

WHO ATTENDS DRAG EVENTS AND WHY? A MOTIVATION SEGMENTATION STUDY OF SOUTH AFRICAN AUDIENCES

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Abstract

Traditional theatre genres appear to compete for audiences in a competitive post-modern culture. This is most likely owing to the availability of a wide range of more popular entertainment- and leisure activities. Drag events, which have just recently become acknowledged as part of mainstream arts and culture, appear to be one such activity. This could explain why the attractiveness of these performances among audiences has largely been empirically overlooked. This study intends to fill a gap in the literature on performing arts, hospitality, and leisure by looking into audience members' motives for attending drag events and categorizing them into market segments. The findings offer significant insight into the leisure behavior of people who attend drag events, as well as suggestions for attracting the right people with the correct message and ensuring that products and services produced for and promoted to these audiences satisfy their specific needs.

Keywords

Audience, Drag events, Entertainment, Leisure behavior, Market segmentation

1. Introduction

The term theatre comes from the Greek word ‘theaomai,’ which means ‘to see’, and refers to a setup that allows performers to deliver stories to an audience (Ali, 2016). Hill et al. (2012) state “the audience is an integral part of an artistic experience. Only when the public experiences what the artist wishes to communicate is the creative process complete” (p. 36). Due to the increasing popularity of newer and unusual leisure and entertainment activities such as cabarets in the form of drag events – i.e., drag cabaret (Baxter et al., 2022), theatre genres have become more competitive. This could explain why traditional theatre styles such as plays, satire, musicals, contemporary dance and ballet, orchestras, and opera appear to battle for audiences (Passebois & Aurier, 2004).

Despite the increasing popularity of drag events, this genre has only recently become acknowledged by mainstream society. This is due to the impact of RuPaul Andre Charles, who is regarded as the world's most prominent drag performer (Roschke, 2019). RuPaul, who is also a well-known actor and reality television personality, has revolutionized the portrayal of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, and Others (LGBTQ+) community on television. His show, *RuPaul's Drag Race*, has gained widespread recognition and averages around 1.2 million viewers per episode (Petski, 2018). The success of the American reality television show has also led to many people becoming more aware of the various facets of the LGBTQ+ culture (Rimalower, 2015).

Despite the increasing popularity of drag events and the cultural expressions of this genre in the media, the appeal of these performances has been largely empirically ignored. This may be due to performing arts venues tending to have a homogeneous audience. According to Johnson & Garbarino (2001), performing arts venues indeed only see a single audience for the entire arts. A warped image of the performing arts audience could lead to a void in the literature about this genre and its various facets, and this could affect the marketing efforts (Scollen, 2008) of venues offering drag events. Thus, due to the increasing competition in the theatre industry, it has become more important for performing arts venues to develop a customized customer profile to cater to their specific needs. This will allow them to improve the quality of their services and attract more potential customers (Hattingh, 2018).

In South Africa (and elsewhere), drag events have become more popular with an increasing number of entertainment venues catering to this niche leisure audience (Dube, 2022). This study aims to analyze the leisure behavior of the audiences that attend drag events. It is built on the recommendations of the Saayman and Kruger (2015a) study that explored the various factors that influence the decision-making processes of the audience when it comes to attending various types of live performances. The study also used a cluster analysis method to identify and profile the various market segments that make up the live performance audiences at the Beefcakes Cabaret Theatres (hereafter referred to as BCT) in three South African cities: Johannesburg, Pretoria, and Cape Town.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Art of Drag as a Form of Leisure and Entertainment

Although men masquerading as women are often associated with homosexuality, the practice of performing this act is not limited to gay men (Warren, 2011). During the Elizabethan era in England, for example, the word drag was used to refer to male actors who played women's roles in theatre (Gerstner, 2011). Women were restricted in their freedom during this era, and they were not allowed to participate in social activities, including theatre. Male actors had to play female roles in plays (Warren, 2011), and it was common for pubescent boys to act as women in certain roles due to their gentle facial features and smaller body frames (Rimalower, 2015). In recent years, drag has been associated with various forms of artistic performance by drag queens who are most commonly gay men and transgender women dressing in stereotypical feminine clothing with heavy makeup and wigs (Gerstner, 2011). According to Moncrieff and Lienard (2017), drag queens are individuals whose main goal is to make themselves look like they are representing the opposite sex to entertain an audience.

A drag queen performance aims to challenge heteronormativity and hegemonic masculinity (Rupp et al. 2010). They often entertain audiences by performing in various forms of artistic performance, such as stand-up comedy, lip-syncing, or choreographed dances (O'Brien, 2018), usually in the form of a cabaret or in nightclubs, and at Gay Pride events (Gerstner, 2011).

South Africa's BCT is a well-known leisure and entertainment facility that provides some of the best drag events in the country. The facilities in Pretoria, Johannesburg, and Cape Town can hold up to 100 people, and the tickets cost around \$20 each which includes a dinner and a live show. The audience is mainly composed of white, young, straight females (Hattingh, 2022). The people who attend the shows are mainly celebrating their birthdays while some also attend bachelorette or divorce parties or just for a 'girl's night out' (Beefcakes, n.d.). The servers at the facilities are hired mainly for their masculine physiques, hence the name Beefcakes. The various BCT venues feature live performances by some of South Africa's best drag performers. They also host themed evenings and special events. One of these is *Bitchy Bingo*, which is a comedy night that's characterized by its outlandish prizes and crazy commentary (Beefcakes, n.d.).

2.2 Motivational Factors Influencing Live Performance Audiences' Behavior

Research in leisure studies has shown that motivation is a crucial topic that is discussed in various ways. According to Middleton (1994), it can be regarded as the psychological influences affecting people's choices. Slater (2006) added that motivation can be seen as a trigger that leads people to act on a particular unmet need. For instance, people who are passionate about the arts might have some unfulfilled needs that they can satisfy by participating in various leisure activities (Kruger & Saayman, 2012), such as watching a drag performance. Although motivation is not the only factor that can influence people's behavior, it is the most critical factor

that people can consider when it comes to making decisions (Dikmen & Bozdalar, 2013). According to Boekstein (2012), the initial stage in the decision-making process is identifying the consumer needs which can help determine a person's motivated behavior. Entertainment venues must therefore understand the motivating elements that influence their consumers' decisions including the primary needs that audiences want to fulfill through attendance (Slater, 2006). In addition, by using motives as a segmentation base, audiences are divided into segments in which different attendee needs and production resources and features can be matched (Bansal & Eiselt, 2004). This ultimately helps with designing and tailoring the offering to particular audiences' needs (Kruger & Saayman, 2012).

Table 1 below shows the limited research that has been done on live performance audiences and drag events in South Africa. It reveals the common factors that influence audiences' decisions as well as identifies market segments where such analyses were conducted. According to Table 1, some of the main reasons people watch live performances are related to social interaction, entertainment, education, status, and personal enrichment (learning). However, the relevance and order of these factors appear to vary by study. Some studies also suggest that the motives of people to attend live performances are influenced by the type of performance (Dikmen & Bozdalar, 2013), the demographics of the audience (Kruger & Saayman, 2012), and group composition (De Rooij, 2013), implying that "the motives of audiences at a particular theatre genre (e.g., musical) cannot be applied to audiences at other theatre genres (e.g., comedy)" (Hattingh, 2018, p. 2).

Table 1.
Previous Research on Motives for Attending Different Types of Live Performances

Researchers	Type of leisure activity/performance	Motivational factors	Market segments
Caldwell (2001)	Performing arts in general	Enrichment, reduction, communion, distinction (status or ego-enhancement)	N/A
Johnson and Garbarino (2001)	Theatre in general	Leisure (relaxation, entertainment, social goals) and enrichment (including emotional and educational experience)	N/A
Lockyer and Myers (2011)	Live stand-up comedy performance	Sharing the comic experience, expecting the unexpected, respecting the stand-up comedian, opportunities for interaction, and proximity and intimacy	N/A
Kruger and Saayman (2012)	Live music performance	Artist affiliation and unique experience, socialization and event novelty, fun and group affiliation, enjoyment and entertainment, and nostalgia	Avid fans and recreational attendees
De Rooij (2013)	Performing arts in general	Cultural aesthetics, cultural reduction, cultural stimulation, social duty, social attraction, social distinction, and social bonding	N/A
Saayman and Saayman (2014)	Live orchestral performance	Escape, socialization, and event attractiveness	The vintage males, the vintage females, and modern enthusiasts
Kruger and Saayman (2015b)	Circus performance	Entertainment and fun, social status and socialization, aesthetics and enchantment, act affiliation and uniqueness	Enthusiasts, novices, and observers
Kruger and Saayman (2017)	Opera performance	Group affiliation and fun, unique experience, entertainment, appraisal, and socialization	Phantom lite and phantom deluxe
Hattingh and Niekerk (2020)	Live stand-up comedy production	To be entertained by a favorite comedian(s), to enjoy the unique atmosphere, to socialize with friends, family, or colleagues, to relax and have fun, to enjoy comedy (i.e., crying from laughter)	The highbrow socialite, the hero worshipper, the bored and curious, and the culture vulture

2.3 Overview of Market Segmentation Applied to Leisure Studies

Market segmentation is a tool utilized by marketers to identify their target audiences and develop effective marketing programs that can be tailored to meet their specific needs (Weaver & Lawton, 2002). Marketers gain information about real or potential customers through segmenting a market, and so uncover certain sub-groups on which to focus their marketing efforts, which Morgan and Pritchard (2001) refer to as "economically significant visiting groups" (p. 152).

Market segmentation is at the heart of marketing because no single market offering will satisfy all individuals (Saayman & Saayman, 2014). The literature provides two types of market segmentation techniques: a priori and post hoc (Bigné et al., 2008), also commonly referred to as data-driven market segmentation (Dolnicar & Grün, 2011). The a priori segmentation method requires choosing the segmentation base in advance (Dolnicar & Grün, 2011). To identify audience segments, the population is separated according to prior knowledge, a process known as 'commonsense segmentation' (Dolnicar, 2004). In leisure studies, the most common bases for segmenting a market using the a priori approach are geographic variables and/or socio-demographic variables, spending patterns, event/theatre genre preference, decision-making style, frequency of attendance, and media usage (Kruger, 2010), which are then utilized to find differences and similarities in the variables of interest between and among the audience segments after segmentation (Prayag, 2010).

Post hoc (data-driven) segmentation techniques are commonly used by leisure researchers (Bigné et al., 2008). They use a set of variables as the base to cluster multiple respondents into homogeneous groups (Prayag, 2010) based on similar answers to the segmentation base variables (Dolnicar & Grün, 2011). Leisure audiences, for example, can be segmented based on the benefits they seek from visiting an entertainment location. These benefits would become the data used to segment audiences based on the relative importance assigned to each benefit, a process known as 'benefit segmentation,' which is a type of behavioral segmentation in which motives are employed as benefits (Frochot & Morrison, 2000). Prayag (2010) suggests using importance levels for segmentation purposes as motives that are important to current audiences are likely to be important for future audiences, thereby enabling the identification of motives that are likely to influence future audience behaviors. This should result in homogeneous segments of drag event audiences that are seeking similar benefits from attending these types of live performances. Once audiences have been separated, tailored targeting may be used to market products and services to the identified audience segments. Therefore, knowing the motives of each segment may assist entertainment venues in meeting the needs of every attendee, thereby offering a more customized offering which in turn may lead to repeat attendees (Kruger & Saayman, 2015a).

Loker and Perdue (1992) argue that "benefit segmentation has the advantage of being

based upon predictive, causal factors, and when combined with key descriptive variables, provides clear insight into marketing and communication strategy formulation” (p. 35). As a result, benefit segmentation is increasingly being used in leisure segmentation studies because it can provide marketers with "a more complete picture of customers, from their motivational profiles to behavioral and socio-economic characteristics, which may be useful in a positioning or promotional strategy" (Boekstein, 2012, p. 94), as opposed to traditional segmentation methods.

Cluster analysis is a prominent statistical method for performing post hoc (data-driven) segmentation. It is defined as “a toolbox of highly interdisciplinary techniques of multivariate data analysis” (Dolnicar, 2002, p. 4) that uses a “specified set of variables to classify a specified set of objects or subjects into relatively uniform clusters” (Weaver & Lawton, 2005, p. 211) and is “mostly an exploratory technique” (Hair et al., 2000, p. 594) as it does not follow a specific formula due to it relying heavily on the data being explored (Dolnicar, 2002). The resulting segments house cases (respondents) that are fairly similar in terms of these variables and different from cases in other segments (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). Due to clustering’s popularity as a tool for data-driven (post hoc) market segmentation, it was used for this study to categorize drag event audiences into different segments based on the relative importance attached to each of the motives (the specified set of variables). In addition, but entirely independent of the cluster analysis, contrasts between audience segments can be tested through background variables (Dolnicar, 2002) such as gender, age, and other relevant variables (Weaver & Lawton, 2005), and were used as supplementary segmentation bases.

3. Methods

This study was empirical in nature and constituted exploratory research. Through a quantitative method, the researchers were able to identify the audience groups that are most likely to attend drag events. By categorizing data sets into similar behavioral categories produced primarily through these quantitative procedures (Weaver & Lawton, 2005), it is argued that the application of quantitative techniques and multivariate analytic methods could considerably aid in segmentation (Eftichiadou, 2001). As a result, the optimum strategy for acquiring primary data for this study was chosen to be a survey.

3.1 The Self-Administered Web-Based Electronic Survey

The survey was conducted online through a program known as SurveyPlanet. It was administered in English and divided into two sections. The first section collected demographic information about the respondents, while the second section analyzed the motivations of the audience members who attend drag events using a 5-point Likert scale.

The survey's reliability and validity were improved by borrowing and modifying variables from previously validated leisure studies, specifically Walmsley (2011), Saayman and Saayman (2014), Kruger and Saayman (2015a, 2015b, 2017), and Hattingh and Niekerk (2020).

3.2 Sampling Method and Data Collection

Due to the intimate setting of drag events, collecting data in person during these performances could potentially affect the audience's leisure experience. Therefore, the use of traditional sampling methods was not possible. The researchers were able to use a combination of non-probability sampling techniques, such as convenience and snowball sampling. The survey link was shared with patrons through the BCT email database, a type of convenience sampling (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). The use of snowball sampling also allowed the researchers to collect additional data. Before participants submitted the survey, they were asked to forward the survey link to other individuals who had attended a drag event at BCT. The data was gathered over two months (June – July 2019). The total number of respondents included 670 people from various drag events held at BCT locations throughout South Africa.

3.3 Ethical Considerations

Throughout the data collection process, relevant ethical considerations were taken into account. All participants who took part in the study provided their informed consent to partake in a voluntary dispensation. Participants could withdraw from the study at any point in time without being discriminated against, and all participants were guaranteed anonymity. Furthermore, participants were safeguarded from physical harm and were assured that all information provided by them would be treated with the utmost levels of confidentiality.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Identification of the Segmented Clusters

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 was used to code, capture, and analyze the 670 usable and completed surveys. A 'post hoc' method of segmentation was utilized to explain the variety of drag event audiences and to produce unique audience clusters by doing a hierarchical cluster analysis on the scores of the motives for attending drag events using Ward's procedure with Euclidean distances. The number of clusters in hierarchical clustering, as stated by Malhotra and Birks (2007), is not

predetermined; instead, groupings are suggested by the data. To put it another way, members were grouped based on their inherent similarities. The audiences' motives were employed as the principal segmentation base for market segmentation without pre-processing the raw data as indicated by Dolnicar (2002), Dolnicar and Grün (2011), Hattingh and Spencer (2020), and Weaver and Lawton (2005). By visually inspecting the dendrogram, the number of clusters was calculated heuristically (Dolnicar, 2002). Two, three, four, and five-cluster solutions were tested, and a four-cluster solution emerged as the most acceptable and distinct, with common motives inside clusters but also different motives across clusters (Table 2).

Table 2.
The Four Clusters ($n = 670$)

Number	Name	Size	% of sample
Cluster 1	The Avid drag fan	196	29
Cluster 2	The Comedy enthusiast	200	30
Cluster 3	The Brotherhood tribe	145	22
Cluster 4	The Sisterhood tribe	129	19

4.2 Interpretation and Profiling of the Segmented Clusters

Several statistical analyses were carried out to ensure the stability and validity of the cluster analysis results. To determine the most important motives for each cluster, the four clusters were cross-tabulated with the 19 motives, and chi-squared tests revealed statistically significant differences between the importance scores of all motives ($p < 0.05$) (Table 3), suggesting that the segments were statistically distinct from one another and that there was internal validity. To define the four clusters meaningfully for marketing purposes and to establish external validity, or external criterion analysis, the clusters were cross-tabulated using sociodemographic and leisure behavior variables (Table 4). The most important motive, sociodemographic, or leisure behavioral variable that distinguished each cluster were then used to assign a label to each resulting cluster. Chi-squared tests found no statistically significant differences in the number of times attending drag performances at BCT (return vs first-time visitor) ($p = 0.109$), occupation ($p = 0.309$), travel cohort ($p = 0.194$), or group size ($p = 0.123$) across the four clusters. The clusters differed significantly at the 5% level in terms of race ($p = 0.017$), educational level ($p = 0.000$), regularity of performing arts attendance ($p = 0.000$), gender ($p = 0.036$), sexual identity ($p = 0.002$), and age ($p = 0.049$). The relationship status ($p = 0.087$) was significant at the 10% level. The clusters were interpreted and profiled using these descriptive statistics. This is critical for developing marketing strategies since it gives realistic, accessible, and easily translatable data for each cluster.

Table 3.
Cross-tabulation and chi-squared test results of clusters compared with motives

Category	Motive (importance scores)	The avid drag fan % (N = 196)	The comedy enthusiast % (N = 200)	The brotherhood tribe % (N = 145)	The sisterhood tribe % (N = 129)	Chi-square probability
Cultural reduction	To relax and have fun	100	97	90	97	0.000*
	To be entertained by drag artist(s)	95	70	66	78	0.000*
	To escape from my daily routine and responsibilities	61	78	28	64	0.000*
	Curiosity got the better of me	38	21	8	51	0.000*
Cultural stimulation	To explore/learn new things (e.g., broadening my mind)	88	51	12	61	0.000*
	To learn about South African drag culture	92	27	5	40	0.000*
Cultural aesthetics	To enjoy the unique atmosphere	98	90	72	96	0.000*
	Because I enjoy comedy (i.e., crying from laughter)	71	98	49	63	0.000*
	To enjoy the costumes, make-up, sound, and sights associated with drag performances	95	66	45	92	0.000*
	To meet and interact with my favorite drag artist(s)	86	35	5	52	0.000*
Social attraction	For a chance to be with people who enjoy drag shows	94	40	19	68	0.000*
	To meet new people with similar interests	65	21	14	34	0.000*
Social distinction	To tell others that I've seen a live performance by a well-known drag artist(s)	69	13	5	57	0.000*
Social bonding	To socialize with friends, family or colleagues	88	87	79	96	0.000*
	To share the experience with someone special	69	51	39	81	0.000*
	To experience LGBTQ+ community pride	96	48	23	52	0.000*
Social duty	To support drag artists and performances	97	73	42	91	0.000*
	To support my friend or family member or colleague performing on stage (an ally of the LGBTQ+ community)	51	14	8	21	0.000*
	It's a ritual/hobby of interest	45	12	5	17	0.000*

*Significance at the 5% level

Table 4.
Cross-tabulation and chi-squared test results of clusters compared with socio-demographic and leisure behavior characteristics

	The avid drag fan % (N = 196)	The comedy enthusiast % (N = 200)	The brotherhood tribe % (N = 145)	The sisterhood tribe % (N = 129)	Chi-square probability
Regular performing arts attendance					0.000*
Yes	61	77	20	19	
No	39	23	80	81	
Age					0.049*
18–20	4	4	2	7	
21–30	53	46	32	40	
31–40	30	24	41	33	
41–50	19	21	20	15	
50+	3	5	5	5	
Race					0.017*
Black/mixed	25	12	12	20	
White	71	85	84	76	
Indian/Asian	4	3	4	4	
Sexual identity					0.002*
Straight	55	55	33	68	
Gay	34	36	61	28	
Lesbian	3	2	5	2	
Bisexual	8	7	1	2	
Gender					0.036*
Male	45	37	58	32	
Female	55	63	42	68	
Education level					0.000*
No formal education up to secondary completed	18	12	12	21	
Certificate/diploma	56	44	26	51	
Bachelor's degree	18	24	29	17	
Honors degree	5	15	19	7	
Masters or doctorate degree	3	5	14	4	
Relationship status					0.087**
Single	39	30	38	31	
In a relationship	35	37	30	37	
Married/Civil Union	23	26	31	28	
Divorced/widowed	3	7	<1	4	

*Significance at the 5% level

**Significance at the 10% level

Cluster 1: The Avid drag fan. With 196 respondents, the *Avid drag fan* cluster was unique in that respondents seemed to perceive all but two motives as significant; it was the only cluster in which the importance scores for 17 of the 19 motives were greater than 50% (except for visiting BCT due to it being a ritual or hobby of interest and curiosity) (Table 3). However, when compared to the other clusters, this cluster tended to place a greater emphasis on particular motives. Cultural stimulation is one of these categories, with 92 percent saying they want to learn about South African drag culture and 88 percent saying they want to explore/learn new things, indicating that they are open-minded and want to broaden their mindsets. These findings are corroborated by Hattingh (2018) and Kruger and Saayman (2015a), who stated that one of the most important reasons for watching live performances is to learn and explore new things. Furthermore, leisure activities can “expand people's cultural horizons and expose them to new and challenging people, ideas, and customs” (Bowdin et al., 2006, p. 37). In this context, the concept of learning refers to people exploring other cultures through various activities and celebrations (Dikmen, 2012). For instance, those in the *Avid drag fan* cluster might want to learn more about the growing performance culture of drag events.

Although the audience members in this group have various needs (as the importance scores demonstrate), the group was further differentiated from the others in that respondents appeared to be very enthusiastic about attending drag shows to support drag artists and performances (97%), as well as to support a friend, family member, or colleague who was performing on stage (51%). Thus, this finding suggests that supporting drag artists, friends, family members, or colleagues on stage, referred to as 'social duty' by De Rooij (2013), is a major motivator for this audience segment to attend drag events. Other key motives for this audience group, according to Table 3, include experiencing LGBTQ+ community pride (96%), being around others who appreciate drag shows (94%), and meeting and interacting with their favorite drag artist(s) (86%). These findings confirm Hattingh and Niekerk's (2020) 'hero worship' audience subgroup, which has a strong desire to meet and interact with their favorite performer(s). This audience group appears to attend a drag event to 'worship' or support its heroes, and thus can be classified as LGBTQ+ allies.

The leisure behavior characteristics and socio-demographics of this audience group are analyzed in Table 4. Although the cluster was mainly composed of white (71%), single (39%), straight (55%) or gay (34%), female (55%), or male (45%) individuals, a significant portion of the attendees, unlike other clusters, were mixed-race and black (25%). Also, a significant number of them were between the ages of 21 and 30 (53%) and regularly attended arts performances (61%). The percentage of individuals who hold a diploma or certificate (56%) was also significantly higher in the cluster. The above findings suggest that this is a diverse audience group (black, mixed-race, white, gay, and straight) of mainly young and open-minded individuals who are interested in learning more about the culture,

pride, and diversity of the LGBTQ+ community. They also tend to be loyal supporters of drag events and want to meet and interact with their favorite drag artists, which is why this group was labeled the *Avid drag fan*.

Cluster 2: The Comedy enthusiast. This cluster had the largest sample size (200 respondents) and is heavily influenced by humor (comedy), with 98 percent of respondents wanting to cry from laughter (Table 3), showing that 'transcendence' is one of the most compelling reasons for this group to attend drag events. Transcendence relates to “a spiritual experience allowing the consumer to break loose and to rise in this world, experiencing extraordinary states of being, and being uplifted” (De Rooij, 2013, p. 152). According to De Rooij (2013), those who cry when they laugh, for example, may be moved by transcendence. Caldwell's (2001) 'enrichment' category appears to be comparable to this cluster. For instance, there are parallels in terms of happiness, feeling uplifted, and laughter. A great majority of live stand-up comedy audiences, according to Hattingh (2018), visit to laugh and enjoy humor. Therefore, the current findings imply that this audience cluster is comparable to Hattingh's (2018) comedy-focused audience cluster. The other factors that motivated these audience members were their desire to escape from their daily routines, and their need to recharge (78%), which corroborates the findings of Caldwell (2001), Hattingh (2018), and Johnson and Garbarino (2001) regarding the significance of 'reduction,' i.e., diversion, escape, relaxation, and recuperation when attending a performance.

In terms of socio-demographics and leisure behavior characteristics (Table 4), this cluster was composed of mainly females (63%) who were in a relationship (37%). Individuals were also mostly white (85%), straight (55%), and gay (36%), relatively young between the ages of 21 and 30 years (46%). They too, as were the case for the *Avid drag fan*, regularly attend arts performances (77%), probably as a result of their strong need to laugh and get away from their typical surroundings.

These findings reveal that this audience cluster is composed of young gay and straight individuals, who are mainly attracted to drag events to satisfy their urge for laughter and to escape from their daily routine. Thus, they were dubbed *Comedy enthusiasts*.

Cluster 3: The Brotherhood tribe. This cluster was the third largest with 145 respondents and had low importance scores for most of the motives. In contrast to other audience clusters, this cluster only had four motivation importance values that exceeded 50% (Table 3). This audience cluster appears to attend drag events primarily to unwind (relax) and have fun (90%). According to Hattingh (2018), one of the most salient factors that motivates people to see live stand-up comedy is to have fun and relax, thereby, supporting the current finding. This discovery is not surprising given the parallels and apparent overlap between the comedy genre and drag/cabaret. This cluster was also very eager to socialize with their friends, family, and colleagues (79%). The studies in Table 1 show that socialization is very important for people who attend live events. According to Crompton and McKay (1997), there are two types of socialization: known-group

socialization and external interaction/socialization. External interaction refers to the social interaction that occurs when individuals meet new people during new experiences. On the other hand, known-group socialization is the type of social interaction that involves people socializing with their family, colleagues, or friends. This finding suggests that for this audience group, known-group socialization is more significant than external socialization, as only 14% were encouraged to attend to meet *new* people. The next main reason to go to drag events in this cluster is to take in the unique atmosphere (72%). This finding supports Hattingh's (2018) claim that the environment surrounding a comedy show or drag event is one of the main reasons why people attend. The final significant motivation for this cluster is to be entertained by a drag performer (66%). The importance of entertainment is backed up by a study done by Johnson and Garbarino (2001), who argued that although audience members attend live performances for a variety of reasons, one of the key reasons is to be entertained. Therefore, this finding confirms the importance of being entertained when attending drag events.

According to Table 4, most respondents in this cluster were white (84%), unattached (single) (38%), and gay (61%) men (58%). Furthermore, they were between 31 and 40 years of age (41%), possessed a bachelor's degree (29%), and attended performances much less frequently (80%). These findings suggest a cluster of mainly young white gay men who seek a unique environment in which to have fun, be entertained, and relax with family, friends, or colleagues. They are referred to as the *Brotherhood tribe*.

Cluster 4: The Sisterhood tribe. With 129 respondents, the *Sisterhood tribe* audience group was the smallest. Despite some motives of this cluster overlapping with those of other clusters, there are group characteristics that made participation in this cluster more powerful. The *Sisterhood tribe* cluster valued socializing with friends, family, or colleagues (96%) even more than the *Brotherhood tribe*, *Avid drag fan*, and *Comedy enthusiast*, sharing the experience with someone special (81%), and curiosity (51%) (Table 3). Like the *Brotherhood tribe*, this group appears to have a strong desire for known-group socialization (as previously stated) and to share a pleasant pastime with someone close. For example, attending to show support for a divorcee, a birthday party, a bride-to-be (bachelorette party), or a 'girl's night out.' According to Earl (2001), one of the key advantages of seeing live performances is that it satisfies one's curiosity. This cluster was likely unfamiliar with drag events and LGBTQ+ culture and could explain why the *Sisterhood tribe* is more intrigued than the rest of the audience clusters.

Respondents in this cluster were generally straight (68%), white (76%), females (58%), who were in a relationship (37%), and between the ages of 21 and 30 (40%). They further had a certificate/diploma (51%), and as was the case for the *Brotherhood tribe*, do not attend arts performances on a regular basis (81%) (see Table 4), possibly due to the infrequency of divorce, birthday, or bachelorette parties. The findings above allude to a predominantly young straight white female audience group looking to share special

experiences with known groups, i.e., a close or special group of friends, and was thus labeled the *Sisterhood tribe*. These findings, therefore, support the claim made by Baxter et al. (2022) in that while gay men have been known to be the most loyal fans of drag theatre, the genre is becoming more mainstream as younger heterosexual females are joining the audience.

5. Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to investigate the appeal of drag events and challenge the notion that arts audiences are homogeneous. The findings of this study contribute to the body of knowledge on leisure, performing arts, and hospitality literature.

This is the first paper that uses a quantitative audience assessment to segment drag event audiences based on behavior, demographics, and motivation. Despite the fact that no segment is totally homogeneous, there are group features that increase membership since various leisure behaviors, motivations, and socio-demographics overlapped and were essential to all audience segments. Even though it is not generally representative of all drag event audiences due to the study only including three drag entertainment venues and all respondents were internet users, empirical evidence shows that drag event audiences are not homogeneous. The cluster analysis revealed that these audiences are diverse in terms of their motivations (see Table 3), as well as their sexual identity, age, educational levels, race, gender, and relationship status (see Table 4). These findings back up Kruger and Saayman's (2015b, 2017) assertion that live performance audiences are diverse in terms of motivations, leisure behaviors, and socio-demographic profile. As a result, there are distinct groups of drag event attendees with varying leisure behaviors and needs.

The findings help to eliminate needs that have no bearing on attendees' decision to attend a drag event. Furthermore, the findings suggest that when planning drag events, it is critical to analyze motives for attendance in order to identify different needs and segment target markets. Once marketers understand why people attend, key components of a marketing campaign can be highlighted to encourage more people to visit the entertainment venue. A clear marketing campaign aids the live performance attendee in planning what he or she wants to see and gives an appropriate indication of what to expect from the planned leisure experience (Dikmen & Bozdalar, 2013). The implications for marketers targeting the *Brotherhood tribe*, for example, are that ad copy and imagery should highlight a mix of opportunities for fun, entertainment, and relaxation in a unique and sociable environment where they can satisfy their social needs by meeting with colleagues, family, and friends, which could significantly extend and deepen this group's leisure experience. Failure to meet these specific needs in future drag events may reduce revisit intent among attendees in this specific cluster, threatening BCT's long-term viability.

This study is the first to use the clustering procedure to analyze drag event audiences which demonstrates how it can help segment leisure audiences. The four sub-groups that make up drag event audiences, each with a set of leisure behaviors, motives, and demographics, could assist BCT in understanding its target market and developing effective marketing techniques. It could also help attract the right individuals to the various drag events and ensure that the products and services that are promoted are designed to meet the specific needs of these audience clusters. Since there are various audience segments with varying needs, the marketing campaign cannot be focused on one single or homogeneous audience. It is therefore important that the various factors that influence the decisions made by the various clusters are highlighted in different marketing campaigns to motivate them to attend drag events in the future.

5.1 Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

While this study is one of the first to attempt to segment South African drag event audiences, the findings should be interpreted with caution. Because only internet users were included in this study, self-selection bias is a particular concern. This study was only conducted in three cities in South Africa and does not intend to provide conclusive or generalizable findings of all drag events. Further investigation is needed to confirm or reject the findings.

Future research could examine using additional qualitative methodologies such as participant observation and focus groups to go deeper into the reasons why specific motives are more relevant in the decision-making processes and leisure behavior of drag event audiences.

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