



A Merry Christmas for Theatres and Audiences

This study reflects on the ticketing data and opinions of theatre goers during the Christmas 2014 period. At Purple Seven we wanted to get an understanding of whether Christmas theatre goers are inherently different to “year round” theatre goers and if so why, how and what the opportunity is for the industry.

To set the scene, for this study we looked at and used the following statistics taken from our existing engagement with theatres across the country and Purple Seven’s free to access “Did You Enjoy That” customer feedback survey for venues. We used data from 2012-2014, which equates to:

- 54m tickets
- £1.3bn ticket sales
- 178,000 Did You Enjoy That responses (32,000 of which were for Christmas)

Executive Summary

- Total spend per week is 31% higher during the Christmas period than the rest of the year with 34% more tickets being purchased during the Christmas period.
- We have seen a slightly lower ticket yield during Christmas 2014 compared to 2013 – although higher than 2012.
- The two highest weeks for theatre spending in the UK are the 51st and 52nd week of the year.
- On average, 15% of a venue’s 2012 Christmas bookers also booked for the 2014 Christmas season, and 28% of a venue’s 2013 Christmas bookers also booked for the 2014 Christmas show.
- When looking at retention rates year on year of venues using the Did You Enjoy That survey, we found one venue had 56% of customers returning for the Christmas show in 2014 that attended in 2013.
- Whilst overall average event ratings were similar when comparing Christmas and non-Christmas performances, people are more likely to give 5* event reviews during Christmas and much more likely to give 5* venue and value for money ratings.
- The most common response to “how did you hear about this show?” outside of Christmas is brochure, but when planning for the Christmas show, the website is of far more importance.

Ticketing Trends since 2012

Spend and tickets both increase towards the end of the year, whilst the average yield per ticket is slightly down on average around Christmas, but the effect is not hugely significant.

2013 and 2014 were more successful years for Christmas theatre than 2012, and importantly 2014 has been more successful than 2013. The Christmas period is still growing and has once again been a successful time for theatreland. There has been a distinct drop in ticket yield towards the end of 2014, but this will no doubt be impacted by the amount of children attending the events at lower prices.

Fig1. Ticket Sales by Month

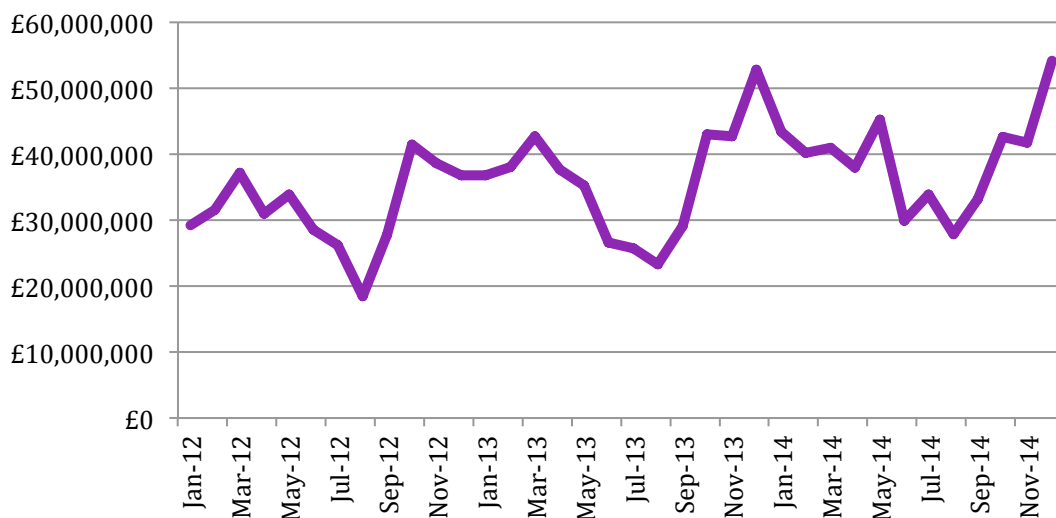


Fig 2. Tickets by Month

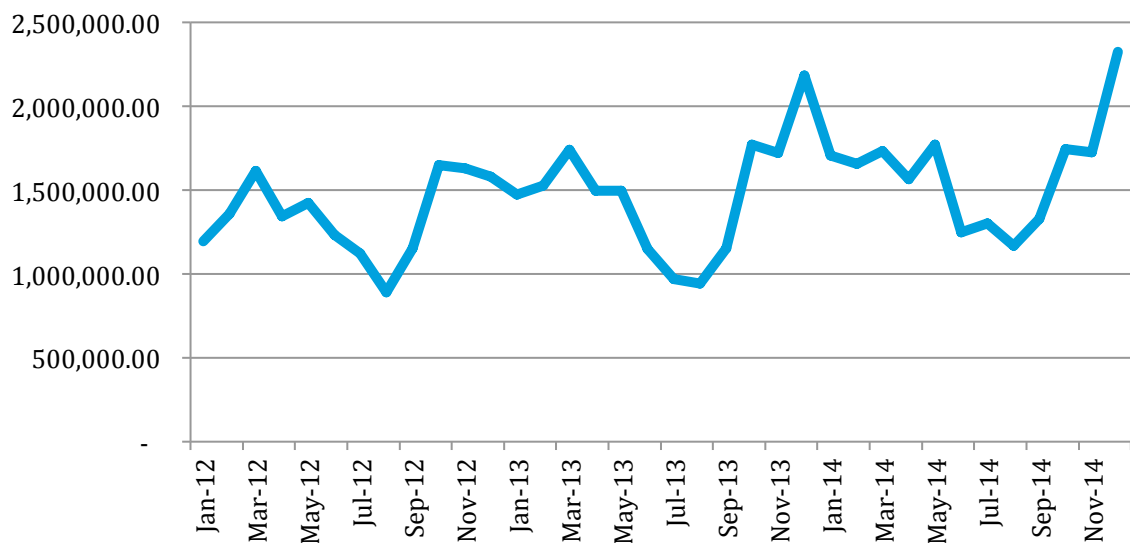
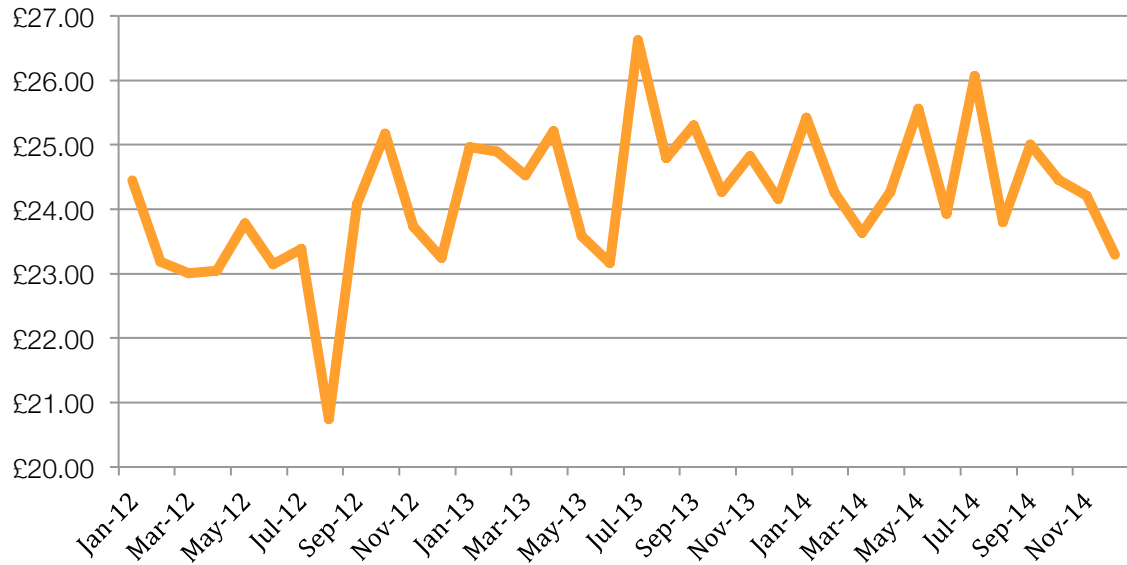


Fig. 3 Ticket yield by month



As we know from our work with ticketing information every day, averages can mask distinct patterns, and whilst Christmas is a key period for many venues, the 52nd week of the year is absolutely king. This final week of the year has shown itself to be on average 86% higher than an average week in terms of ticket sales, whilst the festive period overall is 30% higher per week. Getting that last week of the year right is absolutely critical.

In our previous Arts Professional article (Enjoying the Christmas rush), we identified that existing customers to a venue are more likely to book earlier, whilst when it comes to December, 45% of bookers for the Christmas show are “new” customers to that venue. Indeed, November and December account for 60% of a venue’s new customers for the whole year.

On average one in ten new customers will come back to a venue, however when it comes to a new customer engaging with a venue at Christmas, almost 40% of those customers will return to the venue – 4 times the average return rate for new customers.

Did You Enjoy That Customer feedback survey

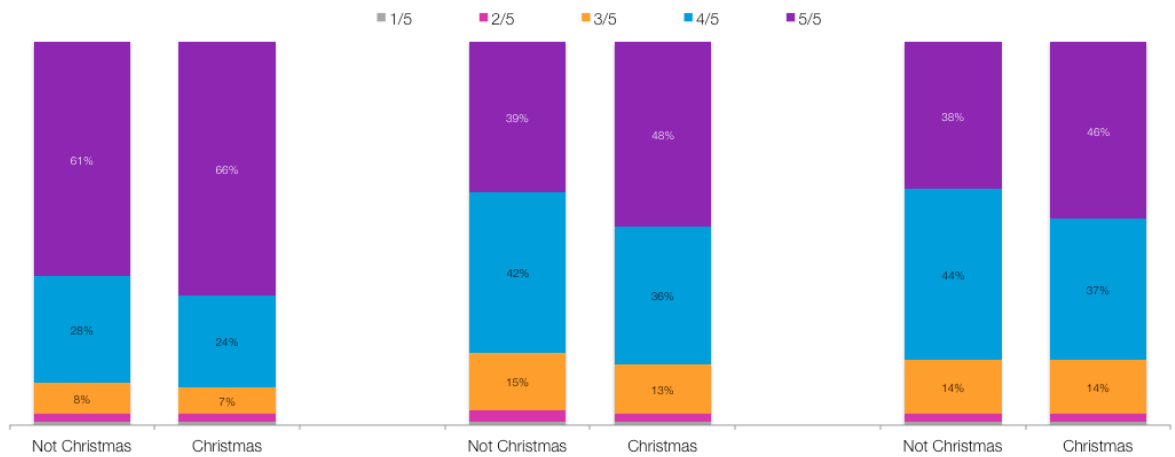
So now we know what the ticketing data tell us about this important time of the year, but we also want to understand what consumers are telling us about their experiences through the free Purple Seven customer feedback solution for venues, Did You Enjoy That.

Whilst the average ratings for the venue, event and value for money do not differ much between Christmas and Non-Christmas events, again we need to dig below the averages to find some differences.

By looking at the percentage of responses that achieved 5/5 stars, this increases at Christmas across perceptions of the event, value for money and the venue itself. This is key as we know from our previous Arts Professional articles that a negative rating of a venue can have more of an impact on a customer returning than them not enjoying the show.

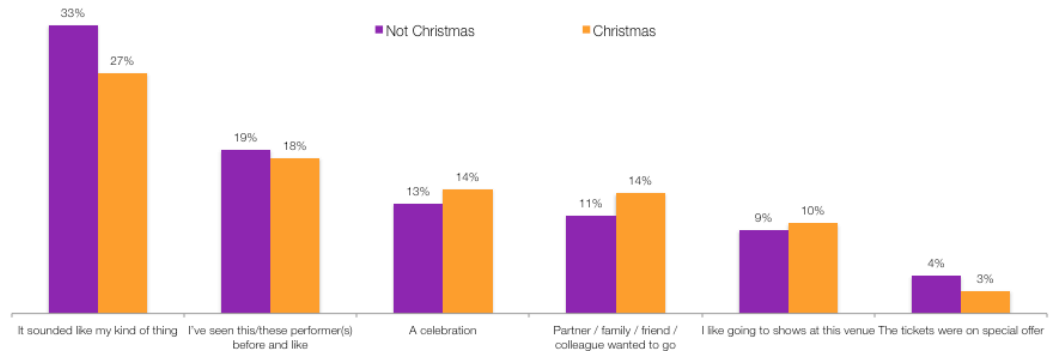
So great news for those venues getting new audiences for their Christmas shows, a great time is being had!

Fig 4. % of respondents rating event, venue and value for money out of five stars



And how are audiences being influenced to book for Christmas shows?

Fig 5. How did you hear about the event?

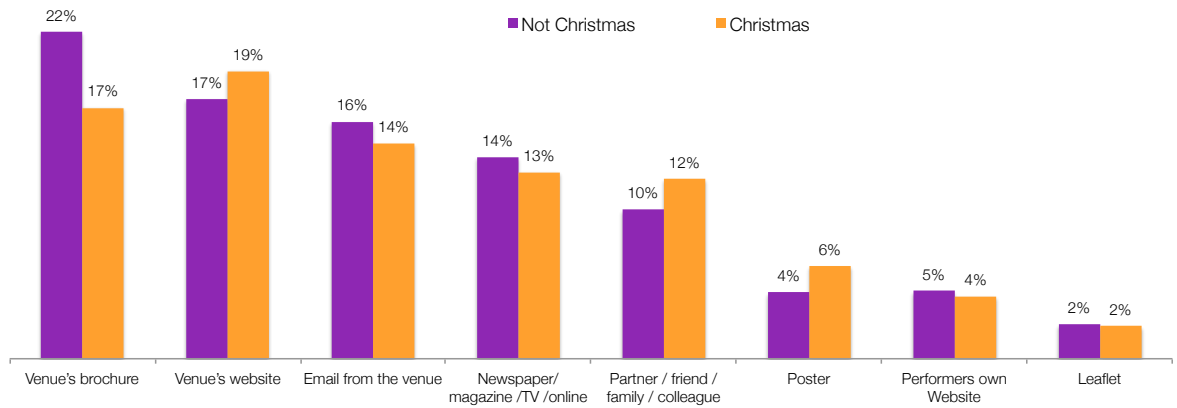


As can be seen from figure 5 above; “a celebration”, “attending with someone else” and “liking the venue” are more important at Christmas than the rest of the year. Again, as we saw in our Arts Professional article from earlier in the year, 84% of audiences at Christmas stay within their own region rather than travelling elsewhere, so local marketing is a key consideration – the exception being the South East where a higher amount of audiences travel into London.

And how are audience members finding out about the shows?

At Christmas, as can be seen from Fig. 6, consumers are more influenced by the venue’s website than during the rest of the year, and also brochure becomes less important compared to the rest of the year. This may well be a factor of new audiences who would therefore not have a brochure. Word of mouth should also not be underestimated with 12% of those surveyed saying that they heard about the performance from their partner, friend or family

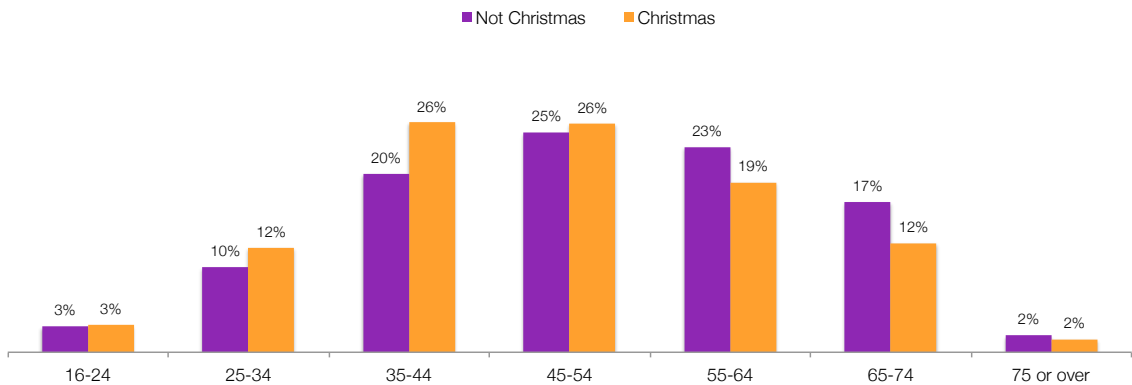
Fig.6 How did you hear about the show?



As part of Did You Enjoy That, we collect demographic data of attendees and “ghost bookers” if the survey is passed on to other attendees in the party. Of course a key demographic indicator is age, and as can be seen from Fig. 7, it is encouraging to see that Christmas shows are bringing in younger audiences compared to the rest of the year, 41% of respondents were aged under 44 years, compared to 33% for the rest of the year. Building the longevity of engagement with these key Christmas audiences is important to ensure that the “younger audiences” return both during the year as well as for next Christmas.

When it comes to ethnicity of attendees we see minimal difference between Christmas and non-Christmas.

Fig.7 Demographics of attendees



Conclusion

Christmas 2014 has beaten both 2012 and 2013 in terms of sales, tickets and bookers which is a great trend to be setting, and with almost a third of 2013 bookers coming back for the 2014 Christmas shows this is clearly a hugely important time of the year for retention. Let's remember that one venue achieved a "retention rate" of 56% of customers coming back from their 2013 experience to re-engage in 2014!

Equally, Christmas is a key period for bringing new audiences to venues with 60% of a venue's new audience annually coming in November and December. As we know from the above demographics, Christmas brings in a slightly younger audience and from the star ratings we know they have had a great time so the opportunity really is there to retain these new audiences with relevant offering and targeted communications.

And finally, the importance of the website during the Christmas period cannot be underestimated particularly for those key new bookers.

Here's to a bumper Christmas 2015!

Purple Seven would like to thank all the venues that participated in this Christmas study and we hope they enjoy their Christmas gift from Purple Seven of a free Did You Enjoy That report for participating.

If you would like to find out more of how to engage with Purple Seven to bring new meaning from data, be that transactional or customer feedback surveys – either free or paid for services – please contact us at enquiries@purpleseven.com.

The logo for Purple Seven, featuring the word "PURPLESEVEN" in a bold, sans-serif font. The "PURPLE" part is in black and the "SEVEN" part is in purple. The logo is flanked by two purple diagonal slashes.

/PURPLESEVEN/

