Promotional Strategies for Revenue Generation in University Theatre: A Study of Pinnacle Productions 2026

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Direct Research Journal of Management and Strategic Studies

Vol. 7(2), Pp. 10-34, August 2026

Research Article
ISSN: 2787-009X
https://journals.directresearchpublisher.org/index.php/drjmss/index; https://www.ajol.info/index.php/drjmss

Received 10 May 2026, Accepted 21 July 2026, Published 18 August 2026

ABSTRACT

This study examines the promotional strategies for revenue generation in Akwa Ibom Stare University (AKSU) Pinnacle Theatre, highlighting the need for effective marketing approaches for enhanced theatre patronage. However, the lack of effective promotional strategies and financial sustainability has continued to pose a threat to the theatre venture as traditional promotional methods alone are no longer sufficient in an era dominated by digital communication and dynamic audience behaviour. Many theatre practitioners lack the necessary marketing expertise to design and implement comprehensive promotional campaigns and this is reflected in low turnout, inadequate publicity, limited sponsorship and insufficient internally generated revenue. This study is anchored on Philip Kotler's Marketing Mix Theory as the qualitative data gathered through key informant interview (KII) and participant observation of selected stage performances in the Akwa Ibom State University Season of Performances 2026. Findings from the research shows that promotion strategies and revenue generation in theatre productions reveals that the success and sustainability of theatrical performances depend largely on the effectiveness of promotional activities, especially through the use of digital technologies for marketing and diversifying the channels available for the inflow of revenue. The study recommends that, theatre practitioners should develop and drive entrepreneurial initiatives for sustainable promotional framework, identifying innovative marketing practices that will contribute positively to the creative economy through cultural entrepreneurship while providing practical policy recommendations for effective university theatre administration.

Keywords: *Creative Economy, Promotional Strategies, Revenue Generation, Social Media Marketing, University Theatre Management*

Citation Mbede, A. U. & Robert, F. M. (2026). Promotional Strategies for Revenue Generation in University Theatre: A Study of Pinnacle Productions 2026. Direct Research Journal of Management and Strategic Studies. Economic Diversification as a Catalyst for Sustainable Development in Nigeria: A Conceptual Review. Vol. 7(2), Pp. 10-34.
https://dx.doi.org/10.26765/drjmss.v7i2.2

INTRODUCTION

Theatre occupies a distinctive position within the cultural and creative industries because it simultaneously functions as an artistic practice, a medium of entertainment and education, a vehicle for political and social commentary, and an instrument of cultural expression. Across different historical periods and geographical contexts, theatre has continually adapted its forms, production practices and relationships with audiences while retaining its fundamental dependence on live human interaction. In Nigeria, this tradition is particularly complex because contemporary theatre has developed through the interaction of indigenous oral and performance traditions with literary and dramaturgical forms associated with Western education and colonial influence (Adedeji, 1981; Jeyifo, 1984; Ogunbiyi, 1981; Obafemi, 1996; Soyinka, 1976). The resulting theatrical environment encompasses traditional performance, literary drama, travelling theatre, institutional theatre and contemporary stage practices. This historical and cultural richness, however, does not eliminate a persistent organisational challenge: theatre institutions must continually secure the financial resources required to sustain artistic production while preserving their cultural, educational and social objectives.

The financial challenge of theatre has a substantial basis in cultural economics. Theatre production is labour-intensive and differs from many commercial industries in its capacity to generate productivity gains through technological innovation. Baumol and Bowen's (1966) influential analysis of the performing arts explains this structural problem through what has become known as the "cost disease" of the performing arts. Live performances require substantial human labour, and technological advancement does not necessarily reduce the amount of labour required to stage a particular performance. Consequently, production costs may increase over time while the capacity to increase productivity remains comparatively constrained. Throsby (2001) similarly argues that the economic characteristics of cultural and artistic production require analytical approaches that recognise the distinctive conditions under which the arts operate.

In theatre, this economic constraint is compounded by the limited capacity of venues, the purchasing power of potential audiences and the fact that each live performance is temporally and spatially restricted. These conditions make the relationship between audience development and financial sustainability particularly important. Contemporary evidence demonstrates that these structural challenges remain relevant to performing arts organisations. Castiglione and Infante (2025), in their long-run analysis of theatre demand and supply across Italian regions, demonstrate the importance of understanding theatre through the interaction of demand and supply conditions. Paoletti (2025), examining theatre funding in Italy following the disruption associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, similarly highlights the vulnerability of theatre institutions to financial instability and external shocks. Although these studies arise from the Italian context, they provide an important comparative basis for understanding a broader problem confronting live performance: theatre organisations must continuously develop mechanisms capable of connecting artistic production with sustainable sources of financial support. The implication for theatre management is that artistic production cannot be separated entirely from questions of audience development, market positioning and financial planning. Within this context, promotion becomes more than a means of announcing the existence of a theatrical production. It constitutes a strategic mechanism through which theatre organisations create awareness, communicate artistic value, attract audiences and establish relationships with existing and prospective patrons. Early scholarship in arts marketing established the importance of treating audiences as groups whose interests, expectations and patterns of consumption require systematic understanding rather than assuming that audiences will automatically attend performances because a production exists (Bennett, 1997; Diggle, 1994; Hill et al., 2003). Scheff and Kotler (1997) similarly place marketing at the centre of performing-arts management, emphasising strategies for audience development and the financial sustainability of arts organisations. Byrnes (2009) extends this perspective by locating marketing within the broader field of arts management, thereby demonstrating that promotional activity is interconnected with organisational planning, management and resource allocation.

The development of theatre marketing scholarship has increasingly challenged a narrow, transactional interpretation of promotion. McDowell (2022), for example, reframes theatre marketing from a transactional orientation towards an enactive perspective in which the relationship between theatre organisations and audiences is experiential and relational. This shift is theoretically important because audiences do not purchase a theatre performance in the same way that they purchase a conventional manufactured product. They purchase access to an experience involving performance, interaction, atmosphere, cultural meaning and collective participation. Marketing, therefore, must communicate not only the availability of a production but also its distinctive value to prospective audiences. In this sense, promotional strategy becomes part of the process through which a theatre production is positioned within the cultural marketplace.

The relationship between promotion and audience behaviour has become even more significant with the transformation of communication technologies. Jenkins (2006) anticipated the growing convergence of media production, distribution and audience participation, while Tuten and Solomon (2023) demonstrate how social media marketing has developed into a sophisticated field involving platforms, interactive communication, digital communities, influencers and technologically mediated consumer engagement. For theatre, this transformation has expanded the range of promotional instruments available to producers and managers. Traditional posters, flyers, press coverage and word-of-mouth communication can now operate alongside social media, multimedia content, digital advertising, electronic communication and other online platforms. Consequently, the contemporary theatre manager is increasingly required to understand not only the artistic and administrative dimensions of theatre but also the changing communication environment through which audiences encounter theatrical productions. This transformation is particularly significant within the Nigerian theatre environment. Mbede (2024a) identifies multimedia as an increasingly important instrument for audience engineering within Nigerian theatre, while Mbede (2024b) examines social media as an apparatus for audience development in the Nigerian theatre milieu. Together, these studies indicate that digital communication is becoming increasingly important to the relationship between theatrical productions and their audiences. The importance of digital platforms extends beyond simple publicity because they provide opportunities for theatre organisations to communicate repeatedly with audiences, circulate visual and audiovisual material, encourage interaction and create anticipation before a performance. The implication is that audience development increasingly requires sustained communication rather than a single promotional announcement immediately before a production.

The wider Nigerian digital marketing literature reinforces the importance of this transformation. Uford et al. (2022) examine the effectiveness of electronic marketing platforms in relation to consumer behaviour among university students, demonstrating the relevance of digital communication to contemporary consumer engagement. Charles and Uford (2023), although working within a business and financial-performance context rather than theatre, further demonstrate the importance of digital and business strategies in contemporary market environments. These studies are not direct evidence of theatre revenue generation, but they provide contextual support for understanding the changing communication environment within which university audiences operate. For university theatre, the significance of this development lies in the possibility of reaching student and external audiences through communication channels that are already embedded in contemporary patterns of information consumption.

The international literature provides further evidence that the relationship between digital promotion, audience engagement and theatre sustainability extends beyond Nigeria. Thevananth (2026), examining Nallur Drama Nights, demonstrates the potential of social media platforms to improve theatre visibility, audience engagement and attendance while contributing to income-generating opportunities. Samadi and Lashkjani (2026) approach the issue from the perspective of Generation Z, arguing for strategies capable of positioning theatre within an increasingly crowded media-consumption environment. Their work is significant because contemporary theatre competes not only with other live performances but also with streaming services, social media, film, gaming and other forms of digitally mediated entertainment. The promotional challenge is consequently no longer simply to inform audiences that a performance exists but to make theatre sufficiently visible and attractive within a highly competitive attention economy. The relationship between promotion and the wider economic impact of performing arts is also demonstrated by Xue (2026). Examining the performing arts economy in Hainan Province, the study argues that performing arts activity can stimulate cultural and tourism consumption, particularly where performing arts development is supported by coherent government policies and integration with other sectors. Although the context differs from Nigerian university theatre, the study is relevant because it demonstrates that the economic value of performing arts can extend beyond direct ticket income. A successful performance economy can generate associated consumption and broader economic activity. This perspective encourages a more expansive understanding of theatre revenue generation in which audience attendance can potentially contribute to wider institutional, cultural and economic value. The promotional dimension of theatrical activity can also be understood through the concept of performance itself. Yu and Li (2026) conceptualise interactive marketing through a dramaturgical framework, suggesting that marketing can itself become a form of staged consumer engagement. Vargas (2025), examining persuasion and dramaturgy in art auctions, similarly demonstrates how carefully constructed spectacle and persuasive techniques can influence consumer perception and behaviour in creative markets.

These studies are not theatre revenue studies in the strict sense, but their theoretical relevance lies in demonstrating that the boundary between performance and marketing can become increasingly fluid. Promotional communication can itself be designed as an experience that captures attention, generates emotional responses and influences audience or consumer behaviour. For theatre managers, this implies that publicity materials and promotional activities should not necessarily be viewed as external to the theatrical experience but potentially as extensions of the production's identity. Historical evidence also demonstrates that promotional spectacle has long been connected to theatrical enterprise. Williams (2026), in examining African American travelling tent shows in the early twentieth century, demonstrates how parades, costumes, visual symbolism, vehicles and other forms of public spectacle were employed to attract attention and communicate cultural and commercial identities. Although the historical and racial context differs fundamentally from contemporary Nigerian university theatre, the study provides an important reminder that theatrical entrepreneurship has historically relied on deliberate public image-making.

Promotion is therefore not an entirely new addition to theatrical practice; rather, contemporary digital technologies have transformed the instruments through which theatre organisations perform this function. The African theatre environment presents distinctive challenges that make the relationship between promotion and revenue particularly important. Amo-Mensah and

Hammond (2026), examining Ghanaian theatre, demonstrate the relevance of promotional communication to audience attraction. Steedman et al. (2025) similarly show that contemporary Ghanaian theatre practitioners operate within diverse and often resource-constrained economic environments, highlighting the need for practitioners to combine different income-generating activities. Nukpezah et al. (2026), meanwhile, draw attention to ethical considerations associated with audience-sensitive promotional practices. These studies collectively suggest that African theatre marketing cannot simply reproduce models developed in highly resourced cultural markets. Promotional strategies must be responsive to resource limitations, audience characteristics, cultural expectations and ethical considerations.

The Nigerian context presents additional competitive and institutional pressures. The growth and dominance of screen-based entertainment, particularly Nollywood, has intensified competition for audiences, investment and media attention. Adeosun and Maiyaki (2026) examine the business models of Nigeria's movie industry, illustrating the importance of commercial and organisational structures in the country's screen-entertainment economy. This is relevant to live theatre because theatre productions must compete within a broader Nigerian creative economy in which film and digital entertainment can potentially reach larger audiences and distribute content more widely. The competition reinforces the need for theatre organisations to develop distinctive promotional approaches capable of communicating the unique value of live performance.

The challenge is not, however, simply to imitate the promotional practices of film or other entertainment industries. Live theatre possesses distinctive experiential qualities that can form the basis of its competitive identity. The immediacy of performer-audience interaction, the uniqueness of each live performance and the communal nature of theatrical participation provide opportunities for theatre organisations to differentiate their productions. McDowell's (2022) experiential approach to theatre marketing is particularly useful here because it suggests that the value of theatre lies partly in the experience created between performers, audiences and the performance environment. Effective promotion should therefore communicate these distinctive experiential attributes rather than treating theatre merely as another entertainment commodity.

The question of revenue generation further complicates the promotional problem. Revenue generation in theatre should not be conceptualised exclusively in terms of ticket sales. Bree (2022) argues that although ticketing remains an important source of income, sponsorship, merchandising, grants and partnerships can provide complementary revenue streams. The implication is that promotional strategy must potentially address multiple stakeholders rather than audiences alone. Sponsorship promotion, for example, may require communication of institutional reputation and social or cultural value to potential sponsors, while merchandising requires audiences to perceive sufficient value in the theatre brand and associated products. Revenue diversification consequently requires an expanded understanding of promotion as a mechanism for communicating value to audiences, sponsors, partners and other stakeholders.

The importance of diversified revenue models is supported by broader performing-arts scholarship. Ormieres (2026) examines funding models and financial sustainability in dance institutions, drawing attention to the significance of diversified funding structures.

Pension and Fristoe (2026) demonstrate the potential of arts-based community engagement to contribute simultaneously to community support and revenue generation. Martin (2026) approaches sustainability through digital resource and asset-sharing networks, suggesting that more efficient management of production resources can contribute to institutional sustainability. Guo (2025), examining arts entrepreneurship education in higher education, further indicates the growing recognition that creative practitioners require entrepreneurial and financial competencies alongside artistic skills. Collectively, these studies suggest that financial sustainability in the arts increasingly depends on the ability to mobilise multiple resources rather than relying upon a single income stream.

The relationship between theatre production and community or institutional objectives also requires attention. Dan-Ogosi et al. (2025), through their examination of participatory budgeting, health promotion and theatre production, illustrate how theatre can be embedded within broader social and community objectives. Such relationships can potentially create alternative pathways for financial and institutional support. Similarly, Ndigwe and Adisa (2026), through the case of Terra Kulture, demonstrate the potential for culturally rooted programming and deliberate promotion to convert cultural assets into economic value. These examples reinforce the proposition that revenue generation in the performing arts may arise from the capacity to connect artistic production with wider social, cultural, educational and commercial networks.

At the same time, the literature cautions against treating revenue generation as an exclusively commercial objective. Theatre has educational, cultural and social functions that distinguish it from ordinary commercial products. Obafemi (1996) situates Nigerian theatre within a broader cultural and social vision, while Adedeji (1981), Ogunbiyi (1981), Jeyifo (1984) and Soyinka (1976) demonstrate the historical significance of Nigerian performance and dramatic traditions. The implication is that strategies for revenue generation must operate within a context where artistic and social values remain important. The central management problem is therefore one of balance: theatre organisations must generate sufficient income to sustain production without allowing commercial considerations to displace artistic quality, cultural responsibility or educational objectives. The institutional dimension is particularly important for university theatre. University-based theatre occupies a distinctive position because it operates at the intersection of artistic production, education, research, student development and institutional representation. Nwamuo (2003) and Yerima (2004) provide foundational perspectives on theatre administration and dramaturgical practice within the Nigerian context. Joseph (2026) further identifies the gradual adoption of digital innovation within Nigerian university performing-arts programmes. These studies suggest that university theatre managers face the dual responsibility of sustaining artistic production while responding to changing technological, financial and audience environments. Consequently, promotional strategy in university theatre should be understood within the particular institutional constraints and opportunities associated with educational theatre.

The literature also suggests that sustainability requires more than the adoption of individual promotional technologies. Vasylenko et al. (2022) emphasise the importance of marketing and public-relations communication in promoting theatre institutions, while Pisali et al. (2025) identify financial constraints, competition, weak financial management and the changing digital entertainment environment as challenges to performing-arts marketing. These perspectives converge around an important proposition: **promotion is** most effective when embedded within a broader organisational strategy**.** Social media accounts, posters, publicity events or electronic ticketing cannot independently guarantee financial sustainability. Their effectiveness depends upon the quality of the artistic product, audience experience, institutional reputation, pricing, accessibility, organisational processes and the ability to develop relationships with audiences and other stakeholders.

This integrated perspective is consistent with the broader logic of arts marketing. Product, price, place and promotion are traditionally treated as central components of the marketing mix, while the expanded services-oriented framework incorporates people, process and physical evidence. In theatre, these dimensions are particularly interconnected. The product encompasses the performance and its associated experience; price influences accessibility and perceived value; place concerns the physical and digital spaces through which audiences encounter and access theatre; promotion creates awareness and communicates value; people influence the quality of audience interaction; process shapes the ease and professionalism of the theatre experience; and physical evidence contributes to perceptions of quality and institutional identity. Consequently, revenue generation cannot reasonably be separated from the wider marketing system through which audiences encounter and evaluate theatrical productions.

A critical reading of the literature therefore reveals a transition from promotion as publicity towards promotion as strategic audience and revenue development**.** Earlier arts-marketing scholarship established the importance of understanding and cultivating audiences (Bennett, 1997; Diggle, 1994; Hill et al., 2003; Scheff & Kotler, 1997), while later scholarship increasingly emphasises experiential, digital and interactive forms of engagement (Jenkins, 2006; McDowell, 2022; Tuten & Solomon, 2023; Yu & Li, 2026). Nigerian scholarship demonstrates that these transformations are becoming increasingly relevant to local theatre practice (Mbede, 2024a, 2024b; Joseph, 2026; Iseyen, 2026), while international and African studies indicate that theatre organisations must simultaneously address competition, financial constraints, audience development and revenue diversification (Amo-Mensah & Hammond, 2026; Castiglione & Infante, 2025; Pisali et al., 2025; Steedman et al., 2025; Thevananth, 2026). The literature thus indicates that the central issue is not whether theatre organisations should promote their productions, but how promotional activities can be strategically integrated with audience development and diversified revenue mechanisms to support organisational sustainability.

Despite this growing body of scholarship, an important empirical gap remains. Existing studies provide valuable insights into theatre marketing, digital promotion, audience engagement, arts entrepreneurship and diversified funding, but much of the available literature examines professional theatre, community theatre, film, dance, arts organisations or creative industries outside the specific context of Nigerian university theatre. Even within Nigeria, existing studies have tended to focus on digital promotion, audience engineering, theatre publicity, film marketing or the broader creative economy rather than systematically examining the relationship between promotional strategies and revenue generation within a defined university theatre production season (Adeosun & Maiyaki, 2026; Iseyen, 2026; Joseph, 2026; Mbede, 2024a, 2024b). Consequently, there remains limited empirical understanding of how university theatre organisations deploy promotional strategies, how these strategies relate to audience and revenue objectives, and how conventional and digital promotional mechanisms can be combined within the resource realities of Nigerian higher education.

This gap is particularly important because university theatre cannot be assumed to operate under the same conditions as commercial theatre companies or professional entertainment businesses. University theatre must simultaneously address artistic quality, student training, cultural representation, institutional visibility, audience development and financial sustainability. Its promotional strategies may therefore have multiple objectives beyond ticket sales, including strengthening institutional identity, attracting students and external audiences, supporting sponsorship and partnerships, and creating sustainable conditions for future productions. Examining these relationships within an actual theatre production season can therefore contribute empirical evidence to the broader debate on arts marketing and cultural sustainability.

It is against this background that the present study examines promotional strategies for revenue generation in university theatre, using Pinnacle Productions' 2026 season as a case study**.** The study is situated at the intersection of cultural economics, theatre management, arts marketing, digital communication and audience development. Rather than treating promotion simply as an advertising activity, it approaches promotional strategy as part of a wider process through which theatrical productions communicate value, attract audiences, develop institutional visibility and pursue financial sustainability. By examining the promotional practices associated with Pinnacle Productions' 2026 season, the study seeks to contribute context-specific evidence to the relatively limited literature on revenue-oriented promotional strategies in Nigerian university theatre. The study consequently provides an opportunity to connect established international theories of arts marketing and cultural economics with the institutional, technological and resource conditions shaping contemporary Nigerian university theatre.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Performing Arts Marketing Perspective

This study is principally anchored in the performing arts marketing perspective developed by Kotler and Scheff (1997). Their approach is particularly relevant to university theatre because it treats marketing as a strategic organisational process through which performing arts organisations identify audiences, communicate the value of artistic offerings, stimulate attendance, build relationships and mobilise resources necessary for institutional continuity. From this perspective, promotion is not an isolated publicity exercise undertaken immediately before a performance; rather, it forms part of a broader process of understanding audiences and creating meaningful connections between artistic productions and potential consumers. The audience-centred orientation of performing arts marketing is important because theatre differs from conventional commercial products. A theatrical production is simultaneously an artistic experience, a cultural expression and, in many contexts, an economic activity. Diggle (1994) therefore emphasises the need for arts organisations to place audiences at the centre of marketing decisions. This position suggests that promotional decisions should begin with an understanding of who the prospective audience members are, what motivates them to attend performances and what forms of communication are likely to attract their attention. Hill et al. (2003) similarly locate arts marketing within the psychological, social and cultural dimensions of audience experience. Thus, promotion becomes more than the transmission of information about a production; it involves communicating the experiential, cultural and emotional value that audiences may derive from attending.

This audience-centred perspective is particularly applicable to university theatre, where productions may address several audience categories simultaneously. Students may attend for entertainment or educational reasons; academic and non-academic staff may be attracted by institutional or cultural interests; alumni may participate because of their relationship with the university; while members of the wider community may respond to the cultural relevance of a production. The promotional challenge is consequently to identify these different audience groups and communicate the value of the production in ways that correspond with their interests.

Theatre Audiences, Reception and Promotional Effectiveness

The relationship between promotion and audience participation can also be understood through Bennett's (1997) analysis of theatre audiences and the relationship between production and reception. Theatre does not achieve its complete social and economic function when a production is created; it requires an audience to experience and interpret the performance. Consequently, promotional activities perform an important mediating function between theatrical production and audience reception.

This distinction is important for the present study because the mere existence of a theatrical production does not guarantee attendance. A university theatre may produce a technically and artistically successful performance but still experience low attendance if potential audiences are unaware of the production, do not perceive it as relevant, or do not receive persuasive information about when, where and why they should attend. Promotion therefore operates at the point where artistic production is translated into audience awareness and, potentially, audience action.

From this standpoint, promotional effectiveness can be assessed through the extent to which communication generates awareness, interest and willingness to participate. This conceptualisation also explains why audience research and segmentation are important elements of performing arts marketing. Kotler and Scheff (1997) argue for strategic attention to markets and audiences, while Diggle (1994) emphasises the importance of understanding audience needs in arts marketing. Taken together, these perspectives suggest that successful promotion depends on matching the characteristics of a theatrical production with the expectations and motivations of identifiable audience groups.

Promotion as Communication and Audience Development

The communication function of theatre promotion has historically evolved alongside changes in media and audience behaviour. Traditional theatre organizations relied substantially on posters, playbills, newspapers, interpersonal communication, public announcements and word-of-mouth publicity. Bennett (1997) demonstrates the significance of audience reception within the theatrical process, making communication an important mechanism for connecting productions with potential spectators. The development of digital media has substantially expanded this promotional environment. Jenkins (2006), through the concept of media convergence, explains how traditional and emerging media increasingly interact within a participatory communication environment. For theatre organisations, this development means that promotion is no longer restricted to conventional advertising channels. The same production can be promoted through posters and radio while simultaneously being communicated through Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp, TikTok, websites and other digital platforms.

Tuten and Solomon (2023) further demonstrate that social media marketing enables organizations to move from predominantly one-way communication towards interactive relationships with consumers. Applied to theatre, this means that potential audience members can encounter promotional content, react to it, share it, comment on it and communicate directly with producers before a performance takes place. Digital platforms can therefore extend promotional activity beyond simply informing audiences about a production to creating an ongoing relationship between the production and its prospective audience.

The relevance of this development to Nigerian theatre is demonstrated by Mbede et al. (2024), who examine social media as an apparatus for audience engineering within the Nigerian theatre milieu. Their contribution is important because it situates digital audience development within the Nigerian theatrical context. Rather than assuming that promotional practices developed in Western arts markets can be transferred unchanged to Nigeria, their work draws attention to the capacity of locally relevant digital communication practices to facilitate audience mobilisation.

The implication for Pinnacle Productions 2026 is that social media should be examined not merely as an advertising channel but as a potential mechanism for creating awareness, sustaining audience interaction and encouraging attendance.

Promotion, Audience Engagement and Attendance

The preceding perspectives establish an important theoretical sequence between promotional communication and audience participation. Promotion initially creates awareness of a production; relevant communication can then stimulate interest; continued engagement may strengthen the audience member's intention to attend; and attendance creates the immediate opportunity for revenue generation. Promotion can therefore be conceptualized as part of an audience-development process rather than simply as expenditure on publicity.

This proposition is consistent with Kotler and Scheff's (1997) emphasis on the relationship between marketing activities, audience development and organizational viability. However, audience development should not be interpreted solely in terms of increasing the number of spectators. Hill et al. (2003) suggest that the arts involve complex experiential and cultural relationships, meaning that audiences may also develop loyalty, identification and continuing interest in an arts organization.

Bennett's (1997) treatment of theatre audiences reinforces the importance of reception in this process. An audience member who has a positive experience may subsequently contribute to the promotion of a theatre through interpersonal communication and recommendations. Thus, promotion and audience participation can become mutually reinforcing: promotional communication attracts audiences, audience experiences influence subsequent word-of-mouth communication, and positive audience relationships may reduce the difficulty of promoting subsequent productions.

For Pinnacle Productions 2026, this relationship is particularly important because the effectiveness of promotional strategies cannot be judged exclusively by the number of promotional materials produced or the frequency with which advertisements are distributed. The more meaningful question is whether promotional communication translates into measurable audience responses, including enquiries, ticket purchases, attendance, repeat attendance, audience interaction and recommendations.

Digital Promotion and the Changing Theatre Audience

The increasing use of digital platforms also has implications for the demographic composition of theatre audiences. University theatre operates in an environment in which younger audiences are highly familiar with mobile communication and social media. Consequently, the ability of a theatre organisation to communicate through platforms that audiences already use may influence the visibility and accessibility of its productions. Jenkins (2006) provides a useful conceptual foundation for understanding this transition because media convergence changes the relationship between producers, content and audiences.

Rather than receiving theatre information exclusively through institutional channels, audiences can encounter theatrical content through multiple interconnected media environments. Tuten and Solomon (2023) similarly explain how social media allows organisations to develop interactive communication with users and to encourage participation around organisational offerings. This has particular implications for promotional content. A production may be introduced through a poster, but its promotional life can subsequently be extended through rehearsal photographs, short videos, interviews with performers, director's messages, audience testimonials, production trailers and interactive posts. Such content may create repeated points of contact between the production and potential spectators. In this sense, digital promotion can extend the temporal and communicative boundaries of theatre promotion.

Mbede et al. (2024) provide contextual support for this argument in relation to Nigerian theatre. Their focus on social media and audience engineering demonstrates that digital platforms can be considered within the broader strategy of audience mobilisation rather than being treated simply as supplementary publicity tools. This distinction is central to the present study because it enables an examination of whether Pinnacle Productions 2026 uses digital media strategically to move audiences from awareness to engagement and ultimately to attendance.

Promotion and the Economic Sustainability of Theatre

The relationship between promotional activity and revenue generation must also be considered within the distinctive economics of performing arts organisations. Baumol and Bowen (1966) established the economic dilemma associated with the performing arts, drawing attention to structural difficulties involved in maintaining financially sustainable live performance organisations. Their work is important to the present study because it demonstrates that artistic production occurs within an economic environment in which rising production and operational costs can create persistent financial pressures.

Throsby (2001) extends the understanding of cultural production by demonstrating that cultural organisations generate both economic and cultural value. This distinction is especially relevant to university theatre because the value of a production cannot be reduced to ticket income. University theatre may also contribute to education, cultural preservation, institutional identity, student development, community engagement and social discourse. Nevertheless, the achievement of these cultural functions requires financial resources.

Byrnes (2009) consequently places management at the centre of arts sustainability, emphasising the importance of planning, resource management, marketing and organisational decision-making within arts organisations. In the context of university theatre, promotion therefore has a dual function: it contributes to the cultural visibility of the production while potentially supporting the financial resources required for production and future programming. The economic dimension also explains why revenue generation should not be restricted to ticket sales. Ticketing may provide direct income from audience attendance, but theatre organisations can also mobilise resources through sponsorship, donations, partnerships, merchandising and other commercial or institutional arrangements. Nwamuo (2003), in his discussion of theatre administration, demonstrates the importance of administrative and managerial processes in the functioning of theatre organisations. Promotion therefore needs to be understood within a wider organisational system in which communication supports both audience mobilisation and resource acquisition.

Promotional Strategies and Revenue Generation

The theoretical relationship between promotion and revenue generation can consequently be conceptualised as a process rather than a simple direct relationship. Promotional activity does not automatically produce revenue. Instead, promotional communication first seeks to create awareness and interest; these responses can develop into audience engagement; engagement may translate into attendance and ticket purchases; and audience participation can provide opportunities for additional financial transactions and stakeholder relationships.

This process can be expressed conceptually as:

Promotional Strategies → Audience Awareness → Audience Interest and Engagement → Attendance/Participation → Revenue Generation → Organisational Sustainability

The first link concerns visibility. If prospective audience members are unaware that a production exists, opportunities for attendance are limited. The second link concerns perceived relevance and value. Communication must persuade potential audiences that attending the production is worthwhile. The third concerns behavioural conversion, whereby interest becomes attendance or another form of participation. The fourth concerns the economic outcomes associated with participation (Figure 1). Kotler and Scheff (1997) provide the principal theoretical foundation for this sequence because performing arts marketing connects audience development with organisational sustainability. Diggle (1994) strengthens the audience-centred component by stressing the importance of understanding the consumer of the arts, while Hill et al. (2003) explain why the experiential and cultural dimensions of theatre should be incorporated into marketing decisions. The economic literature adds another layer to this relationship. Baumol and Bowen (1966) establish why performing arts

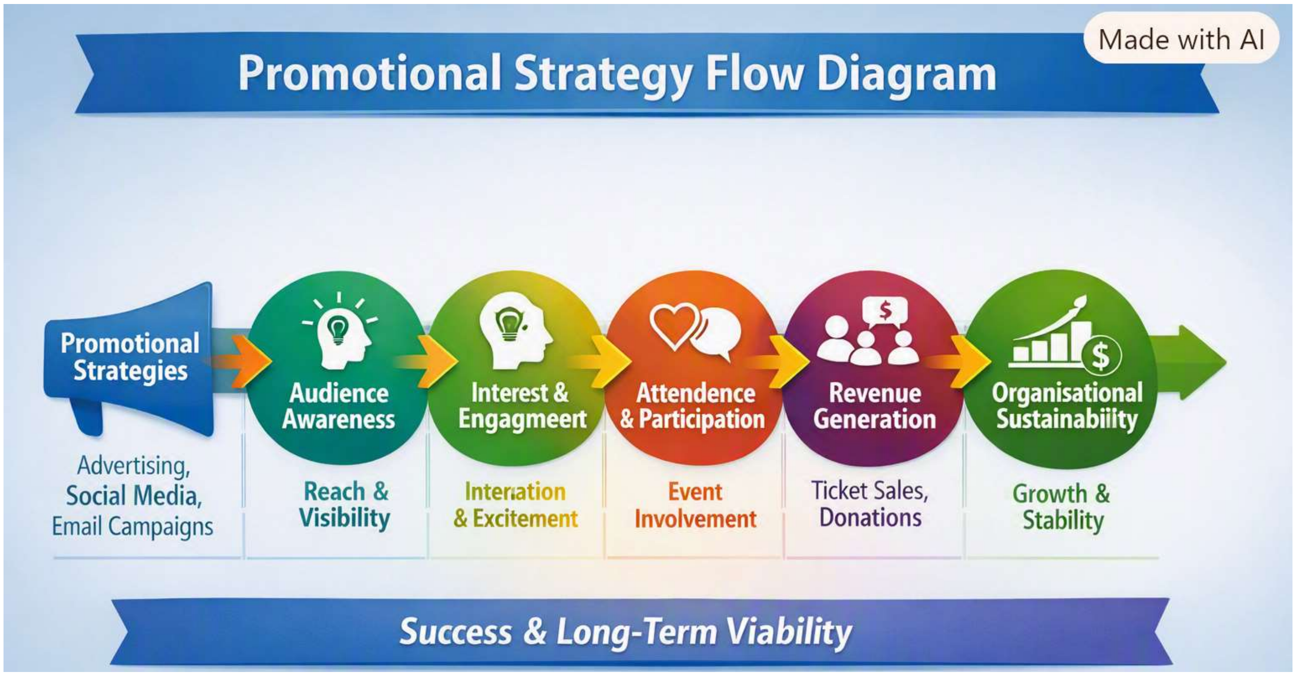

Figure 1: Promotional Strategy Flow: A Roadmap to Organisational Sustainability

organisations face continuing financial pressures, while Throsby (2001) demonstrates the coexistence of cultural and economic values within cultural production. Byrnes (2009) links effective management to the capacity of arts organisations to sustain their operations. Accordingly, promotion should be considered not merely as a cost of staging performances but as a strategic investment that may facilitate audience development and contribute to the recovery of production costs and generation of additional income.

Community Engagement, Stakeholders and Revenue Diversification

A contemporary understanding of theatre promotion must also account for relationships extending beyond conventional audience members. University theatre exists within an institutional and community ecosystem involving students, staff, alumni, parents, cultural practitioners, government agencies, private businesses, sponsors, community leaders and other stakeholders. Promotional activity can therefore serve both an audience-development function and a stakeholder-engagement function.

This broader orientation is consistent with the Arts-Based Community Engagement perspective examined by Pension and Fristoe (2026). Their work demonstrates how arts-based engagement can be connected to community support and revenue generation. The implication is that arts organisations can create economic value not only through direct transactions with audiences but also through relationships with communities and stakeholders who recognise the social and cultural value of artistic activities. This argument is particularly relevant to university theatre. A production that communicates its educational, cultural and community value effectively may be more capable of attracting institutional support, sponsorship, partnerships and donations in addition to ticket revenue. Promotion therefore becomes a mechanism for communicating value to multiple stakeholder groups rather than merely persuading individuals to purchase tickets.

The importance of diversified funding is further demonstrated by Paoletti (2025), whose analysis of theatre funding in Italy highlights the importance of financial structures to theatre sustainability. Steedman et al. (2025), examining contemporary theatre economies in Ghana, similarly demonstrate the diversity of economic practices through which theatre practitioners operate. These perspectives are relevant to the Nigerian university context because they caution against viewing theatre revenue as synonymous with box-office income alone.

Consequently, the present study considers promotional strategies in relation to multiple possible revenue pathways, including ticket sales, sponsorship, merchandising, donations, partnerships and institutional support. The promotional strategy adopted for each pathway may differ because the communication needs of a ticket-paying spectator are not necessarily identical to those of a corporate sponsor or institutional partner.

Branding, Reputation and Long-Term Audience Relationships

The sustainability of promotional activities is also influenced by the reputation and identity of the theatre organisation. Audiences do not necessarily evaluate each production in isolation. Previous experiences, perceived artistic quality, institutional reputation and familiarity with a production company can influence expectations about future performances. This issue is relevant to the concept of arts branding within performing arts marketing. Kotler and Scheff (1997) recognise the importance of positioning and communication in establishing relationships between arts organisations and their markets. When consistently applied, promotional communication can help establish a recognisable identity through which audiences distinguish one theatre organisation from another.

The resource-based view of the firm provides an additional theoretical explanation for this process. Barney (1991) argues that organisational resources can provide strategic advantage when they possess characteristics that make them valuable and difficult for competitors to replicate. In a theatre context, intangible resources such as reputation, audience loyalty, artistic identity, institutional credibility and accumulated production experience can function as strategic resources. Such resources cannot simply be purchased in the same way as advertising space; they develop through sustained organisational practice and audience relationships.

This perspective is useful for Pinnacle Productions 2026 because the revenue implications of promotion may extend beyond a single production. Effective promotion can potentially contribute to positive audience experiences and institutional reputation, which in turn can encourage repeat attendance and strengthen the promotional prospects of future productions. Promotion may therefore generate both immediate and cumulative value.

Relevance of the Framework to Pinnacle Productions 2026

The theoretical framework developed in this study therefore conceptualises promotional strategies as an integrated system linking **audience identification, communication, engagement, participation and revenue generation.** Kotler and Scheff (1997) provide the principal performing arts marketing foundation; Diggle (1994) and Hill et al. (2003) establish the importance of audience orientation and experiential value; Bennett (1997) explains the significance of audience reception; Jenkins (2006) provides a basis for understanding media convergence; Tuten and Solomon (2023) explain the interactive character of social media marketing; and Mbede et al. (2024) contextualise digital audience engineering within Nigerian theatre. The economic and management dimensions further clarify why promotional strategies matter to organisational survival. Baumol and Bowen (1966) establish the structural financial pressures confronting performing arts organisations, Throsby (2001) demonstrates the coexistence of cultural and economic value, while Byrnes (2009) and Nwamuo (2003) emphasise management and administration as necessary components of organisational sustainability. Pension and Fristoe (2026) extend this understanding by demonstrating the potential relationship between community engagement and revenue generation, while Paoletti (2025) and Steedman et al. (2025) reinforce the importance of diversified economic and funding arrangements within contemporary theatre.

The framework consequently does not treat these scholars as a disconnected collection of authorities. Instead, their arguments collectively establish a logical theoretical pathway for understanding the case of Pinnacle Productions 2026 (Figure 2).

Within this framework, promotional effectiveness is therefore understood in terms of the ability of Pinnacle Productions 2026 to transform communication into meaningful audience and stakeholder responses. The framework assumes that promotional activities are most likely to contribute to revenue generation when they are audience-centred, strategically coordinated, culturally relevant, digitally responsive and connected to identifiable mechanisms of financial or institutional support. The theoretical framework consequently provides a basis for examining not only what promotional strategies Pinnacle Productions 2026 employed**,** but **also** how those strategies were targeted, how audiences and stakeholders responded to them, and how the resulting engagement contributed to ticket sales, sponsorship, merchandising, donations, partnerships and broader institutional sustainability**.** This makes the framework directly responsive to the central concern of the study: understanding how promotional practice can be transformed from a publicity function into a strategic mechanism for revenue generation within university theatre.

Revenue Generation in Educational Theatres

Revenue generation in theatre refers to the totality of financial mechanisms through which theatre organisations, independent producers, and individual practitioners secure income to fund productions, sustain operations, and advance developmental objectives (Charles & Uford, 2023). Unlike purely commercial enterprises, theatre organisations characteristically rely upon a diversified portfolio of revenue sources, reflecting the hybrid cultural-economic nature of the performing arts. Any comprehensive understanding of revenue generation

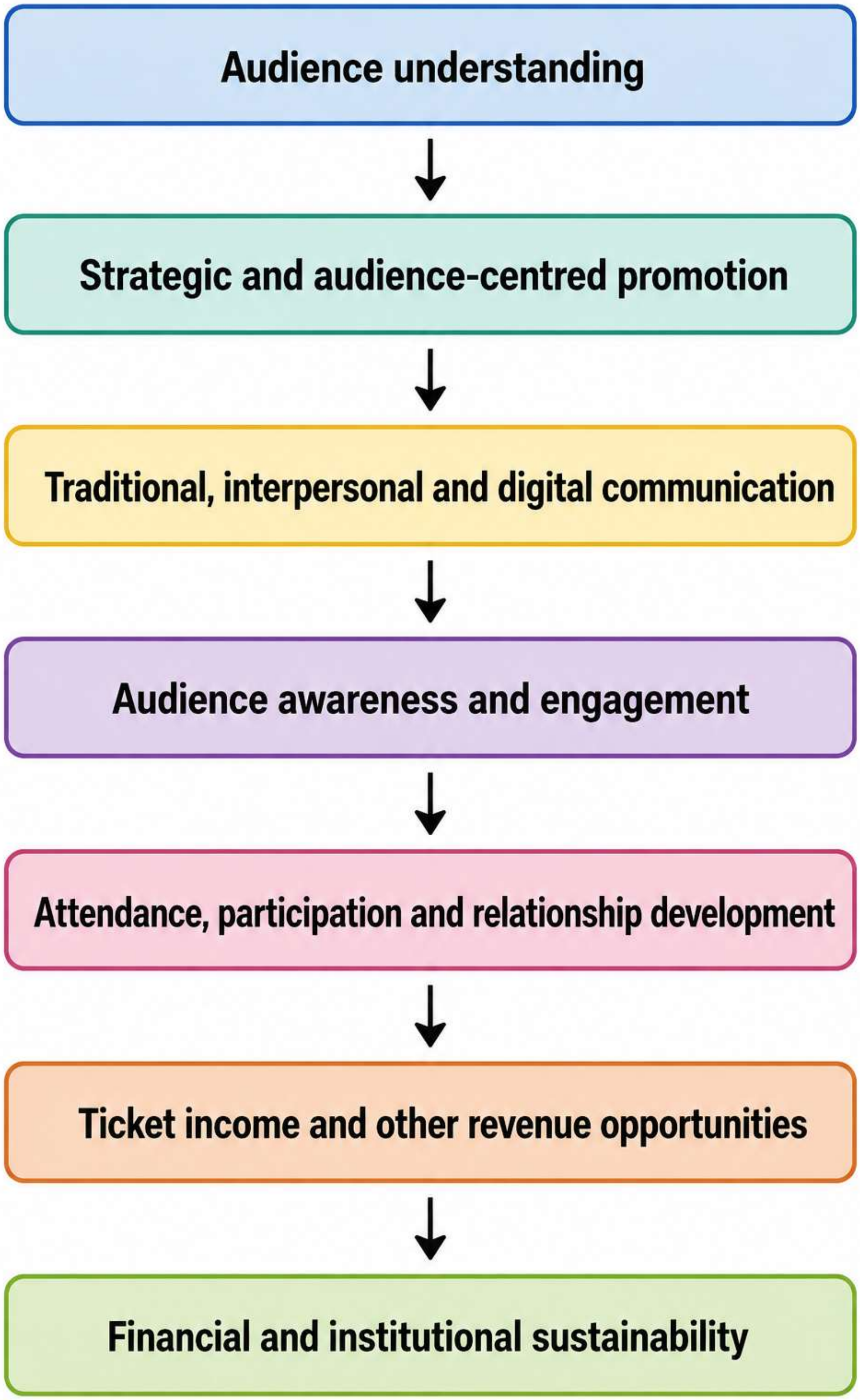

Figure 2: Theoretical Framework for Promotional Strategies and Revenue Generation in University Theatre

in theatre must therefore engage with this structural complexity, as well as with the distinctive financial challenges that arts organisations confront in securing and sustaining adequate resources. The foundational theoretical contribution to this area remains that of Baumol & Bowen (1966) in the study *Performing Arts: The Economic Dilemma* which introduced the concept of the 'cost disease' to describe the inherent productivity constraints facing live performance organisations. Baumol & Bowen (1966) demonstrated that, "because theatrical performance is an intrinsically labour-intensive activity resistant to the efficiency gains that characterise most industrial production, the costs of mounting live performances tend to rise at a rate that consistently outpaces revenue growth" (Baumol & Bowen (1966)). This structural 'income gap' renders revenue diversification not merely a matter of strategic prudence but an existential necessity for most theatre organisations.

Revenue streams in theatre may be broadly categorised into earned and unearned income. Earned income encompasses box-office receipts, merchandise sales, licensing and royalty fees, venue hire, and ancillary income derived from educational programmes, workshops, touring, and digital distribution. William Byrnes submits that, "unearned income comprises grants from government agencies and arts councils, corporate sponsorship, philanthropic donations, and endowment returns" (p. 178). Ticket pricing occupies a central position in earned revenue management and is among the most consequential strategic decisions facing theatre producers. Theatre organisations must navigate the tension between revenue maximisation and audience accessibility, setting prices at levels that generate adequate income whilst avoiding the exclusion of lower-income audience members. Dynamic pricing strategies adapted from the airline and hospitality industries and employed by a growing number of commercial theatre producers seek to optimise revenue by adjusting ticket prices in real time in response to patterns of demand and booking behaviour.

Corporate sponsorship has assumed increasing strategic importance as a revenue source, particularly in contexts where public arts funding is constrained or declining. Scheff & Kotler (1997) contend that, "arts organisations must develop compelling value propositions for corporate partners, articulating clearly how association with a theatre brand can enhance corporate reputation, employee engagement, and community goodwill" (Kotler,1997). In the Nigerian context, Yerima (2004) postulates that, "corporate investment in theatrical production has historically been limited, though there is mounting evidence of growing interest from telecommunications companies, financial institutions, and consumer goods corporations in leveraging the cultural prestige and audience reach of high-profile theatrical productions" (Yerima, 2004).

The strategic diversification of revenue streams has become a defining priority for theatre organisations globally, driven by the chronic financial volatility associated with dependence on box-office receipts and the uncertainty of grant funding cycles. Langley (1980) avers that, "educational and community engagement programmes including school performances, artist residencies and professional development workshops, represent a significant and frequently underdeveloped revenue opportunity, particularly for organisations with recognised artistic expertise and strong community affiliations" (Langley, 1980). Revenue diversification not only enhances financial resilience but also deepens the organisational mission by extending the theatre's cultural reach and social impact beyond its core production schedule.

Effective Promotion Strategies for Theatre Productions

Promotion strategies occupy a position of paramount importance in determining the success of theatrical productions, functioning as the primary mechanism through which producers and organisations communicate the value of their work to potential audiences and translate awareness and interest into attendance and sustained engagement. Even the most artistically accomplished production will only realise its full financial potential if it is effectively marketed. Effective promotion strategies perform multiple interrelated functions within the theatrical production context. They generate awareness by disseminating information about the existence, content, cast, and scheduling of a production. They create interest and desire by communicating the distinctive artistic, emotional, and social value of the theatrical experience in question.

In the context of Nigerian theatre, the strategic importance of systematic promotion has been consistently emphasised by scholars and practitioners alike. Adedeji (1981), writing about the Nigerian popular travelling theatre tradition, observed a clear correlation between promotional investment and audience mobilisation, noting that, "troupes which devoted resources to community-based promotional activities consistently achieved larger and more engaged audiences than those which relied exclusively on informal networks and spontaneous attendance" (Adedeji (1981)). Whilst the informal promotional strategies characteristic digital theatre adapted to their particular historical and social context, contemporary Nigerian theatre practitioners operate in a substantially more competitive entertainment environment, in which structured, strategic promotion has become increasingly indispensable to both artistic and financial success. According to Mbede (2026), "the theatre director needs to explore digital tools to conveniently foist creative images, videos, animations and soundscape to improve on the aesthetics of the live theatre productions" (Mbede, 2026). The transformative impact such an engaging theatre demands for the use of digital technology for theatre promotion.

Social media strategy is among the most significant developments of the early twenty-first century. Platforms including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube afford theatre organisations unprecedented opportunities to engage directly and authentically with audiences, share behind-the-scenes content, and generate viral interest in productions at comparatively modest cost. This carries particular resonance for Nigerian theatre organisations, which can exploit the country's large and rapidly expanding social media user base to extend their reach well beyond the boundaries of conventional theatre-going demographics. Mbede et al. (2024), notes that, "This strategy was used in tracking engagement metrics to understand audience preference to attend the production in person or online" (Mbede et al., 2024). This shows that promotion strategies also perform a critical interpretive function by shaping audience expectations and constructing the cognitive and affective framework through which audience's approach and evaluate a production.

The Role of Social Media in Theatre Promotion of AKSU Season of Performances

The Akwa Ibom State University (AKSU) Season of Performances organised by the Department of Performing Arts, Obio Akpa Campus is located in Oruk Anam local government area of Akwa Ibom State Nigeria. In the recent editions of the annual theatre festival there has been significant increase in the use of digital promotional platforms for marketing and revenue generation, with the use of social media platform as a primary vehicle for pre-event, live-event, and post-event promotion. Social media performs several distinct functions in the promotion of AKSU Season of Performances, each of which merits separate consideration. The role of the media in promoting performances is really important. Social media helps people get the information they need and have fun at the same time. People who like theatre and students choose to use media to stay updated about AKSU Season of Performances because it gives them what they want. They get to know what is happening. Mbede et al. (2004) in the work *Exploring Social Media as an Apparatus for Audience Engineering in the Nigerian Theatre Milieu* avers that, "In the productions *Beyond my Scars, The gods are not to Blame* and *Diary of a Pastor's Wife*, dedicated social media platforms were used to create awareness and gain patronage for live theatre productions. Dedicated use of social media engagements with prospective audiences through Facebook posts were made and virtual updates, production information and invitations were posted at intervals by the cast and crew members of the production team. The presence of clusters of people in virtual social circles especially on Facebook, WhatsApp, X (formerly known as Twitter), TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat and YouTube made it easy for publicly posted information to reach the target audience" (Mbede et al. (2004). For this reason, the productions for the promotion of AKSU Season of Performances 2026 was adopted as a tool **for** creating awareness and selling tickets for increased box office returns**,** as theatre productions require substantial publicity because audience attendance determines both artistic success and financial sustainability. Social media enables organisers to disseminate information instantly to thousands of users regardless of geographical location. Through digital posters, countdown graphics, rehearsal photographs, promotional trailers, cast introductions, and event reminders, prospective audiences become informed about performance schedules, venues, themes, and ticket availability. This immediate dissemination of information significantly increases the visibility of theatre productions compared to conventional publicity methods.

Social media encourages student participation and peer promotion. Since AKSU Season of Performances is organised within an academic institution, students serve not only as performers but also as promoters. Participants frequently upload rehearsal photographs, performance videos, backstage activities, and festival experiences to their personal social media accounts. This peer-to-peer marketing expands promotional reach organically because audiences often trust recommendations from friends and colleagues more than official advertisements. Such user-generated content contributes significantly to audience awareness and attendance. Another critical role of social media is strengthening relationships with stakeholders. Theatre festivals involve collaboration among university management, lecturers, students, sponsors, alumni, media organisations, cultural agencies, and theatre professionals. Social media provides an avenue for publicly acknowledging sponsors, celebrating volunteers, recognising guest artists, and appreciating institutional support.

These online acknowledgements enhance organizational relationships and increase the likelihood of sustained sponsorship and partnerships for future editions of AKSU Season of Performances. Where promotion was once the exclusive responsibility of a designated publicity committee, participants described a shift in which every student performer, and indeed many lecturers, now function as informal brand ambassadors, sharing rehearsal clips, costume previews, and countdown posts on their personal accounts. Short-form video content, particularly Instagram and TikTok reels showing snippets of command performances such as the Year One class production of *Abori*, Year Two class staging of Aniebiet Mbede's *The Untold Story* or the Year Three class production of Ekaette Brian's *Heritage in Harmony,* was repeatedly cited as more persuasive than static flyers, corroborating arts-marketing literature which stresses that experiential previews reduce the perceived risk of attending an unfamiliar live event. Social media serves as an important tool for digital documentation and archival preservation. Jenkins, (2006) adds that, "historically, many university theatre productions disappeared after performances because of inadequate documentation" (Jenkins, 2006). Today, photographs, promotional posters, interviews, trailers, performance clips, and audience reactions remain permanently accessible through social media platforms. These digital archives become valuable resources for researchers, students, theatre historians, and future festival organisers seeking to study the evolution of AKSU Season of Performances or document the history of educational theatre in Nigeria. Social media also promotes professional networking and institutional visibility (Uford et al., 2022). Through consistent online presence, AKSU Season of Performances attracts attention from theatre practitioners, cultural institutions, academic researchers, media organisations, and potential collaborators. This increased visibility creates opportunities for invitations to theatre festivals, research collaborations, workshops, exchange programmes, sponsorship agreements, and professional mentorship for students studying Theatre Arts. Consequently, AKSU Season of Performances should continue investing in professional digital marketing strategies, creative multimedia production, and consistent online engagement to maximise the promotional potential of social media.

Impact of Social Media on Audience Awareness

Social media has fundamentally transformed the way audiences discover, engage with and respond to theatrical productions. Unlike conventional media, which relies on one-way communication, social media provides an interactive environment where information is created, shared and discussed among users in real time. For educational theatre festivals such as AKSU Season of Performances, social media has become an indispensable communication tool for increasing audience awareness, stimulating interest and encouraging attendance. Platforms including Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, TikTok, X (formerly Twitter) and YouTube have expanded the reach of theatre publicity beyond the physical boundaries of the university community, allowing productions to attract both internal and external audiences. Audience awareness refers to the extent to which potential theatre-goers are informed about forthcoming productions, including details such as performance dates, venues, ticket prices, cast members and the themes of productions. In contemporary theatre practice, awareness is increasingly created through digital communication, where audiences are continuously exposed to promotional messages through their preferred social networking platforms.

This rapid dissemination of information is particularly beneficial because most target audiences are students who actively utilise digital communication platforms daily. Promotional flyers uploaded to Instagram or WhatsApp can circulate throughout departmental groups, faculty associations and student organisations within minutes. Consequently, awareness of theatre productions increases significantly without the substantial financial costs associated with conventional advertising. According to an interview with Precious Koffi as a theatre manager, in previous years we depended mainly on posters and announcements around campus. Now, almost everyone hears about our productions first through WhatsApp status updates, Instagram posts or Facebook promotions. Similarly, Favour Okon as a student audience member commented, "I rarely notice posters anymore. Most of the performances I attend are because I saw the flyer on Instagram or someone shared it on WhatsApp.

The responses indicate that digital communication channels have become the first point of contact between theatre producers and potential audiences. Participants observed that social media enables information to spread rapidly among students and members of the university community, creating widespread awareness before production dates. Hudson and Hudson observe that social networking platforms have transformed arts marketing by enabling organisations to engage audiences continuously before, during and after performances. Instead of relying on a single promotional announcement, theatre marketers now create sustained communication campaigns that maintain audience interest over extended periods. This continuous exposure increases audience familiarity with productions and strengthens the likelihood of attendance. The entertainment dimension of the Marketing Mix Theory is equally evident. Promotional videos, actor interviews, rehearsal footage and behind-the-scenes photographs provide enjoyable content even before the actual performance occurs. These materials generate excitement and emotional involvement, encouraging audiences to attend productions in order to experience the complete theatrical event. The theory also explains the importance of social interaction in theatre promotion. Users frequently share promotional posts, comment on announcements, tag friends and discuss performances across digital platforms.

These activities satisfy interpersonal communication needs while simultaneously increasing audience awareness through electronic word-of-mouth. Social media has substantially transformed audience awareness within contemporary educational theatre. Its ability to disseminate information rapidly, extend audience reach, encourage electronic word-of-mouth communication, facilitate interactive engagement and deliver visually compelling promotional content has made it an essential component of theatre marketing strategies. For AKSU Season of Performances and similar educational theatre festivals, strategic utilisation of social media offers significant opportunities for expanding audience participation, strengthening institutional visibility and ensuring the continued relevance of live theatre in the digital age.

Marketing and Publicity in Theatre Productions

Marketing and publicity have, in recent decades, moved from the periphery of theatrical production to the centre of institutional strategy. They are no longer adequately theorised as mechanisms for announcing performances; rather, the literature converges on the view that they constitute the primary means through which theatrical organisations communicate artistic value, construct institutional identity, cultivate audiences and secure economic viability. This reconceptualisation matters because theatre is not reducible to a single mode of value production — it is simultaneously an artistic, cultural and economic practice, and any account of its marketing must hold these dimensions in tension rather than collapse them into one another. Accordingly, this review evaluates the effectiveness of theatre marketing in relation to four interlocking concerns: audience development, institutional reputation, financial sustainability, and the rapidly changing technological environment in which theatrical products are now produced, promoted and consumed.

From Transaction to Experience: Reframing the Marketing Object

A productive point of departure is the analytic distinction between marketing as a broad managerial process and publicity as a narrower communicative function nested within it. Marketing, in this framing, concerns the development and positioning of the theatrical product, the determination of its value, the identification and pursuit of target audiences, and the cultivation of durable consumer relationships; publicity, by contrast, is concerned more specifically with the generation of awareness and public attention. McDowell (2022) intervenes decisively at this conceptual level, challenging transactional models of theatre marketing and arguing for a shift towards an experiential paradigm that foregrounds the relationship between theatre and its audiences rather than the exchange of a ticket for admission. This argument carries theoretical weight precisely because theatrical consumption resists assimilation to the logic of ordinary commodity exchange: the audience member does not simply acquire an object but participates in a co-present artistic and social event. It follows that theatre marketing cannot restrict itself to communicating the availability of a performance; it must also articulate the experiential and cultural value the audience stands to gain by attending — a task closer to narrative and affective communication than to conventional retail promotion.

Communication, Awareness and the Economics of Attention

This experiential reframing is reinforced, at the level of empirical demonstration, by evidence on the role of communication in audience development. Amo-Mensah and Hammond (2026), through their analysis of *Unhappy Wives Confused Husbands* and *You Play Me I Play U* in the Ghanaian context, show that promotional communication — deployed through both offline and online channels functions as a fundamental determinant of audience attraction, generating awareness, connecting productions with latent audiences, and contributing measurably to attendance. Their contribution is significant not merely for confirming the obvious claim that promotion aids attendance, but for extending the theorised function of theatre promotion beyond information dissemination into the domains of brand visibility, institutional reputation and return on investment. Publicity, on this account, has both communicative and economic consequences: a production of considerable artistic merit that remains unknown to its potential public cannot convert that merit into either attendance or revenue. Artistic quality, in other words, is a necessary but insufficient condition for audience engagement; visibility is the mechanism by which quality is allowed to matter economically.

Iseyen (2026) develops this relationship between communication and audience engagement along a different axis, offering a conceptualisation of Nigerian theatre publicity that emphasises its capacity to generate continuing, rather than merely episodic, forms of audience and cultural engagement. Through the metaphor of seismology, Iseyen theorises publicity as an activity that both precedes performance shaping expectation and follows it, contributing to memory, discourse and cultural continuity. This is a conceptually important move because it unsettles the conventional temporal boundary that confines publicity to the pre-performance period. If publicity is implicated in the formation of expectation before the event and in the sedimentation of cultural memory after it, its value cannot be assessed solely by reference to immediate ticket conversion. Publicity, so understood, is not a discrete promotional episode but a constitutive part of a broader cultural communication system through which performances acquire visibility, meaning and enduring public relevance.

Competitive Pressures and the Limits of Promotion Alone

The stakes of effective publicity are heightened by the competitive conditions under which contemporary theatre organisations operate. Pisali et al. (2025) identify a cluster of interlocking challenges confronting performing arts marketing: competition among theatre organisations, financial constraints, weak financial management, and the growing dominance of digital entertainment as an alternative claim on audience attention and leisure spending. Their findings carry an important implication for how the problem of theatre marketing should be framed: organisations cannot rely on conventional promotional methods alone to remain competitive but require integrated strategies encompassing digital technology adoption, brand identity development, stakeholder collaboration, financial planning and revenue diversification. This reframes the central problem. The difficulty facing theatre marketing is not simply an insufficiency of publicity but a misalignment between promotional activity and the broader organisational capabilities required to sustain it. Publicity may successfully generate audience interest, yet organisational weaknesses in financial management, production planning, or audience service can constrain the extent to which that interest is converted into durable institutional outcomes. Promotion, in short, is a necessary condition for audience development but cannot substitute for organisational competence.

Digital Transformation and Its Ambivalences

The communicative environment within which theatre marketing operates has been substantially reconfigured by digital technologies. Joseph (2026), examining performing arts departments within Nigerian universities, identifies streaming services, electronic ticketing and social media marketing as significant vectors of digital innovation capable of strengthening the competitive position of university theatre. The importance of this argument lies not simply in the fact of technological adoption but in its implications for practitioner competency: digital platforms are increasingly constitutive of the infrastructure through which theatre is marketed, distributed and experienced, rather than being merely supplementary to it. It follows that theatre education must itself respond to the digital transformation of the creative economy, cultivating practitioners who combine artistic competence with contemporary marketing and technological capability a pedagogical implication that extends well beyond the immediate question of promotional technique.

Thevananth (2026) offers empirical substantiation of this digital transition through the case of Nallur Drama Nights, demonstrating that platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp and YouTube can increase visibility, deepen audience engagement, and support the economic sustainability of community theatre. This study is of particular interpretive value because it illustrates the convergence of communicative and economic objectives within a single technological infrastructure: social media functions simultaneously as a publicity mechanism, an audience engagement platform, and a potential contributor to financial sustainability. Yet Thevananth (2026) is careful to identify a countervailing finding — inconsistent audience engagement which cautions against any straightforward equation of digital presence with effective digital marketing. Platform adoption is not self-executing; the value generated by social media is contingent on the quality, consistency and strategic orientation of the communication it carries.

Johnson (2026) arrives at a structurally similar conclusion when tracing the historical development of entertainment publicity, from traditional press-agentry practices to contemporary approaches incorporating social media, influencer engagement and artificial intelligence. This trajectory indicates that publicity is becoming progressively more technologically sophisticated and data-oriented, yet Johnson (2026) simultaneously identifies writing ability, narrative intuition, emotional intelligence and technological literacy as the core competencies required of contemporary publicists. Applied to theatre, this suggests that effective publicity demands considerably more than technical access to digital platforms; it requires the capacity to construct compelling narratives around productions and to communicate those narratives persuasively across heterogeneous audience segments. The technological and the narrative dimensions of publicity are therefore not competing paradigms but complementary competencies.

Integration Rather than Substitution

The expansion of digital marketing should not, however, be read as evidence of the obsolescence of traditional publicity. Amo-Mensah and Hammond (2026) demonstrate explicitly the continued relevance of combining offline and online promotional approaches, a finding with an important critical implication: digital media should not be conceived as replacing traditional publicity but as one component within a channel mix that must be calibrated to audience characteristics and strategic objectives. This is particularly consequential in contexts marked by uneven access to digital technologies across socioeconomic groups. A promotional strategy that is technologically sophisticated but exclusionary risks a paradoxical outcome the narrowing rather than the expansion of theatre's accessibility precisely because it privileges channels unavailable to segments of the potential audience.

The Marketing Mix Reconsidered for Theatre

The relationship between marketing activity and the theatrical product itself can be productively examined through the Marketing Mix framework. The traditional 4Ps Product, Price, Place and Promotion offer a foundational vocabulary for analysing how organisations position and communicate their offerings, while the expanded 7Ps framework adds People, Process and Physical Evidence, categories of particular relevance to a service- and experience-based industry such as theatre. Applied critically, the theatrical *Product* cannot be reduced to the dramatic script or the performance considered in isolation; it encompasses the total audience experience, including acting, directing, stagecraft, costume, sound, lighting and the other constitutive elements of production. This is consistent with McDowell's (2022) experiential reframing and suggests that marketing is fundamentally constrained by the quality and distinctiveness of the underlying

product: publicity can generate expectation, but it cannot indefinitely compensate for an unsatisfactory audience experience. Price introduces a persistent tension between accessibility and commercial sustainability, requiring organisations to calibrate the financial cost of attendance against both the perceived value of the performance and the purchasing capacity of target audiences. The literature synthesised here does not furnish sufficient evidence to establish a universal optimal pricing model for Nigerian university theatre specifically, but the broader marketing literature indicates that pricing decisions must remain responsive to audience circumstances. In educational theatre contexts, this issue is especially salient, since cultural and educational access may be valued alongside and occasionally in tension with financial return, positioning price not merely as a revenue instrument but as an element of audience-development strategy. Place has likewise been transformed by the expansion of digital channels through which audiences encounter theatrical products, as demonstrated by both Joseph (2026) and Thevananth (2026). Digital channels do not, however, displace the physical venue, since live theatre remains fundamentally dependent on embodied performer audience interaction; rather, digital communication extends the theatre's presence beyond the physical venue, enabling potential audiences to discover productions, interact with theatre organisations, and circulate promotional content both before and after performances.
Promotion constitutes the most direct connection between marketing and publicity, yet the literature consistently indicates that it is most effective when integrated with the other elements of the mix rather than treated as an autonomous activity. Amo-Mensah and Hammond (2026) demonstrate that promotional communication enhances visibility and attendance; Iseyen (2026) emphasises its capacity to shape both expectation and cultural memory. Taken together, these contributions imply that promotion should be understood as a process of constructing meaning around the theatrical product rather than merely announcing dates, venues and prices — successful theatre publicity communicates why a production matters, for whom it is intended, and what distinctive experience it offers.

The expanded 7Ps direct further attention to *People*, *Process* and *Physical Evidence*. People are central to an intensely human mode of production and consumption: actors, directors, marketers, production personnel, volunteers and front-of-house staff collectively shape the audience's experience of the organisation as a whole. Process concerns the procedural infrastructure through which productions are promoted and delivered, including ticketing, communication, scheduling and event management. Physical Evidence encompasses the tangible and visual indicators through which audiences evaluate an organisation posters, programmes, banners, tickets, stage design, costumes, theatre facilities and digital promotional materials elements whose significance is amplified in an industry where perceptions of professionalism substantially shape audience confidence.

Synthesis: Beyond the Volume of Publicity

Taken together, the literature indicates that the effectiveness of theatre marketing cannot be reduced to the volume or frequency of publicity activity. Marketing outcomes emerge instead from the interaction between communication and the broader quality of the organisational and theatrical experience: a promotional campaign may successfully attract attention, but the conversion of attention into attendance, and of attendance into sustained audience relationships, depends on the value delivered by the production and the quality of the audience experience as a whole. This is precisely why Pisali et al. (2025) advocate an integrated approach combining modern marketing practice with stronger financial management, brand development and stakeholder collaboration, rather than treating publicity as a self-sufficient remedy for audience-development challenges.

The wider creative industries furnish additional corroborating evidence for the interaction between cultural products, markets and institutional structures. Qureshi (2026), examining festival marketing, advertising, promotion, exhibition and audience reception in filmmaking, illustrates how creative works must traverse multiple stages of visibility and audience encounter before achieving broader cultural impact. Although the production context of film differs from that of live theatre, the underlying principle transfers: creative products require effective pathways through which audiences can discover, interpret and access them. Wu (2026) reinforces this point by demonstrating that creative industries exist within complex relationships among market development, cultural identity and regulatory structures. Both contributions support the broader argument that theatre marketing should be situated within a wider cultural and institutional environment rather than treated as an isolated promotional activity detached from the structural conditions of the sector.

A critical synthesis of the reviewed literature therefore reveals a discernible movement from promotional publicity towards integrated, audience-centred marketing. Earlier conceptions that implicitly positioned publicity as a vehicle for informing audiences appear increasingly inadequate within an environment in which audiences expect interaction, experience, accessibility and continuous communication. McDowell (2022) foregrounds the experiential dimension of theatre marketing; Amo-Mensah and Hammond (2026) demonstrate the communicative and economic significance of promotion; Joseph (2026) and Thevananth (2026) highlight the imperatives of digital transformation; Johnson (2026) traces the increasing technological sophistication of publicity practice; and Iseyen (2026) extends the theorisation of publicity into the domains of cultural memory and continuing engagement. Read together, these contributions indicate that theatre marketing is becoming increasingly relational, experiential, and digital and strategically integrated a trajectory that has significant, and as yet under examined, implications for university-based theatre in Nigeria.

Limitations of the Existing Literature and the Resulting Gap

Notwithstanding its considerable conceptual value, the reviewed literature exhibits important limitations that bear directly on its applicability to the present context. A substantial proportion of the evidence concerns professional theatre associations, community theatre, entertainment publicity, filmmaking, or performing arts institutions located outside Nigeria. Even where Nigerian contexts are examined, as in Joseph (2026) and Iseyen (2026), the analytic emphasis falls principally on digital innovation or on the conceptual and cultural dimensions of publicity rather than on the institutional realities of a specific theatre sector. Pisali et al. (2025) focus on theatre associations in Malaysia, while Amo-Mensah and Hammond (2026) examine Ghanaian theatre. This geographical and institutional diversity is analytically valuable it demonstrates the transferability of certain conceptual insights across contexts but it also means that the findings cannot be generalised without qualification to university-based theatre production in Nigeria specifically. This limitation identifies a precise gap in the literature: comparatively little scholarly attention has been directed towards how marketing and publicity operate within the institutional realities of Nigerian university theatre. Existing scholarship establishes, with reasonable consistency, the importance of audience communication, digital innovation, experiential marketing, branding and integrated promotional strategy; considerably less attention, however, has been given to how these dimensions interact within the bounded, resource-constrained context of a defined university theatre season, in which institutional mandate, pedagogical objectives and commercial viability must be reconciled simultaneously. The unresolved question is therefore not whether theatre requires marketing and publicity the literature settles that question unambiguously but how different marketing and publicity strategies can be integrated within educational theatre to achieve audience development, institutional visibility and sustainable performance outcomes under conditions of significant resource constraint.

Revenue Generation and Financial Sustainability in Contemporary Theatre

Revenue generation is a central determinant of the sustainability, organisational resilience and continuity of theatre production. The economic viability of theatrical organisations is particularly important because productions require substantial expenditure on costumes, set and stage design, lighting, sound equipment, publicity, venue maintenance, transportation, technical operations and remuneration for artistic and production personnel. In contemporary theatre, therefore, financial sustainability cannot be understood solely in terms of immediate profit; rather, it encompasses the capacity of theatre organisations to secure, diversify and manage financial resources while maintaining artistic quality, audience accessibility and institutional continuity. This perspective is increasingly relevant in an environment characterised by changing audience behaviour, technological transformation, competition from digital entertainment and uncertainty in traditional sources of cultural funding.

The literature indicates that sustainable theatre financing depends increasingly on the diversification of revenue streams rather than reliance on a single income source. In educational and community-based theatre, this requirement is particularly significant because the social, cultural and pedagogical objectives of performance may constrain the extent to which ticket prices can be increased. Consequently, theatre managers must balance economic objectives with accessibility, artistic integrity and audience development. Pisali et al. (2025), in their study of theatre associations in Malaysia, identify financial constraints, weak financial management, intense competition and the growing dominance of digital entertainment as major challenges to performing arts sustainability. Their findings suggest that theatre organisations require more systematic financial planning, stronger auditing practices, realistic budgeting, digital marketing and revenue diversification to remain resilient. This argument is consistent with Ormieres (2026), whose comparative analysis of dance institutions demonstrates that institutional resilience is influenced substantially by the structure and diversification of revenue rather than simply by the absolute amount of resources available.

Ticket sales remain one of the most direct and traditional mechanisms through which theatre organisations generate earned income. Revenue from ticketing is influenced by production popularity, ticket pricing, venue capacity, promotional effectiveness, timing, audience characteristics and perceived performance value. Castiglione and Infante (2025), in their long-run analysis of theatre demand and supply across Italian regions, demonstrate that theatre demand is associated with factors including ticket price, consumer income, tourism and urban agglomeration, while theatre supply is influenced by ticket prices, previous attendance, income and public subsidies. Their findings further demonstrate substantial regional variation, suggesting that theatre pricing and revenue strategies cannot be developed independently of the socioeconomic and geographical characteristics of target audiences. This has particular implications for educational theatre, where affordability may be deliberately prioritised to encourage student and community participation. Affordable ticketing may reduce the immediate financial return per attendee but can contribute to audience expansion and long-term market development. A strategic approach may therefore involve differentiated pricing structures, including student concessions, group bookings, early-bird offers, premium seating and other audience-specific packages. Such approaches allow theatre organisations to balance accessibility with revenue objectives by recognising differences in audience purchasing capacity and willingness to pay. The issue is particularly important within university theatre, where the primary objective may include education, cultural development and community engagement rather than commercial maximisation. Revenue generation should consequently be assessed not only through gross ticket income but also through its contribution to audience development, institutional visibility and the capacity to finance subsequent productions.

Beyond ticketing, sponsorship and institutional funding constitute important components of the theatre revenue architecture. Paoletti (2025), examining theatre funding in Italy during and after the COVID-19 period, demonstrates the importance of public authorities, banking foundations and other institutional stakeholders in supporting theatre enterprises. The study, based on extensive funding records, highlights the interconnectedness of public and private financial support within the performing arts ecosystem. Similarly, Ormieres (2026) demonstrates that different funding structures produce different forms of institutional resilience. Publicly supported organisations may benefit from a relatively stable structural revenue base, whereas philanthropy-dependent organisations may enjoy greater managerial autonomy but face greater vulnerability when earned income declines. These findings indicate that sustainable theatre management requires a carefully structured combination of earned income, public support, private sponsorship and other forms of external financing.

The Nigerian creative industry provides further evidence that cultural production can operate through diversified business models. Adeosun and Maiyaki (2026) explain that Nigeria's film industry has developed from relatively low-budget production models into a major cultural and economic sector with significant implications for employment, national identity and economic development. Their analysis highlights the importance of digital technologies, international collaboration, improved distribution systems and regulatory support while identifying piracy as a continuing threat to industry sustainability. Although film and live theatre differ in their production and distribution structures, the Nigerian film experience demonstrates the potential of creative enterprises to combine cultural value with commercial strategies. This provides a useful comparative basis for examining how theatre organisations can exploit emerging technologies, audience networks and alternative commercial partnerships to strengthen their revenue base.

Digital technology has become particularly significant in the contemporary revenue environment because it affects both audience development and the commercial visibility of theatrical productions. Thevananth (2026), examining the Nallur Drama Nights initiative in Northern Sri Lanka, reports that Facebook, WhatsApp and YouTube were used to increase visibility, audience engagement and attendance while contributing to the financial sustainability of community theatre. The study demonstrates that targeted social media communication can extend theatre promotion beyond conventional publicity channels and facilitate direct interaction between theatre organisations and audiences. However, the findings also indicate that inconsistent audience engagement can limit the effectiveness of digital strategies. Consequently, digital promotion should not be treated merely as publicity but as a strategically managed component of audience development, relationship building and revenue generation.

The relationship between theatrical experience and consumer engagement has also become increasingly important in contemporary marketing. Yu and Li (2026) propose a dramaturgical framework in which spatial immersion, narrative co-creation, sensorial atmosphere and participatory agency interact with psychological mechanisms such as presence, flow, empathic engagement and meaning-making. Although their framework is developed within interactive marketing rather than university theatre specifically, it provides a useful conceptual explanation of why audience experience can influence engagement and potentially strengthen loyalty and value co-creation. For theatre organisations, this suggests that revenue generation is not simply a function of selling access to a performance; it may also depend on the ability to create distinctive experiences that encourage repeat attendance, positive word-of-mouth communication, audience attachment and broader participation.

The economic sustainability of theatre is also closely connected to the efficient management of production resources. Martin (2026) highlights the financial and environmental costs associated with fragmented theatre prop inventories and proposes a digital framework for sharing theatre assets across organisations. The study illustrates how collaborative resource management can reduce unnecessary expenditure and promote more sustainable production practices. This perspective is important because revenue sustainability is determined not only by the capacity to generate income but also by the ability to control production costs. For theatre organisations operating under financial constraints, improved resource sharing, inventory management, asset reuse and collaborative production arrangements may increase the proportion of generated revenue available for artistic development and institutional growth. Theatre's economic role must nevertheless be considered alongside its cultural and social functions. Ndigwe and Adisa (2026), examining Terra Kulture in Nigeria's creative industry, demonstrate how cultural resources can be transformed into multiple business activities, including theatre, film production, events, galleries and hospitality. Their case illustrates the potential for cultural organisations to develop diversified revenue ecosystems around artistic and cultural assets. Such diversification can create employment, develop talent and contribute to wider economic activity. The implication for theatre management is that revenue generation can extend beyond conventional ticketing to include events, partnerships, merchandising, hospitality, educational programmes and other complementary activities that leverage existing cultural and institutional resources.

The cultural and political dimensions of theatre further complicate the relationship between artistic production and financial sustainability. Ameen and Ahmed (2026), in their historical analysis of Kurdish theatre, show that theatre functions not merely as an entertainment product but also as an instrument of cultural identity, political expression and social representation. Likewise, van der Hoven (2025), through discussion of opera production in the African diaspora, draws attention to the production conditions confronting African composers and opera practitioners operating across different institutional and geographical contexts. These perspectives reinforce the need to conceptualise theatre financing within a broader cultural ecosystem in which economic considerations interact with artistic autonomy, cultural identity, institutional conditions and social responsibility.

Audience development is another important dimension of sustainable theatre revenue. Financial strategies that focus exclusively on short-term ticket income may overlook the longer-term value of audience relationships. The findings of Castiglione and Infante (2025) indicate that theatre demand is shaped by socioeconomic, geographical and cultural conditions, while Thevananth (2026) demonstrates the potential of digital communication to increase audience engagement and attendance. Yu and Li (2026) further emphasise the role of immersive and participatory experiences in strengthening consumer engagement. Collectively, these studies suggest that effective theatre revenue generation requires an integrated approach in which pricing, promotion, audience experience, relationship management and institutional reputation operate together rather than as isolated activities. At the same time, sustainability must incorporate ethical considerations concerning audience welfare. Nukpezah et al. (2026) draw attention to the risks associated with theatrical practices that prioritise dramatic effect without adequately considering the psychological, emotional and physical wellbeing of audiences and performers. Their argument for ethical dramaturgy demonstrates that audience development cannot be reduced to increasing attendance or revenue. Sustainable theatre must preserve audience trust and safety while maintaining artistic and commercial objectives. This is particularly relevant to educational theatre, where audiences may include students, children and community members with different levels of vulnerability. Overall, the literature suggests a transition from conventional theatre financing models towards more diversified, audience-centred and strategically managed revenue systems. Ticket sales remain important, but they are increasingly complemented by sponsorship, public and private funding, digital promotion, merchandising, partnerships, resource-sharing mechanisms and complementary cultural enterprises (Adeosun & Maiyaki, 2026; Martin, 2026; Ndigwe & Adisa, 2026; Paoletti, 2025; Pisali et al., 2025; Thevananth, 2026). At the same time, sustainable revenue generation requires attention to audience demand, experiential value, institutional resilience, resource efficiency and ethical responsibility (Castiglione & Infante, 2025; Nukpezah et al., 2026; Ormieres, 2026; Yu & Li, 2026). However, an important empirical gap remains. Much of the existing literature focuses on professional theatre, national creative industries, dance institutions, community theatre or international performing arts organisations, with relatively limited empirical attention to revenue-generation strategies within university-based theatre productions in Nigeria. Existing Nigerian-oriented studies, such as those concerning Nollywood and Terra Kulture, demonstrate the economic potential of the broader creative sector (Adeosun & Maiyaki, 2026; Ndigwe & Adisa, 2026), but they do not adequately explain how university theatre productions combine promotion, ticketing, sponsorship, audience engagement and complementary income-generating activities within a specific performance season. This gap provides a strong justification for examining the revenue-generation strategies adopted during the AKSU Pinnacle Theatre 2026 Season of Performances. Such an investigation can contribute context-specific evidence to the literature on performing arts management by demonstrating how educational theatre can balance affordability, audience development, artistic objectives and financial sustainability within the Nigerian university environment.

Challenges of Promotion and Revenue Generation in Educational Theatre

Educational theatre occupies an important position within higher education because it simultaneously serves pedagogical, cultural, artistic and community-oriented purposes. Unlike purely commercial theatre, where financial returns are often the dominant objective, educational theatre combines artistic production with student training, experiential learning, cultural preservation, creativity and community engagement. The production of theatrical performances in universities therefore provides students with opportunities to develop practical competencies in acting, directing, stage management, technical theatre, production management, marketing and audience development.

However, the educational and cultural value of theatre does not eliminate the financial and managerial challenges associated with staging productions. Contemporary theatre organisations increasingly operate within environments characterised by limited institutional funding, competition for audiences, changing patterns of media consumption, inadequate marketing resources and the need to generate sufficient income to sustain production activities.

The financial sustainability of theatre is particularly challenging because theatrical productions require substantial expenditure on venue preparation, stage construction, costumes, props, lighting, sound, publicity, transportation, personnel and other technical and logistical requirements. In educational institutions, these costs may be difficult to recover where ticket sales are low or where productions depend heavily on institutional subventions. Similar challenges have been identified within the wider performing arts sector. Pisali et al. (2025), for example, found that theatre associations experience financial constraints, intense competition, weak financial management practices, market uncertainty and increasing competition from digital entertainment. These challenges demonstrate that successful theatre production requires not only artistic competence but also strategic marketing, financial planning, audience development and diversification of income sources.

The problem is also evident in the broader African theatre environment. Steedman et al. (2025) observed that theatre practitioners in Ghana operate within a difficult environment characterised by limited state support, restricted access to formal funding and theatre venues, and precarious labour conditions. Theatre practitioners consequently rely on multiple forms of income, labour arrangements, informal financing and diverse economic activities to sustain their creative work. This finding is relevant to educational theatre because institutions may similarly need to combine ticket revenue, sponsorship, institutional support, partnerships, merchandising and other income-generating mechanisms rather than depend exclusively on ticket sales. Buttan (2026) likewise identifies poor market connections and funding delays as important barriers to the development of community theatre, while proposing stronger institutional partnerships, grants, digitalisation and integration with cultural and tourism initiatives as possible strategies for improving the economic sustainability of theatre.

Within this context, the Marketing Mix Theory provides a useful framework for examining the challenges of promotion and revenue generation in educational theatre. The theory emphasises the coordinated management of marketing variables, including product, price, place, promotion, people, process and physical evidence. In theatre, the performance itself constitutes the central product, while ticket pricing, venue accessibility, promotional communication, personnel, production processes and the physical environment collectively influence audience perceptions and purchasing decisions. Consequently, weaknesses in any of these dimensions can reduce audience attraction, satisfaction and willingness to pay. Effective theatre marketing therefore requires an integrated approach in which the artistic quality of a production is supported by appropriate pricing, effective communication, accessible venues, competent personnel, efficient processes and an attractive performance environment. Promotion has become especially important because contemporary audiences increasingly encounter cultural products through digital platforms. The traditional reliance on posters, handbills, banners, public announcements and word-of-mouth communication is now complemented by Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, YouTube and other digital channels. The use of social media enables theatre organisations to communicate with potential audiences quickly, repeatedly and at relatively low cost. Thevananth (2026), in a case study of Nallur Drama Nights in Northern Sri Lanka, demonstrated that Facebook, WhatsApp and YouTube could be used to improve theatre visibility, audience attendance and financial sustainability. The study further indicated that targeted digital strategies, dynamic promotional content and community-based communication can strengthen audience engagement, although inconsistent audience interaction remains a challenge requiring strategic planning.

The relevance of digital communication is also evident in the changing media consumption behaviour of younger audiences. Samadi and Lashkjani (2026) argue that Generation Z, having grown up within highly digital and interactive media environments, tends to favour instant, interactive and multi-platform forms of content. Their study identifies time, location, cost and perceived disconnection between theatrical content and contemporary audience interests as important barriers to theatre participation. At the same time, the authors emphasise that the live theatre experience retains important advantages, particularly immediacy, direct interaction and deeper engagement with subject matter. For educational theatre, this suggests that digital platforms should not necessarily replace live performances; rather, they should be strategically employed to create awareness, build anticipation, maintain audience relationships and direct audiences towards physical theatre experiences.

The findings from the AKSU Pinnacle Theatre further demonstrate the importance of integrating digital and conventional promotional methods. The use of Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram and YouTube alongside posters, handbills, banners, public announcements and word-of-mouth communication creates multiple points of contact between productions and prospective audiences. Such an integrated strategy is particularly useful within a university environment because it can reach students, academic and non-academic staff, alumni and members of the surrounding community through different communication channels. The effectiveness of this approach is not determined solely by the number of platforms used but also by the quality, consistency and relevance of the promotional message. Amo-Mensah and Hammond (2026) similarly emphasise the central role of communication in attracting audiences to theatre productions in Ghana. Their analysis of productions by Roverman Productions and Africa Arts Network demonstrates that both offline and online promotional strategies can create awareness, stimulate audience interest, strengthen visibility and contribute to increased attendance and return on investment.

The importance of promotional content and audience engagement is further supported by Mbede (2026), who observes that although traditional promotional techniques continue to produce results, contemporary film promotion increasingly relies on social media to generate interest, capture audience attention and engage wider audiences. This observation is applicable to theatre because audiences are increasingly exposed to entertainment choices through digital communication networks. The implication is that theatre promoters must move beyond merely announcing the date, venue and title of a production. Promotional communication should provide compelling content that creates curiosity, communicates the value of the performance and encourages potential audiences to share information within their social networks.

However, effective promotion should not be understood exclusively as the use of digital media. Audience development requires the strategic combination of communication channels and relationship-building activities. Campus mobilisation, personal selling, public relations, direct communication, partnerships, word-of-mouth promotion and community engagement can complement social media campaigns. The strength of an integrated approach lies in its capacity to reach different audience segments through channels that correspond with their communication habits. This is particularly important for educational theatre because the potential audience is heterogeneous and may include students, staff, alumni, families, cultural enthusiasts and members of the surrounding community.

The sustainability of theatre also depends on the ability of theatre managers to establish meaningful relationships with communities and stakeholders. Pension and Fristoe (2026), examining the Arts-Based Community Engagement model in practice, found that an operational model centred on programmes addressing social issues in collaboration with community partners contributed to greater financial stability. This finding indicates that community engagement can have both social and economic value. Similarly, Dan-Ogosi et al. (2025) demonstrate that participatory approaches to theatre production can promote self-expression, belonging, positive relationships and community agency. Although their study focuses on health and community development rather than theatre revenue, its findings highlight the broader capacity of participatory theatre to create strong connections between productions and their communities. For educational theatre, such connections may strengthen audience loyalty, institutional support and opportunities for partnerships and sponsorship. Another important challenge is the need to balance artistic and educational objectives with commercial and entrepreneurial considerations. Theatre productions within higher education are not simply commercial entertainment products; they are also spaces for student learning, artistic experimentation and cultural expression. Nevertheless, the financial realities of production require theatre managers to develop entrepreneurial competencies. Guo (2025) highlights the growing importance of arts entrepreneurship education in higher education and argues for approaches that balance artistic integrity with entrepreneurial success. This perspective is highly relevant to educational theatre because theatre students and practitioners require not only creative skills but also competencies in marketing, financial management, audience development, networking, innovation and sustainable enterprise.

The need for entrepreneurial and managerial capacity becomes even more important in an environment where theatre organisations face increasing competition from alternative entertainment platforms. Pisali et al. (2025) note that dominant digital entertainment constitutes a major competitive challenge for theatre organisations. The problem is not simply that audiences have more entertainment options; digital platforms also offer convenience, affordability, accessibility and personalised consumption. Consequently, theatre organisations must articulate the distinctive value of live performance while using digital communication to strengthen audience relationships. Samadi and Lashkjani (2026) similarly argue that theatre can maintain relevance among Generation Z by adopting new digital technologies, hybrid approaches and innovative audience-engagement strategies while preserving the unique qualities of live performance.

Sustainability should therefore be approached as a multidimensional issue rather than merely a question of generating immediate ticket income. Birke and Keil (2026), in their examination of theatre management in Germany, found that although some theatres had introduced sustainability practices, these initiatives were often restricted to specific areas rather than being integrated into holistic organisational strategies. Their findings suggest that sustainable theatre management requires a broader strategic approach that incorporates financial, organisational, environmental and operational considerations. In the context of educational theatre, this means that revenue generation should be linked to long-term planning, efficient resource utilisation, institutional partnerships, audience retention and diversified funding mechanisms rather than short-term ticket sales alone.

Community and cultural value can also contribute to theatre sustainability. Buttan (2026) argues that community theatre can support cultural preservation, youth development, employment and cultural tourism while also creating opportunities for economic development. This broader understanding of theatre value suggests that educational theatre can position its productions not only as entertainment but also as cultural and educational experiences with benefits for the institution and surrounding community. Such positioning can strengthen the case for institutional funding, sponsorship, partnerships and community support.

The educational function of theatre further reinforces its potential to generate value beyond direct financial returns. Dima et al. (2026) demonstrate that drama education can enhance participation, collaboration, multimodal understanding, reflective thinking and problem-solving. Although their study focuses on drama integrated with artificial intelligence in geography education, the findings reinforce the broader educational capacity of drama-based approaches. For university theatre, the educational value of productions can therefore be incorporated into promotional narratives to communicate the wider benefits of participation to students, staff, parents, alumni and community stakeholders.

Overall, the challenges confronting promotion and revenue generation in educational theatre are interconnected. Limited financial resources can constrain publicity; weak publicity can reduce attendance; low attendance can undermine ticket revenue; insufficient revenue can limit the quality and scale of subsequent productions; and weak financial capacity can further restrict opportunities for marketing, innovation and audience development. The evidence from contemporary theatre research suggests that these challenges require integrated solutions rather than isolated promotional interventions. Effective theatre management should combine traditional and digital promotion, audience segmentation, strategic pricing, community engagement, partnerships, financial accountability, entrepreneurial competencies and diversified revenue streams.

In the case of AKSU Pinnacle Theatre, the integration of social media promotion with conventional publicity provides a practical response to the changing communication habits of theatre audiences. However, sustained revenue generation requires more than increasing online visibility. The theatre must continuously strengthen the quality of promotional content, maintain consistent communication before performances, develop audience relationships, explore sponsorship and partnership opportunities, improve financial planning and consider additional income streams such as merchandising and other theatre-related activities. The literature therefore supports the view that successful educational theatre marketing is best understood as an integrated process in which artistic quality, communication, audience engagement, community relationships and financial sustainability reinforce one another. Such an approach provides a stronger foundation for ensuring that university theatre remains educationally valuable, culturally relevant, artistically vibrant and economically sustainable.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive qualitative case study design, guided by Philip Kotler's Marketing Mix Theory, to examine promotional strategies and revenue generation in the AKSU Pinnacle Theatre 2026 Season of Performances. Data were generated through key informant interviews (KII) and participant observation of *Abori, The Untold Story*, and *Heritage in Harmony*, focusing on promotion, audience engagement, ticketing, sponsorship, and merchandising.The population comprised staff, students, and stakeholders involved in the 2026 Season. Purposive sampling selected five key informants: one Theatre and Festival Manager, three directors (who are also lecturers), and one institutional stakeholder who was the headline sponsor of the festival. A semi-structured interview guide and observation checklist were used for data collection. Interviews were conducted face-to-face, audio-recorded with consent, and transcribed, while field notes were taken during performances. Data were analyzed thematically around audience awareness, social media engagement, stakeholder relations, and revenue diversification, with findings interpreted through Kotler's Marketing Mix Theory. Informed consent and confidentiality were maintained.

DISCUSSION

Findings reveal a surge in the use of digital promotion platforms for theatre events; especially with the aid of social media platforms like WhatsApp, Instagram and Facebook, which has replaced printed posters, hard copy fliers, picture boards, word-of mouth and other traditional promotion tools. In Akwa Ibom State University (AKSU) Pinnacle Theatre, the main channel for reaching audiences, with informants confirming this shift directly. Student cast and crew acting as informal brand ambassadors extended this reach further through peer-to-peer sharing not just with one of mouth, but a single broadcast message that can reach thousands in real time. Digital promotion translated most clearly into revenue when paired with online ticketing: *The Untold Story* recorded a profit this way, while *Abori* and *Dance in my Heart* saw strong patronage from internet campaigns. This suggests awareness alone is inadequate as promotion requires direct purchase mechanisms to convert into income. Consistent with the Marketing Mix framework, attendance and revenue were shaped by several factors together. The film quality, promotion trailers to the production, staff-audience interaction, organized ticketing and professional promotional materials well branded. Even so, limited sponsorship and small marketing budgets continue to cap revenue growth, showing that promotional strategy alone cannot offset theatre's production cost pressures; hence, income diversification remains necessary to revenue generation in the theatre.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that effective promotional strategies play a significant role in enhancing revenue generation and ensuring the sustainability of theatre productions at AKSU Pinnacle Theatre. While ticket sales remain the primary source of revenue for AKSU Pinnacle Theatre, the theatre has recognised the importance of diversifying its income through sponsorships, donations, merchandising, programme sales, partnerships, and entrepreneurial initiatives. Nevertheless, challenges such as inadequate funding, limited sponsorship opportunities, insufficient marketing budgets, competition from digital entertainment, and inconsistent audience patronage continue to hinder the theatre's revenue-generating capacity. The findings also establish that the effectiveness of promotional strategies depends on careful planning, consistency, audience engagement, and the strategic use of both digital and conventional communication channels. The application of integrated marketing practices enables the theatre to strengthen its visibility, build stronger relationships with audiences, and increase financial returns from its productions. Overall, the study concludes that promotional strategies and revenue generation are interdependent elements of successful theatre management. Sustainable theatre practice at AKSU Pinnacle Theatre requires continuous innovation in marketing, greater investment in digital promotion, stronger collaborations with corporate organisations and alumni, and the diversification of income-generating activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study on Promotional Strategies and Revenue Generation in AKSU Pinnacle Theatre, the following recommendations are made:

To Establish Strategic Partnerships: The Department of Performing Arts should strengthen collaborations with corporate organisations, media houses, financial institutions, telecommunications companies, cultural organisations, and government agencies. Such partnerships can provide sponsorship, publicity support, and financial assistance for major productions and theatre festivals.

To Improve Audience Engagement and Relationship Management: AKSU Pinnacle Theatre should develop long-term relationships with its audiences through curating a functional customer database, to periodically send SMS, email newsletters, create loyalty reward programmes through interactive social media activities, and post-performance discussions. Building audience loyalty will encourage repeat attendance and positive word-of-mouth promotion. To Invest in Capacity Building: Students and staff involved in theatre management should receive regular training in digital marketing, branding, public relations, sponsorship acquisition, event management, audience development, and entrepreneurship. These skills will improve the effectiveness of promotional activities and enhance revenue generation. To Adopt Data-Driven Marketing Practices: Theatre managers should regularly collect and analyse audience data, including attendance patterns, demographic characteristics, ticket sales, and social media engagement metrics. Such information will enable informed decision-making and improve future promotional strategies. To Promote Entrepreneurship within Theatre Education: Theatre students should be encouraged to develop entrepreneurial initiatives related to costume production, stage design, choreography, event management, content creation, and creative consultancy. These ventures will not only generate additional income for productions but also equip graduates with practical skills for self-employment within the creative industry.

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