

## Exploring Audience Motivation and Cultural Difference in Theatre

### Abstract

The study of psychology of theatre is still in its infancy and research in Hong Kong is very limited. This exploratory study aims at discovering the psychological motivations behind different types of Hong Kong audiences in entering theatre. 45 deep interviews were done. Participants are divided into frequent, occasional and infrequent theatre-goers for further analysis. Previous study by Walsmley (2011) has identified emotional, spiritual, sensual, intellectual and social drivers. By reflecting their theatre experiences, the qualitative data suggests a new audience motivation structure. Hygienic factors are added which do not motivate people to go to the theatre but prevent them to go if lacking. For motivators, there are five dimensions with specific motivators in each of them. Entertaining motivators are found important and thus is a new dimension replacing sensual ones. Motivators in Walsmley's study (2011) are regrouped to reflect the psychological elements more precisely. Two new motivators are added. Cultural factors account for the differences in the social and emotional motivators. Overall, frequent theatre-goers are more motivated by inspirational motivators whereas occasional and infrequent theatre-goers are more motivated by entertaining and social motivators. Lastly, age is found to be related to watching habit. The rich finding and discussion focusing on Hong Kong audiences can provide insights to the industry. Future research direction is suggested.

*Keywords:* theatre, audience motivation, entertainment psychology, cultural difference, motivational segmentation