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**Covid-19 & Broadway: A Comparative Analysis of the Shifting Marketing Strategies of
Playbill and The Broadway League**

Leah Gaffney

Advertising & Integrated Marketing Communications, Arts & Entertainment Management

Department of Marketing, Pace University

Professor Chris Ramos

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Abstract

On March 12th, 2020, all Broadway productions closed their theaters due to the declaration of the Covid-19 global pandemic. This shutdown led to companies in the Broadway industry transitioning to nontraditional marketing strategies. This paper will outline how the Covid-19 pandemic led to changes in strategic marketing decisions and compare the motivations of these decisions for two Broadway companies: Playbill and The Broadway League. Previous literature denotes changes to marketing strategies as a result of other historic events in the industry, and current news sources provide industry insight into the campaign discussions. Primary research will be conducted through one-on-one structured interviews with employees of these companies directly involved in marketing strategy and implementation. This thesis aims to compare the marketing responses to Covid-19 of Playbill and The Broadway League and determine whose efforts were more impactful to the industry. The goal of this thesis is also to understand future marketing trends as the Covid-19 pandemic becomes more manageable and a “new normal” emerges. Based on the research and interviews conducted, one can infer that the changes in marketing from the pandemic will evolve marketing into a hybrid strategy, combining the newly established digital realm, with the former traditional marketing. Nevertheless, the pandemic is currently still impacting the world and constantly evolving, so discoveries will occur throughout this thesis, and the research will be updated to reflect this as much as possible.

Key Words: theater, Broadway, Playbill, The Broadway League, marketing, social media, pandemic, Covid-19, digital marketing, campaign strategy

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Introduction

While the Covid-19 pandemic officially entered the United States in January of 2020, the pandemic has impacted industries worldwide since the fall of 2019, when cases were first identified. All industries were challenged by the abrupt shutdown that occurred in March of 2020 when companies were tasked with ensuring the safety of all involved parties, while still ensuring demand and production were met. On March 12th, 2020, The Broadway League announced the closing of the entire theater industry due to concerns of audience members contracting the virus while attending these shows. What was originally estimated as a few weeks of temporary closures led to a shutdown of over a year and a half, with productions still working on reopening currently.

The length of the Covid-19 Broadway shutdown has never been seen before, even amidst other major events throughout history. The theatrical industry thrives on the physical connection between performers and audience members, in which each party establishes a mutually beneficial relationship of empathy. During the pandemic, companies had to develop ways to supplement this interactive experience and connection to ensure that the industry could remain financially stable. Throughout this study, any reference to the theater/Broadway industry encompasses all theatrical productions on Broadway, Off-Broadway, regional venues, and touring. On Broadway refers to the theatrical productions performed in the designated Broadway theaters. These professional theaters must seat 500 or more individuals, be in accordance with industry union guidelines, and should be in the general vicinity of Broadway and the Theater District— “From West 40th Street to West 54th Street, and from Sixth Avenue to Eighth Avenue” (Robinson, 2019). Off-Broadway productions must be in theaters in New York City, with contracts defining them as Off-Broadway productions and a seating capability of 99 to 499 seats.

Also, “Only Broadway shows can be nominated for Tony Awards (unless a special award is being handed out that requires an exception). Broadway and Off-Broadway shows can be nominated for Drama Desk Awards” (Robinson, 2019). It is typical for Off-Broadway productions to transition to Broadway venues once the show receives further support and recognition. Before being Off-Broadway, many productions begin in regional, smaller venues. Throughout the pandemic, theatrical companies began to highlight these smaller-scale productions and involve them in larger theatrical industry discussions. Touring productions are defined by Broadway.org (n.d.) as “companies [that] travel the country, performing for days or weeks at a time in a particular city before moving on to the next.” These shows maintain the same script and staging as the original Broadway production in order to make the Broadway experience more accessible to those outside New York City.

In addition, Playbill is a reputable news publication for the theater industry and a household name for many fans who attend professional productions. Playbill writer Logan Culwell-Block describes the evolution of this household name; founded in 1885, Playbill originally began publishing physical programs for Broadway shows highlighting cast and production members. It was not until the 1930s that the Playbill logo was placed on these programs (Culwell-Block, 2018). The copyrighted Playbill programs contain information on new productions and individuals within the industry, biographies of cast and production staff, run-time and context for the show, and a background on the venue. In 1994, Playbill created Playbill On-Line, the first virtual hub for all theatrical news. Playbill remains the top source of news for the industry and is constantly expanding the listings and news information it provides (Simonson, 2004).

The Broadway League is a company representing the entire Broadway industry as it is the national trade association for the theater industry, previously known as The League of American Theaters and Producers. Traditionally, The League promotes the Broadway industry, mainly targeting tourists and fans of the industry; individual shows manage their marketing promotions either in-house or using theater industry agencies. The Broadway League's marketing focuses primarily on owned media events like the Tony Awards, representative of all professional theatrical productions. To generate interest in Broadway theater, The Broadway League has shared press releases and industry announcements in the form of printed magazines, newspapers, and direct mail, ultimately establishing the industry in people's minds.

Literature Review

Historical Literature Review:

Broadway is an industry that thrives on being together and connecting in a physical setting. Therefore, based on the nature of the theater industry, the Covid-19 shutdown is an entirely unprecedented occurrence. Comparatively, there have been other instances of brief shutdowns, including in 2001, after the September 11 terrorist attacks. After a decision made by The Broadway League (The League) in 2001, then known as the League of American Theaters and Producers, all theater productions shut down for a few days, though this was not a government-mandated shut down like the Covid-19 pandemic has been. In the months following this shutdown, audience attendance drastically declined, causing the city to come together with The League for a marketing campaign entitled "Spend Your Regards to Broadway." A description of this campaign was described by Marvin Carlson in his work the *Theater Survey*. Carlson describes:

“On Broadway the emphasis was upon luring audiences back into escapist entertainment and to support the damaged tourist industry. In mid-December, with the Christmas vacations coming up, the administration of Mayor Rudolph Giuliani spent \$2.5 million dollars to buy fifty thousand theatre tickets to Broadway shows... [Tickets] were dedicated to a program entitled ‘Spend Your Regards to Broadway,’ designed to stimulate tourism and shopping” (Carlson, 2004).

The “Spend Your Regards to Broadway” campaign was a promotional effort that encouraged individuals to spend money in New York City for free Broadway tickets in return. This consumer promotion led to successful box office records and was a more experiential campaign compared to the more traditional advertising typically seen with Broadway. The 9/11 terrorist attacks were a unique occurrence that required specialized promotions to reignite interest in attending Broadway shows. With the unparalleled impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, similar shifts in marketing are necessary.

The late 20th and early 21st century have identified another shift in theater marketing efforts due to what scholar Emmanuel Kessous termed as the “participatory attention economy.” To describe this, I draw on the work of Kessous in a section of the text *The Economics of Attention*. Kessous (2015) explains, “The term ‘attention economy’ is commonly used nowadays to refer to the economy of digital worlds and especially of the internet. It relates to a longstanding idea, put forward by Herbert Simon, that in a situation of informational abundance, scarcity lies with the processing of that information” (p. 77). In his work, Kessous discusses the increasing clutter within marketing due to escalating digitalization. For marketing campaigns to successfully reach an audience, they must capture the target’s attention in a way that differentiates itself from other promotional materials seen online.

Capturing audience attention is especially important for the theater industry, which consists of many cultural organizations that have been viewed as outdated. Cultural organizations are those organizations that have the purpose of advancing the community. In a report from the *International Journal of Arts Management*, this concept is discussed extensively by authors Angela Besana, Anna Maria Bagnasco, Annamaria Esposito, and Alessia Calzolari (2018) who emphasize the importance of social media marketing for cultural organizations, especially theaters. These scholars describe:

“If they are to survive, cultural organizations, like other players in the economy that are facing a downturn and increased competition, must be included in marketing theories, concepts, strategies, and techniques...These authors focus on the management of arts and culture in general, and agree that ‘traditional’ marketing concepts cannot be applied to cultural organizations without being adapted to their needs” (p. 23).

The article continues to explain how cultural organizations are facing difficulty adapting to their targets’ needs because of unlimited resources available. Due to this, the attention economy has been a threat to the success of theater companies. Nevertheless, the authors argue that transitioning to digital marketing from more traditional promotions is the cost-effective solution to overcoming the attention economy. With theater specifically, Besana et al. (2018) explain, “The objectives of social media marketing are to strengthen audience relations, enhance customer care and customer satisfaction, engage new audiences, and promote a virtual place to extend the physical boundaries of the city or town” (p.25). It is clear that since the turn of the century, companies within the theater industry have been encouraged to switch to more digital marketing tactics.

While occurring naturally due to the threatening attention economy, the digital transition of marketing strategies for the theater industry was expedited as a strategic response to the Covid-19 pandemic. As discussed previously, digital marketing has allowed the theater industry to connect with audience members on a level besides experiencing a performance. In a dissertation discussing arts organizations' adaptation tactics for Covid-19, Jenna Tormey (2021) describes:

“Moving digital allows companies to reach a larger audience online through the use of social media than they would be able to with in-person gatherings. Many organizations have had or recently developed a presence on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter where they can take advantage of live streaming. We see the use of online media in many industries including museums that have implemented online gallery viewings and online programming for visitors” (p. 10).

With no possible way of reaching the attention of potential audience members in person, the industry was forced to bring the theatrical experience online. Though digital marketing was increasing in prevalence before the Covid-19 pandemic, a complete transition of the experience online would not have occurred in such a rapid fashion.

Industry-Based Discourse Review:

Discussion of the Broadway and theatrical industry spans across mediums, with prominent discourse taking place through news articles, blogs, press releases, and magazine periodicals. To develop a holistic view of the past and current marketing strategies of Playbill and The Broadway League, these mediums were analyzed to examine transitional tactics accomplished by the two companies. As previously stated, marketing strategies of the Broadway industry have historically centered around traditional print and television advertisements. This is

especially the case for a publishing agency like Playbill. In American business magazine, *Fast Company*, Christopher Zara (2020) describes Playbill before the pandemic; Zara explains:

“In a typical month, the publication is distributed to more than 100 venues, and the company derives as much as 75% of its revenues from its print product. Before the pandemic, the magazine had occupied an enviable position at the intersection of theater and print media. At a time when print magazines are seeing ever-diminishing returns, Playbill’s cozy distribution arrangement with Broadway and off-Broadway theaters—in addition to many regional theaters—gave it access to the ultimate captive audience.”

The small Playbill booklets practically forced upon you at each show are regarded as an instant keepsake to fans, making them “one of the most visible components of the theatergoing experience” (*Ibid*). While most print marketing tactics are discarded or seen as outdated, audience members save the Playbill booklets, with many developing a collection of them.

Traditionally, the publishing side of Broadway has been dominated by Playbill’s print content marketing tactics, with the company having no real competitors except for the former publication *Stagebill*. With that being said, there is limited information open to the public regarding the performance metrics for this content marketing, as Playbill is a private entity.

Since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, Playbill has had to transform itself from strictly a publisher for Broadway shows to a *producer* of shows- a realm they now had to face competition in. This is a direct result of the company no longer having the means to distribute its materials through print with the closure of Broadway productions. In looking at this new producer role, NPR interviewer Jeff Lunden (2020) conversed with Playbill’s vice president, Alex Birsh, who commented that the company lost “75 to 80% of our revenue because of theater being closed” (2020). To counteract these losses, Playbill began to expand its presence digitally,

beginning with live streaming performances and concerts on the website. They also continue to post constant updates regarding individual shows during the pandemic. All of this new digital content led to an immense uptick in viewers; in fact, “Before the pandemic, Playbill.com attracted about 2 million unique users a month. Now, it’s over 3 million. During the pandemic, Ruthie Fierberg, Playbill’s features editor, has begun producing online performances for the website” (Lunden, 2020). Funds that were raised through these online performances have been donated to The Actors Fund, in an attempt to help struggling performers. Engagement is also said to have increased with online quizzes, contests, and reposted photo galleries, though the exact metrics of this engagement are not explicitly stated. In terms of social media, “Alex Birsh [Playbill’s Chief Digital Officer] calls the Instagram page ‘the fastest-growing part of our business,’ with 674,000 followers and counting” (Lunden, 2020). While there remain to be positive increases in engagement seen by Playbill, there still exists the threat of holding on to the attention this new media has brought in with increased advertising clutter.

Playbill has indeed seen a significant change in its marketing strategy, more specifically the shift from traditional to digital. The Broadway League has shifted similarly, as seen with their program Broadway Bridges. This program was developed by the League and the New York City government in 2017 to bring students from the five boroughs to attend Broadway shows at a discounted or free rate. In a press release by The Broadway League, it is described:

“With the ongoing Broadway shutdown due to COVID-19 and cancellation of all school field trips, The Broadway League, with the support of the New York City Department of Education (DOE) and the United Federation of Teachers (UFT), will be offering all NYC Public School 10th graders free streaming to three previously recorded Broadway and

West End shows – Memphis, Newsies: The Broadway Musical, and Kinky Boots – through school participation and sign up with Broadway Bridges this spring” (2021).

Previously, Broadway Bridges was a promotional campaign for students to attend Broadway shows at a discounted rate, with the appeal that young adults who wouldn’t normally afford to attend such Broadway shows would have the ability to do so. The Broadway League reports positive success with this campaign, stating, “The cumulative total of participants is over 46,000 and the program has experienced 388% growth in three seasons since it started” (*Ibid*).

With its continued success, the League needed to find a way to offer this experience virtually. Therefore, since live shows were not running at the time, in March of 2021 this promotional campaign was transitioned to a digital initiative.

In further comparison of The Broadway League’s marketing before and during the pandemic, it was revealed that the company showcased a change in the focus and targeting of their campaigns. To outline this, I draw from *The New York Times* article “How a TV Ad Enticed Broadway Crowds Right After 9/11” to describe The League’s “I Love New York” campaign as a result of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. This was traditional event marketing that took place in 2001, prior to the digitalization shift seen in recent years. In describing the campaign, author Casey Mink states, “But audiences were hesitant to return, and many shows performed to near-empty houses for weeks. To encourage attendance, the theater’s brightest stars — many in costume — gathered in a mostly deserted Times Square on Sept. 28 to perform the John Kander and Fred Ebb song ‘New York, New York’” (2021). The campaign was targeted toward tourists and those who were outside of the New York metropolitan area and was displayed on major television networks and in movie theaters. With high reluctance to travel post- Sept.11, this commercial

was placed in nationwide spots to generate interest across the country. Overall, the campaign increased gross ticket sales nearly three times.

This campaign, in coordination with the “Spend Your Regards to Broadway” campaign was successful in bringing audience members back to Broadway after the terrorist attacks. Nevertheless, the Covid-19 pandemic brought an entirely different reluctance to attend Broadway shows, both in traveling to Broadway and seeing the actual show. As Ruthie Fierberg (2021) of *Medium* describes, “When it comes to air travel, distance between parties, the ability to leave if uncomfortable, and the ability to move outdoors are not options” (2021). There exist similar Covid-19 worries with subway and train transportation, though typically in a shorter time frame. Besides travel, theater fans even within the tri-state area were hesitant to attend Broadway shows due to the threat of contracting the virus. Therefore, the marketing tactics of The Broadway League had to be altered to bring *anyone* into the theater. In an interview conducted by *Deadline Hollywood*’s Greg Evans with Charlotte St. Martin, President of The Broadway League, St. Martin describes, “We have nine marketing task forces, including the research one and the advertising one and the creative one and the digital one and the developing partnerships one. Each discipline has an enormous group of leaders who are involved” (2020). With virtually no demand for the theater industry, The Broadway League needed to reassess all tasks in-house and ultimately decided to shift their target audience to be more universal. As a result, the hybrid “This Is Broadway” campaign was released by The Broadway League in coordination with the local government. Similar to the campaigns after 9/11, “This Is Broadway” begins with a video spot showcasing Broadway individuals. This video was placed, instead, on social media, on websites, and in out-of-home mediums like subway and bus stations. On top of this, Paul Art Smith of *Broadway Direct* reported on the campaign:

“This is Broadway initiative also will include a comprehensive theatre site, a Broadway ticket contest through Audience Rewards, a lighting of the Empire State Building with Chicago stars Ana Villafañe and Bianca Marroquín, and the Curtain Up! festival, a free three-day festival that will include interactive experiences, panels, live concerts, and performances culminating in a concert celebrating the entirety of the Broadway industry in the heart of Times Square” (2021).

In using a cross-platform approach, The Broadway League was able to achieve an integrated marketing campaign that reached theater fans within the New York City area through the in-person installations and those externally through digital platforms who, perhaps, are unwilling to travel. Not only did The Broadway League’s target audience expand, but the company also expanded its marketing tactics in a drastic attempt to generate interest globally. One aspect of their marketing strategy that did remain was the emotional themes of happiness and togetherness, as seen in both the “I Love New York Theater” and “This Is Broadway” engagements.

Since this hybrid campaign ran through the end of 2021, current analytics on its engagement have not yet been reported. Still, Broadway’s weekly grosses have been reported throughout the campaign’s running time, and potentially indicate that the campaigns were successful for increasing traction to Broadway. At the beginning of February 2022, Playbill consolidated and released a list of Broadway’s weekly grosses thus far, reported by The Broadway League. These grosses begin mid-October and go until the present time, as shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1:

	Gross	Diff \$	Attendance	% Capacity	Diff % Cap	Performances	# Shows
Week Ending 1/30/2022	\$15,038,225	- \$1,456,064	139,584	73.94%	-1.40%	147	19
Week Ending 1/23/2022	\$16,494,289	- \$2,002,400	152,135	75.34%	8.89%	159	21
Week Ending 1/16/2022	\$18,496,689	\$244,955	162,566	66.45%	4.55%	196	25
Week Ending 1/9/2022	\$18,251,734	- \$8,054,918	156,986	61.90%	-11.95%	204	27
Week Ending 1/2/2022	\$26,306,652	\$3,795,025	179,036	73.85%	-8.73%	201	30
Week Ending 12/19/2021	\$22,511,627	- \$8,022,182	184,227	82.58%	-2.53%	191	31
Week Ending 12/12/2021	\$30,533,809	\$4,319,074	240,602	85.11%	2.05%	235	32
Week Ending 12/5/2021	\$26,214,735	- \$6,328,835	210,795	83.06%	0.29%	217	29
Week Ending 11/28/2021	\$32,543,570	\$7,469,522	238,354	82.77%	2.30%	245	33
Week Ending 11/21/2021	\$25,074,048	-\$491,593	212,819	80.47%	-5.72%	227	32
Week Ending 11/14/2021	\$25,565,641	\$2,711,046	214,681	86.19%	4.69%	214	31
Week Ending 11/7/2021	\$22,854,595	\$3,191,157	193,303	81.50%	3.98%	207	30
Week Ending 10/31/2021	\$19,663,438	- \$2,501,164	168,169	77.52%	-7.64%	183	27
Week Ending 10/24/2021	\$22,164,602	n/a	176,083	85.16%	n/a	174	26

From "Broadway's Weekly Grosses Report," by The Broadway League, 2022,

(<https://playbill.com/article/broadways-weekly-grosses-report>).

Between mid-November and early December, Broadway saw its highest gross earnings and consistently high attendance. Thus, these increases in performances may have been the direct result of The Broadway League's campaigns. In the middle of December, capacity and grosses dropped with the new Omicron strain of the virus.

While these reports are positive considering that shows were not running for several months, there remain negative opinions regarding returning to watch Broadway shows. In Ruthie Fierberg's (2021) article urging arts organizations to revamp their marketing messaging, she explains:

“A survey of TDF members conducted in mid-November 2021 by WolfBrown shows only 49 percent of TDF members (a vested group of theatregoers) have returned to the theatre. Only an additional 20 percent said they would go between now and January (and that was before Omicron), 8 percent said they'd return between February and March, and a whopping 24 percent said they would not be willing until April 2022 or later.”

These survey results indicate the continued reluctance of theatergoers to attend live Broadway shows, even with marketing materials encouraging them to go. These results raise the question of the effectiveness of the “Spend Your Regards to Broadway” and “This is Broadway” campaigns, as well as the issue of if any marketing campaigns by any arts organizations would be successful to relieve the fears associated with the Covid-19 pandemic. This threat is exacerbated by the fact that new variants of the virus continue to surface.

Given the fact that Broadway has not returned to its pre-Covid-19 attendance or earnings, it remains that performers and other theater workers have lost income and job security. To relieve their stresses, The Broadway League has further had to shift certain marketing efforts towards government officials. In coordination with the Coalition of Broadway Unions and Guilds, The Broadway League advocated for theater workers to receive emergency funding and other aspects of relief. According to Playbill writer Ryan McPhee (2020), “Both the League and the unions have also called on Congress to provide similar relief to entertainment workers, whose livelihoods have been brought to a halt during the collective effort to flatten the curve”

(2020). Though the League has always advocated for theater workers before the pandemic, the digitalization and publicness of these press releases and public statements have not been seen nearly as much as seen from the pandemic. Once again, The Broadway League has had to expand the focus of its marketing efforts towards targeting the government. While these journal articles offer a good foundation for the changes in the marketing tactics, little information exists on the success and analytics of these changes. Through primary research using interviews and further analysis of current media, it is hoped that the performance of these companies will be identified and can be compared.

Methodology

Design and Procedure:

This study was inspired by an interest in marketing strategies and the theater industry and was exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. While most individual Broadway shows are advertised through external marketing agencies, both Playbill and The Broadway League have internal teams for their communications. Therefore, it is more beneficial to examine these companies since they are limited to promoting the Broadway industry, rather than agencies that may operate in other industries. While the collection of works previously analyzed provided insight into the actual changes in campaigns, the goal of this research, rather, is to provide insight into the reasoning behind tactics and the permeability of this reasoning. What strategies led to the digital transformation of these Broadway companies, as outlined in the journal articles? How did companies ensure that the theater experience can be produced digitally? Will digital theatrical experiences continue once the pandemic has concluded? Through research established by structured interviews with marketing employees from both companies, the study aims to

answer these questions by examining the combination of strategies and motivations from a first-hand perspective. Interviews were the preferred method of primary research, given that campaigns cannot easily be conveyed through short or structured answers. Also, the interviews will provide a larger amount of information that pertains to the questions in comparison to a survey format. A list of the questions that were asked during the interview process is provided in the Appendix (see Appendix A).

The research questions asked throughout the interviews allow for both qualitative and quantitative analysis of each interviewees' responses; this was done to examine both performance and underlying motivation. For simplicity within the interview and later analysis of the quantitative questions, a scale of 1-10 was used. In each question, 1 represented the least amount of severity, and 10 had the greatest, allowing for statistical analysis of the results. Furthermore, the questions that provide qualitative responses will explore the thought process that went into the marketing decisions, as this is not information that can be analyzed numerically.

Because this research focuses on primary data collection with human participants, approval and certification from the Institutional Review Boards (IRB) were obtained to ensure the safety of participants. This was conducted before reaching out to potential subjects. Interviewees were asked to sign a consent form (see Appendix B) before their interview and had the option to skip any questions they could/did not want to answer and stop answering completely if requested. The research proposal and interview questions are found in the Appendix (see Appendix C and A, respectively).

Interviews and Sample Participants:

After the review and approval by the IRB, potential interviewees were contacted digitally to obtain an interest in participation in the study. Potential respondents were first contacted through mutual contacts of arts and entertainment management faculty at Pace University. Other participants were discovered through LinkedIn searches of The League's and Playbill's employees and then contacted via email exchange. This email contained information on the thesis itself, the research process and timeline, the research questions, and the consent form for the participant to fill out should they be interested. Once the individuals coordinated an interview time and submitted their completed consent form, the interviewee was reminded of the structure of the interviews. First, verbal clarification was obtained, denoting how information collected would be recorded; all interviews were transcribed. Since participation was not mandatory and the interviewee would not receive any direct benefit or compensation, they were reminded that they can stop answering at any point or skip any questions they desired to. Identifiable factors were removed from the information collected to ensure anonymity for those who participated. These structured interviews were conducted over the virtual communications platform, Zoom, due to the ongoing threat of Covid-19 and respect the remote work of most interviewees.

For this research, four individuals from the company Playbill were interviewed who had worked in the marketing, media, or creative departments throughout the pandemic. All of these participants worked at the company in different timelines of the pandemic in various aspects of communications, allowing for multiple perspectives on motivations for their strategies. All of these individuals will be referred to throughout the paper with they/them/theirs pronouns, with the identifiers of Participants #1-#5. Since this thesis is based on the marketing work Playbill and

The Broadway League, only company names will be included for each participant, with all other identifiers will be omitted.

Findings

Playbill:

Participant #1 works within the creative department for Playbill and joined the company first in the Fall of 2020, after previously working at another Broadway organization when the pandemic first hit. This individual defined their job as an “everflowing and ever-changing position based on the political, social, and digital state of the city,” but their major responsibility is integrating campaigns and programming between the sales, marketing, editorial, and executive team. Their daily activities consisted of working on marketing campaigns, house advertisements within Playbills, coordinating with the online banner/traffic team, the Playbill Store set-up, and events management. In an effort to describe their position, they defined themselves as the hub of a wheel that works with all of the different spokes (departments) to integrate all pieces of information and ideas into one unique project. When asked about their day-to-day responsibilities throughout the pandemic, Participant #1 broke down their day. They begin with a morning brief with events and partnership teams, as well as with graphic designers. Then they answer a lot of emails from other colleagues and professionals and delegate work through Slack communication channels. Depending on the severity of the pandemic at the time, they could be in a virtual production, creative, or budget meeting, or, hopefully, preparing for in-person projects to happen in 2023.

In early 2020, prior to their position at Playbill, this person was working in social media and communications for touring companies. Participant #1 was building a website for a new

show, conducting interviews with cast members, and writing press releases. They were also planning out influencer marketing campaigns, as this was a new tactic for the theatrical industry that yielded high results, as well as high costs. A majority of the content they produced focused on the uniqueness of the venues that the touring show would stop at. When asked about a typical day pre-pandemic, Participant #1 described that they were either in the office from 9:00-5:00, or out exploring the different touring venues and creating a complete social media campaign based on that. Each venue needed to have their own set of digital and branding materials on the show and the venue itself. They had the initial instructions on March 12th to maintain the work that they were doing, as the shutdown would end after two weeks. As this was not the case, they were furloughed by that company and told to “sit and wait to see what’s going to happen.” Seldom for a few social media interviews with shows and virtual theater education work, this participant did not rejoin the Broadway industry professionally until joining Playbill at the end of 2020.

Participant #2 also had a similar journey with Playbill, only recently joining in October 2021. Throughout the beginning of the pandemic, they were completing their collegiate degree and due to their education, were providing freelance social media work to various companies remotely. As a freelancer, “companies would fly me out for big shoots, and I was going in-house to them once a month.” They would pre-plan content for the company to be posted throughout the coming months. In March 2020 and beyond, this freelance work grew in significance, with an increase in demand for social media as a response to the pandemic. A lot of larger companies had previously spent most of their advertising budget on billboards and print, so they were forced to transition to social media. Many of their clients were reluctant yet intrigued to enter into social media marketing.

In October 2021, Participant #2 joined Playbill remotely on the social media team, working mainly on promoting the editorial content of Playbill. This is the first news source they ever worked with, so they found themselves making content for each day, on the day of. Most of the previous companies they worked with planned out a month's worth of content to be released whenever. Participant #2 creates short- and long-form content for various social media platforms to amplify traffic to Playbill's website, launch social programs for sponsors and partners, and entertain industry fans. In looking into the changes of their role, they described "The role that I'm currently in was a lot more hands-on – bringing people in and out of the studio, as well as going to all of the show openings. Now, it takes a lot more planning to do something in-person, including getting covid tests."

Participant #3 began the social media strategy at Playbill and worked at the company throughout the pandemic until recently leaving. They were hired to make a "cohesive voice" for the company on social media platforms. Similar to Participant #2, they had to amplify the company's editorial website content while also creating entertaining content for the target to interact with. Pre-pandemic, this individual would attend theatrical events and interviews to be live streamed on social platforms. A lot of their work consisted of interviewing Broadway professionals on Instagram Live and hosted red carpet features on Facebook so that individuals could watch these events in real-time. Some of their favorite work was working with Broadway.com and The Broadway League to cover social media for the Tony Awards. Similar to all of the other interviewees, they were under the impression that the shutdown would last only two weeks. Therefore, they needed to develop two weeks' worth of content to make up for no one being in the theaters. This was a challenge, given that theater was typically an experience you needed to be in-person to share. While they were preparing content for the opening of Six:

The Musical, they shifted focus to creating interactive installments on the Instagram and Twitter pages. Furthermore, Participant #3 also described how their work on social media attempted to replace the advertising revenues typically generated with Playbill's print marketing. Since the company could not print or hand out physical Playbills, they brainstormed ways to approach companies and offer them digital advertisements. For instance, Participant #3 explains "One person had actually been talking to Netflix and we wanted to find a way to advertise on digital for their release of *The Prom*. We did an IG story series with easter eggs for theater kids throughout the movies." Ultimately, Participant #3 had to be innovative in approaching theatrical experiences digitally.

Participant #4 expressed similar struggles with transmitting that in-person experience into a digital aspect. At the start of the pandemic, Participant #4 worked in implementing and executing campaigns for clients of Playbill. They ran advertising campaigns for clients who wanted to work with Playbill and saw increased work around the upcoming Tony Awards but had to pause advertising campaigns in March 2020. Since this was the basis of the revenues for Playbill, they began looking into the budget to discover what money their department had left and how to optimize the remaining money. After a month of waiting around for advertising campaigns, many individuals including Participant #4 were furloughed, though employees on the digital side were brought back after about a month. Their role pivoted, as only the digital employees were brought back. They began assisting in media planning and working on driving engagement to the Playbill website. Participant #4 works with the advertising sales team a lot to coordinate media planning for clients. Whenever a client wanted to advertise on Playbill's website, they would have their advertising budget and the goals they want to meet with that budget. Participant #4 would help to implement these goals by checking inventory and

availability of the website based on the impressions of each page. Participant #4 describes a shift in the content they were planning as well: “We hosted a lot of events, live streams, and video concerts... We basically wanted to bring theater online when theater wasn’t exactly happening in person.” This was a common theme expressed by all interviewees from Playbills. Moreover, this individual discussed the change in Playbill’s media buying clients. Luxury car and financial brands typically turned to Playbill’s print advertising but switched to become digital clients in the pandemic. Participant #4 calls these brands non-endemic to the Playbill website, adding difficulties to advertising them on the website. This person describes:

“Our endemic brands know how we function on the website in terms of the backend and the formatting... With these other brands, they needed formatting and things done that were very different from what we were doing with shows on the website. This shaped our content drastically, especially with advertorials. It was like ‘How do we incorporate cars with Broadway on our website?’”

Overall, these campaign changes impacted responses from the target audiences. Playbill breaks down their markets into theatrical viewers and nontheatrical viewers. Participant #4 mentioned that the changes in companies advertised were less appealing to the theatrical viewers, but that was disclosed to all of the clients that they worked with. Ultimately, Playbill saw increased engagement from nontheatrical viewers.

The theater is innately an in-person and interactive experience, so the pandemic provided a unique challenge to recreate this experience in a new way. All of the participants acknowledged that the most practical way of achieving the theatrical experience virtually was through social media. As Participant #2 described: “A lot of bigger companies typically spend a lot of their money on billboards and print, so they were kinda forced to realize that social media

is the new thing for marketing. Some were more hesitant for that change since they just did not understand it.” Nevertheless, Playbill saw flexibility both in timing and geography as a result of social media. The pandemic forced the company to make theater more accessible for individuals, regardless of their location. Participant #3 was glad for this increased accessibility because they “really tried to help the community and generate some great user-generated content” from all over the world. Rather than focusing solely on industry news, the content shifted to focus on audience members. Participant #3 hosted a watch party for the famous Broadway television show SMASH, where individuals were encouraged to watch one episode of the show every day. On Twitter and Instagram, individuals were asked to share their favorite cast albums, play Broadway-themed Instagram Story games, and participate in the 30-Day Broadway Song Challenge (see Appendix D).

While Participants #2 and #3 discussed the prevalence of social campaigns, Participants #1 and #4 described how their work shifted into the production of events amplified by social media campaigns. Participant #4’s department worked on producing Playbill’s first large-scale digital event, Playbill Pride. For the entire month of June, Playbill streamed a festival of programming on Playbill, concluding with the free Pride Spectacular Concert at the end of the month. In this experience, Participant #4 worked on generating advertising revenues with sponsors of the event. As pandemic restrictions were lifted, Participant #1 continued this work with sponsors and led the production of the event “Curtain Up.” This individual mentions that, before the pandemic, Playbill partnered with The Broadway League to produce “Broadway on Broadway,” an annual free concert in Times Square to kick off the Broadway season. Playbill aimed to recreate this event with The Broadway League, leading to “Curtain Up.” Participant #1 recounts:

“We had 49th-43rd street, so how could we have different activations in different areas?

We needed to build sponsored, interactive information like with Netflix where we created a Broadway wall that attendees could interact with in-person and through social media.

We had new AR experiences and a piano from Sing for Hope. Broadway had never seen an activation of this size before, on top of having all of the Covid-19 restrictions and about 75 days of planning.”

This event was immensely successful, with “675,000 people walking through Times Square and looking into all of the brands” and increased social media engagement.

However, Playbill’s transition to a producer of content rather than solely a publisher provided some challenges logistically for employees. Participant #1 mentions “I have to have a lot of information and meetings because I’m meeting with multiple different departments and need to hear how these tasks are going and if they will be fitting into the puzzle.” For “Curtain Up,” they were working with 200 other individuals, meaning a lot of virtual coordination and communication. Other participants echoed the importance of coordination with multiple different teams. Participant #3 was working with other departments but had the responsibility of social media coordination alone. They mention feeling overwhelmed with the amount of work that needed to be done since social media was “go go go!” and no one else was on the team with them. Participant #2 also echoed struggles with planning out social media campaigns given Covid-19 restrictions and the “newfound importance” of social media, but fortunately had another person working with them.

Participant #2 began the conversation about how with such a heavy focus on social media, brands were now centered in the eyes of consumers. Social media opened up conversations about societal and environmental issues by companies, including Playbill. As

Participant #2 states, “We’re highlighting groups that Playbill was too scared to highlight, maybe pre-pandemic.” Participant #3, in particular, discussed heavily the influence that Black Lives Matter had on the content Playbill was sharing. They touch on the issues of where Playbill fits within discussing these social issues, sharing: “We all had different reactions to it, and it was hard to navigate as a person and how I should translate that to the brand. It was hard to see everything through the lens of Playbill. It wasn’t something cutesy or fun, it was serious, and we were talking about social activism, equity, and inclusion.” This individual continued to share that, with such a large platform, it was important to highlight the voices of marginalized communities. They worked on showcasing individuals in the Black community but expressed difficulties with expressing all nuances of the social movement in a virtual world. Participant #2 picked up the work that Participant #3 had created and continued to position the Playbill brand as more accessible for individuals outside of the typical “rich, White men audience.” Participant #2 agreed with #3 that this was not content that Playbill was used to sharing. As one of the youngest members of the team, #2 saw their unique opportunity to change the online communications of Playbill. They created a new look to Playbill that diversified their outward perspective. This respondent describes “We have gotten much more inclusive and we’re featuring shows from all different kinds of theater now. We’re really trying to show the people that actually look like the people in the world.” Of course, there needed to be a balance between supporting artists from different backgrounds and still appealing to all of the productions the company has relationships with. Overall, Participant #2 shared that, from the pandemic, “people want to be engaged and feel like they’re being talked to as a human, no longer as a money source.”

The final question that all interviewees were asked to answer was “If theater were to shift to an entirely virtual platform in the future, how do you envision your roles and responsibilities

to be?” All respondents had a positive perspective on this question, describing how the industry is more prepared than ever to ensure theater will remain a community forever. Participant #1 describes “I don't think it will ever be fully virtual. There will always be some element of live and interactive theater or else theater itself will no longer be a thing – it is as old as human interaction is. We are at an industrial age of theater where we get to develop and explore more as a culture and a community.” The Covid-19 pandemic emphasized the importance of the communal aspect of theater and evolved the role of theater fans to be more *involved*. All of the participants indicated that moving theater to a digital realm provided fans new opportunities to interact with theater. Participant #3 expands this concept: “We really saw the theater community say ‘yes and’ in March 2020 and on.” With so much uncertainty surrounding the new virtual setting of Broadway, the community was forced to join together and find new ways to collaborate virtually.

With an entirely virtual strategy, Participants #2 and #3 described that the role of the social media manager would be more respected and expansive, as it would be their job to facilitate collaboration within the community. They hoped for more funding, support, and resources for social media managers as they were problem solvers for the pandemic. Participant #3 compared these managers to: “There’s this story where a guy was at McDonalds and his cup of coffee spilled all over him because the cup was too hot. Because of this, he created the cup sleeve. You see a problem and make a solution for it. That’s what we did.” Participant #4 is satisfied with this problem solving and believes that the theatrical community as a whole has grown. They strongly believe that an abrupt shift to an entirely virtual setting would be less difficult because of the theater industry’s newly developed strength.

The Broadway League:

After contacting 15 individuals from The Broadway League, no employees responded with interest in participating in this research. This may be in part due to the institution's marketing department preparing for the annual Tony Awards put on annually by The Broadway League and the American Theatre Wing. Therefore, to generate accurate and fair results on the company, The League itself and its campaigns were analyzed based on the interview questions. In looking into The Broadway League, it is important to note that shows typically market themselves or turn to outside agencies. Prior to the pandemic, The Broadway League simply was the hub of communications surrounding the theatrical industry and only marketed events like the Tony Awards. Day-to-day activities of The League consisted of sharing press releases on their website and on social media platforms and coordinating programs to honor those of the theater industry (ex. Tony Awards or Jimmy Awards). The company also reported all of the statistical information for the industry.

Once the Covid-19 pandemic hit the United States, The League was the organization who officially shutdown Broadway. In answering interview question #3 (see Appendix A), instead of receiving instructions for how to proceed, The Broadway League was giving out instructions to all of the companies in the industry. The company made an abrupt pivot from sharing content about shows opening, to instilling hope for the future of the industry. Furthermore, as the pandemic progressed, The Broadway League saw an increase in their marketing campaigns for the entire industry. As previously described, the "This is Broadway" campaign was a cross-platform marketing strategy that aimed to remind individuals of the benefits of Broadway. This advertising campaign was not only produced for broadcast television, but also consisted of out-of-home advertisements (billboards and kiosks), social media promotions, and a special website: thisisbroadway.org. In describing the goal with this campaign, The League's president, Charlotte

St. Martin (2021) describes “The goal is to let the world know we’re back, and, specifically, to drive ticket sales for the first six months from the Northeast corridor and the Eastern Seaboard, which is where we believe is our best opportunity to put people in seats.” In an interview with a marketing consultant for the campaign Andrew Lazzaro (2021), he mentions:

“The hypothesis had been that the core audience is going to come back, and we should focus on the casual theatergoer. But over the course of the summer, as the Delta variant took hold, positions changed — a lot of our data started to suggest that the core audience wasn’t coming back at the level we needed, and we were able to pivot”

The campaign showcased a shift in the traditional target audience for The Broadway League, in which any individuals who loved the Broadway industry were targeted. With the addition of digital platforms, the campaign reached individuals all around the world, promoting the love of the Broadway industry to any fan. This echoes the theme of accessibility seen with Playbill.

As described in the Literature Review, Broadway statistics did not indicate drastic increases following the campaign, perhaps indicating that the target audience did not respond as favorably to the shifting campaign. Throughout the pandemic, theater fans remembered their love for Broadway shows, suggesting that a reminder of this may not be the most effective in increasing ticket sales. As editor Ruthie Fierberg (2021) describes it is important to showcase the reassurance of safety at Broadway shows, on top of promoting the industry overall – what was done with the campaign.

Discussion

Quantitative Results:

The structured interviews were based on both quantitative and qualitative questions. This section will analyze the quantitative results; more specifically, questions #6 and #8.

Question 6 asked respondents, “On a scale of 1-10, 1 being much easier and 10 being immensely harder, how difficult was it to complete your traditional position responsibilities?” Each interviewee was asked to provide a number, based on that scale, with the results being shown below:

	Participant #1	Participant #2	Participant #3	Participant #4
Question 6	8	7	6	6

The goal of this question was to understand the difficulty that individuals experienced when making decisions and carrying out their typical marketing-related activities. From the participants’ responses, it can be inferred that all of the interviewees experienced difficulties in completing their everyday tasks. Participant #3 shared that because they were already working 24/7 on social media, their work only got more difficult because of the uncertainty and high demand, causing their rating of 6. For Participant #4, their response was close to neutral (6) because they were transitioning positions during the pandemic, so their responsibilities completely changed. Regardless, all individuals implied that they experienced difficulties in carrying out their work.

Question 8 asked the question, “On a scale of 1-10, 1 being no change and 10 being unrecognizable, how do you feel your position will change post-pandemic?” The goal of this question is to understand the permeability of Covid-19 changes, both in job responsibilities and what is expected within marketing campaigns. The results from each participant are shown below:

	Participant #1	Participant #2	Participant #3	Participant #4
Question 8	10	9	10	8

All of the ratings that were shared by participants were immensely high, indicating that each individual expects for their position to evolve once the pandemic comes to an end. The reasoning for this can be attributed to the fact that marketing will now need to incorporate the “old normal” and what was the normal throughout the pandemic. The theater industry was primarily an in-person world and has now had its experience in a virtual one; once the pandemic ends, theater will exist in both realms. All of the individuals elaborated on the changes they see to their role and all echoed similar hypotheses.

Qualitative Results:

The research conducted expressed that multiple environmental shifts forced these Broadway companies to alter their marketing strategies. The study found that the immediate and most prevalent shift to marketing in the theatrical industry was the transmission of theater on social media. All individuals interviewed mentioned how the most plausible way to replicate the interactivity of theater was through social media. In this, the companies could connect with audiences, similar to the way performers had once interacted with audience members. As previous literature has mentioned, it is imperative for cultural organizations to establish solid social media marketing campaigns, as this is another level of connectivity with the community. In the instance of Playbill, the community was not looking for the editorial content Playbill was used to publishing; rather, they were looking for ways to consume theater in a new way. The shutdown of Broadway productions consequently led to the printing of playbills to shut down. As highlighted in scholarly articles, Playbill had to recoup its revenues lost from the lack of printing through advertising former print clients on social media. Participant #4 was in charge of digital planning for these clients and shared that clients who were formerly print-only will now be hybrid even as the pandemic comes to a close.

In a similar sense, the content that was posted on social media has drastically shifted from amplifying print and other traditional campaigns to now acting as the voice for these Broadway companies. Playbill found itself becoming a more accessible company to individuals around the world. The company previously positioned itself closely with the primary target of theater: wealthy consumers who frequently desired to attend live performances as entertainment. With the pandemic, they saw their content focusing on the masses – those who perhaps could not afford to see a Broadway show but still had a passion for the industry. Through social media, everyone could share the Broadway experience. Playbill adjusted the messaging for its content, as well, participating in conversations about social issues. Overall, these positioning and messaging changes resulted in better engagement with larger audiences. These targeting shifts are consistent with current theatrical discourse, in which The Broadway League had to establish campaigns that appealed to any and everyone, regardless of economic status. This was seen in their “This is Broadway” and “Spend Your Regards to Broadway” campaigns. The motivation for this lies in the fact that consumers were reluctant to travel and attend live performances.

The results of the interviews revealed that current literature has failed to report on the changing role that brands, even within the theater industry, have seen in terms of societal issues. All interviewees shared that they could not talk about the impact of the pandemic on content without talking about the social movements throughout 2020 and 2021. Increased social media has led to the prevalence of global conversations, where individuals from all over the world can see the digital “persona” of brands and call out the brands they purchase from to participate in these conversations. Participants #2 and #3 discussed this extensively throughout their interviews, as they were in charge of Playbill’s social media channels. Participant #3 worked for Playbill in the height of the Black Lives Matter movement (June 2020) and discussed how it

was an adjustment for them in representing Playbill on social media, but also as an individual addressing such a large social issue. They had to pivot the content they were producing to incorporate more of these marginalized communities and amplify them given Playbill's large platform. Participant #2 touched on some of the difficulties that came with participating in this discussion, as Playbill is such a large brand that appeals to a variety of individuals. This individual needed to be cautious with how Playbill positioned itself to not offend relations with existing clients and productions in the content they were sharing. Ultimately, though, Playbill used its social media platform to participate in these social conversations, as refraining to do so would have negatively impacted consumers' perceptions. All participants in the study commented that the role of Broadway companies in social conversations will continue to grow and expand. It is important to understand and identify this, as it was a nuance that was overlooked by current literature.

While much information was obtained through this study, limitations did exist, beginning with the difference in the number of interviews conducted with each company. The study was only able to interview four individuals from Playbill and none from The Broadway League, meaning that a fair comparative analysis could not be present in this study. More individuals could have been interviewed had there been more personal contacts with employees from these companies and more responses from companies. Also, the interviewees worked at their respective companies during differing times of the pandemic, meaning that their motivations for different marketing strategies could have been different had all participants joined at the same time. Also, this study expected that a majority of the marketing shifts by the companies were into digital marketing, specifically social media, so there is a bias present in the findings.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research is to conduct a comparative analysis on how Playbill and The Broadway League have shifted their marketing strategies throughout the pandemic, determining which company was more successful in their shifting strategies. Although there cannot be a complete comparison of the two companies due to the differing interview amounts, trends were identified throughout the analysis. In recent history, the Broadway industry has only had to adapt to the shutdown caused by the terrorist attacks on September 11th. This shutdown was met by converged marketing campaigns by both companies. While the companies worked together throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, each company progressed in the digital realm differently. As outlined in recent literature, the theater industry was already transitioning into digital marketing as a way of communicating with fans, pre-pandemic. Consequently, digital marketing grew in prevalence with the Covid-19 pandemic. Both industry-focused blogs and articles highlight these marketing changes brought on by the pandemic, but none specifically determine the motivations that went into creating these campaigns. Therefore, it is hard to determine the success and permanence of these shifted strategies. One-on-one structured interviews with employees from Playbill and a primary analysis of The Broadway League's marketing strategy overall were conducted to supplement the gap in information. Quantitative and qualitative results were collected and analyzed to describe generalizations in the marketing strategies. Based on all of the research, one can infer that the marketing strategies brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic will remain in coordination with strategies pre-pandemic. The theater industry will see a hybrid approach to marketing, due to the successes of cross-platform campaigns throughout the Covid-19 shutdown. Given the limited information collected from the study on The Broadway League, it is difficult to accurately compare the two companies'

successes in terms of achieving their marketing goals. Nevertheless, based on the restricted data, Playbill showcased more campaign changes that were well received by their target markets. Employees at the company also indicate that the work that they did throughout the pandemic will continue on even once a new normalcy is established. For future research, it would be important to expand the research data to interview additional members from both companies, as well as those in the marketing departments of other theatrical companies. These include top theatrical advertising agencies, American Theatre Wing, and Broadway Podcast Network. Future research could explore the advertising budgets of these companies and how they have changed (and will change) with the pandemic.

The Covid-19 shutdown of the theater industry changed the way that theater is accessed around the world. Companies discovered new, unique ways to translate the in-person theater experience, solving the problem of accessibility seen with many theatergoers. Although the pandemic persists with new variants arising every few months, Broadway companies are prepared to respond with tested and improved marketing strategies. Marketing within the industry has changed drastically, with no chance of reverting solely back to outdated strategies.

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Appendix

Appendix A:

Interview Questions:

1. Are you working in the marketing department? What is your job title?
2. How long have you been working in the industry?
3. When the Covid-19 shutdown occurred, what were you initially instructed to do in your position?
4. Can you describe a typical day for you before the pandemic, in terms of general responsibilities, communication with colleagues, area of focus, and analyzing progress?
 - a. If in the marketing department, what about the timeline of brainstorming, developing, and producing content?
5. 5. Can you describe a typical day for you now, in terms of general responsibilities, communication with colleagues, area of focus, and analyzing progress?
 - a. If in the marketing department, what about the timeline of brainstorming, developing, and producing content?
6. On a scale of 1-10, 1 being much easier and 10 being immensely harder, how difficult was it to complete your traditional position responsibilities?
 - a. 1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10
 - b. If in the marketing department, on a scale from 1-10, 1 being no change and 10 being drastically, how has the content you manage/produce evolved?
 - i. 1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10
 - c. Can you elaborate on some of the campaign changes you experienced?
7. As a result of your content changes, can you explain how your target market responded to them?
8. On a scale of 1-10, 1 being no change and 10 being unrecognizable, how do you feel your position will change post-pandemic?
 - a. 1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10
 - b. Can you elaborate on where you see your role?
9. If theater were to shift to an entirely virtual platform in the future, how do you envision your roles and responsibilities to be?
10. 10. Are there any additional comments you would like to add or discuss?

Appendix B:

Pace University, New York

CONSENT TO ACT AS A HUMAN RESEARCH SUBJECT

***Covid-19 & Broadway: A Comparative Analysis of the Shifting Marketing Strategies
Between Playbill and The Broadway League***

RESEARCH TEAM

Principal Investigator

Leah Gaffney - Senior Advertising and Integrated Marketing Communications Student
Pace University - Lubin School of Business
860-913-1702 – lg54077n@pace.edu

Sponsoring Principal Investigator or Faculty Advisor

Chris Ramos - Clinical Associate Professor, Executive Director Arts and Entertainment Management
Management & Management Sciences / Lubin School of Business
(212) 618-6429 - cramos@pace.edu

You are invited to part in my research study through a structured interview over the phone or via zoom. Participation is completely voluntary. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything that you do not understand. One of the researchers listed within this Consent Form will be available to answer your questions.

Introduction and Purpose

My name is Leah Gaffney, and I am an undergraduate student at Pace University working with my faculty advisor, Professor Chris Ramos, in the Arts and Entertainment Department of the Lubin School of Business. I would like to invite you to take part in my research study, which concerns the effects on the responsibilities and roles of a marketing professional working within the theater industry, during the Covid-19 pandemic, and analyze how these marketing strategies will change in the future.

Procedures

If you agree to participate in my research, I will ask you to participate in a structured interview over the phone or via Zoom. The structured interview will involve questions about your personal experience as an individual working in theater during the Covid-19 pandemic and should take about no longer than 30 minutes to complete.

Benefits

There is no direct benefit to you from taking part in this study. It is hoped that the research will provide insight as to how marketing professionals working within the theater industry, during the Covid-19 pandemic, adapt and analyze their strategies will change in the future.

Risks/Discomforts

If some of the research questions may make you uncomfortable or upset, you are free to decline to answer any questions you don't wish to, or to stop participating at any time. As with all research, there is a chance that confidentiality could be compromised; however, we are taking precautions to minimize this risk.

Confidentiality

Your study data will be handled as confidentially as possible. If results of this study are published or presented, individual names and other personally identifiable information will not be used unless you give explicit permission for this.

To minimize the risks to confidentiality, we will make sure only researchers listed on this document will have access to the data. When the research is completed, I will retain these records for up to a year after the study is over. The same measures described above will be taken to protect confidentiality of this study data.

Compensation

You will not be paid for taking part in this study.

Rights

Participation in research is completely voluntary. You are free to decline to take part in the project.

If you decide to participate, you may stop participating at any time and withdraw from the study. Whether or not you choose to participate, to answer any particular question, or continue participating in the project, there will be no penalty to you or loss of benefits to which you might otherwise be entitled.

Questions

If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact me. I can be reached at 860- 913-1702 or lg54077n@pace.edu.

If you have any questions about your rights or treatment as a research participant in this study, please contact an IRB staff member within the Office of Research by phone at (212) 346-1689, or by e-mail at paceirb@pace.edu.

_____ Yes, I agree to allow the research team to audio record my interview.

_____ No, I do not agree to allow the research team to audio record my interview.

You should not "Accept" this consent form until all of your questions about this study have been answered by a member of the research team listed at the top of this form. **Participation in this study is voluntary.** You may refuse to participate in this study or discontinue your involvement at any time without penalty.

If you agree to take part in the research, please print a copy of this page to keep for future reference, then click on the “Accept” button below. Clicking on the “Agree” button indicates that:

You are 18 years old or older;

You have read the above information; You voluntarily agree to participate.

Agree

Disagree

Appendix C:

**PACE UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
PROPOSAL FORM**

PACE IRBNet #

1.1 TITLE OF PROPOSAL: *Covid-19 & Broadway: A Comparative Analysis of the Shifting Marketing Strategies Between Playbill and the Broadway League*

1.2 PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR (PI) - Must be faculty, administrator, staff, or graduate student (requires faculty advisor as Supervising PI, listed in #1.7). **An undergraduate may not be a PI**, instead, the undergraduate must be listed in #1.7 and the faculty advisor **must** be listed here in #1.2 as PI. The PI has the overall responsibility for ensuring that the conduct of the project is ethical and compliant.

First Name: *Chris*

Last Name: *Ramos*

Title: *Clinical Associate Professor, Executive Director Arts and Entertainment Management*

Address: *Pace University, Lubin School of Business One Pace Plaza, Room W-403E New York, NY 10038*

Telephone Number: *(212) 618-6429*

E-mail Address: *cramos@pace.edu*

Department/School: *Management and Management Sciences - Lubin School of Business*

CITI training expiration date: *May 5, 2024*

1.3 PROPOSAL VERSION DATE

Enter the planned submission date for initial submissions; change to the revision date if this is a modified version: *January 1, 2022*

1.4 SITE INFORMATION (choose one):

All investigators are affiliated with Pace University

Other: Explain, including identifying collaborators and their institutions, the terms of collaboration, and arrangements for Institutional Review Board oversight. *Please contact the IRB at paceirb@pace.edu prior to submitting this proposal if a reliance agreement will be needed for single IRB review:*

1.5 PROJECTED STUDY DATES

You may not begin any research until the IRB has provided a determination/approval letter:

Start Date: *January 2022*

Completion Date: *May 2022*

1.6 SPONSOR/FUNDING SOURCE (choose one):

No funding

Actual or planned funding

Date of funding submission:

Source of funding/sponsor:

Submission identification number (if none, enter “None”):

1.7 STUDENT RESEARCH (choose one):

Not student-led research; student co-investigators (if any) should be listed in #1.8

Undergraduate student research, faculty advisor **must** be listed as PI in #1.2

Name (first, last) of *undergraduate(s)*: **Leah Gaffney**

Department/school of *undergraduate(s)*: **Lubin School of Business**

CITI training expiration date(s): **September 4, 2024**

Graduate student research, graduate student must be listed as PI in #1.2

Name (first, last) and title of *faculty advisor*: Be sure to click on “Share this Project” in IRBNet to provide the faculty advisor with full access to the submission.

CITI training expiration date:

1.8 STUDY PERSONNEL in addition to those listed in #1.2 or #1.7 (choose one)

Yes – Identify the personnel. Be sure to click on “Share this Project” in IRBNet to provide any appropriate study personnel with access to the submission.

	First Name	Last Name	Title (plus institution unless Pace)	Role in Project	CITI training expiration date
1 .				Co-Investigator Other:	
2 .				Co-Investigator Other:	
3 .				Co-Investigator Other:	
4 .				Co-Investigator Other:	
Check one: ≤4 additional personnel >4 additional personnel, separate list is attached					

No, there are no additional study personnel

1.9 CONFLICT OF INTEREST: Does any investigator have a conflict of interest? (e.g., income from consulting for sponsor or from intellectual property related to the research, contact paceirb@pace.edu with any questions) (choose one):

Yes – Identify the investigator(s) and describe the conflict:

No, there are no investigators with a conflict of interest

1.10 LAY SUMMARY – 300 words or fewer – Describe the project’s purpose, subjects, design, procedures, and data analysis in terms understandable to a lay audience:

The project is a Senior Thesis that seeks to research the comparative analysis between Playbill and The Broadway League and how their marketing strategies have or have not shifted because of the Covid-19 pandemic. It involves a STRUCTURED interview of marketing professionals who work in the theatrical industry. Data and findings will be analyzed in quantitative and qualitative analysis.

1.11 IN-PERSON INTERACTIONS: Are you requesting approval for any study personnel to have in-person interactions with any subjects or potential subjects? (please contact paceirb@pace.edu with any questions).

Yes – Describe (1) the circumstances of the interactions; (2) the measures taken to minimize the risks of Covid-19 transmission; (3) why the project could not be carried out without the in-person

interactions; and (4) why the residual risks of Covid-19 transmission are reasonable in relation to the benefits

No, there are no in-person interactions

2. ‘EXEMPT’ RESEARCH The Federal regulations classify human subjects research as either exempt or non-exempt. The three categories of research listed below are classified as exempt and are not required to meet all of the criteria for IRB approval (for example, agreement to participate can be obtained using an information sheet rather than a full consent form).

Exempt research must be submitted to the IRB.

The IRB makes the determination about whether the project qualifies as exempt.

Is the project in any of the following categories that may qualify as exempt? For all categories, agreement must be obtained from the subjects before they participate.

Exempt Category 1 (Educational Research): Research, conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, that specifically involves normal educational practices that are not likely to adversely impact students’ opportunity to learn required educational content or the assessment of educators who provide instruction.

Exempt Category 2 (Surveys/Interviews with Adults): Research with adults using surveys, interviews, or educational tests.

Exempt Category 3 (Behavioral Research with Adults): Research with adults consisting of collection of information using benign behavioral interventions. *Interventions are benign if they are brief in duration, do not involve deception, and are not physically invasive, harmful, painful, offensive, or embarrassing.*

Choose one:

Yes the project *may* qualify for an exempt category – Complete all of the following:

2.1 Applicable exempt category: 1 2 3

2.2 Subject population – Describe target population characteristics and number of subjects.

Specifically identify whether any subjects will be students or employees of any member of the study team:

The target subjects will be adult men and women who work in the theatrical industry, more specifically in the marketing department, of any ethnic background or health status.

2.3 Recruitment – Describe how you will identify, contact, and recruit subjects. *Please note that you must use a @pace.edu email addresses for communicating with subjects and potential subjects; gmail addresses do not provide sufficient security:*

Subjects will be identified through Leah Gaffney (co-investigator) colleagues and connections. Subjects will be contacted by means of email; then a follow up by scheduling day/time for a STRUCTURED interview. Interviews will be done either over the phone or via Zoom meeting. Any questions regarding this matter, he/she can contact Leah via phone (860)913-1702 or via email at lg54077n@pace.edu.

Check one: Yes, recruitment materials are uploaded No recruitment materials

2.4 Payments – Will subjects receive any payment, incentive, compensation, or reimbursement for participating (choose one):

Yes, subjects will be paid as follows (include any conditions on payments):

No, no payments to subjects

2.5 Consent process – Describe method for obtaining agreement to participate based on the IRB Research Information Sheet template. If you will be audio- or video-recording the subjects, you must obtain permission for the recording through an email or other method of documentation:

Consent will be obtained through a consent form describing the project and what entails for the participants. The introduction will be at the top of the consent form and it will be sent via email to set up individual STRUCTURED interviews.

Interviews will be conducted over the phone or via Zoom meeting.

Check one: Yes, information sheet is uploaded No information sheet

2.6 Study procedures – Describe methods, interventions, and data analysis:

The study will be a ten-questions STRUCTURED interview by Leah Gaffney (co-investigator) – the interview can be done either over the phone or via Zoom meeting. The information collected from the interviews will be converted into qualitative and quantitative data format. The data can then be analyzed and compared, by means of assigning specific code, in order to examine the effects that theater shutdowns had on the marketing strategies of the organization. No names will be mentioned in the final research paper.

Check one: Yes, study documents (e.g., survey questions) are uploaded

No documents

2.7 Privacy and confidentiality protections (choose one):

All information that is collected will be from anonymous surveys (At no point in time will the study team be able to identify who provided the survey responses) –

Describe how the survey will be anonymous:

At least some information will be identifiable – Describe privacy and data confidentiality protections, including protections for students and employees, if applicable:

Co-investigator Leah Gaffney plans to conduct a STRUCTURED interview either over the phone or via Zoom meeting. The only person with access to the data will be the co-investigator (Leah Gaffney) and the principal investigator/faculty advisor Chris Ramos. To identify the participant, a specific code will be assigned to their names, but the participants' names will NOT be mentioned in the final writeup of the research.

~End of Questions for Exempt Determinations~

No, the study is not exempt – IRB approval is required, complete questions #3.1. through #3.13.

3. NON-EXEMPT HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH

NOTE: If the project has a separate protocol, the answers to questions #3.1. through #3.13. may be a summary of the information with a

reference to the protocol pages where full details may be found. Be sure to attach the protocol.

3.1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY: Describe the purpose of the research study.

The purpose of the study is to do a comparative analysis between Playbill and The Broadway League and how their marketing strategies have shifted (or not shifted) because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

3.2 SPECIAL CLASSES OF SUBJECTS – Will any special classes of subjects be included?

Yes – Check all that apply

- Minors (under age 18) (be sure to describe in #3.5 how assent will be obtained)
- Prisoners or others involuntarily institutionalized (contact paceirb@pace.edu if checked)
- Adults with diminished capacity to consent (be sure to describe in #3.5 the consent process)
- Pregnant women specifically recruited because they are pregnant
- Students of any member of the study team
- Employees of any member of the study team
- Patients of any member of the study team

No, there are no special classes included

3.3. NUMBER AND CHARACTERISTICS OF SUBJECTS:

Approximate number of subjects to be recruited: At least 10 subjects

Identify any characteristics (e.g., age, sex, ethnic background, health status) that will be used to include or exclude subjects and describe how you will screen for these characteristics:

Adult men and women who work in the theatrical industry, more specially in the marketing department(s), of any ethnic background or health status.

3.4. SUBJECT RECRUITMENT: Describe how subjects will be identified, approached, and recruited. *Please note that you must use a @pace.edu email addresses for communicating with subjects and potential subjects; gmail addresses do not provide sufficient security:*

Subjects will be identified through Leah Gaffney (co-investigator) colleagues and connections. Subjects will be contacted by means of email; then a follow up by scheduling day/time for a STRUCTURED interview. Interviews will be done either over the phone or via Zoom meeting. Any questions regarding this matter, he/she can contact Leah via phone (860)913-1702 or via email at lg54077n@pace.edu. .

Check one: Yes, recruitment materials are uploaded No recruitment materials

3.5. INFORMED CONSENT (choose one):

Consent WILL be obtained: Describe how informed consent will be sought, how the study team will approach individuals to seek consent, and the members of the study team who will be obtaining informed consent:

Consent will be obtained through a consent form describing the project and what entails for the participants. The introduction will be at the top of the consent form and it will be sent via email to set up individual structured interviews. Interviews will be conducted over the phone or via Zoom meeting.

Check: Yes, consent form is uploaded

- Will subjects sign the consent form (choose one)
 - Yes – Describe whether the signature will be on paper or electronic (a signature is required if subjects will be audio- or video-recorded)
 - No – Describe why subjects will not sign:
 - A signature would reveal the names of the subjects, so the subject will just need to check off a box indicating “Agree” or “Disagree.”*

- Will the study involve deception (misleading subjects or omitting information) (choose one)?
 - Yes – Complete **all** of the following:
 - The nature of the deception:
 - Why the research could not be practicably carried out without the deception:
 - Why the deception will not adversely affect the rights and welfare of subjects:
 - Whether subjects will be debriefed, and if so, how, where, and when, including whether subjects will be given the option to withdraw their data:
 - No, the study does not involve deception

Consent will NOT be obtained: Complete **all** of the following:

Why the research could not be practicably carried out if subjects were required to consent:

Why not obtaining consent will not adversely affect the rights and welfare of subjects:

Whether subjects will be provided with additional information after participation, and if so, how, where, and when, including whether subjects will be given the option to withdraw their data:

- Does the project involve the use of identifiable private information?
 - Yes – Describe why the research could not practicably be carried out without using such information in an identifiable format:
 - No, the project does not involve use of identifiable private information

3.6. METHODS AND PROCEDURES APPLIED TO HUMAN SUBJECTS: Describe the study design and procedures related to participants. Include the duration of each participant's participation. Describe sequentially and exactly what will happen to each participant. **The description must be complete, or the proposal will be returned:**

Consent will be obtained through a consent form describing the project and what entails for the participants. The introduction will be at the top of the consent form and it will be sent via email to set up individual STRUCTURED interviews. The interview will be conducted over the phone or via Zoom meeting. The duration of each participant's interview should take about no longer than 30 minutes to complete. The structured interview will involve questions about the subject's personal experience as an individual working in the theater industry during the Covid-19.

Check one: Yes, study documents are uploaded No study documents

3.7. COSTS AND PAYMENTS TO SUBJECTS:

Costs – Will subjects incur any costs by participating? (choose one):

Yes, subjects will incur the following costs:

No, no costs to subjects

Payments – Will subjects receive any payment, incentive, compensation, or reimbursement for participating? (choose one):

Yes, subjects will be paid as follows (include any conditions on payments):

No, no payments to subjects

3.8. RISKS TO SUBJECTS: Describe all potential risks to subjects including physical, psychological, social, legal, or other. Assess the probability, severity, potential duration, and reversibility of each risk. Describe the procedures utilized to prevent and/or minimize any actual and/or potential risk.

Do *not* write “None” – there is always at least the risk of breach of confidentiality and often discomfort with study procedures which must be mitigated:

There is not much risk for participants since data that will be collected is through a structured interview and the interview will be conducted either over the phone or via Zoom. If some of the questions make the subject feel uncomfortable or upset, the subjects are free to decline to answer any questions he/she doesn't wish to, or to stop participating at any time.

As with all research, there is a chance that confidentiality could be compromised; however, we are taking precautions to minimize this risk.

3.9. BENEFITS: Describe any potential benefits to the subject as well as benefits that may accrue to society in general as a result of the study:

Participants as well as the theatrical and marketing industries at large will benefit from this research as it identifies trends in marketing and illustrates the adaptation of the industry.

3.10. CONFIDENTIALITY: Choose one:

All information that is collected will be from anonymous surveys (At no point in time will the study team be able to identify who provided the survey responses) – Describe how the survey will be anonymous:

At least some information will be identifiable – Describe privacy and data confidentiality protections Include procedures for coding, secure storage and transmission, control of access to data, and destruction of data at the end of the study:

Leah plans to conduct a STRUCTURED interview either over the phone or via Zoom meeting. The only person with access to the data will be the co-investigator (Leah Gaffney) and the principal investigator/faculty advisor Chris Ramos. To identify the participant, a specific code will be assigned to their names, but the participants' names will NOT be mentioned in the final writeup of the research.

3.11. ANALYSIS OF DATA: Describe the plans for analysis of data to support the purpose of the study:

The information collected will be converted into qualitative and quantitative data to analyze and compare interviews in order to examine the effects that the theater shutdowns had on the marketing strategies of the theater companies.

3.12. SPECIFIC RISKS: (contact the IRB at paceirb@pace.edu if Yes is checked for any items)

- Does the proposal involve obtaining or using biospecimens (blood, saliva, tissue, etc.)?

Yes – Describe how biospecimens will be obtained and used:

No

- Does the proposal involve drugs (choose one)?

Yes – Describe the method and route of administration prescription or dosage for each drug, and potential adverse effects:

No

- Does the proposal involve exposure to radioactive material (choose one)?

Yes – Describe the exposure:

No

- Does the proposal involve use of recombinant genetic material (choose one)?

Yes – Describe the use of recombinant genetic material:

No

~End of Questions – Be Sure ALL are Answered~
~Be Sure to Attach All Required Documents ~

Appendix D:

30-Day Song Challenge

BROADWAY EDITION

PLAYBILL

<p>Day 1 A song that you love to belt in your shower</p>	<p>Day 2 A song with a color in the title</p>	<p>Day 3 A song from a Disney musical</p>	<p>Day 4 A song from a Tony-winning show you love</p>	<p>Day 5 A song that boosts your confidence</p>	<p>Day 6 A song that you've auditioned with</p>
<p>Day 7 A song that you love to sing at karaoke</p>	<p>Day 8 A song that reminds you of summer</p>	<p>Day 9 A song with a number in the title</p>	<p>Day 10 A song that makes you cry</p>	<p>Day 11 A song that's an 11 o'clock number</p>	<p>Day 12 A song from the year you were born</p>
<p>Day 13 A song from a show you think closed too soon</p>	<p>Day 14 A song with a person's name in the title</p>	<p>Day 15 A song you've performed for an audience</p>	<p>Day 16 A song you'd want played at your wedding</p>	<p>Day 17 A song with a dance break</p>	<p>Day 18 A song that's about falling in love</p>
<p>Day 19 A song sung by two or more people</p>	<p>Day 20 A song that reminds you of your childhood</p>	<p>Day 21 A song by an artist's whose voice you love</p>	<p>Day 22 A song about a broken heart</p>	<p>Day 23 A song from a musical that's never been on Broadway</p>	<p>Day 24 A song that you love to play on road trips</p>
<p>Day 25 A song that relaxes you</p>	<p>Day 26 A song from a musical that's had a revival</p>	<p>Day 27 A song from a jukebox musical</p>	<p>Day 28 A song from a musical set in New York City</p>	<p>Day 29 A song from your dream role</p>	<p>Day 30 A song that reminds you why you love Broadway</p>