Inside the Ticket-Buying Journey

HOW LIVE EVENT PATRONS MOVE FROM DISCOVERY AND PURCHASE TO EXPERIENCE AND RETURN

PRESENTED BY:

AudienceView

TheaterMania

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INTRODUCTION

Introduction: Inside the Ticket-Buying Journey

Think about the last time you decided to attend a live event. It probably wasn't one quick decision, but a series of small ones about time, money, and whether it felt worth it. That's the same process your audiences go through, and it looks different depending on what they care about and how they engage with events.

That's why AudienceView conducts an annual survey of TheaterMania.com subscribers. Each year, we look beyond transactions to understand how people actually experience the path to attending a live event, from discovering a show to deciding whether to come back again.

Some overall patterns remain steady, which is encouraging. But when you look more closely, clear differences show up. Age, event preferences, and past experiences all influence how people move through the journey, even when they're attending similar types of events. What seems like a small moment to a venue can make a big difference in how someone feels about buying, showing up, or coming back.

This report follows the ticket-buying journey as people experience it in real life. Looking at each stage in order makes it easier to see where confidence grows, and where friction gets in the way. If you want a clearer picture of how audiences move from interest to attendance—and why some stay loyal while others don't—the pages that follow offer a closer look.

The AudienceView Team

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

This report is organized around the ticket-buying journey, from first discovery through loyalty. The trends overview that follows highlights the biggest findings at each stage, before diving deeper into the details and recommendations later in the report.

Top 2026 Trends Overview

Discovery

HOW PEOPLE FIND EVENTS

- Email remains the most reliable discovery channel across nearly every audience, including younger buyers.
- Discovery habits vary by age and event type, with older audiences leaning heavily on email and younger audiences using a broader mix, including social and ads.
- People want timely messages, especially when tickets go on sale, when details change, or when an offer is relevant to them.

Decision

WHAT HELPS PEOPLE COMMIT

- Editorial reviews and direct emails from trusted sources are the strongest decision drivers, even for audiences who discover events through social media or word of mouth.
- Clear pricing, seating, and return policies make buying easier and build buyer confidence.
- Trust plays a growing role. Concerns about fraud and resale push buyers toward official, first-party channels.
- People abandon purchases because fees are too high and checkout is too hard (forced to create an account, slow pages, unclear seats).

Experience

WHAT DEFINES THE NIGHT OUT

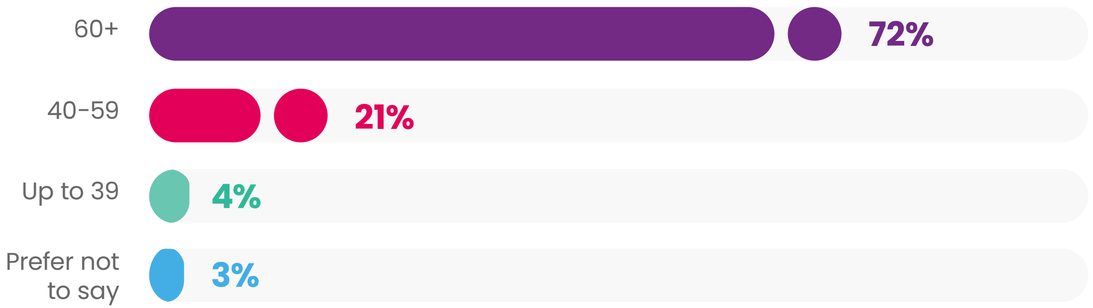
- Add-ons that deepen the artistic experience matter more than practical upgrades, especially for music and theater fans.
- The biggest pain points happen outside the venue, with parking, entry, and exit impacting how smoothly the event goes.
- Many times, small improvements before and after the show matter more than changes to the event itself.

Return

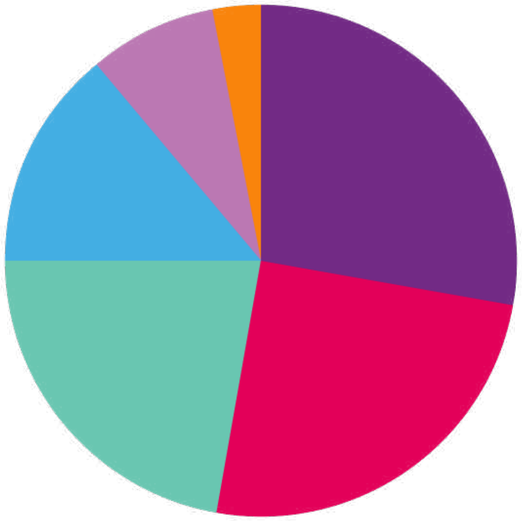
WHAT BRINGS AUDIENCES BACK

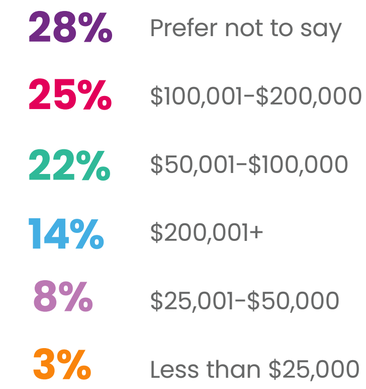
- Most people don't consistently return to the same venue, making loyalty one of the biggest opportunities for growth.
- Repeat behavior varies by audience, geography, and reason for attending. There's no single loyalty strategy that works for everyone.
- Email is the foundation for ongoing engagement, with timely, relevant messages helping turn occasional attendees into repeat visitors.

How Old Are You?

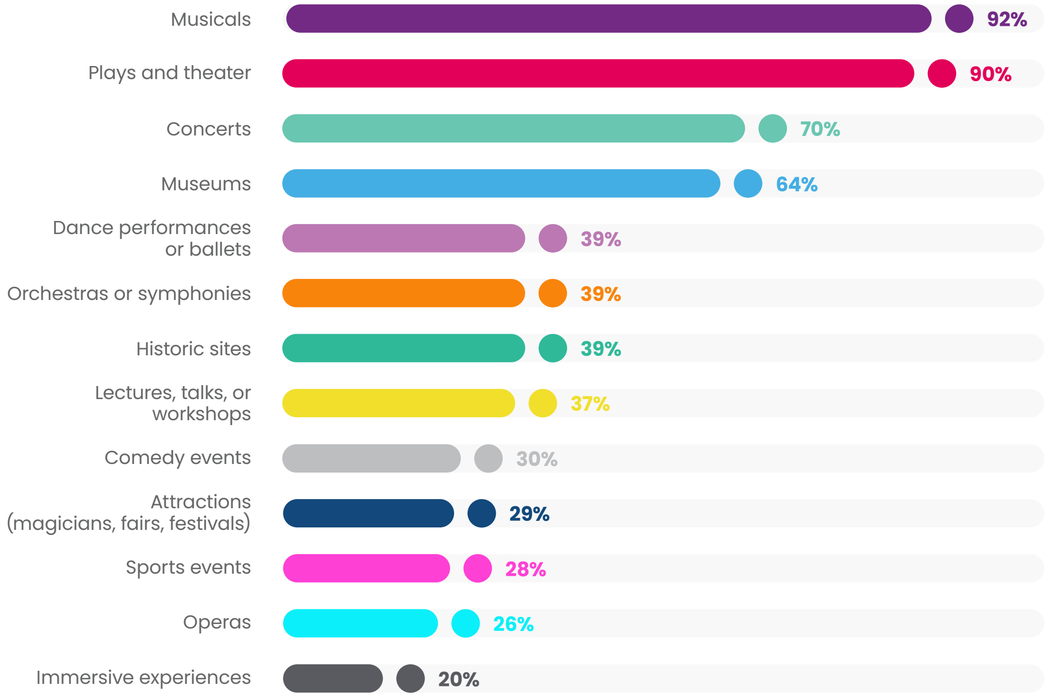


What Is Your Household Income?





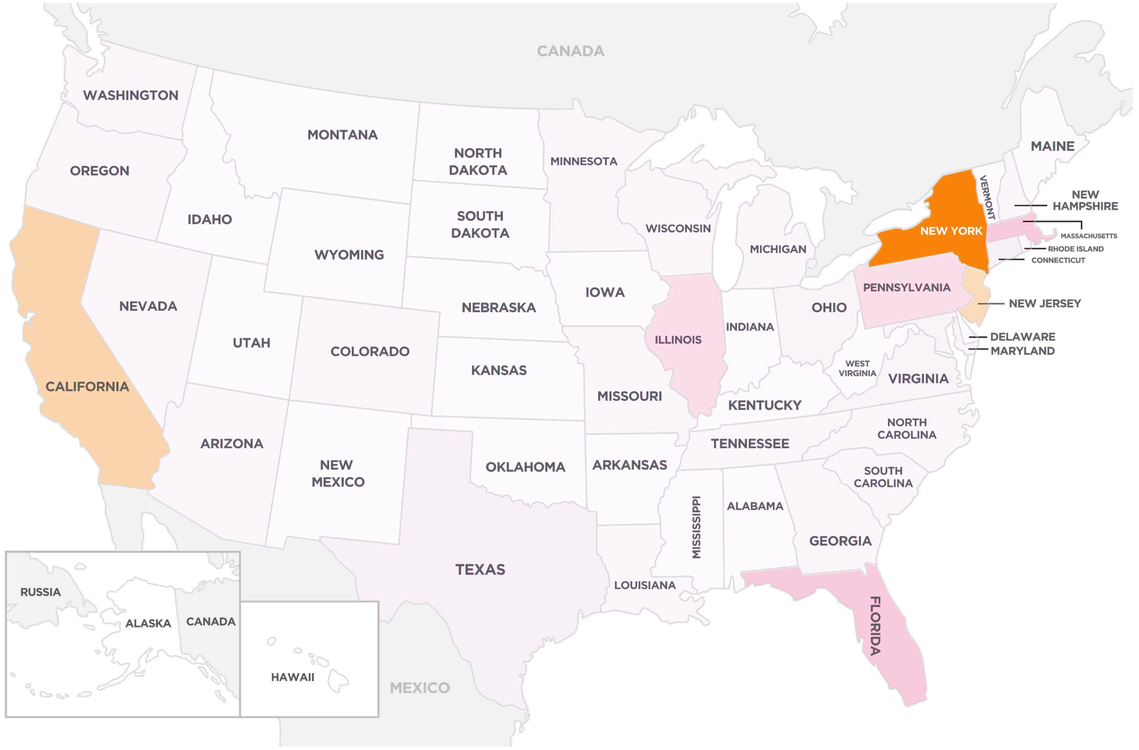
What Types Of Live Events Or Attractions Do You Attend?



How Many Live Events Do You Attend Each Year?

What State Do You Live In?

New York	**36%**
New Jersey	**10%**
California	**8%**
Pennsylvania	6%
Massachusetts	6%
Florida	6%
Illinois	3%
Connecticut	3%
Maryland	2%
Texas	2%
Other States	**15%**
Outside USA	**1%**



Audience Segments by Event Preference

We grouped audiences by the kinds of events they're most likely to attend, helping highlight meaningful differences in behavior and expectations.

CULTURE CRAVERS

- Plays / Traditional Theater
- Musicals

CONCERT LOVERS

- Concerts

ACTION SEEKERS

- Sports Events
- Attractions (magicians, fairs, festivals, and other ticketed events)

CLASSICAL CONNOISSEURS

- Dance Performances
- Opera
- Orchestra / Symphonies

AVID LEARNERS

- Museums
- Historic Sites
- Lectures, talks, or workshops

DISCOVERY

FINDING THE PERFECT EVENT

Discovery starts long before someone decides to buy a ticket. It’s shaped by how people prefer to hear from venues, what catches their attention, and whether messages show up at moments that actually matter to them.

Insight 1

EMAIL IS THE MOST RELIABLE PATH TO EVENT DISCOVERY

Email from trusted sources consistently outperforms every other discovery channel, making it the most reliable way people learn about new events. Venue newsletters and show-specific emails rise above social, search, and ads because they feel direct and trustworthy. Even younger audiences—who lean more heavily on social—still rely on email when it comes to finding shows that matter to them.

> Email is definitely still one of our most popular units. We're pairing a dedicated or co-op email with things like meta-ads so that we can retarget everybody who opens or clicks.
>
> *- Darius Thompson-Smith, Commercials Director at WhatsOnStage*

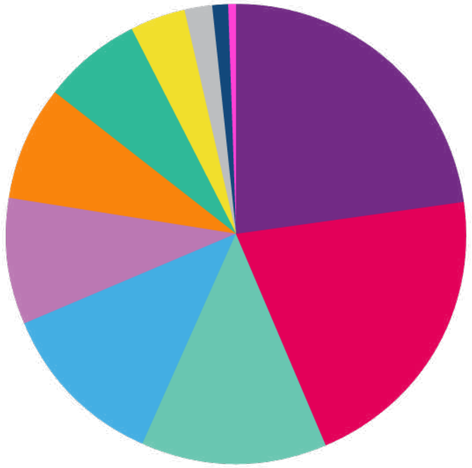
LEARN MORE ABOUT WHAT MAKES A THEATER CAMPAIGN SUCCESSFULL

EMAIL LEADS DISCOVERY ACROSS NEARLY EVERY AUDIENCE SEGMENT

Email is where audiences feel most connected to the venue itself. Consistent, show-specific emails top every other discovery source because they come directly from the organization audiences trust. Venue newsletters (23%) and performance emails (21%) far outperform social (13%), search (12%), and digital ads (4%) as the first point of interest.

Even younger audiences who browse on social still rely on email when they want details they can act on. Email works when it's owned, targeted, and personal—the kind of communication that strengthens long-term audience relationships.

How Do You Usually Discover New Events To Attend?



- **23%** Newsletters or promotional emails from the specific venue
- **21%** Newsletters or promotional emails from the performance itself
- **13%** Social media (Instagram, Facebook, TikTok)
- **12%** Online searches or even listing websites (e.g. Google, Eventbrite)
- **9%** Print advertisements (newspapers, magazines, billboards)
- **8%** Other
- **7%** Word of mouth from family or friends
- **4%** Digital advertisements
- **2%** Advertising on streaming platforms (e.g. YouTube, Spotify)
- **1%** None of the above
- **0.5%** SMS messages

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Send consistent, event-specific emails** to inspire discovery and deepen trust.
- **Segment your lists** so each audience gets communication aligned to their interests and habits.
- **Use branded SMS** for high-intent moments like presales or reminders.

THE RIGHT CHANNEL DEPENDS ON WHO'S LISTENING

Getting discovery right determines who shows up at all. Most arts and cultural audiences are older, which shows up clearly in how they find events. Classical Connoisseurs and Culture Cravers, many of them 60+, mostly rely on newsletters and promotional email to decide what to attend. Concert audiences are younger by comparison and use a broader mix, with social media and digital ads playing a bigger role.

Attendance Drivers By Event Type Preference:

CLASSICAL CONNOISSEURS

Rely most on email and newsletters (75%+)

CULTURE CRAVERS

Strong preference for email and venue updates (70%+)

CONCERT LOVERS

More likely to discover via social media (57%+) and streaming ads (53%)

ACTION SEEKERS

Use a broader mix, including social and digital ads alongside email

AVID LEARNERS

Lean towards direct channels like email and venue websites

RECOMMENDATIONS

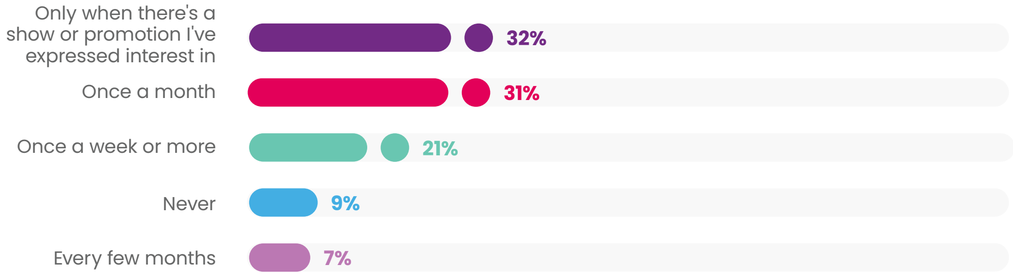
- **Adjust discovery channels based on who each event is for,** not a default mix genre.
- **Give teams the flexibility to vary outreach show by show,** instead of locking into one channel strategy.

PATRONS PREFER A STEADY COMMUNICATION RHYTHM

Strong, consistent communication is one of the simplest ways to keep audiences connected to your venue. Most attendees want regular updates: 52% choose weekly or monthly messages, and that trend holds across ages. Older audiences lean slightly higher (40–59: 55%, 60+: 52%), but younger buyers aren't far behind (39 and under: 48%).

When updates feel relevant, people stay engaged, revisit to buy, and trust the source behind the invitation. With simple segmentation, venues can keep communication meaningful without overwhelming inboxes.

How Often Would You Like to Receive Messages (Email or SMS) From a Venue or Show You're Interested in?



RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Keep a predictable cadence** (weekly or monthly) to build reliability and ongoing engagement.
- **Allow patrons to tailor their email preferences** to their desired frequency to avoid tune-out.
- **Pair consistent email updates with SMS** reminders when something matters (on-sale, reminder, update).

Insight 2

DISCOVERY HABITS CHANGE WITH AGE, AND TIMING IS EVERTHING

Audiences use many different sources to help them decide which event to attend next. Young buyers lean on social and word of mouth, while older patrons rely more on email and venue updates. But across every age group, one thing stays consistent: people want messages that show up when they're actually useful. Whether it's a weekly update or a well-timed alert tied to their interests, relevance and timing matter just as much as the channel itself.

AGE INFLUENCES HOW PEOPLE FIND EVENTS

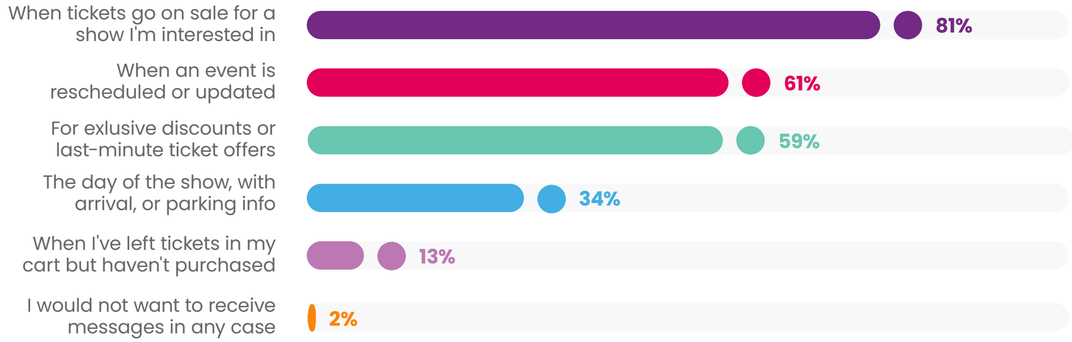
Younger audiences cast a wider net when discovering new events—splitting attention across social, word of mouth, and digital ads—while older audiences stay anchored to venue-driven channels like email. Email leads discovery for ages 40–59 (38%) and 60+ (46%), whereas social dominates for those 39 and under (62%).

At the same time, SMS is becoming a trusted source for event updates. People ignore generic texts, but they pay attention to messages that are clearly branded and relevant, making segmentation and a recognizable sender name increasingly important.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Use age-based segmentation** so each group hears from you in the channels they actually use.
- **Keep SMS on brand** and purposeful so younger audiences recognize and trust it.
- **Pair detailed emails with SMS** for quick touches to meet each group's preferences.

When Would Receiving Communication About an Event Feel Useful Rather Than Intrusive?



PEOPLE WANT MESSAGES WHEN THEY MATTER

Nobody wants more messages. But your patrons want useful ones. Here's when you should show up for fans: 81% want to hear when tickets go on sale for a show they care about, 60% want key event updates, and 59% value exclusive discounts or last-minute offers. Day-of logistics still help (33%), but generic messages like cart reminders barely land (13%).

Email is the preferred channel for nearly every event update, but SMS consistently ranks among the top three—especially when the message is just-in-time, clearly branded, and directly tied to something the patron wants.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Focus communication on high-value moments** like on-sale alerts and key updates.
- **Segment by interests and past behavior** to avoid over-messaging.
- **Use SMS for time-sensitive reminders** when it helps move patrons toward actions.

DECISION

TURNING INTEREST INTO PURCHASE

The decision to buy depends on how comfortable and informed people feel along the way. Clear guidance, familiar signals, and an easy purchase experience help patrons move forward, while uncertainty or friction can make them pause or walk away.

Insight 1

PEOPLE WANT HONEST, HELPFUL GUIDANCE BEFORE THE BUY

When audiences are deciding which tickets to purchase, they rely on signals they trust. Editorial reviews and emails from the venue and show remain the top nudges across most age groups, even for younger audiences who spend more time on social. Clear, credible communication helps people feel confident they're making the right choice, which directly influences conversions.

REVIEW AND EMAILS ARE THE TOP DECISION DRIVERS

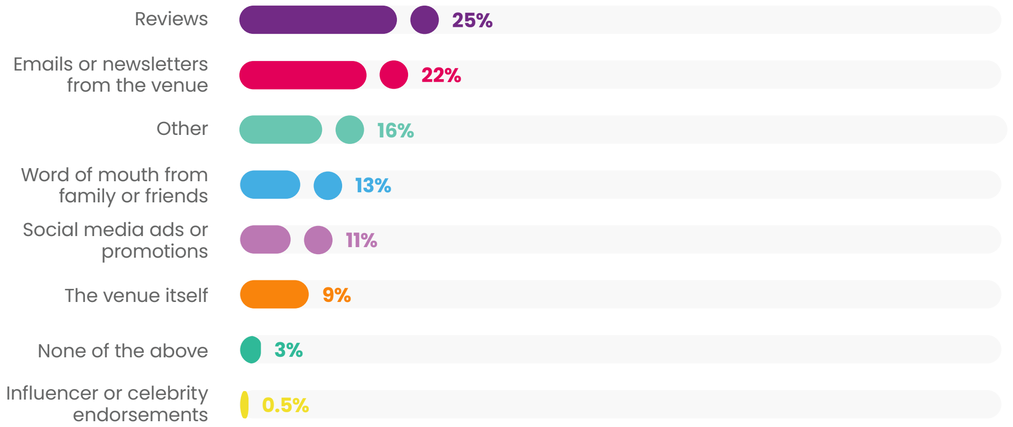
Reviews (25%) and emails (22%) influence ticket purchases most, with the largest portion of people turning to reviews before committing to a ticket. Online review influence rose 11% from 2024, making reviews one of the fastest-growing decision signals in the buying journey. Older audiences rely on them most — 50% of 60+ and 40% of ages 40-59 cite reviews and emails as key triggers.

But even younger buyers who lean heavily on social (72%) say reviews and emails impact their choices (35%). No surprise here. A quick scroll through TikTok shows how reviews are baked into much of the content these patrons consume.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Show reviews and fan quotes** on event pages and in email campaign.
- **Match review format to the audience** (long-form for older buyers, short social proof for younger ones).
- **Send confidence-boosting nudges** to hesitant buyers, using reminders, social proof, or last-chance cues to help them commit.

Which Of These Factors Influenced Your Most Recent Event Purchase?



BUYERS CONSULT TRUSTED OPINIONS, NO MATTER HOW THEY DISCOVER NEW EVENTS

Across virtually every discovery channel, reviews show up as one of the strongest drivers of purchase decisions. Whether someone finds a show through email, search, listings, or social, reviews consistently rank near the top of what actually pushes them to buy.

Even among highly social audiences, reviews still matter. People who find events on social may love the scroll, but they still want to see what others thought before they buy.

For those who find events on social, reviews are the #2 purchase trigger (24%), just behind social ads or promotions (30%)

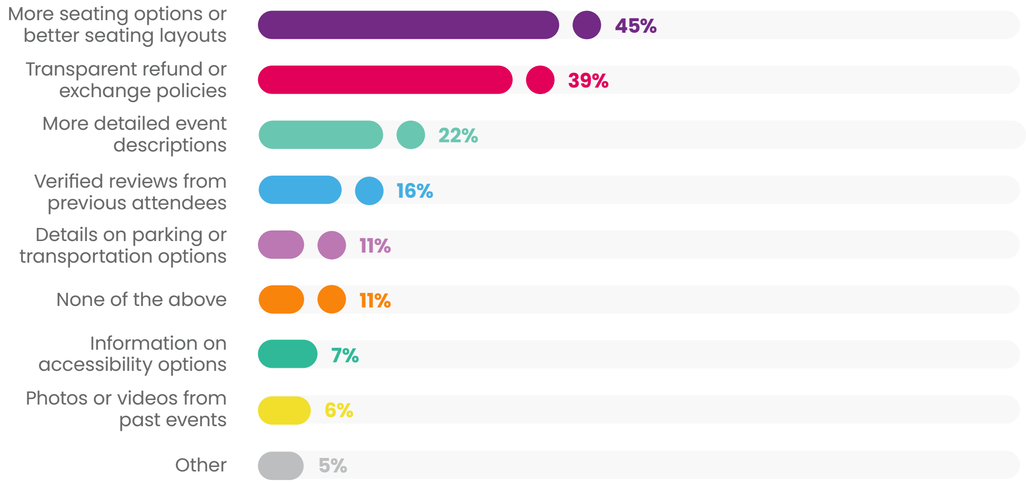
RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Keep review cues consistent** across email, social, listings, and checkout.
- **Surface top reviews** during the final steps of the purchase to reinforce trust.

CLARITY ON COST, SEATS, AND POLICIES REMOVES HESITATION

When ticket buyers hesitate, it's usually because something feels unclear or uncertain. Patrons say transparent pricing (61%) and easy refunds or exchanges (47%) would improve the buying experience most. And when it comes to feeling confident about a purchase, 45% want clearer seating and 39% want transparent refund or exchange policies

What Additional Information Makes You Feel More Confident in Purchasing Tickets for a Live Event?



RECOMMENDATIONS

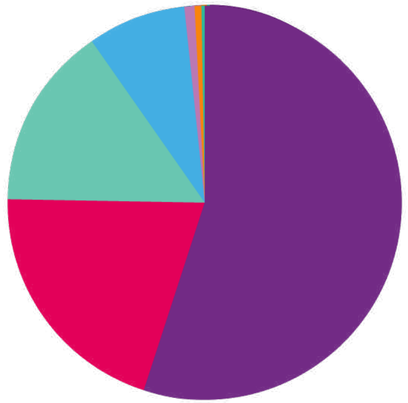
- **Display full pricing,** fees, and refund terms upfront to avoid surprises.
- **Be transparent -** name your fees for what the are, so consumers know where their money is going and why.
- **Use real-time, accurate seat maps** so buyers understand what the're selecting.

Insight 2

FRAUD CONCERNS RESHAPE BUYING BEHAVIOR

Fear of fraud has a big impact. Almost a third of people avoid sites that feel suspicious, choosing places they trust will keep their payment information—and their seat—safe. When tickets end up on risky resale sites, venues lose control and fans lose confidence, making it harder to entice them back.

Where Do You Usually Purchase Your Tickets?



55% Online, directly from the venue or performance

20% Online, from a 3rd party (TheaterMania, Stubhub, etc.)

15% In-person or over the phone with the box office

8% Other

1% Physical ticket resale near the venue

0.5% Through social media links (Facebook, Instagram, etc.)

0.1% From an online reseller (Craigslist, Facebook Marketplace, Kijiji)

FANS TRUST VENUES FAR MORE THAN THIRD-PARTY SITES

When buyers feel unsure about a ticket site, they overwhelmingly head straight to the venue instead. While 83% of people avoid third-party sites due to legitimacy or fraud concerns, most buy directly from the venue's site.

Audiences who frequently attend events behave the same way. People who attend seven or more live events per year usually purchase tickets directly from venue websites. About 56% choose the venue as their primary channel, with just 17% relying on third parties. When it comes to spending, higher-priced tickets are most often purchased directly from the venue, with about 60–62% of buyers in the top price tiers buying from venue websites rather than third-party sellers.

Across trust, frequency, and spend, the behavior is consistent. Buyers who are more engaged and willing to spend more money prefer to stay on the venue's own site, where the experience feels official, familiar, and safe. And where fans can access tickets without competing against bots or resellers.

Nearly one-third of buyers will abandon a purchase entirely if the site feels suspicious, and another 12% hesitate.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Keep checkout fully branded and consistent** so fans always recognize the official buying experience.
- **Reassure buyers with strong security cues and clear confirmations** that reinforce they're purchasing through the trusted, first-party channel.

PERCEIVED FRAUD RISK IS ALREADY CHANGING HOW PEOPLE BUY

Most people say they've never purchased a fake ticket. Even so, nearly 30% avoid sites that feel even slightly untrustworthy. Buyers are watching for signs that reassure them they're in the right place: whether the seller is official, the experience feels familiar and consistent, and the site looks and sounds like the venue they know.

When those signals are missing, people hesitate or walk away. As fraud becomes more sophisticated, venues can't wait for buyers to be affected firsthand. Perception alone is already shaping behavior.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Use familiar design and consistent messaging across ever touchpoint** so buyers always know they're interacting with the official venue.
- **Pay attention to where buyers pause or drop off,** and follow up with clear, official messages that confirm they're buying directly from the venue.

PROTECTING INVENTORY PROTECTS YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH FANS

Preventing fraud is only part of the story. When bots or resellers grab tickets before fans can, it creates scarcity and confusion, pushing buyers to chase tickets across unauthorized resale channels. Even when it's out of the venue's hands, customers blame the venue and lose confidence that they'll get a fair shot at reasonably priced seats.

RECOMMENDATIONS

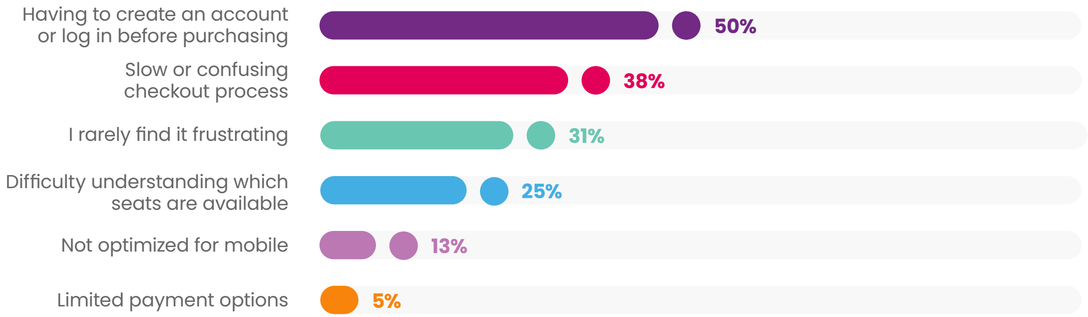
- **Protect inventory early with fraud prevention and bot + reseller management,** keeping tickets in official channels and in the hands of real fans.
- **Steer buyers clearly to safe, first-party purchase paths,** reducing resale confusion and reinforcing trust.

Insight 3

BUYERS WANT THE PURCHASE PROCESS TO BE EASIER

Buying a ticket shouldn't feel like work. But for many people, it does. Slow-loading pages, confusing seating charts, and surprise fees stop buyers in their tracks, no matter their age or experience level. When the process gets frustrating, fans don't hesitate to abandon their carts, which means small points of friction can turn into big revenue loss for venues.

What Usually Makes the Online Ticket Buying Process Feel Frustrating or Time-Consuming?

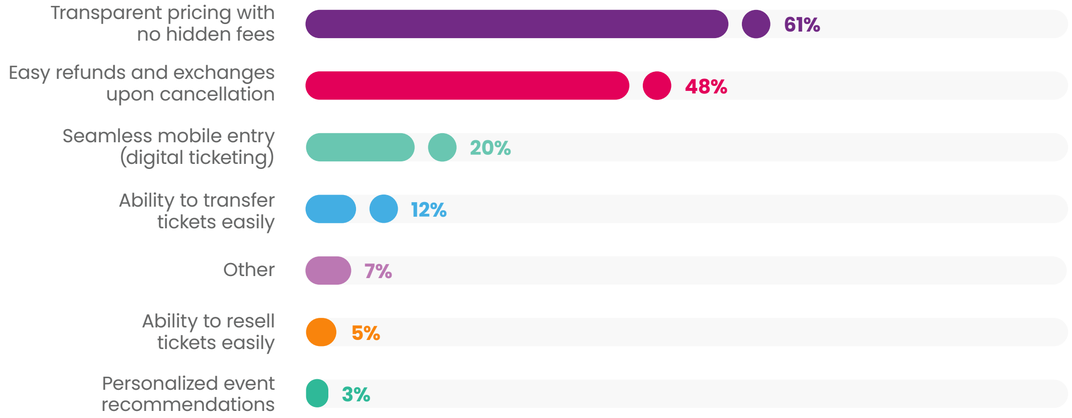


THE BIGGEST BARRIERS TO BUYING ARE BUILT INTO CHECKOUT

Many ticket failures happen because checkout gets in the way, not because someone loses interest. Nearly half of buyers have abandoned a purchase because they were forced to create an account, up to 40% leave when the process feels slow or confusing, and many get stuck when seats aren't clearly displayed. Older patrons tend to be more frustrated by these aspects of checkout than younger ones.

As mobile use continues to rise, expectations are rising with it. More people this year (7.5%) say an easier mobile purchase would improve the buying experience.

Which Option For Buying Tickets Would Improve Your Experience The Most?



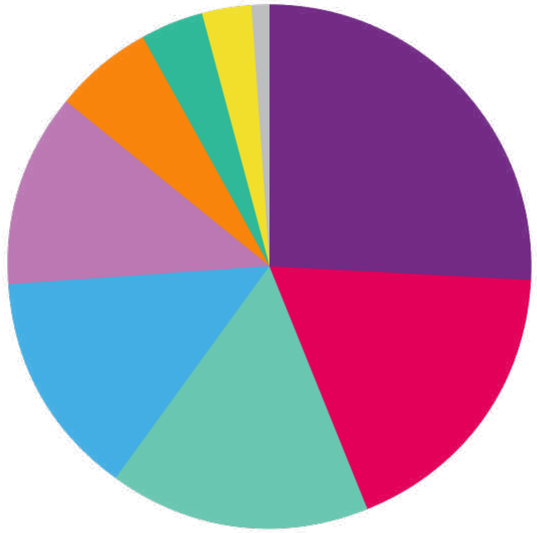
RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Streamline steps in checkout** so the path to purchase stays clean and intuitive.
- **Offer a guest checkout that requires only an email address and payment details,** while still capturing or linking the patron record on the backend. Use reliable, real-time seat maps and upfront pricing so buyers know what they're choosing.

TICKETING FEES ARE THE TOP DRIVER OF CART ABANDONMENT

Across price points and age groups, people walk away for the same reasons: high fees, confusing layouts, slow pages, and limited seat visibility.

What Is The Most Common Reason For Abandoning Your Shopping Cart Before Completing An Online Ticket Purchase?



- **26%** Exploring the event, but not ready to purchase
- **18%** I can't get the seats I want
- **16%** The fees were a surprise and too high
- **14%** The fees were not a surprise, but they were too high
- **12%** Frustrating Online Experience
- **6%** I never abandon my shopping cart, I always complete a purchase
- **4%** No options for refunds or exchanges after purchase
- **3%** Other
- **1%** I choose to purchase tickets to a different event instead

61% of buyers say clearer pricing and fees would make it easier to complete their purchase.

Younger buyers abandon their cart when browsing on mobile becomes annoying (43% of ages 26–39), and older buyers abandon when seat options feel limited, or the experience feels too frustrating (15% of 60+)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Be upfront about fees** and explain them clearly, so buyers know what they're paying for before they commit.
- **Design for mobile first** so the experience matches how most people browse and buy.
- **Keep pages fast and layouts simple** to eliminate the workflow drops that frustrate every age group.

Insight 4

PRICE INFLUENCES WHEN PEOPLE BUY

When pricing and timing don’t line up, venues either leave money on the table or make buying feel harder than it needs to be. That’s because people treat expensive events differently. Higher-priced experiences like operas and musicals are planned earlier and bought with more intention. Lower-priced events are typically decided closer to the date, when convenience and availability matter more.

NO SINGLE SALES WINDOW WORKS FOR EVERY EVENT

The kind of event you’re promoting plays a role in how far ahead people are willing to commit. This is why timing your outreach matters as much as what you say. People buy opera and dance tickets far in advance, while sports and museum visits are decided closer to the date. Theatergoers fall in between, while concert ticket sales stretch across the buying cycle rather than peaking at any single time.

Event Type Sets the Buying Timeline

ACTION SEEKERS
Most purchase within one month (24%)

AVID LEARNERS
Buy from same day to one month before (70%)

CONCERT LOVERS
Buy 1-6 months out (70%)

CULTURE CRAVERS
Purchase 1-2 months out (70%)

CLASSICAL CONNOISSEURS
42% buy tickets four months or more before the event, with 19% buying seven months out.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Align on-sale timing to the type of event,** instead of a one-size-fits-all calendar.
- **Design your sales and marketing to serve both planners and last-minute buyers,** depending on the experience you're selling.

BIG SPENDERS BUY EARLY. BARGAIN HUNTERS BUY LATE.

Price is a strong signal of when people commit to buy. Higher-priced tickets are more likely to be purchased well in advance, while more lower-priced tickets are purchased closer to the event date. Tickets priced at $200-$250 are most often purchased one to six months out and show little last-minute activity, whereas $10–$20 tickets are typically purchased in the final week and day-of the event. Midrange tickets (around $100) tend to peak one to two months before the show.

Because higher-priced buyers tend to purchase first, venues that discount too early risk losing full-value sales to people who would have paid more.

Typically, How Far In Advance Do You Purchase Event Tickets?

27% 1-2 months before the event

23% 8 days - 1 month before the event

18% 2-3 months before the event

12% 4-6 months before the event

12% 1-7 days before the event

5% 7 months or more before the event

3% Day of the event

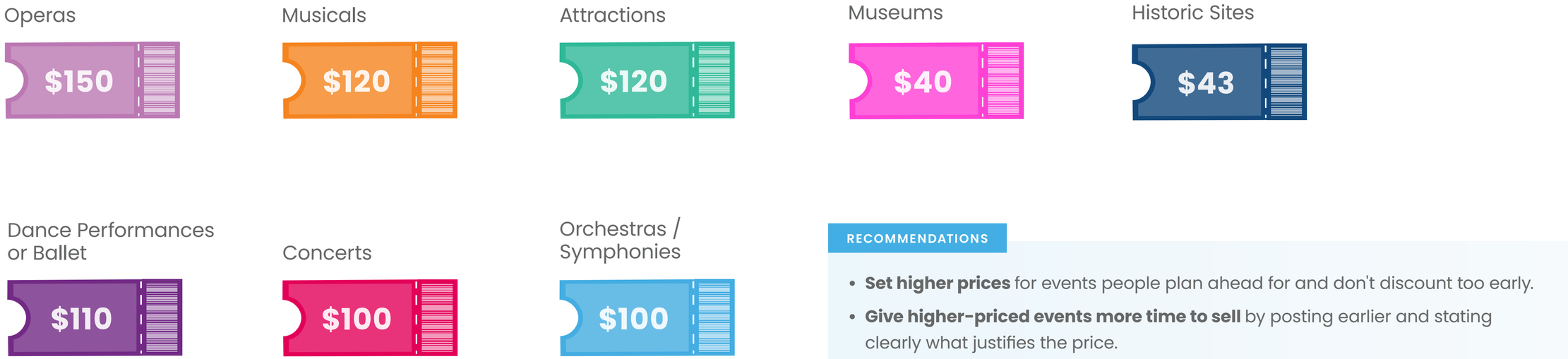
RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Release inventory with intention.** Protect premium windows before offering discounts.
- **Use flexible pricing and packaging tools** to match demand patterns across buyer groups.
- **Build demand before tickets go on sale** with waitlists, gamified marketing, or early access to capture higher willingness to pay and increase ticket revenue.

AUDIENCES SPEND THE MOST FOR OPERAS AND MUSICALS

As we've seen with planning and purchase timing, events people commit to earlier tend to support higher ticket prices. Operas and musicals sit at the top of the spend range, with median prices of $150 and $120. This lines up with the buying behavior seen elsewhere in the data. Events with shorter decision windows have lower price points, where purchases are more last-minute.

Average Ticket Price By Event Type



RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Set higher prices** for events people plan ahead for and don't discount too early.
- **Give higher-priced events more time to sell** by posting earlier and stating clearly what justifies the price.
- **Keep lower-commitment events easy to buy,** with simple checkout and last-minute details.

EXPERIENCE

WHAT SETS THE TONE FOR THE EVENT

People remember how an event felt long after they leave the venue. From the moments leading up to the show to how smoothly the night unfolds, every detail counts toward giving patrons a reason to come back.

Insight 1

THE FULL SHOW EXPERIENCE DRIVES REPEAT ATTENDANCE

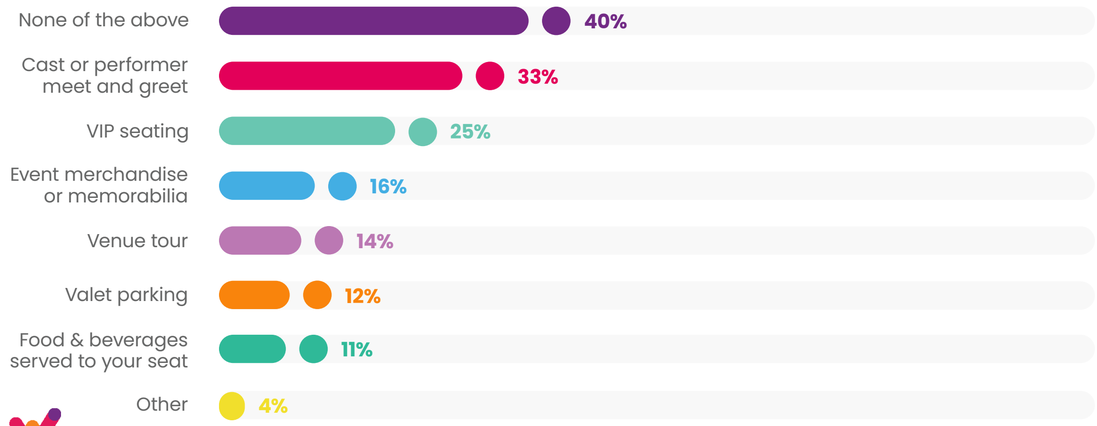
When people think about a great night out, it's not just the performance that makes it memorable. Audiences crave add-ons that bring them closer to the artistry itself. At the same time, the biggest pain points happen outside the venue: parking, entry, and exits. Demand for premium extras is concentrated among Concert lovers and theater fans, making targeted offers essential.

THE MOST DESIRED ADD-ONS DEEPEN THE ARTISTIC EXPERIENCE

When people choose to spend more, they want upgrades that bring them closer to the performance. A cast or performer meet-and-greet is the top add-on (33%), followed by VIP seating (25%). Practical upgrades like valet parking (12%) or food delivered to the seat (11%) lag far behind, and even merchandise interest is modest at 16%.

These preferences show that audiences see add-ons as part of the storytelling and connection, seeking moments that feel personal and immersive.

Which Of The Below Experiences, If Any, Would You Be Most Interested In Purchasing Along With Tickets?



RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Focus premium add-ons** on musical/theater fans where interest is highest.
- **Bundle VIP extras** to lift revenue from high-value buyers.
- **Promote upgrades early** in emails and branded SMS so fans see them before purchase.

THE BIGGEST PAIN POINTS SIT OUTSIDE THE VENUE

Parking, entry, and exit, rather than the performance itself, define how smooth the night feels. The top frustrations all happen before or after the show: 43% cite parking or transportation as least convenient, 29% struggle with entry lines, and 27% feel the bottleneck on the way out.

In-venue issues like food or finding a seat barely register by comparison, which means fixing the "getting there and getting in" moments should be a priority for venues. Clear updates—especially by text—and seamless digital ticketing can remove friction early in the journey.

Which Parts of Attending a Live Event Feel the Least Convenient Today?

43% Parking or transportation

29% Getting into the venue or scanning tickets

27% Exiting the venue after the show

19% None of the above – everything is convenient

16% Finding event information (schedule, runtine, etc.)

11% Buying food or drinks

9% Other

4% Finding my seat

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Send day-of texts** with clear parking, entry, and timing information.
- **Use digital ticketing** to seed up lines and reduce friction.
- **Keep logistical updates consistent** and well-timed from purchase to curtain call.

PREMIUM EXTRAS APPEAL MOSTLY TO MUSICAL, OPERA, AND SYMPHONY FANS

Premium add-ons are driven almost entirely by musical, opera, and symphony attendees. Within this group, 61% want venue tours, 54% want merchandise, 53% want cast meet-and-greets, 41% want food delivered to their seat, and 42% want VIP seating and valet parking. Theater-goers show similar preferences, but at lower levels, while most other event types show little to no interest in upsells.

When venues target these high-interest segments with tailored offers, they unlock meaningful incremental revenue and strengthen loyalty among their most passionate fans.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Target premium offers –** tours, merch, meet-and-greets – to concert lovers and theater fans.
- **Highlight these upgrades** prominently in pre-event campaigns to boost uptake.
- **Use segmentation** to tailor extras to the audiences most likel to buy them.

RETURN

KEEP AUDIENCES COMING BACK

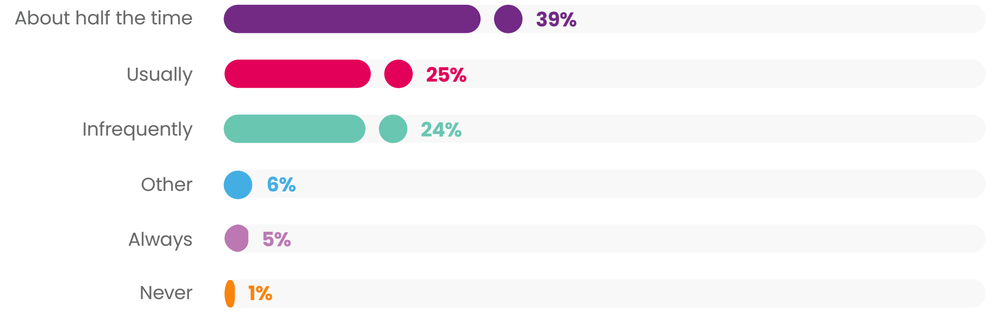
People consistently show up to places that feel familiar and welcoming. Venues earn repeat visits by staying in touch, showing up at the right moments, and giving audiences reasons to choose them again.

Insight 1

EVEN LOYAL FANS SHOP AROUND

Venues build loyal followings, but even regulars don't always return to the same place. Only about 30% visit the same venue consistently, and the majority say they attend a venue "half the time" or less. That means most fans behave like free agents—following the show, not the venue. Strengthening loyalty requires intentional communication, ongoing engagement, and benefits that feel personal and worth coming back for.

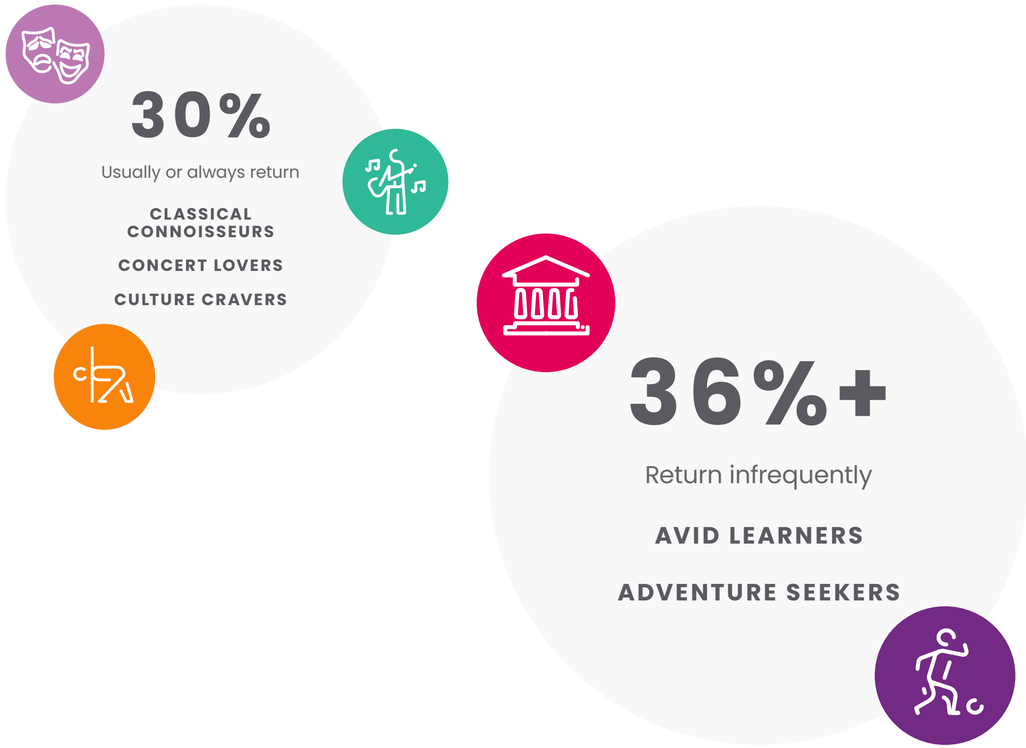
How Often Do You Attend Live Events At The Same Venue Or Theater?



MOST AUDIENCES AREN'T REALIABLY CHOOSING THE SAME VENUE

To better understand loyalty for live events, marketers need to look at how often people come back to the same venue. Regardless of the type of event attended, patrons say they return to the same venue only "about half the time," ranging from 38% of Avid Learners to 51% of Classical Connoisseurs. Even in segments with higher repeat rates, only about 3 in 10 say they usually or always revisit the same venue.

Loyalty by Event Type



RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Monitor buying and loyalty behavior** by segment, adjusting messaging, timing, and follow-ups to fit the experience you're promoting.
- **Test deeper engagement where people are already coming back,** then scale what works.

PEOPLE COME BACK FOR DIFFERENT REASONS

Loyalty hinges on how well you segment and interact with your audience. Knowing what brings people back makes it easier to turn occasional visits into regular ones.

- **Frequent attendees** respond most to new shows and flexible packages or subscriptions. They want value and variety.
- **"About half the time" attendees** return for discounts and strong programming. They're on the fence and need a nudge.
- **Infrequent attendees** need affordability first. After price, discovery support and social experiences help tip them back into attendance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Match offers to behavior** with packages for high-frequency buyers, and deals plus discover tools for casual attendees.
- **Make the next step obvious** with personalized follow-ups based on what they've attended before.
- **Highlight social and experiential benefits** to convert occasional visitors into more regular patrons.

VENUE LOYALTY VARIES BY GEOGRAPHY

Loyalty looks very different depending on where people live. States with dense cultural ecosystems like New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut show lower loyalty. People venue-hop because they have options.

States with fewer competing venues — Florida, Georgia, Texas, Callifornia — show higher repeat behavior simply because choices are fewer.

This doesn't mean loyalty can't grow in competitive markets. It just means venues must differentiate through experience, communication, and benefits, rather than relying on location convenience.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Strengthen the relationship, not the radius.** Clear communication, seamless logistics, and perks matter more in crowded markets.
- **Personalize recommendations** to stand out when audiences have many choices.
- **Create community touchpoints** (insider events, member perks) that give people a reason to keep coming back to your venue.

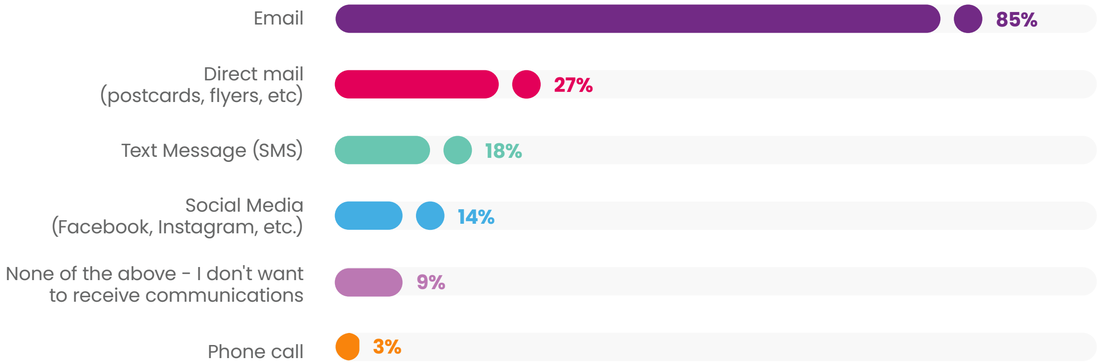
Insight 2

EMAIL KEEPS PEOPLE CONNECTED LONG AFTER THE CURTAIN FALLS

The vast majority (85%) of attendees prefer email for venue communication, nearly five times higher than any other digital option. Direct mail still holds meaningful weight at 27%, while SMS and social each sit below 20%. Only 9% opt out entirely, showing that audiences want ongoing communication, as long as it comes through a channel they trust.

For loyalty, this matters. Regular emails from the venue keep audiences in the loop and more likely to become a repeat patron.

How do you Prefer to Hear From a Venue or Show You've Attended or Expressed Interest in?



RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Keep emails as your primar loyalty channels** so patrons always know where to look for updates.
- **Use segmentation to keep messages relevant,** sending different updates to frequent attendees, occasional visitors, and new buyers.
- **Reinforce trust with consistent branding and clear information,** especially in confirmations, follow-ups, and post-show outreach.

Insight 3

TIMELY, RELEVANT MESSAGES BRING PEOPLE BACK

Most people prefer communication that's directly tied to something they care about: 31% only want messages when a show or promotion matters to them, and another 31% prefer a steady monthly rhythm. Weekly updates appeal to just 21%.

What marketers need to remember is that people stick with venues that respect their attention. Targeted, well-timed updates keep the conversation going, making audiences more likely to come back for the next show.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Use on-sale and new-show alerts as loyalty touchpoints,** reminding past attendees that they're first to know.
- **Re-engage lapsed buyers with interest-based nudges,** such as updates tied to the genres they previously attended.
- **Create a predictable communication rhythm** that audiences can rely on – monthly for most, occasional for those who only want big news.

CONCLUSION

EVERY TICKET HAS A STORY

Today's audiences don't want to be sold to; they want to be understood, and venues that recognize this are redefining loyalty. Trust has become the primary driver of repeat engagement, built through ongoing relationships rather than one-off promotions. Clear communication and streamlined ticketing are now foundational to rebuilding attendance, sustaining engagement, and giving patrons compelling reasons to return again and again.

The respondents for this report consists of 1,550+ TheaterMania subscribers. Participants were not paid or incentivized to respond to this 30-question survey.

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