

Call for Papers: *Cultural Trends* Special Double Issue May/July 2019

Working title: *Audience Data and Research: Perspectives from Scholarship, Policy, Management and Practice*

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At a time of increasing audience mobility and greater competition for audience attention, the need to understand audiences in a deeper and richer way is at the forefront of concerns for funding agencies, policymakers and arts organisations, and increasingly for scholars. In this context, this double issue aims to stimulate new critical debate on the potential of emerging audience research methods and approaches to provide fresh insights into questions of experiential enrichment and cultural value.

Despite the vital role that audiences play across the globe in supporting and giving meaning to the performing arts, audience research remains sporadic; limited by methodological insecurity; and compromised by claims of positive bias (Johanson and Glow, 2015). Scholars in social science disciplines, such as business and management studies, and in arts and humanities disciplines, such as performance and cultural studies, struggle equally to make headway on seemingly intractable issues of cultural engagement, decoding, meaning-making, value and impact. As the next generation of arts audiences matures and as drivers including big data, co-creation, participation, digital engagement and live streaming continue to impact on the arts, audience behavior and expectations are changing. Audience research needs to change in response.

The proposed special issue will: provide a forum to showcase and bring together the highest quality contributions of, between and beyond these respective disciplines to explore the potential complementarity of evolving approaches to audience research; and provide an in-depth opportunity for investigating evolving methods. It will also situate, contextualise and showcase the emerging academic field of audience studies. As such, part of this special issue will critically explore a range of empirical approaches, methods and methodologies to highlight new research across the many disciplines that contribute to audience scholarship.

A second focus of the issue is on the contribution that the use of a specific dataset – Audience Finder^[1] – makes now (and might make in the future) to our knowledge of audiences, the audience development strategies of cultural organisations and the policy development of public funders and regulatory bodies. A variety of fields have started critically examining what van Dijck (2014) has termed *dataism*, and the logic and consequences of big data in contemporary societies. The evolving dataset within Audience Finder is currently analysed to reveal patterns, trends, and associations but questions remain as to how the data generated might transform social, cultural, political and economic processes in the (subsidized and commercial) arts sector.

This element of the call provides an opportunity for those working both within and outside of the cultural sector to use analytical tools and methods from other fields to provide new insight and understanding on current patterns of cultural consumption. To enable researcher engagement with the Audience Finder dataset and the staff team at The Audience Agency (offices in London and Manchester), a small number of bursaries (max. £500 per paper) will be available to cover travel and other expenses.

Invited submissions will be subject to rigorous double blind peer review and should broadly address one or more of the following themes:

- Critical applications of innovative or emerging audience research methods and methodologies
- Artist-based approaches to audience engagement
- ‘Implicated spectatorship’ in applied and specific contexts (e.g. prisons and hospitals).
- The potential for a strategic approach to audience research and data to drive sectoral change
- How analytical tools and data analysis methods from other fields may provide new insight and understanding on current patterns of cultural consumption via *Audience Finder*
- The potential for data-driven decision-making arising from *Audience Finder* to improve the resilience of the cultural sector
- Analysis of the dataset within *Audience Finder* to inform policy development and implementation.

Publication timeline

First drafts in:	Friday 14th December 2018
Peer reviews due in and sent to authors:	Friday 22nd February 2019
Revised drafts to editor:	Friday 5th April 2019
Online publication date:	Friday 31st May 2019
Print publication date:	Thursday 6th June 2019

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**For proposals related to analysis of the Audience Finder dataset please contact:
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[1] Audience Finder (<https://www.theaudienceagency.org/audience-finder>) is the free national audience data and development tool, enabling cultural organisations to understand, compare and apply audience insight. Audience Finder brings together data on all UK households with data from over 800 cultural organisations: over 170 million tickets, 59 million transactions, approximately 280,000 surveys and web analytics from all the UK's major arts and cultural organisations.