

Taking art online reaches a new audience and enhances the user experience

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This research was conducted by **Hasan Bakhshi and David Throsby** at the **National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts, UK and Macquarie University, Australia**

Summary

This paper sets out a conceptual framework for understanding how new technologies are changing the way in which cultural organisations work. The research used this framework to analyse data from surveys taken of both ‘live’ and ‘digital’ audiences for The National Theatre and Tate. In both cases the online audiences were less affluent than the ‘live’ and had tended not to have been to the specific cultural institution in the previous 12 months (whereas a vast majority of the ‘live’ audience were frequent attenders). The digital audience were regularly engaged with the type of cultural experience that was on offer, but they did not go to that particular theatre or gallery.

Four broad categories describe the changes that digital technology has brought about

These are: innovative ways of reaching an audience (broadening, diversifying and deepening); innovation in artistic development (where the technology informs the artistic process); innovative forms of value created by culture (see below) and innovation in management and governance (including how to approach questions of revenue generation).

The audience numbers for theatre and visual art were expanded by going online

The total audience for the play at the National Theatre (Phedre) was almost doubled thanks to the screening of the play in cinemas across the UK and Europe. The visitors to the Tate Liverpool exhibition (Colour Chart) were quadrupled by including visitors to the online version of the exhibition.

The effects of seeing work via digital means

People who saw the play in the cinema actually reported stronger artistic affects (emotional engagement, being transported, seeing things in new ways) than the theatre audience. That trend was reversed when comparing online and 'live' visitors to Tate. Cinema-goers were happy to pay for their experience, but online gallery visitors were not.

Keywords

digital **gallery** **online** **theatre** **live** **UK** **audience** **visual art**

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Author email	david.throsby@mq.edu.au

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