

Spotlight on Arts Audiences

Wave 5 (Spring/Summer 2025)

Presentation of Results: July 2025

Thank you to our generous partners

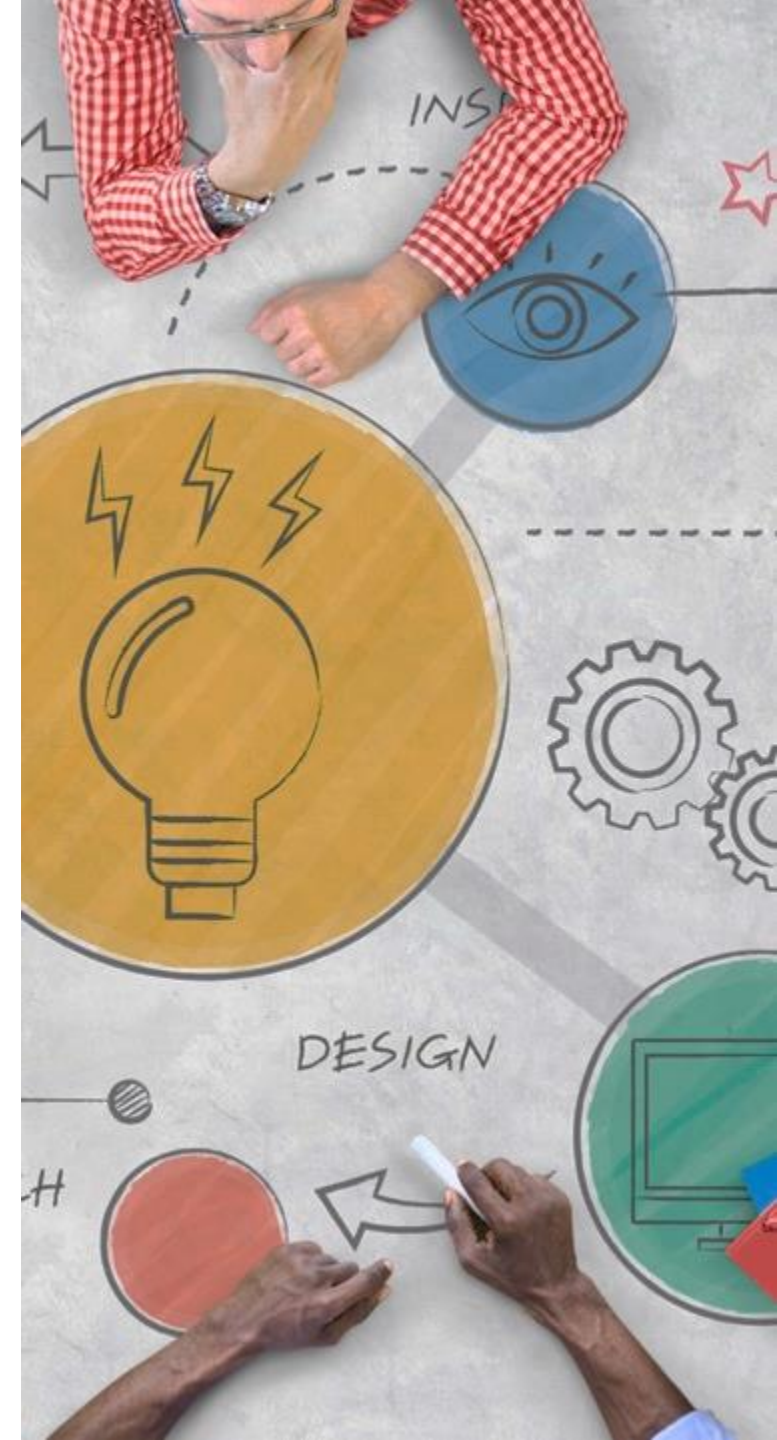
This initiative is being funded by arts funders who are keen to use data to drive engagement and growth strategies across Alberta.

We thank them for their generous support.



The point of this work is to help leaders like you reach more people.

The data is yours to leverage and should be applied along with other inputs – put it to work!



Our Approach for Wave 5:



6 Focus Groups

- 2 in Calgary + area
- 2 in Edmonton + area
- 2 virtual with regional Albertans



**June
3, 4, & 5**



Passive Audience

Occasionally attend events, watch arts content, or pursue arts events.

While open to attending more, they need to be **inspired to engage.**

Why Passives?

To develop and extend your audience base

The Arts-Going Audience in Alberta



IMMERSED: The **most active**,
eager, and supportive.
24%



ENGAGED: They are **active but**
not as enthusiastic.
18%



PASSIVES: They will need to be
inspired to **engage more**.
51%



INFREQUENT: They may be
interested but **rarely** engage.
5%

What makes the Passive Audience different?



- **GROWTH OPPORTUNITY:** Large but under-engaged audience
- **VALUE & RELEVANCE ARE CRITICAL:** More selective with their time and money
- **DIFFICULT TO PURSUADE:** Do not receive the same value from the arts
- **COMPLEX:** It is about more than the art experience

Qualitative: A different kind of research



When you want to understand the **perceptions, opinions, motivations and attitudes** that influence actions and behaviour.

- Small group discussions (6 to 8 per session)
- Exploratory and flexible (ask only a few questions and really listen)
- Our main activities:
 - Discuss experiences passives enjoy and barriers to going more often
 - Exploration of how advertising influences behaviour. Arts related advertising in the Alberta market was used to encourage conversation and understand specific, unique perspectives

We were not testing the effectiveness of the advertising.



Remember...

We are talking about the passive audience. They are different than your core audiences who are the Immersed and the Engaged.

Key Findings



What did we learn in this wave of work?

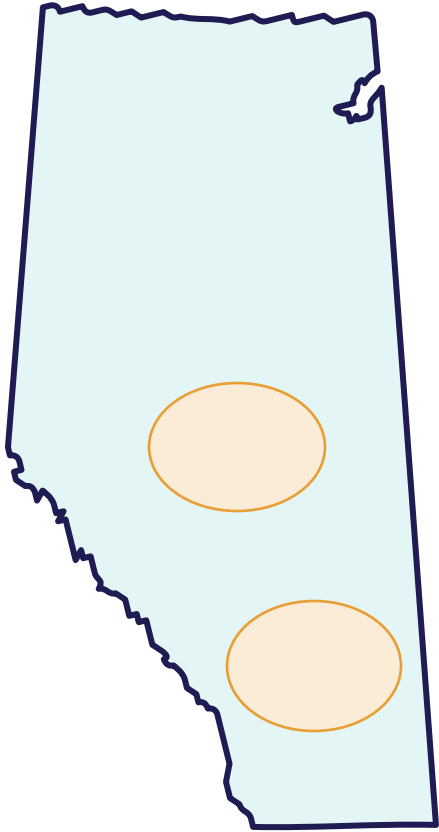
1 The Passive audience is a large and diverse group, and so are their needs and requirements.

2 Passives are generally “passengers” in the decision-making process.

3 Passives need to “see themselves in the experience” in a very practical way.

4 Advertising has an important, BUT DIFFERENT role.

What about major urban vs. non-major urban audiences?



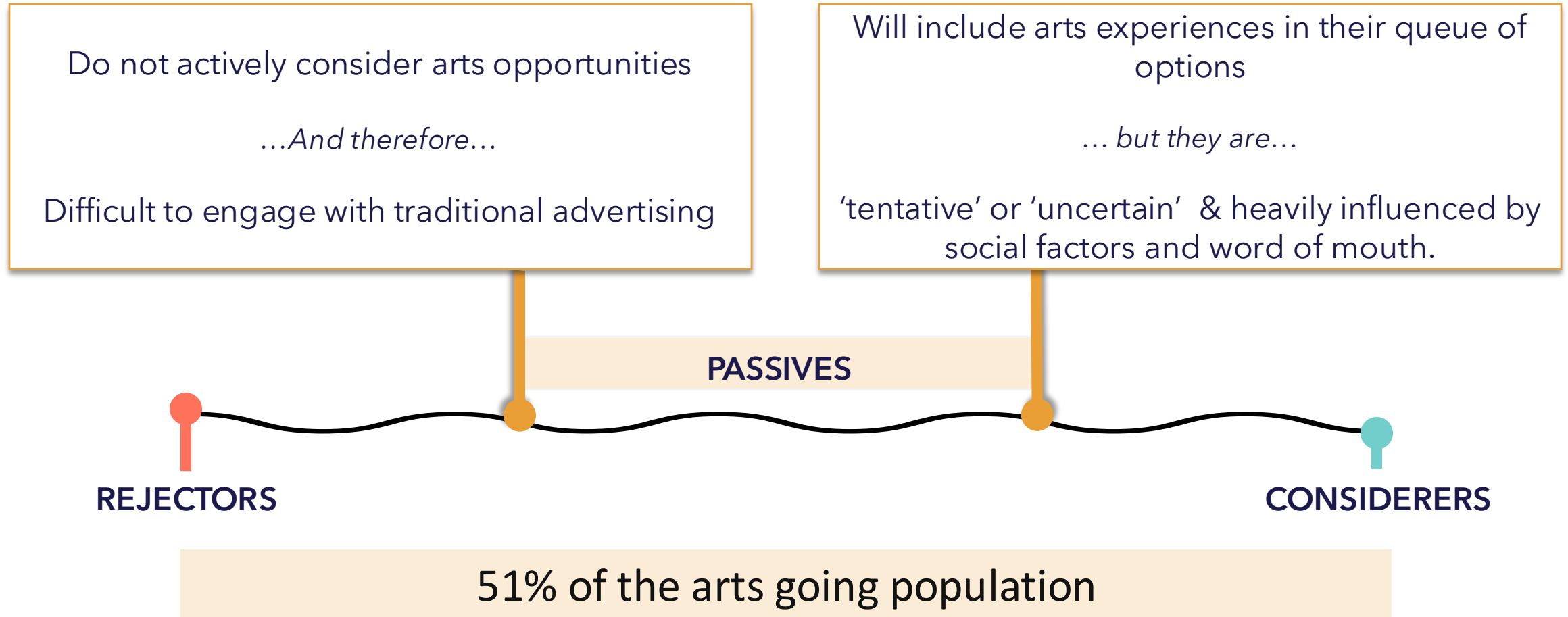
Smaller centers:

- Fewer opportunities
- Cost and time barriers
- Accept varying quality
- Support the community

Edmonton & Calgary:

- Key on entertainment value
- "How do I get there?"
- Less urgency overall
- Decision paralysis

1. Passive Audience: A large and diverse group



2. Passive Audience: Passengers in the arts experience

Passives are often inspired by invitation....

but they still need to feel it is worth their time, money, and energy.



"My wife buys the tickets and tells me what we are going to see."

"I have my 'cultured friend.' She is the one who sees what is going on and makes suggestions for things she thinks I will like."

3. Passives Audience: Need more information and reassurance than Immersed and Engaged



Cautious



Less tolerant with disappointment



Open to a narrow range of experiences



Looking to stay in their comfort zones



Unlikely to venture into the unfamiliar

Passives' lack of experience is a barrier to attending



What contributes to guest reassurance, and what can arts organizations do to maintain it?

First, the arts experience

- ✓ Familiar works
- ✓ Type of experience
- ✓ Ad quality
- ✓ Awards or accolades
- ✓ Names of shows or artists

"I get what this is about. I don't know what Eroica is, but I know what to expect from Beethoven. I know this will be a serious concert."



What contributes to guest reassurance, and what can arts organizations do to maintain it?

Second, the “vibe”

- ✓ Venue: fancy, intimate, casual, grand?
- ✓ Amenities and seating
- ✓ Length/ size
- ✓ Who attends
- ✓ Explaining common attire

“This picture (Candlelight Concert) tells me what this is going to be like. It is going to be a relaxed and casual atmosphere, nice music, easy.”



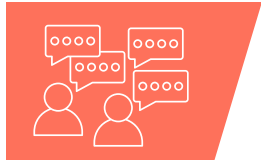
4. Passive Audience: Need something different from advertising

There is a lack of context and familiarity that makes break through challenging.

"These (ads) are just a bunch of noise. I don't know what most of them are even promoting."



Traditional advertising has a role, but Passives to look to online sources to help them assess art experiences.



Word of mouth

What are people talking about?



Reviews

What are people posting online?



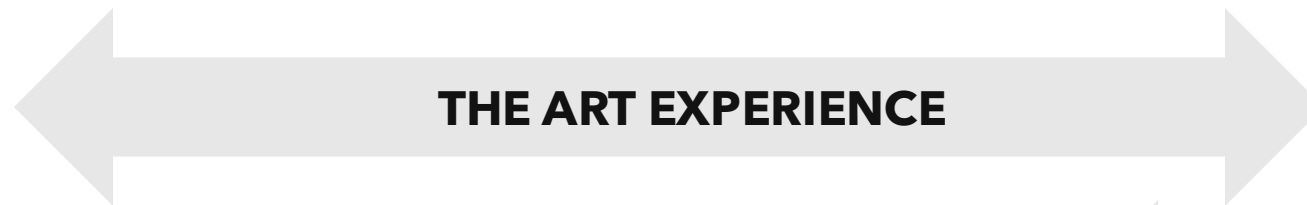
Event website

Details about the event



Hashtag searches:

#NameOfEvent



Considerations for Advertising and Marketing



Use this information carefully...

*This is **NOT** meant to be an assessment of advertising for arts events. These findings should not be assumed to reflect the needs of your core audiences: the Engaged or Immersed audiences.*

Rather this should help identify how to interact with and inform those who are often less familiar with arts experiences.



Remember...

The goal of this exercise is to understand what will increase confidence to attend an experience they may enjoy.

It is about extending reach to those who may have interest, NOT about charting a new course or reaching ALL passives.

What attracts the Passive audience eye?

Clarity of art experience



What attracts the Passive audience eye?

Familiarity



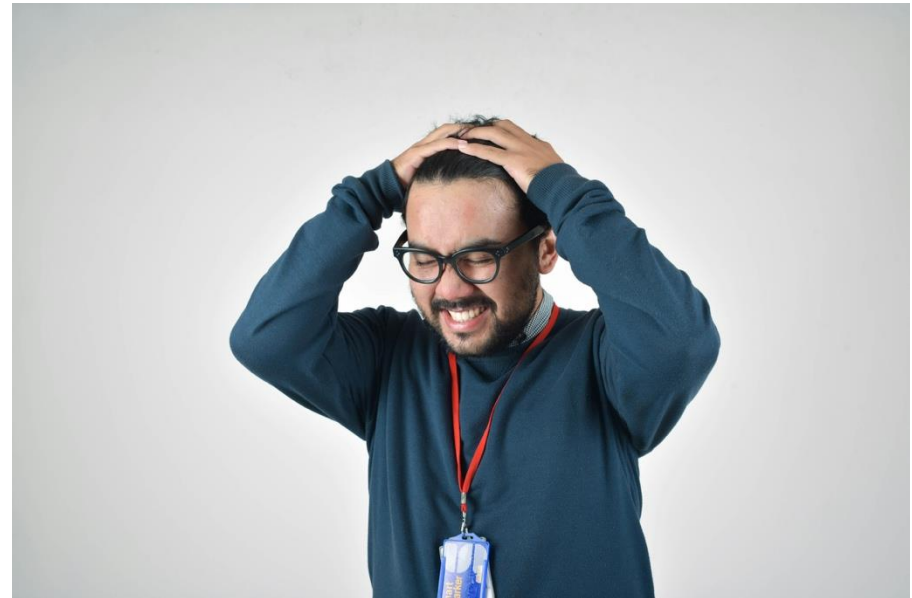
What attracts the Passive audience eye?

Communicates the vibe



What is challenging for the Passive audience?

- ✗ Lack of clarity of experience/ no context
- ✗ Disconnect between image and event
- ✗ Difficult to interpret



Thank you. Questions?





Please help us design our
final phase of work.

Understanding people.

It's what we do.

**Stone —
Olafson**

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