of meaning in an active, not passive, manner: ‘[f]acets are not just ‘there’, existing as silos of knowledge or data to be taken up or absorbed, but are brought into being through the critical and imaginative practice of epistemologically-ontologically astute researchers, and this must show – or be allowed to shine through – in the knowledge they create’ (Mason, 2011, p.81).

The approach to complexity that this research adopts is concerned with generating different constitutions of meaning and value in particular interactive contexts, in an attempt to explore the multi-dimensional nature of human experience. It follows therefore that meaning-making and value-making enacted through (inter)action relies on a fluid, dynamic and unfinished understanding of these emergent concepts to 'shift assumptions': an aspiration that Mason argues facet methodology is well suited to do (2011, p.82). As this thesis explains later in more detail, this aim is a crucial driver for the design of individual facets. Firstly, I want to explore further how the facet methodology approach will address the project's research questions through the conception of the research field 'as network' (Kokot, 2006).

Case studies as a structuring tool for delineating field-as-network

Case studies are used to investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, particularly when 'the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident' and multiple sources of 'evidence' are used (Yin, 1994, p.13). The comparative case study method, as a distinctive form of multiple-case study, examines multiple situations with a given framework, selected to either predict similar results or predict contrary results for similar reasons (Agranoff and Radin, 1991; Yin, 1994). It therefore relies on a replication logic based on the premise that the 'external' conditions of the case study can be controlled (Yin, 1994, p.51). This might be an entirely appropriate methodology for a project that was taking a critical management approach, or one that aimed to evaluate the efficacy and/or impact of particular arts marketing practices. However, the use of case studies in this project instead becomes a useful structuring force, rather than a form of analysis in its own right. If we were taking the third-person perspective of languaging that Bottineau describes as arising from 'recursion to create a consensual linguistic domain' (2020) then it would seem a viable methodology to study how these linguistic domains compare and contrast across the three case studies through linguistic analysis. However, it would also shift the focus to the language as 'disembodied transcriptions resulting from human units of actions' (Bottineau, 2012, p.4) instead of centralising the enactive understanding of language and speaking as a modality of *action*, thus subjectively and intersubjectively distributed.

Similarly, not only is the idea of external conditions nonsensical in our enactive

understanding of sense-making, which relies on a dynamic relationship with 'internal' and 'external' contexts; in this approach, we are aiming to ‘factor contexts into explanation, rather than attempting to control for them or edit them out’ (Mason, 2006, p.17). This aims to afford a more concrete understanding of the particularities and contextual relations within and between each case study that tells us 'something characteristic of the object of concern' (Mason, 2011, p.79). To that end, while the selection of particular case studies enabled me to select the location of the research field, it was the facet methodology approach, as the project’s overarching methodology, that informed and structured the analysis.

The primary research questions of this project require a critical approach to the dominant transactional marketing model used in the theatre sector. Firstly, the research is concerned with exploring the dynamics of interactions between three groups: theatre-maker, audience member and cultural intermediary (those that work at a producing venue in the theatre and marketing teams). Additional research questions were designed with this intersubjectivity in mind: uncovering the processes behind conceiving roles; of focusing and directing the attention of others; of articulating valuations of one’s experiences; of articulating intentions and expectations and shaping those of others; of remembering and imbuing meaning and value after an experience; and crucially of sense-making, both individually and collectively. In doing so, the research field of enquiry shifts from field-as-location (which might describe, for example, the boundaries of the individual or the brain, or the field as a defined space and time) to the 'field-as-network', representing what Kokot describes as a 'multi-sited ethnography' (2006). By defining as its research field the interplay between roles and sense-making, and mobilising this within the enactive theoretical framework, the approach foregrounds how participants navigate their understanding of themselves and others as linguistic bodies through participatory sense-making, and languaging as an 'embodied and intersubjectively distributed action' (Bottineau, 2012, p.5).

Some of the participants who are the focus of this study as agents perform certain professional roles in particular fields in a cultural institution, working in an arts centre in Manchester called HOME or in one of three particular theatre companies. The other participants constitute a group of audience members recruited specifically for this research. The researcher too enacts a certain role in relation to their research participants, and through interactions with them, participates fully as a linguistic body. In doing so

together, researcher and research participant, like the everyday sense-makers that they are, can be understood to sculpt the world together through one another's experiences (Bottineau, 2012, p.13). The case studies selected for this project aimed to provide a shared context for the participants and the researcher, allowing for more of a shared understanding and relational context to emerge. As we habitually incorporate and incarnate the utterances and agencies through one another as social and linguistic bodies, conceptualisation of our roles within these interactions is needed, and in particular how participants evaluate the potential consequences of each interaction – including, in this case, the experience of live theatre.

Moreover, although identified for ease here in three discrete categories (arts marketers, audience members and artists/theatre-makers), it was important that participants were cast in this research not as one-dimensional formal representatives of their designated participant group, but as constantly evolving, forming, unfinished linguistic bodies in their own right. Thus participants are here classified by their initial 'roles' given to them by this research project, and by their engagement with the selected case study venue: that of artist or theatre-maker (and all the potential creative and production roles that might entail in the theatre-making or theatre production process); that of the arts practitioners working at the case study venue (e.g. in marketing or the theatre production team); and finally that of the audience – both current and prospective – for the case study venue.

Furthermore, the research design aims not to flatten or simplify the complex interconnections of these active agents within their sense-making processes through their conceptions of their own roles, their sense-making processes, their articulations of meaning and value as well as their intentions and expectations of the experiences of the theatre 'events' and of the research project. Rather, it sets as its focus these interconnections as a field-as-network. Linked to enactive theories of concreteness, we understand cultural value as it emerges in different interactive contexts, leading to a more concrete understanding of how cultural value emerges for different participants across several months. The processes of languaging as intersubjectively distributed, alongside interactive meaning-making processes, within this project thus aim for 'an intersubjectively renewed awareness of this distributed process, in a dialectic understanding of the agents' togetherness' (Bottineau, 2012, p.14).

Programming and marketing

As explored earlier in the thesis, the programme of work was not the most important factor influencing an audience member's choice to book for contemporary art (Price et al., 2019, p.232). Yet it is clear that the programming of such events will have an impact on factors such as cost and matching the arts event to their mood. For example, although there are exceptions, shows that are longer and have an interval, or employ a larger cast and production team, will often have a higher ticket price compared to those shorter or smaller shows. In addition, as Facet 2 will explore, the different production and relational contexts in which individual shows sit also have an effect on the positioning of these shows within HOME's wider programme and artistic offer. Additionally, whether or not an audience member perceives a show to reflect their mood clearly will depend on their past experiences and individual tastes, but also how they interpret the marketing materials at their disposal and how they imagine their experience of the show to be in the future; an area this research is particularly interested in.

It is a result of this direct link between programming and marketing that research participants from the HOME venue for this project included those in the theatre team responsible for the programming and producing of their live performance programme. This enabled inclusion of early conversations between the theatre producing team and the marketing and communications team and provided access to the processes in which members of both teams fed into the development of campaign content, as well as broader conversations around the positioning of these shows within the wider HOME programme (e.g. through the programming of 'enrichment' events or special ticket offers for particular community and educational groups), laying open some of the rationale behind why these particular shows were programmed.

Yet even though, to a greater or lesser extent, HOME was directly involved in the development of these three shows, they were not what might be constituted as 'lead' producers for any of them. Therefore as participants in this research, like those in the marketing and communications teams, they were often responding to the initial design of campaign content by the theatre companies themselves; early versions of which would have informed programming decisions at an early stage. For that reason, it would have been useful and interesting to include these processes of selecting what work to put on stages for all three shows, considering the complex nature of these decisions which need

to take into account ‘reduced funding, an increase in types of shows that can be programmed, and a drive for increased diversity’ (Coupland, 2022, p.426). Nevertheless, due to the constraints of timing for this doctoral research project, and the fact that all three theatre shows had been programmed by the theatre team months before the start of the fieldwork activity, it was simply not possible to include the processes of programming these theatre shows within the fieldwork itself.

Selecting case studies

As described in the thesis introduction, recruiting participants for this study began with the selection of the venue case study: HOME, Manchester. HOME formed the context for the selection of the theatre companies, and therefore the nature of the interactions that acted as the central point for all three participant groups. The research began with a meeting with the full marketing and communications team, where I explained the aims of the project and my background as a practitioner and researcher. This led to a process of planning research activity in collaboration with the theatre programming team, including the selection of the theatre company case studies and the recruitment of the audience participants. The theatre events needed to take place within my research timeline (February 2019–October 2019), constraining our choices further. In partnership with the marketing and theatre teams, it was additionally agreed that we should select three case studies, to provide an adequate amount of data while at the same time not being too onerous for participants. Additionally, the three theatre case studies were selected primarily to be representative of a range of *intended* audience engagement models. Based on HOME's experience working with the theatre companies in the past, as well as awareness of their past work, the HOME theatre and communications team were able to give a general sense of the 'type' of experience they expected from each company’s work, to allow for a consideration of range.

Two out of the three case studies took place in the smaller T2 space (ONE and SWIM), and the third took place in the larger T1 space (Red Dust Road). The sizes of the company ranged from two performers (ONE), to four performers (SWIM), to a large ensemble cast (Red Dust Road). Red Dust Road was a stage adaptation of a memoir, telling the story of poet Jackie Kay’s life, while ONE and SWIM were devised by the performing companies. Out of the latter two, one was a performing company with an established working relationship (ONE) and the other consisted of a team of creative practitioners brought

together specially for the making of this particular show (SWIM). In practical terms, these three case studies needed to have runs of more than one night at the theatre to allow a greater degree of choice for audience participants in terms of selecting which performances they could attend. In addition, it was ideal that the three case studies were instances of new or contemporary theatre, methodologically speaking, to provide early access to the creative processes. Finally, as HOME were essentially acting as gatekeepers to the recruitment of the theatre companies, it was more likely that they would have longer runs if they were co-productions, or HOME-supported productions. Full details of the performing companies of the shows will be explored in the next chapter[2].

Recruiting audience participants

Audience participants were sampled first through a range of demographic and behavioural criteria, including their levels of experience attending theatre and levels of engagement with HOME more specifically. Audience participants were recruited through an 'open call' survey, inviting participants to register their interest. The advert copy[3] was hosted on the theatre's website as a news item, and an edited version of the call was distributed via an email news bulletin to HOME attenders (all art forms). 110 people registered their interest via a short survey, and 30 participants were selected, based on a sampling strategy which involved screening participants' potential availability for the research activity, as well as a range of demographics (age, gender, ethnicity, disability). In addition, it was important for this research to pull on a range of levels of engagement with HOME as an institution, and theatre-going more generally, so in the screening survey participants were asked if they had visited HOME in the past (and if so, whether this was to watch a film/visit the art gallery/see a piece of theatre/eat or drink in the restaurant/bar). Applicants were asked to describe how they would define themselves in relation to attending theatre (i.e. a regular attender, infrequent, never been, etc). Participants were then sampled across these criteria to provide as even a split as possible across these different elements. The table below [Figure 3.1] compares the key demographic and behavioural information of sampled participants, with those that responded to the survey.

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[2] See Appendix A for details of the creative teams behind the shows.

[3] See Appendix C for the details of the audience participant recruitment campaign and survey.

Figure 3.1: Demographic/behavioural breakdown of audience participants and survey respondents

	Total respondents (95)	%	Participants (27[4])	%
Age				
18-29	32	34%	8	30%
30-49	35	37%	11	41%
50-69	25	26%	7	26%
70+	2	2%	0	0%
PNTS	1	1%	1	4%
Ethnicity				
White British	73	77%	17	63%
Black British	4	4%	1	4%
Asian British	1	1%	1	4%
White Other	6	6%	5	19%
Mixed Race	7	7%	2	7%
Other	4	4%	1	4%
8. Do you go to the theatre (in general), if at all? If so, what type of thing do you go to see and how often? If not, is there any particular reason?				
FREQUENT ('often'; 'regular'; 5+ times/year)	60	63%	15	56%
INFREQUENT ('sometimes', 'occasionally', 1-4 times/year)	27	28%	8	30%
RARELY/NEVER	6	6%	4	15%
Didn't answer	2	2%	0	0%
7. Have you ever been to HOME before? (tick all that apply)				
Seen a theatre show at HOME before	68	72%	17	63%
Watched a film at HOME before	61	64%	16	59%
Been to a gallery exhibition at HOME before	45	47%	11	41%

[4] Although 30 participants were selected to take part in the study, 3 participants did not attend the first discussion group, leaving 27 remaining participants who took part in the research activity.

Been to HOME to eat/drink, for a general visit or other event	72	76%	15	56%
Never been to HOME at all	4	4%	2	7%

Participants were given the option to sign up with a friend or family member to take part in this research. From the total respondents to the survey, seven people requested to participate as part of a couple. In the end, I recruited two groups of two participants. It is also worth noting that while there were a small number of audience participants who had a direct and professional connection with working in the arts, (e.g. as a practising artist), the occupations of the audience participants were on the whole varied and diverse (although arguably of a similar socio-economic classification)[5]. However, what was clear from the beginning of the research was that each audience participant was interested, curious and engaged in the prospect of participating in this research – though, of course, not all for the same reasons. Furthermore, while I did not ask specifically for educational qualifications as part of the initial registration of interest survey, it became increasingly clear as the research progressed that many audience participants were actually experienced in research in their own fields.

A note on participant roles in this research

Additionally, it is important to note that it was clearly communicated to all participants that they had been selected to take part based on a consideration of the diversity of participants to be as representative of the Greater Manchester area as possible. It can therefore be reasonably assumed that this would potentially influence how participants framed their individual experiences in relation to the categories outlined in the survey[6] they were asked to fill out to register their interest in participating in the research. It is not implausible to suggest that the questions asked in this survey will have influenced what experiences and identities audience participants enacted in these discussion groups, and more generally throughout the project. We will see across the facets how audience participants framed their responses in relation to these demographic and/or behavioural

[5] See Appendix B for a full list of occupations of audience participants and survey respondents.
[6] See Appendix C for the introduction to the survey that potential audience participants responded to register to their interest in taking part in the project.

categories, both in terms of their own participation in the project, and what they deemed meaningful to their own narratives and sense-making journeys more broadly.

Thus the act of casting participant roles in research for sampling required a certain adherence to pre-ordained categories. For instance, participants at a very basic level were identified according to their relationship with the practice of theatre-making – as audience member, as theatre-maker and as their professional marketing or production roles within a theatre. What we have here is what De Jaegher et al. refer to as ‘a reification of a particular ‘end’ product of human self-making’ (Di Paolo et al., 2018, p.225). In this instance, these roles are either defined in the professional realm as those who are paid (or not) to perform certain artistic, administrative, managerial roles, and those who pay to participate in the productions of their labour as audience members. This has been reinforced through the ways in which audience participants were further communicated with, identified and sampled according to their historical engagement (or lack thereof) with theatre productions – be that through their past engagement with HOME and contemporary theatre, but also in their interest in the project and their presumed interest in attending three theatre shows, and taking part in a research project about their experiences.

By casting participants in these reified roles in this research, I have ignored the ‘ontologically prior, constitutive, dynamic, relational and collective processes and conditions that individuate and make human personal becoming conceivable’ by ‘an abstraction of concrete processual patterns’ (Di Paolo et al., 2018, p.255). This is perhaps not a weakness of the research method as such, but rather inherent to the process of researching with human subjects. Indeed, one of the main concerns of this methodology and this research is to begin unpicking these roles, to attempt to uncover some of these dynamic, relational and collective processes and conditions of human becoming, self- and world-making, that constitute sense-making, rather than to continue to reify them, to define them or to pin them down. This is particularly true in regard to audience participants – as their role as audience member refers to a role that they have historically undertaken at some point, or one that they will fulfil for the purposes of this research.

The construction of facets

The focus of the facet methodology approach aims to provide ‘flashes of insight’ into the

peculiar and characteristic entwinements that make up the research problem, and it is the facets that are directed towards and shed light on these entwinements. The active construction of these facets in this methodology is led by what is 'exciting, challenging, unsettling, pivotal or resonant about the entwined nature of the world' in relation to the research questions (Mason, 2011, p.80). By exploring the application of the enactive framework to meaning-making, the theatrical event, arts marketing and ultimately our understanding of cultural value, we are able to consider these terms anew as reliant on embodied and intersubjectively distributed languaging practices (Bottineau, 2012, p.5) enacted through social acts of active agents in particular contexts.

It is both problematic and central to the aims of the research that constructing the facets involves adopting conceptualisations, terminology and knowledge which, through their recursive use, have become sedimented or 'enlanguaged' in particular linguistic communities. Certain research traditions have led us to elaborate separate conceptions of entities that may otherwise benefit from a more integrated approach. While the research aims to investigate the workings and metaphorical entailments (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003, p.4) of some of these terms, it was inevitable that I had to borrow from the products of dominant languaging processes in each of the contexts that this research explores.

An example of this, and one of the most potentially problematic conceptual differentiations enacted through the constructing of the facets themselves, was conceptualisation of the theatre as an 'event' as the necessary separation between interactions taking place in particular spaces and time. In the enactive framing of this research, events could include the performance and the show itself but also the wider contexts that each participant evokes. This involves, quite simply, the interactions that mattered, or had the potential to matter, to participants. Yet to situate and separate certain notions of the event for the purposes of clarity, this research also refers to 'the event' to mean specifically the particular performance that the audience participants attended at a particular time at the venue (HOME).

However, it was important that the facets were not mapped directly against participant groups, as that would have placed too much of an emphasis on the roles that I assigned to the participants. Indeed, for the questions around roles and autonomy especially, it was important to go beyond a simple comparison of the activity of the different groups. It was important too that the facets were not simply the three different theatre case studies; for

reasons given earlier in this chapter, this would have followed a comparative case study framework that relies on a replication logic. Therefore the facets defined below were chosen as they broadly represented three particularly key practices or modes of interaction: namely, marketing as an institutional utterance and promotional activity (Facet 1); an understanding of marketing within an arts management practice, located within administrative practices of the relations between a venue and theatre companies (Facet 2); and the theatre as an event, where all three of the participant groups come together, and which is arguably the 'focus' or 'centre' of the theatre-as-product (Facet 3). Of course, I could have chosen three completely different facets to explore in this thesis, and in the research project more generally, but the chosen three enabled an exploration of the three key areas I felt the research questions needed to address, shedding light on different facets of the field-as-network constructed for the purposes of this research. This next section details the specific facets that structured the research. For each I have included the intended line of investigation around which each facet is constructed, as well as the modes or types of interaction that these mini-investigations included.

Facet 1: Marketing as organisational practice and promotion

The first facet was created to explore how marketing content, the 'assets' used and created by the producer of the content in collaboration with the theatre venue or theatre company, (in)form audiences' expectations of a particular theatrical event. This content consists of formal communications on- and offline, such as the show 'blurb' (text copy) and image, and video trailers. This facet explores how audience participants responded to this promotional content, as individuals and as a group, and how they engaged with this interaction within the public domain. It primarily draws from three discussion groups held with audience participants at the beginning of the research and constitutes arts marketing practice as primarily one that involves the creation and reception of creative content.

Additionally, as participants were allocated into the initial project discussion groups according to their availability and preference – a Thursday evening (25th April), a Saturday morning (27th April) or a Saturday afternoon (27th April) – on the whole the make-up of the groups was fairly mixed in terms of the diversity of participants' experiences and backgrounds. After initial group participant introductions, this initial discussion group

included a brief presentation of the research project[7]. The second half of each of these three groups included a loosely-structured discussion centred around the communications activity of the three shows that participants were going to see as part of the project. On the whole, the broad structure of the groups was kept similar across all three groups.

While languaging describes a process of enacting language-as-action, it cannot be understood only through the analysis of vocabulary choice. But that does not mean that word choice cannot still be instructive. We shall see in the first facet how specific words or phrases can function as enactive symbols, the enactment of which can be understood as an intention to direct attention towards a specific aspect of the shared micro-context (Di Paolo et al., 2018, p.283). Therefore, while transcripts were used to record certain parts of spoken discourse, the analysis of these transcripts and audio recordings took various forms within and through the studies. For the first study I conducted a thematic analysis to analyse patterns and commonalities across all the audience participants' responses to each show campaign across the three discussion groups. The remaining studies in this facet involved the analysis of particular narratives within the groups, but still enabling some cross discussion group comparison with a particular focus on where interpretations or experiences diverged.

Facet 2: Marketing as a site of cultural value conferral

The second facet in this project flips the focus: while the first facet explores the interactions between marketing content and audience, the second investigates the creative and management processes between arts marketers and theatre companies to create this marketing content and to craft the invitation to a potential and/or current audience. I could have selected a more chronological approach to the analysis of the facets within this thesis, which would have first explored the development of the communications and marketing activity and then followed with an analysis of how this content was understood and received by the audience participants. However I felt instead that beginning with the reception of the campaign content by audience participants mirrored the order in which most audiences – including programming teams of toured-in work in arts organisations, audience research participants in this particular project, and the wider public more

[7] See Appendix A for full details of the presentation given at the initial focus group, as well as the marketing materials shown to audience participants in each of these groups.

generally – would, more often than not, first encounter these contemporary performance works: that is, through the original copy and image as presented on HOME's website pages. In doing so, this facet explores how notions of cultural value are 'conferred' (Meyrick et al., 2019) within an enlanguaged institutional context. In addition, Facet 2 unpicks conceptualisations of the audience present within the development of the artwork itself (Fillis, 2006), including the intended mode of engagement or interaction. In this sense, it draws on arts marketing as both a professional and personal practice.

The research activity for Facet 2 was aligned with the activity of the venue teams and theatre companies. Methods here focused on a range of methods as part of the anthropological methodology of 'deep hanging out' (Walmsley, 2016). This involved a diverse range of data collection methods: from observations, field notes and recordings of campaign and audience engagement activity; hanging out with venue staff and theatre teams; observations of meetings; individual semi-structured interviews and field notes of informal conversations and photos of notes taken by the marketing team. With theatre companies, this involved more observational techniques: recording of select conversations; field notes and sketches, as well as reflective depth interviews with artists.

Throughout the process, the research drew on established qualitative techniques, such as interactive introspection, which exist under the umbrella of 'deep hanging out' and allow for emergent experiences to occur between researcher and participant (Walmsley, 2016, p.6). It explored interactions between arts marketers, producers and theatre-makers within the professional spaces of their practice, such as offices at the theatre venue and rehearsal and development spaces. This facet was designed to explore the sense-making processes enacted by both artist/theatre company and organisation and to capture how they interacted, both directly and indirectly, through abstract conceptualisation of the other. This included direct communications, such as meetings, and email communications and planning documents shared with the researcher. The professional activity mapped in this facet also included instances of early audiencing of theatre shows, through attendance at both public and private work-in-progress sharing performances and rehearsals.

Subsequently this facet makes use of a range of different research methods across interactions that took place in professional administrative and artistic contexts of HOME (e.g. the office/marketing meetings, rehearsals, R&D and sharings in the rehearsal space) as well as similar spaces at Battersea Arts Centre (ONE rehearsals) and National Theatre

of Scotland's office and rehearsal space (Red Dust Road). Inevitably these interactions were dependent on a degree of access of the researcher to these processes, which varied across the different productions, and the nature of the activities were dependent on the subsequent unfolding of marketing and communications activity over a period of several months. The analysis underpinning this facet navigated across a series of different research methods, including direct observations, field notes, video and written journal entries, interviews, informal conversations, photos of notes of theatre-makers and arts professionals, audio recordings of conversations, rehearsals and sharings, sketches, content analysis of marketing materials and depth interviews. After generating this data during the fieldwork across these different modes, I began to revisit transcripts and audio recordings in order to produce a layer of my own interpretations and experiences. This iterative process involving the revisiting of data was based on the hermeneutical tradition of interpretative analysis that allowed me to 'spiral ever-deeper into' subject matter (Leigh and Brown, 2021, p.61). This activity took several forms, including coding of transcripts, thematic analysis, sketching and writing as a method of inquiry (Richardson and St. Pierre, 2017).

The particular aspects of campaign activity in this facet were chosen specifically to allow the research questions pertaining to how marketing and communications activity is carried out to be addressed, as well as how decisions are made about the inclusion of particular content across professional collaborations, and how theatre-makers and arts professionals alike enact certain value narratives in line with organisational and institutional narratives. While this facet does not aim to provide an evaluation of marketing activity *per se*, it is important to acknowledge that these campaigns sit within a broader communications context, both in terms of the marketing and communications practices of HOME and the practices of each of the theatre companies themselves. This facet highlights some, though not all, of the prominent aspects of each of the campaigns that were discussed and carried out during the fieldwork with the HOME and theatre company teams. This analysis should therefore not be treated as representative of the company's activity, but rather as necessarily incomplete. Campaign activity for each individual show is couched in a context of the range of relationships between HOME and the theatre companies: from associate company status (ONE by Bert and Nasi) to formal co-productions with an independent theatre company (SWIM by Liz Richardson and company) and with a larger theatre company (National Theatre of Scotland's Red Dust Road). In keeping with the project's methodology, the analysis foregrounds the dynamics of these relationships, pulling on

interactions between theatre company and venue staff (and researcher, implicated through the activity of research itself).

Facet 3: The theatre event

The line of investigation for the final facet focuses on the theatre event itself, as the meeting point of the audience and artist for the show within the context of the intermediary space of the venue. Regardless of the intended audience engagement model of the show, the theatre event here was defined as a crafted time and space for this interaction, with a beginning and an end. This facet explores how roles of artist and audience were regulated to some degree by the theatre company, venue team and constraints and affordances of the space itself, and how audiences navigated their roles through their own autonomous audiencing practices. In keeping with the theoretical framing of this research, the activity of this facet included interactions before and after the event, as audience participants reflected on the particular interactions that mattered to them through their own embodied, languaging processes in a way that they felt most suited them. Participants were expected to attend shows as part of the research project, but how they related their experiences to me was to a large extent led by the participants themselves. As a result, interactions took place across varying time scales within the confines of the research activity.

Facet 3 relied on ethnographic techniques such as observations, informal chats before events (audio notes recorded), observation of general vibe or 'feeling' of the event, as well as field notes from my audiencing. I asked participants to tune into their embodied experiences and repeated similar questions[8] over several interactions, in line with Dervin's (2003) 'sense-making methodology' which aims to map experiences which are constantly in flux. During the focus group at the beginning of the research, participants were given a menu of potential methods they might like to consider, ranging from written feedback over WhatsApp and email, audio or video capture, face-to-face interaction (post-show chat) as well as more creative methods such as painting, embroidery, journaling, drawing or creative writing. Data generated for this facet included audio-recorded depth interviews, meetings, focus groups, exchanges on WhatsApp, email and text; as well as images, audio and video files sent online; pictures of additional reflective and creative responses

[8] Examples of questions used to prompt audience participants' reflections pre- and post-show can be found in Appendix F.

by audience participants (e.g. embroidery, drawing); field notes on interviews; audio-recorded field notes of accompanied performances before/during/after performances and audio recordings of post-show discussions.

While a significant portion of audience participants chose to take part in a post-show discussion with other audience participants, others (also) responded in other forms. In total, 25 full reviews were written by audience participants of the three shows, with a further 13 shorter reviews written over text or WhatsApp message. Several of the participants also elected to respond to questions in the latter format, resulting in online interviews that would often last over a period of days. In addition, six audio notes were sent with reviews, and three video diaries. Ten diary entries or notes were shared, often relaying conversations that participants had had with friends and family or experiences they had had at other cultural events or on holiday. One participant invited me to see a theatre show with them which they had booked tickets for 'in response' to the first show they had seen as part of the project. In addition to this activity, a total of seven responses to the shows could be classed as 'creative' or 'artistic', including a piece of embroidery, the writing and performance of a rap poem, a painting and drawings.

Data generated

Figure 3.2: Quantity and type of data generated by research method[9]

Method	**Quantity and type of data generated**
Online survey	95 responses were received for the audience participant recruitment survey. The online survey was open for responses 14 March–4 April 2019 and was publicised through HOME's website, social media channels, email communications to their mailing list and partner list[10].
Discussion groups	3 discussion groups (duration of two hours) took place on the 25th and 27th (x2) April 2019 at Gorilla,

[9] See Appendix D for a table of the total quantities of data generated broken down by data type.
[10] See Appendix C for a copy of the survey and for details of the communications of the project participant call-out.

	Manchester. They were attended by 25 participants[11].
Deep hanging out	Attendance at 19 meetings and/or rehearsals with theatre companies where observations were carried out and recorded in field notes, including three run-throughs or 'sharings' of shows prior to their performance: (SWIM on 14th–15th February, 26th June and ONE on 30th April 2019). Attendance at 16 marketing and campaign meetings with HOME members of staff from the marketing and theatre producing teams from 21st January–26th June 2019.
Accompanied visits	20 researcher-accompanied visits to 17 performances of three shows and deep hanging out with audience participants, including pre- and post-show field notes and observations.
Post-show discussions	16 post-show discussion groups took place after accompanied visits to the three theatre shows at HOME, with between one and five audience participants attending at any one time. Post-show discussions took place at HOME's café/bar and lasted between 19-94 minutes (average 52 minutes).
Audience participant-led activity	In addition to the 25 participants that attended at least one, and often more, of the post-show discussions (23 after ONE, 24 after SWIM and 22 after Red Dust Road), 18 participants sent reviews, responses and reflections to, or answered questions about, shows over email. 20 participants did this through text or WhatsApp instant messaging. Three sent their responses to the show as an audio file, and two participants as video files (pre- and post-show). Other participants created drawings (two participants), embroidery (one participant) and creative writing or poetry, such as a rap (one participant), in response to the shows[12].

[11] See Appendix A for the discussion group presentation content used for these groups.

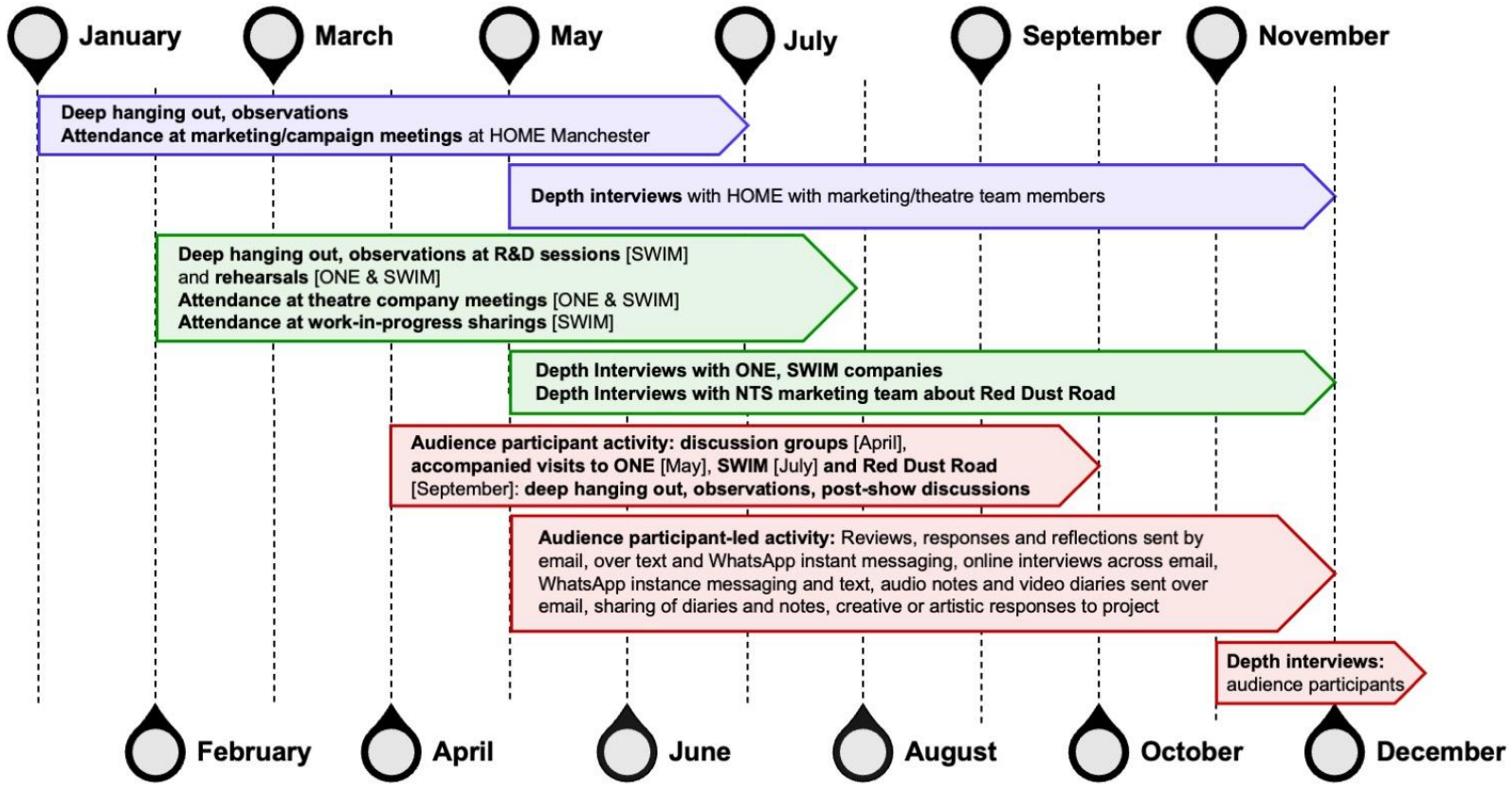
[12] See Appendix F for prompt questions distributed to the audience participants for this activity. See Appendix E for examples of audience participants' journeys through the research project depending on what methods they chose to use.

Depth interviews	21 depth interviews were carried out with members of the HOME marketing team (four), the HOME theatre producing team (two), members of the theatre companies (nine) and audience participants (six). These ranged from 34-75 minutes in length (average 55 minutes) and took place both at HOME and offsite.
Research diaries	The research fieldwork was documented by the researcher in a research video diary (50 entries) and a written journal (38 entries) from February–December 2019.

Research timeline

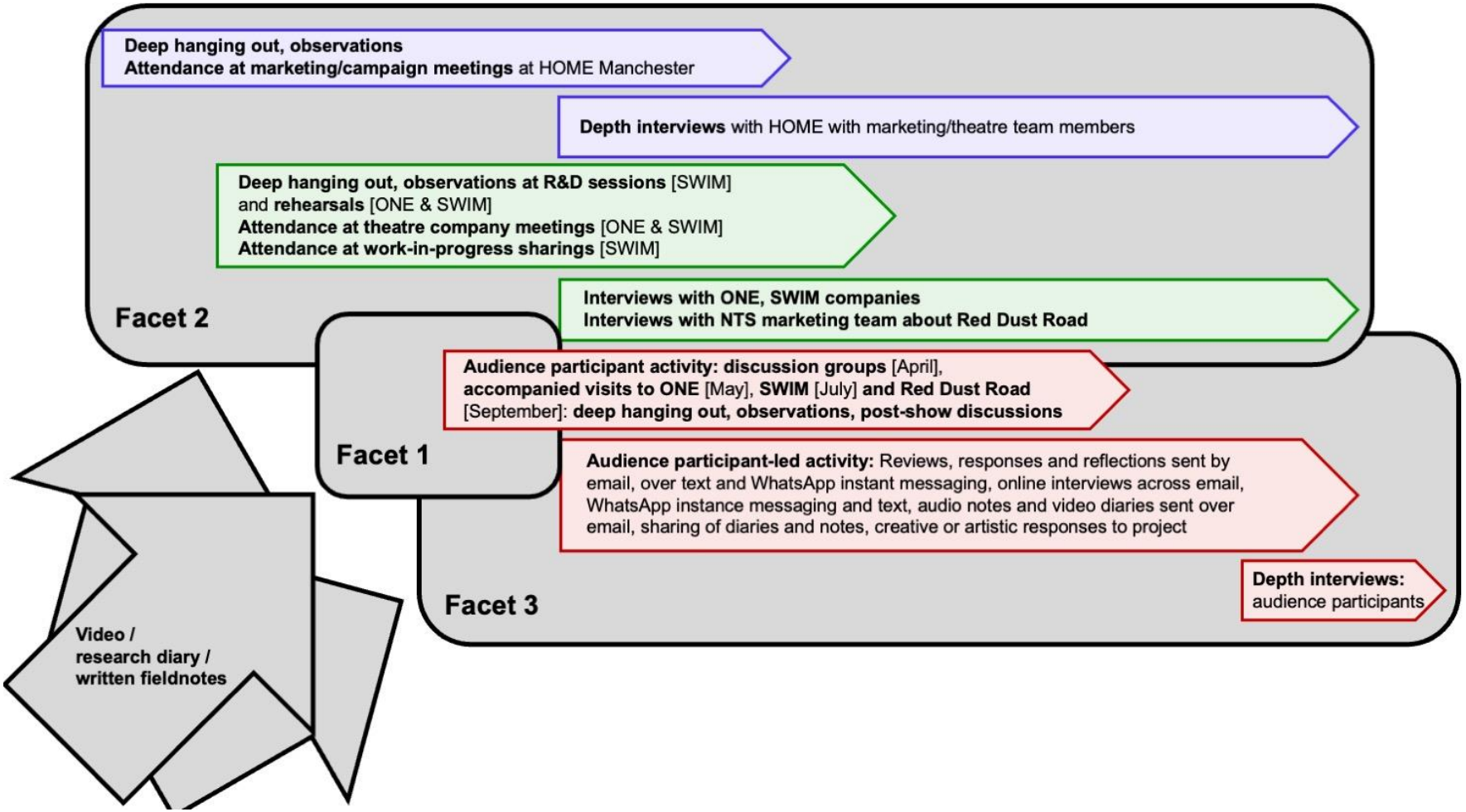
The diagram below [Figure 3.3] summarises the fieldwork that took place from January–December 2019 for the purposes of this project. The activity is colour-coded by the audience participant group with which the activity took place; the top two arrows in blue are activity with HOME marketing and theatre teams, the next two arrows in green show the activity with the three theatre companies, and the final three arrows delineate activity that took place with the audience participants.

Figure 3.3: Research timeline (2019)



The diagram below [Figure 3.4] details the same fieldwork described in Figure 3.3 but provides an idea of how the facets overlay this activity. It should be noted that it was only possible to produce an approximation of this; due to the nature of the methodology, there was a fair amount of overlap between facets, to allow for analysis across, within and between facets. The arrows in the diagram illustrate how the reflective journaling methods used throughout the fieldwork also fed into each of the facets.

Figure 3.4: Research timeline (2019) with facets overlaid



Capturing my role as researcher

The research design and methods used within this study enabled me to explore my experiences as a sense-making agent interacting with research participants. The final chapter of this thesis reflects on my own participation in the research activity by capturing my own emergent experience of the project as a sense-maker. By analysing processes of description, classification and insight-generation rather than burying them, my aim was to understand more fully my role as sense-maker. I charted the research process, which began on the first day of my fieldwork, through the more reflective, autoethnographic methods of journaling, in order to capture how my understanding and conceptualisation of the facets shifted at different points throughout the research. In addition to the activity outlined in the previous section, and in Figure 3.3, I also used a number of reflective techniques such as video journaling, audio notes, written journaling and field notes throughout the fieldwork. This activity was done as and when I felt I needed to capture 'flashes of insight' or to process a more embodied or emotional response to the research activity and my own emergent experience of the project as it developed. I found these tools particularly helpful in capturing a snapshot of the fieldwork, allowing me to reflect back and reconnect to my positionality (Leigh and Brown, 2021, p.80).

This was particularly important because my role as researcher necessarily ebbed and flowed with the research activity in accordance with the needs of each facet, dependent on the research participants with whom I was interacting, and as a result of the constraints of the interactions themselves. In this sense, like any ethnographic research, it always incorporated some element of participation, even if it was not directly carrying out the activity constituting the research object itself (as is the case with action research) (Lassiter, 2005, p.84). I was at once a host (creating the context for interactions), participant (as in ethnographic traditions), and sense-making human being, paying attention to my own emergent phenomenological experience within the interpretivist paradigm. In this research, I created interactions in the form of research interviews, or observations that were specifically constructed for the needs of the research, as well as observations of interactions that were already occurring which I spectated or observed such as performances, meetings and rehearsals. Then there are of course the different roles of the researcher within the research itself, such as when I recorded my thoughts on a particular interaction, project managed research activity or listened back to audio recordings for analysis. These interactions were enacted in a dynamic way, feeding into future

interactions based on interactions in the past. Of course, as Leigh and Brown argue, it is important to acknowledge and foreground your own reactions as a researcher as 'you can only truly and authentically know your own experience, not that of others' (2021, p.97). Like all the facets of this research, my interactions were therefore impossible to capture completely, as they were wedded into my own sense-making as an individual and active agent.

As we have seen, participants were constituted both as co-researchers in professional (arts workers, artists) and personal practice (audience members). A connective, fluid ontology was enabled by this fixed epistemological framework. Each participant brought with them their own frames of relevance, informed by a range of professional and personal contexts. The research design allowed me to situate discussions of meaning and value where these differing skill sets, experiences and epistemologies interacted. Furthermore, we will see in the analysis how the roles that participants were initially designated emerged as fluid categories. This was certainly the case with the audience participants and venue marketing teams. However, the fluidity of the theatre companies was more apparent much earlier, as they shared and fulfilled a multitude of cultural intermediary roles within their own producing and performing teams or even had – as was the case with National Theatre of Scotland – their own marketing teams.

Ethical challenges of an engaged epistemology

In her article 'Loving and knowing', Hanne de Jaegher develops on Kym Maclaren's idea of 'letting be' to form the basis of an engaged epistemology. Instead of being construed as a disengagement, letting be in this context refers to the 'relating between parties interested in knowing each other', acknowledging that there is always motivation and interest (and thus power imbalance) driving an engagement, and that ultimately, engagement relies on a balance between underdetermination and overdetermination of the other in social interaction (De Jaegher, 2019). She exemplifies this idea by evoking the type of engagement in a loving relationship, where one encounters, but respects the autonomy of, the other. It is thus an epistemology that is a knowing-in-connection (De Jaegher, 2019).

Of course, like all forms of knowing, we can always know things and people quite wrongly – not so much in the sense that what we know does not relate to truth, but in our tendency to know things in an overdeterministic manner, 'where a big part of the knowing is

determined by the knower, and a smaller part by the known' (De Jaegher, 2019, p.847). Indeed, objective knowing can be a very engaged form of knowing, yet it often overdetermines. It is in a sense abstracted: '[t]he more objective knowing becomes, the more it cuts relationships with its 'object' of knowing' (De Jaegher, 2019, p.857).

Crucially, the idea of 'letting be' as a mode of engagement that De Jaegher develops in her thoughts on an engaged epistemology situates the practice of research – the endeavour to know things – firmly in an intersubjective context. It enables us as researchers to consider that while we can and should try to let others be in research, respecting their autonomy, we can only do this so much. We have seen how the idea of participatory sense-making emphasises our intersubjective dependence on others – that we are always being situated and determined by others, and we do the same to others (De Jaegher, 2019). I argue here that an engaged epistemology shifts this intersubjectivity from a methodological and epistemological necessity, to an ethical one.

On the whole, it could be argued that rigour tends not to be as readily associated with naturalistic, qualitative research as it is with quantitative research that relies on, for example, the standardisation of procedures of data collection and observation of a large number of cases (e.g. Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Cardano argues that this is because often, quantitative research approaches aim to reduce uncertainty by relying on a theory of probability, whereas qualitative approaches often propose an alternative: a 'theory of argumentation' (2020). As an alternative criterion for rigour, theories of argumentation place an emphasis instead on the construction of the argument and are therefore well suited to the dialogism of multi-disciplinary, multi-epistemological research.

As the research involved prolonged and frequent participant involvement, and relied on me building relationships with participants, it was vital that regular catch ups and updates on consent took place throughout the process. I conducted a comprehensive practice of obtaining informed consent with information on the project and participants' right to withdraw as well as explaining how data storage/use would be carried out[13]. All survey data was managed according to university protocols on data privacy. Research participants received a full information sheet and consent form but it was not possible or necessary to obtain full informed consent from individuals for the observation of meetings

[13] See Appendix C for copy of an example consent form issued to participants.

and rehearsals within the venues and performing arts companies. In this case verbal consent was obtained, participants were informed I was observing and the reason for my presence was explained. I had spare information sheets to hand should anyone wish to follow up with me at a later date. While participants from theatre companies and HOME venue teams were not provided with an incentive, the research project costs covered the ticket price for the audience research participants to attend the 3 shows, plus refreshments at the discussion groups at the beginning of the project[14].

The most significant challenge of this methodology, the enormity of which is not lost on the researcher, was posed by one of its core characteristics: facet methodology's fluid approach to methods. The rigour of this approach lies not in the capacity to conduct complex procedures, but instead in the 'astuteness, openness, empathy and humility of the researcher' (Mason, 2011, p.82). In this sense it aims to lay open the social, processual and interpretative qualities of its own methodology (Sedgman, 2019c). The opportunities for varying types of interaction that my methods afforded do not produce data that I then analysed only through one epistemological lens. Rather, my interpretation of this methodology allowed for a certain flexibility and spontaneity in choosing which methods structured interactions between researcher and participant. A clear example of this social and dialectical nature of these interactions was that not every audience participant would find the same types of interactions useful in their sense-making journeys[15]. Therefore, I aimed to provide the opportunity for them to decide how they would best like to interact with me throughout the project.

It is worth mentioning here, however, that I do not believe giving my participants a degree of choice over their participation in this research always allowed for a more complete or authentic articulation and communication of their sense-making journeys. There are clearly limitations here too. For instance, despite my repeated efforts to encourage them to find a way of participating that felt 'right' for them, it is highly possible that at some times, participants felt they were unable to take part in a way that was truly productive for them, for a multitude of reasons (e.g. a lack of confidence, not wanting to upset me, or not really being sure what methods to suggest).

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[14] The additional research costs were covered by a Large Award grant from White Rose College of Arts & Humanities.

[15] See Appendix E for 3 examples of journeys of audience participants through the research.

Nevertheless, the option for participants to partially choose the context of our interactions enabled a conscious foregrounding of the 'how' and 'why' of these decisions, creating space for both participant and researcher reflexivity. Throughout the research process, we were able to explore their rationales for making those choices, as well as providing them with the opportunities to try out and play with their own understandings of their sense-making journeys, including why particular parts of their experience were more important to them than others. Thus it was not just the methods that provided the epistemological fluidity in themselves, but the methodological approach. In addition, this subtle but significant shift of the focus of this research is more in keeping with sense-making in the enactive paradigm, which allows us to maintain the crucial aspect of facet methodology as Mason sees it: the required 'high degree of epistemological astuteness' that is necessary to look at the world 'through the radically different lenses of different approaches' (2011, p.82).

For work with each participant group, there was a varying degree of flexibility regarding the nature of these situated interactions, and therefore what methods are used to best capture them and the sense-making processes that constitute them. As I have explored the audience participants began the project with structured interactions, but there was subsequently some flexibility to foreground a certain reflexivity in their engagement with the project. However, for the group of arts professionals and for the artist/theatre-makers, the interactions were structured according to existing activity – i.e. the marketing campaigns surrounding the performance events, the observations of rehearsals, etc. Yet, even within these structured interactions there was a degree of flexibility and adaptability as the creative processes developed and relationships were built with co-researchers. Additionally, however, this activity was subject to a wider set of constraints that were not always within my control as a researcher. In the discussion chapter, I reflect in more detail on how my positionality as an arts marketer, together with the fact I was fully responsible for the recruitment and participation of the audience participants compared with the other two groups, and the fact that practical considerations constrained my access to some of the creative processes of the theatre companies, resulted in the research being slightly skewed in part towards the audience and cultural intermediary strands.

Thus it would be remiss to argue that this research model has been entirely participatory and freeform, especially given the earlier argument that co-creation is far from an entirely

democratic or equal process. On the contrary, acknowledgment and exploration of this power imbalance, when it flashed up as insight during the research process, was built into the fabric of the analysis. It would be unethical to suggest that I could simply rely on my intuition alone to mitigate any harm caused by power imbalances: these are clearly part and parcel of the researcher/participant relationship and need careful consideration at the beginning and throughout the research process.

The design of the research allowed for an unfolding of interactions across a number of months, which may be considered, relatively speaking, as a type of longitudinal design. Drawing on the theories of Lakoff and Johnson in *Metaphors We Live By*, who concluded that shared experience leads to common understanding and an increased likelihood that we are 'all on the same page', the longitudinal design, put simply, allowed for a shared history (2003, p.150). This build-up of relationships over time between researcher and participant provided more opportunities for interaction than 'one-off' research activity might have afforded.

Indeed, within the enactive framework, all research is a type of interaction. After all, even a researcher who interacts with their data as 'objective' values still needs to code, manage or analyse them. These analysis processes draw from our own languaging: our interactions with enlanguaged environments as well as our own attempts to coordinate with the world; the dialogue between theory and data; our research participants and the wider research community in order to further our own understanding and continued learning (Reid, 1996, p.206). In this sense, it is not dissimilar to our day-to-day languaging, it is just formalised differently within an academic research setting, for example. The emphasis on research as sense-making process draws from the philosophical and epistemological positioning of researchers who do not collect data which already exists, but rather generate it by navigating and constructing their approach through their own sense-making capacities as a 'data traveller' (Leigh and Brown, 2021, p.39). Furthermore, this navigation is undoubtedly constrained by the accepted and/or existing practices of a researcher's chosen research community or discipline. Audience research, as a disparate and diverse 'field' of research, is not wedded to any one way of doing things, and consequently provides a fertile ground for audience research methodologies to develop. It is to this rich tradition that this thesis aims to contribute.

Contribution of research approach

This project builds on the abundant and diverse traditions that make up the broad church of audience research, and on the proliferation of creative methods in audience research and the mixing of methods in a qualitatively-driven way (Mason, 2006). It could be argued that this methodology is multi-method in the sense that it does incorporate a varied mix of methods. A common reason for adopting such an approach is the aim to create as full a data set as possible to piece together the puzzle of experience, or at least create as complete a picture as possible of the research object. This can involve, and often does, separating the 'experience' into its constituent parts and then selecting a method ‘best’ suited to interpreting each individual part, thus building a multi-method study based on ‘matching methods’ (Mason and Davies, 2011, p.599). The matching methods approach may seek to do this through fitting together different parts of the methodology to create a more complete picture, or by corroborating findings produced by another method, but they rarely share a coherent 'world view' (Mason, 2006; 2011). As Lister argues, it is still commonplace to combine methods as ‘if done in the correct way, *will ultimately produce a different type of analysis* from that of the other approaches' (2019, p.10, original emphasis).

However, as this chapter has argued, this research mixes methods through the construction of facets in facet methodology, within the context of an engaged and embodied epistemology. Aligning with phenomenological approaches called for in much cultural value research, with an understanding of participants as 'co-researchers’, this research contributes to an acknowledged gap in research focused on uncovering how the arts and culture matter to audiences. It achieves this by repositioning ‘audience expertise as a sense-making process rather than a definitive valuation’ (Sedgman, 2018a, p.315) in order to reposition audience expertise within a reconceptualization of arts marketing , both within the academic field and as an area of professional practice. An inherent aspect of this methodology is the acknowledgement that this is one researcher's journey through a very particular constellation of case studies that afforded a particular set of interactions within the context and with other research participants. This fits comfortably into the interpretivist framework where 'there is only interpretation, [n]othing speaks for itself' (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998, p.313) wherein there is an attempt to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to their experiences (ibid, p.2). In this sense, this project explores the interaction of these pathways to value and

meaning: ‘not ‘value’ itself, but the manoeuvres by which we navigate our ways to a particular value judgement’ (Sedgman, 2018a, p.315).

In response to the call for more rigour in cultural value and audience research, there is an increased focus on our understanding of cultural value not as a reified valuation but a sense-making process. Oliver and Walmsley centre their approach to value as an emergent notion resulting from the interplay of diverse intersubjectivities, which they describe as a ‘dialectic of practice and its productions (and the spaces of social relations)’, arguing that cultural value 'is always under negotiation and in-the-making, and contingent on the multiple experiences and expressions of intersubjectivity' (2011, p.89). This work has influenced the participatory design of this project, in order to understand more fully the sense-making journeys of participants.

We have seen in the first section of this chapter how the theoretical framework of enactive and embodied cognition constructs a reality that is not independent, but interdependent. In her explanation of the key principles of facet methodology, Mason refers to the 'lived world' as a 'connective ontology' (2011, p.78). Rather than analysing its constituent parts separately, the project aims to uncover the holistic entwining of associations and contingencies actively made by embodied humans through interactions. The research design allows for a foregrounding of the interplay between the sensory and the intangible, the lived experience of participants and the meaning they enact through the interactions staged by this research activity. Not only does this allow for an understanding of what stories are told and how they are told; it is the forging of these connections between the two, the relations *between*, that is the key focus. Fundamentally, it is this interplay that forms the basis for how facet methodology operates, bringing together mini-studies of a complex research object and combining them to ‘emphasise the interplay between tangible and intangible sensory experience’ (Mason and Davies, 2009, p.1). The approach developed for this project sits within a phenomenological paradigm, using participatory sense-making as a general concept to illustrate the ways 'in which sense-making is altered, oriented, modulated, enabled and/or constituted in situations of social interaction' (Di Paolo et al., 2020). This therefore necessitates a very particular approach to the research object through the mobilisation of different contexts to unearth the tensions inherent in sense-making. The construction of 'simultaneously epistemological and substantive' facets (Mason, 2011, p.84) in facet methodology enables a direct foregrounding of reflexivity, which constitutes the novelty of the approach.

Chapter 4: Facets

This thesis' analysis chapters are structured as three facets, each starting with an introduction to the research questions that the facet aims to address, as well as providing a brief summary of the underpinning methodology. As was explored in the previous methodology chapter, the studies constituting each facet present data generated from fieldwork activity which took place from January – December 2019. Each facet is then structured as a number of 'studies' and concludes with an overview of how the studies relate to key enactive theories. The discussion chapter which follows this one, entitled 'Layering the Argument', develops these ideas further across all three facets, and layers the argument by relating it directly to participants' conceptions of their roles and researcher positionality, exploring the limitations and constraints of the research methodology and evidencing the original theoretical and methodological contributions of the project. These are then further developed in the conclusion chapter by exploring the implications of these contributions to both sector practice and the research disciplines of arts marketing, cultural value research and audience studies.

Facet 1: Marketing as organisational practice and promotion

The studies included in this first facet explore the initial reception of campaign content produced by the theatre companies and the HOME venue through a series of discussion groups held with audience participants at the beginning of the research fieldwork. We saw in the previous chapters how the enactive framework conceptualises language not as discrete units of meaning through which information is coded and received, but as a live stream of activity. By exploring the content that was produced by the theatre companies to communicate to potential audiences about their shows, this facet explores some of the dynamics and processes of making sense of this content, as enacted by audience participants. This facet uses the content, or 'blurb', or 'copy and image' as an example of common sector communications practice as the starting point for unpicking the processes of sense-, meaning- and value-making that are enacted in the marketing and communications processes of this project's particular case studies. This starting point provides us with *a* beginning - *a* way in - to broaden our understanding of and attunement to processes of languaging within institutional, organisational and professional artistic discourses. This facet orientates itself towards the products of these value enactments, and the communicative potential of choice words, images and other media to express a particular message. It constructs as its context some of the resulting imagery and text of the communications activity produced by theatre company and organisation before (and sometimes during) the developing of a theatre production.

In that sense, I used the initial discussion groups with audience participants as an initial interaction with participants about the research project, the shows they were going to see as part of the project, and HOME as an arts venue. By way of introduction to the three shows produced by the theatre companies in this research, the data generated for this facet consists of audience participants' responses to communications and campaign materials of all three shows. The studies mostly draw on transcripts and recordings of these group discussions, as well as some of the information that they gave about their relationship with HOME and theatre more broadly in the survey they filled out to register their interest in participating in the project. In many ways the methodology underpinning this facet is reminiscent of the practice of conducting focus groups in market research, in which the analysis of transcripts is used to determine responses to specific questions, by generalizing from individual responses seen to represent a particular market or audience segment. However in the enactive methodological framework, with its emphasis on sense-

making as process rather than product, this initial facet serves only to provide us with concrete examples of participatory sense-making in practice, in relation to the reception of promotional communications material, within these discussion groups.

While it is commonplace for focus group methodology to sample groups according to one particular characteristic or experience that they have in common (Morris Hargreaves McIntyre 2008), it is not within the scope of this project to produce an analysis of audience participant response by discussion group. This is because while a procedure of sampling participants across a range of demographic and behavioural criteria was followed, as explored in the methodology chapter, participants were not recruited as representative of a specific audience group (e.g. theatre non-attenders, disabled audiences). Nevertheless, how the discussion groups were structured and hosted and the mix of lived experiences of the individuals that took part will have constrained and afforded certain discussions and themes that emerged. Similarly, how the call for participation in the project was designed and the terms on which participants experienced being recruited will have undoubtedly influenced their interactions within the research and with myself, as the researcher. For instance, in the discussion groups, participants will have offered up what they deemed to be of interest or important to the discussions of their cultural experiences, as well as meaningful to their own narratives and sense-making journeys more broadly.

Thus it is worth saying at this stage that while conversations in the discussion groups did often consider whether or not participants felt that the content had had the desired effect or impact on them, this facet is not explicitly interested in providing an evaluation of the efficacy of the campaign content. It instead aims to shed light on the responses of audience participants to specific marketing collateral or assets, generated through the staged introduction to the content in the discussion groups. After giving an initial sense of how the groups understood campaign content, the facet goes on to explore in more detail how participants' individual sense-making processes converged and, crucially, diverged both within and across different discussion groups. The studies highlight examples of the breadth of connections made by different individuals and the assumptions needed to make sense of campaign content, and how participants interacted with the imaginary other (theatre company and HOME) through the specific utterances of languaging processes chosen to be reified in campaign content creation. Therefore, while this facet is concerned with the sense-making processes of the individuals taking part in the project, it is worth considering in more detail some features of this interactional context of the discussion

group format. The next section will briefly provide an overview of the mix of participants in each group in relation to this particular category of experience, and key demographics.

Audience participant engagement with theatre and HOME

The previous chapter provided a full breakdown of discussion group participants across various demographics, including any previous engagement with HOME specifically, or theatre more generally. This next section will briefly explore the mix of audience participants within each discussion group, both in terms of their demographics, and their levels of past engagement with theatre and HOME specifically. A photograph of HOME was displayed for the participants to see, and they were asked to share their past experiences and engagement with HOME, and how it compared with their experiences of theatre more generally. For those participants who had not attended HOME, they were asked to give their first impressions from the image of the venue.

The first discussion group (DG1) was the most diverse group by age and included two participants who identified as disabled and/or neurodiverse. Over half of this group had been to see theatre at HOME before and were either frequent or infrequent attenders to theatre more generally. Many of the discussions about HOME in this group were led by the participants with some experience of HOME's arts programme, broadly speaking. While some participants attended HOME specifically to see foreign films, with some enthusing about the good value 'pizza and film ticket deal', others mentioned particular screenings and events that they had attended in the past. For example, one participant made an annual occasion of attending Viva!, a festival of films in the Spanish language, with a group of friends. Other participants remarked on the general vibe or atmosphere of HOME and how it felt like there were lots of different things going on, and how for them that perception was a key part of their experiences of HOME as an arts centre. Others in this group remarked on how they would just drop in and see what was on if they found themselves with time to spare. One participant who had not attended HOME before, but had walked past, commented that it 'looked accessible', and that even though they had not been, they had looked at their programme and felt that it offered a 'variety' of different things. Others compared HOME's theatre offer to the Royal Exchange Theatre, another theatre in Manchester, which one participant suggested put on more traditional 'community' plays, whereas HOME was more 'contemporary'.

The second group (DG2) was the most diverse group by ethnicity and had all previously been to HOME (although not all to see theatre), with most participants saying they either rarely or infrequently went to theatre. As this second discussion group had less frequent theatre attenders on the whole, the discussion focused more on how they felt that HOME was a 'melting pot' of different people, a central meeting point in Manchester to meet friends. One participant offered their comparison of HOME to its predecessor – the Cornerhouse, with its arthouse film and workshop programme which was felt overall to have developed favourably into a cross-art programme which was described in turn by participants as 'alternative', 'queer', 'edgy', 'indie', 'thought-provoking' and 'buzzy'. One participant told of how, on a trip to Manchester to learn more about the city with the idea of moving there one day, they were urged by a friend to visit HOME while they were there. It turned out they picked the weekend when HOME was celebrating its birthday and coming out of the play they were faced with a festival of performance outside the venue. They remarked how that had made them think about Manchester more as the sort of place they might like to live.

The final discussion group (DG3) was the most homogenous in terms of demographics, and although all but one participant had previously been to HOME to see theatre, there was a couple of participants who said they were infrequent attenders or attended theatre rarely. Discussions and perceptions of HOME in the final group with its mix of those who frequently attend theatre at HOME, and those who never attend theatre and/or HOME, were mixed. There was some understanding of HOME's genesis from the Library Theatre, and consequently the different direction that the programme has taken – towards shows that are less familiar, 'unusual', or 'unconventional'. The participant who had not been to HOME at all perceived them to programme a 'wide range of non-commercial shows'. There was a sense for some participants that they attended HOME for experiences that were a bit 'weird' or shows that they might 'randomly go to' with a sense of the unexpected and 'seeing where they end up' as key to their experiences at HOME.

Overall the diversity of the three discussion groups was represented in varying degrees: the first group was more mixed in terms of age and abled/disabled participants, but less so in their relationship to HOME and frequency of theatre attendance. The second group was more mixed in terms of ethnicity and their frequency of theatre attendance, but less so in terms of their relationship to HOME. The third group was less mixed in their demographics as a whole and their relationship to HOME but included a couple of participants who

considered themselves rare or infrequent theatre attenders. When asked, participants gave specific examples of visits in the past, or offered more general observations of how they might characterise their perceptions of HOME's programme. While all participants were encouraged to offer their thoughts regardless of their experience of theatre-going or HOME, it was to be expected that these discussions were mostly led by those who had concrete examples to draw on from their own experiences, both within a local Manchester context as well as more generally across different cultural art forms.

Study 1. Reception of show campaigns

This first study provides an overview of participant responses to different visual and audio content for the three performances they were to see as part of the research project[16]. Drawing on some common themes that emerged from the participants' interactions with the marketing content from the show campaigns as shared within the discussion groups, this study serves a 'topline' analysis of participants' first impressions of the show, through interaction with the show's primary copy and image, and ultimately how they began to shape their expectations of the anticipated theatre experience, including any assumptions that they made about the person or people 'behind' the content.

[16] See Appendix A for a more detailed overview of this content within the overall format of the discussion groups.

ONE by Bertrand Lesca and Nasi Voutsas: image

After discussions of theatre, HOME and the research project activity, the second half of the discussion group started with participants being shown the image, title, company details and dates [Figure 4.1] of the first performance they were to see at HOME: ONE. Some participants were intrigued and wanted to know more about the show, making inferences to the type of show they might expect. Others remarked on the comical disembodiment of the character/s in the image. A couple of participants commented on the simplistic and 'stripped back' nature of the image and design, while others found the expression of the character to be quite intense, or strange.

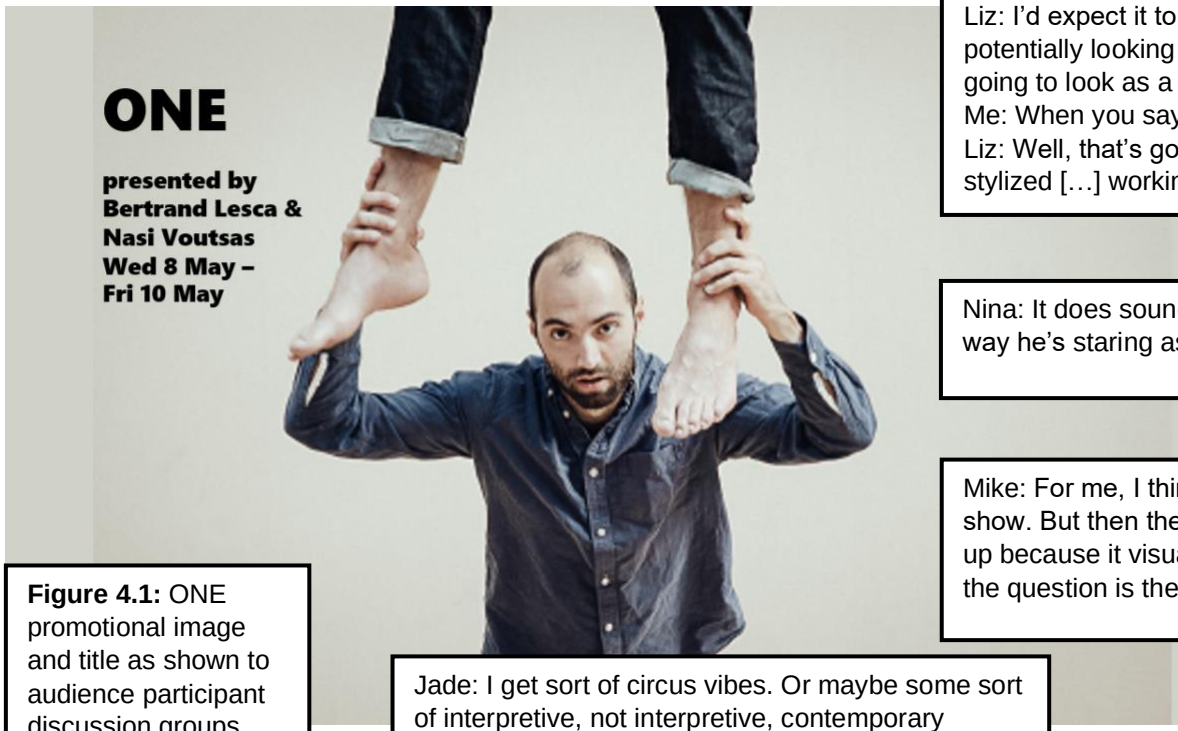


Figure 4.1: ONE promotional image and title as shown to audience participant discussion groups. April 2019.

Liz: I'd expect it to be some sort of physical theatre, potentially looking at that image. I would think how is this going to look as a show?
Me: When you say physical theatre, what do you mean?
Liz: Well, that's going to use movement in places or a stylized […] working more symbolically (DG3).

Nina: It does sound a bit in-yer-face. The way he's staring as well (DG1).

Mike: For me, I think it's gonna [be] like a one person show. But then the next voice, it's not going to be a stand-up because it visually doesn't look like a stand-up. So then the question is then, well what is it? (DG3)

Jade: I get sort of circus vibes. Or maybe some sort of interpretive, not interpretive, contemporary dance. Or economists. Radical economists (DG2).

Grace: Looks a bit intense… Not necessarily in a good way (DG1).

ONE: copy and image

Participants were then shown some of the artwork taken from the A5 flyer for the company Bert & Nasi's trilogy of shows [Figure 4.2] of which ONE was part. The copy for the show below was taken as a screenshot from HOME's website. While a few participants found the campaign to be intriguing, and wanted to learn more, on the whole they were disappointed with the lack of clarity on what the show might be – in particular within the copy itself. There was evidence of participants picking up on particular aspects of the copy in an attempt to build a picture of the type of show that ONE might be. However, there was a fair amount of confusion among participants who struggled to connect with the copy, finding the language jarring and dry. In addition, many participants felt that the inclusion of lengthy reviews for their previous two shows in the trilogy was irrelevant, and actually annoyed some participants, as indicated in the responses below.

Figure 4.2: ONE leaflet artwork and screenshot of HOME website page. April 2019.

Bertrand Lesca & Nasi Voutsas presents

One

Part of: Our Feb – Oct 2019 Theatre Season

Wed 8 May 2019 – Fri 10 May 2019

Nasi is on a ladder. He's not coming down any time soon.

Taking as its point of departure the polarisation of politics today, *One* begins amid the ruins of unresolved conflict and looks at the walls we build to protect the difference between what we say and who we really are.

Bert & Nasi return to HOME following *Eurohouse* and *Palmyra* (Orbit Festival 2017).

Praise for *Eurohouse*:

★★★★ "This wonderfully playful, intimate and ultimately moving show… Constantly pits idealism against self-interest and pragmatism." – Lyn Gardner, The Guardian

"A nicely subversive idea played with charm." – The Stage

★★★★ "Stylish… An exhilarating, intelligent fusion of theatre and lecture." – Broadway Baby

"[Bertrand] Lesca and [Nasi] Voutsas are the perfect double-act… A powerful, important and subtle piece of theatre which might well make you rethink the EU – and, even if it doesn't, it will definitely make you laugh." – Exeunt

Jade: It sounds like a Radio 4 afternoon play that you're sitting in.

Me: Would that put you off?

Jade: Yeah coz I wouldn't be able to turn it off [laughs] (DG2).

Nevan: The last quote does say double act. So that's useful. But the rest of it? The other thing is as well that is probably one of the worst sentences I've ever seen written. It goes over three lines, so by the time you get to the end of it, you don't actually have a clue what the sentence is saying… So it's quite poor script (DG3).

ONE: video

Participants were then shown a video made by the company and shown on one of the performer's (Nasi) Twitter feed [see Figure 4.3]. The video showing the two performers singing solidified some participants' first impressions of the show as 'pretentious', while one participant in the last group was baffled by the fact that they apparently 'couldn't sing'. Another mentioned that the lack of context made it difficult to make connections and once again felt it jarred with the image. However a couple of people were reassured by the engaging nature of the performances in the video, while others expressed shock that the video made it sound funny – something that seemed to not be coherent with what the image and copy suggested to them. The video was met in every group by laughter, people tended to find it baffling and off-putting, or engaging and intriguing. [See Appendix A for more screenshots from this video.]

Figure 4.3: Screenshot from video on YouTube channel of HOMEmcr. 2019. *Bert and Nasi – ONE.* [Online]

Selah: [The show will be] quite strange probably… Like one of those where you're like – I'm not really sure like I knew what I was watching. [Laughter] (DG1).

Liz: Pretentious twaddle. What I'm expecting is that there will be one or two things that I think 'oh that's quite clever' but on the whole I'm expecting to be mildly annoyed (DG3).

Sarah: I think I would be interested in going to see it but seeing that clip put me off. Like what are they doing? [laughs] What's the point of it? I guess I think I'm quite traditional in how I look at what I choose. So without the - the writing didn't really engage me like 'Nasi is on a ladder'. Like I mean, it just seems a bit obscure. But they seem quite fun. But it wouldn't entice me to go.

Seb: I'm now just wondering what the title means? ONE. So it's really intriguing and throws up a lot of questions (DG2).

Pablo: I mean, that doesn't reflect the artist we see. Like at all. I just mean the video…

Me: In what sense?

Pablo: I don't know – it's like… dry, and like I feel more engaged with that person (points at video) than the description (DG2).

SWIM by Liz Richardson: image

Participants were then shown the title artwork for SWIM, company details and dates [Figure 4.4]. This was the second performance participants were booked to see as part of the research. Participants inferred various details about the performance from this image, such as the theme of wild or outdoor swimming, with some suggesting it looked like a one woman show. Some felt it looked silly, mentioning the bobble hat, while others suggested it would be more sad or serious than ONE would be.

Jade: The picture's really pretty. It's got a kind of sunrise or sunset. So you're like oooh. But then is it gonna be lots of women talking? And that's like – *urgh* (DG2).

Figure 4.4: SWIM promotional image and title as shown to audience participant discussion groups. April 2019.

Selah: I would expect a documentary type thing (DG1).

Grace: I love it already.

Me: Why?

Grace: Because there's a person walking out in the water. She's not too afraid of whatever she looks likes. And she's got a bobble hat on in the water.

Nooren: And not much else – yeah [laughs].

Grace: Tick box. Silly (DG1).

Pat: I think it's going to be something sad…

Nevan: I think it might be northern based because she's wearing a bobble hat. [Laughter]

Pat: I think the word itself 'SWIM' – it's got lots of different meanings. You know, sink or swim, drown you know and the water…

Susan: Could be an autobiographical thing (DG2).

Nevan: It's much more engaging than the last one [ONE].

Me: Why do you think that is?

Nevan: It's more serious, it's more intriguing. It's quite minimalistic, you don't have people taking up lots of space not telling us anything. This makes me intrigued. I want to know what it's about now (DG2).

SWIM: copy and image

Participants were then shown the copy for the show, taken from the show's webpage, alongside an alternative promotional image for the show [Figure 4.5] which HOME had used on the website. (The previous image [Figure 4.4] was used for the show's leaflets and posters). Overall participants felt the copy gave them more of an understanding about what to expect, in particular the last sentence of copy.

Figure 4.5: Screenshot of HOME website page for SWIM, including promotional image. April 2019.

Liz Richardson in association with HOME & Echo presents

SWIM

Part of: Our Feb – Oct 2019 Theatre Season

World Premiere
Tue 9 Jul 2019 – Sat 13 Jul 2019

There is this lake.
And in the lake, there's a woman.
She's swimming.
She finds the pain is less, to remember him in the water.

Liz took Sam & Josie swimming.
She said they'd feel amazing
It was cold.
It was really cold.

SWIM is a brand new show from theatre makers Liz Richardson (*Gutted*, Mothers Who Make), Josie Dale-Jones (*Me & My Bee* & *dressed)* and Sam Ward (*Five Encounters on Site Called Craigslist* and *[insert slogan here]*).

With live music, videography and playful, intimate storytelling, *SWIM* is about isolation, being held and just jumping in.

***SWIM* is supported by Cruse Bereavement Trust**

Cruse Bereavement Care

Anaïs: It's definitely more, like self-explanatory than the last one [ONE] that we've seen. But it's again that question – what does it *mean*? Like, is there going to be a band and a screen for the video? And how many people are there gonna be on stage, like, is it a big production? Is it like something with like, very few people on stage? (DG3).

Faith: I feel like I'm gonna cry [laughs]. Because I do a lot of crying in the theatre. And I feel like I don't know why I just get the vibe that I'm gonna cry in this (DG2).

Liz: I'm interested that it's got live music and videography. That interests me.

Nevan: Yeah yeah it made me consider going more (DG2).

Red Dust Road by National Theatre of Scotland: image

Participants were then shown the promotional image and title artwork [Figure 4.6] for the final show included in the research: Red Dust Road. Some participants noted the fact that the show was by the National Theatre of Scotland, while others recognized the name of the show from Jackie Kay's memoir by the same name. Some participants felt like it looked historical or factual, while one participant felt the image had a filmic quality to it.

Figure 4.6: Red Dust Road promotional image and title as show to audience participant discussion groups. April 2019.

Liz: I think that the fact that it's written by Jackie Kay, I guess the assumption is that she's an interesting person (DG3).

Aaron: Political maybe?

Cadi: Set in the past (DG1).

Sarah: I've heard of the book (DG2).

Seb: More factual.

Jade: Monologues (DG2).

Nevan: I'd want to go and see it because it's the National Theatre of Scotland. I've seen a number of their productions in Scotland. At the Edinburgh Festival…

Mike: Also the endorsement of the National Theatre Scotland. Well I know NT Live. But the National Theatre, in my view, is guaranteed to be good. So yeah I don't know how relevant that is? (DG3)

Anaïs: I think the picture has got a kind of movie feeling to it.

Susan: It's not contemporary is it because of the typewriter, 70s is it?

Mike: It does make me worry a bit if it's set in the 70s… I can't tell what it's going to be about (DG3).

Red Dust Road: copy and image

Participants were then shown the copy taken directly from HOME's show webpage [Figure 4.7]. Participants used various clues from the copy and image to build a sense of what to expect from the show. One participant, who was familiar with HOME and its programme, picked up on the fact it mentioned music, and that this implied it would be larger production than the other two.

Figure 4.7: Screenshot of HOME website page for Red Dust Road. April 2019.

HOME and The National Theatre of Scotland presents

Red Dust Road

Written by Jackie Kay
Wed 11 Sep 2019 – Sat 21 Sep 2019

"You are made up from a mixture of myth and gene. You are part part porridge"

Growing up in 70s' Scotland as the adopted mixed raced child of a Communist couple, young Jackie blossomed into an outspoken, talen poet. Then she decided to find her birth parents…

From Nairn to Lagos, *Red Dust Road* takes you on a journey full of he humour and deep emotions. Discover how we are shaped by the folk we hear as much as by the cells in our bodies.

Based on the soul-searching memoir by Scots Makar Jackie Kay, adapted by Tanika Gupta (winner of the 2018 James Tait Black Prize for Drama), and directed by Dawn Walton (Founder and Artistic Director of Eclipse Theatre).

Jackie Kay is a celebrated poet, writer and HOME patron who has picked up numerous awards for her novels and story collections, as well as writing extensively for television and the stage. She was awarded an MBE in 2006, and made a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature in 2002. She was named Scots Makar – the National Poet for Scotland – in March 2016.

Aaron: It's going to be a good strong journey I think. […] So it's, it should take you along with it (DG1).

Liz: I expect there to be some singing in this.

Me: Okay, why do you say that?

Liz: Because of the words 'how we are shaped by the folk songs we hear'. Because obviously it's quite epic in scale, isn't it? Because you know it's someone's life and it talks about places like Nairn and Lagos so I would expect it to be musical and a big cast. And with it being in the bigger, more conventional space in HOME isn't it? So I would expect it's going to be a reasonably big cast. Perhaps maybe using the songs to take us from place to place. I've got my teacher head on here. That's what I'd anticipate (DG3).

Sarah: I like the kind of identity issue, like if you feel like an outsider (DG2).

Red Dust Road: video interview with Jackie Kay

Participants were then shown an extract from a video interview entitled 'Meet Jackie Kay' produced by the National Theatre of Scotland[17]. A screenshot of the video thumbnail is included below [Figure 4.8]. It was featured on HOME's webpage for the show and shared with their social media networks. The video features Jackie Kay talking into the camera, as well as looking through some books and leafing through old photographs. She describes how she feels about the fact that her memoirs were being turned into a theatre production. Some participants were interested to hear from the writer whose life the show was going to be based on, and in particular noted their interest in her discussions on having her life story interpreted for the stage. Others were pleased to have a little more background to her as a person, and felt her warm and engaging manner was in stark contrast to the more factual, informational tone of the copy.

Figure 4.8: Screenshot from video on YouTube channel of HOMEMcr. 2019. *Jackie Kay on Red Dust Road.* [Online]

Daphne: She [Jackie Kay]'s warmer than the copy. She is very engaging and this [the text] is sort of flat. She's, yeah, I guess more warm when she is talking (DG2).

Seb: As much as I thought she's a sweet lady, and I loved that she's smiling constantly, I still don't really have a huge pull in to know more. But that's probably just personal (DG2).

Bee: I like what she said about theatre and the way it can deal with matters [of social justice] and that makes me think, are they going to do that? (DG2)

[17] See Appendix A for more screenshots from this video.

This study shows how the common market research tradition of ‘market testing’ to gauge the responses of different participants to three different campaigns yielded a range of responses. The staged reveal of the different media allowed for an understanding of how participants were beginning to piece together a picture of what they might expect from the shows themselves. Some participants found the ONE campaign intriguing, while others found it to be lacking in the information that they needed. Others found the SWIM campaign equally intriguing, with many enjoying the striking visuals, and felt on the whole that the copy gave them a little more context on what to expect. Broadly speaking, the Red Dust Road image and copy tended to split opinion within the groups, with those reassured and excited about the prospect of an ambitious staging of one person’s life, and others who were unenthused by the ‘un-HOME’ like tone of the copy, and the prospect of the play.

Despite the comparatively small sample size, we can see, broadly speaking, there were some commonalities to participants’ evaluations of the efficacy or impact of the content across the three discussion groups, in particular when we compare their expectations with whether they enjoyed the performance when they saw the show later on in the project. Similarly there were some broad trends relating to participants’ past experiences of theatre and HOME. For example, generally speaking those participants who had been to see theatre shows at HOME before had lower expectations of ONE. However they were just as likely as those who had never attended theatre at HOME to enjoy ONE. In addition, expectation across the participants was generally higher for SWIM than for the other two shows, and the show was enjoyed more by those frequent attenders to theatre than those participants who suggested they were less frequent attenders. Moreover those that attended contemporary theatre in the past were less likely to enjoy Red Dust Road overall, but their expectations before the show in response to the marketing materials was at a similar level to participants who attended other types of shows. Overall there were no strong trends or patterns between the formation of expectations for each of the shows based on the marketing campaign material they were shown in the discussion groups and their past experience of theatre or relationship to HOME.

It may seem obvious to point out that people interact through and with different modes of communication in different ways, informed by their own experiences, histories, interests and values, building contexts of understandings or what Mason refers to as ‘associated surroundings’ (Mason, 2006, p.18). Although this copy and image is likely to inform

campaigns run by marketing teams at venues for example, we saw how the shift to relationship and relational marketing has resulted in the ideal for many marketers of customer relationship marketing (Rentschler et al., 2002; Walmsley, 2019a). This practice often relies on strategic segmentation of and targeting to potential and current audiences, often identified by particular behavioural or demographic characteristics (Maitland, 1991; Conner, 2022). By tailoring the media, timing, and tone of the different messages to different segments of the market, marketers aim to produce integrated, often multi-modal, communications campaigns to promote to audiences the work of their venue and/or performing companies. It is impossible to target a campaign differently for every individual who might be interested in a company's professional activity or product, hence the need for segmentation (Morris and McIntyre 2010, p.1) often based on behavioural data or demographic trends in a population. It is thus a necessity inherent in all segmentation practices to make assumptions about the individuals they are targeting, even if those assumptions are driven by data and evidence. We will explore this a little further in the next facet from the perspective of those who work as cultural intermediaries and carry out these practices within organisations and institutions.

Study 2. Sense-making as process, not product

If this research was interested in the efficacy of the communications campaign content produced for the three shows, then I might have considered how the responses detailed in the first study could inform our understanding of this. Indeed, in a traditional marketing focus group format, these findings might result in the product developers (in this case the artists and venue) to make changes to the communications material that they produced. For example we could conclude that the potential audiences might benefit from being clearer about the theatrical techniques used in ONE, what the show or staging involves, or indeed what type of genre ONE is considered to be. Or it might suggest that it would be worth giving a sense of how the video content might feed into SWIM – as backdrop or documentary, and show more of the visuals from the set, including the performing company. We might also suggest that the copy for Red Dust Road is revised for HOME's audience to reflect more of a contemporary tone, or to bring out aspects of the show that might entice a whole new set of audiences. Making these changes would be seen as making good 'evidence-based' business decisions, using responses gleaned from focus groups in the market research tradition with a range of current and potential audiences as a basis for activities of an organization, and/or theatre-makers, perhaps correlating

commonalities to broader social or cultural characteristics and/or particular demographic groups (e.g. ethnicity, age, gender).

As explored in the research context chapter, this mode of research presumes that while the reception of different stimuli across different population groups may not be uniform, their processes of reception are. Not least this is because the practice of market testing treats meaning and sense as outputs or products of sense-making process, triggered by the content stimulus, which is identified, compared and contrasted across groups of people who are themselves assumed to be representative (Maitland, 1991). Departing from an exercise in analysing the content or meaning generated by different participants, this next study instead places a point of emphasis on *the ways in which* participants navigated their individual sense-making journeys within the specific context of the discussion groups, and in particular across the different modes of content.

Navigating across modes of campaign content

We saw in Study 1 that the format of the discussion groups was designed to provide a staggered reveal of different types of content that were available for the shows at the time, in an attempt to capture participants' initial sense-making processes in action. This would begin for each show with an image and basic show details (name/s of performing company and performance dates) before layering in more content (copy and video). This allowed for comparisons to be made across the different media, as much as across the three different shows. For instance, participants sometimes felt that the different elements of the campaign, such as image and copy, worked well when considered together:

> Erica: This [SWIM copy] is really good copy… that definitely makes me want to see it. And that last line '*With live music, videography and playful, intimate storytelling, SWIM is about isolation, being held and just jumping in*'. I love when it kind of gives it more context to what's actually going to be happening. Which I really like […] I think the first one [ONE] was lacking [this]. It didn't have that accessible, like, context to the work. So […] I would definitely go and see it.
>
> Jade: The words are really simple like a kids' storybook like '*here's a lake, she's swimming*.' Like it's kind of visual, and the picture's really pretty. It's got a kind of sunrise or sunset…
>
> Daphne: I think it made me feel a bit uncomfortable you know the description made me feel like I might feel uncomfortable when I'm watching it. But then the bottom bit gives you a bit of context which makes me feel like actually maybe it might be more enjoyable. […] the bit at the top made me think it's going to be an

> uncomfortable watch. And an uncomfortable experience. But then the last bit it's more working through it…
>
> Jade: Yeah that last line's really clever… It's like all gonna be like smiles at the end (DG2).

Firstly we can see here the value that all three participants place on this particular line of copy. For Erica, this context enabled them to access something that convinced them that they would like to go to the show. For Daphne, this line was more of a reassurance that despite her initial reservations, it was not going to be too uncomfortable a watch, something that she suggests did not initially appeal. The implied focus on 'working through it' is echoed in Jade' sense that it will be 'smiles at the end', presumably an important aspect of the experience for them.

However even though each layer of content might have enabled some participants to build up positive interpretations of the type of show, inevitably for other participants this same process only served to confirm their initial - and negative - impressions. For instance, Nevan's worst fears about ONE as being a pretentious show from the image and copy that he saw were only reinforced when the video was subsequently revealed:

> Nevan: [It's] definitely not something I would go to, based on the blurb that we got. And that video made it even worse. Just absolutely no way I would go (DG3).

While Nevan felt adamant that all the ONE promotional materials had put him off wanting to see the show, there were other participants who found that they changed their minds as they engaged with different media within the campaign. For example, participant Selah felt that the ONE copy gave her some much-needed additional content in which to understand ONE, something that she felt was lacking from the image alone:

> Selah: So for me now having a description [of ONE] it's very interesting now. Coz it sounds like it's current, it sounds like it's going to have an interesting way of putting together facts and also like sort of art and performance altogether. The picture wouldn't have given me any of that… I think it is very interesting to watch that (DG1).

For Selah, the reveal of the ONE copy enabled her to build a clearer, and more enticing, picture of what to expect from the show. Participant Liz had the opposite trajectory with the

ONE copy and image, admitting while she 'would read the blurb based on the picture, to hear what it's about', the copy did not appeal as it did not make it any clearer what the focus of the show was:

> Liz: Is it about polarization and politics? Or is it about what we say and who we are? That's two different things in the same sentence. So are they exploring 2 different things? So which is it? Is it just all that stuff or some of that stuff or…? (DG3)

Then finally, after watching the video and feeling like she was only getting increasingly confused, Liz came to the conclusion that the show was going to be pretentious, predicting quite confidently how she might feel while watching the show:

> Liz: Oh no… Pretentious twaddle. What I'm expecting is that there will be one or two things that I think 'oh that's quite clever' but on the whole I'm expecting to be mildly annoyed (DG3).

For Liz, the additional engagement with the text and the video footage for ONE was disappointing in its lack of clarity. The copy and the video did not give her what she was needing to have a clearer grasp on the themes of the show. Another participant Seb had a similar response, but his disappointment originated from the fact that the copy directly contradicted the expectations he had formed from the image:

> Seb: I think for me, [the copy] changes what I initially thought it was. I feel a lot more comfortable with something that's character based or, you know, the idea that it was maybe about mental health and it was about this guy's kind of, you know, pull push with some character of himself. Whereas now I'm seeing words jump out like polarization or political or conflict and I'm starting to think – oh, god, this is all going to be real. This is going to be some like real political statement that I'm going to have to get my head around. And that's not necessarily going to be a person focused thing that I maybe thought it was before (DG2).

It is clear then, that the direction of the navigations made by some participants making sense of the same campaign content differed greatly depending on whether participants felt that the image, text or audio-visual content worked together in a coherent way, albeit not always towards a positive outcome. In the first instance, it is easy to see how Selah may not have been interested enough to read the copy, upon seeing the image, unlike Liz and Seb – who suggested they would have, only to be 'put off' by the copy and video

content that they encountered. While these different journeys of engaging with different layers of ONE campaign content exemplify two different trajectories, ultimately neither of them necessarily led the participants to want to see the show.

While the first study analysing the outputs of participants' meaning-making journeys in relation to campaign content began to unveil some level of consensus on potential themes across the discussion groups, what is clear is when we look closer at the individual pathways participants took through the different modes of content, no one participant followed the same journey. That is to say, while there were instances of agreement within groups themselves, and participants responded to each other within the group, they each related to the different pieces of campaign content in different and unique ways. This complexity would have been lost if we had just stopped at analysing the content of responses as if they were consistent and generalizable outputs of the meanings made, as in the first study of this facet.

Sense-making as situated (inter)action and engagement

Making sense of communications content is not just complex because of the differing and contradictory sense-making trajectories of individuals. While clearly individual contexts and frames of reference are key to these processes, I will first describe a few instances where participants were engaging as a group of interdependent individuals, where it was clear that they were building on each other's experiences in both their articulation (by actively participating in group discussion, referencing one another, reporting on another's experiences) but also in some cases in a way that participants described as changing or affecting how they experienced the content. It was fairly common for participants to reference their differing responses to aspects of the content. For instance, Erica framed their response to the SWIM image in relation to other group members' responses suggesting that the show would be emotional or tackling 'deep' issues such as death and grief:

> Erica: I'm not really getting like the emotional vibes from particularly this image. I'm sort of seeing it more like playful, adventurous, funny vibes rather than like, but that might be because I've always wanted to do it [wild swimming]. So like, yeah, like seeing her do it I'm gonna be like oh yeah I wanna do that too. So, and I don't associate that with like, an emotional release (DG2).

Sometimes it seemed that not agreeing with what was being said about a piece of content actually actively encouraged participants to put forward their views, as is the case with Grace and the ONE video trailer– perhaps here giving Nina the impetus or encouragement to also agree:

> Nooren: Yeah I think before the video I would have been more likely to book it. After seeing the video I'd have been like… this looks like one of my drunken ramblings on Snapchat.
>
> Grace: It's funny you should say that, because the video sold me exactly on the thing I felt was missing. [Laughter]. I, for me, it's like 'oh they're being silly'.
>
> Nina: Yeah that's the same I thought so. I would always much rather see a play about something or possibly quite 'oh god the state of the world is just awful' if there's going to be jokes (DG1).

Like the example of Daphne who found herself increasingly reassured by the SWIM copy as she read it, there were times when other participants described their engagement as processual. For example, while the themes described in the ONE copy connected with and interested Faith, she felt it was written in a way that she felt difficult to access, and required effort:

> Faith: I had to read it twice to connect with it… the first time I read it I didn't take it in at all. Then I read it again and thought okay, like the themes sound really interesting. But the way it's written has like turned me right off. Even though I think I would enjoy it. But then it was [the] reviews that brought me back in like, I can read them and connect with that a lot more so the way that the copy is written. I feel like if that copy was written differently, I would be really engaged with it. […] I think the way that that's written is really dry for me (DG2).

Faith is prepared to make the effort to engage with it, feeling like there is potential for her to connect with it despite the fact she finds this difficult. This was not always the case of course. There were other times when participants disengaged with the materials presented completely and did not really want to elaborate further on what it was about the images that did not appeal. This may have been because the participants could not fully explain it, for example when Adam suggests that he would not have picked the ONE leaflet up because of the image: 'it doesn't do anything to sell it to *me*. I don't know why.' (DG 1). Unlike Faith, who felt that the failure to connect with the ONE copy was a result of poor

quality writing, Nooren similarly described her aversion to the SWIM show as resulting from a visceral and direct embodied response to the image:

> Nooren: [The SWIM image] doesn't appeal to me. It makes me feel cold. And I would be like 'nah you're alright, I don't even really want to know what it's about'. Like feeling cold, she's got a hat on, she's obviously cold.
>
> Me: You don't like the idea of being cold?
>
> Nooren: Yeah I just wouldn't have been bothered about looking into it. It could be something that I really love but I wouldn't even look into the story to see what it's about, I just wouldn't even… So if I'd read that first [SWIM copy] I would have had the opposite reaction. I would have been like 'wow this looks really good.' With it having music and videography and it's a bit fun, lots of different things going on, I would have been like 'oh yeah I'd quite like to see that'. Whereas the first bit [SWIM image] yeah just totally put me off (DG1).

Later on in the group, we hear Nooren reflect on her response to the SWIM image, suggesting that it originated in part from another participant's response to the show that she had heard in the group earlier, describing it as 'it's going to have lots of sound, splashing water' (Nina DG1):

> Nooren: I was trying to think why, why am I not interested in this [SWIM image], even though it's just one person – in one pose […] Why have I had such different reactions to them both? And so that was the only thing that made me think of – like what you said [referring to Nina] about splashing water – oh maybe it's making me think it's cold and in the ocean. Like no thanks! [laughs] (DG1).

Once again we have a clear indication how responses to the content created for the communications campaigns for the shows depended deeply on the context in which they were engaged with. It is clear, with these examples particularly that participants were connecting not with any inherent meaning, but instead with meanings enacted by others (e.g. with Nooren within the group itself) or with imagined 'better' copy. For Faith she had faith that the meaning of the show, or the 'themes' as she referred to them, were worth engaging with – but the copy was making it difficult. While Adam did not want, or perhaps did not feel able, to articulate why he was put off, Nooren was able to contextualise her embodied, visceral response to the image making her feel cold, building on another's' response in the group. However much participants suggested they were engaging with copy and image at face value, they were in fact enacting complex, individual and

interweaving flows of meaning with utterances emanating from the immediate environment in which they were engaging – or what De Jaegher and Di Paolo (2007) would refer to as 'participatory sense-making'.

We can see how from these brief examples of participants engaging with the campaign content that there is an underlying complex and shifting process of sense-making, of putting together of particular aspects of visual, written and audio-visual material to build up a more coherent picture about what to expect. However, not only is this not the same process for all, this engagement is fundamentally vulnerable to breaking down dependent on seemingly 'irrelevant' criteria – for instance, in Nooren's case the order in which she sees something and forms her first impressions, or a particular word or phrase that chimes in a particular way with another participant.

The fine line between inconsistency and intrigue

On the whole, if participants felt there was a consistency between what a series of campaign materials were trying to communicate about the show it did, in many cases, make it clearer for participants to make a judgement. However, for fear of stating the obvious, just because we have grasped what someone is trying to say, does not mean we have to like it or want to engage with it. In some cases, like with Adam and ONE, or Nooren and SWIM, the image alone was enough for them to disengage entirely. For Nevan and ONE, there was very little room for changing his mind once he had seen the image, copy and video footage. For others, like Faith with the ONE copy or Daphne with the SWIM copy, they noted moments where they could have finished engaging, but they persisted, presumably driven by some sort of residual intrigue. What is interesting is that this was not a uniform individual response from participants to all three shows: for instance Nevan did not always make his mind up so readily with all the shows, nor did Faith always want to work hard at engaging with it. Nor did engaging or disengaging with content particularly follow a pattern of behavioural demographics, as participants both new to theatre and those who were regular contemporary theatre attenders were just as likely to vary in their commitment to continuing the engagement with the content.

We have seen already how participants would suggest that the reasons that they did not like the idea of a show was as a result of bad quality communications, or the fact it was not being clear or consistent. For instance, Pablo initially described a sense of inconsistency between the ONE performers as they were represented in the video, and the way the copy

described the show, explaining that ‘the artists don’t fit with the image’ (DG2). Yet we know that Pablo was not the type of person who needs complete coherence in order to make meaning, as this next example of Pablo engaging with the SWIM image demonstrates:

> Pablo: It’s simplistic, emotional…. I see that with the hat. But the colour scheme […] that seems to, [it’s] telling me otherwise. Like kind of, I guess it’s kind of funny because she’s wearing a hat and way up into the water but just like the whole image suddenly like it’s just interesting. Yeah (DG2).

Here Pablo explains that in this instance, the fact that the hat in the image and the colour scheme are not telling him the same thing makes the whole thing more interesting, rather than putting him off.

In contradiction to some of the earlier points made about participants needing to know how to build up a coherent picture of what to expect, here we have instances where participants demonstrated an aversion to being told exactly what to expect. There were more explicit examples of this in some participants’ responses to the Red Dust Road campaign. While some participants felt it overall communicated what to expect in a more coherent and consistent way than the other two shows did, there were some who suggested that this very fact made it feel too didactic and information-heavy:

> Erica: I feel like the copy doesn’t make me feel like I’d get any more out of it [Red Dust Road] then if I just read about her… This would be, I don’t feel like it’s offering me anything more than what I could already find out about her. I don’t know why… I’m quite neutral about it.
>
> Jade: The copy feels more like the back of a book for me. And referential as well.
>
> Seb: Like she was awarded an MBE. There’s loads of stuff. Like that last paragraph about her, I guess, I don’t know, it’s much more straightforward in the way it’s being communicated to us which in some ways, it’s not allowing us to feed on anything to create images in our minds of what it might be (DG2).

This suggests that there are times when incoherence and a disconnect both *between* and *within* the processes of engaging with different aspects of visual and written content can be a good thing. As Seb describes, it allows space for the reader, or listener, to create images in their own minds as to what they might mean. Yet on the other hand, when content did not make sense to participants in a coherent way, or a way in which they could

connect, this was often given as the reason behind their lack of engagement with the content.

Study 3. Making sense through lived experience(s)

Drawing from the same discussion group conversations as the previous two studies in this facet, this next study aims to explore the breadth of interpretations and connections made by participants in this research by shedding light on the instances where participants drew directly from their own lived experience. We have seen in the previous two studies how participants incorporated the meanings and languaging flows of the campaign content and of other participants through different and unique, but interdependent, trajectories. Drawing from Mason's idea that we navigate the micro- and macro- contexts of our own lived experience in order to make sense, we might describe the immediate context of the discussion groups, in terms of the materials they were shown and the interactions with other audience participants (and me), as the micro-context. Conversely, we might refer to what this study is interested in as the corresponding macro-contexts for meaning-making: how participants drew on lived experiences that took place before and outside of the discussion groups themselves. In this sense we can see how meaning-making of audiences of arts marketing materials are very much led by what the participants deem to be important about their own cultural experiences (Murray et al. 2014) to evoke and incorporate into their languaging flows.

This study begins with a few brief examples of the associations that individuals made when they encountered the show campaign content. As with the previous two studies, it would be impossible to map all the associations that were made in this context, as methodologically speaking we can only access those that were articulated within these specific discussion group contexts. While emphasizing at once the *breadth* of interpretations from different individuals, even of what might be considered common themes, I have chosen to include those examples that also provide a *depth* of interpretation. This is to show how some participants began to associate the campaign content and subsequent potential show themes with aspects of their broader lived experience, even at this initial stage of the research.

Personal experiences of swimming and SWIM

For perhaps very obvious reasons, one of the more prominent themes in group discussions about the SWIM image and copy was the subject of 'wild' or 'outdoor swimming'. For instance Jade, who was an outdoor swimmer herself, recognized aspects of the image and connected them directly to her own experiences and thus volunteered an explanation to the group of what it entailed. For Jade this thematic link made the show immediately feel of interest to her, as the imagery evoked a beauty of the water and landscape which she described as central to her own personal experiences of outdoor swimming:

> Jade: I do do outdoor swimming […] It's just really aggressive swans and dog shit [laughs] but there's a really great camaraderie coz people just stand around in their wetsuits chatting in the sunset and in the water […] So just having the visuals: water's great, looks very pretty. So just even standing in front of a backdrop of water, I'm happy. I'd be up for that (DG2).

Another participant – Cadi – also made the connection between the SWIM image and copy and her own swimming experiences, but in a different way. She connected instead with the theme of isolation mentioned in the copy that she felt was reinforced in the image's aesthetics:

> Cadi: I got the vibe [of] the isolation theme from the previous image on her own. Her back's to you, she's sort of, contemplating, thinking. Now it matches up with the blurb. Swimming is […] it's almost a personal thing. It's where you have your headspace, you can't talk to anyone – not that I know of. So I think it's time to contemplate things and reflect. Yeah I think it matches quite well (DG1).

These examples show two participants' completely different connections to the same practice of swimming, based on what is a defining feature of their past experiences and what they most readily connect with the show imagery and text. For Faith, it was not so much her own personal experiences of swimming that she described, but rather the image evoked a particular personal connection to her mother:

> Faith: This [SWIM image] reminds me of my mum. The picture and just the way. Yeah. My mum. So I want to see it. It makes me want to see it.

> Me: Anything specific?
>
> Faith: Well the woman, she's like my mum. There's just like a big backstory.
>
> Me: Feel free to only share what you want to share.
>
> Faith: Well basically her and a load of her friends at the moment are doing a lot of like random stuff all together. And one of the things that they did last week, they went open water swimming. […] I was like, 'what are you doing going open water swimming?' It's just like the woman in a bobble hat and the swimming costume and the kind of two different worlds. Yeah it reminds me of my mum just like doing like crazy stuff. Just going and doing things (DG2).

Like Faith and Jade, participant Sue's response was also a social one, as she made inferences about the type of people who might go outdoor swimming, and then linked the content and potential meanings of the show directly to this idea:

> Sue: I like it because it's about people that are obviously a bit out there. You know having the nerve to go swimming in a bobble hat. You've got to have made a choice haven't you – about what you are wearing and everything that you're not. And you've chosen to be somebody that is probably inconvenient and I think so much of life is inconvenient that it might be an interesting way to explore how we deal with it and how we can be exhilarated by that inconvenience as we get accustomed to it (DG1).

As to be expected, by no means were these associations with swimming always positive among participants. We saw earlier how Nooren was put off by the SWIM image because it made her feel cold, and the idea of swimming in the cold sea did not appeal to her at all and so the SWIM image did not make her want to know more about the show. Similar to Nooren's more embodied response to the image, Grace developed her idea of what she imagined people got from swimming and then used this to build a narrative on her own projected experience of the show and in particular the slow rhythm and feel of the show as a future audience member:

> Grace: Trying to put in more in terms of feelings – I know I'd be, or I'd expect I'd be relaxed by it and the thing is I know at the same time it's also going to be talking about some heavy stuff as well. Coz if it's… if you title a play SWIM and it's about… swimming. Swimming's a release? Could be talking about things that are a release? If that's something that is at the centre of somebody's life – a play about swimming. It's going to be a story taken at slow pace. And I feel like

> physically I could feel myself leaning back in this, I don't expect I'd twitch that much watching it, which I often do in theatre (DG1).

While all these participants engaged with the theme of outdoor or wild swimming, they did so in very distinct ways, according to their own experiences of outdoor swimming, swimming and hearing stories about swimming, or through other people's imagined experiences. However one participant - Pat - constructed an entirely different narrative from the SWIM copy and image, that she then went on to connect to her professional background in social work:

> Pat: I'm wondering now if Sam and Josie [mentioned in the SWIM copy] are children? Because 'took them swimming'. You don't 'take' other adults swimming do you? So I'm wondering whether they're children and now I'm a bit worried why she's taking them in the water.
>
> Nevan: To drown them?
>
> Pat: Yeah she says 'she said they'd feel amazing. It was cold. It was really cold'. That makes you think they didn't really like it. I don't know (DG3).

Pat did not connect with the theme of wild swimming, even when broached by other members of the group, but instead interpreted the particular tone of the words in the copy itself, suggesting the possibility that SWIM might actually be a story of mystery, of intrigue, or even a dark drama involving murder. This breadth of interpretations of the same image and text illustrates the wealth of narratives and pathways people can follow through their interaction with them, even with an arguably straight-forward and explicitly detailed theme such as swimming. All of these interpretations seem to be informed by past lived experiences of participants, incorporating available details or 'utterances' within the content as clues or starting points for their imaginative, rich and creative sense-making processes.

Staging personal stories: Red Dust Road

As a play adaptation of the poet and writer Jackie Kay's memoir by the same name, levels of familiarity with Red Dust Road varied across the group. A small number of participants had read or were familiar with the original book, and identified particular themes such as 'communism' (Daphne DG2) or 'adoption' (Pat DG3). Given that I showed an extract from a video interview with Jackie Kay in the discussion groups, it is perhaps not surprising that

one participant directly assumed that the show would be more like an 'evening with' the writer, and began to imagine his response to watching that potential format from the audience:

> Pablo: It looks like for me very personal. And like if you don't really know her and you're not really into her poetry for me it's just like, I wouldn't go. I don't know how it's going to be really […] she looks quite like calm and relaxed and I feel like I could fall asleep. [Laughter]. Yeah. Or just completely lost interest in 10 minutes.
>
> Me: Interesting. Do you expect it to be a narrative or…?
>
> Pablo: No. No. Like her sitting. On a couch or something… (DG2)

He was then later on surprised by the idea expressed by other members of the group that there might be a cast of characters played by actors. While participants felt that the other two shows were less explicitly about a person's life, it was clear to them that Red Dust Road was. Yet this ability to make a ready judgement on what the show was 'about' or, in Pablo's case, what format the show might take resulted in them claiming they were not really interested, and probably would not go and see the show outside of the confines of this project. The idea of having somebody's life story who they did not know told on stage did not appeal to some participants, like Nevan and Seb:

> Seb: I'd probably only seek out something that was factual about a person if I knew if I was aware of the person before and I don't, I don't know anything about her. So I'm probably less pulled by that than I am to an emotional story like the ones we've seen. Because something kind of creative or fictional would probably pull me more than an autobiography of someone that I don't necessarily know (DG2).
>
> Nevan: To be honest it doesn't really interest me that much. I mean, it's a very good description of it, of the story. Well I think I know the story. […] The story of her discovering who her parents are and all the aspects of what makes her who she is today and reflecting on herself. That's very interesting. It's just really not my cup of tea (DG3).

Interestingly, for some participants for whom the premise of Red Dust Road *did* appeal, they were more interested in the dynamic between fact and fiction – i.e. the writer's actual 'real-life' events and the interpretation of these by someone else (the adaptor, the company) of her story: the idea of interpreting someone else's interpretation appealed. Again this may well have been influenced by the fact that I showed the video of the

interview with Jackie Kay. Both Liz and Nooren were interested in the idea, touched on by Jackie in the video, that it was an interpretation of her life, rather than a factual retelling:

> Nooren: I do like that idea though that it's somebody else's interpretation of a story that she has. But then we're watching that interpretation of someone else's story. So what we'll get from it will be different from what she's got from it. (DG1)
>
> Liz: Watching it [the video] makes me more interested in seeing it just to hear what she says about the fact that she gave up creative control of it to the company, to the director, and the adaptor. And that's quite interesting. How you, how you – if it's your story. But then she kind of gives it up like 'this is the story you can tell'. I find that quite interesting really (DG3).

What's more, for some of those participants who suggested they were less interested in this show based on what they had seen in the copy, image and video, they became more interested when one of the participants mentioned another aspect of Jackie Kay's life:

> Jade: [The Red Dust Road copy] doesn't feel so much like HOME. It completely missed out her queer politics […] she's a kind of queer icon…
>
> Faith: You see knowing that […] makes me now want to go and see it more.
>
> Seb: Actually yeah
>
> Faith: If she's a queer activist it makes me want to [go]. So that's a real shame that it's not [mentioned] (DG2).

Similar to the different potential interpretations of the swimming theme in SWIM, these examples demonstrate the breadth of ways through which participants navigated the same source content, picking out and articulating once again different aspects of the Red Dust Road campaign content on which to hang their own personal interpretations and judgements.

This study has aimed to explicate how different participants enacted different meanings and narratives around the 'same' themes. In all instances we can see clearly how their different lived experiences, the lived experiences of others and even the *imagined* lived experiences of others informed these interpretive narratives. Furthermore, the potential interpretations continued to multiply as participants related to different ways of feeling about these different narratives, as they interpreted their interpretations through the

experiences of others. Additionally, in some cases this included interactions with their future selves as audience members for the show. The final study of this facet study offers further illustrative examples of how participants, in building their frames of reference, did so by making assumptions on the types of people and intentions 'behind' the content, often as imaginative social interactions with other audiences, the performers or theatre-makers, and the HOME venue team.

Study 4. Sense-making as social interaction: incorporating and incarnating the other

Study 2 focused on processes of participatory sense-making through the incorporation and incarnation of others within the immediate context of the discussion groups. Study 3 focused on participatory sense-making that incorporated and incarnated the agencies of others through evocation of narratives from their participants' own lived experiences, or the lived and imagined experiences of others, in relation to key themes expressed in the marketing material. This final study aims to highlight how participants framed their interpretations of the marketing material for the show in interaction with the (presumed) voice/s behind the content. This undoubtedly included assumptions of the type of interaction that they were to expect with the artist or company directly within the theatre event, which is explored in more detail in Facet 3. Many participants asked questions around how I and the other participants thought the companies would be staging the stories, and in particular, *who* participants would be encountering in the shows themselves and how they might take part in this future imaginary interaction as part of the anticipated theatre experience.

Are you talking to me?

As explored in the research context chapter, many advertisers and marketers actually aim to construct messages in different media that are, to varying degrees, 'disembodied' from the original interlocutor by incorporating 'alien' languaging flows (Di Paolo et al., 2020) – for example, the institution's enactments of cultural value. They might do this by creating written or visual material on behalf of the institution and marketers may adopt the tone of the 'organisational' or 'company voice', as is the case with some of the marketing copy used for the three shows. With the inclusion of the copy taken from HOME's website, for instance, many participants made the reasonable assumption that the copy had been written by the people working at HOME.

Indeed, participants demonstrated a certain sensitivity throughout as to *who* had produced the content and commented on, for example, how the writing of the promotional copy or blurb did not match their expectations and experiences of what they perceived to be HOME's 'usual' organisational voice. In the example below, this mismatch was understood to be evidence that Red Dust Road was therefore a show that may not be for HOME's usual type of audience, and by extension, was not 'for' the participants themselves.

> Erica: This makes me think […] kind of coming from this marketing person point of view, that it is written for an older audience [murmurs of agreement]. So HOME like, maybe trying to bring in a different demographic, and this might appeal to someone else. It feels safe in terms of how they might deliver the work. Yeah like deliver her [Jackie Kay's] story…
>
> Faith: Like this copy has been picked up out of like a Royal Exchange programme and plopped into HOME's instead, which upsets me…
>
> Daphne: As it's the National Theatre of Scotland, it feels like it's worded for the National Theatre of Scotland rather than HOME. As if is it just their wording and they have copied it? (DG2)

As this and previous examples in this facet have shown, while the Red Dust Road campaign more clearly identified a sense of narrative and themes than the other two shows, this was, for this set of participants, at the expense of connecting with HOME's 'authentic' voice and values, as they saw them. This is not just a question of lacking the confidence or being unsure about how they might interpret the content; indeed quite the opposite. Instead, they were questioning who had written the copy and crucially, who it was for. Thus they concluded that the answers to both these questions were, respectively, 'not HOME' and/or 'not me / HOME's usual audience'. This was enough for participants to dismiss the communications as 'for someone else', echoing Nevan's earlier comment that the show sounded 'interesting' but was not 'his cup of tea' (DG3).

Of course, incorporating the voices of others on the venue's show webpages - especially those enacted by the companies themselves (in this case, the National Theatre of Scotland) – is common (arts) marketing practice. As we shall explore a little more in the next facet, content is more often than not generated by individuals from the performing companies and from the venues' staff teams working collaboratively (to a greater or lesser

extent) depending on the relationship between the company and the host venue. What the studies in this facet have aimed to demonstrate so far is that this content is interpreted as an act of interaction, even if this interactional context is not always explicitly described as such.

A common practice among arts marketing by companies and venues is to include 'pull quotes' from reviews of their previous shows in the descriptions of their new shows. However in the case of ONE, the inclusion of so many reviews of their past shows was the source of mild irritation for some participants, as we have already explored in Study 2.

> Liz: I think Nevan's right [laughter]. I do find it very annoying. And same with novels, when they use all the quotes for a different show. It really really irritates even when they do it with a novel. It irritates me when they do it with theatre. I just think – what's the point of knowing what people thought of their last – and I do know what the point is, I don't know why I'm saying that. I just don't, I don't understand *why* they've taken a part of that with praise for the previous shows. Obviously, like you said, people have liked that style previously so they might expect… you know. But that's a lot of space to praise something that you're possibly never going to see!
>
> Pat: I wouldn't even have seen that – I would have thought they were talking about [this show ONE]– looking straight at the thing. That's probably what they want you to do. They think it's about that and they think that sounds okay (DG3).

> Mike: The words on there, are they from HOME? Or are they from that production company, if you know what I mean…
>
> Me: Why do you ask?
>
> Mike: Because the bottom […] the praise bit, it feels like, it's like I don't know the person, potentially who has written about it hasn't seen it: "I've got all that space to fill. So what should I copy and paste to fill the space?" (DG3)

Unlike Mike, who perhaps sees the inclusion of lots of reviews coming from a place of ignorance about what the show actually is, Liz believes it to be a deliberate marketing ploy, used to mislead those that read it. Indeed Pat admits to probably not even realizing those reviews were for a different show altogether. There was certainly a sensitivity and understanding among certain participants that the marketing material was designed to fulfil

a certain function – to persuade them to buy tickets; a recognition of the motivations and the agency of the person or people 'behind' the production of the content.

We have seen how participants in discussion groups build on the sense-making of each other within the groups to make sense of the various campaigns. But as the example below from Faith shows, as well as those explored in the second study of this facet, it is not always just the opportunity to interact with others that is central here, although many participants did describe how they enjoyed sharing ideas with others and hearing from others. However, as the next example shows, participatory sense-making does not just involve people responding to one another's reflections in a simple dialectic back-and-forth, but that other people's sense-making *informs* the content of others' utterances. That is to say, they are incorporated – sometimes fully, other times partially, and other times not at all. Indeed there were some instances where participants explicitly described instances where they made sense *through* interactions with others:

> Faith: I will say like, I've got to fess up to this I had like some ideas about this [Red Dust Road] but then as Sarah was saying about it being a book, and then Jackie Kay's a poet and like it was all of those things that weren't make my brain fit. I think a lot of I get a lot of things from word of mouth and so I'm always really interested in what other people know about [and] something sort of engages me (DG2).

These imagined others were not just referring to those people in the discussion groups themselves; discussions often involved detailing interactions with a variety of different influential 'others' including, but not limited to, immediate friends and family, as well as theatre show reviewers. Sometimes, as the participants below discuss in response to ONE's copy, it is just the opinions of others that help to validate and feed into their decision-making processes:

> Nevan: In particular, word of mouth is a really good way – coz people I trust, especially for shows that are expensive. Like going down to London to see a piece of theatre production. You know if my friends have gone to see it and said, 'it's brilliant, you should definitely go.' That makes a huge difference. Much more than, much more than four stars from Broadway Baby.
>
> Liz: Yeah there are certain reviewers that I would trust. Like I would trust Lyn Gardner from The Guardian, for example (DG3).

> Erica: I think that plays a big part in whether I'm going to go or not. And I was just like, on there seeing that they wrote about Palmyra, which was a big show, but I didn't see it. But that makes me want to go.
>
> Me: When you say big show what do you mean?
>
> Erica: Well, well reviewed (DG2).
>
> Nina: I think it's the kind of play that I'd like *to say* I'd go and see. [Laughter] (DG1).

There is a question here of the people that each participant trusts – for Nevan, theatre-going is informed by the opinions of his theatre-going family and friends, whom he trusts and sees as more informed than a reviewer of a blog site. Similarly Liz knows the types of theatre reviewers that she trusts, presumably being also familiar with their work. Erica and Nina, the two participants who themselves worked in cultural intermediary roles in the arts, suggested they were influenced by the wider professional sector context.

But the opinions of informed family and friends or those who review theatre for publications were not the only imagined 'others' that were referred to by participants during the discussion groups. In order to fully participate in the task of the discussion group, that is to participate fully in discussions around communications content for the shows, participants would often adopt different personas in an attempt to give different points of view. By switching subject positions they would incarnate the agencies of others in their own narratives. We saw in the previous example how Bee suggested that the vague nature of the ONE copy would 'put some people off', and we can see below how Liz and Susan, referring to their shared professional experiences as drama teachers, imagined a scenario where they had to convince their students to come and see ONE:

> Susan: Yeah like now we've said it, there are a lot of words there. And the second half talking about their other show Eurohouse, you know, why put that in? It's nothing to do with it. Like you said Liz, apart from the obvious reason that if you've seen them before it's interesting stuff. But for me, you know if I'd presented that to my A Level students, they'd think I was crazy.
>
> Liz: They'd say, but what's it *about*? [laughs]
>
> Susan: Yeah yeah but what's it *about*?
>
> Liz: Yeah and I'd say, 'I don't know, it sounds like it might be interesting though.' [laughs] Like what else could you tell them? (DG3)

Although both Liz and Susan are referring to a specific educational context, nevertheless these examples show the prospect of making sense of what a theatre show may offer as a prospective future experience is inherently one that is made in a social context. The specific interactional contexts in which these decisions are made are of course dependent on each individual's lived experiences, their habits, and how they use (or not) theatre as part of their everyday lives. It shows however the importance of being able to grasp for themselves a 'way in', a 'sense' of what something is about – something they are able to make sense of, or indeed how they may be dependent on other people to do this for them (in the case of word of mouth from reviewers, or trusted friends or family members).

What's it about?

Participants often found themselves referring to what the show was 'about': yet another complex and context-dependent question that is difficult to answer without first understanding what each participant is referring to. What is clear is that participants used this question to connect (or refer to a lack of connection in some cases) or pin down a particularly important or meaningful aspect of experience, towards which to orient themselves (and others) towards. Perhaps this is the kind of thing that Pablo is referring to when he describes his frustration with not being able to interpret the ONE copy 'in a theatrical way':

> Pablo: To me it sounds like I think that tone like advertising, you know? [...] I just don't know how to kind of interpret it in a theatrical way (DG2).

This was also a recurrent frustration with the information-heavy copy of Red Dust Road. While participants understood what the play set out to do, as we have seen, many participants wanted to know how the show was going to be staged:

> Seb: It's too long-winded… Doesn't tell you anything about the actual performance itself. Which doesn't, which makes me think that when you were asking before about the other one, and how important was that last sentence -it makes me think that it's actually more important, because this doesn't have it and I'm now wondering "what will it be like?" I'm just thinking "oh no". If that waffle made any sense (DG2).
>
> Faith: Now I'm actually really struggling to, like, picture what it would look like on stage. And I understand. My point is, you know, the journey. But then when I think

> of it on stage, like, I can't picture it. Yeah. Yeah I don't know, what would be appropriate for it. I think that's interesting (DG2).

> Anaïs: How do you make that work? How do you make that work on stage?
>
> Nevan: You can see it in a movie quite easily. But like Anaïs says how can you make it work on stage? (DG3)

Here participants described how they were struggling to confidently imagine what the 'actual performance itself' will be 'like', to 'picture what it would look like onstage' and how the companies will 'make it work onstage'. All of these questions are framed in relation to their experience and understanding, although as there was an absence of (e.g.) video footage or photos from the performances themselves within the discussion groups (they did not as yet exist), participants did suggest that these would have been helpful:

> Anaïs: Even like recording of some of the rehearsal like, just like even 10 or 15 seconds just so you can build it in your head…
>
> Liz: Some companies do trailers don't they. Trailers that show little snippets that just give you a sense of how the show works. But yeah you're right that could be really helpful (DG3).

How are you going to do that?

In particular, there was a marked interest in (and concern with) how the SWIM company would stage the show, because of the presumed logistical and creative challenge of staging water and swimming in a theatrical setting. This was a point of intrigue for some in considering the likely potential options or choices that the company would make:

> Nina: As soon as I start thinking about plays about swimming I'm like – "how are they gonna do the water?" (DG1)
>
> Adam: It was the open water swimming aspect of it that in general the organized sessions they're very busy. But when you're out swimming it is very solitary and it's you against the water. And I was interested how they would get that across (DG1).
>
> Jade: I wonder how are they gonna get water on stage? Obviously not gonna have a massive tank (DG2).

For others, the only option would be to 'do' the water in an abstract sense, an idea which Aaron found off-putting, presuming it would be something that he would not be able to connect with:

> Aaron: For me, if this was a film I'd go and see it. But because it's a play, it worries me, in terms of its realism. And so if it's going to be abstractly done it's going to be one of those that I couldn't quite get my head around.
>
> Sue: Are you expecting a paddling pool? [laughs]
>
> Aaron: I just think it's going to be a bit too surreal in a sense, and then that ties with the theme as well so. I don't think it's one I would choose to go and see (DG1).

What do you / does this mean?

Participants often approached the inclusion of certain details in marketing materials (and indeed exclusion of others) as invitations to interpret them as meaningful acts enacted by the producer of the content. For instance, Jade focused in on the image of the ladder, suggesting that it might be a gimmick of some sort used by the performers, presumably a theatrical technique that she expected to see from the type of show that she anticipated ONE to be:

> Jade: I wonder if there's gonna be like a visual gimmick like a massive ladder in the middle or like kind of igloo blocks of the building which they're going to be like shouting off. I don't know but there's something there that they can't quite get across. That's going to give it away. I dunno. Like is that a real ladder? Or I dunno is it (pause) like kind of an Ionesco type thing (DG2).

In a similar way, other participants responded to the design of the artwork, using it as a basis to imagine particular potential production elements (such as staging, or design, or number of performers onstage) of the show itself (in the example below, SWIM):

> Nina: 'I think a lot is going to be left to your interpretation, it's going to be quite […] It looks quite stripped back, the colours are very simple, the composition's very simple. There's not going to be a lot of costume changes, or big audacious back sets or designs or anything like that. It's like you have to – there's not going to be many performers, possibly one – and you're just going to have to, you're going to be given bits of information, and you build your own impression of sort of what's…'
>
> Me: Do you [the group] agree with that?

> Nooren: I think I do, like what I was saying before about it being quite intense I can imagine sitting and trying to be very quiet, not to distract from it. Like you were saying, there's not going to be a lot of costume changes or a lot of people at the same time. It kind of gives off that impression (DG1).

Another example of this is when another participant inferred that SWIM would have very little dialogue because the character in the image is facing away from the onlookers' viewpoint:

> Anaïs: Lots of silence. Because she's not facing us. Perhaps there is going to be very little dialogue (DG3).

The absence of answers to these key questions for participants, leaving them unable to build context and make associations that were meaningful to them, occurred in reference to all three shows at different points. However ONE is a particularly interesting case in point. For some it was an intriguing campaign, and there was a range of different responses to the different pieces of content as we saw in this facet's earlier studies. Nevertheless, for others, the campaign was interpreted as deliberately misleading, by excluding information that would otherwise have enabled participants to make sense of the communications more productively. As illustrated in the exchange illustrated below between Anaïs, Liz and Bee, this assumption is founded on the premise that the company *know* what the show is *really* about; they presume the existence of a truth that they are missing out on, thus a feeling of mistrust develops when participants feel intentionally kept 'out of the loop' – part of the 'mystique' or the 'pretension' or 'schtick' of 'modern art'.

> Anaïs: It still makes it really difficult to understand what we're going to watch. Is it a linear narrative or is it a new approach? […] I'm like – I want to know what it's about. What I'm going to watch. It's not just the theme, it's about everything that makes the play.
>
> Bee: I think they're being intentionally vague.
>
> Me: Why do you think that?
>
> Bee: Maybe it's [pause] mystique. I don't know…I think it probably puts more people off then entices people to go and see it.
>
> Liz: Or part of their kind of shtick that they've produced theatre that makes you challenge and think. So therefore, we're not going to tell you what it's really about you know. I guess it's all about that engagement isn't it? What they would say.

> Anaïs: But […] there are a lot of assumptions that people know or have a frame of reference in which they can interpret what, especially when it comes to modern art. People who go to the theatre might not have that so it can make it even more difficult for them to go because you know, you should already know about it, and you don't. And they don't go because it's too difficult.
>
> Me: So what do you think the marketing has to do?
>
> Anaïs: It has to give you like […] some clues. Like proper clues in which I can feel like my interpretation of the play… I haven't seen that many plays. […] So you can build that frame of reference, and then go to the [play or] exhibition and understand what it is about and think about what they're doing in that context. So it's putting things into context (DG3).

Crucially, we have seen how the missing 'clues' that Anaïs refers to here are not so much being told what to feel or think, but the ability to find a connection or to broadly grasp the potential experience.

What is clear from this study, then, is that by considering notions of authorship, of motivation and intent behind communications activity, participants enacted and imagined others to interact with, even when they were lacking in the information of who these people behind the content were. All of what these examples had in common was a deeply social sensitivity – to being excluded or left out or misled; and sometimes even ultimately a feeling of not being valued. As participants made sense of campaign content, they were socially interacting: not just with each other, but with the (imagined or real) producers of the content, providing rich insight into their perceptions of the roles and intentions of the theatre company, and their meaning-making processes. These social interactions not only relied on the autonomy of participants to make meaning on their own terms. The interactions are inherently dynamic and constantly evolving within their own specific contexts and are thus vulnerable to breakdown at any time. We saw this in the instances where participants judged something as 'not for them', as 'pretentious' or unappealing, as well as a sensitivity to and frustration with the feeling of not being given what they felt they needed to be productive in their sense-making.

Facet 1 conclusion

Through analysis of the transcripts and fieldnotes from the audience participant discussion groups held in April 2019, this facet explored their responses to campaign content such as imagery and artwork, text or 'copy', and video content produced for the three shows. The

main research question this facet aimed to address was what role the marketing process plays in shaping audience expectation, in terms of what kind of input and receptivity the artistic experiences requires of them. However it also began to lay the groundwork for how the processes of sense-making by audiences throughout the total art-making process (so in this case, the beginning of this experience) relate to their final blending of the theatrical event as a concept of meaningful duration, how they are beginning to conceive their roles as audience members and what the pathways are that bring people to alternative understandings of the same event.

The first facet explored how audiences make meaning in interaction with campaign content for the three shows. It drew on some common themes emerging from the participants' interactions with marketing content (primarily marketing copy, image and video content where available) within these discussion groups, to provide a 'topline' overview of the audience participants' first impressions of the shows, and the theatre-makers, and in some cases, HOME itself. This facet then went on to illustrate how participants' sense-making processes spanned multiple modes of content, and how often interactions with different modes of content developed - both individually and within the group dynamics of the discussion group. Participants would often change their minds on what they thought, demonstrating how their continuous processes of contextualization and recontextualization of the meanings and sense they enacted. This study also showed how these journeys were far from uniform, and that even though it was clear how participants' individual choices affected others' within the group in a sense that this sense-making is inherently interrelational, each individual's trajectory even at this early stage of the project was unique. This was true both within the three groups as much as across the three groups.

Therefore, it was clear from this facet that different audience participants differed in their responses to the different bits of campaign content. Similarly it is perhaps not surprising that audience participants also differed in how much they were looking forward to, or how much they expected to enjoy the different shows. While there was some agreement in some of the groups, and general trends, on the whole this was fairly evenly split across the three shows. There was not one show that everyone was absolutely adamant they would dislike - and indeed perhaps this is a result of the methodology, all the participants were sampled for their curiosity and willingness to try something that they might otherwise not have chosen for themselves. What is of particular interest in this facet was how different audience participants tolerated, and in some cases actually enjoyed and were excited

about, the prospect of getting something unexpected or unknown. While some found ONE's campaign content in particular to be confusing and not clearly communicated what the show was about, others were put off that the Red Dust Road campaign, which was more straightforward in the message it was communicating. It might be suggested that this is just a matter of individual preference - that one participant is more tolerant generally of not getting the full picture from content, not being told what to expect, compared to another for whom the same lack of information causes undue anxiety and uncertainty. But we also saw in this facet examples of when individual participants were tolerant of this incoherence with one show's campaign, only to laud it as intriguing by another. What is clearly illustrated here is the sense that the engagement is not an inherent characteristic of either the participant nor the show itself, but rather a characteristic of the particular contextual engagement or instance of interaction.

While the first study in the facet pulled out common themes on which many participants agreed, the remainder of the facet aimed to pull out and unpick key examples and instances of divergence between participants – such as different responses to the same 'themes'. Disagreement, as a form of engagement, ranged from choosing the opposite stance to another, to simply using the experiences of others to more gently frame their experiences in another light. While we are not so interested here in trying to nail down causation - i.e. that one participant's viewpoint caused another to think the same, or to think differently - these instances explored in this facet clearly illustrate how audience participants framed their responses to the campaign content through and/or in relation to the responses of others. While the discussion of these 'key' themes might on the surface seem to be the same or show some sort of commonality of response across the participants, we saw how the experiences of these themes were also very different between individuals. It is not enough to say that most participants had the same response to the SWIM copy, for example, because they thought it was about swimming and made them think about times when they had been swimming. We saw how the different experiences that constituted each participant's notions of what swimming involved for them, were vastly different - for some it was emotional release, for others it was fear and being cold.

So too did the beginnings of interactions with the 'people behind' the content begin to emerge in this facet. This was particularly marked in Red Dust Road, understood to be a staged life story of poet Jackie Kay. Yet even with ONE and SWIM we see throughout this

facet how participants began to form expectations about those they were expecting to interact with (even, as is the case with Red Dust Road, indirectly through the telling of her story) at the theatre event themselves. The final study in this facet explored how participants responded to the use of the 'marketing voice', or the organisational or company voice. While all the copy and image tested during the discussion groups was the generic copy that the company used on the show's general webpage, for example, there were some instances where participants still described how they felt that copy was not intended for them; that in some way they felt it was designed for someone else (for example in the case of Red Dust Road being not for HOME's 'usual' audience). There was a sensitivity to details that enabled them to make these judgements; a product perhaps of living in a world where we are daily bombarded with messages, there was a general understanding that marketing and communications activity involved targeting specific audiences with specific messages. Indeed, the (over)use of extracts or 'pull quotes' from reviews irritated some participants and was judged to be either indicative of someone not knowing what to write about the show (as was the case with some for ONE), or seen as a deliberate attempt to mislead in order to sell.

Connected to this was the idea in this facet that these social interactions, while clearly often rooted in the 'social' methodology of the discussion group, were also enacted with others that were not in the room. While in the enactive framework, we are used to the idea that languaging is a process informed by those interactions that precede it. (Indeed even outside the embodied cognitive framework, you would be hard pressed to deny that experience is informed by memory and past experiences). The enactive theoretical framework enables us to approach the utterances made by participants in this research as simply snapshots of these languaging flows in a particular window of time and space. It also enables us to consider with just as much importance the interactions that occur with others within and outside this immediate context. In this sense we can see how participants have in the past incorporated the languaging flows of others - both within the discussion groups, but also their friends, their family, their colleagues, as well as those others they interact with in their daily lives in society through various media. There were also instances in this facet when participants not only responded to the actual utterances of others in the room, but they also incarnated the utterances of imagined others; for example, when forming judgements about how others might feel about the show.

We saw in this facet how audience participants, who had been specially recruited for this project, demonstrated a keen motivation to engage with the endeavour. This was particularly clear in their attempts to grasp what the shows were ‘about’; in an attempt to orientate themselves and clarify their relation with the potential experience. While on surface level this could be seen as quite a simple question, and indeed there were common themes in all three shows that emerged and/or were often directly mentioned in copy and image. However what we saw in this facet was how participants approached this question to mean various things. For some, to know what a show was about was to know what was going to happen, what the show was going to look like, how it was going to be staged, and how it was going to feel. For others, it was more about what the artist and theatre-makers were *trying* to do, and how they might approach certain presumed challenges (i.e. how the company were going to ‘do’ water and swimming on stage in SWIM was a common concern). In addition, there were questions of what the people behind the copy and image were trying to communicate to them, what was intended or meant by the use of a specific word, or a specific detail. What was interesting here is that as participants focused on a particular detail in this way, there was a corresponding assumption often that it had been deliberately placed there to be interpreted; it had been imbued with pre-existing meaning ready to be decoded. Here we can see how even the most unintentionally-placed detail can be interpreted as a specific and deliberate utterance, within a social interaction. Indeed even the lack of particular detail or information was interpreted as a particular choice, and consequently had the potential to frustrate. We saw this in relation to some participants response to ONE and their lack of clear information about what to expect from the show. Subsequently many participants felt they were unable to engage with the meaning of the content, and could not consequently work out what the show was about. For others it was a deliberate intention to mislead or deceive or a sense of feeling left out or excluded. Thus it is clear in these different responses how marketing and campaign content are deeply social.

Facet 2: Marketing as a site of cultural value conferral

While the first facet explored the reception of the promotional images and copy for each of the three shows with the audience participants, this facet will examine the context of the production of this content by the marketing teams at HOME and the theatre companies themselves. Facet 1 thus represented the starting point of the discussion into the complex processes of meaning-making by illustrating some concrete examples of participatory sense-making in an audience discussion group setting whereas this facet explores the processes behind the content creation in a professional arts management context. Calling on the umbrella methodology of deep hanging out, this facet casts as its field-as-network the interactions of and between the two different participant groups: members of HOME's marketing and producing teams, and the theatre companies.

The theoretical basis for Facet 2 continues to draw on our understanding of enactive participatory sense-making by applying it to these two participant groups, in relation to their personal and professional roles and as individual sense-makers. It will explore how individuals in these organisations interact, both directly and indirectly, with each other, and the imagined audience. The latter is understood as conceptualisations of the target audience for a particular show in the eyes of both HOME arts marketer and theatre-maker, as well as early audiencing activities such as public and private work-in-progress performance sharings and rehearsals.

The chapter outlining the research context for this project introduced the idea that cultural value is 'firmly located in the administrative and political interactions by which it is described, judged and communicated by different stakeholders' (Meyrick et al., 2019, p.81). In particular this facet focuses on the latter: the articulation and communication of cultural value by those working within cultural intermediary roles. While this situates our understanding of arts marketing within a broader arts management and policy context, it does so critically, drawing on the theoretical framing of the body of cultural value research outlined in the research context chapter which conceptualises cultural value as a values-based discourse, rather than a series of strategic, abstract data-driven decisions (Johanson and Glow, 2015).

Outline of activity underpinning this facet

The timeline below provide details of the fieldwork conducted with members of HOME marketing and producing teams [Figure 4.9] and with the three theatre companies [Figure 4.10] included in this research. These two strands of activity underpin the analysis for this facet.

Figure 4.9: Research timeline - HOME fieldwork strand

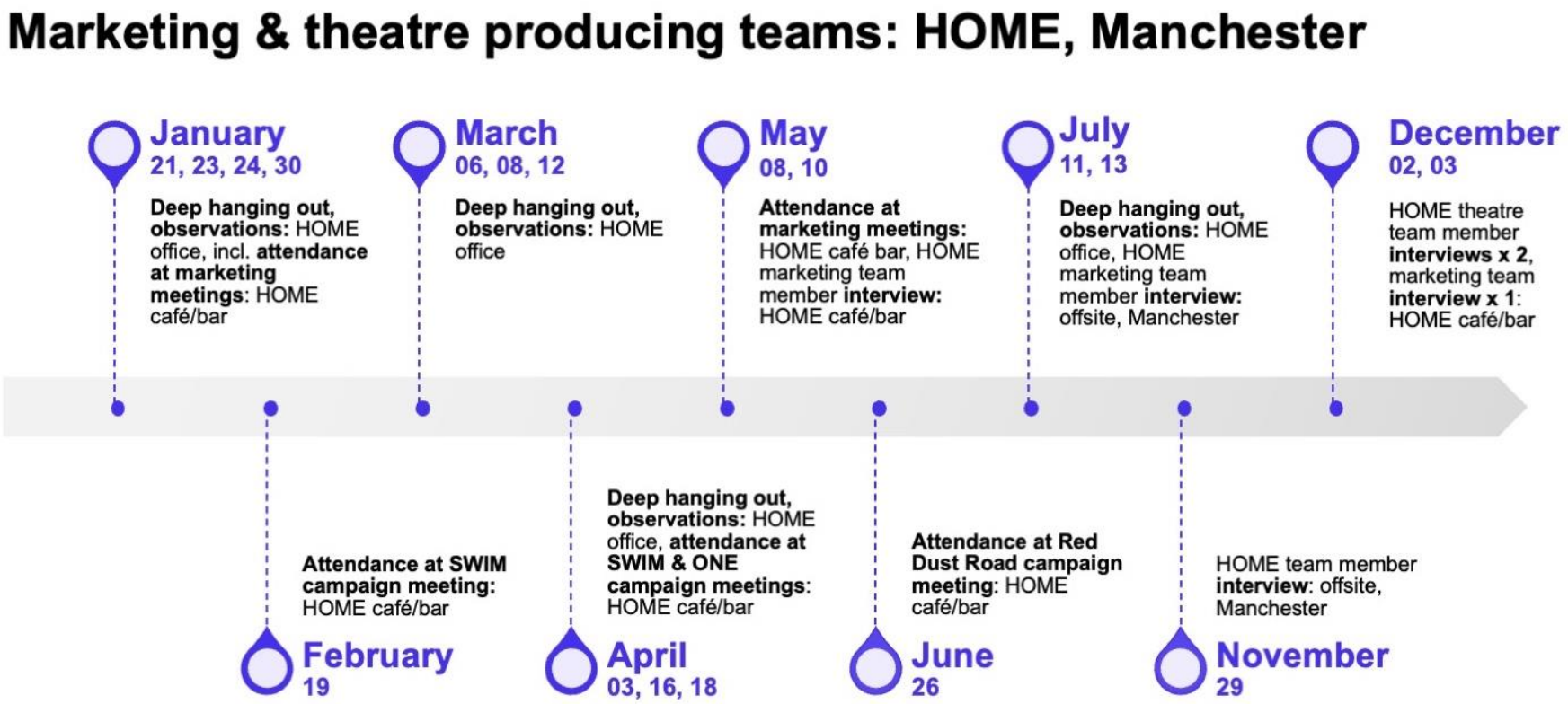
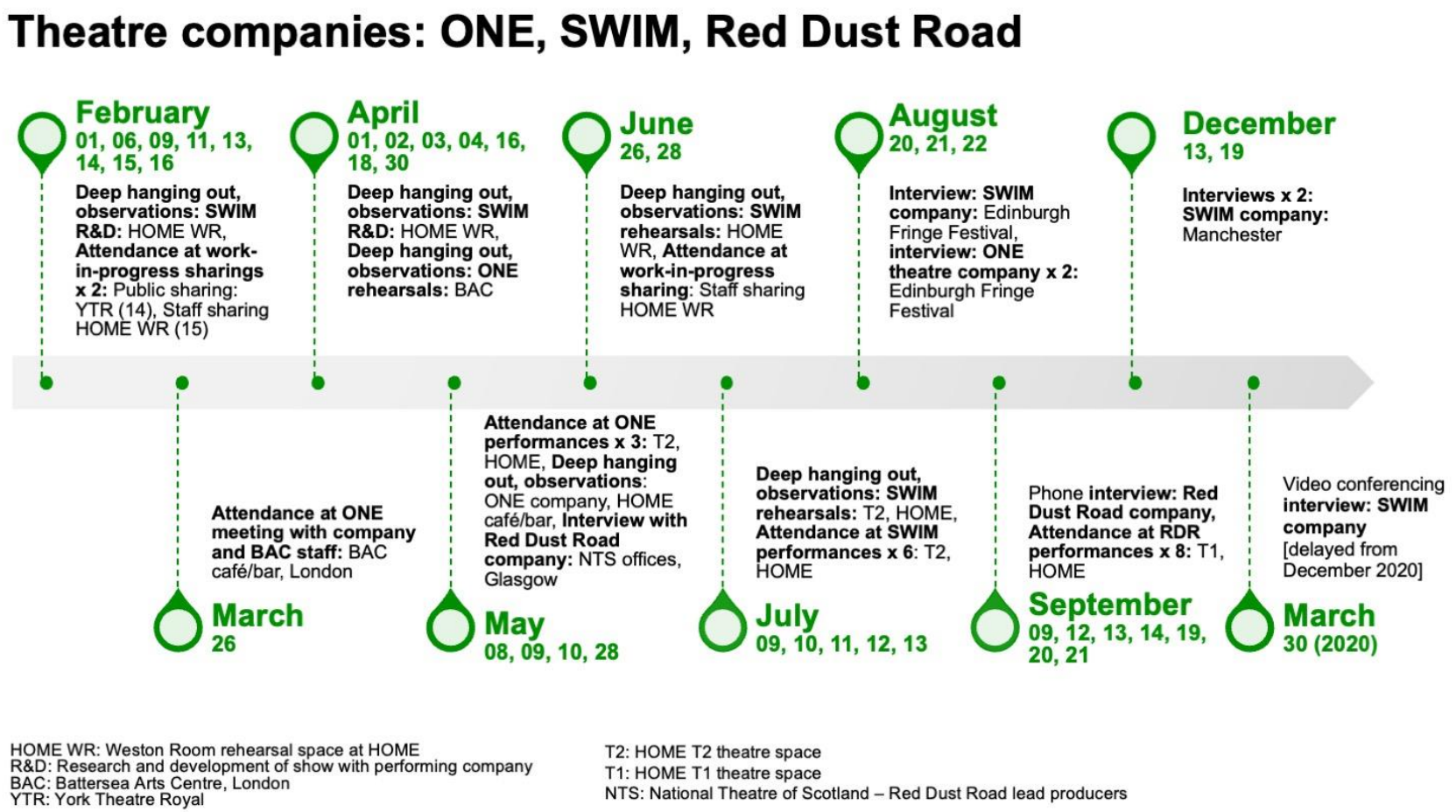


Figure 4.10: Research timeline - theatre companies fieldwork

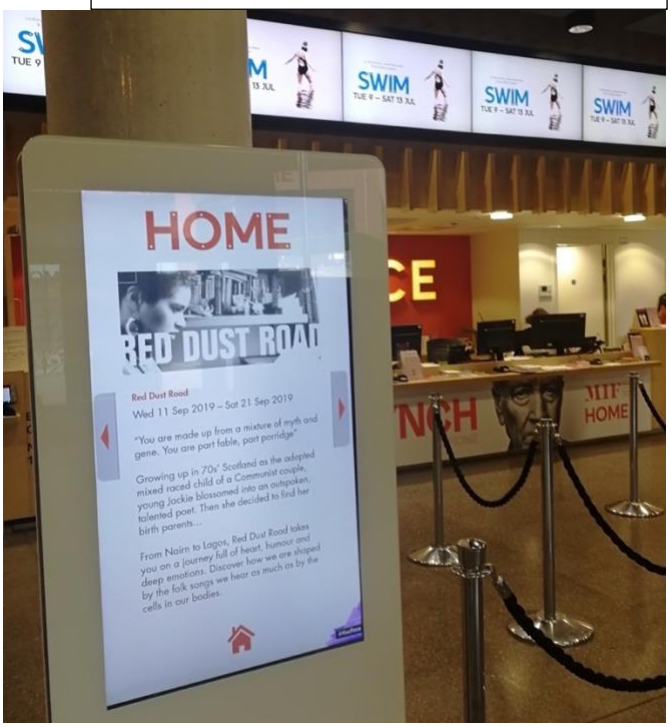


Study 1: Marketing as engagement

It is clear that while marketing and communications activity is a collaborative activity between arts marketers, arts managers and theatre companies, the degree of collaboration is at least in part influenced by the fiscal and pragmatic co-production relationships that delineate lines of responsibility for certain areas of activity, thus constraining who is involved in these collaborations and crucially who has access to key (marketing) content-making and (theatre) art-making activity. Placing cultural value within an enactive framing is apt here as it enables an understanding of underlying dynamics within the specific co-production relationships between venue and theatre company.

This project involved three new theatre shows which, at the point of their programming, were still in fairly early stages of their development. These three shows were considered to be in some way 'co-produced' with HOME. As discussed in the methodology section, this was a conscious decision to allow for the research to chart the process of producing marketing content as much as possible alongside the development of the shows themselves. In a professional context, it is not uncommon for the sending and receiving of marketing campaign content to be one of the first interactions between performing company and marketing team at the venue, once the contracting process (often handled by a programming or producing team) has taken place. In this sense, then, the production of 'copy and image' for webpages, promotional printed leaflets and posters, and digital campaign artwork [Figure 4.10] can also act as a tool for teams at venues to familiarise themselves with the company and/or the show itself.

Figure 4.10: Digital display in HOME foyer with Red Dust Road copy and image. June 2019. [Photograph].



The production of copy and image

The production of copy and image is often seen as part of the contractual obligations between theatre company and venue, regardless of the terms of their producing relationship. Marketing can thus be understood in this way as a content management process which takes place over a series of interactions, including the discussion and production of new visual, audio and video content and the updating of copy and images as the dates of the production near. This activity is often carried out in a dynamic and responsive relationship with sales activity that is regularly monitored by the venue marketing team, allowing for the reallocation of resources to campaigns depending on the levels of ticket sales against budgeted income.

Thus the copy and image, and any additional subsequent 'content' produced, are products of certain interactions within particular professional and production contexts, can and often do sit alongside the creative process of making the actual show itself. We can see in each of the three different theatre shows explored in this research three distinct models of producing, ranging from a full 'co-production' (Red Dust Road), to an associate company status (SWIM), to a piece of 'toured in' work which, although seed commissioned by the venue, was developed outside the building (ONE). Although the precise agreements between the venue and the companies are confidential, it is important to recognise how these distinct professional relationships provide a context within which the marketing and communications interactions sit.

In this case, then, we are looking at the theatre companies, all with significant professional experience in theatre-making in their own disciplines, and HOME – a venue that has been producing theatre for five years. As all interactions in the enactive paradigm are informed by the interactive histories of each of the interactors and thus they are never neutral; they always bring their own concerned perspective, their own histories, perspectives, moods - not to mention expectations of the interaction itself (De Jaegher et al. 2017, p. 516). Thus considerations of professional reputation and safeguarding existing professional relationships are always a concern and will have influenced how individuals navigated communications activity around and through these relationships. For example, we shall see how with Red Dust Road, despite a fairly fundamental misalignment between the effectiveness of a particular image between HOME and the National Theatre of Scotland (NTS), the marketing team at HOME resolved instead to preserve the co-production

relationship, and to respect the creative work of NTS in the development of the early promotional imagery. Illustrating a professional practice of 'letting be' (De Jaegher 2019) in engagements explored in the research context chapter, the relationship was considered to be, by the HOME staff team and NTS alike, a positive and productive one (HOME_004).

This was not just particular to conversations between the two marketing teams; repeatedly in interviews, members of HOME's marketing team stressed the importance of being sensitive to the needs of the theatre companies during the strenuous show development and rehearsal processes. However, this 'letting be' took its toll: while these types of interpersonal dynamics were often acknowledged, members of the marketing team often expressed an underlying frustration with theatre-makers and producers (notably in general, not just limited to the case studies included in this project) who did not seem to recognize or value the importance or vital role of marketing and engagement.

This facet illustrates how there was a general rule with the HOME marketing team that the more access marketers were able to get into the creative process, the better. Similarly, the more 'open' theatre-makers and creative teams were to articulating and communicating the value of their work for the purposes of promotional activities, the better. In part this aligning of objectives and openness to marketing activities was coupled with a general feeling of ease across these partnerships and there was still a dominant perception that it was easier to work with theatre-makers that value marketing activity than those that did not (HOME_001). However, it also touched on something more fundamental about how it affected the perceived quality of the content that was produced. For instance, discussions with the marketing team around what constituted 'good' or 'effective' content for theatre shows tended to revolve around certain recurrent ideas of good practice. For example, there was a sense that images and visual content for the shows 'have to reflect what [the show is] about' (HOME_44), returning to the idea explored in the first facet that a show is, in some sense, universally or objectively 'about' something. For instance, it might be a theme – such as 'wild swimming' or 'adoption' in SWIM and Red Dust Road respectively.

The role of the arts marketer in relational marketing practice

> I always think of [developing a marketing campaign] like football. You would never do the tactics for a team when you didn't know who you're playing. You'd never say – we're going to really set up to score goals and play three at the front and [be]

> really good for attacking before you've even seen the fixture list of who you're playing (HOME_004).

HOME's marketing strategy as well as many conversations in meetings and interviews regularly returned to the idea that good organisational engagement had to be based on a clear relational dynamic – a two-way communication - rather than simply broadcasting a message out the masses. This strategy is thus in tune with what Walmsley describes as the 'relational turn' in the organisational practice of engaging audiences explored earlier in the thesis, moving away from a product-focused to a relationship-focused strategy (Walmsley, 2021). This was certainly evidenced through many of the priorities and sensibilities articulated by members of the HOME marketing team. Playful and fun digital content was specifically designed to drive engagement, to 'plug into what audiences are already talking about' and encouraging them to interact through likes and retweets. This was seen as a key way to develop audiences by adopting a human tone, admitting to mistakes and having an approachable, playful and open tone of voice (HOME_002). Far from being a whimsical way of passing the time, the idea of moulding people's perceptions of HOME was thought of as a necessary ingredient in what the team often referred to as 'breaking down the barriers' of theatre-going (e.g. for those that thought HOME was full of 'arty-wanky' people (HOME_001)), as well as building HOME as a trusted brand. Communications often included what is commonly referred to as crafting an effective 'call to action' and is particularly common in social media content such as the Instagram post pictured [Figure 4.12].

A key aspect of the call to action is that it provides a mechanism for evidencing impact; in this case whether the post had the desired impact of people clicking through to see more information or engagement with their main Instagram feed. The emphasis on 'click through rates' and the number of views that a video may get is often seen to be in some way directly related to whether or not a show will sell, although this is not always the case. Nevertheless it is a widely used quantifiable, monitorable and reportable metric to judge the efficacy, and efficiency of communications activity.

In interviews and meetings with the marketing teams, it was apparent that, like many other venues, HOME's communications strategy relied heavily on engagement on their digital platforms. One of the central ideas underpinning HOME's digital strategy is the idea that it provides a platform for interactions to occur. Through direct marketing (e.g. e-bulletins to the mailing list) and indirect marketing (e.g. social media activity), on the website and on HOME's integrated digital platforms, HOME sends messages out to its followers, mailing list and bookers through a series of coordinated messages. The level of interactivity enabled through each medium of course depends on its functionality: responding to a message on Twitter is fairly straightforward, and indeed expected, by audience members on the platform; however email marketing practice tends to disallow responses to the address from which ebulletins are sent out. Nevertheless, the plurality of digital platforms hosted and used by HOME's marketing team, in addition to offline communications, enables a fairly wide range of possible interactive contacts between the venue and its audience. On the whole this practice is fairly commonplace across many arts organisations in the UK, although the level of actual interaction will be constrained by a number of factors, not least the marketing team's resource and the size and make-up of digital platforms.

Figure 4.12. Screenshot of an Instagram post with SWIM production photographs. June 2019. [Online]

It could be argued that this web of interactions that makes up an arts organisation's marketing and communications strategy such as those carried out on an organisation's social media channels, represents a type of segmentation system, in terms of engaging with those individuals who choose to be communicated with through a particular channel of their choice. Unsolicited marketing from organisations through online advertising aside, individuals are given a certain level of control on which channels they receive information about upcoming shows and events at HOME. Of course HOME retains a level of control

on these channels and may further segment or target their communications to particular groups accordingly. In addition to each platform's inbuilt insights tools (e.g. Google Analytics) which describe a range of engagement metrics (e.g. site visits, click through rates) related to particular communications activity, there is also more potential now for data from one platform to inform the activity on another. For instance, one of the marketing meetings I attended through this project included details of a plan to segment email communications by frequency of attendance, using booker data and cross referencing it with email communications list in order to develop a relationship management approach that relied on past interactions with the building (HOME_28).

Digital platforms are not only used to communicate information about details about shows and encourage people to buy tickets. Members of the HOME marketing team often talked of building relationships with their audiences and online communities, with the need to create space that encouraged engagement and interaction. In this sense we can see how the activity and interactions that are staged through HOME's digital channels are not just about increasing the reach of stream of information about, mostly offline, cultural activity, but they are very much part of the day-to-day relationship building with prospective audiences, artists and communities. In this sense, the digital activity is integrated and intertwined through the fabric of the organisation (HOME_002), at the heart of the organisation's strategy. Furthermore, this strategy was not only seen as fundamental to the organisation's sustainability as the 'future of audiences depends on digital collaboration' but also as a strand of the organisation's artistic output (HOME_002). However it also fits in with the sense of establishing HOME as a hub, not just artistically, but as a social space (HOME_002).

Furthermore, through interviews with the digital team, it was also apparent that the increase in potential for online interactions in arts marketing practice was also seen to provide a key opportunity to not only start these interactions through broadcasting messages and sharing content to watch and listen to and then 'click to find out more', but also to 'listen in' on conversations happening in the various social spheres. Indeed, while there was a recognition that there needs to be a balance of mainstream and experimental work within the programming, relevance to communities was described by one marketing team member as a 'number one responsibility' for the organisation (HOME_003). There was even a sense that marketing's role was to fit what HOME was doing in with what

people are doing and what people want to connect with: ‘listening to people, if there’s a big thing going on… it’s good to get a vibe of what people want to connect with’ (HOME_002).

It is worth mentioning a couple of common tools utilised by HOME’s marketing team to help situate their engagement practice into this broader strategic context. The first tool initially feels like a fairly straightforward process that forms the backbone of marketing and communications campaigns for live theatre performances: the consideration and selecting of certain aspects or themes of a theatre show or a theatre-maker’s creative process to articulate and communicate through a range of visual and auditory media. We will look at these processes in a little bit more detail throughout this facet in relation to the three show campaigns explored in this project. Broadly speaking, this approach allows for a certain amount of tailoring of different ‘key messages’ or ‘themes’ to different target groups or audiences through a range of different media. These might be referred to as ‘the selling point’ of the show, or ‘the hook’, but the process of identifying these themes or messaging is akin to ‘getting it’ or ‘grabbing hold of something’ for a show (HOME_001). In common parlance, we are referring here to themes that are assumed to already exist in the theatre shows – and presumably too their prospective value. The marketing and communications practice, then, is about identifying these themes that pre-exist within the prospect of the theatrical experience, and then appropriately articulating and communicating them to the correct target markets.

As we have already seen from the research context outlined earlier, it is the latter half of this process (the articulation and communication of meaning and value to target markets) that dominates a large proportion of arts marketing scholarship, with comparatively less attention being paid to the preceding stages of creating and forming these messages (Fillis 2006). However, before we explore what constituted these key messages for each campaign included in this research, it is first helpful to consider how this practice is affected in considerations of ‘best practice’ for an engagement-led marketing strategy. Firstly we must acknowledge that marketing and communications practice has a role to play in simply relaying information, making it easy for people to find information about shows and events and book tickets. Indeed, this is especially true with experienced theatre-goers, such as the personal and professional networks of theatre-makers and arts professionals, that no doubt make up a proportion of audiences for live performance. As Brown et al. found, audience members with professional backgrounds in art forms are more likely to attend arts performances than those without (2011, p.175). With the

exception of some theatre-makers or companies working in the industry, who have what one member of the marketing team referred to as an already 'built-in audience' made up of regulars (HOME_001), on the whole arts marketing practice still involves a certain amount of proactive marketing and communications activity that aims to introduce new ideas and practices to audiences, regardless of their theatre-going experiences in the past.

In the HOME marketing team at the time of the research, there was an almost blanket aversion to the idea of broadcasting out vague messages. More than one member of the team on separate occasions described this as the practice of: 'Whispering in ears rather than shouting loudly in the face. We need to get the messaging right rather than a giant generic thing that means nothing' (HOME_004). It is clear that the effective, engagement-led marketing practice to them involved a judgement of which messages to tailor to which audiences. These processes are affected by a number of different factors; not least, as already mentioned, how the show is already seen to be 'landing' with audiences (through sales figures), but also the budgets, resources and skill sets available and the division of responsibility agreed through different co-production agreements.

Developing and diversifying audiences

As well as the close monitoring of the effectiveness of such a strategy (through the close analysis of ticket sales, for example), there is also another underlying assumption or set of values underpinning this practice of identifying key messages: ideally as using 'different images and copy for different audiences- making bespoke communications for different audiences is key' (HOME_004). There is of course a benefit to this practice – by diversifying the message there is more potential to reach more markets, and thus potentially more sales. This arts marketing practice within a (publicly-funded) arts institution such as HOME is also seen as imperative to diversifying audiences – a sector-wide concern as outlined in the research context chapter. The logic of this approach is clear: by providing more 'ways in' or hooks through a range of different campaigns targeted at different people through different platforms, the hope is that it attracts an audience group made up of different people.

However there is a clear conflict between idealism and pragmatism here. Firstly it is interesting to note that this scrutiny is often reserved for shows that do not sell; if a show sells out as a result of a built-in audience who are primed and responsive to the messaging around the show, then by and large a homogenous audience is less likely to be

noticed or seen as unproblematic. The pragmatist approach of marketers here then is to move on to the shows that need a little help to get sales moving. Firstly the result of this is that essentially arts marketers are unable then to fully evaluate their activity; as one marketer put it 'we never learn from the quick wins' (HOME_003). However, perhaps a more insidious consequence of this practice is not just the lack of opportunity to learn, but also increased scrutiny and highering of standards for those shows and companies that do not sell as easily, the oft-cited 'difficult sells'. This is a clear concrete example of how audience development and marketing is a values-driven practice: the diversity of audiences is only important (and therefore arguably less important) when the sales for a show are not a cause for concern. What's more, it is important to note that this is a systemic failing, and that throughout the research marketing team members in particular were most aware of this tension. As one team member pointed out, 'There's still an awful lot of people that just don't see it as their job to think about people who aren't them' (HOME_003).

Vox-pops: platforming the audience voice

Another tactic widely used in the arts sector as an engagement and sales tool and that was also used regularly at HOME at the time of this research was the creation of vox-pops. The vox-pop (and by extension social cards, which feature artwork combing 'pull quotes' from audience members with show artwork or production imagery) is created by filming audience members as they come out of a show and asking them their opinions on their experience. The idea is to 'platform' or 'give a voice' to audiences (HOME_19) with a particular emphasis on curating the resulting video content to ensure a diversity of voices are represented. In this sense it is also regarded as an audience development tool: 'I think audiences really respond to hearing […] from other people' (HOME_002). Another team member described them as coming across as more 'honest and unbiased' than a message coming directly from HOME as an institution would be (HOME_001). The idea here is that audience member opinions are more trustworthy because they are not professionally associated with HOME, who clearly have the motive to sell tickets. Vox-pops are thus understood to have the potential to bridge the gap in this way between current and potential audiences for HOME, by attracting audience members who consider themselves in some way to be similar to those in the videos. Of course, this practice is in the interests of the organisation: in the hope that it sells tickets for the shows, or future shows, by positioning HOME as a vibrant, diverse and inclusive place. As one HOME team member

stated, it is important for audience development for audiences to hear and see people ‘like them’ (HOME_002).

Yet like the artistic programme, where theatre shows, screened films and curated exhibitions are not randomly chosen, these vox pops are too a product of ongoing processes within the institution and the wider artistic and cultural sectors. While the vox pops more specifically, and the audience-led engagement strategy more generally, is aimed at staging as broad and representative as possible a diversity of voices and opinions, there are of course always going to be those that are more likely than others to be platformed. While it was seen as generally good practice to include negative reviews as well as positive ones in vox-pops, there needed to be a balance when it came to picking those audience members reviews to include in the vox-pop reels:

> So you get a shit sandwich, basically, all the good stuff at the start, good stuff at the end, make sure the last two were like well on it. And it's okay, if someone's like: “Oh, yeah, got lost in the middle. I wasn't sure about it.” Because that's okay. Everyone's got their opinions. And I think transparency is a massive thing, especially for the arts. You want people to have different opinions (HOME_002).

To be clear, I am highlighting the practice of masking institutional values in this way not so much to criticise this practice as to draw attention to the complex navigation of values that cultural intermediaries have to enact through their practice between marketing as promotion and marketing as engagement. I am not suggesting that the practice of producing vox-pops is entirely nefarious, or not without merit. In fact, while it evidences this tension, vox-pops and the platforming of audience opinion generally was always often described as a way for potential audiences, and the venue as a whole, to listen more to audience’s opinions of shows. It was not seen as concealing an institution’s need to sell tickets, but in the interest of all: the institution, the artist and the audience members it gave a voice to.

HOME’s marketing team saw this kind of activity as an opportunity to advocate for the audience’s opinions and experiences, with their digital platforms in particular acting as platforms for dialogue and discussion about their experiences of shows, albeit subject to processes of selection and curation. Vox-pops in this sense illustrate the type of value-balancing acts that marketers have to perform in order to fulfil their professional duty to protect the institution’s interests. Yet it shows how the techniques and tactics of marketing-as-engagement are subject to the very same constraints as marketing-as-promotion. The

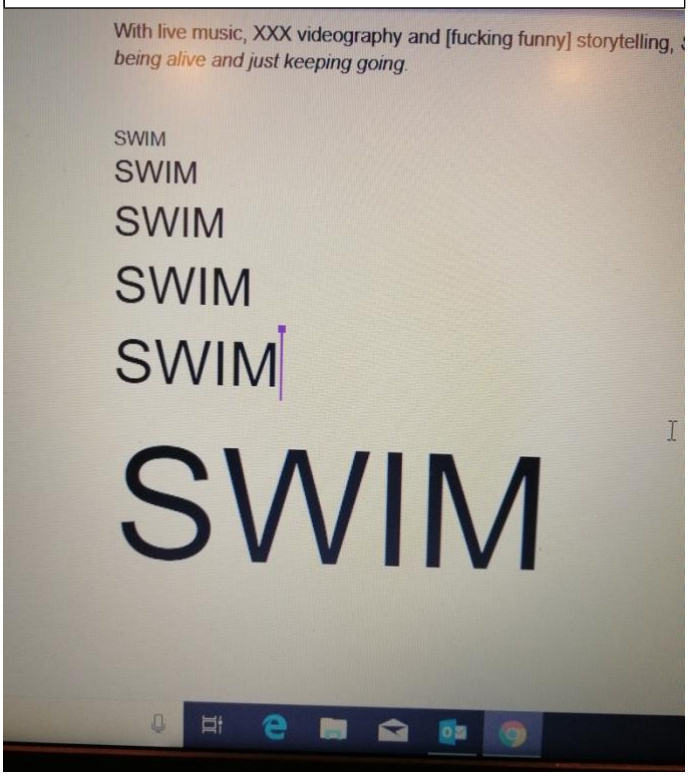
relational shift of marketing practice in this way needs to be developed to be reflected in wider business models and management practices, and at a policy level.

Study 2: The 'easy' sell

The importance of access and collaboration: SWIM

The production partnership between HOME and Liz Richardson and company was described by more than one HOME team member as the ideal set-up in terms of access to the creative process and content creation (HOME_44). This was partly made possible by the show being developed at HOME during several weeks of research and development (R&D) including opportunities for marketing team members to attend work-in-progress sharings[18]. During the R&D process, the SWIM company was working in the same building as the HOME team. This also enabled greater access to the creative process for this research process, as I was able to conduct 'deep hanging out' with the team, and in particular the four performing company members over several months. I attended and observed several rehearsals, meetings and sharings between the company and the wider HOME staff team at various points throughout the process. In addition to being able to map some of the collaborative processes that went into the creation of the show, I was able to observe the creation of some video content on the 'making of' the show, and even appeared onstage[19]

Figure 4.13: A moment of frustration captured in a screenshot taken by the researcher during a SWIM company copywriting session. February 2019.



[18] SWIM has since evolved into a new show under the same name, and is touring venues in autumn 2022.

[19] It is worth mentioning I was fulfilling a non-performance role, holding my finger on a button to ensure a fault in the sound equipment did not turn everything off. In this sense my role shifted unexpectedly to researcher-technician for this portion of the research.

as part of a public work-in-progress sharing at York Theatre Royal. I was also able to observe conversations and interactions between members of the SWIM company, and the members of the SWIM and HOME teams, around the production of some of SWIM's digital marketing campaign content, including the filming of one of the preview videos as well as the creation of the artwork and in particular, the copy for the show [Figure 4.13 and 4.14].

An early image for SWIM was used by the company and HOME for early communications about the show (e.g. in the HOME season brochure). This artwork was then updated and replaced. The early image was shared with the focus group participants in April, as well as the more up to date image and copy. The image, and subsequent theme, was described by one team member as 'very zeitgeisty', (HOME_006) presumably referring to the perceived increase in interest in the subject and practice of wild and open water swimming. From the outset, conversations around the SWIM campaign were characterised by creative, open thinking, with much evidence that HOME team members found the show's content and themes interesting and engaging on a personal level. SWIM was described by one team member working in press as having an 'unconventional' nature and they expressed a personal connection to the 'restorative, palliative' aspect of wild swimming' (HOME_26). Echoing the responses to the show by prospective audience members, HOME team members were equally intrigued as to how the company would stage wild swimming onstage.

Figure 4.14: Photograph taken by researcher of SWIM company developing title artwork during research and development phase. February 2019.

In partnership with the company, the HOME marketing team planned a special open water swimming event to take place in Salford Quays. Not only were willing volunteers from across the HOME staff team encouraged to launch themselves into Salford Quays, it was itself described as a 'launch event' for the show. The idea behind this was to produce 'good content' and 'opportunities for press coverage', such as an interview on local television with a cold water specialist on the benefits of cold water swimming, as well as

with HOME staff and the SWIM company (HOME_29). Discussions in meetings described the key message here being that ‘theatre and the arts more generally are about telling stories that can help people (HOME_44b). As one of the SWIM company explained: ‘we are naturally promoting coming together doing something’ (HOME_44b). In addition to the media coverage, HOME worked with the company to produce video content to cover the swim, as well as additional video trailers on the rehearsal process, including interviews with the company (and cold water swimmers).

These video trailers were shared periodically through both HOME and the company’s website, mailing list (email) and social media channels. There were also several interviews in specialist swimming press covering the show. This access to the creative process was seen as paramount for the HOME marketing team, and in particular the digital team, as it enabled them to produce what they described as ‘unique content’ (HOME_22). This was understood as content that was not just produced by the company for a range of tour dates, but rather content that is specific to the context of its partnership with HOME. This idea was echoed by another member of the team who headed up the SWIM campaign, describing it as an opportunity to ‘be involved in the creative side of things’, as they felt much of their portfolio of work revolved around shows that were ‘toured in’ (HOME_003).

As one HOME staff member described the campaign, ‘it’s why Liz’s show was really good – SWIM – actually, because she gave a lot away. We did so many interviews with her […] she was so happy to talk in front of the camera (HOME_004). There was a sense of familiarity between HOME and the SWIM company, as many of the performers had made or performed in shows at HOME in the past. It was also clear that many team members feel that Liz’s engaging personality and openness to collaborating with the marketing team was seen as a great positive, describing her as a ‘mine of ideas’ (HOME_29). In this sense, the creative content was regularly referred to as a collaborative responsibility between HOME and the SWIM company (HOME_13).

Throughout the campaign activity there was a real sense of collaborative endeavour reported by the teams. In the case of SWIM it was clear that the proximity of the show’s creation to HOME’s marketing and communications activity and the opportunities of collaboration afforded were highly valued across the HOME marketing team. But in addition, there was a willingness and openness felt between the company and the venue team that was not taken for granted. As one team member described: ‘sometimes the

digital team don't feel welcome in the rehearsal room, it's not always like this. But digital is not an add-on, we need access. If the vibe is weird with some companies, it can be hard' (HOME_22). In addition to this familiarity with the company and access to the creative process, the general feeling approaching the SWIM campaign in HOME marketing meetings was one of positivity: early plans looked to connect with wild swimming clubs and enthusiasts (HOME_44b). While the focus on outdoor swimming was described as an 'easy hook' by HOME team members (HOME_19), SWIM exemplified the ideal campaign as it was seen to have a fairly 'broad' appeal. In this sense, there were lots of potential 'ways in': 'it's got a lot of offer in terms of different audiences (HOME_004). This was echoed by another team member in the theatre production team, who described the show as having 'various ways in' with 'universal themes that are great alongside the visuals and musical elements' (HOME_006).

Red Dust Road: a well-resourced partnership

Unlike the other two shows, Red Dust Road toured a number of Scottish venues before touring to HOME in September 2019. Additionally, out of the three shows included in this research, Red Dust Road was the only performance to take place in the larger Theatre 1 (T1) space at HOME; both ONE and SWIM were staged in Theatre 2 (T2). Red Dust Road was a coproduction between HOME and another publicly funded organisation: National Theatre of Scotland (NTS). It was a new stage adaptation of an extant book by well-known writer Jackie Kay, and the fact that this theatre production was to take place for a longer period of time in HOME's larger theatre space meant that a larger marketing budget and more resource was available from the outset for the campaign. While the relationship between NTS and HOME was described as a 'joint effort' between NTS and HOME (HOME_43), NTS, as lead producers, also took the lead on marketing content: for example, NTS took responsibility for the development of the main image and copy for the show, in consultation with the HOME marketing and theatre team as co-producers, and coordinated tour-wide activity. The HOME marketing team was then responsible for carrying out any specific and local communications activity for the HOME dates of the show, with the support of the NTS team.

While there is no need to directly compare the approach to the SWIM and Red Dust Road campaigns, it is worth noting that the two particular production contexts for each afforded different interactions between HOME's marketing team and the theatre companies/creative teams, and subsequently the authorship of the marketing campaign content. For instance,

as the show had already opened to audiences in Scotland, the Red Dust Road campaign focused more on producing content around an existing show, although the HOME team were consulted at various stages throughout the process. As well as travelling to rehearsals, some of the HOME team also attended the show's premiere at the Edinburgh International Festival a month before the HOME performance dates. Therefore the timings of the production schedule meant that HOME received a lot of show-based content to circulate to audiences ahead of the show's arrival in Manchester[20]. SWIM, on the other hand, afforded a more regular level of collaboration, there was a more co-authored content from both the theatre company, and the HOME team. While the SWIM company did produce a video trailer and circulated production photographs of the show, the fact it was premiering at HOME and had a shorter run than Red Dust Road resulted in a large proportion of activity focusing on the process of making the show.

However NTS did also provide a large amount of 'preview' content on the making of the show; for example, the video with Jackie Kay which was shown to the audience participants in this project's initial discussion groups. In addition to this preview content, NTS produced a series of production photographs of the show for HOME to use, and a video trailer of the show which HOME could edit for their own communications purposes. In addition to the artwork displayed in print, online and in the building (e.g. through digital screens in the foyer) HOME's team focused mainly on images and reviews from the show itself as it toured prior to arriving at HOME. However, the HOME

Figure 4.15: Photograph taken of vinyl artwork developed for Red Dust Road front of house display above one of HOME's central staircases. July 2019.

[20] This also naturally affected access for the research as well: there was less access to their interactions throughout the creative process itself but I was able to interview some of the members of the NTS team on the campaign itself before and after the show's tour.

marketing team also designed and displayed one of the original letters from the book itself, above the first staircase [see Figure 4.15].

As Red Dust Road was based on an autobiography of Jackie Kay's life, there were many potential 'hooks' or themes that were brought out in the campaign, not least the connection with and involvement of Jackie herself. As a Manchester-based patron of HOME, and someone in the public eye as a writer, it is perhaps not surprising that much of content produced by HOME focused on Kay, and her relationship with HOME. For example, in a similar way to the HOME and SWIM company open water swim for SWIM, an additional 'enrichment' (HOME_32) event was scheduled as an 'evening with Jackie Kay' on the 15th September, in the middle of the Red Dust Road production run. As a production in the larger space with a longer run, HOME also held a formal press/guest night with invited guests and a pre-show event, including speeches from the Chief Executive of HOME and Jackie herself. The marketing team also coordinated a number of local press interviews with the writer for both local and regional press publications. As one member of the HOME marketing team mentioned, Jackie Kay's connection to Manchester made for a 'good human interest story' as she represented 'the face of the city' (HOME_26). A number of press interviews were conducted with her, alongside members of the show's creative team in local and regional press publications.

Figure 4.16: Initial image for Red Dust Road, used in HOME's Autumn 2018 brochure, which was replaced by Figure 4.17 as a promotional image in Spring 2019.

Out of the three shows explored in detail in this research, Red Dust Road is closest to what you might term a 'traditional play' or 'drama' – described by members of the marketing team as a 'good solid play' (HOME_26) – presumably as a result of the range of different characters that represented different people in Jackie's life, and the traditional dramatic structure comprising a 'beginning, middle and an end (HOME_26). However, as we shall see in the next facet in more detail, there was still a

range of different narratives engaged with by different audience members. So in this sense Red Dust Road represents an interesting paradox: on the one hand, we can see how the HOME marketing team believed the show to have broad appeal, as there was a number of different 'ways in' for an audience – a range of different themes that would appeal to have resonance to different audiences. On the other hand, the show was often 'about' Jackie's life. There was an acceptance of this diversity within the notion that the show 'told us about Jackie's life'. Yet the challenge remained how to encapsulate this potential diversity in the primary show image, or in the main show copy – because inevitably decisions have to be made as to which narratives and themes are the primary ones. There is thus a necessary overdetermination or value judgement on what aspects or narratives or strands of Jackie's life will connect most with a potential audience. This challenge is evidenced in the evolution and discussions of the main publicity image between HOME and NTS, which was used in the printed venue brochure and on the website, for Red Dust Road [Figures 4.16 and 4.17].

Figure 4.17: Photograph taken of front of Red Dust Road promotional flyer, featuring updated image and artwork. July 2019.

The initial image [Figure 4.16] was referred to as the 'holding' image, which was replaced by the very early image presented at the discussion groups in April 2019. This image was used for when the show went on sale. It was in fact taken from a holiday snap of Jackie's, depicting her as a young girl, presumably situating the play in the story of someone's life, or a reflection of times past. The following extract is taken from my fieldnotes taken from the particular moment when this image was replaced by a new one [Figure 4.17] in June 2019:

> The new image for Red Dust Road created by NTS has arrived and has landed in the Marketing Manager's inbox. I think they've seen iterations of it before, but I get the sense they've been landed with it a bit. Everyone from the marketing team is huddled round the desk, including me, necks strained to get a glimpse on the tiny screen. There's murmurs, and groans, and unintelligible noises. We are all decoding the image: what does it mean? Studying all the different aspects of the image, people begin to offer their opinions:
>
> > 'Well firstly, it needs to be landscape for our brochure.'
> >
> > 'I guess you've got Africa there, so that gives us a clue that we're going to travel there.'
> >
> > 'I dunno, I think the map of Africa is a bit clunky.'
> >
> > 'That family photo looks scanned.'
>
> As a few of the team members had seen the show in rehearsals a few weeks back, I asked them if they feel it reflects the show. The responses are reflective of general disappointment.
>
> > 'It looks really sad.'
> >
> > 'Nah it makes it look too dull and dusty - it's uplifting and joyous. The show is FUNNY - there are good one-liners, especially from the adoptive parents.'
>
> Another team member does admit: 'It's a tearjerker too though.'
>
> To which another protests: 'Yeah but it needs to be a joyous image. Jackie looks a bit sad there, although I suppose there is some smiling, I don't know'.
>
> I do agree with most of their opinions actually, but I'm not really sure I could pinpoint what I would have done instead.
>
> (HOME_52)

There was a sense from this moment in the office that the image needed to tell the right story for each of the team members, and also a sense that it needed to reflect their experiences of the show – even though, as one team member pointed out, this included both notions of happiness and sadness. The response to the inclusion of the Africa map which one team member described as 'clunky' reinforced this idea that there is in fact a limit here to how much an image should be didactic in its meaning – a response to an image that perhaps feels too easily decoded or too obvious, which produced an instantly negative reaction with one team member. This directly contradicts the idea that an image

should be clear and communicate something. It is also entirely possible that it was seen as being inappropriately general, as much of the play's narratives takes place specifically in Nigeria, rather than the whole of Africa, but nevertheless remains as evidence of someone's 'decoding process' of the show.

It is clear in the interaction described in my fieldnotes above, as well as through subsequent interviews with HOME team members, that members of the HOME marketing team would have gone 'down a different route' with the artwork if they had been producing it, relating their interaction with the images and copy produced by NTS to their experiences of seeing the show in rehearsals: 'The pictures were dull, they made it look dry. It was in fact a joyous story' (HOME_003). Once again we have a contradiction about what an image should actually set out to do: it is not just about communicating a series of clues to the themes of the show, or depicting certain themes relating to what is perceived to be what the show is 'about, but that it should instead reflect the experience or the qualities of the show itself. Yet this idea is not any simpler. By describing their experiences of watching the show in rehearsal, HOME team members remarked that the show was at once joyous and funny with great one-liners, and also a 'tear-jerker'. This mix of emotions described was easily expressed when relating to their own connections and embodied experiences of the show, and yet continued to pose a difficult challenge for the image to communicate both. In the end, it was felt that a more joyous, smiling image would be more appealing to prospective audience members; as one team member succinctly put it in a subsequent interview: 'National Theatre of Scotland made it look sad and boring, missing the humour at the heart….I don't think I'd want to go and watch two women look sad for two hours' (HOME_004). HOME's campaign was thus intentionally formed around a series of different themes in the play and informed by the team's different experiences of watching the show, in order to communicate the breadth of possible 'ways in', rather than on a particular type of experience to be grasped.

It was clear in interviews with both the NTS and the HOME marketing teams that experiences of the show were diverse across the board – some loved it, some hated it, some felt it was about adoption and race, others focused more on the relationship with Jackie and Jackie's mother. However, this misalignment went further than just general qualities of the show as 'joyous' or 'boring' or 'sad', to what the show was depicted to be fundamentally about through the content. According to the HOME team, it was felt that NTS had chosen the wrong aspect of the show to focus on: 'Chose the wrong aspect of

the show – i.e. the relationship between Jackie and her mother…. Choosing the right aspect of Red Dust Road- the poster and focus on Scottish actors worked great for National Theatre of Scotland' (HOME_004). Indeed the reasoning behind this choice was reinforced by a member of the NTS marketing team, who when asked what the show was really about, responded: 'It's a mother daughter story' (HOME_43). When I asked a member of the HOME team why they did not go with this angle too, they told me that it was probably because NTS's focus on this angle was a result of the well-known Scottish actress, Elaine C. Smith, having been cast in the role. This illustrates how marketing campaigns depend on value judgements of local contexts as well as individual and institutional value judgements. In this case, the particular (national) production context influencing the content, a context that does not easily translate across national or even regional borders.

To reiterate, the partnership between NTS and HOME was on the whole positively regarded, despite the misalignments between the two companies on image choice. HOME team members were particularly pleased with the range of 'amazing digital content' (HOME_004) that NTS had provided them. As was explored in depth in the first facet, images and copy do not communicate the same thing to everyone. We interact with campaign content through a number of complex intersubjective processes. This particular example illustrates how one image became the site of a conferral, and this case fundamental misalignment of meaning, between those involved in producing creative content, of what aspects of a show, or experience of the show, were most important to 'communicate' or 'what the show's about' – even within the same production partnership. As we see here, NTS and HOME were selling the 'same' production in two entirely different national audiencing contexts, depending on what they felt is most likely to appeal to a particular local audience. But there is also something fundamental about the way that this changes the understanding of arts professionals, on a personal and therefore a professional level, about what they value about a production – in this case *on behalf of* audiences. We will explore this dialogue between personal and professional interpretations in a little more detail later on in this facet.

These examples of Red Dust Road and SWIM campaigns highlight the extent to which the marketing role at an arts centre like HOME is as much about managing relationships with artists and companies as it is about managing content and communications campaigns with current and potential audiences. Frequently there was a sense of protecting

relationships with companies over disagreements about content with companies (HOME_004). However at this point it is worth mentioning that this prioritisation of company relations was often seen as a key part of the challenge of arts marketing, and is perhaps overlooked or undervalued by both sector practitioners and arts marketing researchers alike. The point here is not so much that one image or another could be more effective, but rather indicates the shifting languaging flows that were at play across both companies as much as within the HOME team.

Study 3: The 'difficult' sell

The three case studies explored in this research all provide a glimpse into a slightly different model of working between venue and theatre company. For the SWIM company, there was a high degree of collaboration and openness of the creative process to the marketing team which enabled a certain level of collaboration from many different parties at the level of the content. With Red Dust Road, the collaboration between NTS and HOME was described as a partnership, but with NTS as the lead partner – who provided HOME with a range of content, and listened to their responses and feedback, but at the same time took overall creative control and arguably provided context-specific content for the show. The third show, ONE, was more in line with what we might class as a 'toured-in' show. Although there was an existing relationship between HOME and Bert and Nasi, and a degree of collaboration and conversation, the context of the show's production did not afford a full collaboration on content production. HOME instead received content from the company to use in its campaign, a practice that is fairly common in the touring sector.

It is worth restating that the aim here is not to evaluate these three different models of working, but rather to show the different contextual factors that might affect distributions of creative control and responsibility when it comes to the authorship of marketing content. Not least, these three models of working map onto the contractual agreements between HOME and the theatre companies, by means of co-production (Red Dust Road), association (SWIM) and ONE (toured-in). To reiterate, Red Dust Road was co-produced by a core-funded organisation, whereas SWIM and ONE are independent companies led by practitioners in receipt of project income. It is assumed for the purposes of this research that while these production modes will play a significant role in determining (for example) the level of resource available for these productions, there are also myriad other factors at play.

Pressures of marketing within an arts centre context: sales-driven marketing

Before this facet focuses on Bert and Nasi's ONE, I will first draw on a few of the key general problems and challenges highlighted by the HOME marketing team, in relation to this practice of juggling relationships, communications and campaigns for a series of different shows. In the season which included the three shows explored in this research, the HOME team were also responsible for campaigns for a large number of art exhibitions in the gallery space, a film programme across 5 cinemas, as well as a number of different theatre shows. This is just the 'artistic programme' output and excludes the additional ongoing educational and outreach activity that took place as well as the broader building activity, which was managed by, but nevertheless connected to, separate teams (e.g. book shop, food and drink offer, hires and corporate activity etc). While the structure of the marketing team did allow for certain specialisms across art forms spread across 8 full time/part time roles – the marketing team was responsible for all of this cross-art form activity[21].

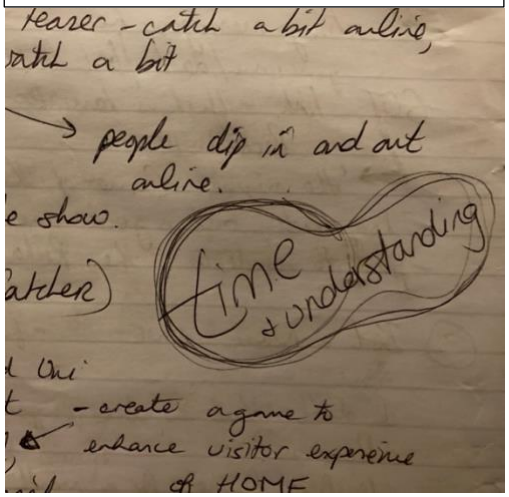
It is perhaps not surprising then, given the volume of 'work' passing through HOME's doors, in all of their 'artistic' spaces (gallery, cinemas, theatres), that the most commonly articulated frustration by the HOME marketing team was indeed a lack of time. This was at best recognised as the reality of working in a busy arts centre; indeed the opportunity to work with a range of different artists across different art forms in a 'fast-paced' yet 'fulfilling' work environment was valued by team members (HOME_001). However on more than one occasion, marketing team members likened working at HOME as being stuck on a fast-moving motorway: 'with so much stuff going on' (HOME_004) characterised by the relentless rhythm of 'banging out campaigns' (HOME_002).

As illustrated in the photograph taken from my fieldnotes while observing a meeting with the HOME marketing and communications team [Figure 4.18], rather than finding the right way to sell something, marketing team members often articulated a need for more 'time and understanding': as one team member described it, 'with such a big programme it is impossible to find the time to be granular and dig in to all these potential messages' (HOME_004). The challenges of not being able to access the creative process, because of

[21] Notably, during the months of this research project, all individuals within these roles that were involved in this research subsequently left their roles, indicating a comparatively high turnover of marketing staff. The structure of this department and organisation has now inevitably changed.

time or as described earlier, by a sense of not feeling welcome in the rehearsal room, created a pressurised environment. This in turn clearly took its toll on motivation and morale on a personal and professional level: as one team member described it being increasingly difficult ‘to be bothered about one particular campaign (HOME_001). Another team member described how they often felt too disheartened to see a show if it had taken a lot of work to sell (HOME_003). Despite the notion that arts workers enjoy the flexibility of their ‘vague’ job titles (Dubois, 2013, p.22), we saw in the introductory chapter the toll on mental health of arts workers. There was also a sense that the opportunity to learn from campaigns was lost, as two different team members put it: ‘I would like to carry out more granular evaluation of who is coming and how people are engaging in what connections they are making, but I haven’t got the time’ (HOME_002).

Figure 4.18: Photograph of researcher fieldnotes from observing a meeting with HOME marketing and communications team. April 2019.



In addition, and perhaps a more pervasive barrier to learning, is the practice of focusing attention on why shows are not selling, and less on why they might be. For instance, one team member mentioned that once a show is selling ‘well’, or you have the quick wins or ‘easy sells’ firmly in place, there is a need to switch focus instead to the shows that are not selling so well – the ‘difficult sells’. Instead they wanted to ‘really dig in and analyse when things sell – the quick wins’ (HOME_004). The need to continually manage time and resources effectively in order to respond to the high volume of content and activity that team members felt was required for their job in their current mode of working resulted in team members strategically putting their time and energy where they felt it was going to have the most impact. Arguably this idea is just good strategy business management practice: working more efficiently and effectively with limited resource to have the maximum impact through the work that you do. What is potentially problematic with this particular rhythm of working of course is not only the lack of opportunity for learning, as outlined by HOME team members, but also the alignment of marketing as a response to sales activity. This directly contradicts the idea of marketing as the practice of ‘driving sales’ when in fact in practice we can see that the opposite is in fact just as true: sales activity has a direct impact on the marketing processes of the shows. It is thus only one

logical step to assimilate shows that are ‘an easy sell’ as indicative of a value beyond one that is solely market-driven. For instance, if we have a programme full of shows that sell out, that do not need much intervention from the venue marketing team, we can see how quickly a commercial model could develop. Indeed it could be argued that this is indicative of where the arts sector is heading, perfectly exemplifying the ‘conferral of value’ that the practice of arts marketing and management continues to promulgate.

Up until now we have constituted the difficult sell in relation to the easy sell, in reference to the level of difficulty that a product or show might in fact present, dependent on how easily the show fits into a particular dominant transactional framework. This section will look briefly at the third theatre show explored in this project – Bert & Nasi’s production of ONE. The characterization of this show, or any show, as a ‘difficult sell’ is here approached critically, attempting to unravel some of the conferral processes that assimilate clarity of communication and broad appeal with the idea of an easy sell. It is not a characteristic of the show itself, but rather a relational definition, with a particular neoliberal framing of art-as-product. Indeed, it is important to note at this stage that characterization of ONE as a difficult sell is firstly specific to this particular context. Indeed Bert and Nasi’s work in other contexts, such as internationally or at festivals such as Edinburgh Fringe Festival could be conceived as an easier sell, due to their recognition and critical acclaim in wider theatre communities.

‘Maybe they’re just not that into you’: the soft sell

> I find Bert and Nasi’s approach to marketing quite refreshing. It’s not that they don’t care about marketing, quite the contrary. I keep thinking back to the conversation we had yesterday, where they described how they don’t want tell people what to think and that if they don’t come, maybe they’re just not that into you, and that’s okay. That’s pretty profound in the otherwise dominant narrative of SELL SELL SELL. They understand that people come to shows with their own stuff and their own needs and they’re interested in them and happy with that (ONE_004).

Figure 4.19: Screenshot of @HOME_mcr Twitter post about ONE. May 2019.

Instead of conceptualising a difficult or hard sell in opposition to an easier one, I want to now consider an alternative, not entirely unrelated, binary proposition of the hard vs soft sell – one that refers instead to *the extent to which* an organisation promises or guarantees certain benefits, in return for an engagement (e.g. buying a ticket). In this sense, the hard sell becomes about certainty of the transactional value of what is being sold – i.e. you will get this (or are likely to get this) in return for this (e.g. the price of a ticket).

The soft sell, on the other hand, is the use of proposition with less certainty – i.e. you might get this (but you might not), in return for this (e.g. the price of a ticket). The 'softer' language enables a shift in agency and a sharing of responsibility between both parties involved in the transaction. This could be likened to the strategy of 'pull marketing' explored in the research context chapter, where the value of a particular product – in this case, a theatre experience – is essentially described, in order to speak for itself. This is not a hard binary, and much arts marketing contains a selection of hard and soft sells, with the focus on the former in messaging when shows are not selling as expected: 'don't miss out! Book now'. While the soft sell might be used to mitigate risk, by attempting to avoid over-promising a particular guaranteed experience, no matter what strategy is adopted, if an organisation does not deliver on their promise, then the relationship between the organisation and its audience is equally vulnerable to breakdown through a loss of trust. What this binary offers here is a distinction moving away from the perceived effort of the selling function of a marketing team, towards an emphasis on the dynamics of the 'selling' interaction in a more interactional context, which enables us to explore how the invitation to engage is crafted. In this sense we could liken the concept of the hard sell to the enactive concepts of overdetermining the other, and the soft sell as engagement as letting be, as theorised by De Jaegher (2019). It is in the context of the 'soft sell' that we can begin to understand the practice of our third company: Bert & Nasi, and their show ONE.

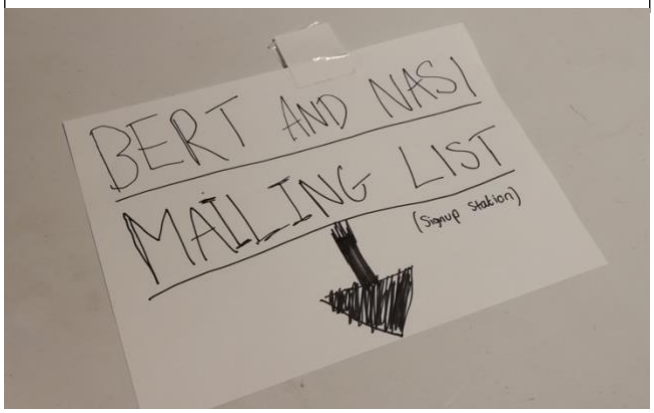
While we shall see that this particular campaign at HOME sits very much within this wider context, it is nevertheless a good opportunity to show how a theatre company deliberately attempts to subvert this dominant 'selling' function of marketing through its activities. What is interesting about this particular example is that while this practice by the company was on the whole respected and broadly understood by the individuals working at HOME, it nevertheless presented certain key challenges to its established ways of working as marketing professionals. As one HOME team member described: 'They (Bert and Nasi) don't give a lot away and they don't particularly care about doing that much content for the sake of it. But then what is a difficult sell anyway? We think that ONE is a difficult sell and we just accept it' (HOME_004).

We know from the previous facet that not providing much information about what the show is about runs the risk of excluding potential audience members, who may otherwise feel 'out of the loop', leading them to feel frustrated. Indeed this is something that came out through conversations with the company; that on the one hand they do not wish to knowingly exclude anyone from their work, but at the same time they are not aiming to ensure everyone gets the joke: 'it has to mean something to us, it doesn't matter if that's different to what it means to other people' (ONE_002). However it is clear they do not mean this to come across as contemptuous or dismissive of prospective audiences, but rather as a pragmatic admission that they might not be everyone's 'cup of tea'.

Before we explore how this particular campaign could be understood as rejecting the dominant transactional model of marketing, let us first consider the professional context underpinning the professional relationship between the company and HOME, and subsequently the content of the campaign, as we have with the other two shows previously. The ONE copy included lots of reviews from their previous shows; in particular Eurohouse and Palmyra, which incidentally were being performed near the HOME dates at other venues. We also saw in the previous facet how for some people deciding whether to book for a show, they read or rely on reviews from the press, online or trusted family and friends. One of the tactics of HOME's marketing team to sell ONE was to incorporate a number of reviews from the company's previous shows: 'We've not got much content from them, so let's add some of good quotes from their past shows in' (HOME_29). The prominence of reviews of their other shows and details of their past awards gave the

sense that this show sat within a broader context of other work. However this was one of the key barriers for some audience members to grasp what ONE was about.

Figure 4.20: A picture of Bert and Nasi's 'homemade' mailing list sign-up sheet, displayed front of house before and after their performances of ONE



The Bert & Nasi company's approach to marketing can be summarized by their rejection of the notion of publicity as a professional and formal process, as exemplified in their hand drawn sign to join the mailing list, which has an informal and personal feel [Figure 4.20]. Indeed much of their conversations around marketing stemmed from discussions on cultivating relationships, both with their co-producers such as HOME, as already mentioned, but also those reviewers who have watched their work in the past. We saw in the previous facet how the content that they do produce – for example the images, copy and video content – are on the whole interpreted by audience members in the focus group (who, on the whole were unfamiliar with their previous work) as not really enabling them to shape any strong expectations about what to expect from the show itself. This idea was reiterated by one of the HOME team members, who described the process of posting the video made by Bert and Nasi on HOME's social media channels:

> 'There was a point where I think I wrote a tweet being like: 'If you're wondering what you can expect from ONE, [their video trailer] won't answer that.' But it will tell you how to kind of, you know, get a vibe of their humour. […] There's a fun, silly vibe. You know, you'll experience something new. So that's been quite a tricky one' (HOME_001).

It is fairly common practice for theatre companies to create video trailers for their work, which might include footage from rehearsals and/or the finished production, interspersed with interviews or other original material from the show, and often including past audience or critic's reviews. They are regularly used as a promotional tool for live theatre performances. However, Bert and Nasi tend not to develop video content about their shows in this way. As they suggested in one conversation, 'for some shows it works really well; for others – like ours – it doesn't' (HOME_25). The video trailer for ONE shown in the focus groups did, for instance, include some of the music that is used in the play itself, and included the two performers talking to camera, and to each other. However this is not

necessarily ‘footage’ from the show, but more of a taster, or what one HOME team member described as giving a ‘a vibe of their humour’ (HOME_001). It is in this sense more of an introduction perhaps to the artists themselves, or even an extension of their artistic practice, rather than footage from the finished show. We saw in the first facet that the content that they are contractually obliged to create in order to sell tickets through venues for example, the copy and image, are also focused very much on themselves as performers. The images for their shows depict either one or both of the performers. The copy is again fairly factual, explaining the premise of the show ‘Nasi is up a ladder’.

In the context of selling the show as part of a busy theatre season at HOME, this approach to marketing ONE did pose a challenge for the marketing team, who for the most part, were desperate for more content from the company: ‘the more information you have ‘it does help’, the more handle on the show when you’ve seen it (HOME_26). On the whole, interactions between the HOME company and the ONE company were characterized by a strong need for (more) content, in order to provide more of a sense of what to expect, and to design a campaign accordingly. This drive for more content was underpinned by the assumption that more content would provide the team with more information, and thus potentially more understanding of how to design an effective marketing campaign. When I asked one team member what kind of content they would have liked, they said: ‘It would have been good to interview Bert and Nasi about their choice of music in the show. […] Even if their answer is – ‘because it’s good music’, they *are* good content’ (HOME_004, my emphasis).

Again, we return to this idea that it is the people behind this show, rather than its meaning, that is the value here. The role of marketing here then becomes introducing the artists as theatre-makers and creatives, as ‘cool clowns’ as another team member described them (HOME_006), to potential audiences. Marketing here becomes an introduction to Bert and Nasi as people, and as artists, rather than focusing on selling the show as an experience-as-product in its own right.

In summary, ONE in one sense constitutes a difficult sell, but only in so much that it refuses to sit within the model of dominant marketing activity. As one team member put it:

> They turn a lot of stuff on its head. Like ‘okay so you want us to be clear in our marketing materials? No. We’re just going to give you a picture of Nasi and some

> feet'. […] It's the mystery. Being able to read an image really clearly is comforting, but not being able is like a purposeful thing isn't it? (HOME_006)

The dominant model then, which is constituted in response to conceptualisations of the competitive neoliberal marketplace for arts and culture, is founded on the primacy of the 'easy sell' in this sense and does not provide enough space for arts marketers to grasp the level of 'time and understanding' that they feel they need. This challenge is compounded in this example by Bert and Nasi's rejection to the idea of marketing-as-selling.

What we have with ONE then is an example of a fully formed soft sell – a sense that whoever chooses to engage with their invitation will be the 'right' audience to engage. This allows us to understand marketing then not as a separate interaction characterised by an overdetermining of the other in an effort to sell something to them, but as the beginning of a series of interactions, that are initiated by the theatre company and in which (willing) audience members are cast as interactors. This idea was brought forth by one team member in their description of the company's use of imagery: 'If you are to engage with their images, then you have to work hard: 'you have to bring yourself into the interaction. Bringing yourself to the work and to the content' (HOME_006) What we have, then, is a blurring of the lines that divide marketing and art-making as discrete professional creative practices.

Study 4: Marketing as intersubjective practice: autonomy in audiencing

In pragmatic terms, both marketing campaigns and live performances have a point where they are considered finished, in some form, in their creation. As we will see in the next facet, a live performance may be understood as finished in one sense when it is performed in front of an audience. Indeed performance studies scholars and theatre-makers alike may also argue that a theatre show is never really finished, as it is constantly shifting and changing in accordance with the dynamics within the audience-artist interaction. Arguably, the same could be true to a certain extent with marketing campaigns: especially in the digital age which allows for webpages to be updated and communications to be more responsive. In this sense, both marketing and theatre-making can be understood as processes of a similar nature: they both involve the management of interactions, even if, in the particular case of Red Dust Road, for example, these processes are managed by

separate teams (i.e. the creative team working on the show, and the NTS marketing and producing teams).

As we have seen, SWIM presented the opportunity for the content to find multiple different entry points or ways in for prospective audiences. What remained steadfast throughout the creative process, and the corresponding communications campaign run by the company and the HOME team, was the mention of the theme of open water or 'wild swimming'. However, as the show progressed, we can see how this theme was opened up to incorporate other themes or narratives. One team member after watching the show and working on the campaign felt that in fact the show was not about open water swimming at all, but instead a more personal story:

> In lots of ways it was ideal, because we were there from the beginning and just had the chance to really start thinking early on about who those audiences might be… […] But when it came to the actual show… it was a bit confusing about what it was about. […] I think I lost a bit of a grasp on what I was selling […] I thought I was selling one thing and then it was something else (HOME_002).

Marketing is conceptualised here as an ongoing dynamic process of engaging with the show through a sort of professional audiencing practice. Indeed this idea was reflected in the conversations with the company around the pressures not only to produce content while making a show and to ultimately 'form a product before it's created' (HOME_32).

It was generally understood, even expected, among HOME team members – both in the producing and marketing teams – that shows would morph and change as they were produced. As one team member pointed out: 'how do you [the theatre-maker] pin ideas down to just one thing?' (HOME_005). This is one of the reasons why having a show developed 'in-house' was seen by many as the ideal opportunity to dip into the different stages of the show's development: 'Perhaps it's better to ask what is it about *now*? Shows evolve and don't stay the same' (HOME_003). This fluidity of content was also described by arts marketers and campaigns as well – as one team member described their relationship with the campaign for both Red Dust Road and SWIM, that took place across a number of months: **'**You can become blind [sic] to it seeing too much and forgetting what you are meant to be saying. You can change your mind as the campaign progresses (HOME_004). Indeed, it is seen in both cases – for marketing and for artistic practice – that this fluidity enables a certain dynamism and responsiveness to audiences and potential audiences. Similarly for artists, sharing their work with potential audiences – even

constituted by professional networks as private sharings – is a way to trial out ideas from the rehearsal room, ahead of the official opening of a show.

Casting the audience

Early versions of the show SWIM were shared as work-in-progress 'sharings', both at York Theatre Royal as part of a 'scratch night' and through formal sharings with HOME staff to see progress on the show in the rehearsal room. The former was a ticketed event and open to the public, the latter was a private event for staff at HOME, including those working in the theatre and marketing teams. The value for marketers and HOME team members in attending sharings is evident in their use of them as an opportunity to further frame their own experience of the show to inform their professional marketing and communications activity. However it is also worth exploring the value of these same sharings – in the case of SWIM for example – to the theatre company themselves. The value of sharings was primarily articulated by theatre companies as an opportunity to workshop particular scenes that represented an opportunity to rehearse a particular mode of interaction that is dependent on input from audiences (e.g. scenes where audience input was needed), but also an opportunity to try out ideas and get a feel for the room.

This practice is central to many artists' creative process – for example, Bert and Nasi referred to work-in-progress sharings as 'audience workshopping' (ONE_003). While these sessions constitute a sharing of progress and work that has been taking place in the rehearsal room, from the theatre-makers' perspective it is clear that it is in fact the audience, or perhaps more specifically, the interaction with the audience that is being workshopped, on the theatre-makers terms. It is in this way that the artists retain their autonomy as interactors, as well as acting as the designers for the rules or 'blueprint' of the interaction itself.

It is through these sharings that marketers, as early audience members, also retain their autonomy, in relation to their meaning-making practices as well. They use these sharings as an opportunity to begin their audiencing of a particular show, a particular interaction with a particular artist. In this sense, we can understand marketing practice as a type of interpersonal or intersubjective practice of engaging with the artists or theatre-makers themselves. Here we are moving away from the definition of marketing as an abstract, disembodied business practice, towards one of embodied engaging through social interaction between two autonomous interactors.

Marketing as audiencing

Time and again the marketing team referred to their role as arts marketers in relation to audiences: either as ‘the audience experts’ (HOME_002) or the audience being their priority (HOME_003). We have seen in the practice of uncovering different narratives that might be of potential interest to prospective audiences as central to the ideas of developing and diversifying audiences perceived to be a key professional responsibility of the marketing team, and of the organisation as a whole. Yet this was not simply understood as an abstract or theoretical exercise; being able to experience and see a show first-hand was repeatedly and consistently understood as the ideal. While first-hand contact with artists and their creative processes was seen as an opportunity to collate content (e.g. photos, videos, interviews) of ‘behind-the-scenes’ content, the opportunity to ‘audience’ a show ahead of selling it was seen as equally, if not more, important than opportunity to produce content.

Many marketing staff felt that seeing a show just gave them a very quick and easy understanding of what a show involved, which made working on the campaigns that much easier, because they have a sense of what a show is about (HOME_003). Yet there was also a sense through first-hand personal audiencing experience of a show, that marketing staff were able to be more ‘truthful’ or ‘authentic’ when it came to articulating and communicating the value of the shows to audiences (HOME_002). The ‘massive responsibility’ that marketing team members felt to audiences was typified when one team member went so far to say that they, speaking personally, refused to promise something in a campaign that they felt the theatre experience could not deliver. It is clear here that the responsibility to audiences transcends a professional or organisational shared responsibility to something much more personal (HOME_003). In this sense marketing was described as an inherently ethical conundrum, with one member assimilating deliberately misselling something as ‘lying’ or being dishonest (HOME_001).

Indeed it could be argued that this motivation to produce ‘more’ content, to witness and communicate insights from the processes of theatre-making, was sometimes motivated by an underlying and personal curiosity of the arts marketer to understand or get the show first-hand: ‘I do struggle with shows when I don't understand why. This is why marketers need to speak to artists at the earliest possible point of creation, understanding why is crucial’ (HOME_004). While this idea that seeing a show first-hand enabled marketing

teams to truthfully communicate their own experiences of a show, and somehow for a show's quality authentically, HOME team members were keen to stress in interviews that while it was easier to sell a show that they had enjoyed, they did not have to love a show personally in order to find value in watching the show to inform their professional practice. An example was given by one team member of going to see a show which did not instantly appeal to them through the initial introduction to the idea, and was still not of interest once they had seen the show. However what was key was that they were able to understand the creative processes behind the show and that was the key priority for them in that campaign: '…being allowed to be in [the artist's] brain stops us marketing the content and starts us marketing the creation side of it' (HOME_004). This access to the process but also the creative people behind the show was a recurrent theme (HOME_001). Here good 'content' is characterised as having the ability to engage with the people behind the shows, such as through interviews or other content, but also to give audiences a sense of *why* particular decisions have been made across all areas of the creative process, once again reinforcing the intersubjective nature of marketing practice.

There was also a recurring understanding and empathy between the marketing team and the theatre-makers for the stresses and strains of the creation process, and the additional demands that marketing activity might place on the rehearsal process. It was clear that members of the HOME marketing team felt a responsibility to reflect the artist's process 'in a good light', and a lot of effort went in to making sure, where possible, artists felt comfortable in taking part in any communications activity. For one team member, this was similar to the idea of building relationships on trust with artists as much as with audiences. If a company was unwilling to engage with the marketing processes of the team, it was seen as a lost opportunity for audiences (HOME_002). In this sense we can see how the interactions between theatre-makers and the HOME team as intermediaries can be understood as deeply social, reinforcing marketing and audiencing as intersubjective processes that have a mutual responsibility to one another.

We have seen how these processes of audiencing on a show-by-show level is clearly a process valued by marketing professionals to inform their specific campaign activity. Of course, it is not always possible for marketers to see every show that they work on ahead of starting a campaign – not least because a show might be being developed elsewhere and therefore is inaccessible, or the pressures of time and resource might prevent access to the creative process in this way. However seeing shows as arts professionals working

on a particular show's campaign was not only described in terms of a professional responsibility; there was a sense that many HOME team members were also interested in their experiences as audience members for theatre and art more broadly. Throughout interviews as part of this research and in broader professional activity such as marketing meetings, team members would often incarnate and incorporate their past experiences of theatre shows and artistic experience more broadly into these interactions.

Thus there was an emphasis placed on this broader individual cultural diet as a useful frame of reference – both in terms of explaining and justifying their individual responses to particular theatre shows. It was not uncommon for HOME team members to describe their experiences of working at HOME in relation to developing their own individual tastes and broadening their own cultural experiences and how working at HOME had been a learning, 'eye-opening' experience (HOME_001). Beyond the opportunity to experience shows by particular artists they loved, HOME team members repeatedly placed an emphasis on the processes of learning and developing understanding of their own cultural experiences – essentially of their own audiencing practices – as working out what they liked (HOME_004). For instance, one team member described their love of new writing as simply a result of liking 'thinking new things' (HOME_004).

Furthermore, there was a sense that what the staff team, as audience members, expected from HOME was the unexpected and the new, again often referring to their own tastes as 'eclectic', being into 'weird theatre' that offered 'unusual experiences' (HOME_003 & HOME_004). Far from being esoteric naval-gazing, or an added 'bonus' for working in the arts, this was seen as an integral aspect of their professional practice as arts professionals that was both relational and dynamic. One team member likened their dynamic and ever-developing tastes and audiencing of theatre as a continual process of self-understanding – ensuring that they made a point of going to see shows that they did not really like. They went on to describe the process of making sense of their cultural experiences as a way of continually engaging with the new and the different – never really knowing exactly what you will like, and being able to keep an open mind about cultural experiences:

> You're not going to keep eating the same food for the rest of your life because you know, you like it, you're gonna want to try something else as well. And I'm tempted… I know I don't like Marmite. I'm tempted to try it again because someone gave me… some crisps, I can't remember what they're called, some Christmas snack […] Yeah and apparently they taste like Marmite and I really

> liked them. And I was like, I thought I didn't like Marmite. So now I'm gonna go back and taste Marmite again (HOME_005).

This study has aimed to highlight the importance of these personal audiencing experiences as directly related to the professional marketing activities managed by arts professionals. From something that is often seen as an abstract, disembodied and strategic process of marketing emerges a more intuitive and embodied practice of audiencing and valuing. What's more, the emphasis on these processes by the HOME teams was not just a result of theoretical abstractions or indulgent musings in the bar after a show, but rather were seen to directly, and pragmatically relate to the content of campaigns and strategic direction of their marketing practice.

However, this idea of using their own experience to relate to the show (HOME_004) and inform the creation of their campaigns was often qualified by a recognition of the tension between their own personal experience and those of a potential broader audience. It is in this way that these individuals transcend the boundaries of their own subjective experience and make sense of their own experiences in relation to the experiences and interactions with others. This intersubjectivity nevertheless is rooted in a sense of their own autonomy as interactors and as audience members, in much the same way we saw artists enacting their own autonomy in the sharings of their work in progress. This recognition of their autonomy within these interactions was made manifest in one team member's response to the question on how useful the sharings were for their practice. We have seen already how useful these sharings were to developing a deeper understanding of the artist or theatre-maker's creative processes and decision-making, for example, but rather than just leaving it there – this team member suggested: 'Seeing the sharing so early on is incredibly useful, as we can ask questions. We have an idea of *what we think'* (HOME_22). Returning to the idea of needing 'time and understanding' here we can see how team members valued most of all the opportunity and space to engage with the creative process: the opportunity to not just be presented with information, but to ask questions, to probe and develop an idea of where they sit in relation to their experience, and presumably, the experience of others within this shared audiencing context.

We can see throughout this facet the different examples where the HOME marketing team aimed to bring out a range of different narratives or interpretations on behalf of different prospective audiences. In this sense, the importance HOME team members placed on transcending the boundaries of their own personal experience was also articulated as an

ethical imperative. As one team member put it: ‘you don't want to attract people like me all the time’ (HOME_002). There was a tension further articulated here around their ability or authority to make assumptions on behalf of other people. This often emerged as a sense of unease, as making assumptions was seen to be part and parcel of their professional practice, although it was often not described as simple or straightforward:

> I think if […] you’ve told someone honestly what they’re going to get out of something - it’s to the best of your ability, you don’t know what everyone’s gonna get out of everything - and they get it, by and large, they’re going to come back. But if you tell someone they’re going to experience this, like, amazing thing and then their life’s never gonna be the same again, and then they come in, they’re like, what? When are they going to come back? They’re never going to believe you (HOME_003).

What we have here is an embodied and felt tension by a member of the arts marketing team for any kind of promising, guaranteeing on behalf of others, even when that judgement is based on their own personal interests or their own personally experienced experience. Here we can begin to see the shifting away from the dominant model of marketing as a transaction of discrete units of values, towards an understanding based on a more fluid and dynamic intersubjective enaction of value through interaction between active agents both with their own autonomy on their own meaning-making processes.

Facet 2 Conclusion

This facet explored the conferred and collaborative processes across three different co-producing models to produce content for the shows’ communications campaigns. Within the arts management context, these processes were enacted between the navigation of sales activity and during the development of the shows themselves. Access to the creative process was seen as a vital for the HOME marketing team, as was clarity in communications and a sensitivity to ‘mis-selling’ a theatre show. The strategies employed demonstrated the key hallmarks of Rentschler et al.’s (2002) relationship marketing or what Walmsley describes as the ‘relational turn’ (2021); for example in the role that HOME’s digital engagement strategy played for the digital team at the time in terms of building trust and coming across as ‘being human’ (HOME_001).

Through interactions with HOME marketing staff, it became clear how the individuals that made up the marketing and communications team saw their roles as cultural

intermediaries as connecting or matchmaking audiences with the specific theatre experiences that made up HOME's programme, while also acknowledging the resource limitations (especially time). This idea was also central to the process of identifying key messages or themes of shows for campaigns, which the HOME marketing team often used as an opportunity to reach new audiences, central to their audience diversification and development strategies. The use of vox pops and the production of social media cards, for instance, was seen to be a key tool in platforming, and inevitably curating, as broad a diversity of voices and opinions of shows from audience members.

SWIM was in many ways seen as an example of how the HOME marketing team wanted to work with theatre companies, enabling access to the process of creation, building on existing relationships with theatre practitioners and a willingness from members of the theatre company to collaborate on developing new content for marketing and communications campaigns, including notably an outdoor swim. Red Dust Road, as a partnership with an established national producing organisation, provided opportunities for the marketing teams from both HOME and NTS to work directly together. The fact that the show opened in Scotland before touring to HOME enabled the team to see the show in advance and disseminate additional content produced, such as production photographs and a video trailer. We saw in this facet how ONE, on the other hand, was conceptualised differently in relation to this particular dominant transactional framework. Unlike SWIM and Red Dust Road, it was often referred to as a difficult sell, not least because as we saw in the first facet, many audience participants and HOME marketing team members too, were unsure what they might expect from the performance, and therefore found it difficult to frame in relation to their own experiences.

Members of the HOME marketing team often described and, in some cases, demonstrated feeling driven by a need to grasp what the show was about *for themselves*. We saw throughout this facet how arts marketers related to their own personal experience of watching the shows 'first-hand'. Only then did they feel able to develop content in order to describe it to others. So in that sense, the prospect of seeing the show first hand in the form of a 'sharing' was lauded as the perfect opportunity to do just that. We saw in this facet too, how these sharings also played a role for the theatre companies in terms of feeding into the development of the shows themselves. Even when it is articulated clearly that these sharings will often differ from the 'final' theatre show, these nevertheless present opportunities to workshop or rehearse a particular audiencing and performing role.

While seeing a show first hand were often seen as opportunities to produce more content for social media, there was something more significant: it was as if people could only ‘get’ the show, or the prospect of the show, through the experience of it. This is an inherent acknowledgement of the value of knowing in an embodied way - through embodied social interaction.

This facet provided concrete examples of the embodied and primarily intersubjective and social practice of the individuals that practise arts marketing. By focusing on the work of cultural intermediaries, we can also explore the conferral of value as enacted through arts marketing and audience development practice. Crucially as Hadley reminds us, these set of practices are not technical, but ideological (Hadley 2021). In particular this facet illustrates how engagement and diversity narratives are situated within these languaging practices, through the audience development and communications activity that aims to develop (and diversify) HOME’s audiences for live performance. Cultural intermediaries thus navigate the tension between their own autonomy as individuals, and their roles as professional intermediaries, through their own sense-making processes. As Negus argues, to ‘untangle and disaggregate’ these professional and personal practices of cultural intermediaries, is to work out when and how particular marketing practices might be considered ‘reflexive, creative and innovative and when they might be considered unreflexive, habitual, conservative and mundane’ (2002, p.510).

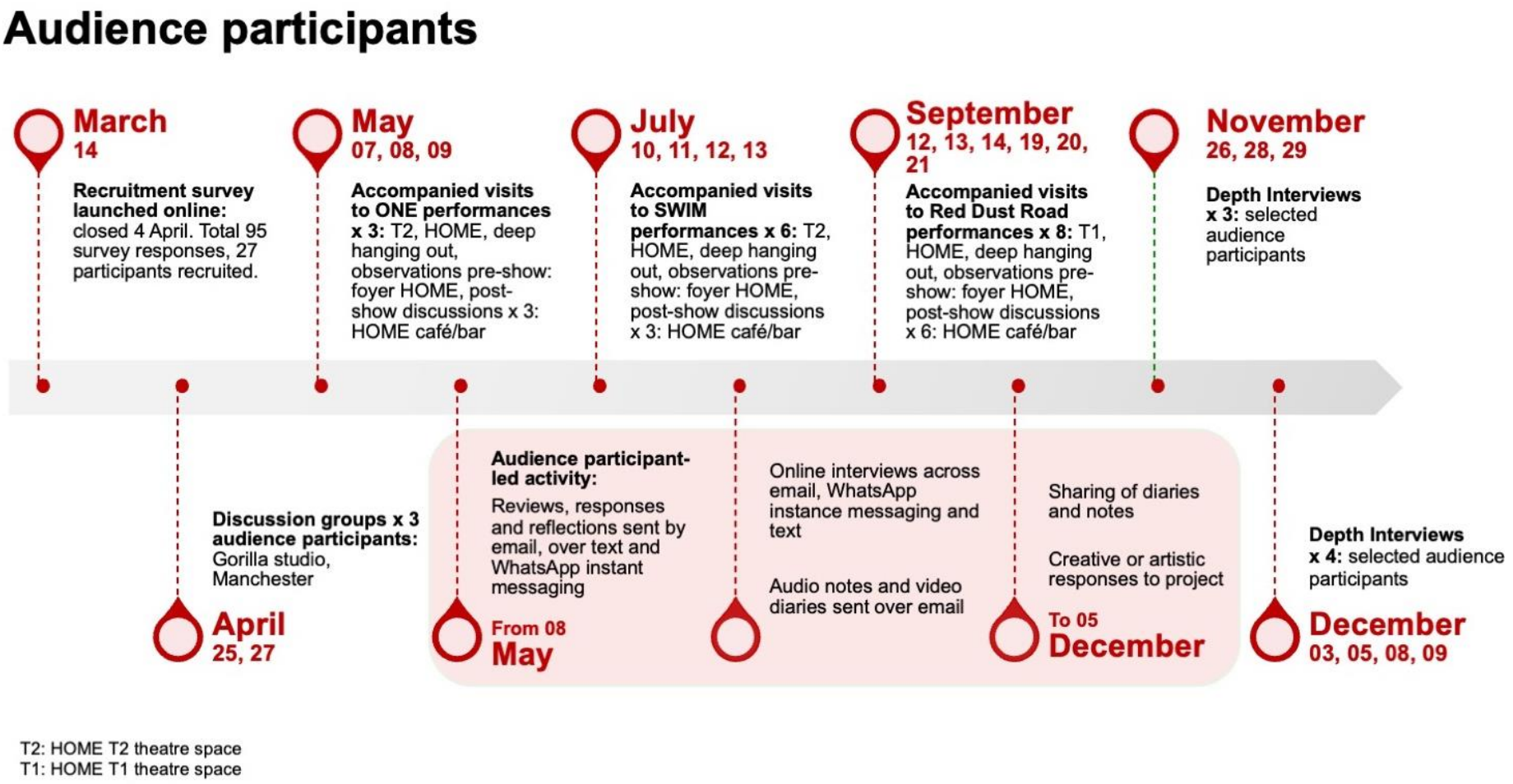
Facet 3: The theatre event

The line of investigation for this facet focuses on the coming together of the audience and performers at the theatre 'event' and how these interactions are regulated by participants in interaction with one another, the theatre performing companies and the venue space hosted by the cultural intermediaries (HOME). In particular the facet looks at how roles of audience and performer were conceived through the processes surrounding the theatre performance events, and how audience participants selected particular aspects of their experience to focus on in their interpretation and meaning-making processes. This facet starts with an overview of responses from audiences to the three shows, describing how they experienced the show (and how their experiences related to their expectations of the show) or how the performance matched up to the 'individual's map of how it should have been' (Reason 2004). It also explores what they thought the shows were 'about'; what they liked or did not like; and how they conceived their roles in relation to both the performing company and the spaces of the theatre auditoria in general. It looks in more detail at how they understood their experiences of the events as being (or not being) meaningful, aiming to lay bare the different pathways of understanding of the 'same' theatre event.

Outline of activity underpinning this facet

As explored in the methodology chapter, this facet is underpinned by a series of methods under the umbrella 'deep hanging out' with the addition of a series of participant-led responses to shows, building on the discussion groups outlined in Facet 1. Participants were given the option to take part in the project in whatever way(s) they felt most appropriate and the methods that were chosen will be explored in more detail in later facets. I attended the events with audience participants, and facilitated conversations in pre- and post-show discussions, notes and observations made during the research process, and responses provided by audience participants in the lead-up to and following their attendance at each performance. The timeline below provides details of the fieldwork conducted with audience participants, a large majority of which underpins the analysis outlined in this facet, in addition to the fieldwork conducted with audience participants that underpins the analysis for this facet [Figure 4.21].

Figure 4.21: Research timeline: Audience participants fieldwork strand



T2: HOME T2 theatre space
T1: HOME T1 theatre space

Overview of the reception of the shows

Out of all the three shows, audience participant responses to ONE were the most polarised. Those who loved the show described it as ‘surprising, fun, tense’ (ONEAP42), while others felt a more emotional connection: ‘brain buzzing in reflecting on it. Emotional catharsis. Incredible moving experience in shaping constructs’ (Grace ONEAP30). Jade suggested it was an ‘amazing production’ and one of the ‘best things’ she had ever seen (ONEAP09), and Faith felt inspired by its creativity: ‘…my creative brain has been ‘fed’ with this piece’ (ONEAP32). While all these participants found ONE enjoyable for many different reasons, there were just as many audience participants who felt the complete opposite. Matthew and Pablo recalled the show as being ‘the worst thing’ they had ever seen (ONEAP23; ONEAP39).

On the whole responses to SWIM were less polarised than they were to ONE, and the show appealed to a broader group of audience participants. Pablo pointed out that the theme of grief was so relatable to everyone’s experiences that he was not convinced ‘someone can actually hate this…you can be the person that has lost someone or you can be the person that loves someone who has’ (SWIMDGAP16). Aaron described how the use of mixed media such as live music, videography and performance gave the performance an ‘incredibly poetic’ feel ‘all the way through’ (SWIMDGAP16), whereas others specifically mentioned the ‘heightened’ ‘pared back’ language, with the music matching the words (Sue SWIMDGAP21; Bee SWIMDGAP26). Many participants cited the ‘immersive’ nature of the show as feeling ‘as if we were actually in it’ (Bee SWIM APDG31). Others felt the use of different media in the show, such as film, performance and music, kept them engaged throughout, with Cadi commenting that this was something she ‘personally hadn’t seen done in that way in theatre before’ (SWIMAP36). Matthew pointed out that the different modes and media used in the show ensured that each scene was ‘short enough to not drag on’ but with enough changing that ‘if you didn’t like one section, perhaps you would the next one’ (SWIMAP38).

Audience participants often described engaging with SWIM on an emotional level. Faith described how she was ‘really invested in the emotion of the piece’ and found some of the projections, such as the imagery of trees reflecting on water which ‘made the water look like it was on fire’ mixed with the narrative and the videos in the show all ‘made me feel very emotional', in a cathartic way, 'not like in a sad way - just like bubbling up'

(SWIMDGAP04). Others noted ‘how personal a story it was’, adding how the character of Liz was ‘very good at connecting with the audience’ (Seb SWIMAP51).

As well as resonating with audience participants’ experiences of swimming, (with some even sending me photographs of them trying wild swimming as a result of the play (Pablo SWIMAP41)), the theme of grief in the show resonated with many audience participants’ experiences of loss in their own lives (e.g. Pat SWIMAP43). One of the audience participants who works with a lot of people who are grieving in his professional life, found much of what happened in the play to be ‘really poignant and really perfect’, quoting the specific lines from the play:

> Talking about at the end saying: 'you stay in [the water] as long as you want and whatever you do will be right for you'. I'm always saying this to people, you know, everybody's bereavement is very different. And you go through that process, and it's right for you (Aaron SWIMDGAP16).

When attending Red Dust Road, many audience participants mentioned their experience of the larger auditorium (T1) as well as the staging of the show when discussing their responses. Those audience participants who found the smaller T2 space to be uncomfortable appreciated the 'larger, more comfortable theatre' which afforded them a 'more enjoyable experience' (Matthew RDRAP32). Daphne reflected how this all culminated for her in more of an ‘event’ feel, explaining in a text message after the performance: ‘I think the change of theatre made it feel more like a night of entertainment [while] I viewed the others as research' (RDRAP41). A number of audience participants felt that out of the three shows they saw as part of this project, Red Dust Road was the one that offered the most ‘production value’ (Nevan RDRDGAP12). While some commented on the higher ticket price of Red Dust Road, compared to ONE and SWIM, others like Nevan, linked this to a general sense of value and a perception of a larger production budget: ‘(t)here's money gone into that as well, the way it's been designed […] this is clearly the most professional (of the three plays we've seen) by a 100 miles' (RDRDGAP12).

Similarly, most audience participants described Red Dust Road as more traditional or conventional in comparison to ONE and SWIM. For Adam, not only was the show well staged, he felt it was the best of the three performances because ‘it had a story [that] could be followed without struggling to interpret abstract concepts' (RDRAP35). Anaïs too felt more familiar with the format of the story: 'I think it's like a way of doing the story that

you're much more used to… it was much more linear' (RDRDGAP16). Hazel too described the appeal of the show's 'clear beginning, middle and end' which matched her expectations of what she was going to see (RDRAP38). Seb recognized the more familiar theatrical convention of having more characters included in the story (RDRAP06) and Cadi too described her use of the word 'conventional' to describe: 'what I'm used to in the theatre - people acting out a story in a more 'traditional' way' (RDRAP33). At the interval for Red Dust Road, Liz compared the different aims of each production, musing on the way she felt ONE and SWIM were aiming to reflect and raise 'thoughts for the audience to consider' whereas Red Dust Road, while touching on ideas such as 'the nature of identity' was 'essentially… the story of Jackie Kay and her life' and was therefore 'more traditionally a play' (RDRAP07). She felt that this was fairly typical of the programming of HOME, which she expected to stage smaller scale shows in the T2 space that are 'more about ideas or touching on a series of things, rather than one nice neat story' (Liz RDRAP07).

But for other participants, it was not just the form that they liked – or the way that the story was told – but a sense that the show had more *content* to it. In her post-show response to the show sent over email, Susan listed a wide range of adjectives and themes to describe her experience of Red Dust Road: 'autobiographical, uplifting, informative, pathos, humour, ignorance, sadness, racism, happiness… (Susan RDRAP37). Khidr described Red Dust Road as his favourite story so far, citing the subject matter of 'race, belonging' and 'family' as themes 'that a lot of people talk about', adding 'there's a lot more of a story to it' than the previous two shows (RDRAP20). Hazel too explained that Red Dust Road was probably her favourite show, because 'it felt like it had more in it, for me.' (Hazel RDRDGAP12). For these audience participants, the different themes, topics or subjects that Red Dust Road 'covered' was, for them, indicative of a presumed broader appeal, in comparison to ONE or SWIM. For this reason, the idea that something had the potential to appeal to more people was directly related to their perceived quality of the performance, defined by the degree to which they perceive it to have the potential to engage other people. This implies to a certain extent there is a necessity to make sense of the appeal for others in participants' definitions of quality and value, as well as a recognition of one's own individual experiences. That is to say it is as much socially constructed in and through others' experiences (or our perception of their experiences) as well as the perception of our own.

Study 1: Marketing and expectations

In the initial focus groups many audience participants felt the copy and image for ONE did not give them a sense of what to expect from the show: 'I couldn't get a feel for what the production would entail' (Cadi ONEAP12). Adam recalled trying to find out more about show, and was 'surprised' that he could not, adding that he was likely to have 'not booked for the show' as a result (ONEAP41).

ONE - A show about politics?

While the audience participants related in different ways to what they were expecting from engaging with the marketing content, for many participants who expected the show to be political, the show did not deliver on its promise. On reading the updated copy on the webpage before going to see the show, Nevan recalled expecting the show to 'be about a clash between left wing and right wing political views' which he felt overall did not 'gel with what we saw' (ONEAP22). Matthew felt that the show 'certainly did not provide any deeper thought or insight into the topics they chose' (ONEAP23). Pat felt that she 'could not see how it related to the supposed theme at all' (ONEAP29). Liz described the intentions of the artist, as outlined in the copy, as having 'lofty ambitions' which were unfulfilled (ONEDGAP03). Pablo described the feeling of not getting what was described in the promotional copy as akin to 'cheating on the audience' and admitted feeling misinformed (ONEAP03).

Figure 4.22: A rap written (and performed) by audience participant Susan in response to ONE

The 'One' Rap!

'One' was actually **'Two'**

Who **knew** what was going on…at **Home…?**

The lights were on but was there anybody '**home'?**

Their 'blurb' was **wrong**….

Politics? I don't think so…

Comedy more like was going **on…** it was played through **song** (and even **dance** – at the end….those moves were **strong**)

When Bert went offstage, that bit was **long…**

I could go **on** and **on** and **on….** Comedy, **yes**….but **political theatre…I** think that was wrong!

But I still liked it!

However, while most participants agreed that the copy did not reflect their experiences of the show, for others not getting what they expected formed a key part of their enjoyment of ONE. As Sue remarked as she walked into the auditorium, 'I'm deliberately emptying my brain', so as not to form too many preconceptions of what to expect, and to go into the auditorium with 'an open mind' (ONEAP07). Seb justified his decision to not do any

research into the show beforehand as wanting ‘to have an authentic reaction to what I was seeing' (ONEAP27). These participants purposefully chose not to find out what the show involved. Others did, but enjoyed the surprise: Bee described ONE as something ‘new and different’, going on to explain that she had ‘never experienced anything like that before…I smiled throughout’ (ONEAP13). Tamara recalls how ONE was the show out of the three that she enjoyed the most, even though she felt she could not really communicate what the show was about:

> I really enjoyed that. It was a little bit weird […] I like that. I can't really tell you what the play was about, I can't. But I know that I laughed. I laughed the whole time. And my eyes were really open […] you know just watching it, it was great. I really, really enjoyed it. It stuck with me […] the whole weirdness of it. I spent the whole of that play wondering, “what is actually going on?”. That was what was in my head the whole time. I didn't get it. I really didn't get it (Tamara RDRDGAP26).

Erica too described it as ‘something quite unexpected, but in a good way’ (ONEDGAP09). Daphne, who ‘thought it was brilliant’, felt that she would simply ‘describe it differently’ to how it was described in the copy, as for her it was as much about ‘inner turmoil’ as it was ‘a political thing’ (ONEDGAP09).

For some participants, the fact that the show did not explicitly engage with ‘political’ material was a relief. Faith reflects in her post-show notes that she was initially worried about this aspect of the show, which she felt she might not understand (ONEAP32). Seb too was hoping for more of a ‘character piece rather than a statement of society’ and the fact that the show did not fulfil this ‘promise of a political show’ was in fact fine with him (ONEAP27.) Sue was worried that the show’s ambitions to be political would result in it being too ‘clunky-political’ and ‘more obviously boldly phrased’, whereas she found the actual show to be more interesting (ONEDGAP09). Grace reflected on the way for her the show did not talk ‘explicitly about the issue that it was trying to cover - about people not feeling like they could be together and being awful about it, as a divided society’ and enjoyed the fact that it was not too ‘pushy’ or ‘didactic’ in this sense (RDRDGAP26).

SWIM

By contrast, on the whole, the marketing for SWIM provided a clear frame of reference on which audience participants built their expectations. Given the subject matter of grief and bereavement, many audience participants were not surprised that they found the show

emotional and sad and the music to be particularly moving. Seb, who described how he likes ‘something that's going to pull me in emotionally’ felt SWIM ‘really kind of lived up to that’ (SWIMAP51). Erica, who had recently experienced the death of a dear friend, felt that the show was perfectly timed for them, as they could use the ‘nice dark space’ as a ‘private outlet for my grief’ (SWIMAP46).

After the initial discussion groups, some audience participants engaged with marketing materials ahead of the show more than others – something that they were given an option to do if they felt they would normally, outside of this particular research project. We saw with SWIM in particular how this continual process of engaging with marketing content over the month that preceded the shows played a role in changing their initial expectations formed during the discussion groups at the beginning of the research project. For those audience participants who were worried about how swimming was going to be portrayed on stage, the videos created by the company on the ‘making of’ the show provided some reassurance. Aaron felt these videos helped to allay his fears that the portrayal of swimming would be ‘too abstract’ 'pretending to do swimming moves on stage' but instead 'it was really complex, really good’ (SWIMAP18). The videos changed Seb’s expectations, who initially thought it was going to be really negative ‘being about loss and stuff’, but after watching the video felt ‘now I think it's going to be a bit more positive' (SWIM AP24). Susan shared her pre-show thoughts on the journey to HOME: reflecting back specifically on the moment in the video where the word 'denial' appears on a post, reflecting how that was 'uppermost in my mind at the moment’ as she felt it was ‘one of the stages of grief, but not one that ever dissipates’ (SWIMAP42). Like Seb, Mike was worried the show was going to be really negative initially, but felt that the details of the show on the webpage and the video made the show look ‘really appealing’ and ‘a potentially uplifting story’ (SWIMAP35).

Unlike ONE, those who were expecting SWIM to provide them with something different from what they experienced were, broadly speaking, not disappointed. For instance, Hazel was expecting ‘more of story more like theatre’, but did not mind that it was a mix of theatre and spoken word, and not what she expected (SWIMAP40). Selah, who was expecting 'more of a documentary about the movement' and 'less of the theatre and poetry’ was pleased that she got more than she expected: 'because if it's just documentary, you could watch it at home. There's no added value to coming to the theatre to watch it on screen’ (SWIMDGAP16).

Figure 4.23: Photograph taken by researcher of a poster on display in HOME's toilets. June 2019.

In addition to knowing what to expect, and feeling like on the whole the marketing materials reflected their experience of the show, audience participants were particularly pleased to recognize the image of the lone figure in the water in the video footage used in the show, which Aaron described as an 'iconic bit of artistry' (SWIMDGAP16) from the image used in the marketing [Figure 4.23]. Faith recalled trying to picture the poster in her head as she watched the show, and when she saw the image, 'I don't know why but something makes me feel really happy that the picture is taken from the actual footage' (SWIMDGAP04). Liz too commented how it was 'nice to recognise the imagery (in the projection) that's on the poster […] to see where she came from' (DGAP21). For Anaïs, who recalled the image that she felt was 'strong' when she first saw it, made more sense to her in the context of seeing the show, as 'she looked really wobbly and [it's] the peak moment when she's talking about grief.' For Anaïs, seeing the poster used in the show made it easier to relate it back to the theme of grief (SWIMDGAP09).

Red Dust Road

We saw in Facet 1 how the updated flyer image introduced two months prior to the show's run at HOME in Manchester and used in their season brochure and in the show's printed promotional material (flyer/poster) did not, on the whole, help participants to picture what they might expect from the show. When shown the images after they had seen the show, participants felt the images had 'nothing to do with what we've seen […] we didn't see any of that on stage' (Anaïs RDRDGAP16). While for Anaïs it did not reflect how the production looked, others suggested there was a lack of connection with the characters in the image, or a clash of emotional tone or mood of the image. Pablo argued that 'it did not relate to

the overall mood of the play' because the characters 'look really serious (in a reflective way)' (RDRAP42). Another participant joked how the person in the image looked like 'her financial advisor' and not her daughter (Faith RDRDGAP12).

Figure 4.24: Promotional image for Red Dust Road, used on the inside of the A5 flyer produced for the show. July 2019.

Overall the response of audience participants to the additional content of the campaign once the show had opened in Scotland was fairly positive, with production photos and video content helping to give them much more of a sense of what to expect and in some cases, making the show look more 'colourful and fun' than they were initially expecting (Pablo RDRAP22). Many participants expected there to be more connection with Jackie Kay herself, rather than the actors of the play, on the image. Some even questioned why Jackie Kay was not included in the updated production imagery (Liz RDRDGAP08). Faith suggested she wanted more connection with Jackie's life, and the connection with her Nigerian heritage, including 'pictures from her (Jackie's) childhood […] I'd have a world map and Africa blown up big and Scotland blown up big and then I'd have like, photos - little lined dots and scribbles and notes' (RDRDGAP12). Some participants were not looking forward to the show: for example, those who varied in their familiarity with Jackie Kay and were thus not particularly enthused about 'an autobiography of someone that I don't know' (Seb DG2). However, with the exception of Seb, a fair few of the sceptics turned out to be pleasantly surprised by the show. Jade, who was not at all looking forward to seeing Red Dust Road, was shocked to find it to be 'surprisingly entertaining', adding that she was not expecting 'a really good piece of entertainment […] dancing in it, convincing dancing, proper tunes […] Fast-paced - loads of things moving about, which kept it going' (RDRDGAP50). Erica too, who felt that 'plays' like Red Dust Road were not really something they typically have enjoyed in the past, especially given the play's length compared to shorter, more

‘contemporary’ shows they tend to enjoy, explained that ‘[g]oing to see a two-hour performance […] feels like a commitment for my brain’ but that it was ‘definitely better than I thought it was going to be […] I wasn't clock-watching’ (Erica RDRDGAP22).

What did it mean?

The promise of an inherent meaning can have an intriguing power, as people try and ‘solve the puzzle’ (Khidr DGAP03). Nevertheless, this rests on the assumption that there is a puzzle to be solved in the first place; that there is an intentional series of clues that have been created intentionally, by the company or writer, for the audience to decipher and unpick. Audience participants often described the pleasure they felt from ‘getting’ what the theatre company had intended to create. For example, as Faith described, the ‘tense and uncomfortable atmosphere’ of ONE that she felt walking into the auditorium was, she described, a deliberate aesthetic choice by the artist, and described feeling ‘pleased’ that it had had ‘the desired effect’ on her (ONEAP32).

It follows therefore that there would be frustration for those participants, such as Mike, who felt they did not clearly understand the intentions of the performers with ONE. For example, two weeks after the show, Mike still felt that he ‘didn’t get what the actors or the performers were trying to get at’ (ONEAP13). With Susan, this same sense was prolonged, after trying and (feeling like she was) failing to reach a satisfying interpretation, she described how she was convinced she was ‘clearly missing something’ and admitted feeling ‘intellectually challenged’:

> The more I read about Nasi and Bert's previous work (critiqued so eloquently and intellectually by various play-going journalists) the more confused I have become. Clearly I AM missing something! (Susan ONEAP18)

Two weeks later, she admitted that she was feeling less concerned but still ‘bewildered’ (Susan ONEAP18). But this was not always the case for those who were seeking a coherent meaning. Cadi too felt that the intended messages of the show were just unsuccessfully communicated, 'overshadowed by their execution, a lack of plot or context' (Cadi ONEAP25). For these participants, there was a recognition that there was intention, but a failure of delivery; a sense that the company were intending to communicate something, to ‘get at’ something, to relate to a theme in some way - and were failing to do

this effectively. Instead of taking it as a lack of understanding on her part, Cadi was more confident it was unsuccessful execution on the part of the company.

However, a number of audience participants felt that ONE was, in fact, meaning-*less*. In this case it was not so much that they performers were trying, and failing, to convey a message, nor that their experience of the show itself was meaningful in its own right. It was simply that there was no message or content from the outset to convey. Nevan felt that the show was 'pointless', suggesting that it did not provide any 'substance' or anything 'new or different' and that he had seen things like it before: 'I don't need to watch a couple of four year olds squabble onstage' (ONEAP13). Nevan felt that because the meaning was so obscure, the company was relying too much on the audience to decipher the meaning, 'creating it in our heads', which he felt was 'lazy' on the part of the performer (ONEAP13). Pat too felt that ONE was only thought-provoking in the sense that you had to provoke your own thoughts and 'relate it to your own experience' (ONEAP29). In these particular instances, the effort of interpreting ONE for two participants who differed in levels of experience with theatre such as Pat and Nevan was not worth the perceived pay-off.

We have seen how for some audience participants, not knowing where the show was going, or the intentions of the characters in carrying out their actions on stage, was engaging in itself. These audience participants were also more likely to be satisfied in focusing their meaning-making and interpretations of the shows on the experiential qualities of the show, more than an intellectual or determined message. This was described as a conscious decision by Nina, which she made during the performance, to not think too much about what the company were intending her to think, but rather let herself 'relax into the idea that I could just watch them perform and their relationship without feeling like the show existed to teach me something' (ONEAP34). She later on reflected how she felt after the show, feeling that she had 'a lot to chew' and then later adding 'I left feeling really full but not sure what I'd eaten' (Nina ONEAP34). For Nina, the experience still had substance even though she was not sure what this substance was. For Anaïs, the experience was equally defined on personal terms, and she was pleased she was able to sit with feelings of being uncomfortable:

> [Sitting] through the uncomfortable bits, brought up competing feelings. That for me is the sticking bit. If you're confident enough to face things that are uncomfortable it becomes less uncomfortable (Anaïs ONEDGAP09).

Faith too enjoyed the lack of clear or didactic meaning conveyed in the show, saying that the ‘randomness of the play’ actually gave her confidence in her own interpretation of the show (ONEAP32). Indeed, there were many instances where audience participants described periods of not enjoying their experience of ONE yet in retrospect found enjoyment in unpicking their experiences. For example, Erica admitted that it was in fact two weeks later that they actually ‘connected with it much more after seeing the piece’ (ONEAP28). Commenting that the show itself was ‘more accessible’ and ‘more concise’ and less ‘grand’ and ‘abstract’ than how it had been sold to them, they felt that the ‘underlying theme of conflict was actually very simple’ (Erica ONEDGAP09).

Hazel too recalled feeling tense and uncomfortable throughout the performance, with the message or the meaning of the performance emerging from reflecting on the tension, in retrospect. There is a sense of relief in finding the meaning:

> At times when other people were laughing I felt like I should be laughing. Made my jaw hurt, felt my forehead scrunching up and eyebrows coming together. Confusion / didn't understand. Remember hearing near the end: ‘you'll know what it's about' but didn't think I would, was certain I wouldn't (Hazel ONEAP17).

Yet for Hazel, the scene where Bert and Nasi embrace on the ladder at the end was the ‘lightbulb moment’ where it ‘clicked’ for her: ‘‘it hit me what it was about, or at least what I thought it was about […] it felt like the show had been about ONE person the whole time’ (Hazel ONEAP17). This then made her ‘rethink’ her whole experience. This was a fairly popular interpretation. Seb, who enjoyed the interaction between Bert and Nasi throughout the performance also pondered in his written diary entry three days later if the two characters were in fact ‘multiple facets of one person’s character’ - adding, ‘after all, it was called ONE!’ (ONEAP27). Aaron too felt it was more about layers of a person's character, potentially someone going through mental illness, and the ‘ever-changing layers of a person's character’ (ONEAP13). Daphne too felt that Bert and Nasi were actually one person, and that the two separate characters were ‘two sides of him struggling with accepting (and having others) accept his identity’ (ONEAP21).

For example, while some participants were annoyed that ONE did not deliver on its promise to be ‘about’ politics, others were less sure (or had forgotten entirely) what it was meant to be about, and thus found this retrospective layer of ‘political’ meaning enriching to their memories of the performance. Some deep interpretations emerged. Selah, for

instance, very much enjoyed the lighter, more comedic style of the performance, and found (like Hazel) that the meaning emerged in one particular moment: when the audience were asked to choose what ending they wanted (ONEAPDG09). She described then remembering that the show was meant to be ‘about Brexit or something’ (Selah ONEAPDG09). Khidr and Nooren in the post-show chat in the bar discussed at length the show’s ‘political messages’, recalling specific scenes which illustrated the ‘power play’ between the two characters, and the idea that the audience had to ‘pick a side’ (ONEDGAP0). While initially suggesting that the show was not really about politics, Nooren asks the question: ‘is politics actually just relationships? There are lots of politicians who are just idiots… [and] the biggest idiot gets the attention’ (ONEDGAP03). Grace too felt like ONE was a ‘political play’ as it illustrated ‘tensions and trying to solve and bring solutions’, and how division in society more broadly is often a result of ‘one side being rude to the other’ and ‘not listening’ (ONEDGAP09). For Grace, the play was a direct metaphor for what she felt the UK was going through at that time, with the Brexit campaign, with both ‘sides’ using the same strategy: ‘you have to choose, you have to pick a side. And then it’s implied that you have to ignore the other side and not listen to them’ (Grace ONEDGAP09).

Many audience participants admitted to being moved by the idea in SWIM that someone would make a show about their friend who was grieving: ‘That she felt such love […] for this other person that she felt moved to do this and put all the time into this. I just thought 'I don't think anyone feels like that about me?' (Bee SWIMAP31). Pat too recalled that Liz said she'd done it for her friend:

> Actually I thought “God I'd love somebody to do something like that for me you know” […] She said something at the end like 'it's not about you, it's for you' - and I thought: 'imagine if that's you and your friend has made a show like that for you (Pat SWIMDGAP13).

For these participants, the show was conceptualised as an utterance of love to the performer’s friend - an idea that resonated strongly with them conceiving it as a play about ‘friendship’ more than grief or wild swimming (Bee SWIMDGAP31). However, while some found the performers ‘deconstructing [the story] live’ (Selah SWIMDGAP16), ‘peeking behind the curtain’ into the creative process of putting on a show (Nina SWIMDGAP04) appealing, others were more sceptical of the intentions and impact. Jade felt that the faux interview style used ‘was too difficult to build up the story’ and was fleshing out an already ‘thin premise’ (SWIMAP23).

Deep and meaningful

This next section briefly touches on some of the more profound or deeper meanings that audience participants enacted through their reflective activities. A number of audience participants also recalled being surprised by connections to their own personal experiences that they made during the show; often experiences that they had forgotten or not thought about until the play itself. For Aaron, the biggest and most unexpected connection he made was the section in the show with the video of them in the car after swimming, as it reminded him of a time he took part in a giant artwork as part of Hull City of Culture 2017, which involved him being naked with hundreds of strangers on a beach:

> It was such a cold immersive out there experience, to be naked with that many people.. the adrenaline rush of doing it and then afterwards how people just bonded together […] the sudden community that forms because you've gone through the same experience. So for me it was exciting I suppose and it was the same for me. I didn't expect that to happen with that experience. But I won't send you any pictures [laughs] (Aaron SWIMDGAP16).

Nina recalled what she described as a ‘spooky’ moment in SWIM which she could relate directly back to a recent experience she had being with a friend swimming in the water on holiday. Like the part in SWIM where the characters describe being ‘there’ for a loved one without having to touch them or talk to them ‘and actually that's when you can feel like closest to someone', Nina recalled when her and her friend got out of the water, she felt it had been in some way 'therapeutic' for their relationship. She goes on to explain:

> Obviously it was wildly different scenarios, different relationships. I guess I've been thinking about it quite a lot over the past weeks because it was quite a strange […] I didn't even think that when I was going to see a play called SWIM […] that didn't even cross my mind (Nina SWIMDGAP04).

Nevan too recalled how his experience of the show itself made him recognise that when he lost a loved one many years ago, he had taken up long distance swimming, and had found the repetitive motion of swimming good for clearing his mind (SWIM DGAP09). Once again, Nevan expressed surprise that he had not thought about the significance of this until he saw the show:

> I never thought about it, you know. It's quite funny. Until this play, I never thought that maybe I was using that as a support, you know, as counselling for myself (Nevan SWIMDGAP09).

For these audience participants, their experiences of SWIM resulted in them reflecting on, and in some cases revisiting the significance of, their past lived experiences. Illustrating a similar depth of engagement and linking to past lived experiences, there were however some participants who did not feel that SWIM represented or resonated with their own lived experiences of some of what was being depicted on stage. For instance, audience participant Jade, who has been swimming outside all her life, loved the visuals, and the 'evocative live music', remarking on the 'immediacy and intensity' of the staging, and describing how 'when they jumped about you could feel the thump through your body' (Jade SWIMAP23). But she felt that the 'love of water' was not communicated strongly enough, and that there were other crucial aspects of wild swimming that she felt were missing. While Jade suggested that she 'got the link between grief, trauma and swimming', the fact that neither Josie nor Sam seemed to enjoy swimming surprised her. In a similar way, Sue felt that the show did not delve deep enough into grief and wanted deeper engagement with this theme of which she had considerable lived experience (SWIMDGAP21). For her the key aspect of grief being the 'ever-present sense of absence' was missing from the show, and she wanted Liz to give up her own grief of losing a part of her friend: 'When your friend stops being the person they were because they're grieving, you lose a bit of your friend… who you were able to be as you related to them' (Sue SWIMDGAP21). She felt that the show should have done this as the whole play was about connecting with her friend and her friend's grief: 'It's for her friend, this whole thing, and we're all seeing it' (Sue DGAP21). Both these are examples of how two audience participants wanted the shows to reflect what was important to them about these two types of human experiences - wild swimming, and grief, respectively. In a similar way to those who felt it represented their own experiences, there was often deep reflection and consideration of what was important to them about these themes - an ownership of their own experiences interpreted in relation to what the show presented, or often did not or failed to present. We see here how the meanings and relevancies of SWIM were only enacted in interaction with this wider, rich and personal context.

Participants in one discussion group after Red Dust Road considered how the theme of adoption in the play had a broad appeal, even for those who had not directly experienced it

themselves: 'It's a massive 'what if' for anyone, isn't it? Even if you've not been adopted. Like, what if I hadn't been raised by this family? Or what's me and what's given to me?' (Jade RDRDGAP50). One participant in this group was Pat, who had direct experience of working in adoption services, and was pleased with the way that the show portrayed adoption accurately: ‘there were just so many things that were true to the adoption process’ (RDRAP50). Pat particularly welcomed the portrayal of the adopted family as ‘warm and loving individuals’, and the ‘complexity of the adoption triangle’ (RDRAP31).

However, on the whole, more participants picked up on the broader themes outside of the adoption storyline. Khidr explored the similarities (and differences) between Jackie’s experiences of racist microaggressions with his own, recalling the line when someone asks Jackie where she is ‘really from’, and suggests that he too can relate to being asked that, before adding: ‘I get that quite a bit as well […] I mean I don't get asked that as much as she probably did, because in the 70s it's way worse’ (RDRDGAP22). The play made Seb think about ‘how it must be to grow up and not be around people like you’, reflecting that living in a diverse area such as Manchester can be taken for granted, ‘that you grow up with faces that you can relate to’ (RDRAP06). Post-show discussions on diversity of ethnicity and lived experience were, for many participants, tied inherently to notions and experiences of place, even for those who had not got direct personal ties to Nigeria nor Scotland specifically. Cadi compared Glasgow in the 1970s to some of the small towns in South Wales, where she is from, that are 'less cosmopolitan and less tolerant to change and diversity' (RDRAP33).

Of course, given the focus of this research on arts marketing processes, it is possible that some audience participants particularly emphasised the relation between their experiences and the marketing more than they might have otherwise done. For some it did not matter that the two did not match their experiences. However, often, this was the perception of those who enjoyed the shows. For others, the theatre company and HOME had a responsibility to give people a sense of what to expect from the show, perceiving it as ‘part of the contract’ between company and audience (Aaron ONEAP13). This highlights a key challenge for arts marketers when creating marketing campaigns for theatre shows, that while marketing clearly plays a key role in shaping audiences’ expectations of the show, if the experience does not engage in some way the audiences that the marketing has played a part in attracting, then they will leave feeling disappointed. However as we have seen in this study, there are clearly also instances when providing something different from what

they expected can surprise and delight audience members, as long as they feel like they were able to engage in the experience in a positive way.

It is worth mentioning however that while we saw deep meanings emerge through reflection, reflection and engagement with the meanings of a show did not always guarantee a positive experience. What's more, it would be easy to dismiss negative interpretations of a show as frustrated attempts to interpret the meaning of the show. While some audience participants, such as Susan with ONE, who felt upon reflection that her frustrations were probably because she was still missing something, others, like Aaron came to a different conclusion. After sharing a rich and complex interpretation of ONE in his post-show communications with me, he also admitted that none of them felt particularly fulfilling and concluded that the more he felt he explored ONE the more he was in fact convinced that there was in fact 'less meaning than he first thought' (ONEAP24). We can see in this example how following and labouring a process of interpretation, actively trying to make sense of the show he had seen, does not guarantee the sense of reaching a fulfilling and satisfactory meaningful interpretation of said show.

Study 2: Interacting with the performers

On the whole the audience participants warmed to ONE's two performers Bertrand Lesca and Nasi Voutsas, playing the characters Bert and Nasi. In the post-show discussion group, Seb described them both as 'warm' and 'characters I cared about' (DGAP03). Even Nevan, who did not enjoy the show, admitted that Bert and Nasi were 'engaging' and 'performed well' (ONEDGAP13). Participants often described interaction with the characters of Bert and Nasi in fairly social terms. Nooren recalled finding herself 'rooting for one character, then the other', as she began to 'invest in the characters' (ONEAP03). While Aaron admitted to not having worked out who Bert and Nasi really were in the show, he did go onto describe how Nasi reminded him of his friend and therefore warmed to him because of their 'similar character' (ONEDGAP13). Aaron recalled watching Nasi more because he felt there was a certain 'depth' to him:

> There was stuff going on behind the scenes, in terms of expressions. Even at the beginning, you didn't know when it started. You were like 'what's he doing?' (Aaron ONEDGAP13)

For Aaron, the mention of the similarities between Nasi and his friend was presumably correlated in some way with the fact that he was intrigued by what was going on ‘behind the scenes’ with this character. Bee too felt she connected with the characters, but on a more emotional level, singling out the moment where Bert kicked the ladder that Nasi is on in an attempt to get him off (ONEDGAP13). She recalled becoming ‘a bit agitated’ comparing her reaction to what it would have been ‘in normal life’ (Bee ONEDGAP13). She went on to explain her connection with the characters ‘on a basic human level’, saying that she in fact preferred Nasi to Bert because ‘he's my sort of person. The other guy [Bert] is the sort of person that annoys me, wants all the attention’ (ONEDGAP13). Bee then went onto explain how her dislike of Bert as a character meant she ended up not watching Bert as much ‘just out of principle' (Bee ONEDGAP13). Bee’s description of how the level of like or dislike of their characters on a human level dictated how much she wanted to watch and engage with each performer as characters shows the social nature of her engagement with Bert and Nasi.

During the curtain call, the performers traditionally take a bow at the end of the performance and tend to come out of character and audiences applaud their performance. However this was also a moment brought up by many audience participants as they felt that it jarred with their experiences of the characters throughout ONE. For some audience participants, like Seb and Pablo, when the actors came out of their characters at the end of the performance, it felt, in some way, inconsistent with his experience of them to that point. Pablo disliked their performance because he felt the portrayal of their characters was too ‘obvious’, adding that he found them ‘annoying… a bit too laddy for me’ as they were ‘trying too hard’ and were consequently ‘harsh and uncomfortable to watch’ (ONEAP39). He then described the curtain call as ‘weird’, primarily because ‘they were in character the whole time’ and then ‘they were themselves… sort of pally’ (Pablo ONEAP39). For Seb, who unlike Pablo found their performances to be natural and engaging, he explained not liking the curtain call because he wanted Bert and Nasi to ‘just walk out’ (ONEDGAP03). When probed as to his reasoning for this, he explained that, like Pablo, it jarred with his experience of Bert and Nasi as performers, presumably as a result of the ‘act’ of playing ‘themselves’:

> [The curtain call] broke the spell of who those characters were. I would have liked to have been left with the feeling of the two characters, rather than “thanks for coming to see our performance” (Seb ONEDGAP03).

SWIM was performed by a company of four: Liz Richardson, Josie Dale-Jones, Sam Ward musician Carmel Smickersgill, who played live music throughout the show. Many enjoyed the range of characters, and the fact that they were seemingly ‘playing themselves’ in a similar way to ONE. Aaron felt that it gave the show a more ‘honest’ feel: ‘when they were saying 'what are we getting into? […] I just think there's a lot that rings true about it’ (SWIM DGAP16). Faith too liked that the idea Liz had asked the two other performers to help perform the show, knowing that she did not want to ‘do the story alone or like explore the story alone’ (SWIMDGAP04). Nevan was pleased that the cast was not made up of professional swimmers, and that each character was different, adding that it was 'far more interesting [than] if they were all kind of the same, it wouldn't have worked as well' (SWIMDGAP09). While Selah admits to being confused as to what the role of Josie and Sam was in the show ‘and why she [Liz] reached out to them to be involved in this’, she also felt that without this mix of different people, the show might have just been too ‘intense’ (SWIMDGAP16).

There were other audience participants who enjoyed the ‘conversational’ and ‘natural’ performance style of the production. Faith admitted that she usually ‘get[s] turned off by actors that are really ‘acty’ but described how for her the performers in SWIM ‘really melted into it’ and she found herself thinking halfway through ‘this is so like a conversation’ (SWIMDGAP04). Daphne too felt that they had a really ‘natural’ performance style, adding ‘oh wouldn't it be lovely to be able to act in a way that was just so natural […] It just seems like you're just chatting for the first time' (SWIMDGAP04). Indeed for Grace, the fact that the actors were playing themselves and introduced themselves at the beginning of the show, allowed her to feel ‘invited into the conversation’ about Liz’s grief and her friend’s grief, adding that she was impressed by their performances because ‘not everyone can act themselves’ (SWIMDGAP31).

On the whole audience participants found Liz’s performance in particular to be compelling; Susan remarked that the final monologue of the show performed by Liz was the only place that she was ‘really moved’ (Susan SWIMAP42), and Naomi suggested that Liz’s performance ‘carried the show’ (Naomi SWIMAP37). In fact, some audience participants were convinced that, for Liz, this was more than ‘just’ a performance, and expressed real care and concern for her as a performer. After one performance, Bee asked me: 'My only question was should she be doing that? How can she make it feel authentic every time? I do feel it's real, and I just wondered. I don't know how she does it.' (SWIMAP31). Seb was

similarly interested in whether or not Liz's performance was the same for every performance, describing how Liz 'played with some real emotion' like 'she was really feeling the story':

> I noticed she made a lot of noises with her mouth, like swallowed and sucked in a breath and she did a lot outside of just talking. And she looked away quite a lot, she did a lot of things that made you think, this isn't a performance but something she's felt (Seb SWIMDGAP26).

In contrast, some participants felt that they were unable to connect empathetically with the characters in Red Dust Road. For some this was down to the performance and/or direction of the scenes. Faith, who particularly did not enjoy the first half, felt the performances themselves were 'very flat' and 'there was no rhythm to the speech' and no 'variety in any of the performances' (RDRDGAP12). Because of this, Faith felt that she was unable to connect with the characters themselves, 'seeing actors rather than characters. They could be anybody. […] I felt like I wasn't watching characters, I was watching actors' (RDRDAP11). When asked to explore this further in the post-show discussion, Faith concluded it was perhaps a result of the direction of the show, which failed to flesh out characters and create a more multi-dimensional world:

> You've just put like four or five people on stage and let them read a script, rather than, like, create a world, create characters […] that kind of put a barrier up for me' (Faith RDRDGAP12).

Aaron too described the show as 'a series of little cartoons almost, quite funny', agreeing with Faith that the performances felt quite flat and 'performed off the page more than realistically in a sense', which disappointed him (RDRDGAP12).

Like many participants unfamiliar with Jackie Kay before seeing the production, Tamara found her interest in her life and work ignited by watching the play:

> I'm quite a visual person, so actually to… watch a play about her life has made me want to maybe read some of her poems. I'm not the kind of person who would read a poem about someone I don't actually know… Now that I've seen this woman I resonate with - she's Black, she's really creative, she has an African ancestry and heritage. It's really refreshing, (Jackie is) someone worth knowing about (Tamara RDRDGAP26).

Yet the motivation or drive that participants felt to find out more about Jackie Kay's life and work was often directly connected to a feeling that the show did not fully give 'a sense' of Jackie Kay as a person, or as a poet. Conversations around what elements of Jackie Kay's life story were missing, or not fully developed were common in post-show discussions. Participants more familiar with Jackie Kay's life and work often noted that there were facets of Jackie Kay's life or relationships that were not explored in the show. For example, the fact that Jackie's son was only 'mentioned a few times, but you never saw him', resulted in Tamara feeling that in some ways, Jackie 'remained quite private throughout… we didn't find out about HER', despite the show being 'about' her (RDRDGAP26). Sue agreed, commenting on the 'absence of a sense of who Jackie really is… we're being told certain bits … and not others (RDRDGAP26). Similarly, Liz pointed to the sentence on the flyer for the show that reads 'she blossomed into an outspoken, talented poet', but recalled that this was only really referred to: 'it was kind of underplayed […] and if you know Jackie Kay, you know that she's a poet. So it felt as if that was missing.' (RDRDGAP08).

This idea was mirrored in other audience participants' description of how Jackie was characterised, or written, in the play as a character. In one discussion group, participants pondered over how Jackie did not really change that much throughout 'which is a funny thing, because it's literally a journey of her discovery of her identity' (Faith RDRDGAP12). Nevan too, felt that she was 'pretty much the same from the start to the finish. Now that may be because we were jumping backwards and forwards […] but there was no development of character all the way through' (Nevan RDRDGAP12). Nevan added that he would have expected a more 'real' characterisation, as often in plays 'somebody gets more and more upset and more mad […] we didn't really see any of that' even though 'that woman we see at the end, where she knows where she comes from, surely is changed versus the woman who hasn't met her father' (RDRDGAP12).

There was one particular moment in the play that was brought up by a number of participants as an example of an aspect of Jackie's life that could have been developed more: the part of the play where Jackie's mum 'brushes off' Jackie coming out. These participants were sensitive not to suggest that the show had to include it because of an inherent interest; as Tamara pointed out: 'I don't think the play was about Jackie's sexuality' (RDRDGAP26). Rather it was felt important because it brought up an unexpected dynamic between Jackie and her mother, who at every other point in the play

had been portrayed as ‘so warm about everything about her’ (Sue RDRDGAP26). Nevan too wanted to understand more about why Jackie’s mum did not seem to accept her sexuality, adding it might have been interesting to explore that further as it ‘would have fitted into the story line’:

> Her mum was such an accepting individual… I'm sure a mother, if that character is anything to believe in, came to accept her and the way she is. But it would have been nice to see that journey. It didn't need a lot more expansion (Nevan RDRDGAP12).

In her text messages sent after the performance, Daphne too explained how more exploration of the sexuality narrative would have given an extra dimension to the portrayal of Jackie and her mother’s relationship. Indeed this was the story that one of the members of the marketing team at the National Theatre of Scotland (NTS) suggested was the key narrative of the play, and what the show was ultimately about (RDR_002). Daphne felt that if this was the case, then more on this aspect of her relationship with her mother could have been explored:

> Not just from a voyeuristic perspective but more that it was interesting that these people, who seemed so unconventional, had their own boundaries. (Daphne RDRAP41)

There is a sense for Daphne, Nevan and Sue that the nod to, or brief mention of that narrative was in some way not enough to fully explore this facet of Jackie and her mother’s relationship, and that it was something for them that would have added an extra relatability or ‘realness’ to the portrayal of their characters. At the same time, participants also reflected on the (hard) task of pulling together all the different strands of someone’s ‘life’ into a series of narratives, or ‘life story’, and were fully aware that there were editorial choices that needed to be made by the creative team on which aspects of Jackie’s life to include. As Erica remarked, there was a large amount of material to include: 'it was like decades of life you're trying to fit into 2 hours' (RDRDGAP22).

Nevertheless, while a certain lack of ‘depth’ (Bee RDRAP20) was acknowledged by some to be a necessary choice to tell the story, there was a fairly universal consensus among participants that the main character - Jackie - was difficult to empathise with or relate to, indicating that these audience participants were, on the whole, expecting to. As we saw earlier, participants felt engaged by the form and content: for instance, Susan pointed out

she felt that Jackie's 'journey' throughout the play 'drew me in completely', but explained this being a result not of the 'actress playing the role' but rather 'the form and content of the piece' (Susan RDRAP37). Paradoxically, the lack of engagement with Jackie as a character was felt even though she was onstage most of the time. As Mike remarked, even though the show was 'about her and her story', he felt Jackie 'didn't need to be in every scene… all the time' (RDRDGAP16). He described how he was waiting for 'other people's parts of the story to be told' such as the birth parents' stories:

> I get her father is distant, but I kept thinking "Oh, maybe he's back in the next scene", and then he disappeared so […] It would have been interesting to hear more of the dementia of the [birth] mum and […] maybe go back in time when she was younger (Mike RDRDGAP16).

As a result, he felt the telling of Jackie's story did not 'gel' for him (Mike RDRDGAP16). Like Mike, Aaron puts his lack of connection and the fact he 'never warmed to the central character' down to the fact that she was on stage most of the time which 'struggled to keep me for that reason' (RDRAP12).

Whereas Mike found he was more interested in the stories of some of the other characters of the play, Selah described her dislike of Jackie in terms of how she was characterised, adding that she found 'it difficult to relate to her and her drives' (Selah RDRAP36). In an email sent three weeks after the show, Selah suggests that this might have been because she found the acting of Jackie to be a bit 'intense', and that 'because I failed to feel the emotions myself I instead felt a bit let down' (Selah RDRAP36). Selah made explicit here the connection between her lack of empathy with the performance of Jackie's character and how this prevented Selah, as an audience member, to feel the 'same' emotions.

Study 3: Audiencing and agency

"This show contains audience participation"

The research context chapter referred to a large body of work in audience and performance studies that seeks to challenge the binary of passive/active audiencing, in favour of the latter, arguing that all theatre, to a certain extent, involves some form of active participation from audiences (Fenemore 2007a; Reason 2010). However in certain theatre traditions, some theatre practitioners also deliberately create moments where audience members are directly addressed, asked questions or asked to leave their seats to perform a certain role onstage. ONE was such a performance.

Figure 4.25: Photograph taken by researcher of ONE pre-performance. T2, HOME. May 2019.

Like SWIM, ONE took place in the T2 space, which is the smaller of the two auditoria at HOME. The audience entered the space while the character Nasi was stood on the top of a ladder, stage right [pictured in Figure 4.25], facing out to the auditorium. (For some participants, the sparse set only added to the mystery of what the show was about: 'there's not a lot of scenery, unsure what it's about' (Hazel AP17)). Many participants liked the smaller space, with Grace suggesting it is more 'intimate' allowing audiences to 'push back' rather than as a space for reverence (ONEAP09). Furthermore Erica felt that the minimal set used in ONE's staging allowed the company to connect with audiences (ONEAP09). With the house lights up, and with the show having unreserved seating, how audience participants made their choice about where to sit at the very beginning gave some indication of their assessments of the space and how they might like to engage with the performance.

Some participants, like Erica, selected to sit a little further back, as they got 'the vibe that there might be audience participation', adding that they don't 'get anything' from making eye contact with performers (ONEDGAP09). Some participants chose to sit nearer the front, like Faith, who described herself as a 'bit of a front row person. I can more easily make a connection with the performer. I get distracted by people around me, I like to hone in' (ONEDGAP09). Similarly Selah sat fairly close to the front, as she recalls: 'I don't mind being involved' (ONEDGAP09).

The audience participation element of ONE was seen as one of its key defining characteristics in the eyes of many participants, and memories of this aspect of the show dominated when they were asked to recall their experiences throughout the project. For some this was the primary reason why they did not enjoy the performance. Mike related how it took him a while to calm down 'from not being picked on or interacted with', and

even then, he felt he was unable to enjoy it (ONEDGAP13). Cadi described how she felt the need to 'un-squirm' straight after the performance, following up the next day with how she had felt uncomfortable throughout, and consequently had continually avoided eye contact with the performers (ONEAP20). Indeed Cadi, like Erica when they were choosing where to sit, was not the only one who mentioned eye contact with the performers as something that she did not want from the audiencing experience of ONE. The fear of being 'picked on' as an individual member of the audience relates back to the enactive idea of being overdetermined by another in an interaction, threatening the autonomy of their role as a member of a collective audience.

This is reinforced by other participants who rejected the overuse of this theatrical device, such as Pablo, who felt that the use of audience participation in the show replaced any meaningful content in the show itself and 'relied on the audience too much' (ONEDGAP03). Pablo recalled two weeks after the show how he felt the direct calls on the audience to participate in the action of the show were 'weird and aggressive' (ONEAP39). Adam too described the audience participation as 'forced' (ONEAP41), while Pat described she felt the performers 'dragged the audience in'(ONEDGAP03). Presumably Pat thought that other audience members felt the same as her, as not only did she describe being worried that she herself would be picked on, she also added that this made her 'cringe' because she felt 'embarrassed' for the performers, who were trying in vain to get people to participate (ONEAP29). In a particularly creative post show review sent over email the day after the performance, Matthew too likened his feelings of embarrassment for the performers as being on a similar level to '8 seasons of 'Curb Your Enthusiasm'' (ONEAP23). Indeed, for some audience participants, the prospect of someone *actually* enjoying participating in the show in this way was so alien to them that they were convinced that those members of the audience who *did* were stooges or 'plants', deliberately asked, (or paid to), participate. This indicated that not only were these participants uncomfortable in their role of being 'forced' to take part against their will, but they also felt in some way that other audience participants must be feeling a similar embarrassment, and were, like Pat, thus embarrassed for the whole concept for trying 'too hard' (and/or failing) to successfully engage the audience in this way.

However, negative experiences of ONE's audience participation were by no means universal. While Aaron recalled how his uncomfortable feeling at the beginning of the performance was partly related to his 'wondering how far the audience participation might

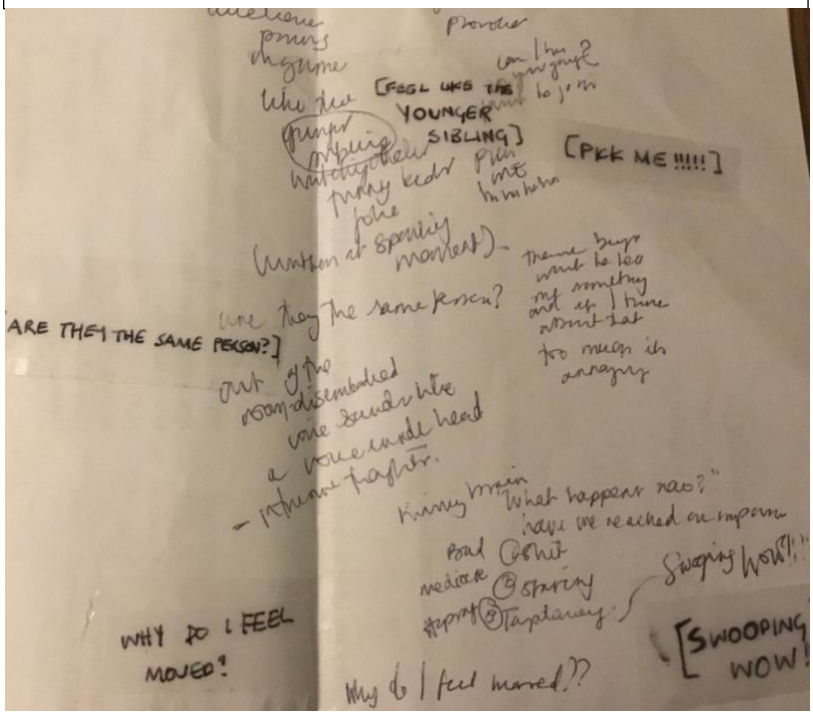
go', he felt that this initial tension began to ease as the show progressed and the audience began 'to gel together' (ONEDGAP13). He described how he began to feel more secure in his role as an audience member as the clearer delineation of roles between an 'us and them' 'felt safer' and 'more relaxed' (Aaron ONEDGAP13). Similarly, Grace felt that it was tense to begin with but recalled how she felt relaxed at the end of the show (ONEDGAP09). For Grace this was down to the realisation that the performer 'knew what they were doing' and thus she was able to relax (ONEDGAP09). Faith described how she felt really 'chilled out' out after the show, which was not what she had expected (Faith DGAP09).

Indeed, this feeling of being relaxed – the absolute opposite of what those who hated it felt - was commonly cited by those who enjoyed the experience of ONE, and was correlated with a certain level of trust in the intentions and/or perceived skill of the performers. Grace described the tension as being created deliberately, with intention and thus she felt safe; Bee too felt that the two performers were 'totally in control' (ONEAP13), despite uncomfortable moments. This idea was further illustrated in the experiences of one of those participants who elected to take part in the show actively as a 'character' when called upon, agreeing to help Bert convince Nasi to climb off the ladder. She explained her choice to participate as founded on the belief that her role as an audience member was an enabling one and by doing what was asked of her by the performers, she was fulfilling the 'social contract' of theatre, enabling the performers 'to give their very best' (Sue ONEDGAP09). Sue went on to describe how she trusted the performers to not humiliate her, even though she was not entirely sure where they were 'taking the show next' and felt that the performers were 'highly skilled' in the way they 'took control of the audience' by 'crafting the whole group of us and going with it together' (ONEDGAP09). So for some, the same space experienced felt unsafe, with forced rather than consensual audience interaction. For others this very same space, and in some cases same performances, felt safe, with intentional and skilled management of interaction by the performers, or as a result of a feeling of safety within the audience as a whole. Notably, this was not because those who felt safe did not feel the tension, but rather that they had trust in the performers to keep them safe.

Furthermore, we saw how Pat and Matthew's feelings of shame and embarrassment for the performers emerged from a sense that others in the audience were feeling just as uncomfortable as they were. Notably however, it was not simply that those who enjoyed

participating actively in this way who felt that others too were having the same positive experience. For example, Erica explained how they did not want to take part in the show as it made them feel uncomfortable, but they recognised that it was the responsibility of the performers to make the shared space open and relaxed and safe for all. They felt that Bert and Nasi succeeded in achieving this: 'they [Bert and Nasi] really have a skill that made everyone feel like they could make noise or be part of it… (which) opened up the room' (Erica ONEDGAP09).

Figure 4.26: Photograph of notes written during ONE sent by audience participant Nina after the show. May 2019.



While clearly some liked the way the invitations to participate, but were equally glad they were not picked on to take part, there were those who were less sure entirely how they felt about the prospect. These participants described in rich detail what they defined as their choice to not participate in the action. Selah explained how throughout the show, she herself was having a debate about whether or not she should get involved, asking herself ‘what’s appropriate or not?’ (ONEDGAP09). Seb too described how he was conflicted about wanting to take part, recalling a few days after the show how he found himself ‘having a dialogue in my head about why I should/shouldn't want to take part’ and that it was at the same time ‘exciting’ and ‘unnerving’ to ‘possibly be part of the narrative’ (ONEAP27). In Nina’s notes written during the performance but shared a couple of weeks after [Figure 4.26] she likens her want to be included - captured in the phrase ‘pick me!’ - with a feeling of being a younger sibling wanting to be included in an older sibling’s game, yet feeling still ‘excluded somehow’ (ONEAP34).

For some audience participants, the terms of engagement for the audience needed to be clearer and perhaps more consistent. For example, Anaïs wished that it had been written

down in ONE's promotional material that the audiences had 'permission' to make noise and interact with the performers, and saying that 'if actors are comfortable being engaged, then (it should) say so' (ONEDGAP09). By not having this explicit permission, it was difficult to know. Even though audience members were invited to join the performers on stage at various points throughout the show, this was still 'by invitation only' - made through direct address to particular audience members, or an open invitation made to any 'willing' volunteers. In fact, a couple of audience participants remarked on how they would have liked more opportunity and agency than the space had allowed to be more involved in the action onstage. For example, Anaïs explained how she 'wouldn't have minded if people had moved around', adding that 'she felt like that was invited' (ONEDGAP09). Jade felt the same, adding that she 'would have preferred no seats' and that the performers could have done 'a lot' by 'getting people to move around them' (ONEDGAP09). Together with the invitations to participate in the action, these two participants felt the staging could have enforced this more clearly, by creating more space for the audience to move around and engage with performers differently.

While most calls to participate in the action relied on individual audience members, Bert and Nasi also gave the 'collective' audience a choice between two possible endings. Unsurprisingly perhaps, for those audience participants who were not enjoying the show it felt that despite appearing to give agency and power to the audience to decide for themselves, the choice ostensibly given to the audience to choose the ending for the show was also further proof that the show was rigged. Matthew was sure that 'the alternative endings will never be performed' (ONEAP23), while Nevan too suggested that the ending will 'always be the same for every performance' (ONEDGAP13). Seb was more forgiving of this theatrical trick, admitting that, while Bert and Nasi 'never had any intention of doing the shitty ending', he nevertheless recognized the technique when 'the audience supposedly have control over what happens next (when in fact, I think the producers have their way of creating the ending they want)' (ONEAP27). In this way, the audience participants all recognized that there was no chance that the ending would change according to the audience vote, but differed in how comfortable they were about this: for some it was a matter of deception, while for others it was a skilful engagement technique. Matthew and Nevan's response was indicative of two audience members who refused the terms of engagement entirely: for them the choice given to the audience was not a choice, and thus it was disingenuous of the performers to pretend it was.

Similarly, Nevan described feeling frustrated with the ONE audience on the whole, who he felt were not being 'rebellious' enough, and recalled wanting to shout out loud 'get him off the ladder' (ONEDGAP13). It was frustrating for him that his role as a 'passive', placated audience member as an audience member was being determined for him – and he felt there was no space for real agency. What's more, in a video response he sent through on the way home from the performance, Nevan continued to ponder whether the audience were genuinely invested and believing the action of the piece, or whether they were just 'playing along' (ONEAP26). This was the case with Seb, who was happy to 'play along' which did not feel like a threat to his autonomy, despite feeling too like Nevan that he had no real choice or power to change what was going to happen onstage.

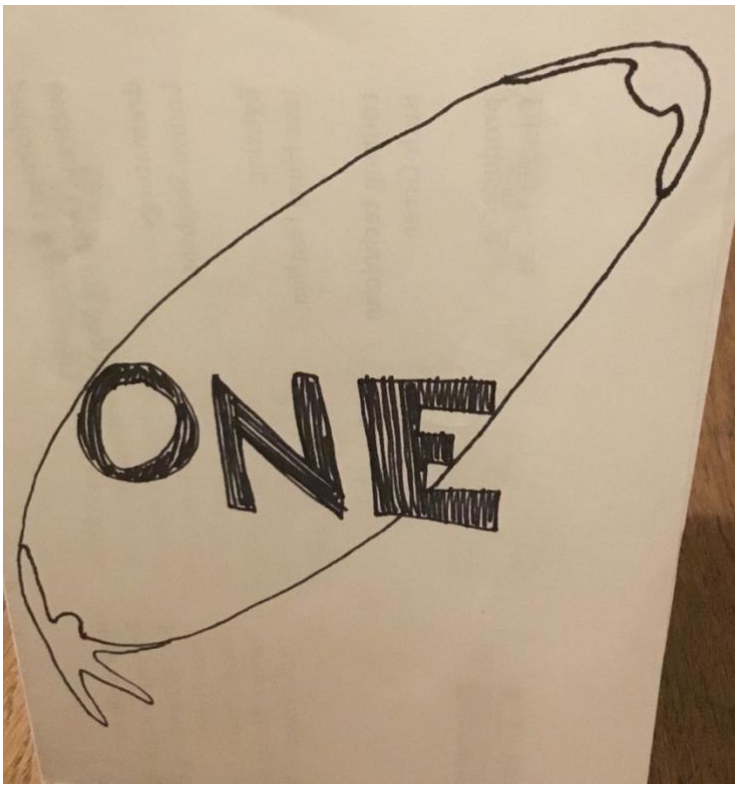
The dance finale in ONE: a contrasting engagement

> [T]he diagonal corners of the stage and then running in the dance. I was like "where are they going to go from that? Out on the street? It's just getting too big!" It's amazing what they did with that space' (Jade ONEDGAP09).

Another aspect of ONE which many audience participants brought up in their reflections on the show was a scene towards the end of the show that was often referred to as the 'dance finale' as it featured Bert and Nasi performing a dance together. For this scene, the house lights, which had been on throughout the whole show, were turned down. Aaron recalled how this shift to a more 'theatrical' staging or 'traditional set-up' meant that the ending for him felt more 'familiar' (ONEAP13). Thus he was able to enjoy the contrasting 'physicality' of the scene, even though he admitted to not being sure 'why they did it' (Aaron ONEAP13). Later on in the project, Aaron described how he was able to maintain a certain sense of his own agency in the dark, and was able to engage with the show however he liked, describing the kind of 'anonymity' and safety that he feels in the dark: 'hidden in a way… where you can focus on what's going on with the escapism from where you are' (SWIMDGAP16). Hazel too described the feeling of being 'transfixed' by the dance, which heralded a 'mood shift' in the show (Hazel ONEAP17).

Figure 4.27: Photograph of drawing created after ONE sent by audience participant Nina, depicting the memorable 'dance finale'. May 2019.

For Pablo, this was the only scene he enjoyed, because it felt more 'polished' and, unlike the rest of the show, 'felt more cohesive' (ONEAP39). Susan enjoyed the fact that the dance was well controlled, despite the fact that the sheer energy of the performance meant that it 'could have gone wrong' (ONEDGAP03). For those who enjoyed the performance as a whole, the dance at the end was also meaningful and moving. Daphne commented on how Bert and Nasi were 'pushing you towards each other and then pushing you away', interpreting this as Bert and Nasi saying 'it's all good but then I don't want it anymore' (ONEDGAP09). Sue felt the ending was hopeful, 'like "we can do this'' and felt it was 'absolutely phenomenally expressive with very little' (ONEDGAP09). In her drawing reflecting on her experience of the show Nina drew the shape of their dance as a giant oval, with her notes 'swooping wow!', reflecting on how it moved her and made her laugh [Figure 4.27]. Sarah described this moment 'where they threw each other around the stage' as the most memorable aspect of the entire project, describing it as 'very arresting as (an) image' which she found 'quite beautiful' (SWIMAP44).



However, others found that the contrasting theatricality of the dance scene clashed with their experiences of the show as whole. Anaïs felt that the ending, with the 'moody lighting' and 'all the stars' projected on stage robbed her of the 'uncomfortable ending' that she wanted (Anaïs ONEDGAP09). Presumably as they were not really enjoying the performance, Pat simply found the dance ending 'boring' (ONEAP29), like Liz who that the finale had been 'stuck' on the end, and was unsatisfactory because she felt the performers 'didn't know how to finish' the show (ONEAP03).

Jokes and truth: humour and authenticity

What is particularly interesting about Nina's response to SWIM is she felt there was a certain vulnerability and openness to the characters and performances in SWIM, which gave it a different quality to ONE. She felt the two performers in ONE had 'set roles' from the beginning: 'they were two different forces but they started fairly similar throughout in their eccentricities […] How they interacted obviously changed, but themselves, they were pretty stable' (SWIMDGAP04). However, Nina felt the performers in SWIM 'were having experiences that were changing' and wondered if this made the experience feel 'a little more open and delicate?' (SWIMDGAP04). In describing the different 'ask' from the performers to the audience in ONE, Nina's description of SWIM's engagement was reminiscent of not being overdetermined in the interaction as an audience member. While ONE was asking her to think, the SWIM performance was more of an offering to: 'feel whatever. Feel whatever you feel' (SWIMDGAP04).

On the whole, while audience participants felt that the audience had a less directly participatory role in SWIM than they did in ONE, there was still a similarity between them in the sense that audience participants felt they were 'being spoken to, rather than just observing a play being acted out in front of me' (Cadi SWIMAP36). Anaïs described SWIM as having a 'storyteller kind of feeling' to it, which she compared to other plays where instead 'the action is really concentrated on the stage and the stories told on stage' (SWIMDGAP09). Aaron too noted the use of the pronoun 'you' at the beginning of the performance:

> When Liz says "I see *you* go into the water, and I see *you*" […] I guess it was her friend, but then it almost felt like she was talking to us […] it drew me into the experience, because I felt like she was talking to me. You sort of imagine yourself into it (Aaron SWIMDGAP17).

For others the difference between the role of the audience in ONE and SWIM was the feeling that SWIM did not expect 'anything from the audience' (Pablo SWIMAP16). Daphne noted how the performance style was natural and conversational, but that this was not a conversation *with* the audience 'like you were joining it' but rather felt 'like you were listening to their conversation' (Daphne SWIMDGAP04). Naomi too felt that her role as an audience member was there to 'view/listen', adding: 'it felt like we were there to help Liz tell her story but also to support her and hear it' (Naomi SWIM AP37).

While many found this key to their relaxing experience of the show, far from being a passive role for the audience, there were still participants who found that the emotional themes of the show required a level of energy and commitment on the part of the audience member. Selah's response to SWIM illustrated this; on the whole Selah found that the sadness of SWIM took more out of her than her experiences of ONE:

> It feels like I give a little bit of me into that, if it's more sad or it's a bit like it makes me feel OH URGH EMPH a little bit […] I need more recovery time from this. I leave […] touched and in a positive way, but also yeah like it takes a little bit more from me (Selah SWIMDGAP16).

These examples all reinforce theories of audiencing as an active process. It would be easy to assume that if participants felt, like Nina, that they were free to feel whatever they wanted to, that this in turn is somehow passive, but as we can see, there was still an amount of emotional work audience participants felt was required of them. We can see this exemplified in some participants response to the difficult themes of grief in SWIM. While a few participants who were nervous about the 'show within a show' idea in SWIM, overall many decided that it felt appropriate given the nature of what the SWIM performers were trying to achieve. In an email reflecting on the show one month after seeing it, Adam described how he recognised the format of the show where 'the performers [are] telling you how they came to make the play' (SWIMAP47). While Adam admitted that, on the whole, he does not like this format usually, on this occasion he felt it 'worked' (Adam SWIMAP47). After seeing the show, Erica recalled feeling 'put off' by the 'making of' focus of the show, adding 'that part didn't really sit well with me' (SWIMAP46). However a couple of weeks later, on reflection, Erica was thankful for this necessary distance, explaining: 'for the safety of the audience, it was better to have performers that weren't going through the grief themselves' (SWIMAP46). Liz too, was initially sceptical of the idea, as she felt it could have 'gone completely wrong… in many, many ways' (SWIMAPDG21). However she felt that the moments in the show where 'she talked about her friend's grief and her feelings about her friend's grief were for me, the strongest part of the show' (Liz SWIMAPDG21). In this way, the distance allowed for a more honest, and safer, treatment of difficult subject matter, and for some, like Erica, more ethical audience engagement mode.

Many audience participants found Red Dust Road to be more humorous than they were expecting. Tamara commented at the interval that she felt that it was 'important' that Red

Dust Road had humour in it (RDRAP24), and Pat was also pleased with the balance of humour and sadness, portrayed in the production photos, suggesting that ‘despite the theme, it doesn’t look like a misery memoir’ which would have put her off (RDRAP30). This sense that the show was kept ‘light’ ensured for Cadi that there was a positive spin, to ensure that ‘Jackie’s friendships and success shone through too’ (RDRAP33). For Adam, the use of humour in the scenes was important for the pacing of the show as it ‘kept the audience wondering what would come next’ (RDRAP35).

Yet in addition to this humour, audience participants particularly picked up on moments of the show when Jackie Kay’s poetry was directly incorporated into the text, adding to the mix of ‘prose’ and ‘dramatic action’ in scenes (Selah RDRAP36). Nooren described how these scenes *felt* more poetic, compared to the other scenes that drove the storyline or plot, by the difference in rhythm: ‘I feel like poetry always has some sort of focus on the pace and the rhythm’ (RDRDGAP22). Faith recalled how the switch to poetry felt immersive: ‘that kind of poetic, very descriptive [scene], when she was looking out to sea. I was really lost in that, that was really nice. Nice to watch, nice to listen to' (RDRDGAP12). Sue, too, was 'really impressed by the way that the dialogue in the play naturally became poetic, or could be poetry', giving the example of the loss of Jackie’s birth mother, which she found to be ‘so poetically expressed’ (RDRDGAP26). But Sue felt this was very much about communicating how Jackie, as author of her own story, was making sense of her relationship with her mother, rather than just a functional storytelling device. For Sue it added another dimension to understanding their relationship: ‘it felt like she [Jackie] picked up on a sense of loss - or something - in the mother, that wasn't just a projection’ (RDRDGAP26). These three examples illustrate how audience participants articulated the value of poetry in the scenes in terms of how they each experienced its different qualities. For Nooren it was a focus on the rhythm of the performance; for Faith the poetry had a descriptive, immersive quality; for Sue it added another dimension to her understanding of the relationship between Jackie and her mother.

Indeed, many participants would have liked more, or a greater emphasis on, the staging of these more poetic moments, which they enjoyed (Anaïs RDRDGA16, Adam RDRAP35). Liz felt that poems could have replaced a lot of the ‘long explanatory scenes’, and together with more use of projections on the screen, could have provided more powerful visual imagery to make the audience ‘work a bit harder’ (RDRAP07). Indeed there was a number of participants who were disappointed with the level of theatricality in the play, questioning

why it was being staged as a play at all: ‘I genuinely don’t know why they did make it into a play’ (Bee RDRDGAP26).

Audiencing as participatory sense-making

It might seem obvious to state that audience participants would be aware of the experiences of other audience participants during the show, momentarily differentiating between themselves and other audience members as ‘the audience’. As Reason points out, the social nature of attending the audience for a live event results not just from an awareness of other audience members, but more specifically in ‘an awareness of the personal responses of others’ (2004). Indeed there were multiple examples of instances where audience participants framed their experiences through the experience of other audience members, which illustrates how awareness of others’ responses is in a dynamic relationship with our own. For instance, Daphne reflected how the characters in ONE had reminded her of a good friend and because of that connection, she was able to feel ‘calm’ with Bert (ONEAP21). She framed this in contrast to what she felt were the experiences of the other audience members, and asking me if I thought if the other audience members were angry with him because she could ‘sense it’ but she herself did not feel it (Daphne ONEAP21).

While Daphne was describing her experiences of ONE in contrast to what she perceived to be others’ experiences, participants also regularly assumed that others were experiencing the same as them. For instance Pablo mentioned how he thought other people were ‘absolutely hating’ ONE, like he was (ONEDGAP03). Bee described the exact same performance, which she enjoyed, as the audience being ‘gripped’: ‘you could hear a pin drop’ (Bee ONEAP13). When I asked Bee to explain why she felt this, she recounted how she had been very aware of two particular audience members for SWIM who she felt were particularly engaged:

> I could tell they were moved […] just by their body language. In their interaction with each other, and how they looked at each other, you know. You could see there were key moments where they were engaged (Bee SWIMAP31).

Seb was gripped by the responses of the other audience members throughout ONE, noting in his post-show diary entry '[a]udience members were eyeballing one another as if to say, “What do YOU think's going on?”'(ONEAP03). It was clear from Aaron’s response

to ONE that he felt at times anxious about what was going to happen; relatedly, he described the laughter in the audience for ONE as ‘tense and nervy’ (ONEDGAP13).

There were also instances where participants would hone in on a similar aspect of the show, observing it to be worthy of comment, but once again they interpreted the significance of it differently depending on their own experiences of the show. For example, a number of HOME staff and audience participants alike noted how people would often stay in their seats for a while after watching SWIM. For some the reason for this was because the play had engaged the audience, and there was a ‘stillness and concentration in the room’ with people ‘resonating with some experience of loss’ (Pat SWIMAP43). Sue noted a similar thing, remarking that she felt these were audience members ‘who had come to grieve or because they were grieving’ (SWIMDGAP21). Yet others interpreted the same stillness and quiet at the end of the show as a feeling of the show falling a bit ‘flat’; Liz commented that she was ‘quite taken by how flat the clapping was at the end’ and felt the whole thing was a bit subdued (SWIMAP21).

Others felt the distance between their experiences and their perception of the experience of other audience members keenly, but were more likely to turn the shame of ‘not getting it’ inwards. In a post-show discussion after ONE, Mike was surprised to hear that another audience participant Sarah also did not ‘get’ the show, but in contrast to Mike, enjoyed that. This idea was to Mike quite surprising, and he consequently admitted it made him ‘feel better’ about the fact that ‘the whole show had gone over [his] head’ (ONEDGAP13). He had previously hinted how the laughter from other audience members had made him feel a bit awkward during the show but he was not really sure why. It was clear from this revelation in the post-show discussion group that it was simply because he had assumed that the others had connected with something that he had not. Similarly, although more related to his own experience of not feeling that Red Dust Road was a show ‘for’ him, Seb described how despite the odd laugh ‘here and there’, he was feeling a bit removed from the experience:

> I looked around in the audience and it wasn't really my kind of people, and I was losing my interest part way through, hence why I was looking at people in the audience and they were just confirming that maybe it wasn't my thing (Seb RDRAP40)

While some participants, like Daphne, Mike and Seb who felt the distance between their own experiences and what they perceived to be the experiences of others in the audience

in order to reflect on their own experiences, there were also instances where this was used to make judgements about the quality of the show, and the behaviour of other audience members. In his disparaging review of ONE, Matthew described a fellow audience's member's laughter as 'overenthusiastic' (ONEAP23). In this case, this judgement on another audience member's behaviour was used to justify claims that the (presumably positive) response this audience member was having to the show was not warranted. Nevan too was frustrated with the reaction of other audience members and the fact that they were engaging with the show and laughing (Nevan ONEDGAP13).

Overall Study 3 has illustrated that key to the practice of audiencing was how audience members were not just aware of others' experiences, but that their perception of what they were experiencing directly informed their own sense- and meaning-making processes. However, it was clear from the examples here that people were affected by one another in unique and complex ways. Just as different moments or aspects of the shows were experienced uniquely and interpreted in different ways, incorporating different languaging flows, so too were the experiences of others incarnated differently. For some participants the experiences of others strongly influenced a sense of being excluded from the audience; other times, audience participants described the experiences of others as being the same as theirs. What's more, neither of these ways of relating to others were experienced as universally positive or negative experiences.

Facet 3 Conclusion

We saw in the first study in this facet how interactions with the content of marketing campaigns in the lead-up to shows can mould expectations and experiences of a show. While these interactions take place across a number of spaces, (often online) and across differing timescales, this facet described instances where participants evoked memories of these interactions with campaign content, folding them into the descriptions and interpretations of their experiences of the theatre productions. The idea that ONE promised to be a show that touched on political themes underpinned many audience participants' value judgements of the show and disappointed some, who did not engage with this 'intended' theme at all. Others found themselves simply forgetting that the show was even meant to be political in the first place and then found another layer of meaning in their experiences when they considered them in retrospect.

However the facet also described examples of how marketing campaign content did not just lightly or indirectly influence experiences, or were not just in some way related to their meaning-making processes, but that the content also directly impacted their experiences. Nina even describes how her interactions with the marketing content dominated her experience of the show so strongly that she recalled getting too much ‘into her own head’ trying to relate ‘the political bits of copy - polarised political positions and two opposing sides’ with what she was experiencing (ONEAP34). Interestingly, Nina suggested that if the show had been billed as a comedy, she might have found it easier to enjoy the performance ‘at face value’, rather than expecting a piece of theatre to provide a ‘lesson to take home and think about’ (ONEAP34). Similarly, for Faith, the image in the SWIM poster/flyer were so evocative of her mother, that she described how her experience of the show itself kept being ‘about’ her mum: ‘I've not seen her for a while so that's probably a lot to do with why I cried' (SWIMDGAP04).

In addition, we saw with both SWIM and Red Dust Road, campaigns that included additional communications content, such as production trailers or the sharing of production photos, changed participants’ expectations of the show before they arrived at the theatre. Many expected SWIM to be much sadder due to the themes of grief portrayed in the initial copy and image, and were pleasantly surprised to find that not to be the case. Similarly, participants who were worried about Red Dust Road being dry and boring often found themselves to be engaged with a dynamic, pacey and more light-hearted piece of storytelling.

Through the continual adjustment of behaviour in response to and the interpretation of what was happening ‘to them’ during the shows, and then the more reflective, meaning-making that occurred in post-show discussions and in the months that followed the performances, audience participants were in constant interaction with their own memories of their experiences, and those of others, interacting still with the artistic event and its ‘sticking bits’ (Anaïs ONEDGAP09) long after their actual concrete interactions with the artists had finished. Of course the degree to which this happened varied, and as to be expected, some memories were only evoked when they were asked as part of the research to recall their reflections of the show.

Study 3 illustrated how others’ experiences directly informed the languaging flows of audience participants directly, but in unique and complex ways. For some participants the

experiences of others strongly influenced a sense of being excluded from the audience; other times, audience participants described the experiences of others as being the same as theirs. Therefore it is clear here that the processes of incorporation of others' languaging flows is not enacted indiscriminately, but subject to complex intersubjective dynamics at play both within audience-to-audience interaction, and audience-to-performer interaction. Through exercising their agency, we saw how participants selected particular meaningful languaging flows from their experiences of others and of the environment of the theatre show that they felt resonated with them to incarnate within their own.

Although there is an increasing focus on the role of the audience in the completion of the artwork (Boorsma 2006), our understanding of a theatre performance as a discrete artwork in its own right has been shaped by historical focus on the content of the performance as 'text' and less so on the foregrounding of the audience response, particularly in disciplines such as theatre and performance studies. Indeed, a key characteristic of this methodology enables a building up of a shared microcontext across these three shows, to allow for a certain level of comparing of experiences, responding to the same 'stimulus'. However, as illustrated by not only the diverse responses to the shows - such as the polarised response to ONE -, but also the wildly divergent experiences of particular 'key' moments in performances themselves, the 'sharing of' experiences by participants did not result in audience participants having a 'shared' experience. This reinforces the idea that the theatre event is best described not as a 'shared' experience (Bennett, 1997), but instead as an active process of sharing the same time and space to afford a multitude of different interactions between those individuals who are present.

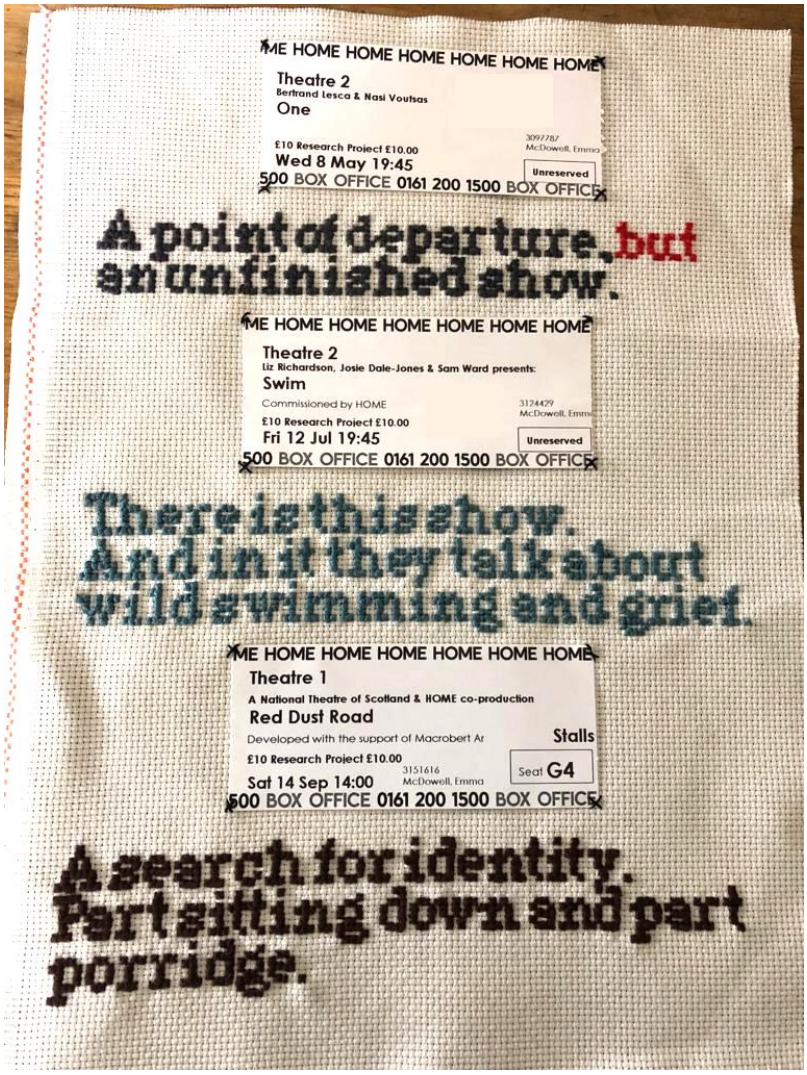
Yet while Bennett hints at the diversity of individual experience that comes from sharing an experience, she does not develop further on how this manifests in audiencing practice (Sedgman 2019a, p.474). This facet aimed to provide concrete examples of how the diversity of individual experiences of an artwork manifests in audience practices. This describes a primary contribution of participatory sense-making as a theoretical framework. Not only does it enable an understanding of the diverse and contextual processes of incorporation and incarnation of others' languaging flows inherent in audiencing are, but it also enables an exploration of where these languaging flows converge. The next chapter will explore this notion of theatre as a participation genre (Di Paolo et al., 2018) and how this can contribute to our understanding of how theatre - as an intersubjective space more generally, and individual shows more specifically - play their role in constraining and

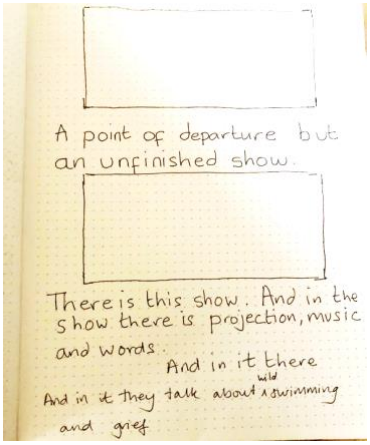
affording these languaging flows. By reconceptualising theatre as a participation genre - or perhaps more appropriately as a series of participation genres - we can begin to consider more deeply not only how our individual experiences of the artform may differ from each other's experiences, but crucially how they are interdependent on specific interactions within the shared environment, including crucially, the intersubjectivity that this 'social' art form affords with performers and other audience members, and the space itself.

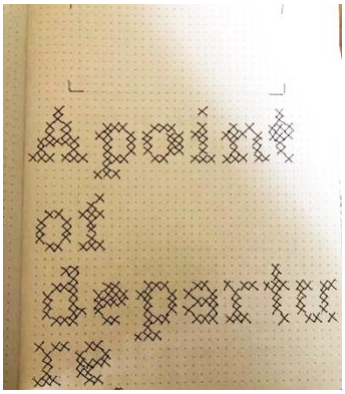
Furthermore, we have seen how participants often conceptualised their experiences of the show by describing them in social terms as participatory sense-making, engaging with the incarnations of characters, and enacting imagined landscapes and worlds of their own making. While on the whole, this more active participation was less foregrounded in their experiences of the remaining two shows than in ONE, audience participants still conceptualised their roles in interactive terms. Many described feeling like they were being 'spoken to' by the performers in SWIM, being told a story; they were also implicated still in a sort of conversation (albeit one that they were observing rather than actively taking part in. Even with Red Dust Road, seen as a more traditional and conventional piece of dramatic storytelling, audience participants felt like they were observing or 'looking into Jackie's memories' (Cadi RDRAP33). While there were more concrete instances given in relation to SWIM and ONE around how the terms of engagement were communicated to audience members, it is still important to recognise that the larger more traditional proscenium arch space with a clear delineation between the audience and performer space in T1, will have also just as actively (or perhaps even more so) constrained the terms of engagement with Red Dust Road.

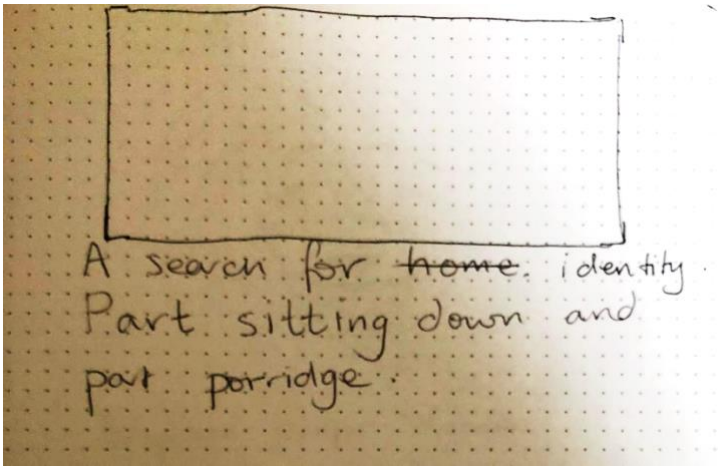
The next chapter titled 'Layering the Argument' aims to bring the themes and 'flashes of insight' offered by each facet into dialogue with relevant theoretical concepts and broader lines of enquiry. This chapter aims to develop further the ideas and themes that have emerged in these three facets in order to 'layer' the argument (Mason 2008, p.4). In doing so it will address the central question of this research: *How* might an understanding of cognition and meaning-making in the enactive paradigm enable a reframing of the experience of contemporary live theatre as a complex and embodied set of sense-making interactions between artist, audience and associated cultural intermediaries? It will then consider in more detail how the clusters of methods employed through the facets shed light on the enaction of meaning and value.

Figure 4.28: An embroidered response to the shows. Photographs of embroidery and of drafting and designing processes contributed by audience participant Liz. December 2019









Chapter 5: Layering the Argument

By mobilizing the structuring elements of Mason's facet methodology to a series of research fields, this thesis has aimed to explore how adopting an enactive approach to the total art-making process of contemporary live theatre might reframe the arts marketing process as a complex and embodied enaction of cultural value between artist, audience and relevant cultural intermediary. By layering in theories of participatory sense-making, and other complementary theories from the wider enactive theoretical framework, it conceptualised not only the marketing process, but the processes of audiencing and performing a theatre show, as situated social interactions. While the former involves interaction with enlanguaged meaning concretised in image or written text through media used in the products of marketing and communications activity, the latter focuses on how audiences and artists enter into a series of ongoing interactions, participate in one another's sense-making processes, and continue to enact their own autonomy through their roles as performer and audience member through this process.

As enactive theory describes it, embodied cognition is the process of people enacting their own experiences of the world in interaction with other people, and with their environment. For instance, the interactions between audience and artist explored in Facet 3 were situated within the theatre spaces at HOME and thus constrained and afforded the environment in which these interactions take place. Furthermore, the interactions between audience and artist through the production and response to marketing and communications messaging were mediated by those working within the HOME marketing and theatre teams, through the creative content that they produced through their own individual audiencing practices and the positioning of the show within the wider institutional programme of activity. We have seen how the results of these professional artistic and management practices then went on to influence and impact the value and meaning-making processes of audience participants, both in terms of informing initial expectations for the events, as well as being incorporated directly into audience participants' languaging flows.

Each facet approached the interactions of audience and artist and cultural intermediary differently. Facet 1 explored how audience participants conceptualised and imagined the people behind the marketing content for the shows, whereas Facet 2 oriented itself in an opposing direction: how the people behind the creation of the marketing content

conceptualised the (imagined) audience through interactions with the theatre company and enaction of particular narratives in campaign activity.

Through the enactive approach this methodology takes, we have seen how language is not treated as vehicles of pre-determined meaning or content that can be analysed, but as a live stream of activity that we, as researchers, are only able to join as sense-makers in our own right as ‘a concrete engagement with living streams of activity out there in the world’ (Di Paolo et al. 2018, p.7). Thus if we are to conceive of research methods in this study as, to some degree, being social interactions, either explicitly or implicitly, then it follows that I was only ever able to drop by or in on the languaging flows of another, through interacting with them as a linguistic body. Like all interactions in the social domain, as they are always in danger of breakdown - not least through instances of disagreement, contradiction and navigating incoherence and feelings of exclusion. What’s more, the particular affordances, and constraints, of each method used to interact with participants are determined by a specific and situated context, which as we have seen, is more productive for some than it is for others. But sense-making in the enactive theoretical framework does not *just* have the potential to be realised in an explicitly participatory setting, such as a group discussion group, it is participatory by its very nature. In this sense it can contribute to the field of audience research by holding an interest in language for its own sake, and not as a vehicle to access some ‘truth, reality or original experience’ (Reason 2004)

This discussion section outlines a series of key insights that emerged from the three facets to address the research question and evaluates how the enactive theories applied in each of the sections interrelate. In this sense we can appreciate how different interactive contexts lead to a more 'concrete' understanding of how cultural value emerges. However firstly this chapter will consider my own interactions and positionality with the research activity itself, as a self-reflexive methodology. In particular I will reflect on some key moments during the research that were full of uncertainty, inconsistencies and contradictions; aspects of research that De Jaegher (2019) argues are central to any sophisticated form of knowing.

Researching as sense-making

> The ethical dimension of acting in language is always present… Languaging is never free from risk and sometimes it can feel like walking a tightrope… We feel the double binds of trying to be honest, pragmatic and caring for others (Di Paolo et al., 2020).

In their facet methodology-inspired study of the rhythms of physical activity in mid and later-life, Phoenix & Bell (2019) helpfully summarise Mason's argument that the rigour of facet methodology in fact lies with the researcher's analytical process of 'identifying and showing where insights have come from, where and how alternative interpretations have been sought out, and the reasons why those pursued are deemed convincing to the research team and beyond' (p.48). As explored in the methodology chapter, the research design enabled me to use a variety of reflective methods to remain as conscious as possible to my experiences as a sense-making agent interacting with research participants such as researcher journals and written fieldnotes. In the analysis, as in the research design, I was conscious that the narrative of the research was connected deeply to my process of learning. I often would use the journal as an opportunity to describe my experiences of managing some of the more difficult social dynamics of the research, which I will explore in a little more detail in this section.

This research project aimed to approach articulations of quality and value as what they are: situated utterances or enactments of a particular thought or feeling arising in a specific intersubjective context (from the writing of social media copy by a HOME marketing professional, to a WhatsApp voice message recorded by an audience member straight after a performance intended for the researcher). But of course, this research is not simply a series of interactions that have been objectively documented (even if that were possible, which it is not, in the enactive paradigm). These utterances have been incorporated into the researcher's sense-making processes, and then incarnated in the words of this thesis. They have been enacted as research.

This section will bring together my own interactions with the research activity itself, with my own emergent experience of the project as research as sense-making which I captured throughout the research process in video and written journals. The idea was to enable

sensitivity to ‘flashes of insight’ (Mason, 2018, p.4), as well as understanding more fully my role as sense-maker as central to the process. While the research inevitably drew on *which* meanings and value each research participant enacted throughout the research process, the focus of the research project was centred more on *how* audience participants understood and articulated their experiences. While facets explored the words that participants used to express their thoughts, there was an emphasis throughout on the embodied experience of the researcher of these interactions. This next section explores particular instances of difficulty experienced during the research, which illustrate how the process of conducting this research - from fieldwork to analysis - was, itself, a social interaction, and thus consistently vulnerable to breakdown. As with any social interaction, the efficacy of the methods employed in this research were impacted by potential breakdown of a productive interaction, for example due to my attempts to overdetermine an interaction by asking questions that a participant found too difficult or confusing to answer, or the difficult group dynamics in the discussion group setting. However, reflecting on some of these key difficult moments also offered rich insight into understanding more deeply my role as researcher and sense-maker within this research.

One such moment was a few weeks into the fieldwork, when I had finished a particularly intensive week of accompanying audience participants to see the three performances of ONE taking place at HOME and had spent three evenings hosting post-show discussions and interviews with HOME theatre and marketing teams. After the show in the bar afterwards, after the audience participants had left, I ended up chatting to some of the theatre company, and one of them asked me whether or not it was ‘weird’ seeing the show again after seeing it in rehearsals. Reflecting in my research journal afterwards, I noted that I had found it very difficult to formulate a response to this seemingly straightforward question:

> It’s like I don’t know what I think anymore. It feels like I’ve listened to people’s opinions all evening… I didn’t know how to answer the question from my own point of view… or even if it should? (VJ_0905)

This moment helped me to develop my thinking on what constitutes the ‘it’ that the performer was referring to. Was it the show in rehearsals, which was similar in many ways to the performance, but in a completely different context which meant that for me, it was a completely different interaction? Was I meant to answer it as my own experience as an audience member, or as a researcher who had just brought thirty people to see the show

throughout the week? Reflecting on this moment during the analysis, it was clear to me that this was the point at which I realised that my own positionality as a researcher and as an audience member and as a critical friend of the theatre companies and venue I was working with were very often at odds with one another. This tension certainly felt familiar.

In addition, what was interesting to me was that as a researcher up until that point I had resisted the temptation to give my opinion of the shows, for fear of directing the conversation too forcefully, or swaying the opinions of the participants. What had happened therefore was I had opened my own sense-making processes up to every possible potentiality, and in doing so lost my own critical faculties and sense of what I thought about things.

In everyday sense-making, we may incorporate and incarnate others' agencies, but we do so with a certain level of personal autonomy – being able to pick and choose how we interact (to a certain extent), we can disengage from those interactions that we deem not to be productive. As a researcher, whose responsibility it was to keep the interactions as productive as possible, I had exhausted myself by continually trying to adopt the other's perspective. From then on, my journal took on a more personal tone: I ensured that I connected with my thoughts as an audience member and was more readily willing to go with the flow of conversations a little more, giving my opinion when I felt it was of interest. It also allowed for a more even dynamic in interactions with the audience participants to participate more in this setting, as they felt less like I was interviewing them and more like I was one of them.

However, while it is inherent to the role of researchers working in the ethnographic tradition that they consider themselves to be participating in some way in what they are researching, I was not so prepared for the moments when participants enacted the role of the researcher. Despite making the effort to explain the basis of the methodology in the discussion groups, there were times when participants actively expressed concern for my methodology and were worried that I would find it difficult to analyse their responses. Two participants in particular explained that this worry that they had was impacting on how they were participating in the research, as they felt that they were second guessing what I needed from them. While I did not share their anxieties, having designed the methodology in a particular way that I was comfortable with, it was clear that my reassurances to this point had not provided the clarity they were seeking. It was only when, during one post

show discussion group, slightly exasperated by their doubt, I explained to them how my positionality as a neurodiverse researcher (with ADHD) had impacted on the research design. This release of some of my personal autonomy seemed to do the trick – these two participants felt that they could understand what I wanted from them and were more at ease in being able to respond to the project more informally 'as just an audience member'.

Another time, when one participant had brought in a large bowl of popcorn as an offering to other participants involved in the discussion group post-show, my instinct was to suggest that we put it away, in case one of the restaurant staff came over and asked us to leave for bringing in our own food. Luckily, the audience participant in question (Sue) soothed my anxiety and suggested that 'she did this kind of thing all the time, they know me'. As I reflected on my urge once again to overdetermine Sue's autonomy to bring in food to the discussion, I realised it came from a feeling that I somehow had an obligation to the venue, and perhaps even more deeply incorporated, an obligation to protect their commercial interests. I apologised to Sue for my outburst and shared my anxieties as feeling like I needed to control, or overdetermine, the situation with Sue and the group as researcher and host. We reflected on this together and an interesting discussion about the politics of the space ensued.

While this was navigating the tension between feeling beholden in some way to the venue's interests and to my audience participants' feeling of safety and comfort, another difficult moment was similarly navigating the tension between myself as a researcher and myself as an audience member, but this time in relation to attending the rehearsals of the theatre company behind ONE. I had already spent a significant amount of time in rehearsals with the SWIM company, as they developed the show at HOME, and had organised to visit the ONE company in rehearsals in London ahead of their performance in London. However, it proved difficult to arrange a time to access this and as I was worried about being too much of a burden, I simply showed up at their rehearsal space and hoped they remembered that I said I was coming. They very generously agreed for me to watch them run through the show in the rehearsal room. Reflecting in my journal afterwards, it was clear to me that I was somehow overstepping the mark by overdetermining the encounter. It felt awkward to be in the room, but not because I felt I was an imposition, but because I had unwittingly become an early audience member, when my intention had been to merely observe how they made their work:

> It didn't feel as easy [as SWIM], possibly because wasn't really a priority for them, which is fair enough. I think I sort of surprised them, even though we'd organized it. I was fitting into their process. And then suddenly I was watching the show (VJ_3004).

I enjoyed myself immensely and was very grateful for the sneak peek of the show, but the feeling I had somehow cast myself in the wrong role stayed with me for a while afterwards. A month later, I had the opportunity to talk it through with one of the HOME theatre team, who knew the company and the way they worked very well. She explained:

> [Bert and Nasi] have got to really trust each other to do what they do. With ONE they say really shit things to each other, so they need to create a safe space where they can test their own boundaries. This is core to their practice as ethical care, their interaction. They want to have frank and honest discussions to squeeze out what they need from it without having to necessarily worry about performing (HOME_006).

While they had been extremely generous in letting me into the rehearsal space, the guilty feeling that had stayed with me was a result of feeling that I might have delayed the progress on their show. Instead of being a quiet researcher in the corner, they had performed their show 'to me', for my benefit (although no doubt it was a little helpful to run the show as well). It was clear to me then that being 'greedy' with data, the underpinning logic of facet methodology, had its challenges when it came to the ethnographic positionality and ethical practice of the researcher. That is, I may have wanted to be a mere observer, but I was implicated as a participant – which, of course, I always was.

What's more, the understanding that this experience gave me of the company's practice made it very difficult to hear the criticisms by the audience participants that the company did not spend enough time working on the show, or that they did not care about the audience (as detailed earlier in the thesis). Once again, I was implicated here with a sense of duty to respect the autonomy of the artists, to tell the audience participants that they had *in fact* worked *very* hard and did care about their audiences, and to respect the autonomy of the audience participants, who were generally gracious with their critique and entitled to their own opinions of their interactions. In the end, the only choice I was able to make as a researcher was to sit with this tension and accept it as central to the research endeavour.

There were many other times too numerous to mention where I was aware of my positionality as a white, able-bodied, posh, neurodiverse, cis researcher – and no doubt many more besides when I was not so aware. While these might be seen as biases, and thus methodologically they may be seen as weaknesses, it became clear to me that these difficulties I encountered were actually the result of navigating the autonomy of the interaction and my autonomy as a researcher. This required a constant switching of roles and consideration of how my embodied experience of the research activity could, in fact, provide rich insight into my own positionality as a researcher.

The ethical consideration to want participants to benefit somehow from taking part in this project resulted in me often feeling compelled to provide my research participants with a positive, enjoyable experience of the research. The efforts that I made to regulate the experiences of my participants, to ensure they had what they needed to engage with the project as fully as possible, and to look after their wellbeing on an ethical level, all formed part of my role as researcher.

We might consider that an inherent problem with analysing audience talk is that people do not always say what they mean and often the very attempt to reflect on their experiences can override understandings of their own minds or adjust their preferences to match up to their explanations (Johanson and Glow 2015; Reason, 2010). This project places these processes, and all of the post-rationalisations, inevitable misunderstandings and miscommunications that occur as a result of these attempts, as part of the sense-making processes the research is precisely concerned with. It is important to acknowledge that the inherent imbalance of power dynamics of certain interactional contexts that afforded certain sense-making processes over others, such as in a group discussion, were still very much in play, and it is through the fluid approach to methods and provision of a variety of interactional contexts and options that I attempted to mitigate for these imbalances where possible. However, there were clearly instances where participants engaged less, resulting in uneven levels of participation across the group.

In addition, the idea that I as a researcher am capable of having complete control of determining the experience for my participants is incongruent with the theoretical framework on which this research depends. As sense-making in the enactive paradigm is an inherently risky process, due to its precarious nature, and therefore at continued risk for breakdown, there were undoubtedly times when I or the participants would attempt to

over-regulate an interaction or over-determine their or the role of another in the process. It is in these misunderstandings, miscommunications and incidences of (real and potential) social embarrassment and crucially how as autonomous agents we navigate these instances, and continue (or not) to regulate our social interaction effectively, that is of interest here. These processes are at the heart of sense-making and were under my control as much as they were under the control of the participants. Through the participant-led design, I was able to be responsive to these dynamics as part of my own sense-making process. However, I must acknowledge that at every stage and within every interaction, an imbalance of power dynamics is already, always potentially in play; and as one individual I will have not been able to be aware of all these potentialities.

The personalised approach of the participant-led design naturally engendered varying degrees and levels of participation by participants, and the methodology had to accept that as the reality of research as a social act. For some participants, the modes of interactions unfolded and changed depending on particular contextual factors, whereas for others, their preferred interactions with the research were either set in stone from the beginning, either as a clear sense of how they wanted to respond to the project, or by controlling the parameters for access to existing structures (e.g. theatre companies determining my access to their rehearsal processes, for instance).

As De Jaegher et al argue, in social interaction research, 'when allowing for uncertainty in the interaction, there is more trust' (2017, p.512). The fieldwork certainly felt at times to be a precarious social process, which is of course what De Jaegher and their contemporaries would suggest is the essence of sense-making processes. Thus an engaged epistemology and a 'letting be' of social interactions with participants across the fieldwork became less of a conscious choice and more of a necessity of the methodology if I was to respect the autonomy of the interactions and of the participant-interactors.

Key enactive principles

This next section will draw from the findings of all three facets and further highlight the contribution the enactive theoretical framing has to our understanding of meaning-making in relation to the research questions forming this project.

Making meaning in this way becomes a ‘momentary shared orientation cast towards a person, an object, a situation, an act etc’, with their main effect to be ‘to state a claim (often ambiguous and open-ended) on the current relations between selves, activities and world’ (Di Paolo et al. 2018, p.294). Throughout the research there were instances when audience participants navigated the diverse experiences of the other participants by attempting to build shared microcontexts. We can see how the trajectories of each audience member were all different and unique, but meaning was not co-created in the sense that they built the same meaning together. However we saw how they were still enacting their meanings in response to and through one another. In this sense the contribution of participatory sense-making as a potential theoretical framework through which we can understand how these meanings are enacted in a participatory way is significant: it enables us to study how our experiences interrelate, and how our collective experiences are interdependent. Yet it allows space to consider how our own individual journeys and navigations of these social spaces can lead us to build our own individual and unique meanings.

The reporting and braiding of utterances

Facet 1 illustrated how participants enacted meaning by reporting the utterances of others, instead of treating them as pre-formed and discrete entities representing their individual responses. For instance, in Facet 1 we saw repeatedly how participants reported previous viewpoints of others, and used them to frame their own interpretations — either agreeing, or disagreeing, or sometimes just using them as an excuse to put forward their viewpoint. In particular, in study 2 we saw how participants used the format of the discussion group to feed off each other’s responses, how they changed their mind and considered their own journeys ‘through’ the content, and compared their experiences to the immediate ‘local’ context of the group, as well as broader contexts.

We saw in the research context chapter how Bottineau’s typology for languaging allowed for an understanding of languaging to happen at a number of different levels. In this research alone, we saw how participants incorporated and incarnated the languaging flows of others at a hyper-local level (e.g. in the discussion group of Facet 1), an extended individual context (e.g. the reporting of experiences of family and friends or the perception of experiences of other audience members) and an extended social context (e.g. the wider social macro-contexts). This reporting of utterances was not just confined to the actions of

the group on that particular day at that particular time. Participants would often refer to previous lived experiences as a way of 'stating a claim on the current relations of the group' (Di Paolo et al. 2018, p.294). This was often ambiguous and open-ended but were related in some way to the discussions – for example in the way they connected with the experiences of swimming or the life of the writer outlined in Study 3. Equally as often, participants would interact with themselves through self-directed utterances, such as when they imagined themselves in the discussion groups audiencing one of the shows, taking on a certain role as future audience members to visualize and imagine how they might respond to the theatre event that the copy and image was helping them bring forth. They conceived their roles as others, not just as 'themselves-in-the-future' but also playing different roles, adopting the view point of others – for example, when Bee suggested that friends and family members might be 'put off' by ONE's ambiguous communications campaign, or when Liz and Susan imagined a scenario where they had to discuss the prospect of the show with their students to persuade them to come. This is linked to the key aspect of intersubjectivity – that as sense-makers we are used to adopting multiple positionalities (De Jaegher et al., 2017).

While the content of these discussions is of course particular and situated within this specific context, the processes by which participants made sense are not: this is everyday sense-making in action. By combining processes of interpretation and production, by trying out new potential possibilities and meaning, new utterances were produced that were themselves open to new interpretations and potential reporting by others in the group. We can see time and time again in the examples given in the studies how participants would, to coin Di Paolo et al.'s terminology, 'braid their utterances' in interaction with others and the actions of others: 'by braiding reported utterances, participants are able to make social and pragmatic relations present, even when the context is not entirely shared' (Di Paolo et al. 2018, p.293). They were doing this by way of participating actively in the group. This was evident in how Jade was able to position her experiences of wild swimming in a context that others were able to understand, or how Nooren situated her own experience of the SWIM image and copy in relation to the experiences of others, and in doing so revealed something about her own experience to herself.

Facet 3 took the principles outlined in Facet 1 and developed them in a broader audiencing context. We saw how audience participants' experiences of their own audiencing involved processes of interacting with the experiences of others; that's to say,

their *interpretations* of the experiences of others. It is not a causal relationship - their experiences were not directly constructed from others' experiences in a total way, but through this process of interacting with others, they constructed their own experiences. It is nonsensical in this paradigm then to question whether or not others' experiences influence our own. Neither is it necessary to conflate our experiences with those of others, by treating the audience as a homogenous collective experiencing homogenous experiences. By placing a point of emphasis on the interactions between those participating in the sense-making processes, the enactive framing allowed me to question *how* their experiences were formed through the experiences of others, be it in their immediate context of the auditorium or discussion group, or the extended context of personal or shared social contexts – or the ecological extensions of the extended mind (McConachie, 2013b, p.186). It was perhaps not a coincidence that Facet 3 also included many instances where audience participants were actively interested in and curious about the experiences of others; after all '[u]tterances are […] about people about their actions, and about previous utterances, before they are about objects or events' (Di Paolo et al. 2018, p.293).

Indeed we are used to interacting with faceless marketing messages every day in this way; if we were to treat every pop-up or marketing slogan that we were faced with as a meaningful invitation to engage we would begin to lose our grip on reality. Yet we saw in the last study of Facet 1 illustrated how audience participants, often instinctively, understood marketing content, as 'products of linguistic bodies' (Di Paolo et al., 2018, p. 304), and thus when trying to make sense of it, would engage with it as if they were interacting with those linguistic bodies. We can see how participants recognized a certain intention and agency behind the communications material, illustrated for instance in the judgements made by Erica about the Red Dust Road copy not being 'for them', or the idea that the inclusion of persuasive reviews was meant to persuade or trick Liz into booking for ONE. This demonstrates a certain familiarity and scepticism with being marketed 'at'. Here there was a sensitivity to feeling like the communications was not meant or directed at them, or a will to try and understand the motivations behind the content itself. This idea then lays the foundation for understanding communications content and activity of artists and theatre-makers not as lumps of content, imbued with pre-conceived meaning, but as specific utterances or enactive symbols resulting from the actions of specific people – of specific 'linguistic communities' (Di Paolo et al., 2018, p.307).

Enactive symbols

Thus in this framework we can understand marketing content not as fixed symbols to decode, but enactive symbols dependent on the enacting of micro-contexts between participants. We saw participants navigating symbols that may be frozen in time in the promotional content produced by HOME and the theatre companies, but also how they saw them not just as discrete, universal units of meaning - but they were conscious of the linguistic bodies behind them, producing them (Di Paolo et al. 2018, p. 3). This is described in the enactive framework as a gradual and always incomplete process of sedimenting shared norms through linguistic engagement with one another. So reporting and braiding the utterances of others within a particular situated micro-context, is never just about a shared or joint or mutual attention to a 'thing', but rather always first and foremost concerning people and their actions.

Facet 1 presented us with the opportunity to understanding marketing campaign content as a crafted series of enactive symbols: enactive in a sense that they are not discrete, static and universal symbols in the traditional sense based on the computational theory of mind and sense-making of others as 'mind-reading', but instead as symbols based on particular shared microcontexts, enacted through concrete interaction with one another. In this Enactive sense, symbols act as emergent shorthand in a group scenario, a tool for bringing forth microcontexts of meaning. These symbols are relied upon to constitute the communications campaign content as complex series of utterances in progress, in the same way that language is constituted as a 'living stream' rather than a locus for symbols. In an enactive sense, symbolizing is incorporating and incarnating available articulations in and for a community. Symbols are an 'emergent shorthand' that consolidate histories of interactions and live negotiations and rely on both the symbolizing and sensitizing of linguistic bodies to happen simultaneously, to structure linguistic engagements (Di Paolo et al. 2018, p. 298).

This thesis posits that an enactive understanding of marketing and campaigns material allows us to view campaign communications not as media coded with symbols, but rather as complex utterances in process. These series of utterances do not affect people homogenously in time but will rather 'present points of varying projective, pragmatic, and expressive intensities (Di Paolo et al., 2018, p. 286). We call these moments when meanings tended to converge between participants, not representative of a particular

group, but rather indicative of action-constituted meaning-making at points of ‘high regulatory intensity’ (Di Paolo et al. 2018, p.287). This enactive reframing of symbolizing is central to the practice of participatory sense-making and thus our development of theatre marketing in this project from a transactional transfer of value to an ongoing process of engagement with marketing as complex utterances in progress. It is crucial that we enable a critical approach to the languaging and symbolizing practices inherent in marketing processes if we are to pick apart the ideologies at play in institutional enactments of concepts such as quality and value. We have seen in the first facet how these utterances are already being engaged with in processual interactions due to the participatory sense-making processes at play in the reception of them. By unpicking how these campaign utterances that are incorporating and incarnating particular values belong to particular value frameworks, we can thus better understand how cultural value manifests as a process not a product, contributing to existing work in this area.

In addition to enactive symbolizing, the particular enactive theoretical framing of agency considers the acts of an agent as foundational to a new kind of agency which links how we regulate our interactions with our roles as autonomous agents: ‘it is literally a case of explaining who you are by referring to what you do, and explaining what you do by referring to who you are’ (Di Paolo et al., 2017, p.142). In his discussion of Gallagher’s extension of agency as distributed through time and space, White describes how we might understand agency as acting consciously with intention, rather than as ‘the ‘accessory experience’ generated subsequent to an action’ which ‘becomes part of the background mental state of actions which follow’ (2013, p.125). This directly relates to De Jaegher et al.’s theories of participatory sense-making, bringing social cognition into the enactive and intersubjective realm. For this reason, enactive theories have the potential to uncover dynamics of trust and vulnerability between audience and performer; an ethical approach hoped for by performance studies scholars who we have seen take a critical approach to these dynamics of agency within a neoliberal political context (Freshwater 2011; Harvie 2011; Alston 2016).

What’s more, within participants’ concern with what the show was ‘about’ we see evidence of a certain objectifying attitude, a searching for certain, objective meaning; a ‘sensitivity to rightness’ that accompanies the objectifying attitude to linguistic participation (Di Paolo et al. 2018, p. 293). Conceptualising enactive symbols as a process of claiming a particular set of relations at any given moment not only enables us to recognise the processual

nature of sense-making within particular communities of linguistic bodies, it also switches the focus of interacting with symbols away from the dichotomy of either getting or not getting the meaning, towards a more nuanced and complex picture. While there are 'action points' of an utterance that are constituted by 'points of high regulatory intensity' (Di Paolo et al. 2018, p. 287), these moments do not, and cannot not, affect everyone in a homogenous way. While it might sound obvious, people react to different themes or ideas - such as swimming, in the shows - because of their own particular interactional histories with the practice they have previously associated with this idea. This played out time and time again in everyday sense-making; the common sensical assumptions that we are talking of the same thing for instance; when we use a word which for us incorporates a particular set of relations, only to find that another is responding to an entirely different notion or set of relations. Crucially however, we must be careful in treating action points explored in this facet as discrete entities or units in themselves: as with every utterance, they are a partial act 'whose full effect is only obtained by how linguistic bodies respond to them (often with other utterances, equally open)' (Di Paolo et al., 2018, p.287).

This next section will explore how this develops our notions of marketing in relation to linguistic communities. However firstly, I want to look at the implications of these theories for our understanding of theatre as a practice more specifically and how understanding theatre as a participation genre is a useful term building on notions of theatre as interaction and active audiencing explored earlier in the thesis.

Theatre as a participation genre

This project has argued that that the benefits of approaching both theatre-making, audiencing and marketing processes all as a series of interactions far outweighs the harm done by assimilating them in this way. While the enactive theory of participatory sense-making provides a framework for structuring our understanding of how humans, in general, make sense, I am not suggesting that audiencing is *exactly* the same as art-making. That's to say, while this framework endeavours to help shape our understanding of the innate creativity and dynamism of these human-centred interactions as participatory sense-making, they are nonetheless situated in different contexts, or what refer to as constituting distinct 'participation genres' (Di Paolo et al. 2018).

Firstly, it is important to note that our understanding of genre here is not limited to the type of genre we might associate with the categorization of live performance, such as ‘drama’ or ‘comedy’, although no doubt the use of these genres in sector practice may well be an attempt at pinning down specific consistent characteristics of how these theatre genres might typically engage audiences (for example). Genre used in the enactive sense describe a set of culturally- and time-specific set of normative practices, enlanguaged by past interactions.

In the enactive framework of participatory sense-making, Di Paolo et al. (2018, 2020) conceptualise all ‘linguistic bodies’ in interaction as having an autonomy through their interactions with their environment and others. To conceptualise theatre as a participation genre might be to conceive of a space where specific audience/performer roles are designated. But crucially, in the case of the participation genre of a theatre performance, the theatre-maker is not in full control of those they are interacting with, but rather assumes the role of crafting the blueprint or initial terms of engagement (or invitation to engage). Of course how these roles are conceived does crucially affect the role of the cultural intermediary, which I will look at in more detail in the next section.

It is worth noting here that I am merely suggesting that approaching theatre as a participation genre will open the door for future research on how we might apply this label helpfully. It heralds a shift in moving away from theatre conceptualised as product or as something with inherent characteristics and benefits, towards a description instead of a set of interactive practices that are very much dependent on who is involved and how that in turn forms the marketing invitation. The next chapter will explore implications for this shift in more detail, but this research and in particular the work of Facet 3 has highlighted the need for more clarity on the specific terms of engagement for particular areas of diverse practice that we label ‘theatre’. We know from Pitts and Price’s (2021) research that ‘contemporary’ as a label is understood very differently by audiences than it is by practitioners in the sector, and this research has also explored in depth how the labels of participatory, co-creative and immersive are not particularly helpful in determining or describing a particular interactive framing a show might take. Of course I am equally not suggesting that these labels are used in order to constrict creative agency of artists and practitioners in playing around and subverting the terms of engagement, such as with the practice of ONE. But nevertheless there is some work to do on how those in cultural intermediary roles and artists and theatre-makes alike might consider how they are

articulating the inherent constraints on engagement that are otherwise implicit and well understood by experience designers, scenographers and creative practitioners.

For instance, a participation genre could be applied to the type of theatre shows that audiences have come to expect from HOME's programming, and how they might lead to an expectation of certain practices (e.g. direct audience participation, shorter shows with no intervals). Or it could work on a smaller scale effectively by making more explicit in communications activity the norms and practices of participation genres that make up attending a theatre performance – such as how audiences enter an auditorium and find their seat, or how they might participate in applauding the theatre company at the end of the evening, for example. This would have been welcomed by some of my participants who were less familiar with theatre and with HOME who were surprised and a bit confused by the interval. Nooren recalled thinking:

> I got confused at the break. It was just like, it stopped. And then the woman who was sat next to us is rushing to get out. And I was like 'is that it finished? That can't be it finished. How can that be the end of the story? That's a bit shit. [laughs] (Nooren RDRDGAP22).

Delineating participation genres as types of interaction inherent in audiencing could help to provide audience members who are lacking the tools, information or context to orient themselves to engage– be that with a new artistic experience, or more broadly relating to a particular theatrical convention. As in the example above, it focuses less on the lack of knowledge or understanding towards an open admittance that knowledge is specific on the particular communities that enact it. Indeed it is quite the paradox that on one level theatre, as an art form that can encompass a wide range of diverse content, performers with varying skill sets, and (certainly in theory) something that is simple to stage, is still inaccessible to so many. We saw in Facet 2 how easy it is to treat engagement as yet another impact metric, particularly in digital marketing practices. In this way, a significant and particular contribution of the enactive framing of engagement is that we are focused not just on the instance of engagement, but on the qualities of the engagement.

We saw how the attempt to symbolize in an enactive content is to direct the languaging flows of a particular group of people in a way that allows for practice of a certain identity (Di Paolo et al. 2018, p. 293). The enactive perspective enables a framing of cultural value that focuses on the practice and maintenance of these identities, especially in relation to

symbolizing notions of quality and excellence in a certain value framework, such as the ideological framework of the democratisation of culture over cultural democracy as Hadley describes (2021). In this sense, the enactive framing also has implications for our understanding of cultural value. The research context chapter explored how the practice of marketing and communications in the field of arts marketing often treats campaign contents as rigid and discrete symbols with inherent predetermined markers of meaning: a hangover from a management practice based on a computational theory of mind. In the enactive paradigm, pieces of campaign content, through the use of different forms of media, are concretised manifestations of enlanguaged content in this sense and formed from varied expressions of personal, professional and institutional utterances. These utterances are thus inherently value-laden, and although relying on dominant social and cultural shared microcontexts, are just as vulnerable to breakdown when they are interacted with in various media, and even more so when incarnated in interpretations and memory-making following an experience. For instance, more than one participant wrongly identified the person in one of SWIM's video trailers as the writer of the show, when in fact they were an outdoor swimming activist who had agreed to support the show by talking about their experiences of ice swimming. This was not a miscommunication or missing information on the part of the theatre company or HOME team, but rather a simple assumption made by audience participants, who are constantly interacting and engaging with many diverse languaging flows in their busy everyday lives.

It is perhaps not surprising that marketing messaging, is subject to the same types of misinterpretations and assumptions as happen in, say, everyday interactions in our daily lives. But while it perhaps seems obvious, the considerable labour and resource invested in refining and perfecting a range of creative content is often nevertheless an attempt to overdetermine the interaction with the potential audience. It is the pervasive assumption that marketing is about transmitting information into the (presumably) empty brains of those who receive messages. As we saw in Facet 2, individual audiencing practice shapes professional practices of marketing, and thus by its very nature involves making a certain number of assumptions about the level of pre-existing knowledge, or sharing similar lived experiences, in those we are engaging with. It is therefore useful to consider how interactions through and with marketing and communications activity are vulnerable to mistakes and misunderstandings as are the interpretations of more loosely-defined shared microcontexts.

As Oliver and Walmsley argued, issues of cultural value are inherently connected to the roles and the identities that we are enacting (2011, p.99). How participants conceived of their roles was core to the research questions underpinning this project. More specifically Facet 2 was concerned with positioning marketing as intersubjective practice involving processes of personal and professional audiencing which involves making value judgements on behalf of prospective audience members. This necessarily situates and furthers our understanding of arts marketing within a broader arts management context, as well as exploring the perception of narratives of engagement and diversity within the professional imperative of developing (and diversifying) audiences for live performance. This facet considered how we might understand the practice of arts marketing as an embodied and primarily intersubjective and social practice by the individuals that practise it: both theatre-makers and arts marketers / producers through interaction.

On the whole, HOME marketing team members understood that it was an inherent part of their roles as cultural intermediaries to make value judgements on behalf of other people about what was important to them. Indeed we saw a common way of navigating this dichotomy was to ensure that they experienced the theatre shows ‘first-hand’, so that they were able to, at the very least, ensure that their own experiences of the shows could inform their practice. Of course in marketing as in research practice, we are also aware that there are limits to our own subjectivity and if we are only to consider our own experiences and meaning-making, then we will only ever attract people ‘like us’. As there is a call for the diversification of researchers working in audience studies; so too should we consider broadening the diversity of the languaging flows that are being enacted on an institutional level through marketing and programming practices.

It was not the domain of this research to contribute to a concrete definition of value but rather it allows a framework in which we can define our terms on a case by case basis in research studies. Value becomes an emergent concept within contextual parameters; it emerges from the interaction with or our relationship to the environment and is a crucial aspect of sense-making, resulting from an ‘evaluation of the consequences of interaction for the conservation of an identity’ in a system (De Jaegher et al., 2010, p.45). The enacting of identities is not a new notion in the field of cultural value (Hadley et al., 2020, p.149). By conceptualising arts marketing as an embodied and primarily intersubjective and social practice this research has enabled a consideration of the challenges that this reconceptualization of arts marketing practice might present for the dominant practices

reliant on the ‘shared anchoring assumptions’ (Dewey 1939, as cited by Meyrick et al., 2019, p.82) that are currently favoured by, or directly enacted by, the neo-liberal, capitalist model of arts management.

We saw in the research context chapter how scholars argue that the instrumentalization of art is not just in the measuring and dominance of the ‘spillover’ secondary benefits of arts engagement in sectors such as health or education policy contexts, but rather the politicization of the artistic space itself (Hadley and Belfiore, 2018). This facet illuminated the perhaps obvious point that the conferral of value is not between organisations per se, but rather the interactions that Meyrick et al. (2019) are referring to is between individuals within an organisational or institutional framework - in this case, the touring theatre sector. Throughout their professional practices, they fluctuate between the incorporation and incarnation of their own languaging flows, and in doing so, at times, incarnate institutional languaging flows as best-practice marketing speak.

Artists and theatre-makers too are not immune to incarnating institutional languaging flows: they are rewarded when they mirror policy or engagement speak to describe their work and articulate cultural value in promotional activities aimed at prospective audiences for their shows. What we have here is a systematic sanctioning of dominant and normative languaging flows, rewarding those that are able to play the game effectively and dominate certain narratives in particular linguistic communities. Dominant arts marketing practice is reliant on shared anchoring assumptions of these linguistic communities, directly incorporated from those that uphold the neo-liberal, capitalist model of arts management. In an obsession with getting ‘bums-on-seats’, we are not only literally disembodying our audiences of their experiences, but this dominant transaction model serves to quantify engagement in the same ways that previous notions of quality and value stood instead. Engagement, like value, is seen as an outcome, rather than a process. This links to the literature that argues that the problem of value should be approached as interactions to be lived, rather than claims to be proved (Meyrick et al 2019).

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The last chapter looked in depth at concrete examples from the facet activity of how an understanding of cognition and meaning-making in the enactive paradigm enables a reframing of the experience of live theatre as a complex and embodied set of sense-making interactions between artist, audience and cultural intermediary. The application of facet methodology in the enactive framework to the participatory sense-making processes of these three groups of research participants involved in art-making constitutes one of the primary contributions of this research project. As explored in the methodology chapter, facet methodology, as a structuring tool, provided a framework to approach the fields-as-networks (work with the three participant groups) through facets. These facets, listed as Marketing as Organisational Practice and Promotion (Facet 1), Marketing as a Site of Cultural Value Conferral (Facet 2) and The Theatre Event (Facet 3) guided my initial engagement with the data, but they were also shaped and changed throughout the process.

As Mason notes, facet methodology as a 'responsively and creatively evolving approach' can take advantage of these shifts, 'as new insights develop, new theories and concepts take shape, and new lines of investigation start to emerge' (2011, p.83). This chapter thus begins with an exploration of how the facets shifted through the processes of analysis, before considering the ethical implications of the research practice of this project and the original contributions of this research to the research disciplines of arts marketing, audience studies, cultural value, and theatre and performance studies. This concluding chapter will then finish by considering some of the key strategic implications of the challenge to the dominant and transactional model of marketing theatre that this research poses for the making, marketing and management of theatre within the cultural sector.

The gemstone at the centre of the facet methodology might seem an odd metaphor to use for a project exploring the social, complex, embodied, dynamic, relational, and ever-shifting nature of sense-making. However one of the core strengths of the methodology lies in the fact that by developing an understanding of how these facets shift ensures that it is not just a tool for research design, but also applies to the analysis, writing, representation and argumentation of research (2011, p.83). In the last chapter I explored how my positionality as researcher-as-sense-maker inevitably shaped my own navigation of the contextual web of interactions within the fieldwork. This included how the process

was led by and was responsive to the interactions and enactments of the other participants, both in the 'here and now' of research activity, as well as upon reflection in the activity of the analysis. This final concluding chapter starts, then, with a consideration of how the facets have shifted in this particular research project in relation to the research questions underpinning this project.

Shifting facets as an analytical tool

The main research question Facet 1 aimed to address was the role that the marketing process plays in shaping audience expectation of what kind of input and receptivity the artistic experiences requires of them. It lay the groundwork for understanding how they conceived of their roles as audience members prior to the events themselves and how they interacted with the imagined voices of the artists, theatre-makers and HOME staff; the voices behind the copy. This facet illustrated examples of participatory sense-making through which audience members incorporated languaging flows and utterances, and incarnated the agencies of their fellow participants within the local micro-context of the discussion group, as well as interacting with additional imagined others from within the wider macro-contexts of their lives. This facet acted as the starting point for a series of interactions that would take place over a number of months, in the form of audience members' anticipation and expectations of the activity to come, what kind of experience they might expect from the imagery or words that interacted with in the groups, and what kinds of roles they might imagine playing in the theatre event itself.

This facet also constituted the starting point of my analysis processes. By reading over transcripts and listening to audio recordings of these discussion groups, I began a thematic analysis of the commonalities within audience participant responses, across groups. I then moved from analysing *what* meanings participants were enacting towards specific instances that illustrated how they were making them: through one another, in processes of engagement with different modes of content, and through the incorporation and incarnation of the languaging flows of other linguistic bodies. By unpicking the myriad meanings-made and journeys-taken in this local context of the discussion group, I aimed to develop my understanding of how participatory sense-making manifested within this particular situated context. This staging of engagement with communications material within this particular concrete set of interactions enabled a conceptualisation of these pieces of campaign content as interactions with enlanguaged products from previous

languaging flows. As the research design of the project enabled me to access some of the processes of creating this content by theatre companies and HOME staff making up Facet 2's field-as-network.

Facet 2 was designed to consider how we might understand the practice of arts marketing as an embodied and primarily intersubjective and social practice by the individuals. The main research questions addressed by this facet were the processes of selecting and articulating which aspects of the artistic experience are focused on in marketing campaigns, and what role the marketing conversations play in articulating the intentions and expectations of the artistic or creative teams. This facet uncovered how these processes are designed to shape audience expectation and perception of HOME as a vibrant and diverse arts hub, and gave us further understanding of how cultural intermediaries, such as venue theatre and marketing teams, conceive of their roles through interactions with the theatre-makers and creative teams.

However it was through the ethnographic fieldwork underpinning Facet 2, as well as through this analysis process, that the significance of the political and institutional context became apparent. Initially I had planned to compare artistic intention as communicated through marketing material as products of collaboration with theatre companies with specific audience expectations. I saw how the shift from value-as-engagement has at once enabled the potential for a broader range of voices and value-making processes to be enacted, but that these are heavily constrained (and, at times, over-determined) by the dominance of certain recursive languaging practices enacted by dominant linguistic communities. Thus value is enacted through the administrative, public and therefore political space, as much as in the personal space, as marketers playing the role as audience members.

Through the quantification of audience engagement as another metric and the lack of time or space to develop a deeper understanding of the work of theatre-makers and artists, it became clear just how pervasive the transactional framing of value is within the sector. While academics working in arts marketing and cultural value research and professional programmes of marketing training and development alike continue to extoll (quite rightly) the virtues of relational, engagement-led practice, those fulfilling cultural intermediary roles are simply using what little resource, energy and power (even within the very institutions

that they work) to resist the complete takeover of the transactional panacea that is sales-driven marketing.

Thus the lens of this facet shifted away from a focus on specific languaging flows within particular campaigns towards questions of broader institutional values at play within specific engagement and audience development techniques that are emblematic of engagement-led marketing. In particular Facet 2 explored how the dominant transactional model can be understood as an overdetermination of the other, and how this is enacted within the constraints and affordances of three particular models of co-production between theatre companies and venue. Thus the depth of understanding of the principles of participatory sense-making illustrated on a micro-level in Facet 1 were layered on the broader understanding of the context in which these key interactions with audience, artist and cultural intermediary are enacted in Facet 2, to form the analysis and activity of Facet 3.

In Facet 3 we can begin to see how the framing of enactive theories of participatory sense-making of humans as producers *and* consumers of meaning (Colombetti, 2010, p.148) enables a concrete, situated study of the three events-as-product. Through co-research with audience participants, this facet explored meaning-making narratives that participants enacted before, during and after each event, as they described their expectations and experiences, what they liked and did not like, and recalled specific key or memorable moments in each show. From this we could see how audience participants each selected and articulated particular aspects of the show to focus on, and how these were enacted within specific personal and intersubjective contexts and uncovered some of the pathways participants took to reach alternative understandings of the same event by outlining how different audience participants articulated and communicated their experiences of the three different theatre shows.

In particular this facet aimed to illustrate how participants made sense of their experiences through the incorporation and incarnation of languaging flows of the other (including the ‘imagined’ other) and how this in turn can lead us to conceptualise the theatre event not just as an experience capable of doling out ‘social’ benefits, but as a series of interactions itself. The definition of sociality in the enactive sense is helpful here: it characterises interactions that are always vulnerable to breakdown and reliant on the autonomy of those fulfilling audiencing and/or performing roles. This final facet looked at how the theatre

event can be understood to be a participation genre, understood here in the enactive sense as a set of culturally- and time-specific set of normative practices, enlanguaged by past interactions, and how both theatre-maker and audience member navigate the autonomy of their own roles within this event interaction. The enactive framework also allows us to position and understand how participants interact with their past, present and future selves, and how they navigated the research activity as autonomous individuals. This related to how they conceived of their roles within this research process, and crucially how they enacted their own notions of quality and value as tied to these identities.

Ethics of an engaged epistemology

> To live as a linguistic body is to accept that language has a hold on us and we are partially open to its movements. Our behaviour, our ideas, our intentions are in part the result of being exposed to the linguistic acts of others… [they] can go straight into our bodies, in all their dimensions… even momentarily take possession of our affect and our agency (Di Paolo et al., 2018, p.314).

> We're not shouting at each other, unlike the two guys up the ladder [laughs]. We can actually disagree, and it's not a problem. I wish the world was a bit like this (Nevan ONEAP13).

As the above quotes from Di Paolo et al., and audience participant Nevan illustrate, there is an inherent ethical dimension to participatory sense-making, given the interdependency of our languaging processes. Just as when we report others' utterances in our own sense-making, representing others in research is 'always embedded in relations of power' (Pickering and Kara, 2017, p.303). While this is central to the subject matter of this research; namely the dynamics of value that are inherent in arts marketing and management as processes, this section will consider briefly some of the ethical implications of some of the choices that I have made during the research process.

Throughout the research there have been examples of audience participants communicating their enjoyment from opportunities to discuss their thoughts, opinions and experiences that this research process afforded. At the end of the research project, audience participant Liz mentioned, like many participants, how she found it fascinating when other participants had a completely different experience to her:

> That thing […] when people go ‘oh it’s fantastic’ and you think WHAT? Because obviously I'm fairly confident about what I like and what I don't like, but it does make you think - did I just not get it? (Liz RDRDGAP08)

The facets illustrated clearly how participants took part willingly in the research, with many offering rich, reflective, thoughtful and generous responses and encouraging others in the group to do likewise. The deep and rich responses that were given, even at this early stage of the research, were certainly encouraging and thus further encouraged – and it was clear from the outset that I had the opportunity to work with a group of people that were generally interested and engaged in the task at hand. That is not to say of course that all participants navigated the research in the same way, nor indeed in ways that I would have anticipated at the outset; nor was there an absence of confusion, misunderstanding, and at times, frustration, as explored in the last chapter. But all of this was part and parcel of this messy, contingent and socially embedded research methodology. As John Law argues, the research object is a moving and shape-shifting target (Law 2007, 598).

This sense of commitment and engagement of the audience participants is evident in the exploration of the different facets explored in the previous chapters. After 3 initial ‘no-shows’ to the initial discussion group, and a few participants not being able to make a performance on the day, at no point from then on during the fieldwork spanning seven months, did a participant drop out of the project entirely. This may in part be down to the nature of the proposition of this research; within the ‘call-out’ for the research I alluded to a required commitment from participants[22] – and through the processes of selection I directly and indirectly ended up working with a group of, whom I felt to be and whom I encouraged to be throughout, engaged and curious co-researchers. While I tried also to sample as diverse a range of participants as I could (as detailed in the methodology chapter), I may have unwittingly selected those participants with whom I felt I was able to connect as a researcher, and for whom I was able to provide a fulfilling and engaging experience of the research.

Managing the research activity in a flexible way as necessitated by the methodology was challenging across the lifecycle of the project, as there was a degree of sensitivity and

[22] See Appendix G for advert wording.

awareness of participants' professional activity and a need to cause minimal disruption to their practice. As described above, with the audience participants recruited for this project there was the ethical consideration to ensure that the activity was well communicated and structured, which involved a significant amount of project management. This was not only time intensive, but for this particular strand of the research it was therefore important where possible to provide flexibility and agency within this structure.

What's more, during the months of May – September 2019 when the performances took place, a large proportion of my time and energy was spent project managing the audience fieldwork: rearranging tickets when needed, and ensuring that participants were given all the information that they needed to participate fully in the research, including regular e-mail communications on times, dates, venues and any associated content warning issued by the venue. The option to choose their mode of participation in the research was in part to mitigate for any one individual mode of participation being prohibitive to any individual.

Initially the research was designed to allow for an equal split of researcher time across all three participants strands, with a plan to access rehearsals and have meetings with key creatives, attend a certain number of rehearsals and conduct interviews. However engagement across the theatre companies was inconsistent, and this was largely down to the fact that periods of high activity in this area – for example, around the theatre performances themselves, were also high activity in other areas – such attending the shows with audience participants. Thus it was difficult at time to project manage and conduct the research at these crunch points, and the time split of the research did favour the audience participants and the HOME marketing teams as those relationships had already been built. Furthermore this uneven split was likely influenced by my positionality as someone at home in an arts venue and who was sensitive to the pressures of a busy arts marketing team.

Of course there were constraints on the flexibility of these methods in practice. The emphasis was on how the interactions unfolded with participants as active agents or sense-makers, while keeping attuned to the sociality of both research activity and art-making activity and the dynamic, relational context. Some aspects of the interactions were fixed by prior agreement - for example, when we needed to decide on the terms of the engagement such as the agreement of the time or date of an interview. Wherever possible, and wherever it felt appropriate, the interactions were able to take place across a

variety of modes – for example, a face-to-face post show chat in the lobby may then continue in another mode; for example, when a participant decided to explore some ideas and reflections by typing them into WhatsApp and sending them to me, and a mini question and answer session ensued over a number of subsequent days. This relied on a certain commitment and trust from participants and varied across the board.

It became clear to me during the fieldwork, that research methods did not have to be explicitly participatory (as is the case with discussion groups and post-show chats) for them to afford participatory sense-making. We have seen throughout this thesis examples of how sense-making is by its very nature participatory. However, this is not to say that the discussion group as a group research activity will not afford or constraint certain modes of participation in comparison to others. For instance, audience participants were able to listen to one another's responses as they themselves navigated the same stimuli and space, and therefore the utterances of others were more readily available to them than they were in other settings. Although all qualitative research methods have the potential to be social, in terms of interactions with (often) imagined others, the more private one-on-one interview methods could be said to have afforded a more personal or individual sense-making journey. There was an instance of one participant not saying anything in a group setting at all, only to follow up with a rich and full written account of their responses to the questions posed in the group earlier that day. Similarly there were instances throughout the research where participants referred to particular moments in the fieldwork where they felt unable to express their thoughts freely, due to a concern about group dynamics. For instance, one participant admitted during the research that he did not enjoy the first discussion group as much as the post-show discussion chats because of the more informal nature of the latter and also because of a 'dominant' voice in the discussion group (Adam, RDRAP35).

As my co-researchers, I also wanted to share a small selection of audience participant reflections on some of the 'flashes of insight' that they kindly articulated to me during the research that directly related to my research questions. Some participants found themselves to be surprised that the marketing or advertising of a theatre experience would impact how they experienced it. In an audio note sent through three months after the project finished, Seb, recalled how the project had made him more aware of the relationship between audience and performer, which he admits he had taken for granted before:

> I'm thinking “oh what is that show trying to communicate to me. What are the marketing team trying to make me think even before I've seen it?” […] You can be shown an image of something, and then a blurb for something, and it can completely shift your perceptions of what it is, it's a very interesting little journey that they take you on (Seb RDRAP40).

Indeed so compelling and ingrained in us is the idea that theatre is a stable and universal product that some participants expressed surprise that this was indeed the case:

> I am very aware that I've taken every play and placed it upon my background experience to make sense of the content and that's a perspective I feel your work has given me. A sense of the differing understanding of each piece based on the viewer experience. Silly to think I'd never realised before! (Daphne RDRAP41)

Participants generally enjoyed the breadth of shows they came to see, and often recalled moments where they found themselves enjoying something that they would not have previously considered attending. While this was a fairly common and perhaps expected response, the reasoning that they often gave was not only about seeing something different, but additionally discovering something about themselves in the process.

> [SWIM] was probably not the first thing that I would have really jumped to see. But then as soon as it started I thought, 'I'm really glad I'm here. I'm really glad I really can't wait to see how I feel at the end of it (Seb SWIMDGAP26).

Contribution to knowledge

> [T]he enaction perspective reminds us that perception is something we do, not something that happens to us. And this is never truer than when a person perceives some aspect of the physical world to be a symbol or a representation of any kind (Hutchins 2010, p.446).

The literature review found that theories of 4E cognition, and most notably enactive theories, are particularly well suited to exploring questions of cultural value. This is because enactive theories are concerned with the emergent, embodied and ecological (extended) qualities of value, but also that meaning is enacted actively in interaction with other people and our environments. As to date there has been very little in the way of applying theories of enactive cognition to the marketing of live performance, and so one of the key contributions of this research is the application of the theoretical framework itself to processes of arts marketing and audiencing. By understanding theatre as participatory

sense-making, this research project brought together these different groups of audience, theatre-maker and intermediary to enact their roles in the total-art making process. This bringing together of different practices and disciplines illustrates an additional key contribution of this research, the implications for which will be explored in this section. In addition, how a cultural intermediary might practise their own type of marketing is considered in the arts marketing discipline as a fruitful area of research (Fillis, 2003; 2006; 2007). This includes crucially how arts marketers, and more broadly cultural intermediaries, perceive of themselves and thus navigate their priorities within a professional setting (Walmsley 2011, p. 143).

If we are to locate value not in the product, but within intersubjective web of communities, then we might be able to further understand how our judgements are intersubjectively formed (Stewart 2013, p. 117). Studies that approach these processes through the framing of participatory sense-making, which was developed in a response to the lack of enactive accounts for social cognition, can make a very precise contribution to our understanding of cultural value. As research continues to flourish into the imprints of individual experiences of culture (as is the case with new research centres such as the Centre for Cultural Value) then we also need to be ready to research those value frameworks that are underpinning these experiences in an ethical way. As audience participant Grace neatly observed, cultural value is always enacted on personal terms:

> The emotional framework that makes us value certain kinds of art, is actually an important part of us that we need to protect. That's why we feel hurt if someone doesn't like something that we do (Grace SWIMDGAP31).

Indeed the enactive framing has wider implications for the field of audience studies, as just as cultural intermediaries navigate the institutional languaging flows of the professional context in which they work, audiences too also navigate the flows of cultural power and their own agency through their own audiencing (Sedgman 2019a, p.472) as a 'profoundly embodied and deeply cultural' process (Bleeker and Germano 2014, p.383). We saw how the cognitive turn in many disciplines, including within the arts and humanities, has resulted in a number of studies utilising scientific methodologies to explore different aspects of embodied cognition (McConachie and Hart 2006). As it is technologically impossible at the moment to measure thought or language or meaning-making, then it is possible that these critical aspects of audiencing will be side-lined by fields such as 'neuroaesthetics' and physiological mapping of audience experiences which continue to

grow with every technological advance. It is therefore vital that methodologies that seek not to know things in an ‘over-deterministic manner’ do not exacerbate the hierarchy of methods and methodologies at play and ensure a varied mix of methodologies within the audience studies field. As De Jaegher reminds us, ‘(t)he more objective knowing becomes, the more it cuts relationships with its ‘object’ of knowing’ (De Jaegher 2019, p.863). Thus methodologically speaking, if we believe value and meaning to be embodied social phenomena, then we need embodied methodologies to research them (Leigh and Brown, 2021, p.105) that consider the political and ethical implications of their own modes of interpretation (Sedgman, 2019a, p.472).

Furthermore, the application of enactive theories to the study of theatre as an inherently intersubjective and interactive phenomenon (as participatory sense-making) has been largely dominated by studies that track and monitor observable behaviours of audiences in response to the stimulus (performance). While this is welcome research into the mapping of interactive dynamics of live performance, it does not deepen our understanding of the rich and fluid meaning-making processes that are in play. The enactive approach to performing and audiencing therefore has a potentially significant role to play within the audience studies discipline by bringing the interplay between the subjective and the intersubjective to the fore (De Jaegher et al. 2017 p. 515).

Audience research is the perfect field for focusing on the intersubjective, processual and dynamic processes through which audiences make meaning and constitute their sense of selves. In doing so it differs from subjective focused approaches to researching meaning-making ‘that concentrate sociality within individual mental attitudes such as empathy or shared intentional states’ (Di Paolo et al. 2018, p. 8). However as mainstream cognitive science has a tendency not to embrace personal or subjective accounts, there is also significant opportunity for learning from enactive accounts of audiencing and social cognition (and audience studies more broadly) to impact on our understanding of cognition, or what De Jaegher et al. call ‘the need for a practical phenomenology of interactive experience’ (2017, p. 493). Similarly I would argue that as there is no coherent theory of value that any one discipline can agree on, audience studies and cultural value researchers are well placed to contribute a wealth of understanding and knowledge on *how* value is enacted through arts and cultural encounters. Thus not only does enactive research have the potential to contribute to gaps in theatre audience research - such as how audiences experience notions of the ‘live’ in live performance (Reason, 2004) - so too

the rich and diverse methodologies used in audience studies have the potential to contribute to gaps in in social cognition research, such as developing our notion of valence to include multiple dimensions, values and judgements made by humans (Colombetti 2010, p.148). Furthermore theatre as a participation genre is a potentially valuable site to consider the nature of perception, as researchers can explore and experiment with the relationship between the perceiving subject and what is perceived which is at the core of the theatrical event (Bleeker and Germano, 2014; Blair, 2009). As theatre and performance deals with fundamental aspects of human experience such as feeling, motive, behaviour, identity and thinking, this has wide implications for its practice (Blair 2009, p.93), conducting experience research in theatres could provide the ideal laboratory of intersubjectivity to further the research of experiences in terms of how people make sense of their own experiences, sense of selves, through others and the world around them. Given that the theories of participatory sense-making and linguistic bodies are still fairly new, this presents a clear opportunity to forge interdisciplinary collaborations with researchers in the field of enactive and embodied cognition (Di Paolo et al. 2018).

Implications for marketing and sector practice

> Alan Brown: I'm starting to think, what if instead of understanding what we do as producing and selling a product, we actually say our job is to guide people through their lifelong journey with art and theatre? What would your organisation look like if you started with that as an outcome? It would change everything! An entirely new model would be possible.
>
> Emma McDowell: That's an exciting proposition
>
> (Brown and McDowell 2022, p.137).

While this research project did not aim to provide a list of recommendations or a toolkit of marketing or engagement techniques that are directly applicable to the sector, there are nevertheless some key implications of the enactive reframing of the practice of theatre marketing and arts management on a strategic level that are worth considering further. For example, this research project is a shining example of how audiences enjoy talking about, sharing and learning from their cultural experiences. A key area where this research could have more immediate relevance and impact would be in the development of platforms for audiences to share their experiences, or for cultural intermediaries to explore how they might be curious about their own audiencing of shows. Organisations that want to start

embedding audience-centred research practice into the fabric of their operations can start by simply setting up theatre club events, which provide an opportunity for audience members to talk after a show (Fuel Theatre 2015).

This research project argues that it is imperative that marketing activity reflects and enacts diverse value-making perspectives. This is difficult not least because it is hard work to work across difference, but the skillsets of marketing and communications professionals and of artist are well placed to inform this engagement practice. This also requires, crucially, a clarity of communication, of the terms of engagement – which focuses on the needs of those you are engaging, over (over-)promising certain impacts or outcomes from this engagement. We can see that there is increasingly innovative engagement practice occurring within the arts sector – for instance in the introduction of relaxed performances to provide a safe space for non-normative engagement modes, as well as a wealth of socially engaged arts practice that questions the normative value structures of arts engagement. The lack of time and resource to embed reflective practice and evaluation of activity – especially when it goes well – only serves to halt the potential learning both within and across organisations in the sector, which should be set up to enable risk-taking and failure as the crucial part of learning that it is (Jancovich and Stevenson, 2021).

Furthermore, while venues in particular are notoriously resistant to change, especially in terms of diversifying audiences (Glow et al., 2020, p.1494), marketing teams are well placed to lead change, on behalf of their audiences. Of course, this would necessitate a fundamental rethink about the positioning of marketing professionals within organisational structures; as we have seen as current structures, such as those at HOME, make meaningful engagement practices with artists and with audiences extremely difficult. It requires a focus not just on quantity of engagement, but quality, and emphasises the importance of heeding the warnings of the Culture in Crisis report to stop the endless conveyor belt of production and do less better (Walmsley et al. 2022).

What's more, as organisations are under pressure to produce their own evaluations and impact reports for funders and stakeholders, collaborations between academic and practice can be strained (McDowell 2020, Sedgman 2019b). This means that longer-term research partnerships need to be cultivated to allow for a building up of trust, as well as an aligning of mutual objectives. Only then can we begin to develop and facilitate a shared understanding of the types of research questions that the sector are asking and that

researchers are prepared to explore: for example, in the Collaborate research fund at the Centre for Cultural Value which partners academics with practitioners (Centre for Cultural Value, 2021).

Additionally, the methodological flexibility and reflexivity of facet methodology means that it is well suited to teams of researchers (Mason and Davies, 2009), and could be easily tailored to interdisciplinary teams of researchers including a mix of researchers, artists, audiences and cultural intermediaries. In a similar way that we might suggest that the facets of a gemstone are characteristic of a gemstone, they do not constitute the entire gem itself; they are merely faces of it where the gemstone has been cut. This is analogous to the way that facets constitute this methodological approach; they represent 'ways in' to the problem, but do not aim to represent the whole problem, making it a promising avenue for the complex problem faced by cultural value research. Implicit in this methodology is the recognition that the act of researching is incomplete and thus the aim is not to illuminate the research object fully, but rather construct the approach in such a way that it 'cast[s] and refract[s] light' (Mason, 2018, p.45).

As outlined in the methodology section, this project did not strive to describe or document every dimension of the phenomenon of making and valuing of artistic practice by all those linguistic bodies who are involved, not least because this is an impossible endeavour on a methodological level (and well as beyond the realm or scope of any research project, let alone this one) but also because any enactive study of these bodies-in-interaction requires an acknowledgment that we are constantly in the process of becoming. How we make meaning and enact our own selves in our lives, both in our personal leisure time as audience members, as much as in our professional lives as arts marketers or producers or theatre-makers, is borne out of a life-long history of being-in-the-world. While some traditions in audience research, such as those influenced by sociology or cultural studies, have aimed to explore how our different life experiences – including our experience of our ethnicity, race, class, age, sexuality, gender – has informed both the production and reception of art in general, and theatre more specifically, this research has focused on how an individual might incarnate and incorporate their past lived experience into the articulation and communication of the value and meaning of their experience of this research. This is central to the co-creative ethic of the research methodology, in that in part we can traverse the micro- and macro-contexts of our sense-making. Thus it is not so much what the products of this traversing are that is interesting here, but rather how they

themselves interrelate and are incorporated and incarnated into our own sense-making and understanding of our own multi-dimensional experiences.

In the enactive sense of participatory sense-making, it follows that linguistic bodies are able to engage in linguistic interactions as linguistic bodies to virtually equal degree, although they may engage differently (Di Paolo et al., 2020). In this sense for example, neurodivergent modes of engagement are not seen as a deficit. It is not so much a question of access and opportunity, although that is important, but of ethical participation and rigorous, inclusive methodology. This is founded on the notion that not everyone thinks and makes sense in the same way which implies that we need to deploy methods that are appropriate to foster and capture diverse ways of sense-making. While this thesis is not specifically looking at how neurodiverse participants make sense, it nevertheless does concern itself with a diversity of sense-making processes. This thesis does not advocate for a diverse range of audience research methods in order to find out about specific neurodiverse 'conditions', which would place a normative framework onto non-normative categories of sense-making. Instead, it argues that we can use neurodiverse experiences to enrich our understanding and repertoire of audience research methods.

What's more the enactive focus on how we inevitably incarnate and incorporate languaging flows that (have the potential to) do harm to others, particularly through normative frameworks of participatory sense-making within our own linguistic communities, creates a space where we can move away from a blame culture towards one of mutual accountability. While we continue to create diversity narratives in arts management and audience development that create gaps in which only a 'rhetoric of lack' can be placed, we only describe the impacts or products of marginalisation that we are enacting, instead of focusing on 'the behaviours and attitudes of those that are the beneficiaries of that exclusion – often those that *do* the excluding' (Desai, 2020, original emphasis).

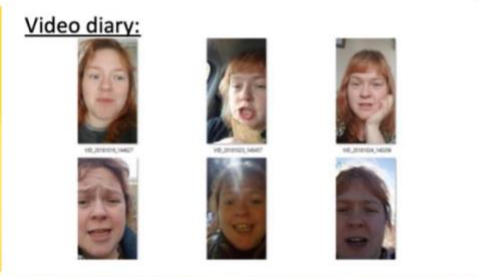
Any claims of contributions of new thinking that this project, or any research project, makes to the ethical practice of arts and theatre marketing must be prepared to grapple with the larger questions of how cultural values currently operate in institutions, and what is being asked of by those in cultural intermediary roles (especially the largely independent, freelance creative workforce who are fulfilling cultural intermediary roles). We have seen the myriad ways in which transactional value frameworks are firmly embedded in practices of arts marketing and management in order to keep the notions of 'producer'

and ‘consumer’ separate, while providing a semblance of empowerment and agency through the provision of cultural products or experiences from which one is free to pick. Thus the shift or skew of this project described earlier towards the audience participant strand, while not surprising, enforces a key contribution to the literature: namely the call for audience voice to be considered ‘foundational in questions of cultural, and wider social, value’ (Walmsley and Meyrick 2022, p. 238).

Therefore what is needed is nothing short of complete overhaul of institutional management structures that are built on a recognition of the equal importance of the roles of audience and artist. I say *roles* specifically, as the idea that we can and should have the opportunity to fulfil either of them at any one time is a fundamental right to participate in the participatory sense-making of our cultural institutions. Crucially this does not mean that these roles are the same; they have particular functions in interaction with one another. Thus clarity on what function these roles play (or their ‘terms of engagement’) in any one interaction is a starting point for good engagement practice. While audience and artist/performer do not necessarily require them to do this, cultural intermediaries can and do play an important function in this process. They are also well placed to design arts organisations and institutions of the future that recognise and value the importance of theatre-makers and creative practitioners with significant skills and experience in crafting artistic engagement practices as much as the creative and central role that audiencing plays in the total theatre-making process.

Appendices

Appendix A: Discussion group presentation content & creative teams



Bertrand Lesca & Nasi Voutsas presents

One

Part of: Our Feb – Oct 2019 Theatre Season

Wed 8 May 2019 – Fri 10 May 2019

Nasi is on a ladder. He's not coming down any time soon.

Taking as its point of departure the polarisation of politics today, *One* begins amid the ruins of unresolved conflict and looks at the walls we build to protect the difference between what we say and who we really are.

Bert & Nasi return to HOME following *Eurohouse* and *Palmyra* (Orbit Festival 2017).

Praise for *Eurohouse*:

★★★★ "This wonderfully playful, intimate and ultimately moving show… Constantly pits idealism against self-interest and pragmatism." – Lyn Gardner, The Guardian

"A nicely subversive idea played with charm." – The Stage

★★★★ "Stylish… An exhilarating, intelligent fusion of theatre and lecture." – Broadway Baby

"[Bertrand] Lesca and [Nasi] Voutsas are the perfect double-act… A powerful, important and subtle piece of theatre which might well make you rethink the EU – and, even if it doesn't, it will definitely make you laugh." – Exeunt

This video was posted on the social media account of one of the performing company on the 23 April 2019. It was shown to the participants in each discussion group. Selected screenshots are below taken from the video on YouTube channel of HOMEmcr. 2019. *Bert and Nasi – ONE.* [Online]. [September 31 2019]. Available from: youtube.com/watch?=vfZhLFqz11. P.97

Liz Richardson in association with HOME & Echo presents

SWIM

Part of: Our Feb – Oct 2019 Theatre Season

World Premiere
Tue 9 Jul 2019 – Sat 13 Jul 2019

There is this lake.
And in the lake, there's a woman.
She's swimming.
She finds the pain is less, to remember him in the water.

Liz took Sam & Josie swimming.
She said they'd feel amazing
It was cold.
It was really cold.

SWIM is a brand new show from theatre makers Liz Richardson (*Gutted*, Mothers Who Make), Josie Dale-Jones (*Me & My Bee* & *dressed)* and Sam Ward (*Five Encounters on Site Called Craigslist* and *[insert slogan here]*).

With live music, videography and playful, intimate storytelling, *SWIM* is about isolation, being held and just jumping in.

***SWIM* is supported by Cruse Bereavement Trust**

Cruse Bereavement Care

HOME and The National Theatre of Scotland presents

Red Dust Road

Written by Jackie Kay
Wed 11 Sep 2019 – Sat 21 Sep 2019

"You are made up from a mixture of myth and gene. You are part fable, part porridge"

Growing up in 70s' Scotland as the adopted mixed raced child of a Communist couple, young Jackie blossomed into an outspoken, talented poet. Then she decided to find her birth parents…

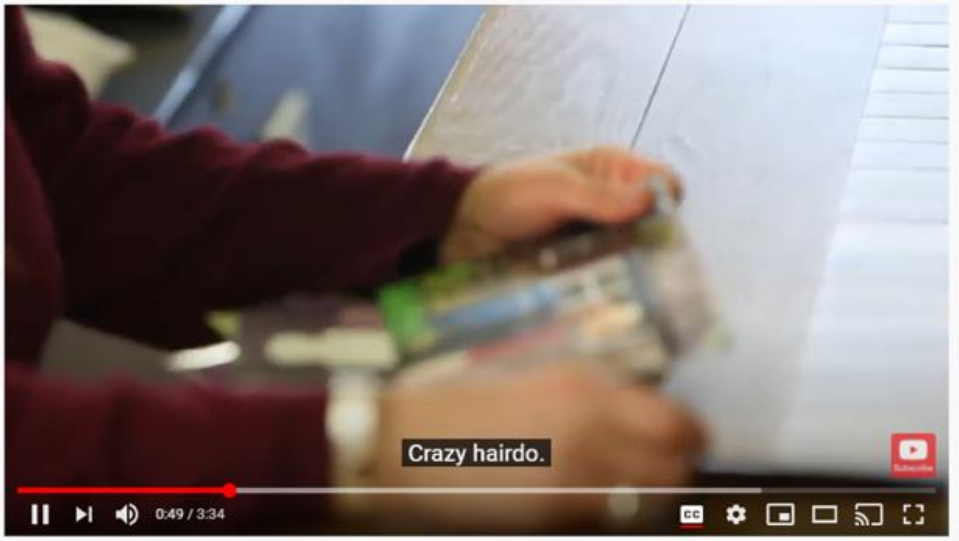
From Nairn to Lagos, *Red Dust Road* takes you on a journey full of heart, humour and deep emotions. Discover how we are shaped by the folk songs we hear as much as by the cells in our bodies.

Based on the soul-searching memoir by Scots Makar Jackie Kay, adapted by Tanika Gupta (winner of the 2018 James Tait Black Prize for Drama), and directed by Dawn Walton (Founder and Artistic Director of Eclipse Theatre).

Jackie Kay is a celebrated poet, writer and HOME patron who has picked up numerous awards for her novels and story collections, as well as writing extensively for television and the stage. She was awarded an MBE in 2006, and made a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature in 2002. She was named Scots Makar – the National Poet for Scotland – in March 2016.

Developed with the support of Macrobert Arts Centre.

This video titled ‘Jackie Kay on Red Dust Road’ was produced by National Theatre of Scotland, hosted on YouTube and embedded on HOME’s website. An extract of this video was shown to the participants in each discussion group. Selected screenshots are taken below from the video on the YouTube channel of HOMEmcr. 2019. *Red Dust Road: Meet Jackie Kay.* [Online]. [September 31 2019]. Available from: youtube.com/watch?v=mUALjA1EojA. p.102.



Creative team: ONE

www.bertandnasi.com

Performed and co-created by Bertrand Lesca and Nasi Voutsas
Dramaturgy by Louise Stephens
Lighting by Jess Hung Han Yun
Touring Technician Ruth Green
Produced by Edward Fortes

Commissioned by Battersea Arts Centre and Bristol Ferment.
Developed with support from the National Theatre Studio, Shoreditch Town Hall and HOME.

Creative team: SWIM

www.lrproductions.co.uk

Created and performed by Liz Richardson, Josie Dale-Jones, Sam Ward and Carmel Smickersgill
Designed by Abby Clarke
Video design by Jim Dawson
Lighting design by Lucy Adams
Music composition by Carmel Smickersgill
Consultant direction by Andy Routledge

Produced by Liz Richardson in association with HOME, Pleasance Theatre Trust and Echo Presents.

Creative team: Red Dust Road

www.nationaltheatrescotland.com

Performed by Stefan Adegbola (Jonathan/Sidney), Irene Allan (Elizabeth), Simone Corenelius (Tope and AJ), Elicia Daly (Anna, Rhona and Agatha), Seroca Davis (Chimamanda, Claire and Nwanyiafor), Sasha Frost (Jackie), Lewis Howden (John), Elaine C. Smith (Helen) and Declan Spaine (Maxwell / Kachi).

Authored by Jackie Kay
Adapted by Tanika Gupta
Directed by Dawn Walton
Set and Costume design by Simon Kenny
Lighting design by Lizzie Powell
Composed by Tayo Akinbode
Sound design by Richard Hammarton
Movement direction by Vicki Igbokwe
Associate direction Jack Nurse
Dialect coaching by Ros Steen and Joel Trill
Fight direction by Raymond Short
Casting by Laura Donnelly, CDG
BSL Performance Interpretation by Catherine King and Natalie MacDonald

Production management by Gemma Swallow
Company stage management by Jamie Byron
Deputy stage management by Louise Charity
Assistant stage management by Laurie Sutton
Production electrician Roy Herd
Production sound by Andy Stuart
Sound supervision Shaun Clark
Stage supervision David Hill
Video supervision Ellie Thompson
Costume supervision Sophie Ferguson
Costume technician Lesley McNamara
Wardrobe technician Nikki Wragg
Hair & Makeup by Lesley Caldwell and Jennifer Scott

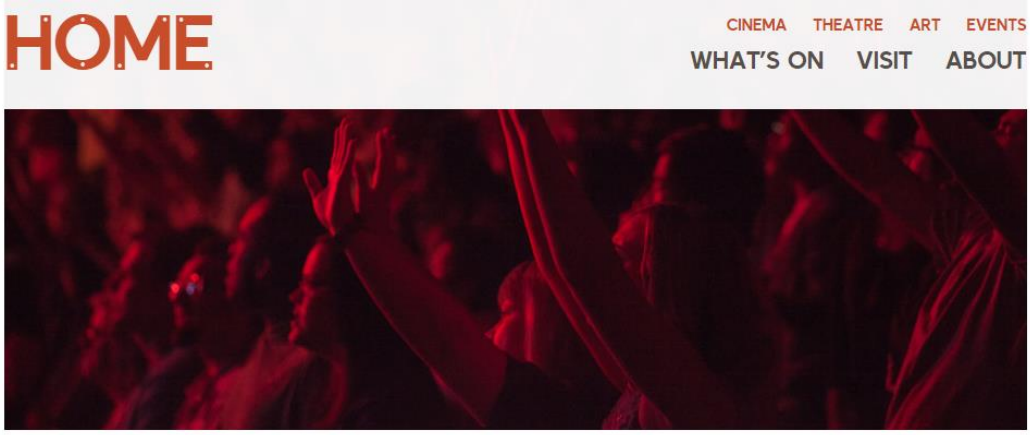
A HOME, Manchester and National Theatre of Scotland co-production. Developed with the support of Macrobert Arts Centre.

Appendix B: Occupational breakdown of audience participants and survey respondents

Occupation	Total survey respondents (95)	% of survey respondents	Audience Participants (27)	% of participants
Administrator	6	6%	2	7%
Arts - actor / artist / theatre-maker / practitioner	4	4%	1	4%
Arts - administration / management	4	4%	2	7%
Carer	2	2%	1	4%
Chef	1	1%	1	4%
Coaching /mentor / counsellor	5	5%		0%
Consultancy / Business Management	4	4%		0%
Corporate Development	1	1%	1	4%
Doctor	2	2%	1	4%
Home-maker	1	1%		0%
Hospitality	2	2%	2	7%
Industrial chemist	1	1%	1	4%
Lawyer	1	1%		0%
Minister	1	1%	1	4%
Nurse	2	2%		0%
Optometrist	1	1%	1	4%
Psychotherapist	1	1%		0%
Publishing	1	1%		0%
Research	4	4%		0%
Retail	2	2%	2	7%
Retired	10	11%	3	11%

Sales / marketing	3	3%	1	4%
Scientist	2	2%	2	7%
Self employed	2	2%		0%
Student / apprentice / trainee	13	14%	3	11%
Support worker	2	2%		0%
Teacher / lecturer	8	9%	1	4%
Tour guide	2	2%		0%
Trade Union Official	1	1%		0%
Translator	1	1%		0%
Unemployed	2	2%	1	4%
Writer	1	1%		0%

Appendix C: Callout for audience participants on HOME's website and Twitter channel, recruitment survey project introduction and example consent form



Home > Take part in a theatre audience research project

Take part in a theatre audience research project

Deadline Thu 4 Apr 2019

Do you fancy taking part in an exciting theatre audience research project? Are you curious about your own and others' experiences of live theatre? Would you like to see three very different theatre shows for free here at HOME?

Leeds University postgraduate researcher Emma McDowell is exploring how audiences and artists experience live theatre, and in particular how meaning and value from these experiences are created, articulate and communicated. Emma is working closely with our Marketing and Theatre teams on this project and is looking for a small group of enthusiastic volunteer participants to take part in the project. You will be asked to see three different HOME productions across 2019, as well as attend a discussion group and an interview. No experience or knowledge of theatre is required – Emma is looking for a mix of people to take part – so if you've never been to a theatre show before, then this might be a great opportunity for you to try something new!

With a background in arts marketing and audience research, Emma has always been inspired by the breadth of responses and meanings that audiences take away from a live theatre performance: 'People often think that you need to have some sort of education or background in theatre in order to understand it, especially the more contemporary stuff. But I've discovered that a lot of the time my strongest or most powerful responses to a theatre show have been because I've not really understood what's going on or why I like it! Perhaps it's just more of an intuitive or social response. I'm talking about that interaction with the theatre maker and other audience members. That's the question that really fascinates me – how we make sense of and take value from what is often deemed to be the 'same' experience for everyone, and then of course how we communicate that to different people. I can't wait to work with audience participants on this project, and I'm really excited to be working in partnership with HOME and with some great theatre companies.'

Interested in taking part?

For more information on the project, or to register your interest to take part, just fill out this survey…

AUDIENCE RESEARCH SURVEY

All participants need to be over 18yrs old and to register their interest before Thu 4 April.

This project is funded by White Rose College of Arts & Humanities (WRoCAH).

Opportunity information

- All participants need to over 18yrs old
- Register your interest by completing the online survey

Date & Time
Deadline Thu 4 Apr 2019

Register your interest

Thank you for your interest in this research project! The information below will help you decide whether taking part in this opportunity is for you.

WHO IS LEADING THE RESEARCH?

Emma McDowell is a researcher from the University of Leeds who is exploring **how audiences and artists experience live theatre**, and in particular how we articulate and communicate the **meanings and value** that we create from those experiences. She is working closely with marketing and theatre teams at **HOME Manchester** on this project, which will form part of her PhD.

Emma is looking for **a small group of enthusiastic voluntary audience participants** to take part in the project. You are not required to have any expertise in theatre; you don't even have to have been to a theatre show, or HOME before! **Emma is interested to work with a mix of participants coming from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences** (but participants aged 18+ only). The project aims to be as inclusive as possible, and will explore ways to ensure all participants can take part fully in the project. In particular, neurodiverse and disabled participants are encouraged to register their interest.

WHAT DOES PARTICIPATING IN THE PROJECT INVOLVE?

Participants will each be asked to:

- attend an **initial 2 hour discussion group in April** (either 25/04 or 27/04 -tbc) with about 10-15 other participants
- **attend performances of 3 different theatre shows** chosen specifically for this project across Summer/Autumn 2019 and meet Emma informally before and after the shows to discuss/record your experiences
- selected participants will also be asked to take part in a **90 minute interview** with Emma

All activity will take place at/near HOME, 2 Tony Wilson Place, Manchester, M15 4FN.

WHAT DO YOU GET OUT OF TAKING PART?

Firstly it's a great opportunity to **see 3 very different theatre shows at HOME** (chosen specifically for this project) without having to pay for a ticket! As we appreciate that participation in this project does therefore require a fairly large commitment from participants in terms of time and energy, we do hope to create **a rewarding, interesting and fun experience** for those who are curious about their own and others' experiences of theatre. Your participation will **directly feed into the research** conducted, the findings of which will be disseminated through conferences and the publication of Emma's research thesis.

If you don't fancy taking part alone, there is space on the project for a small number of participants to **take part with a friend or family member** if they wish. You will have an opportunity to indicate this in the survey but please note all interested parties will need to register their interest separately by completing the survey.

WANT TO TAKE PART?

Register your interest by Thursday 4th April by filling in this survey - click 'NEXT' at the bottom of the page.

Ts & Cs - please read (they're boring, but important!)

Please note that cost of tickets will be covered by the research project and you will be required to see all 3 productions selected by the research lead. (Tickets to productions NOT included in the research will NOT be offered). Regrettably, travel costs to and from the venue will NOT be covered for participants. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and you will receive no financial incentive to take part - only the price of one ticket per production per participant will be covered. Please note that the number of spaces available on this project are limited so completing this survey does not guarantee your participation. Participants are required to be aged 18 or over. Those who are selected to take part will be contacted directly by the researcher with more information. Those who are not selected to take part will also be contacted, and an opportunity to be put on a waiting list will be offered. Priority will be given to those potential participants who are able to attend the discussion group and a performance of each 3 productions. Consideration will also be given to the balance and diversity of the group to ensure it is as representative as possible of the Greater Manchester region. This research is supported by HOME Manchester, and funded by a White Rose College of Arts & Humanities (WRoCAH) Doctoral Studentship, Arts & Humanities Research Council (AHRC). Clicking NEXT on this information page will take you through to a short recruitment survey which will include questions on your contact details, some personal details, details of your availability, and a couple of short questions around your engagement with theatre.

School of Performance & Cultural Industries

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Consent to take part in *'From transaction to enaction: reframing theatre marketing'* research project

	Add your initials next to the statements you agree with
I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated 22/11/2018 explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.	
I agree for the data collected from me to be stored and used in relevant future research in an anonymised form, but that I may be partially identifiable from the use of the organisation / or company name.	
I understand that relevant sections of the data collected during the study, may be looked at by auditors from the University of Leeds or from regulatory authorities where it is relevant to my taking part in this research. I give permission for these individuals to have access to my records.	
I agree to take part in the above research project and will inform the lead researcher should my contact details change during the project and, if necessary, afterwards.	

Name of participant	
Participant's signature	
Date	
Name of lead researcher	Emma McDowell
Signature*	
Date*	

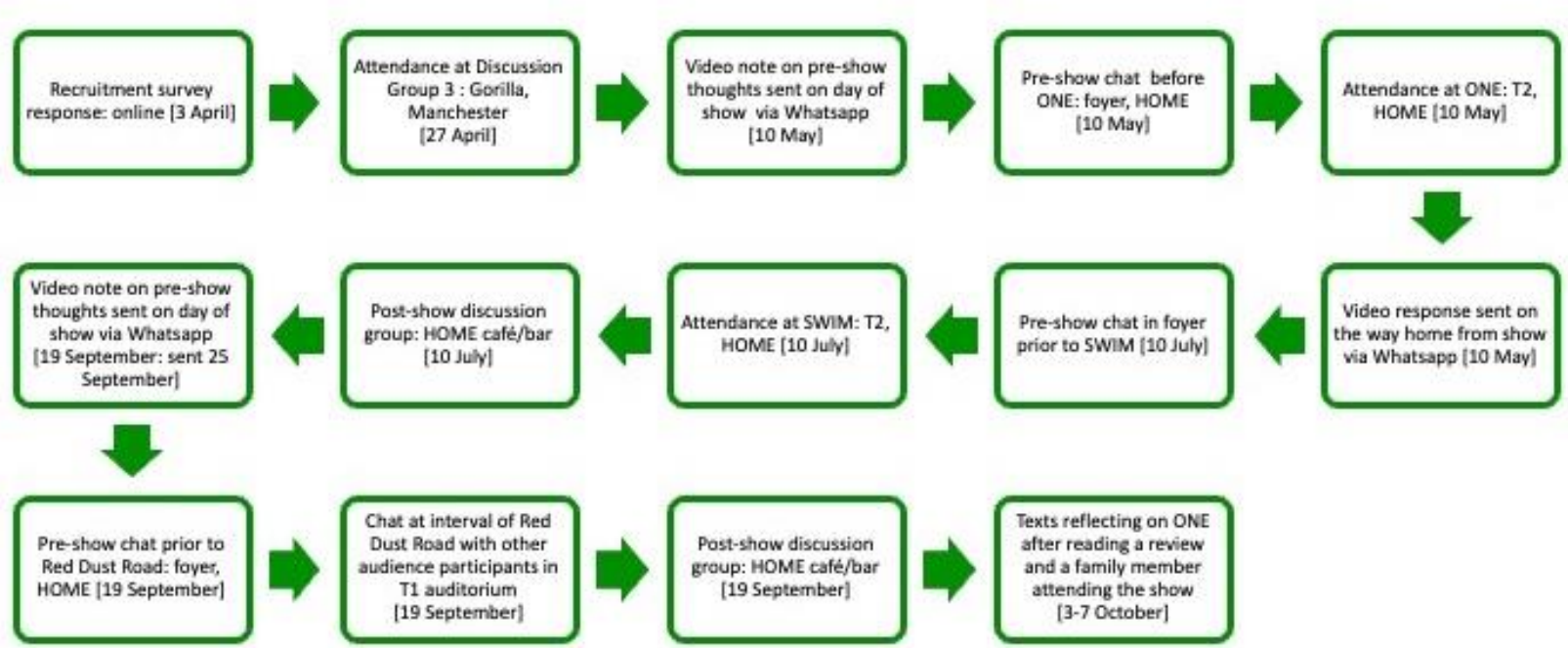
*To be signed and dated in the presence of the participant.

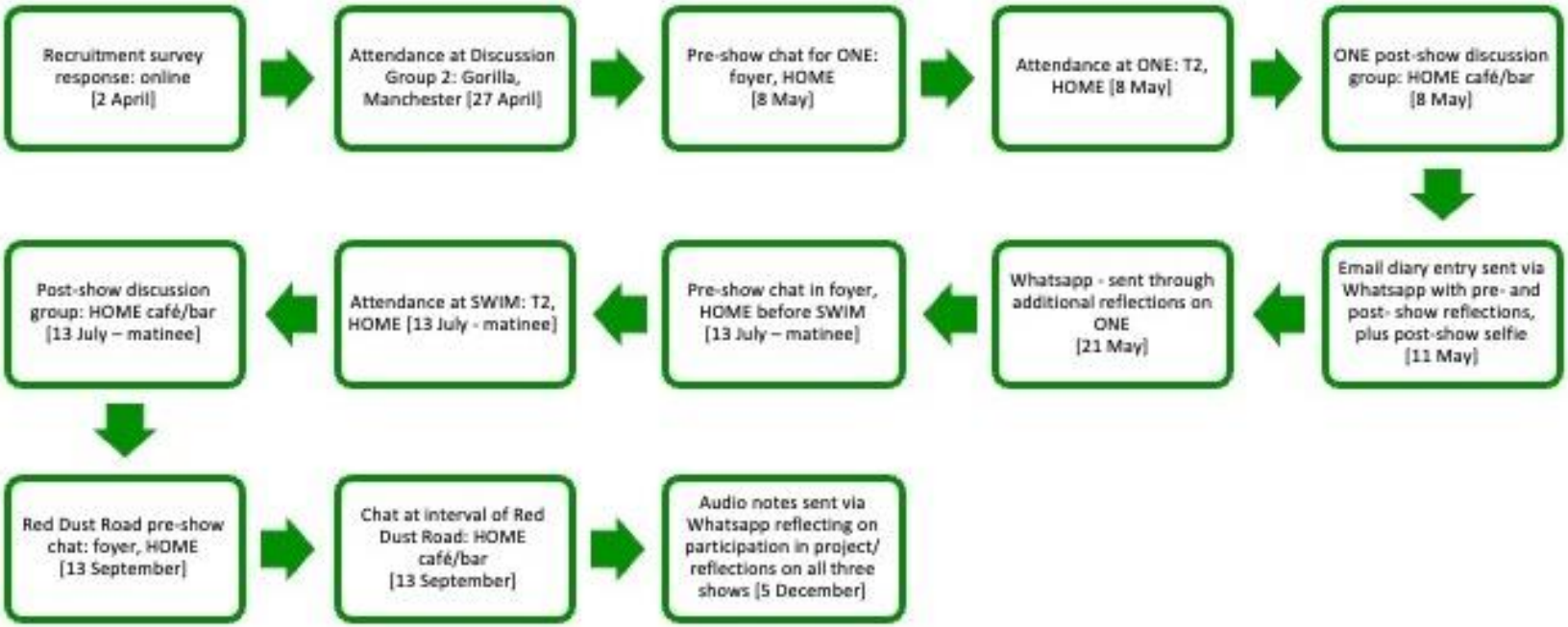
Once this has been signed by all parties the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form, the letter/ pre-written script/ information sheet and any other written information provided to the participants. A copy of the signed and dated consent form should be kept with the project's main documents which must be kept in a secure location.

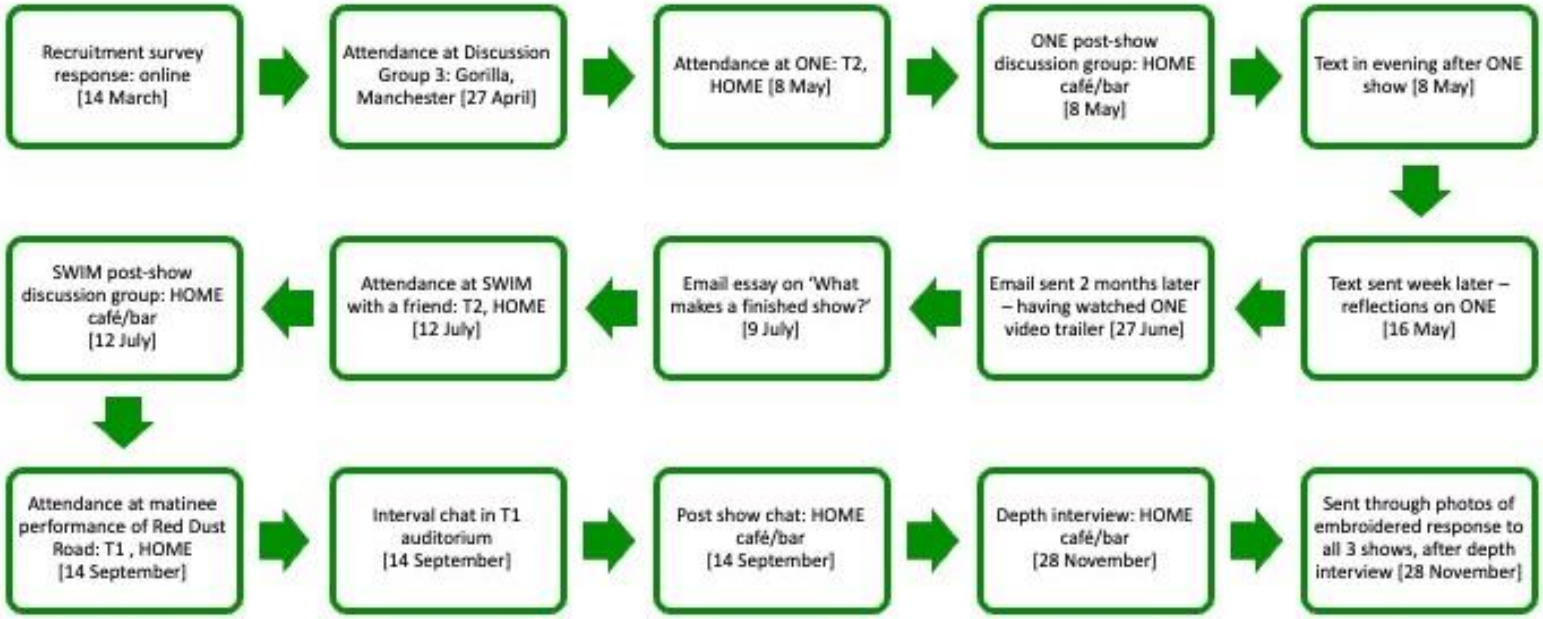
Appendix D: Total quantities of data generated by data type

Data generated		**Quantity**
Audio recordings	Audio notes from audience participants; researcher audio fieldnotes and observations, audio recordings of depth interviews, discussion groups and post-show chats	101
Email threads and attachments	Email interviews, documents, photos, diary entrys, written notes sent over email by audience participants	41
Photos	Photos taken as researcher fieldnotes and observations, photos of creative responses from audience participants such as notes, drawings and embroidery projects	25
Survey responses	Online survey - audience participant recruitment	95
Text message/ WhatsApp instant messaging threads	Text message interviews with audience participants	33
Video recordings	Video notes from audience participants, Videos taken as fieldnotes and observations, Researcher video journals	57
Written fieldnotes	Written fieldnotes, observations, drawings, diagrams, diary entries and fieldnotes about research activity such as depth interviews, discussion groups and post-show chats	64
TOTAL data generated		**416**

Appendix E: Examples of audience research journeys through research project




Recruitment survey response: online [2 April]
Attendance at Discussion Group 2: Gorilla, Manchester [27 April]
Pre-show chat for ONE: foyer, HOME [8 May]
Attendance at ONE: T2, HOME [8 May]
ONE post-show discussion group: HOME café/bar [8 May]
Email diary entry sent via Whatsapp with pre- and post- show reflections, plus post-show selfie [11 May]
Whatsapp - sent through additional reflections on ONE [21 May]
Pre-show chat in foyer, HOME before SWIM [13 July – matinee]
Attendance at SWIM: T2, HOME [13 July - matinee]
Post-show discussion group: HOME café/bar [13 July – matinee]
Red Dust Road pre-show chat: foyer, HOME [13 September]
Chat at interval of Red Dust Road: HOME café/bar [13 September]
Audio notes sent via Whatsapp reflecting on participation in project/ reflections on all three shows [5 December]


Recruitment survey response: online [14 March]
Attendance at Discussion Group 3: Gorilla, Manchester [27 April]
Attendance at ONE: T2, HOME [8 May]
ONE post-show discussion group: HOME café/bar [8 May]
Text in evening after ONE show [8 May]
Text sent week later – reflections on ONE [16 May]
Email sent 2 months later – having watched ONE video trailer [27 June]
Email essay on 'What makes a finished show?' [9 July]
Attendance at SWIM with a friend: T2, HOME [12 July]
SWIM post-show discussion group: HOME café/bar [12 July]
Attendance at matinee performance of Red Dust Road: T1 , HOME [14 September]
Interval chat in T1 auditorium [14 September]
Post show chat: HOME café/bar [14 September]
Depth interview: HOME café/bar [28 November]
Sent through photos of embroidered response to all 3 shows, after depth interview [28 November]

Appendix F: Sample prompt questions to guide audience participant reflection

Mapping your experience – [name of show] – things to think about:

Your whole theatre-going experience – awareness/expectations of show beforehand / during (including venue, before and after) & memories/conversations about the show afterwards

Be aware of your full body-experience – e.g. feelings, emotions, sensations

The rhythms/pace of the show - did it hold/what held your attention? Moments of engagement/disengagement

Any personal connections to parts of the show, things that reminded you or made you think of/feel something from your own life/experiences

What did you like / not like?

How did it compare with your experiences of the previous one/two shows [if applicable]? In what ways were they similar/different?

How did the experience match your expectations? Did the artists behave in a way you expected?

What was your role as an audience member, in terms of interacting with the artist/performers?

How would you/have you articulated / understood / communicated your experience?

How did the company articulate/ communicate their experience and does it reflect yours?

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