

Innovative Market Positioning Strategies for the Indian Performing Arts Sector

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Abstract:

The digital age creates a new context for performing arts organizations. They have to find, create innovative marketing strategies to draw the audience's attention. The objective of this communication is to question how individual and legitimate cultural organizations can manage their brand and what levers they can use to address new challenges. Certain specialised authors considered arts marketing (theatre, music, dance, and visual art) as being the marketing of "difficult" products due to their role in educating the audience and perpetuating beliefs and values throughout generations, by utilising various cultural stimuli. In this situation, the marketers have offered to the audience an intangible aspect, a service that is quite difficult to promote.

Keywords: Marketing, Strategy, Arts Marketing, Indian Arts, Digital media, Innovation

Introduction:

The concept of marketing has been applied comparatively late in arts institutions, specifically in the performing arts. (Ulziibhadrak and Czakaly. 2021) Thankfully, in the last few decades, researchers have been focusing more on arts, marketing, performing arts marketing and classical music and dance marketing as the number of leisure activities in the market is increasing, there is more demand for art institutions to study their customers' wants and needs. For instance, in the classical dance field marketing can improve one's knowledge of classical dance should be watched why it is effective for humans and why it is preferable over other types of dance, such as contemporary western, pop, folk etc, marketing is crucial in this field to provide audience with this aforementioned knowledge and information and to provide demand based products and services. One of these specific aspects of marketing in performing arts is to implement a process and tool gathering the interest of different stakeholders: local governments, sponsors, current audiences, potential audiences, media, critics, providers, competitors and internal stakeholders (Bessana et al., 2018). Marketers have to develop stakeholders' engagement, and to this end, audience development is essential. Marketing tools used for services represent vital components in many strategies adopted by non profit organisations such as: schools, churches, hospitals, museums (Kotler and Keller, 2006)

How digital age creates a new context for performing arts marketing.

New technologies have implemented new ways to communicate with others, to exchange products, to work, to consume, to spend time but also to learn and to access knowledge and information which suggests organizational changes. What are the new challenges for cultural organizations in terms of audience development and marketing? To what extent, traditional

cultural organizations (operas, theatres ...) are affected by this digital transformation? (Juliette et.al. 2019). In today's digital age, the role of digital media and technology in branding the performing arts cannot be overstated.

Digital platforms have transformed how performing arts organizations and individual artists connect with their audiences, offering unprecedented opportunities for engagement and visibility (Psomadaki, et.al. 2022). Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube are now integral to branding strategies, providing a space for sharing behind-the-scenes content, live updates, interactive posts, and promotional materials. These platforms enable real-time interaction with fans, fostering a sense of community and loyalty (Baym, 2018)

Marketing Mix in Performing Arts as Cîntec (2010) states, the marketing mix in cultural field is any set of tactical elements, practical actions which aiming the promotion of a product or a service in order to sell it. Marketing mix in cultural field, as Otilia Cîntec outlines, consist in: product, price, place, promotion, personnel, processes, physical evidences". Other authors consider that marketing mix in arts refers to 6 P's: product, price, place, promotion, personnel and processes (Dickman, 1997). We consider that in performing arts due to the specific characteristics of these services, the most appropriate marketing mix is that of 7 P's (product, price, place, promotion, processes, personnel and physical evidences). Product includes any experience of the audience in the theatre. Several authors state that is a huge difference between the two levels of the cultural offers: the central or basic offer which meet the utilitarian function that consumer expects to find in specific institution and auxiliary offer that meet and add more value to basic offer (Courvoisier and Courvoisier, 2007). So, the product offered by a theatre to its audience includes everything experienced by the audience in the theatre, including the basic offer and also auxiliary products. For adding value to their offers, theatres may provide for its audience: parking facilities, hospitality of the staff, maybe the opportunity to participate at one rehearsal before the premiere or even organising contest for the public and the prize consisting in a meeting with the favourite actor of the theatre. All these experiences involves the customer directly and so it can be established a relationship with it. In the case of performing arts, if we analyse the service offered by the theatre to its audience, it can be established that: the basic offer includes the show or the performance, while auxiliary offer includes for example the parking facilities, the accessibility to information concerning the performance, the personnel ability to manage the problems of the customer, offering him a better experience. The product will differ according to the institutions that provide it. Some theatres may provide for their customers season schedule, calendar of shows, actors resident and special guest actors, printed programs and other commodity (Dickman, 1997).

In arts marketing literature is sustained that arts experiences of the audience can be provided by the arts organisation without changing its core products such as actual performances or exhibitions. Then the satisfaction of the customer is maximised changing or modifying augmented products which add value to the core activities (McLean, 1997). In other words, the customer orientation is applied only to the augmented products while core products remain intact. Changing the augmented product means to modify the way in which the cultural product is communicated, presented and packaged (Kolb, 2000). It is assumed that customer

satisfaction with a theatrical show result from the perceptions of both core service and augmented service (Boerner et al., 2011). Agreeing with the statement that the core products remain intact and the customer satisfaction is maximised changing or modifying augmented (auxiliary) products, we consider that conflicts between both artistic and management side are minimised. Then appear another issue – the ethics of cultural field. We consider also that artistic vision provided by artistic team gives the uniqueness and the originality of the basic offer. In the case of products is simple to adjust the products implementing some attributes required by customers in order to fulfil their needs, surely assuming some cost production. For a theatre to change the basic offer in accordance with customer needs means to suppress all the originality and the artistic motivation behind the act. Kerrigan et al. (2004) take the statement of John Drummond in the book “Arts Marketing” according which “if you let the public decide what you do you will become both repetitive and lacking in imagination”

Indian Scenario of Marketing innovation with respect to Indian classical dance.

1. Globalization and Cross-Cultural Marketing

While Indian classical dance is deeply rooted in Indian culture, its universal appeal can be highlighted through cross-cultural marketing initiatives. Here’s how it can be approached:

Collaborating with International Dance Festivals: Indian classical dancers can collaborate with international dance festivals or cultural exchange programs in various countries. By performing alongside other traditional or contemporary dance forms, they can showcase the versatility and universality of classical dance.

Fusion and Cross-Genre Performances: As global cultural exchange increases, performing artists can experiment with integrating elements of Indian classical dance with other global dance forms or genres (such as ballet, contemporary dance, jazz, or hip-hop). These fusion performances can make the art form more accessible to audiences unfamiliar with Indian classical traditions while maintaining its essence.

Highlighting Indian Classical Dance in the Global Context: Marketing efforts can emphasize how Indian classical dance reflects universal themes such as love, devotion, nature, and human emotions. This approach could appeal to international audiences who might appreciate the emotional depth and storytelling aspects of the performances.

2. Leveraging Influential Figures in the Dance Community

Celebrity endorsements or collaborations with well-known figures in the dance or entertainment industry can elevate the profile of Indian classical dance:

Collaboration with Successful Stars: Successful stars of the field have massive popularity worldwide and offer an opportunity for dancers to partner with film stars or choreographers for performances that mix classical dance with cinematic elements. This kind of collaboration can bring Indian classical dance into the mainstream entertainment world, attracting viewers who might not usually engage with traditional forms.

Influencer Marketing: As social media influencers continue to play a prominent role in shaping cultural trends, partnering with influencers who have a genuine interest in traditional arts or

Indian culture can help spread awareness. For instance, working with influencers who regularly feature cultural topics could introduce classical dance to audiences who are more inclined toward lifestyle and cultural content.

3. Community Engagement and Grassroots Marketing

Building strong relationships with local communities and grassroots organizations can expand the reach of Indian classical dance at a more personal level:

Dance Outreach Programs: Dancers can conduct outreach programs or free workshops in schools, local cultural centers, or community festivals. These programs could aim to introduce children and adults to the basics of classical dance, thereby fostering long-term interest and a deeper appreciation for the art form.

Cultural Ambassadors: Creating a network of cultural ambassadors who are passionate about classical dance can help promote it within local communities. These ambassadors could be trained in spreading awareness about the art form and encouraging participation in local events and classes.

Local Collaborations: Partnering with local art schools, community centers, and non-profit organizations to offer dance performances and workshops can help build a local audience base. These collaborations could be marketed as community-oriented, family-friendly events, making classical dance accessible to a wider demographic.

4. Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) Experiences

With advancements in technology, the field of performing arts is exploring innovative methods to engage audiences:

Virtual Reality (VR) Performances: Offering VR experiences of Indian classical dance can help audiences experience a performance as if they were part of it. Virtual reality could allow global audiences to “attend” a performance from their homes, experiencing the dance in immersive environments.

Augmented Reality (AR) for Dance Tutorials: Implementing AR technology could provide innovative ways to teach and learn Indian classical dance. For example, an AR app might project a digital dancer performing a particular step alongside the user, helping them learn in an interactive way.

5. Creating Exclusive Membership Programs or Subscription Models

To build a dedicated audience base and ensure consistent engagement, Indian classical dance companies and individual dancers can explore subscription-based or membership programs:

Members-Only Content: Offering exclusive content such as private performances, interviews with dancers, or access to dance classes can attract a dedicated group of patrons who are willing to pay for more intimate access.

Patronage Programs: Similar to how art museums have patrons or sponsors, classical dance organizations can create tiered patronage systems where loyal supporters or donors receive benefits such as VIP tickets, backstage passes, or invitations to private rehearsals.

Subscription-Based Learning Platforms: Online platforms can offer a subscription service for dance enthusiasts to access classes, tutorials, and instructional content. This model works well for dancers who wish to teach and engage with audiences remotely.

6. Sustainability and Ethical Marketing

As global consciousness around sustainability and ethical practices grows, Indian classical dance can also promote itself in a way that aligns with these values:

Eco-Friendly Events: Marketing dance festivals or performances as “green” events—using sustainable practices such as minimal waste, eco-friendly costumes, and sustainable venues—can resonate with environmentally conscious audiences.

Supporting Social Causes: Many Indian classical dance performances are based on deep cultural and spiritual themes. Aligning with social causes (such as education for underprivileged children, women's empowerment, or environmental conservation) and marketing performances as a way to support these causes can appeal to socially responsible audiences.

7. Leveraging Testimonials and Word of Mouth

Word-of-mouth remains a powerful marketing tool, especially in the arts:

Audience Testimonials and Reviews: Gathering testimonials from attendees of performances and sharing them on social media or promotional materials can build trust and credibility. Audience feedback can be used in promotional campaigns to highlight the impact of the performances.

Celebrity Endorsements: While working with influencers is one way, securing endorsements or praise from prominent figures in the arts, whether local or international, can provide significant credibility.

8. Brand Partnerships with Luxury and High-Value Brands

Indian classical dance can align with high-end brands to create a sense of exclusivity and prestige. Luxury brands, whether in fashion, lifestyle, or jewelry, often target affluent consumers who are culturally aware and appreciate art forms. Strategic partnerships can be beneficial:

Luxury Fashion Shows and Art Events: Collaborating with luxury fashion brands for fashion shows or exhibitions can combine Indian classical dance with high-end fashion, creating a culturally rich atmosphere. For example, dancers can perform at the launch of a new luxury collection, bringing attention to both the dance and the brand.

Premium Event Sponsorships: Organizing classical dance performances as exclusive events with high-value ticket offerings (e.g., VIP seating, meet-and-greet with the performers,

premium dinner events) can elevate the brand image of both the dance and the sponsoring brands.

Collaborations with Jewelers: As many classical dance performances feature elaborate costumes, jewelry brands can partner to provide dancers with unique pieces that are showcased during the performance. The dance performances can act as an attractive showcase for the brand's products.

9. Interactive Virtual Performances with Audience Participation

To increase audience engagement, performances can be made more interactive through digital platforms:

Audience Voting and Involvement: During virtual performances, allow audiences to vote on specific aspects of the performance, such as song selection, costume choices, or even choreography elements. This makes the experience more personal and immersive, encouraging repeat viewership.

Real-Time Interaction: Using live streaming platforms (e.g., YouTube, Instagram Live), dancers can interact with the audience in real-time. This might include answering questions about the dance style, performing live requests, or discussing the history and significance of the piece. Virtual performances can feature real-time audience chats and reactions to make it a two-way interaction, creating more connection.

Augmented Reality (AR) Storytelling: For an even deeper level of engagement, AR could be used to bring stories and mythological elements (often present in Indian classical dance) to life on viewers' screens, allowing them to interact with the environment. For example, a Kathak performance could use AR to depict scenes from ancient texts as part of the digital experience.

10. Crowdfunding for Artistic Projects

With rising costs of travel, production, and venue rentals, many independent dancers and smaller companies can turn to crowdfunding as a viable means of raising capital. Crowdfunding platforms like Kickstarter, GoFundMe, or Patreon can help secure funds for specific artistic projects:

Exclusive Backer Perks: Dance companies or solo artists can offer special perks to their supporters. For instance, donors can receive special access to behind-the-scenes content, private performances, or even personalized dance classes with the artist. This helps create a sense of ownership and involvement with the project.

Crowdfunding for Cultural Preservation: Classical dance performances that aim to preserve traditional dance forms or bring awareness to lesser-known styles can receive backing from those passionate about cultural preservation. Crowdfunding could be an avenue to raise awareness and support for reviving or maintaining traditional aspects of Indian classical dance.

Conclusion:

Any opportunity available in the market should be considered by artists in order to maximize the reach, customer satisfaction and the institutional benefits. Knowing the market needs is an

important requirement for artists from time to time. Lack of information about contemporary scenario in the performing arts induces a new orientation of consumer to another products offered in the market. No individual or cultural institutions will receive public recognition and appreciation from their customers if their needs are not satisfied and are on par with the current generation requirements. Intense competition in entertainment services market and in leisure time market determines a customer-oriented approach. The variety of opportunities available in leisure time market hampers the marketers' mission – to attract new audiences in performing arts.

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