



**A co-design approach to enable dance theatre companies in South Africa to communicate with diverse audiences**

**By**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Contemporary dance theatre companies often lack the in-house knowledge to design effective marketing materials and visual communication design materials. This research asks the question: In what ways can dance theatre companies in South Africa be assisted in developing effective marketing and visual communication design materials?

The research methodology is qualitative and informed by design thinking and co-design, providing an understanding of the real-world nature of the problem. Throughout the data gathering and analysis phases and moving towards finding possible solutions, the design thinking approach engaged the researcher and stakeholders in a problem-solving and innovation mindset. Co-design fostered a collaborative approach to the research, empowering stakeholders to participate actively in an iterative design process.

The findings confirmed the challenges facing dance theatre companies in South Africa and the lack of in-house knowledge to design effective marketing materials. Co-design was used to develop a prototype digital app. This human-centred design intervention is designed to simplify the complex task of designing marketing materials for dance theatre companies.

**Keywords:** Wicked problem, Design thinking, Audience development, Dance theatre marketing, Design Intervention, Co-design

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## CHAPTER 1: SETTING THE STAGE

### 1.1 Introduction

Dance theatre companies, globally and in South Africa, struggle to reach audiences effectively due to financial constraints and a lack of visual communication design skills and knowledge within the companies. Filling auditoriums and developing an audience through marketing is vital for the sustainability of dance theatre. South Africa is culturally diverse, which indicates that the potential audience for these theatre productions is equally diverse. Due to financial constraints faced by many dance theatre companies, many do not have an official marketing department and, therefore, lack the skillsets and knowledge to design effective marketing material (Motsoatsoe, 2016:49). Effective marketing is the extent to which a dance theatre companies marketing activities achieve its goals and objectives (Skačkauskienė et al., 2023).

Dance theatre companies require guidance in developing effective marketing and visual communication design material to promote dance theatre in South Africa's multicultural society and constrained economy.

One of the primary birthplaces of contemporary dance in South Africa is Cape Town. The impact of contemporary dance is reflected in the lives of dance pioneers and companies and is emphasised in the dance theatre of South Africa's multicultural society (Friedman, 2012:1; Samuel, 2016:20). Dance theatre literature is in its infancy, leading to limited and inconsistent literature, which highlight the significance of this research (Friedman, 2012:1; Samuel, 2016:7). The book *Post-apartheid dance: Many bodies, Many voices, Many stories* is the first book to bridge the gap by providing a collection of writings in book form that attempts to provide a cohesive narrative of voices within post-apartheid South African dance (Friedman, 2012:vi). Ballet in its traditional form was pioneered in South Africa, particularly Cape Town, at the start of the twentieth century (Friedman, 2012:3). While it was later documented that traditional ballet established its roots in Cape Town in the early nineteenth century, this highlights the inconsistency of the literature (Samuel, 2016:7). Providing a deeper context to the limited development of dance theatre literature in South Africa, Samuel documents that by 2012, only around 20 Master's theses in dance (largely unpublished) had been produced by South African universities. Within this cohort, a notably smaller proportion specifically addresses contemporary dance (Samuel, 2016:9). Accounts of the life stories and biographical accounts of South African pioneers are in their formative years of being documented (Samuel, 2016:9). The earliest documentation of contemporary dance experienced in South Africa can be traced to Sharon Friedman in Cape Town, which in turn, shaped the well-known Jazzart Dance Theatre (Samuel, 2016:25).

This research asks how local dance theatre companies can be assisted in developing effective marketing and visual communication design material. The research question guiding this research focuses on the development of a design intervention to guide dance theatre companies that do not have a marketing department or lack the in-house knowledge to design effective marketing material. The research utilises

design thinking and co-design workshops to involve stakeholders, giving them a voice in determining the proposed design intervention.

## **1.2 Background of the research**

The primary birthplace of contemporary dance in South Africa is found in three major cities: Cape Town, Johannesburg, and Durban. It is manifested through key dance pioneers and national events (Samuel, 2016:12). For the context of this study, it is vital to highlight the positioning of ballet and African dance in relation to contemporary dance in the country. Contemporary dance emerged as a distinct performing arts form in the 1950s, responding to the leading traditions of ballet and the aesthetics of African dance. By nature, contemporary dance is not bound by conformity and rules like ballet. It can be characterised by its descriptiveness of norms and its general grappling with topical issues (Samuel, 2016:3). Ironically, many pioneers and enthusiasts argue that contemporary dance began as a political act with a sequence of aesthetics and movement explorations by choreographers in this country's theatre dance scene (Samuel, 2016:4). It is essential to look at the political history of the country and its social and cultural impacts to grasp the value and importance of contemporary dance theatre in the South African context and thereby avoid the simplified narrative of contemporary dance.

The history of theatre in South Africa supports the assertion that it has existed for decades in terms of its genesis, form, and role as a platform for interpersonal interaction, growth, and expression. Theatre took the shape of dance and folk tales recited around fires with audiences ranging in age from youth to the elderly, beginning with the heritage of the indigenous people of South Africa. Inspired by the first European dramatic performance in the early 20th century, South Africa's initial conventional theatre performances were performed for white South African audiences and were heavily influenced by 20th-century Europe (Phokungwana, 2014:5).

In the 1950s, theatre popularity flourished in black townships and was known as protest theatre and was moulded by the injustices of colonialism and apartheid. Apartheid, referring to apartness or separation, is the name given to a policy separating people by race in terms of where they lived, worked, and assembled, highly influencing various forms of social and economic discrimination (McCallum, 2021:167; Phokungwana, 2014:5). During apartheid, the political system restricted theatre's natural development as a form of expression, limiting people through racial laws that prohibited exchanges between cultural groups (Friedman, 2012:62; Phokungwana, 2014:5; Samuel, 2016:vii). Similarly, contemporary dance theatre was also influenced by the apartheid era. The extent to which it was affected is unclear, as documentation is fragmented (Friedman, 2012:2).

Democracy in South Africa occurred after the election on 27 April 1994, ending apartheid (Van Heerden, 2008:6). The lifting of restrictions on theatre established and strengthened social contact, allowing

individuals to express their ideas, live out their values, practice their customs, and discover more about one another as a society (Phokungwana, 2014:7).

Cape Town is unique among the pre-apartheid South African cities with regard to how it was racially integrated. Many Capetonians still believe that before 1948, Cape Town was a haven for ethnic harmony. These residents believed segregation was only imposed on Cape Town from outside by the national government. Consequently, post-apartheid Cape Town is still highly diverse (Bickford-Smith, 1995:63).

Cape Town, as one of the primary birthplaces of contemporary dance is defined by its rejection of conformity. Grasping its true importance requires understanding the country's political and socio-cultural history. In the 1960s, theatre flourished in black townships as protest theatre, shaped by the injustices of colonialism and apartheid. Apartheid was a policy system that restricted the natural development of theatre. Similarly, contemporary dance theatre was influenced by apartheid, though the full extent of this remains unclear due to fragmented documentation. Democracy in South Africa ended apartheid, lifting restrictions on theatre. Cape Town is noted for its unique pre-apartheid history of racial integration. Consequently, post-apartheid Cape Town remains highly diverse. Cape Town dance companies have since acknowledged the need for diversity to increase their audience, aligning with South Africa's National Development Plan. Jazzart Dance Theatre, South Africa's oldest contemporary dance company, has made a significant impact on contemporary dance, which is evidenced through the many dancers that they have trained and who have achieved national and global success. Without practical intervention, the legacy and positive impact of dance theatre companies like Jazzart Dance Theatre could be lost.

Cape Town dance companies have recognised the need to diversify and increase audiences through the social and cultural transformation of post-apartheid South Africa (Friedman, 2012:7). The National Development Plan of South Africa reiterates this by recognising it as a driving force for nation-building and a tool for social awareness and transformation (Department of arts and culture, 2020).

The National Development Plan 2030 for South Africa (NDP) continue the aim to diversify and increase audiences, while creating a vibrant cultural landscape (National Planning Commission, 2012:37). Many South African dance theatre companies operate with a strong social mission, engaging in outreach and educational programs that positively contribute to society, which aligns with the National Development Plan (Sibisi & Makka, 2022:1090).



Figure 1: Current Jazzart Dance Theatre logo (Jazzart Dance Theatre, 2025)

Jazzart Dance Theatre resides in Cape Town's central business district, in the Artscape Theatre Centre building. They are South Africa's oldest contemporary dance company, celebrating a milestone age of 50 years in 2023. Jazzart Dance Theatre's impact on contemporary dance in South Africa is evident through the numerous dancers they have trained and the company members who have gone on to achieve within the dance industry nationally and globally (Jazzart Dance Theatre, 2025). Without practical interventions, the legacy and the positive socio-economic impact of dance theatre companies like Jazzart Dance Theatre could be lost in South Africa. South African dance theatre companies are currently facing a decline in audience attendance (Motsoatsoe, 2016:17), due in part to financial constraints and dwindling financial support from government structures to prioritise (Mbele, 2025).

One of the primary birthplaces of contemporary dance is Cape Town, it's defined by its rejection of conformity. Therefore, grasping its true importance requires understanding the country's political and socio-cultural history. In the 1960s, theatre flourished in black townships as protest theatre, shaped by the injustices of colonialism and apartheid. Apartheid was a policy system that restricted the natural

development of theatre. Similarly, contemporary dance theatre was influenced by apartheid, though the full extent of this remains unclear due to fragmented documentation. Democracy in South Africa desisted the separate development policies of apartheid and removed restrictions on theatre. Cape Town is renowned for its distinct pre-apartheid history of racial integration, and as a result, post-apartheid Cape Town remains highly diverse in terms of its demographics. Cape Town dance companies have since acknowledged the need to capitalise on this diversity to increase their audience, aligning with South Africa's National Development Plan

In this section the background to the research has been established, highlighting the need for further research that can address the challenges outlined above.

### **1.3 Role of the researcher**

As a researcher conducting this kind of research, I am uniquely positioned through my experience in dancing, acting, choreography, workshop facilitation, dance teaching and multidisciplinary visual communication design. My visual communication career largely centres around the theatre industry. I have been active in the theatre industry for 26 years, mainly in my capacity as a dancer. My practice as a visual communicator increased significantly when I merged my career paths by designing marketing material for the theatre industry. Having made this shift, I developed a deeper comprehension of the value of marketing material for contemporary dance theatre companies.

Through this research, I have addressed the problem that contemporary dance theatre companies, in many cases, lack the in-house knowledge to design effective marketing and visual communication design material that attracts and engage audiences in contemporary ways.

### **1.4 Statement of the research problem**

The problem this research addresses is that contemporary dance theatre companies often lack the in-house knowledge to design effective marketing and visual communication design materials that can attract and engage diverse audiences in contemporary ways. This is due, in part, to the financial constraints that prevent them from establishing a dedicated marketing department. Other constraints are based on the low value placed on effective marketing materials by the leadership/management in South African dance theatre companies.

### **1.5 Main research question**

The main research question guiding this research is:

In what ways can dance theatre companies be assisted in developing effective marketing and visual communication design material for diverse audiences in South Africa?

#### **1.5.1 Sub-question 1**

What are the barriers for dance theatre audience development in South Africa?

#### **1.5.2 Sub-question 2**

What do dance theatre companies who lack skill sets and in-house knowledge need to design effective marketing material for diverse audiences?

#### **1.5.3 Sub-question 3**

How can a co-design process bring about a design intervention to improve marketing material for dance theatre companies with limited resources?

### **1.6 Aim and objectives of the research**

#### **1.6.1 Aim of the research**

The research aims to develop and co-design a design intervention to guide dance theatre companies that do not have a marketing department or lack the in-house knowledge to design effective marketing and visual communication material for potential audiences. The co-design process has been chosen to ensure that the development of the designed intervention is effective, relevant, and user-friendly for non-designers within dance theatre companies.

#### **1.6.2 Objectives of the research**

- Assess the skillset and capacity of dance theatre company staff in South Africa regarding visual communication design.
- Identify areas of improvement for dance theatre company staff in South Africa regarding visual communication design.
- Facilitate co-design workshops to develop a design intervention with key stakeholders in dance theatre companies in Cape Town.
- Test the prototype design intervention with select stakeholders.

Aim	Objectives	Method
The research aims to develop and co-design a design intervention to guide dance theatre companies that do not have a marketing department or lack the in-house knowledge to design effective marketing and visual communication material for potential audiences.	Assess the skillset and capacity of dance theatre company staff in South Africa regarding visual communication design.	Literature review  Online questionnaire
Guide dance theatre companies that do not have a marketing department or lack the in-house knowledge to design effective marketing and visual communication materials for potential audiences.	Identify areas of improvement for dance theatre company staff in South Africa regarding visual communication design.	Online questionnaire
Development of the design intervention will be effective, relevant and user-friendly for non-designers within dance theatre companies	Facilitate co-design workshops to develop a design intervention with key stakeholders in dance theatre companies in Cape Town	Co-design workshop
The co-design process has been chosen to ensure that the development of the design intervention will be effective	Test the prototype design intervention with select stakeholders.	Prototype testing

Table 1: Aim, objectives and methods

### 1.7 Significance of the research

The research underscores Cape Town as the foremost birthplace of contemporary dance in South Africa. It indicates that low audience attendance of dance theatre performances is partly due to ineffective marketing materials that fail to attract and engage audiences. This challenge is compounded by a lack of in-house expertise to design effective marketing material, which is often attributed to the absence of dedicated marketing departments primarily due to financial constraints.

The significance of this research lies in its potential to strengthen the effectiveness of marketing material and ensure the long-term sustainability of dance theatre companies by increasing audience attendance through audience development. The research addresses the gap in the literature which is a result of the infancy of dance literature in South Africa. The ultimate objective was to develop a comprehensive design intervention to aid and enhance the effective marketing of dance theatre productions. The broader aim is to revitalise Cape Town as the birthplace of contemporary dance.

Challenges faced by South African dance theatre companies are financial constraints and a lack of expertise in visual communication, design and marketing. This is set against the backdrop of Cape Town being a birthplace of contemporary dance, yet there's a gap in relevant literature and documentation. In a historical and political context, contemporary dance emerged in response to ballet. This development was restricted and shaped by colonialism and apartheid, which enforced racial segregation and limited artistic expression. The transition to democracy in 1994 subsequently lifted these restrictions, allowing theatre to re-emerge as a space for social cohesion and expression. The problem is that South African contemporary dance theatre companies often lack the in-house knowledge and resources, due to financial constraints, to design effective marketing material and visual communication materials, preventing them from engaging with diverse audiences. The main research question asks, in what ways can dance theatre companies be assisted in developing effective marketing and visual communication design material for diverse audiences in South Africa? The aim is to develop and co-design a design intervention, utilising a co-design workshop. The literature review in *Chapter 2* addresses literature concerning dance theatre marketing materials and the lack of sustainable theatre audience development.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This review discusses literature concerning dance theatre marketing materials and the lack of sustainable theatre audience development. The framework in this literature review lays the groundwork for identifying how a design intervention can improve dance theatre production marketing materials for companies with limited resources, leading to successful audience development.

This literature review is conducted under the following headings: Barriers to audience development for dance theatre productions, Marketing materials and dance theatre companies, The perfect storm of dance theatre marketing, and A global perspective on dance theatre and audience development.

The literature analysis revealed a lack of consistent documentation of dance theatre history and dance theatre literature in South Africa. Dance research in South Africa is in its infancy, which adds to the inconsistency of the literature. For a deeper context of the infancy of dance literature in South Africa, it has been documented that by 2016, only approximately 20 Master's theses in Dance studies had been written. Most are unpublished from universities in South Africa. Within this context, even fewer account for contemporary dance. Adding to this is that dance studies that could be a cultural indicator are under-theorised (Samuel, 2016:54). Even with the limitation, existing documentation has revealed that Cape Town is one of the primary birthplaces of contemporary dance in South Africa, with most of its audience found in its urban centres. It is essential to highlight dance theatre's role in South Africa's multicultural society and not negate its impact, which conspicuously lacks literature. Dance theatre literature in South Africa primarily reflects political history, the lives of dance pioneers and their biographies, and companies biographically and ethnographically. Through these accounts, the literature emphasises the role of dance theatre in South Africa's multicultural society (Friedman, 2012:11).

The emphasis placed on the role of dance theatre in South Africa does not disaffirm that organisations face significant sustainability challenges, particularly financial challenges. Non-profit organisations in South Africa struggle with the implementation of corporate social responsibility (CSR) due to financial constraints, a lack of dedicated funds and insufficient staff (Sibisi & Makka, 2022:1095). This aligns with the challenges faced by dance theatre companies, which often lack the financial resources to hire dedicated marketing staff, leading to an in-house knowledge and skills gap. This lack of resources is a core element of the wicked problem described later in this review.

### **2.2 The perfect storm of dance theatre marketing**

“Sustainability could be defined as a wicked problem”

(Fuad-Luke, 2009:142)

Sustainability is the leading challenge faced by marketing today (Fodness, 2015:16). As a social problem, sustainability is filled with complexities and has no clear definition (Fodness, 2015:15; Savaya & Spiro, 2012:27). It is, however, frequently described as "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Fodness, 2015:10). Companies are expected by stakeholders, consumers and policy makers to demonstrate sustainability (Fodness, 2015:10).

Dance theatre companies in South Africa face sustainability challenges. These challenges are a result of numerous problems. These problems are confusing, involving ill-informed decision-makers and diverse audiences. The term *wicked problem* is appropriate in the context of this research since it mirrors the complex characteristics of the context (Waddock, 2013:1).

Currently, sustainability is the most challenging wicked problem (Fuad-Luke, 2009:142). The term *wicked problem* is used in the literature to describe a perfect storm of unique complexities and characteristics (Fodness, 2015:15). Rittel and Webber introduced the term wicked problem in 1972 and defined it "as a class of ill-formulated social system problems, where the information is confusing, where there are many clients and decision-makers with conflicting values, and where the ramifications in the whole system are thoroughly confusing" (Biesbroek et al., 2019:68).

According to Fodness (2015), the features that characterise wicked problems derive from the complex context in which they are found:

- No definitive formulation of wicked problems exists, as stakeholders have different frames of reference concerning the problem; constraints and resources for addressing change over time, contributing to high uncertainty with outcomes but also with the potential causes and effects underlying the problems.
- The key to understanding wicked problems is that their complex interdependencies and associated high social complexity are never solved traditionally. Still, instead, they become better or worse (Fodness, 2015:15).

The wicked problem characteristics are illustrated in *Figure 2* below and are a valuable framework for understanding the complexities of sustaining dance theatre companies in South Africa.

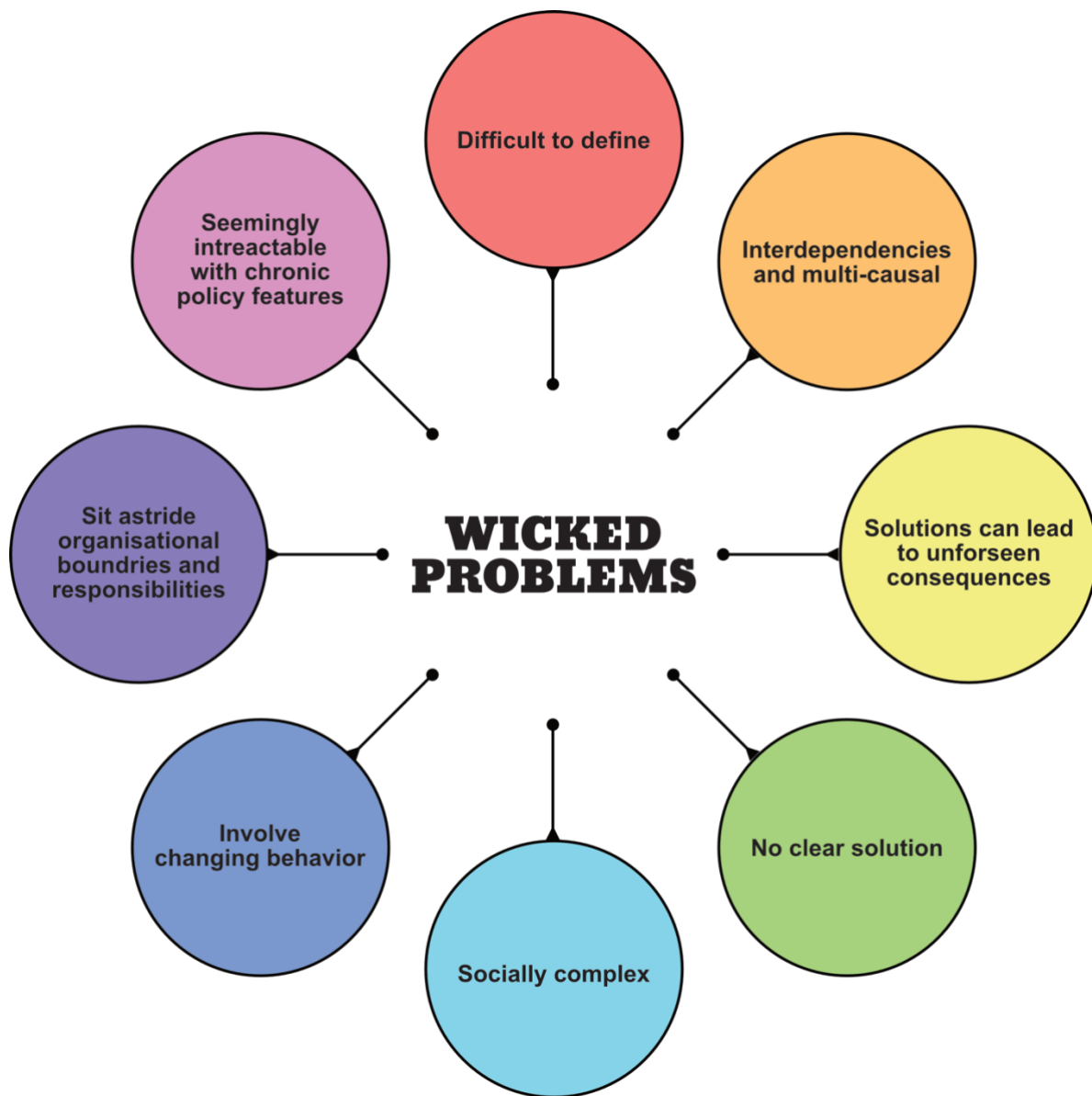


Figure 2: Wicked problem characteristics (Based on Biesbroek et al., 2019:169)

Wicked problems cannot be fully solved; there are only ways to determine how the problem can be understood to address part of it (Mertens, 2015:36). This approach isolates and addresses a specific aspect of the problem rather than trying to solve the entire problem simultaneously. The comparison is made to taming a wild animal, where the objective is to make it less dangerous without eliminating it. The concept of a wicked problem has surprisingly expanded globally, yet it remains largely absent in the African context. Filtering search results to include articles connected to Africa, only 53 articles, representing a mere 3% of

the total, were found. However, the limited mention of wicked problems in African literature does not imply that African nations, societies, and populations are free of significant challenges (Niskanen et al., 2021:2). The wicked problem, comparable to a perfect storm, offers a valuable framework for understanding the complexities and challenges faced by dance theatre companies in South Africa.

The problem of ineffective visual communication for audience development is both multifaceted and deeply interconnected with social and economic factors, which indicates a deeper issue that aligns with the wicked problem (Biesbroek et al., 2019:1). Since sustainability challenges are a wicked problem within dance theatre companies, there is some alignment with their corporate social responsibility (CSR). The wicked problem provides a useful lens for understanding the obstacles South African dance theatre companies face within a bigger context (Sibisi & Makka, 2022:1089).

Research in arts management increasingly positions sustainability challenges as wicked problems because they involve interdependent financial, social, and cultural dimensions (Waddock, 2013:2). Within performing arts organisations this aligns with their dual responsibility of generating income while serving a social mission (Mometti & Van Bommel, 2021:136). CSR in non-profit cultural organisations is not only about environmental responsibility but also about accessibility, diversity, and inclusion in audience engagement (National Planning Commission, 2012:473).

The relationship between the financial constraints of dance theatre companies and their ability to engage in CSR is often disregarded. The World Bank describes corporate social responsibility as "business takes account of its economic, social and environmental impacts in the way it operates", reflecting in it the commitment to sustainability (Sibisi & Makka, 2022:1089). South African dance theatre companies struggle to implement effective corporate social responsibility due to the financial restraints (Sibisi & Makka, 2022:1100). This often leads to a lack of in-house marketing staff and the implementation of audience development. For dance theatre companies, their sustainability is a core wicked problem and is intertwined with their social responsibility to audiences and the cultural landscape, as illustrated in *Figure 3* below (National Planning Commission, 2012:473). The sustainability of dance theatre companies is more than just a problem that affects them; it has a more profound impact on contemporary dance in South Africa (Department of Sport, 2022:25).



### 2.3 Barriers to audience development for dance theatre productions

Theatre is not defined by a single description; instead, its meaning changes according to theoretical, cultural and methodological perspectives in research (Desando, 2017:22:18; Motsoatsoe, 2016:17). Defining the word *theatre* requires concise clarification. Theatre derives from the Greek word *theatron*, "a place of seeing," and is defined as a building designed to present a performance (Motsoatsoe, 2016:54). An audience must be present for a theatre to exist because they are "seeing" the performance (Phokungwana, 2014:90). In the South African theatre community, audiences are commonly referred to as *bums on seats*. This view of an audience merely perceives audiences as numbers counted to access money from paying ticket holders. However, audience members are more than a passive, homogenous group of people sitting in an auditorium. It is important to stress that audiences are diverse, multicultural and more nuanced than the term suggests. They are socially and culturally liberated, influencing their expectations and recipients of contemporary dance theatre (Bennett, 2013:4; Motsoatsoe, 2016:29). The term *audience* is a widely used term, generically used without specificity or attention to engagement. The way in which audiences are perceived by organisations affects how the relationships are imagined between the audience and organisation (Lindelof, 2015:200).

Contemporary dance companies, globally and in South Africa, face sustainability challenges owing to declining audience attendance (Desando, 2017:4; Motsoatsoe, 2016:6). The country's contemporary dance theatres are buzzing with performances despite lacking audience attendance. Attempts by contemporary dance companies, as well as policies and initiatives by the government to increase theatre audiences, have proved insignificant. Potentially, audience decline results from increased competition, dwindling arts education in schools, demographic challenges, and technologies' increasing appeal. What motivates audiences to attend contemporary dance performances is unknown, as the reasons for non-attendance are layered and nuanced and undocumented (Motsoatsoe, 2016:8). There is limited research on how South African contemporary dance companies influence audiences' decisions to attend performances (Desando, 2017:48).

As mentioned above, audiences play an influential role in the sustainability of contemporary dance companies as they increase financial security (Desando, 2017:4; Motsoatsoe, 2016:6). Contemporary dance theatre's decreasing audience attendance requires the implementation of audience development to resolve this issue. In South Africa, audience development is a relatively new concept with limited research, especially with smaller independent contemporary dance theatre companies. In recent years, audience development has become a discussion point, with implementation varying geographically and less evident in many circumstances (Cuenca-Amigo & Makua, 2017:157).

South African arts and culture sectors do not have an official definition of audience development and are interpreted by contemporary dance companies as marketing strategies or art education (Motsoatsoe,

2016:7). The Art Council England outlines audience development as an "activity which is undertaken specifically to meet the needs of existing and potential audiences and to help arts organisations develop ongoing relationships with audiences. It can include marketing, commissioning, programming, education, customer care, and distribution" (Alnasser & Yi, 2023:2; Cuenca-Amigo & Makua, 2017:158). South African contemporary dance companies engage with audience development for various reasons, typically addressing their vision and mission statements. Some have mission statements that directly contain audience development or outreach goals. Others respond to the cultural policy that fosters social cohesion in the audience, seeking to increase their audience and fill auditoriums to increase financial income. One of the core components of audience development within a contemporary dance company is that it impacts not only a particular department but the entire contemporary dance company and is a vital aspect that every contemporary dance company should be involved in (Cuenca-Amigo & Makua, 2017:157; Phokungwana, 2014:32). Audience development is necessary to forge bonds between the audience and contemporary dance companies, persuading audiences to attend a performance and for contemporary dance companies to understand the audience (Phokungwana, 2014:32).

Cultural marketing researchers have studied obstacles to motivation for attending theatre over time, but the dynamism of motivation remains little explored (Obaidalahe & Steils, 2018:7). Discourse are ongoing about what attracts audiences to the theatre in South Africa. However, there are indications that motivations for attendance vary with age, education and jobs. It is assumed that the audience's understanding of theatre influences attendance. Theatres in South Africa are generally not located near audiences and lack public transport, especially for evening performances. Additionally, theatres are perceived as being economically expensive. It is vital to emphasise that attendance is lacking even when theatre tickets are offered for free. A National Arts Council (NAC) 2010 survey highlights time, transport access and price as barriers to not attending theatre (Phokungwana, 2014:24). Despite this, the general barriers affecting audience attendance are equally important (Obaidalahe & Steils, 2018:6).

As highlighted in the figure below, the barriers to audience attendance are complex. While the National Arts Council (NAC) survey in 2010 points to time, transport access and price as key obstacles (National Arts Council of South Africa, 2010:7,12), besides factors like competition from other leisure activities and the specific content of the performances, also significantly influence audience decisions. These barriers are not isolated but rather contribute to the general challenge of attracting audiences, solidifying the view that audience development is a wicked problem. Additionally, digital entertainment options, such as streaming platforms, are increasingly mentioned as alternatives to theatre audience attendance (Walmsley, 2019:40). Suggesting that audience development needs to address not only conventional access barriers but also the evolving digital competition for audience attention.

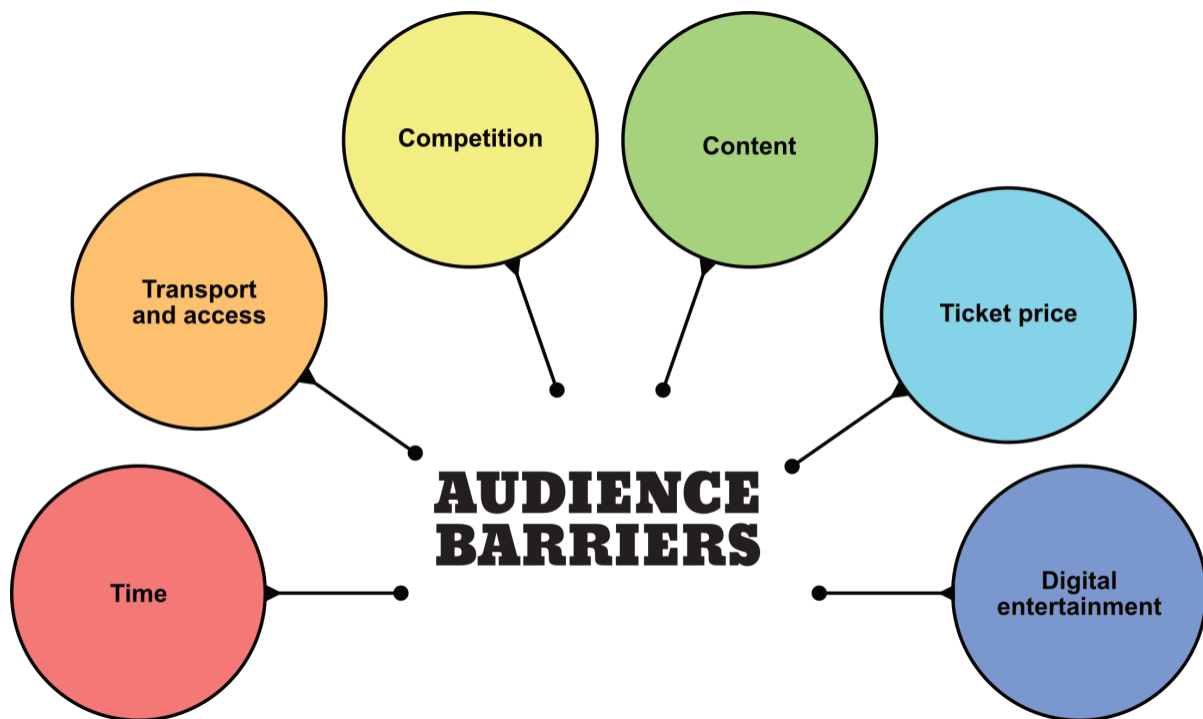


Figure 4: Barriers to audience attendance (Author's own diagram)

As shown in *Figure 4* above, audiences express that they have no time to attend the theatre (Motsoatsoe, 2016:39). Transportation prevents audience attendance, particularly in the evening, for those who do not own vehicles and rely on limited public transport. They consider ticket prices too expensive, specifically for ordinary South Africans. An influential factor is the content offered (Motsoatsoe, 2016:39; Phokungwana, 2014:23). All theatre activities are experiencing increased competition for the attention of audiences. As mentioned, South African theatre is thriving despite the decreased audience attendance, making it difficult for audiences to choose which performances they want to attend and facing ticket prices that are viewed as high. The increased competition also arises from audiences needing to decide whether to attend a different performance, choose other events, go shopping, or watch media on demand like Netflix (Motsoatsoe, 2016:7).

#### 2.4 Marketing material and dance theatre companies

In recent years, there has been increased popularity and diversity of leisure activities and entertainment, making it clear that theatres face increased competition. The consumption of theatre performances has decreased, while cultural activities show an upward trend. Weak audience motivation to attend the theatre is partly due to the attraction of other entertainment and leisure activities (Obaidalaha & Steils, 2018:5). It

has been more than twenty years since the internet revolutionised marketing. The result of this is marketing fragmentation and audience autonomy in decision-making around what and when to attend events. Increasing the audience's access to diverse platforms increases competition. An example would be on-demand services like Netflix, where audiences can access a wide range of local and international content they can watch anytime and anywhere (Motsoatsoe, 2016:26).

Marketing in dance theatre companies has the potential to contribute to the well-being of the company and society by increasing overall culture and fostering economic growth through dance theatre (Dlačić et al., 2017:423). Unfortunately, many dance theatre companies rarely have marketing departments due to organisational structure limitations, leading to no dedicated marketing specialists. In these situations, marketing is done by the staff tasked with marketing with limited knowledge of marketing and its complexities. The marketing capability gap model shown in Figure 5 illustrates the chain of problems.

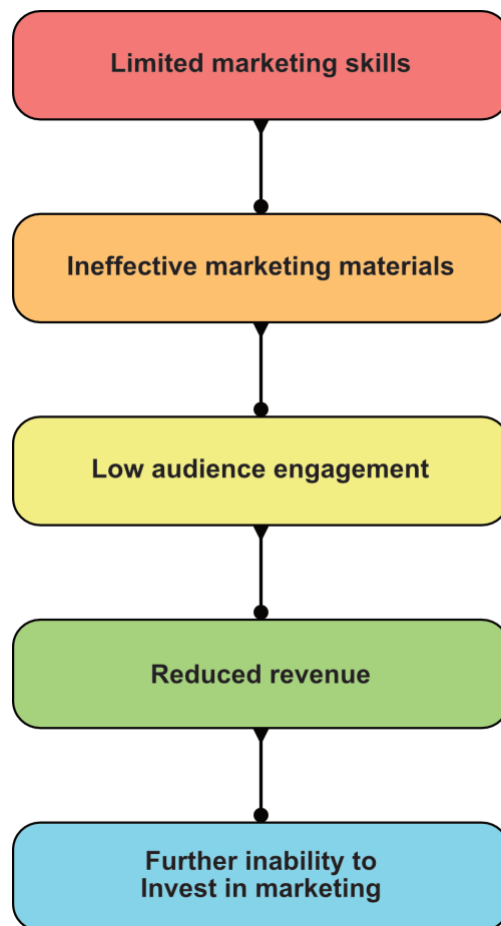


Figure 5: Marketing capability gap (Author's own diagram)

This often leads to gaps in their marketing knowledge of the dance theatre company. Due to their limited marketing expertise, these individuals likely rely heavily on personal judgment. However, their specific process in developing these plans remains unclear (Bennett, 2013:58). From the marketing perspective, dance theatre companies typically prioritise artistic expression in production over the audience's expectations. Dance theatre companies commonly do not favour a customer-centric approach. Audience expectations are therefore not prioritised (Obaidalahe & Steils, 2018:5; Dlačić et al., 2017:424).

Audience loyalty and frequency of attending theatre performances result from tastes acquired over time. Audiences with large amounts of general theatre knowledge possess judgment skills and a frame of reference to understand marketing material. This shows that education and frequency of theatre attendance influence the intention of visiting theatre performances. This specific knowledge is acquired from external sources, specifically magazines, newspapers, mass media, and marketing material (Obaidalahe & Steils, 2018:6). Often, marketing is approached using traditional marketing materials that have worked adequately, but it is found that they sometimes fail to deliver the desired outcomes and result in unintended consequences. Yet, other times, it produces the intended results. This inconsistency questions whether traditional marketing materials are only appropriate in marketing specific theatre performances, and if alternatives may be needed. There is no recognition of the need for alternative marketing material, yet criticism has been made that marketing material is developed using a one size fits all approach (Fodness, 2015:1).

As stated before, without an audience, there is no theatre. Communication is crucial to audience development. Without communication for the theatre, there is no audience. The shift towards social media marketing presents dance theatre companies with new challenges in a highly competitive environment. Especially when designing marketing materials that need to attract audiences irrespective of the company's success in marketing or its hierarchical standing (Lameiro, 2023:104). Theatre visual communication embraces a considerable challenge in that it has to be effective in a highly competitive leisure marketing market and create visual communication that attracts audiences to unique experiences (Lameiro, 2023:104).

The historical, social, economic and political factors surrounding dance theatre in South Africa highlight the complexity of developing effective marketing material. These challenges reflect wicked problems and their entwined characteristics. By untangling the wicked problem, this research inquires into the ways in which dance theatre companies in South Africa might develop effective marketing and visual communication design material to strengthen audience development and ultimately strive towards sustainability for contemporary dance theatre companies (Bahnan et al., 2019:1).

The emergence of digital media in the early 1990s allowed audiences to easily view content, and social media has become a new way of communication in marketing (Gagliano, 2020:2). Since the inception of the web and social media, dance theatre companies' marketing has shifted, with a more substantial reliance on social media, even though they lag in application (Bahnan et al., 2019:23). The possibilities for dance theatre companies' marketing increases significantly when embracing social media since three-quarters of those who use the internet also use a form of social media (Bahnan et al., 2019:24). Globally, it continues to integrate into daily life, and dance theatre has experienced increased exposure worldwide, yet audience attendance has decreased over the last fifteen years. This has resulted in diminishing funds and in limited research (Gagliano, 2020:2).

## **2.5 A global perspective on dance theatre marketing and audience development**

Audience development is seen as an activity undertaken to meet the needs of audiences and develop relationships between arts organisations and audiences. In Nordic countries, audience development addresses funding dilemmas in dance theatre companies (Lindelof, 2015:206). South African dance companies are strained with financial challenges, significantly impacting audience development (Sibisi & Makka, 2022:7). Some dance theatre companies in Bangkok, Thailand, understand the concept and practice of audience development, emphasising that this likely leads to small audiences and financial losses (Thamkulangkool, 2021:23). The dance theatre companies in Korea have experienced significant growth, with ticket sales figures increasing. Despite this growth, the growth of dance has lagged behind other performing arts categories globally (Lee et al., 2016:1044). Similar downward trends are noted in France, where cultural activities, and the consumption of dance theatre has declined (Obaidalahe & Steils, 2018:1). Possible reasons include that the artistic appeal of dance performances is underappreciated, and most dance theatre companies have limited financial resources and lack marketing departments (Lee et al., 2016:1044). In contrast, despite the challenging living conditions in Ukraine, society strives for positive emotional experiences, resulting in a rapidly growing theatre industry. Consequently, marketing is essential for the successful operation and growth of dance theatre companies, ensuring their accessibility, popularity and financial stability (Demchenko, 2024:55). In Croatia, numerous organisations lack dedicated marketing departments, and a study indicated that the general managers of these companies often harbour a "fear of marketing" (Dlačić et al., 2017:424). The primary obstacle to implementing marketing in Croatian organisations has been identified as a lack of experience and knowledge in marketing (Dlačić et al., 2017:424). This fear can be acknowledged by the fact that theatre marketing is a wicked problem (de Siqueira et al., 2023:484). A 2018 study on theatres in Milan suggests that there is a relationship between social media presence and increased audience attendance. The study found that marketing efforts need to be increased by dance theatre companies. The empirical research shows that when supported by social media, dance theatre companies profited from growth in audience engagement (Gagliano, 2020:7). Digital media advances daily, and marketing needs to predict, follow and understand the impact that digital media has to effectively market dance theatre (Gagliano, 2020:4).

There is a significant lack of consistent documentation for dance theatre history and literature in South Africa, with dance research being in its infancy. Despite this, existing documentation highlights Cape Town and emphasises dance theatre's role in reflecting political history, the lives of dance pioneers, and South Africa's multicultural society. Sustainability is complex, leading to challenges with no clear definition, often described as meeting present needs without compromising the future. Dance theatre companies in South Africa face sustainability challenges due to confusion, varied audiences, and ill-informed decision-making, making the wicked problem framework appropriate. Wicked problems are characterised by their lack of a definitive formulation and their high social complexity. The framework is used to understand the complexities of sustaining dance theatre companies in South Africa. Barriers to audience development for dance theatre productions highlight that the term audience goes beyond mere ticket sales; it refers to a socially and culturally engaged group. Contemporary dance companies, both globally and in South Africa, face sustainability challenges due to declining audience attendance and a lack of understanding regarding the motivations of non-attendees. Dance theatre companies face increased competition for audience attention due to a surge in diverse leisure activities and the impact of the internet's revolution of marketing, leading to audience autonomy and fragmentation. While dance theatre can contribute positively to culture and economic growth, many companies lack a dedicated marketing department or knowledge of marketing. This means marketing is often handled by staff with limited expertise. *Chapter 3* describes how the research design is informed by design thinking and co-design using the double diamond model.

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The research design in this study is informed by design thinking and a co-design approach to engaging with the research questions appropriately. A literature review has established the existing research concerning the issue at hand. Following this, an online questionnaire was sent to the research participants, providing valuable knowledge to initiate the first co-design workshop. Co-design was then utilised as a collaborative approach in the research to empower stakeholders in participating actively in the design process and encouraging human-centred empathy and knowledge sharing. Lastly, a testing phase was initiated where a prototype was used to engage further with participants, and final design iterations were completed thereafter.

This chapter unpacks the research design and methodology of this study in terms of Design thinking, Practice-led research, Co-design, and participant Sampling.

#### **3.1.1 Design thinking**

In finding possible solutions, the design thinking approach is a problem-solving and innovation mindset. As shown in Figure 6 below, the design thinking framework groups six core activities into three overarching phases: understanding, exploring and materialising. Beginning with empathize by conducting research to develop a deep understanding of the user. Followed by define, synthesising research insights to locate problems and opportunities, and to frame a clear problem statement that will guide subsequent design. The explore phase focuses on idea generation and concept development. During the ideate activity, a range of creative possibilities is generated to broaden the solution space. These ideas are made tangible through prototyping, where selected ideas are developed into low or high-fidelity representations. In the materialize phase, concepts are iteratively refined and implemented. Through the test phase, prototypes are tested by the users to gather feedback and identify refinements. Finally, in the implement phase, the solution is put into effect (Gibbons, n.d.). The specialised knowledge of individuals is integrated through teamwork and an iterative process to develop user-centred products or services. Making it suitable for addressing social problems (Krohn & Meinel, 2022:14). The primary benefit of the design thinking approach is its ability to drive innovation by encouraging outside-the-box thinking, promote ideas and to challenge assumptions (Kruger et al., 2023:202). Design is connected to our known and unknown biases. Therefore, a problem-solving and innovation mindset is valuable for breaking free from accepted norms. In order to achieve this, designers must adopt an inherently subjective mindset (Leifer & Meinel, 2021:2). It has been extensively applied to address complex social problems. (Kruger et al., 2023:5).

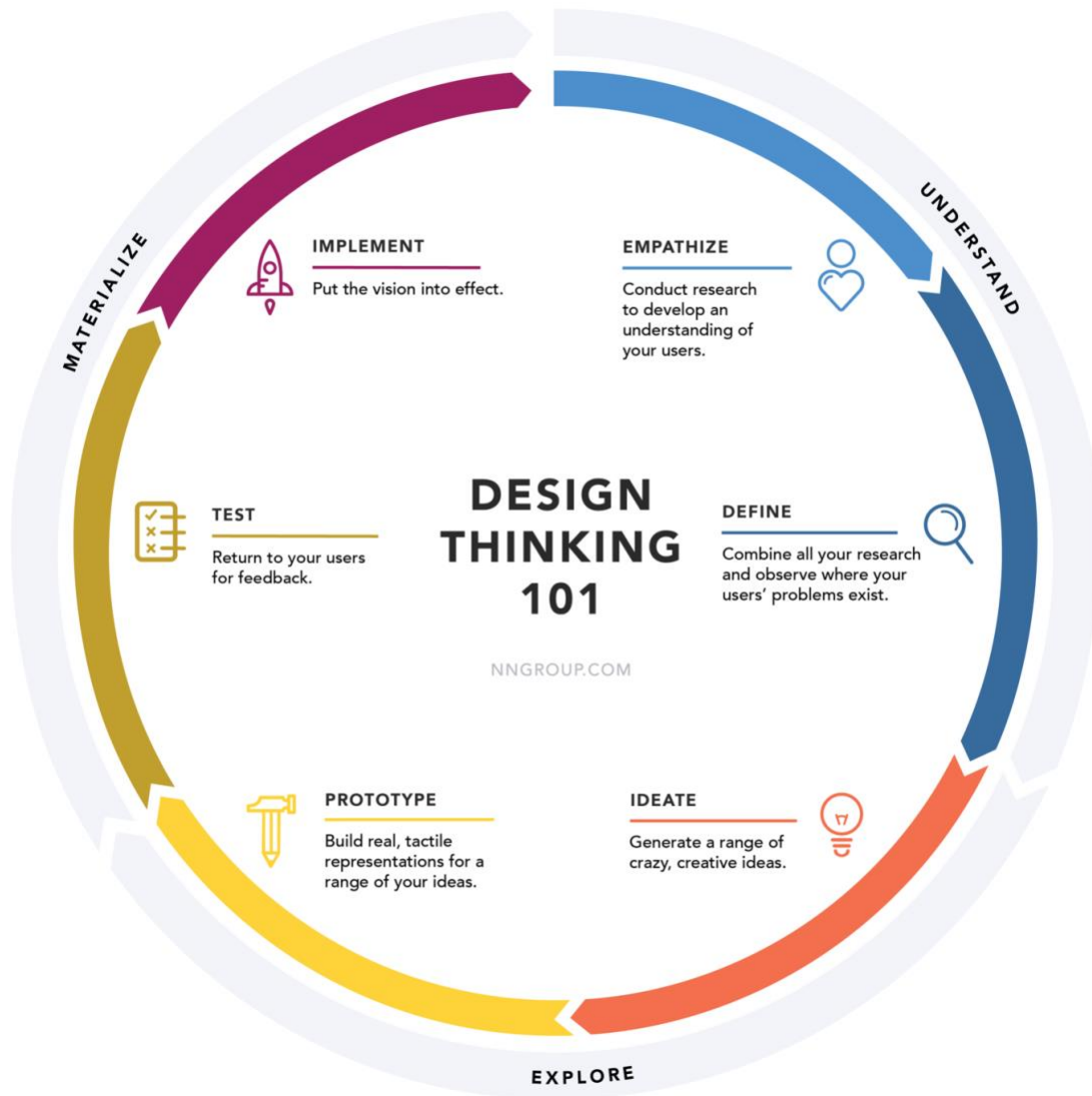


Figure 6: Design thinking framework (Gibbons, n.d.)

### 3.1.2 Practice-led design research

"Practice-led design research highlights the instrumentality of making in the generation of knowledge" (Vega, 2021:270), where the act of designing and creating things is itself a way of generating new knowledge. The idea is that the process of making can aid in understanding complex, wicked problems and develop new solutions in a way that traditional research methods might not.

*"it offers designers a mode of inquiry that is familiar to them, thus asserting the epistemic role of making in the context of design practice"*  
(Vega, 2021:271)

The thought process of knowledge creation extends beyond an individual and includes other people as well as their environment. In essence, knowledge is co-created through collaboration and interaction. It exhibits two characteristics:

- "It is mentally and emotionally constituted,
- It is operationalised by bringing this forth into being" (Vega, 2021:271).

The process occurs when these thought processes are used via open-ended, inventive and effective tasks. Typically, these characteristics can be found in activities such as group cooking, collective artmaking, co-designing, writing music for ensembles or choreographing a dance. The main undertaking of practice-led design research is to articulate knowledge that is difficult or impossible to express in words. Practice-led design research has become an invaluable asset because it offers an insider perspective that other research approaches are not reaching (Vega, 2021:271).

### **3.1.3 Co-design**

The underlying belief systems profoundly influence how co-design is practised. When co-design is applied to concepts that involve social views and sustainability, it is defined as "not a single procedure or ingredient. It is a commitment regarding power and inclusion. Co-design involves mutual learning multi-stakeholder environment. Co-design embraces a multi-stakeholder environment, where the stakeholders as designers, and the designers themselves, learn to create together" (Fuad-Luke et al., 2015:15). The underlying premise of the co-design approach is the concept that people who use designed artefacts are entitled to having a voice in determining its design. Since sustainability is the most challenging wicked problem, co-design is essential to effect profound social change (Fuad-Luke, 2009:147).

Co-design is a continuous cyclic activity, with a start, middle and end. The end can become a new start in a developed, new context and this cyclic process is called the co-design cycle. As illustrated in Figure 7, the co-design cycle for this research starts with the initial phase, "Trigger" (purple), followed by the Iterative Planning phase (yellow), Iterative Start Section phase (red), Iterative Collective Designing phase (blue), and ends with the Iterative Doing and Learning: collective actioning phase (green).

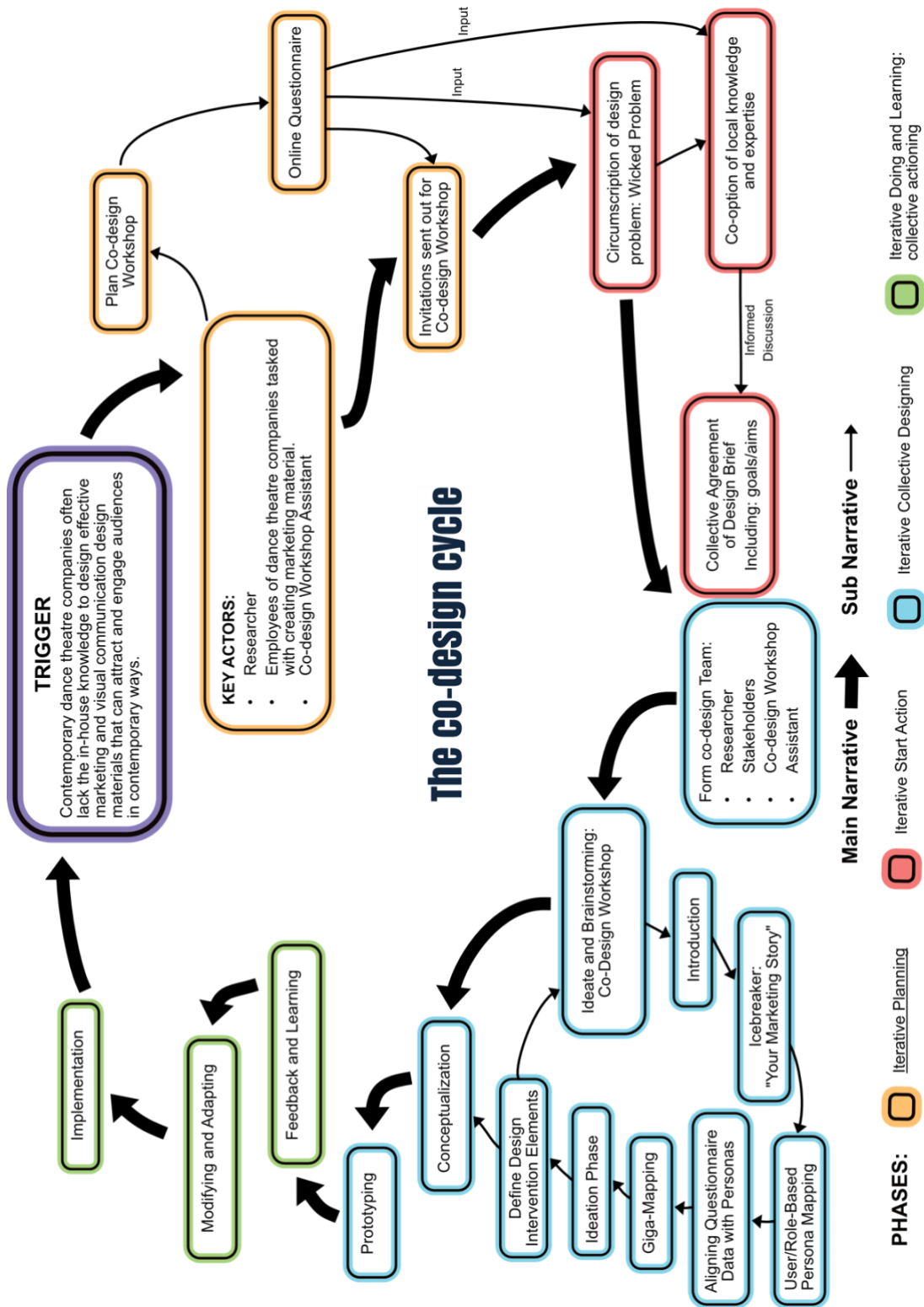


Figure 7: The co-design cycle (Based on Fuad-Luke et al., 2015:129)

This research has utilised co-design workshops as a key component of the research, ensuring that the stakeholders who are predestined to use the intervention played a critical role in designing it. The sequential research activities in *Figure 8* within the co-design process demonstrate the research process within the double diamond, which is illustrated in *Figure 9*.

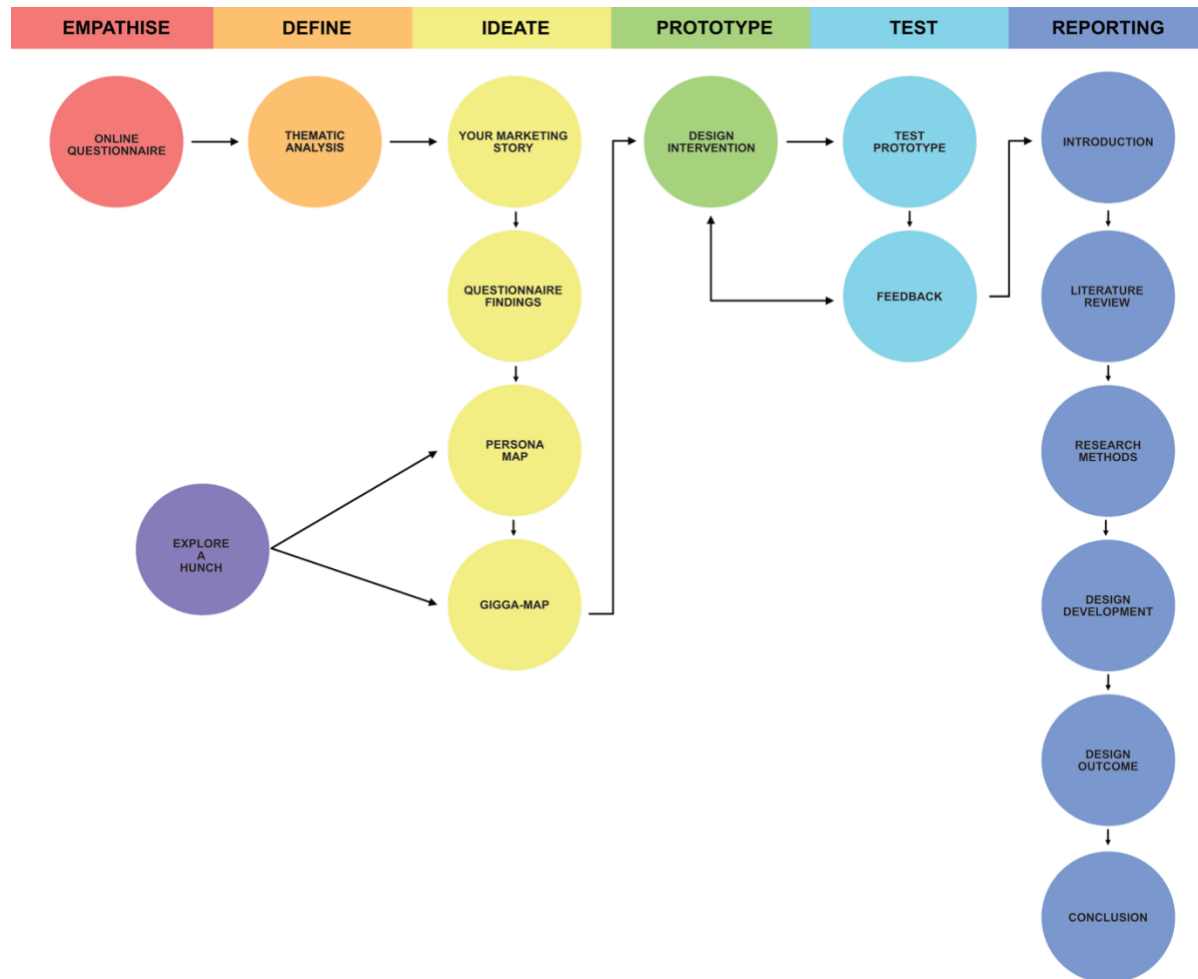


Figure 8: Sequential research activities within the double diamond (Author's own diagram)

There are numerous methods and process models in the design field that can be used to address the complexities of wicked problems and ways to create strategies to handle them. One such iterative process model is the double diamond model initiated by the United Kingdom's Design Council in 2007. Having the most appropriate model is essential when handling wicked problems because the problems have more significant complexities and require more holistic and collaborative approaches (Kotaniemi et al., 2023:2). The core principle of the double diamond model is to find the specific problem and find a solution to rectify that problem. There is no ideal methodological process, making it essential to have a flexible structure that

responds swiftly and appropriately to creative changes as the research process unfolds. Therefore, this is not a linear process (Huang et al., 2023:4).

The four phases of the double diamond consist of discover, define, develop and deliver. In the first diamond, the specific problem is discover (diverge) and defined (converge), known as the problem space, as shown in Figure 10. This was done through an online questionnaire and thematic analysis. The solution space for the second diamond, ideate refers to idea generation, and Deliver refers to the prototype phase, was achieved through a co-design workshop and a thematic analysis with the selected stakeholders, resulting in the establishment of the design intervention. The double diamond is an iterative process which allows for continued cyclic iterations to arrive at solutions. The iterations will be used to test the prototype with the intention of improving the intervention. This iteration is shown in Figure 10.

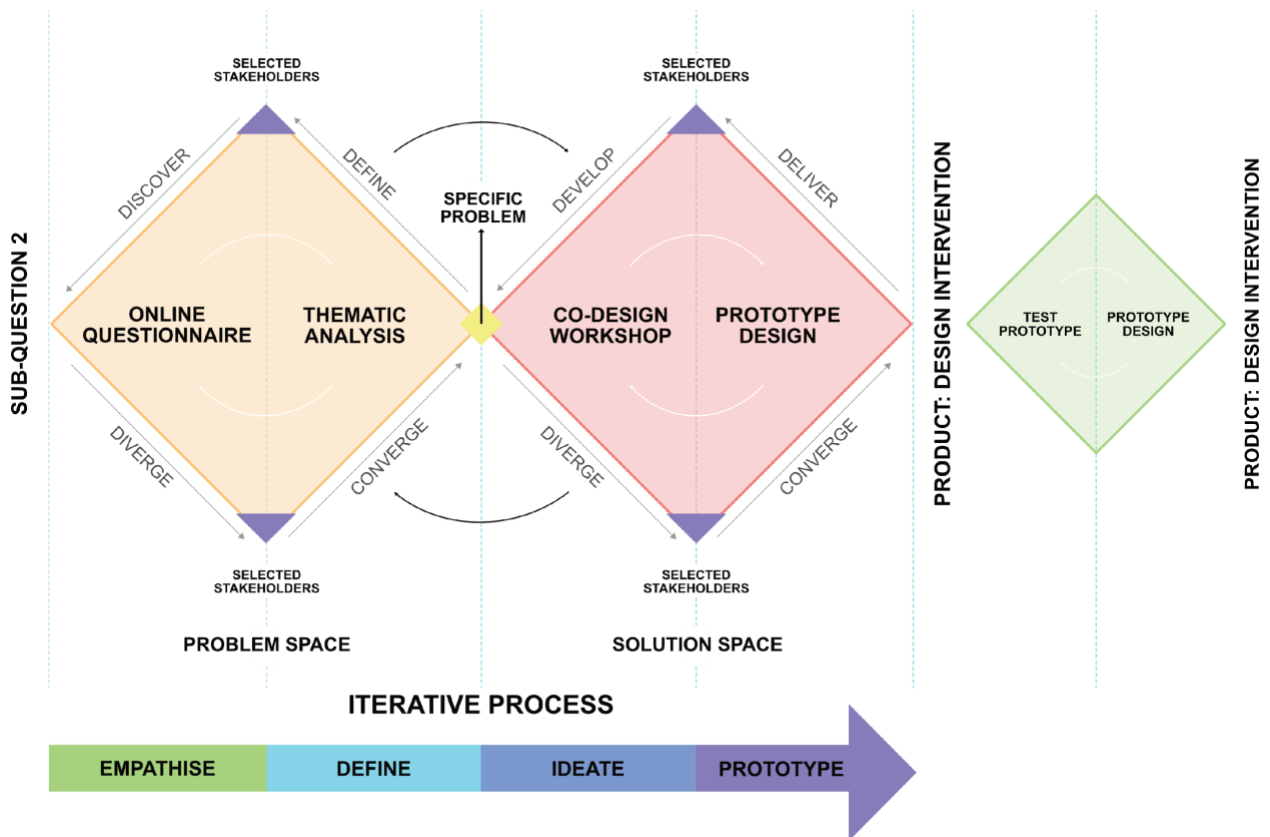


Figure 9: Research activities mapped onto the double diamond (Adapted from Kotaniemi et al., 2023:9)

### 3.2 Sampling of the research participants

This research was geographically focused on Cape Town. It focused on stakeholders within dance theatre companies tasked with creating marketing material for dance theatre production who lack the knowledge

needed for this task. Criterion sampling was used to identify the participants for the online questionnaire, and the participants who met the above-mentioned, pre-determined criteria of importance were selected. These criteria looked at position and responsibilities within the dance theatre company. As well as the level of experience and years within dance theatre. These participants were also used for the co-design workshop and prototype testing to ensure the continuation of the research process. The researcher had difficulty gathering the identified participants due to the time constraints of the identified research participants. One of the research participants was identified through a referral made by another research participant. This sampling method, known as snowball sampling (Korstjens & Moser, 2018:10), aimed at accessing as many online questionnaire participants as possible to allow for the margin of selected participants not responding.

Six participants were selected to participate in the research, and all responded to the requests by the researcher. The researcher shared the online questionnaire via email or WhatsApp. To ensure that the participants receive the online questionnaire in a way that is their most comfortable form of communication. Only five of the six selected participants responded by completing the online questionnaire. As the data collection process continued, the number of research participants decreased, as illustrated in *Figure 12* below. This was communicated by the participants as a direct result of their availability and not a lack of interest in the researcher. The co-design workshop had 3 participants in attendance on the day of the workshop, even though all five participants indicated their attendance. Based on the enthusiasm and valuable contributions of the participants, two were selected by the researcher for the prototype testing.



Figure 10: Sampling diagram of the research participants (Author's own diagram)

### 3.3 Ethical considerations of the research

The principles guiding this research are based on ethical codes and guidelines stipulated by the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) Research Ethics Committee. These regulations protect participants and ensure ethical procedures throughout the process (Taquette & Borges da Matta Souza, 2022). The role of ethics is to help raise necessary concerns and guide the stages of the research process, ensuring that the research is done in a responsible, legal and moral manner (Ajemba & Arene, 2022:2). This research prioritises ethical principles of beneficence, non-maleficence, respect for persons and justice to ensure that the potential risk of harm in any manner is minimised towards the research participants (Ajemba & Arene, 2022:47).

Ethical principles occur at different research phases:

- Ensuring informed consent is obtained from the participants,
- Maintenance of Confidentiality and Anonymity,

- Deception (Beneficence) when needed to protect the participants,
- Using Debrief (Justice) as appropriate (Ajemba & Arene, 2022:47).

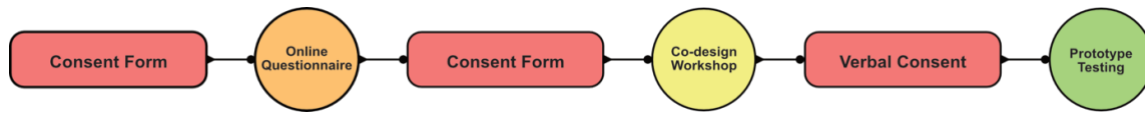


Figure 11: Checkpoints for consent obtained

Consent was obtained at every checkpoint throughout the data collection process. The participant gave signed consent at the start of the research process, which was granted officially by the research participants to ensure compliance with the ethical considerations of the research. The consent for the online questionnaire was provided digitally by the participants at the end of each questionnaire, as shown in *Figure 12* below. Consent was then followed up at the start of the co-design workshop, with each participant signing a consent form. The final checkpoint of consent was granted by the research participants verbally and was recorded at the start of the prototype test of the design outcome.

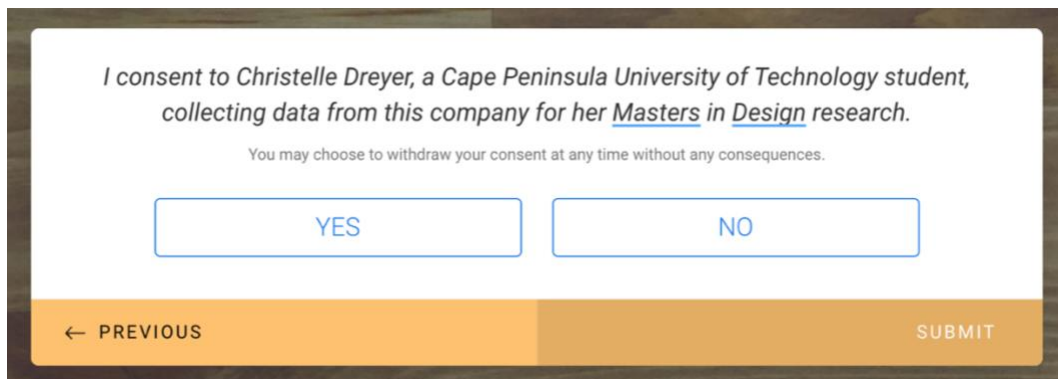


Figure 12: Screenshot of online questionnaire consent field

### 3.3.1 Ethics approval

The research ethics were governed by the ethical guidelines established by the Cape Peninsula University of Technology and managed by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC) in the Faculty of Informatics and Design.

Research did not begin until ethics approval was granted. To achieve this, a full ethics clearance form was submitted to the FREC as part of the research proposal submission.

## **CHAPTER 4: Design intervention development**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter showcases the research through design process by documenting the ideate, prototype, test and assess phases of this design project. This chapter shows how the above phases translated stakeholder needs and challenges into a proposed design intervention. The following chapter 5 will present the design intervention itself in the form of a digital app prototype.

### **4.2 The empathise phase: Online questionnaire**

The discover phase being the starting point of the double diamond is about expanding the understanding of the research context. When starting the process, the research is vague in terms of the complexity of the problems the research participants are facing. The aim is to understand the problem context by empathising and engaging with the perceived end-users (Viviani et al., 2024:4).

An online questionnaire was used for its convenience in that it allowed for the prompt distribution of the questionnaire by the researcher to the stakeholders. Owing to the stakeholders having high-demand jobs, the online process allowed the participants to complete the online questionnaire at a time that suited their schedules. Automation of the delivery of the online questionnaire and the collection of responses reduced data entry errors and simplified coding (Ball, 2019:414).

A custom online questionnaire was created and shared using the Jotform online platform (Tank, 2006). The use of Jotform facilitated efficient and secure distribution of the online questionnaire to the research participants. Jotform automated the collection and management of all the participant responses thus streamlining the research process by minimising potential data entry errors and supporting the validity of the following data analysis through the supply of well-structured response data output appropriate for thematic analysis.

Most valuable to this research is that the online questionnaire reduced social reliability bias. The researcher is well-known in the South African Cape Town dance theatre community. Stakeholders have varying knowledge of the researcher, which raised this concern. The bias refers to the tendency for respondents to offer answers that they assume the interviewer will expect to hear (Ball, 2019:414).

The task of the online questionnaire was to function as a data-gathering tool to start the data collection process within the double diamond. It was designed to collect essential information on marketing skillsets, current practices, and challenges faced by South African contemporary dance theatre companies. The data from this discover phase informed the co-design workshop that followed, ensuring that the workshop structure was relevant and tailored to the needs of the participant stakeholders. This approach established

a basic understanding of the dance theatre companies' context before moving into the co-design workshop (the ideate phase within the double diamond).

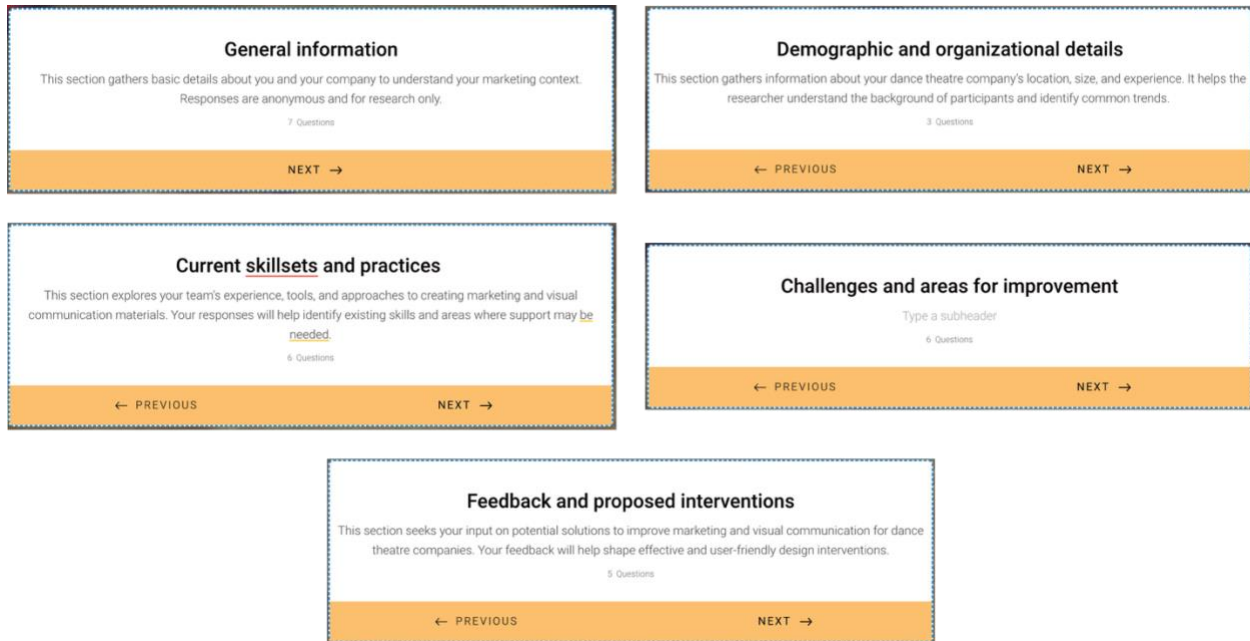


Figure 13: Screenshots of the online questionnaire sections

The online questionnaire in *Appendix 1* was structured into five sections to provide a systematic approach to gathering data for the discovery phase of the first double diamond. The first section above, general information, was the introduction to the online questionnaire. By clarifying that the online questionnaire respondents will remain anonymous, it encouraged trust and voluntary participation. Demographic and organisational details provided a background understanding of the dance theatre companies participating in the online questionnaires and identified common trends. The third section, current skillsets and practices, was core to the data collection because it discovered how and what the current procedures of the dance theatre companies are. The fourth section, challenges and areas of improvement, was forward-looking as it moves from describing the current conditions to identifying problems. This was to discover not just what the challenges are, but where the dance theatre companies feel the most support is needed. This direct input from the participants ensured that the co-design workshop was not based on assumptions but was tailored to the needs of the research which demonstrates the user-centred design methodology. Finally, the feedback and proposed intervention section was the transition from the discover phase of the research in the first diamond of the double diamond to the define phase of the first double diamond. This section also provided the logistical information for the co-design workshop.

The online questionnaire was designed to ensure the validity and richness of the data collected. For the sections such as general information, demographic and details and current skillsets and practices, closed-ended questions were used, including multiple-choice questions about the company size, whether they have a dedicated marketing team and the online questionnaire respondent's role within the dance theatre company. Questions such as "In your opinion, what are the benchmarks for successful marketing design in the dance theatre industry?" and "What are the most significant challenges...?" were essential for in-depth insight that multi-choice questions could not capture. The data from the online questionnaire were then used in the thematic analysis that informed the content and development of the co-design workshops and ultimately, the design intervention.

#### **4.3 The define phase: Thematic analysis of the research**

Thematic analysis is a method for data analysis that demands searching across data sets to identify and analyse. What distinguishes thematic analysis is its flexibility for use across a wide range of frameworks (Kiger & Varpio, 2020:847).

In the context of this research, a thematic analysis was used three times. The first was the thematic analysis of initial online questionnaire data, which was utilised to develop the first co-design workshop, giving a solid foundation for the co-design workshop. A second thematic analysis of the co-design workshop material and audio transcription was conducted to identify the design intervention and the problems the design intervention intends to solve.

The qualitative responses were organised and coded using Atlas.ti (Scientific Software Development GmbH, 2025) enabling effective data management and the facilitation of systematic coding for the thematic analysis.

The analysis was conducted using a method outlined by Braun and Clarke, which has become the broadest adopted method of analysis within qualitative literature. This method consists of five-steps, shown in *Figure 14* below, which is a recursive process in which the following steps may prompt the researcher to circle back to earlier steps (Kiger & Varpio, 2020:848). The thematic analysis assisted the researcher in identifying themes within the research irrespective of the number of times an item or idea related to a theme appeared in a data set (Kiger & Varpio, 2020:848).

The first step of the thematic analysis entails repeated and active reading of the data set (see figure 14). Analytics starts in the second step by organising data at a granular specific level, this phase generates codes. In the third step examination of the codes and collected data are looked at for potential themes of broader significance. Step four describes a two-level analytical process. In the first level of analysis, the researcher checks coded data placed in each theme to ensure appropriate positioning. Step two is similar

to step one in that the researcher decided if individual themes fit meaningfully within the data set. Once the thematic analysis has been defined (step five) the researcher created a definition and narrative description of each theme including why it is essential in the research (Kiger & Varpio, 2020:848).

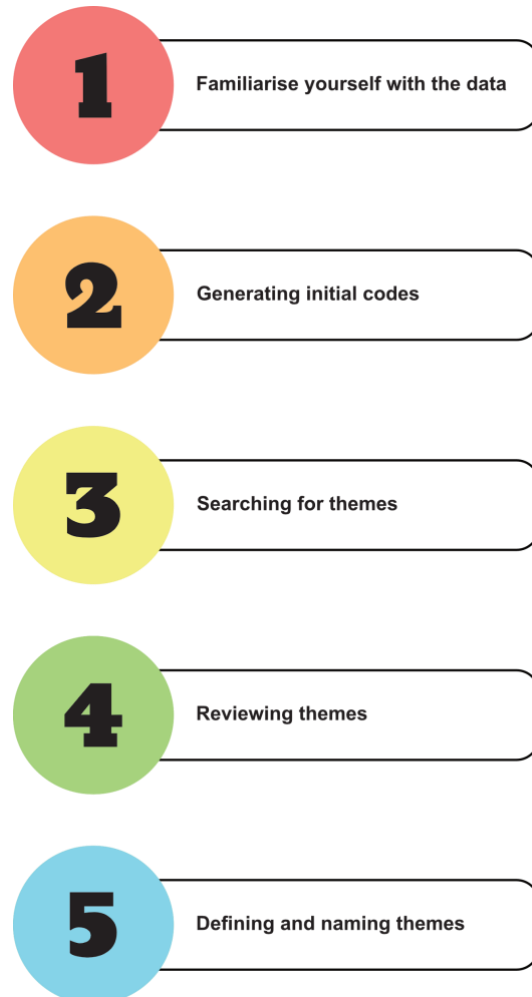


Figure 14: Five-step thematic analysis (Author's own diagram)

#### 4.3.1 Online questionnaire analysis findings

The online questionnaire thematic analysis was essential within the convergent defining phase of the double diamond. In the analysis, the researcher gained a starting point to generate key insights to inform the development of the first co-design workshop.

The online questionnaire analysis revealed that the needs of dance theatre companies extend beyond a lack of skills or resources, as outlined in *Table 2* below. General and organisational highlights basic details about the dance theatre companies that completed the questionnaire. The data indicates that a majority of

the dance theatre companies confirmed that they do not have dedicated marketing teams. One participant noted "we are reliant on securing funding to enable us to hire dedicated staff" (P1), and another "Frequently, I find myself stepping into administrative and marketing roles due to the inconsistent availability of volunteers for these essential duties" (P4). This was crucial for the co-design workshop because it confirmed that the design intervention must be accessible and user-friendly for individuals who do not have, or have limited, knowledge of marketing or marketing material design. Current skillsets and practices addressed the existing capabilities and daily operations of the dance theatre companies. Many of the questionnaire respondents rated their staff's overall skill level in designing marketing materials as a 5 out of 10 stars, reinforcing the problem statement of the research. In addition, questionnaire respondents identified areas where support is needed, including "Graphic design stuff" (P3), "Social media content creation" (P3, P4), "Branding and identity design" (P3, P4, P5), and "Using design tools/software" (P1, P3, P4). The challenges and areas of improvement analysis findings indicate that dance theatre company staff find it difficult to design marketing material that is of a professional standard and attracts audiences. Questionnaire respondent P5 noted that their most significant challenge is "the lack of the specialised skills to create material timeously and implement to deadline". The final theme is *intervention* and relates to the potential solutions identified by the questionnaire respondents. Respondents showed a preference for a solution that is practical and accessible

Quotes	Codes	Themes
"Create a 5 year plan and then look at how marketing could be expanded to create a relevant plan that support this vision using various marketing and promotional action plans"	Addressing most significant challenges	Challenges and areas for improvement
Challenges and areas for improvement		
"Funding to employ specialists in the area"		
"An awareness of the importance of the Performing Arts within the media in general and regular engagement with such publications".		
"An awareness of the importance of the Performing Arts within the media in general and regular engagement with such publications"		
"The lack of the specialised skills to create material timeously and implement to deadline"		

“The challenge has mostly not having high resolution images to work with”		
“Capacity/human people to assist with documenting and archiving materials. Dedicated team to create and posts the material. Brand strategist to support the creation of a consistent digital footprint alongside a dedicated team of minimally small team of about two people”		
“5 of 10 stars” x2	Time spent on marketing design	
“10 of 10 stars”		
“6 of 10 stars”		
“Graphic design basics, Social media content creation. Using design tools/software”	Support needed	
“Branding and identity design, Copywriting and messaging”		
“no” x4	Marketing team	General and organisational details
“yes”		
“Freelance designers/consultants”	Creation of marketing material	
“other” x2		
“Myself” “I do it myself”		
“In-house (staff members)”		
“Volunteers”		
“organization is a nonprofit entity”	Added information	
“we are reliant on securing funding to enable us to hire dedicated staff.”		
“Frequently, I find myself stepping into administrative and marketing roles due to the inconsistent availability of volunteers for these essential duties.”		

<p>“It has limited funding to support the onboarding of digital design and graphic design staff”</p>		
<p>“challenge to secure funding opportunities”</p>		
<p>“10 of 10 stars”</p>	<p>Teams overall skill level</p>	<p>Current skillsets and practices</p>
<p>“8 of 10 stars”</p>		
<p>“6 of 10 stars”</p>		
<p>“5 of 10 stars” x2</p>		
<p>“Social media platform” “Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign” “Microsoft PowerPoint/Word”</p>	<p>Tools or software used</p>	
<p>“Posters, Social media posts, Event programs” “Email newsletters” “Flyers”</p>	<p>Types of marketing material created</p>	
<p>“A healthy combination of branding, social platforms and direct communications.”</p>	<p>Benchmark for successful marketing design</p>	
<p>“Clear understanding the nature of the industry and identification of your target audience. Audience development and retention. Consistent, easy to understand communication to existing and new audiences through online social media platforms”</p>		
<p>“ A specialised team to strategise, plan “</p>		
<p>“Showcase skills on Social Media.” “Customer Referrals” “Working on selling Branded Merchandise” “Working on a best class Website” “Paid short form promotional video material, target paid boosted posts”</p>		
<p>“In-person workshops, Online training modules, One-on-one coaching” “Self-help design intervention”</p>	<p>Potential solution</p>	<p>Intervention</p>
<p>“Step-by-step guides for creating marketing materials, Access to free or affordable design software” “Pre-designed templates”</p>		
<p>“Case studies/examples of successful campaigns”</p>		

Table 2: Online questionnaire thematic analysis

#### 4.4 The ideate phase: Co-design workshop

The co-design workshop focused on the second diamond of the double diamond model, specifically the development phase, as shown below. During the co-design workshop, key marketing challenges faced by dance theatre companies in South Africa were identified, alongside the proposed design intervention and its components. Furthermore, the workshop aimed to co-design a practical marketing design intervention tailored for dance theatre companies and individuals in South Africa and individuals lacking an in-house marketing department or knowledge to design effective marketing and visual communication materials for potential audiences. The co-design workshop addresses sub-question 2: What do dance theatre companies who lack skill sets and in-house knowledge need to design effective marketing material? It also responds to sub-question 3: How can a co-design process bring about a design intervention to improve marketing material for dance theatre companies with limited resources?

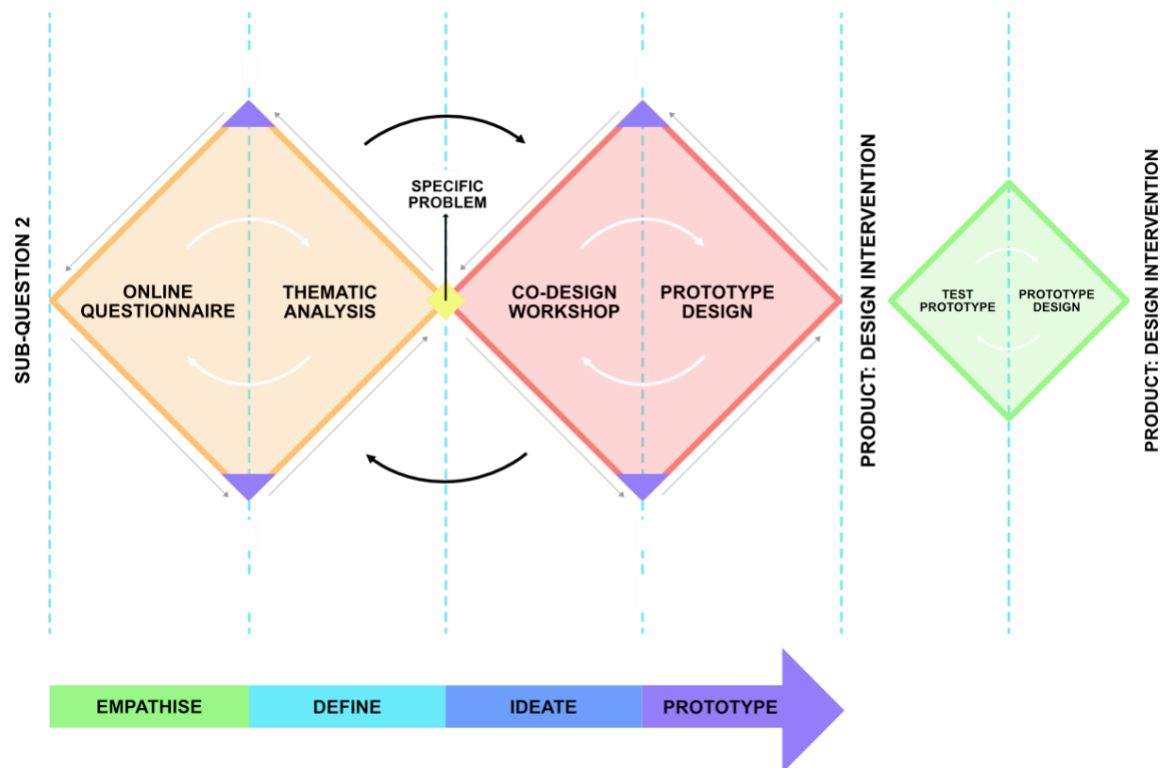


Figure 15: The co-design workshop shown in the double diamond model

#### 4.4.1 Preparation and design of the co-design workshop

Careful preparation for the co-design workshop was essential to ensure methodological consistency and ethical compliance. The process began by confirming the research participants' availability and willingness to attend the workshop. Coordinating the schedules of all the selected participants, as described in 3.2 *Sampling*, proved to be a significant challenge.

The researcher, acting as the co-design workshop facilitator, recognised their limitations as an ambulatory wheelchair user, both physical and in managing all aspects of the workshop. These limitations necessitated the inclusion of a workshop assistant, who also acted as a co-facilitator. Given that the facilitator was acquainted with all the participants, the co-facilitator assumed responsibility for identifying and mitigating any instances of bias during the group discussions. To mitigate potential bias, since the researcher was known to all participants, the co-facilitator was responsible for identifying and redirecting any bias during discussions.

Logistical arrangements were designed to foster inclusivity and participants' comfort. The chosen venue, the fifth-floor boardroom at Artscape Theatre, was made available by Jazzart Dance Theatre. The facilitator ensured all essential technological resources were functioning, including backups.

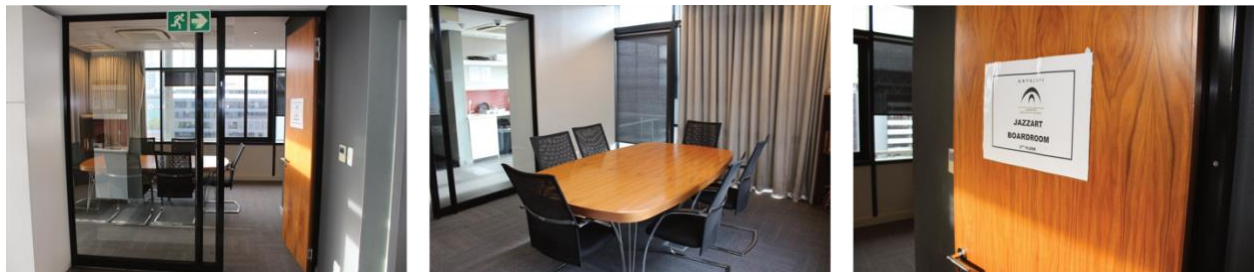


Figure 16: Jazzart Dance Theatre 5th floor boardroom (Captured by the assistant, 2025)

Considerable attention was devoted to the design of both the co-design workshop activities and accompanying supporting materials. A facilitation guide was developed, not as a prescriptive manual but rather to serve as a structured framework for the co-design workshop, promoting clarity and intentionality in its delivery. This guide addresses both practical and research-oriented objectives of the research and is provided in Appendix 2. To further support the participants, an agenda snapshot of the workshop agenda was displayed on the boardroom door, ensuring it remained accessible throughout the workshop. Reflecting feedback from the participants' online questionnaires, the workshop was scheduled for three hours, aligning with the availability of participants.

Session	Activity	Time	Purpose
1	Welcome & Purpose	10 min	Set context
2.	Icebreaker – Your marketing story	10min	Build trust and shared understanding
3	Questionnaire findings	3min	Share questionnaire results
4	Persona mapping	30min	Understand user types, pain points and goals
<b>Break 5-10 mins</b>			
5	Aligning Questionnaire Data with Personas	20 min	Connect real data with personas
6	Giga-mapping	35 min	Identify and prioritise opportunities, needs and challenges
<b>Break 5-10 mins</b>			
7	Ideation Phase	40 min	Brainstorm and cluster intervention ideas
8	Define Design Intervention Elements	25 min	Shape the initial structure for the intervention

Table 3: Co-design workshop agenda

Several workshop materials were designed and prepared in advance by the researcher. These included messages and informational slides for projection, emoji signs, questionnaire finding cards that summarise questionnaire findings, avatar stickers, persona maps, and *how might we* forms. Additional materials, such as sticky notes in various colours and sizes, were also incorporated to facilitate workshop activities, see *Figure 17* below.



Figure 17: Avatars, emojis, questionnaire cards and sticky notes (Captured by the researcher, 2025)

**4.4.2 Co-design workshop implementation and activities**

On the morning of the workshop, the facilitator arrived at the venue first, soon followed by the workshop assistant. Together, they completed the setup and final preparations for the workshop. The workshop commenced later than scheduled due to participants being delayed by traffic entering the central business district, and the need to confirm the arrival status of those who had not yet arrived. Once all the participants were present, the workshop began with an enthusiastic group.

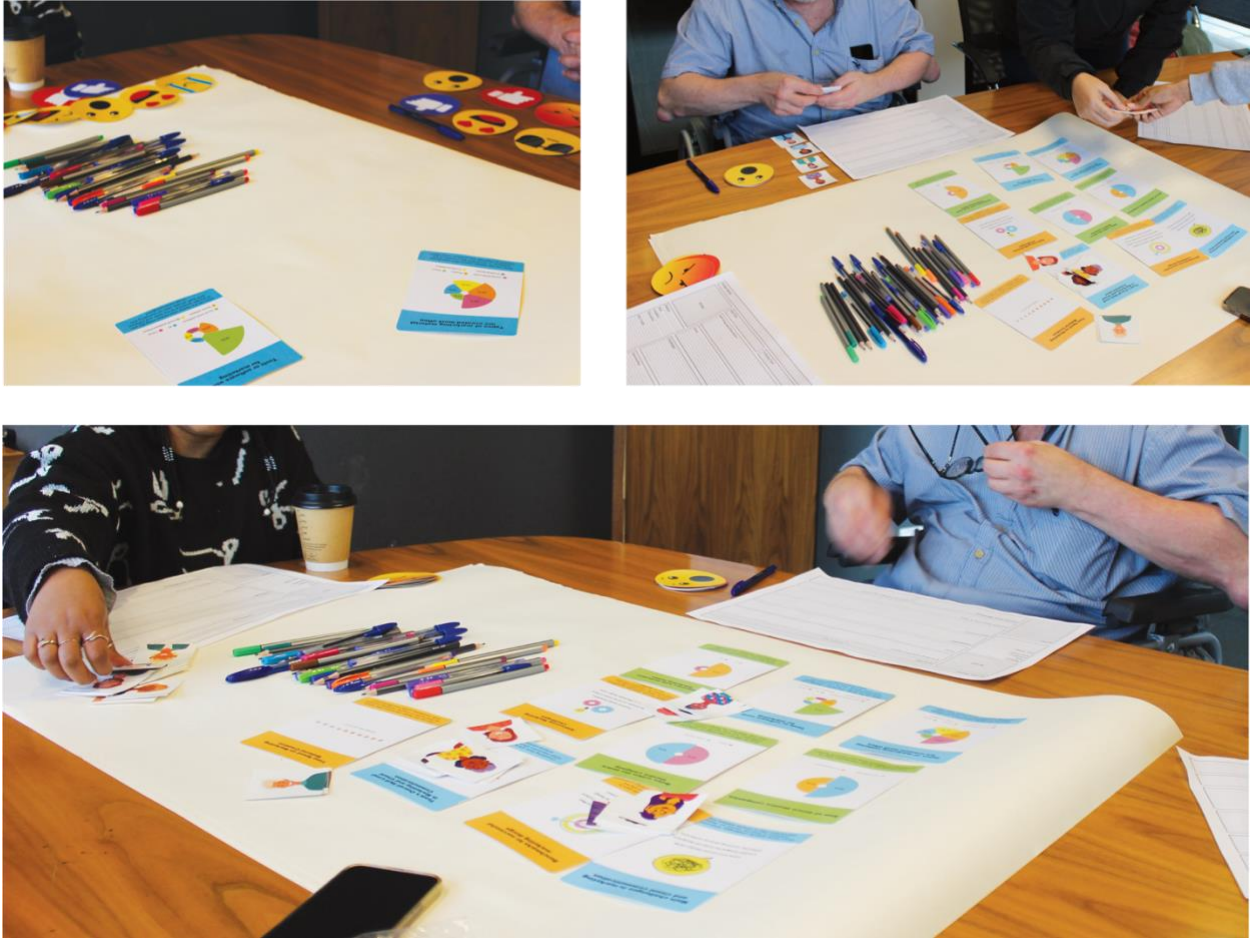


Figure 18: Co-design workshop implementation (Captured by the assistant, 2025)

The workshop began with a welcome and introduction to its purpose and objectives. Participants were informed about the aims of the workshop and the co-design methodology being employed. It was explained that the goal was to collaboratively develop a design intervention to support dance theatre companies and individuals in creating effective marketing materials. A key message highlighting this objective was displayed on the screen display for participants to reflect upon during the workshop.



Figure 19: Digital display in the boardroom showing goals and co-design workshop prompts (Captured by the assistant, 2025)

Establishing group rapport and setting the context for discussions became essential and valuable aspects of the workshop. This was achieved through the *icebreaker activity*, and *your market story*, where participants were provided with prompts to initiate the activity.

Prompts:

- Marketing in one word, how does it feel to you?
- Tell us about a time you had to promote a performance. What did you try, and how did it go?
- What's one thing you've tried to promote a performance that surprisingly worked?
- What kind of help or support do you wish you had when promoting shows?
- Thumbs up or down – how confident do you feel doing marketing stuff.

Not all the prompts were used because the facilitator was attentive to the energy of the participants and the workshop time constraint.

The facilitator selectively used prompts during the activity, considering both the participants' interest levels and the time available. Each participant was invited to share a marketing-related experience, with emojis provided for the participants to express their reactions to these stories. The activity proved effective, as participants were visibly engaged, became more at ease, and contributed valuable insight and information.



Figure 20: Ice breaker activity (Captured by the assistant, 2025)

The agenda then shifted to acknowledging the value of participants' responses to the online questionnaire, thereby reinforcing the workshop's relevance. This recognition was conveyed by presenting questionnaire cards that summarised individual responses into a group response. Some highlighted responses as overall percentages and others as averages, such as the typical size of dance theatre companies and the prevalence of dedicated marketing departments. Each card included questions designed to help participants engage further with the workshop content. However, when participants appeared disinterested in these questionnaire cards the facilitator made an informed decision to proceed to the next activity in order to maintain engagement. During this activity, P1 raised a question regarding the sampling for the online questionnaire respondents. Expressing interest in the validity of the presented data the facilitator responded by clarifying that the researcher had purposively selected the respondents.

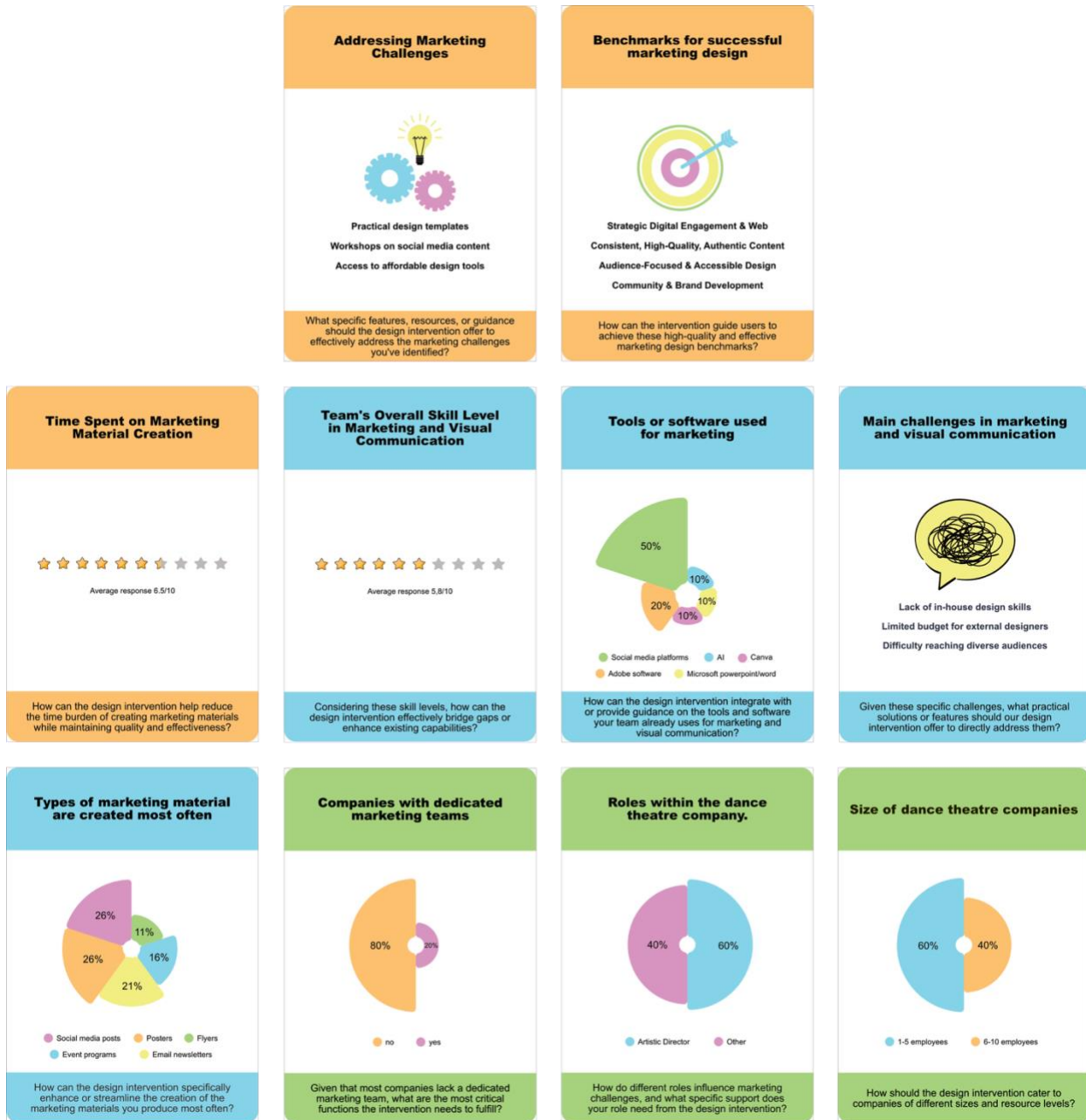


Figure 21: Questionnaire cards highlighting the value of the online questionnaire responses (Designed by the researcher, 2025)

The next activity was the development of role-based persona which focused on the user's role within the organisation and their role in the dance theatre company. The objective of the role-based persona mapping was to build shared understanding and empathy for the individuals within dance theatre companies who will engage with the design intervention. By collaboratively creating detailed, fictional characters representing different roles involved in marketing.

Participants developed personas representing fictional but realistic individuals who handle marketing responsibilities within dance theatre companies. They identified their marketing pain points and available resources. Participants were hesitant to complete the role-based persona map, but the facilitator and assistant provided assurance that it is not as daunting as it appears.

The objective of the role-based persona mapping activity was to foster a shared understanding and empathy for the individuals within dance theatre companies who would interact with the design intervention. This was achieved by constructing fictional personas that represent various roles involved in marketing for dance theatre. As the final activity before the ten-minute break, persona mapping centres on both the individual's role within the dance theatre company (Dam, 2025). Participants created personas embodying realistic dance theatre company members, identifying pain points, challenges and available resources and tools. While some participants initially expressed hesitation in completing the persona map, the facilitator and the workshop assistant provided reassurance, emphasising that the task was manageable and not as formidable as it might first appear.

Avatar Name: ALFONSO

Role/Title: *Artistic Director* Company Type: *Popped Theatre*

Brief Biography/Description: *Student - Theatre, Design, Property. Stage set Design, Lighting Design.*

Goals: *Set the brand of my Company. Awareness of Alfonso in general. Setting tickets & productions and revenue. Getting a wider selection of demographic coverage.*

Status: *25*  
Age: *25*  
Location: *Los Alam*  
Education: *BA*

Key Traits: *Health, Engagement, Balance*

Challenges: *Theater is perceived as an Artform to be seen privileged and highly education. Cooperation from education platforms to market or even showcase. Media type does not value performing arts seriously. Budget resources for a Marketing Strategy.*

Opportunities: *Understanding the impact that social media can have. Taking advantage of word of mouth as a tool.*

Quote: *Look before and learn*

Available Resources & Tools: *Social Media Platforms, Collaboration with other local companies.*

Feelings about Marketing: *Can be exciting if one has a period word daily do marketing for.*

Hopes for a Design Intervention: *Getting the professional media & education more in collaboration.*

Avatar Name: *PRINCE*

Role/Title: *OFFICE MANAGER* Company Type: *DANCE ORGANIZATION*

Brief Biography/Description: *OFFICE ASSISTANT TO THE MANAGING DIRECTOR & HEAD OF TRAINING*

Goals: *AUDIENCE REACH, PARTICIPANTS, ENGAGEMENT, ETC. GIVE THEM AN UNDERSTANDING LINKS TO DANCE*

Status: *38*  
Age: *38*  
Location: *CAPE TOWN*  
Education: *EDUCATION & PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION*

Key Traits: *OFFICE SKILLS, PLANNING, ORGANIZATION*

Challenges: *HOW TO REACH AUDIENCE REACH AND ENGAGEMENT. FUNDING OR SUPPORT SPECIFICALLY IN THE DANCE INDUSTRY. NOT ENOUGH MARKETING UNDERSTANDING LINKS TO DANCE*

Opportunities: *CREATE A SOLID MARKETING PROCESS TEMPLATE. CONTACT CREATIVE AGENCIES. COLLECTING NEW IDEAS FROM MANAGEMENT INDIVIDUALS. GETTING FEEDBACK FROM AUDIENCE REACH.*

Quote: *JUDGEMENT OF THE ABILITY TO MOVE FROM FAILURE TO SUCCESS WITHOUT THE USE OF ETHNOGRAPHY*

Available Resources & Tools: *FACEBOOK, INSTAGRAM, MAIL CHIMP, GMAIL, ADDITIONAL WITH PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEO MARKETING*

Feelings about Marketing: *STRESSED & CLUELESS*

Hopes for a Design Intervention: *SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDANCE TO INCREASE AUDIENCE NUMBER, ETC.*

Avatar Name:

Role/Title: *Artistic Director* Company Type: *Dance Company*

Brief Biography/Description: *Artistic Director of a dance company in Cape Town. She has a background in dance and has been involved in the industry for over 10 years.*

Goals: *Creating something that is inclusive for all people, that anyone can do.*

Status: *35*  
Age: *35*  
Location: *Cape Town*  
Education: *Dance*

Key Traits: *Artistic, Creative, Inclusive*

Challenges: *Lack of resources / staff*

Opportunities: *Using social media to reach more people that can be reached through my dance.*

Available Resources & Tools: *Phone, camera, social media platforms, social team*

Quote:

Feelings about Marketing: *Excited about the potential of social media to reach more people but also aware of the challenges.*

Hopes for a Design Intervention: *Help to reach more people through social media and to create a more inclusive environment.*

Figure 22: Role-based persona maps developed in the workshop by participants (Captured by the assistant, 2025)

During the break, the facilitator and assistant evaluated the workshop's progress and observed that participants engaged more comfortably and openly when given freedom to speak, rather than being confined by structured activities. Acting on this insight, they *explore a hunch* (IDEO, n.d.). They shifted to the giga-map activity, encouraging participants to discuss ideas freely while subtly guiding the conversation with prompts. A giga-map is a tool to increase and aid capacity to grasp and work with super complexity (Sevaldson, 2011:4). This adjustment enabled the integration of questionnaire data with persona mapping discussion, ideation, and identification of the design intervention and the problems that needed to be solved, thereby streamlining several workshop activities into a single activity. Combining these activities was not only effective for managing the limited available time, but also encouraged passionate, candid contributions from the participants once they were prompted. Still, the participants showed hesitation towards activities, resulting in limited development of the giga-map. The facilitator's hunch allowed these open discussions to surface valuable contributions. As a result, the workshop successfully achieved its objectives, with both the design intervention and its solutions being identified.



Figure 23: Giga-mapping (Captured by the assistant, 2025)

#### 4.4.3 Co-design workshop thematic analysis

Analysing the data from the co-design workshop which included audio recordings involved the use of Turboscribe to transcribe the verbal input of all participants (TurboScribe, 2025). Other sources included persona maps, participant accounts and stories, and a giga-map, all of which contributed to the thematic analysis.

The analysis provided insight into the outcome of the design intervention and its features. It also revealed specific challenges faced by dance theatre companies, such as financial constraints and a lack of marketing departments or staff with the relevant dance theatre marketing expertise. It was noted that one person is often responsible for marketing, administration and many other tasks in addition to their own. This results in staff feeling overwhelmed. As illustrated in Table 4, participants expressed this by saying, "That's a lot" (P3) and "there's a lot of things that you need to take into consideration" (P2).

Data clearly showed that participants were aware of their skills gap through statements like, "No, like honestly, I would say thumbs down. Not because I don't know anything, but the more I know, the more I realise I don't know. Even with all of this stuff, I pretend I know" (P1). Budget constraints, discussed in earlier chapters, were validated by the participants comments such as, "not enough funding, donors of support, specifically in the dance industry" (P2).

The most valuable outcome of the co-design workshop was identifying participants needs, which guided the design intervention and its features.

Quotes	Codes	Themes
<p>"All those different categories and then finding out what marketing works for that group and through what resources you need to target. It came down to targeting."</p>	<p>Need for Audience Targeting and Understanding</p>	<p>Identify key marketing challenges faced by dance theatre companies</p>
<p>"There's a certain group that go to Edinburgh Festival that are expats, they will do anything to see a South African show."</p>		
<p>"Or you get the people that actually just like dirty, smutty, anything to do with sex or anything, that group. And you target that group with a certain wording."</p>		
<p>"You've got to think on that basic, basic level of the public."</p>		
<p>"You've got to tell your story in your marketing. And it's got to be inviting."</p>		
<p>"Challenges, theatre is perceived as an art form for the selected privileged and the highly educated, breaking that down."</p>		
<p>"The photograph is blurred. It's crap."</p>	<p>Quality and Relevance of Marketing Material</p>	
<p>"Posted 4K on City Ballet and Jailbreak Ballet for Swan Lake. And the bottom of the guy's tights is wrinkled. I'm sorry. Not good enough."</p>		
<p>"And does that post even have anything to do with the actual show?"</p>		
<p>"Then it doesn't relate to the production. Where is this thinking here? You just chose any random picture."</p>		
<p>"And it doesn't speak to the piece."</p>		

Quotes	Codes	Themes
"Not good enough. And also, does it relate to the work?"		
"You need to say... And if you're going to put the black swan on your poster, it is evil. But seductive evil. So it's got to say all that stuff"		
"That's a lot."	Overwhelm and Complexity	
"And it's the small little detail thingies, man, that gets you. Yeah, that's a lot of work."		
"Well, I don't deal with it, thank God. But it's always, it's a tricky one."		
"there's a lot of things that you need to take into consideration."		
"And also now that times are changing, marketing is also slightly changing. People are moving to different platforms and just engaging with people."	Changing Landscape and Audience Attention Spans	
"thanks to TikTok, people have very short attention spans. So you also need to take that into consideration. "		
"But I didn't have complete control over what I was sending and what I was putting out."	Lack of Control and Authority for Marketing Personnel	
"But you make yourself unpopular on cloud because you are the marketing person. And you've got to learn to say, sorry, this is not... I can't use this. I can't use this material."		
"But even if you do, some people are just like, no. But I want that."		

Quotes	Codes	Themes	
"Because people are going to ask, so who did your marketing for you?"			
"Also when people see your work, they know without even looking at the name of the production or the organization, they immediately know, ah, it's Jazzart. Because ultimately you're a brand also."	Branding and Consistency		
"And font is important."			
"National Theatre has got a certain font they use for all their stuff. And when you see that font, you just see the font, you don't even read National Theatre, you know it's National Theatre."			
"Because you don't want to confuse people."			
"The specific way that you would put that logo only there, and there's a certain thing"			
"No, like honestly, I would say thumbs down. Not because I don't know anything, but the more I know, the more I realize I don't know. Even with all of this stuff, I pretend I know"	Skills Gaps	Explore current skills gaps and resource constraints	
"So, yeah. That's how I feel. Like, even though it should maybe be a yes, it's actually a no."			
"I am excited about the potential and also a little bit stressed because there's a lot of work that goes into it and you never quite have it all figured out."			
"not last minute. Which I find a lot of... I'm going to say arts organisations, because I see it a lot, they are really last minute with their things."	Resource and Time Constraints		

Quotes	Codes	Themes
"not enough funding, donors of support, specifically in the dance industry"		
"budget restraints or any marketing strategy."		
" resource constrained and time constrained so these are all the problems and the stuff what's happening "		
"People are moving to different platforms and just engaging with people."		
"how do you still capture the audience without saying long lengthy things, but still getting across what you are trying to sell to them? So it keeps changing and you have to move with the times."	Adapting to the Challenging Digital Landscape and Leveraging New Media	Brainstorm potential solutions and essential elements of a design intervention
"It can be something on your phone like an app. And how do you feel about... And maybe a podcast, I don't know."		
"Opportunities, understanding the impact that social media can have, taking advantage of word of mouth as a tool."		
"Not good enough."	Emphasis on High Quality and relevant Marketing Material	
"And also, does it relate to the work?"		
"So it's got to say all that stuff. It doesn't say Coppelia."		
"And then I found out, listening to the different people, what works is if you divide your targeting audience, I'm going to say five groups."	Audience Targeting	

Quotes	Codes	Themes
<p>"All those different categories and then finding out what marketing works for that group and through what resources you need to target. It came down to targeting."</p>		
<p>"There's a certain group that go to Edinburgh Festival that are expats, they will do anything to see a South African show."</p>		
<p>"Or you get the people that actually just like dirty, smutty, anything to do with sex or anything, that group. And you target that group with a certain wording."</p>		
<p>"And then for the people that are more into sex, drugs and rock and roll, you send the rude pictures too."</p>		
<p>"You've got to think on that basic, basic level of the public."</p>		
<p>"They look at that beautiful, you think, lovely artistic dance photograph. They look at it with the same eye as they look at a bottle of Coca-Cola or a packet of Slap chips or a Nando's Burger. They look at it with that same eye. What kind of quality or what kind of basis are you sending out?"</p>		
<p>"You've got to tell your story in your marketing. And it's got to be inviting."</p>		
<p>"Challenges, theatre is perceived as an art form for the selected privileged and the highly educated, breaking that down."</p>		

Quotes	Codes	Themes
<p>"Also when people see your work, they know without even looking at the name of the production or the organization, they immediately know, ah, it's Jazzart. Without having to read what it is, because they're already familiar with your work and the kind of things that you put out there. Because ultimately you're a brand also."</p>	<p>Branding and Consistency</p>	
<p>"The specific way that you would put that logo only there, and there's a certain thing, for example, a swoosh or something like that, all the posters will have that same thing. So that you immediately identify, you don't even look at the posters in the middle section, just by those elements you see that."</p>		
<p>"And font is important."</p>		
<p>"National Theatre has got a certain font they use for all their stuff. And when you see that font, you just see the N and you see that font, you don't even read National Theatre, you know it's National Theatre."</p>		
<p>"And so you build, you've got to build, you can't try something new."</p>		
<p>"And like with their stuff, you will see every year, I use the same colors. It's the same colors every year. People don't know it, but it's the same colors every single year."</p>		
<p>"So that you can, it's an online thing that you can work on but you have different options, et cetera, that it will take you to different places."</p>	<p>Identification of Solution</p>	
<p>"Especially since everyone is always on their phones."</p>		

Quotes	Codes	Themes
“Yeah. It can be something on your phone like an app. And how do you feel about...”		
“I've been thinking about that for a long time now.”		
“But if you don't have someone that's consistent, your template goes to shit.”		
“Like a website, yeah. More like an app kind of thing? Yeah, an app would be good.”		
“Are there specific guidelines. In terms of. Arts kept saying. These are the guidelines. That the poster should look like or have. Like for example.”		
“I would say if it is something, I don't know if something like that even exists, something that's interactive.”		
“Interactive. Interactive.”		

Table 4: Co-design workshop thematic analysis

**4.5 The define phase: Defining user needs and challenges for the design intervention**

This section transitions from the problem space, discover and define, and the solution space, develop and deliver, within the double diamond. As the outcome of the define phase, this analysis synthesises the problem by clearly defining the user needs and challenges. Identified through the thematic analysis of the online questionnaire and co-design workshop.

Through the co-design workshop, thematic analysis challenges were identified, laying the foundation for the app as a design intervention and subsequent app features. In this way, the app is positioned to be both theoretically sound and responsive to the wicked problem of dance theatre companies.

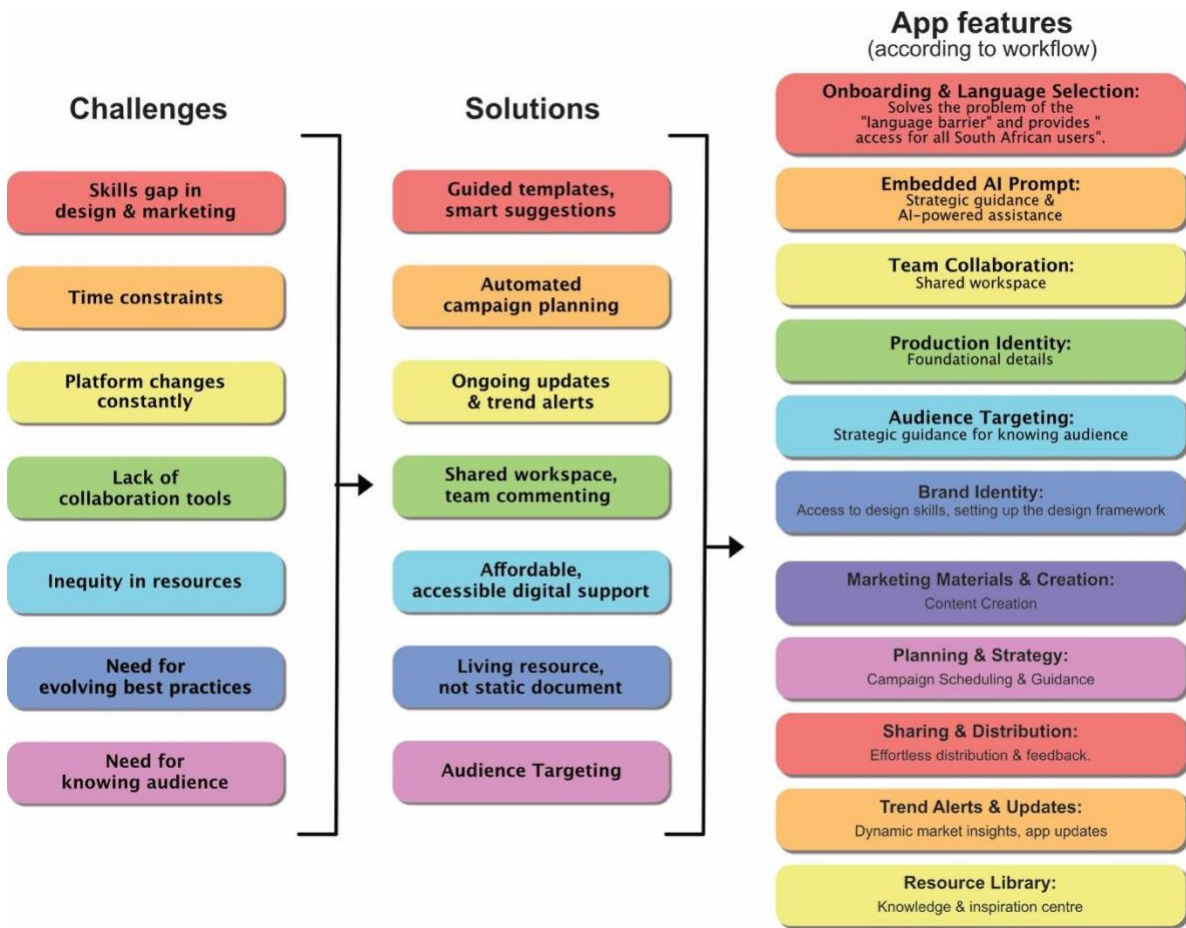


Figure 24: Challenges, solutions, and app features (Illustrated by the researcher)

While the stakeholders did not participate directly in the design or development of the app prototype and its individual features, their input played a crucial role in guiding both the decision to design an app as a design intervention and the selection of app features. It is worth noting that the development of the app, along with its features, fell outside the scope of the stakeholders' expertise. Due to this, the area of responsibility for synthesising their insights into an app was with the researcher. The solutions embedded within the app can therefore be understood as the researcher's synthesis of stakeholder-driven and co-design workshop outcomes.

It is important to note that the design intervention does not intend to solve the wicked problem; instead, it addresses a part of the problem in a pragmatic way that empowers stakeholders.

#### **4.6 From user experience mapping to app features and flow**

The development of the app's features and user flow was thoroughly informed by insights obtained from the user experience map developed by the researcher. This map provides a systematic account of the journey typically undertaken by dance theatre company practitioners as they address marketing design challenges, from the initial identification of issues and active pursuit of solutions. To the evaluation of available app, engagement with the app, and the sharing of outcomes. Through careful analysis of each phase within this user experience, including the user's specific goals, needs, obstacles and expectations. These findings shaped the process for both the selection and sequencing of the app's features, ensuring the app remained grounded in the lived realities of its intended users. The resulting features and workflow are intricately aligned with stakeholder needs and day-to-day practice. Supporting both the resolution of immediate challenges and the broader audience development. A visual representation of this process is provided to enhance the understanding and context.

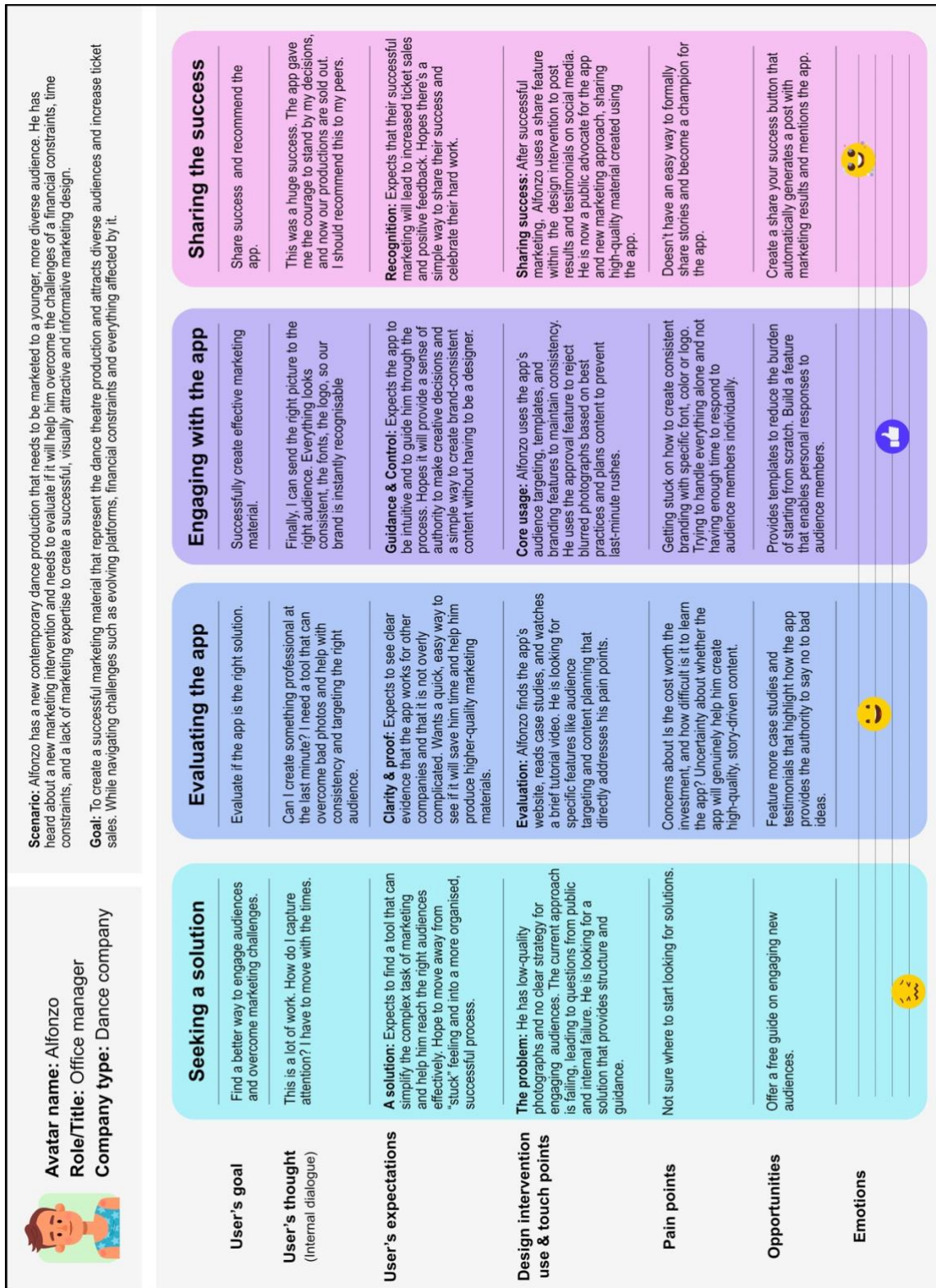


Figure 25: User experience map (Developed by the researcher, 2025)

## **4.7 Online prototype testing with the research participants**

Prototype testing served as the final phase within the double diamond model, ensuring the proposed design intervention meets prospective user needs. Due to participants' schedules and geographic constraints, prototype testing was conducted online via Google Meet (Google, 2025). One participant at a time and not as a group.

### **4.7.1 Preparation for the prototype testing**

Preparation for prototype testing began with extending invitations to co-design workshop participants who had exhibited high levels of engagement at the co-design workshop. To ensure full accessibility, the prototype testing was conducted online via Google Meets (Google, 2025), one participant at a time. This also allowed the data collection process to continue despite the temporary restricted mobility of the researcher. This led to a shift from in-person to online prototype testing. The researcher developed the prototype and structured a one-hour testing session, which included a brief recap of the co-design workshop.

The primary aim of the prototype testing was to identify usability and ensure that the design intervention included the required features. The researcher also prepared extra prompts to guide participants in instances where testers appeared non-responsive.

Prompts:

- What's on your mind right now as you look at this screen?
- Can you walk me through what you're thinking?
- What did you expect to happen when you clicked that?
- Is anything about this screen catching your attention?
- What would you try next if you were on your own?
- How does this compare to other apps you've used?
- What do you think this icon/button is for?
- If you had to describe this step to a friend, what would you say?
- Is there anything here that feels unclear or surprising?
- What would make you feel more confident using this feature?

### **4.7.2 Online prototype testing**

The prototype testing was done online using Google Meet (Google, 2025). The participants had limited time and availability due to schedules and travel commitments. The overall impression of the design intervention was that it would spark the interest of the potential users. The additions to the prototype were minimal and focused mainly on adding information to sections within the design intervention

Feedback from both P1 and P2 on the app's visual identity, usability and features was notably enthusiastic and detailed. P2 praised the app's colour palette as "lekker funky colours, which is nice", appreciating that it felt South African and vibrant without resorting to cliched colour schemes or stereotypes. Also found the images used in the app "immediately" evocative of dance without being literal or overly symbolic. While P2 described the overall look as "nice" and "clean" and thought the design choices made the app "cool", "funky", and inviting for diverse users. Similarly, P1 commented on the visual identity, emphasising that the look "works in terms of colours and does it does reflect theatre" and "it looks very dance to me" but crucially avoids pandering to "Ndebele art, Koza bead, African drums" or anything "cheap" or "touristy". Also highlighting the professional, neutral design, preferring a "black background and white writing" with bold, legible type and noting its accessibility for age groups and levels of experience.

On usability and app features, both participants found the workflow logical and intuitive. P2 described it as "easy, accessible, and easy to find whatever it is you're looking for". While P1 praised the inclusion of language selection as "absolutely" critical for the South African context, P1 approved of the dashboard and user flow, and saw the app as ready for "anyone who's serious about it" within dance and theatre. Both confirmed strong alignment between the app's workflow, its features, and real-world needs, echoing high praise for usability, inclusivity, and design integrity.

#### **4.7.3 Prototype testing thematic analysis**

The double diamond below illustrates how prototype design is iteratively tested and refined as part of the deliver phase. This iterative process emphasises the user-centred nature of the double diamond method. Solutions are not simply implemented; they are validated with stakeholders before being adapted. The prototype testing data consists of a video recording, which was transcribed using TurboScribe, before starting the thematic analysis of the transcribed text (TurboScribe, 2025).

Overall, the first impressions of the prototype were positive and engaged the stakeholders. This was reflected in the reaction, "Yeah, I'd say so. I mean, it looks very dance to me. My immediate reaction at the about dancing" (P1). Features that needed to be added to the prototype within the research scope were sections to include all the funders and partnerships within the dance theatre production. This was validated by participants stating, "whoever is funding, whoever is involved," (P1) and "need an area for partnerships?" (P1). A section for the prospective audience targeting is also needed, as referenced by (P1). "I don't know what you would call it, peers in the arts, arts friends, arts colleagues. People often forget about those people" (P1). Outside the scope of the research, the participant addressed copyright infringements of marketing material, like photographs used within the marketing material design, "But it is content copyright and stealing other people's stuff" (P1).

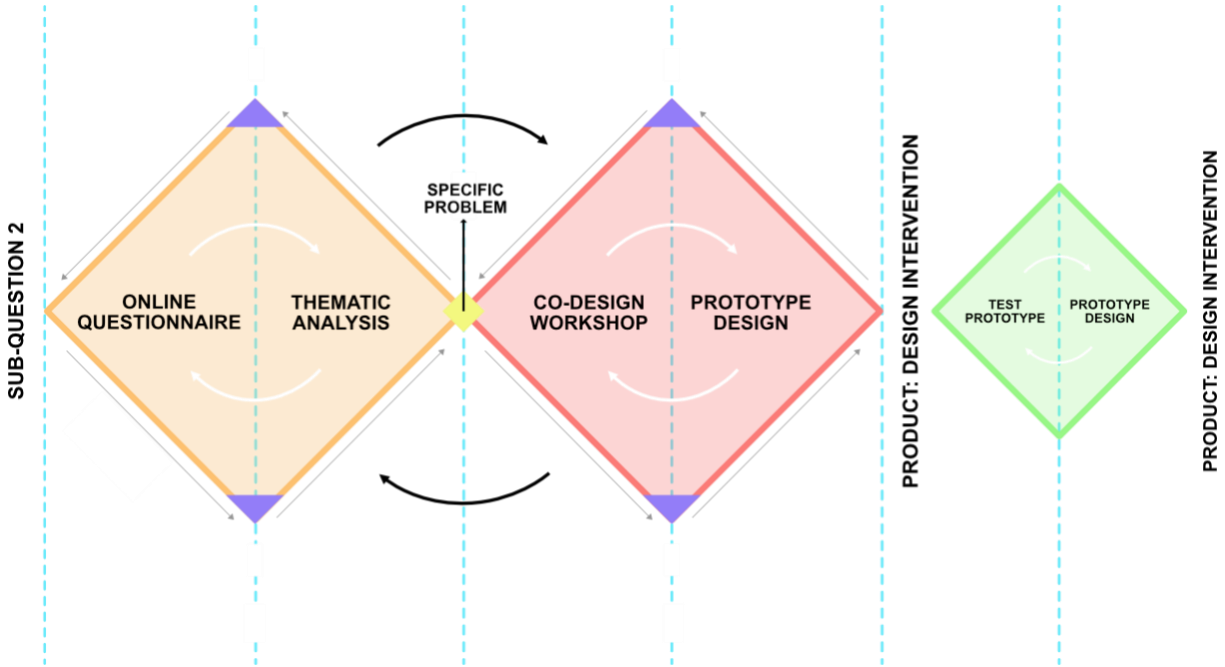


Figure 26: Simplified double diamond

Building on the feedback, suggestions enforced the importance of clearly including a space for partnerships, funders and supporters in the Production details, and ensuring that due credit is given to all involved parties and fulfilling the expectations of the theatre industry (P1). Alongside this, it was proposed that the *Know your audience* feature should prompt users to consider peers, such as artists, friends, colleagues, and partner institutions as a category thus helping users avoid overlooking a group that plays a vital role in audience development (P1). These refinements are actionable enhancements that strengthen the app's alignment with real-world eco-systems in which South African dance theatre operates, specifically Cape Town. Suggestions addressing wider needs such as copyright enforcement and dynamic updates to collaborative information, were considered valuable. However, these were noted as falling outside the immediate scope or technical capabilities of the researcher at this prototype phase.

In contrast to the suggestions for further enhancement provided by P1, P2 expressed overall satisfaction with the prototype and did not identify any significant areas needing improvement. No additional recommendations or changes were proposed by P2 during the prototype testing.

Quotes	Codes	Research scope	Themes
"It's quite nice. Yeah, it's short and I think it's straight to the point"	Overall impression		Appearance and first impressions
"Man, I think it's I think it's cool"			
"It's really cool. It looks really cool"			
"Yeah, yeah. Well, well done. It's good work"			
"I think it's nice. Is it clear enough? Yeah"	Overall design		
"It looks nice and clean"			
"I'd say, yeah, I like it very much. I mean, obviously, you can only really tell when you actually work with it"			
"Yeah, behind the scenes, the black background, the thing in front is the important thing, the stuff behind is hidden in the dark"			
"You also don't want it to be too busy at the same time."			
"Yeah, I'd say so. I mean, it looks very dance to me. My immediate reaction at the about dancing"			
"The colours, just the look. Yeah, it's nice"			
"It's also a lekker funky colours, which is nice"			
"No, it looks good"	Logo design		
"I think it's fine also because of the font that you used. I think it's fine"			
"Yeah, just don't go with colours, because the minute you go with colour, I mean, I was immediately seeing if that was in red, one was suddenly being Shoprite or one of those trade stalls that, you know"			
"I think it's nice and catchy. Yeah, it's to the point. Yeah"			
"quite important to keep up with those trends"	App features		App navigation and key features
"I think anyone who's serious about it, yes"	App use		

“I think at the bottom of your directors and choreographers”	Production details	Inside the scope of research	
“whoever is funding, whoever is involved”			
“need an area for partnerships?”			
“Now, to get to everybody, because it's a collaboration”	New app features	Outside the scope of research	
“But it is content copyright and stealing other people's stuff”			
“I'm always thinking about what I've got to deal with when information changes”			
“so that you can immediately on the app change that time and it will reflect wherever”			
“So, it would be amazing if there's something where if you just actually change it and then click, it would”			
“then very often a large part of your target audience would also be people that work in that same,	Know your audience	Inside the scope of research	
“your colleagues basically in other dance companies”			
“Have you got, what do you call it? For instance, if it's a dance show, other dance schools, other people that”			
“might want to come from, as I said, Andrew Walsh School in Hout Bay, and you know what I'm saying?”			
“I don't know what you would call it, peers in the arts, arts friends, arts colleagues. People often forget about those people.”			

Table 5: Prototype testing thematic analysis

This chapter details the execution of the researcher’s design process, following the design thinking phases. It commenced with the empathise/discover phase through an online questionnaire. Key insights were extracted in the define phase using a thematic analysis. The ideate phase involved a co-design workshop and a gigga-map activity, which led to the conceptualisation of the design intervention. Proceeding to the development of the prototype, including a user experience map, and concluded with the online prototype testing of the design intervention with participants, followed by the final thematic analysis of the test results. The design intervention will be introduced in *Chapter 5*, including its visual design and app features.

## **CHAPTER 5: Introducing the StageSpark app**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The StageSpark design intervention has been conceptualised and developed as a user interface (UI) system that provides a dynamic user experience (UX) for non-designers in marketing positions in dance theatre companies. The development of this app embodies the principles of design thinking, where the user interface has been designed according to data gathered during the co-design process. Importantly, this design outcome is limited to a prototype user interface, as the technical coding to complete a fully functional app is outside of the researcher's skill set.

new paragraph

The responsibility of the dance theatre companies ecosystem is largely the responsibility of an individual within the company. These responsibilities function in the production process, which runs alongside the marketing process, which often leads to a lack of marketing as shown in the figure below.

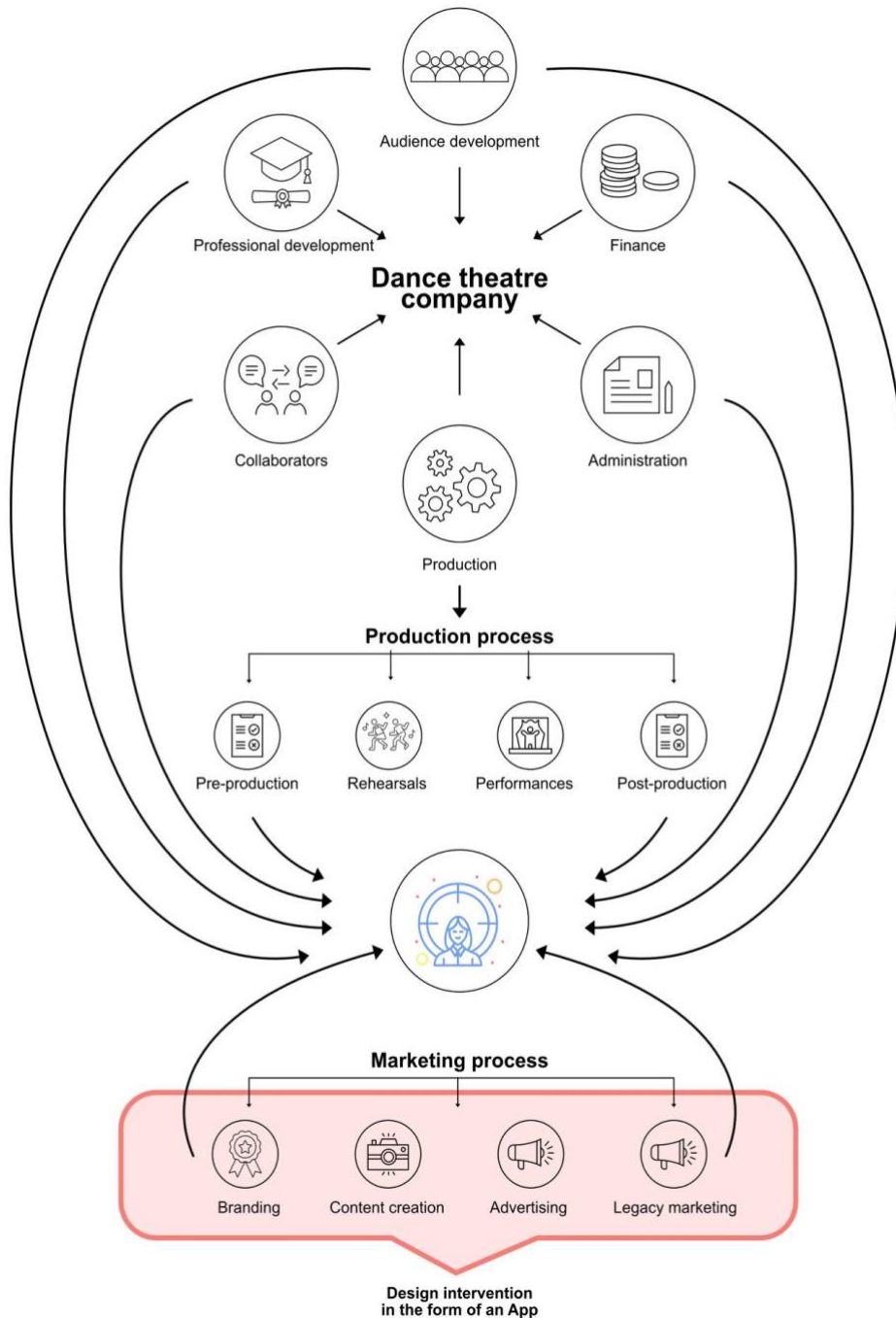


Figure 27: Dance theatre company eco-system showing the proposed design intervention (Illustrated by the researcher, 2025)

## **5.2 The prototype phase: StageSpark app core concept**

The foundation of StageSpark is rooted in the application of the co-design methodology, ensuring that the app is relevant and effective. The core concept positions StageSpark as a comprehensive, human-centred tool designed to simplify the complex task of designing marketing materials for dance theatre companies, which often have limited in-house expertise in this area. This app is not a static resource but a dynamic tool designed to adapt to evolving platforms, audiences and aesthetics.

## **5.3 StageSpark user flow diagram**

The user journey within the StageSpark app is a structured, linear user flow diagram, designed to guide the user through the process of setting up and executing marketing for dance theatre productions. The diagram below (*Figure 28*) also shows peripheral features accessible from the *Dashboard*, including the *Resources library* and *Trend alert*.

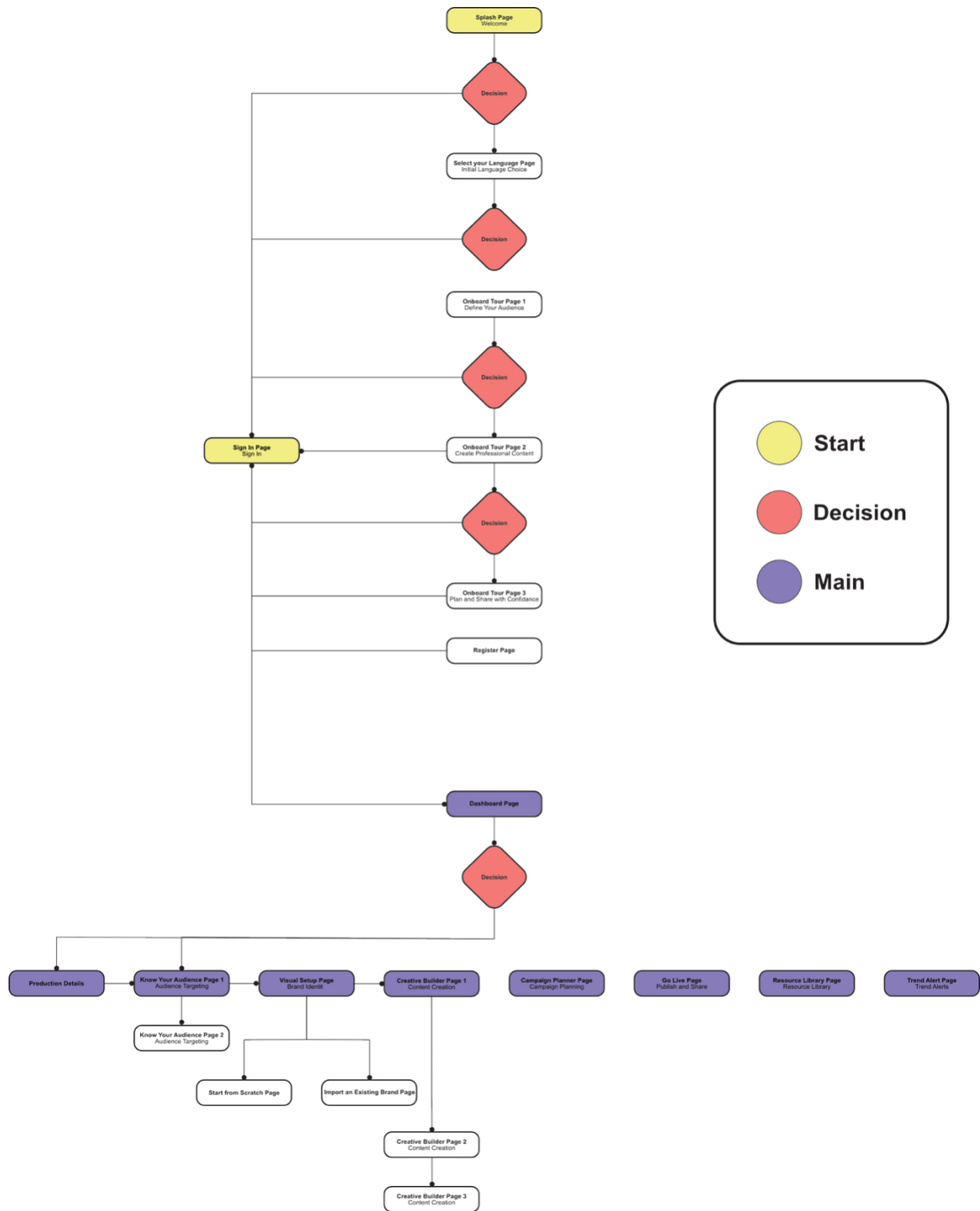


Figure 28: StageSpark app user flow diagram.

## 5.4 StageSpark wireframe

The design is a clean layout with a consistent header that remains the app's branding.

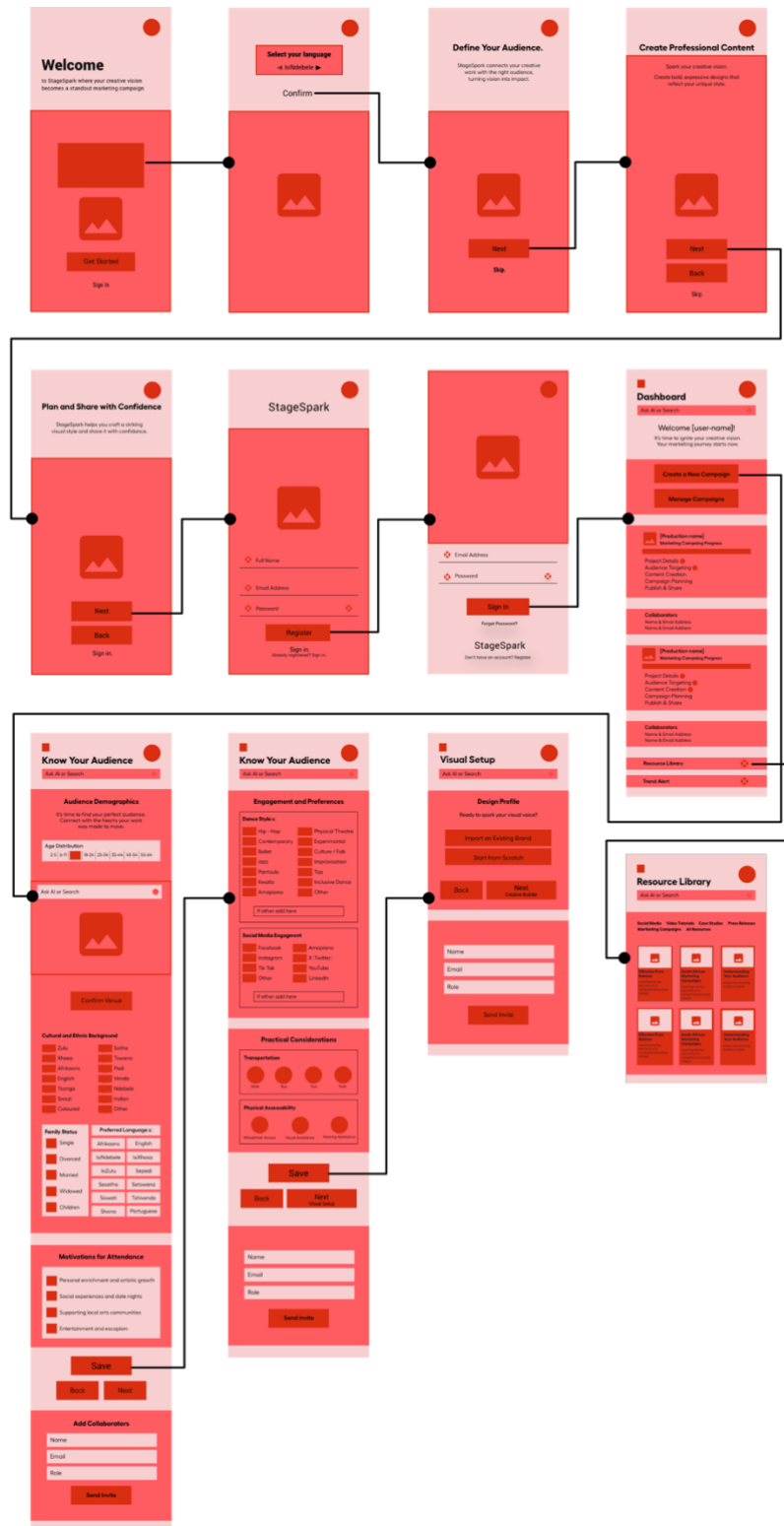


Figure 29: StageSpark app wireframe.

## 5.5 StageSpark interface prototype

The following high-fidelity interface represents the final iteration of the StageSpark app prototype based on the wireframe above. The interface was designed by integrating feedback concerning aesthetics and user experience, input from the co-design process. The aesthetics of the StageSpark app are meant to give users the feel of South African dance theatre, achieved through the vibrant colours and images used. Because black is the colour of invisibility and control backstage, it is used for the background colour in the app. Theatre practitioners develop an affinity for the colour, leading them to be aesthetically drawn to its classic, functional and minimalism in all theatre contexts. The images used originate from previous Jazzart Dance Theatre productions and were provided by the managing director. These images represent authentic contemporary dance theatre and were selected for the strong messages conveyed through the energy of the images, strong dance postures and vibrant colours. The StageSpark app is intended for South African dance theatre and therefore needed to reflect South Africa visually. This was done through the vibrant colour choice, while not using typical reds, yellows, greens and blues. The colours are a modern and warmer, inviting tone, with variations of them. The typeface used in the app is Hellix and was chosen for its simplicity and the need for the app to be used by diverse users. It is a typeface that has strong visual accessibility.

Figure 30 below shows the high-fidelity mock-ups for the app starting with the first splash screen and including the subsequent screens that a user would navigate through.

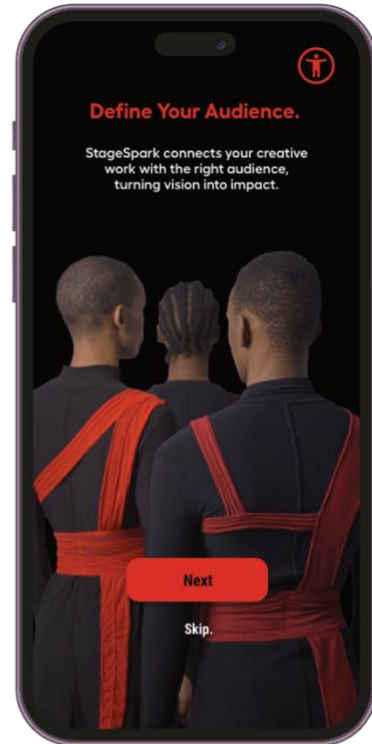
# Splash screen



Initial language choice screen



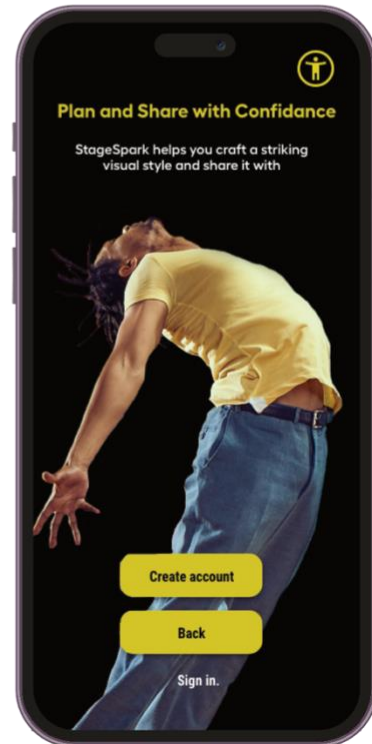
Onboarding screen 1



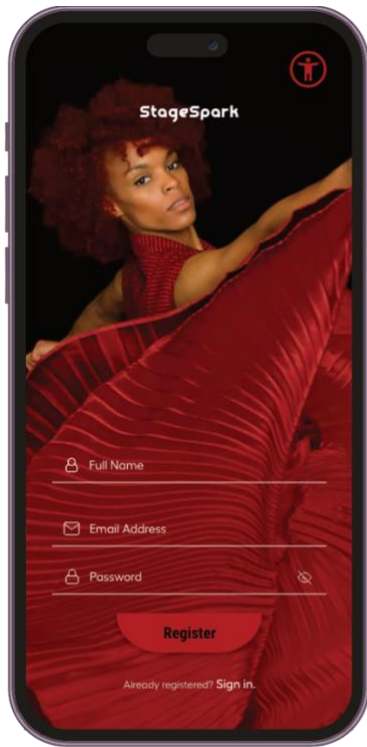
Onboarding screen 2



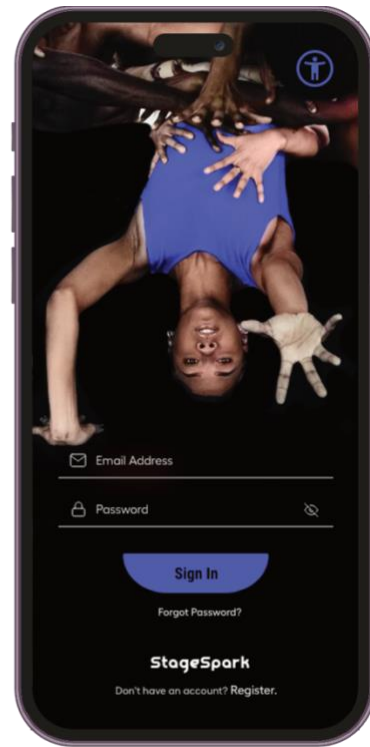
Onboarding screen 3



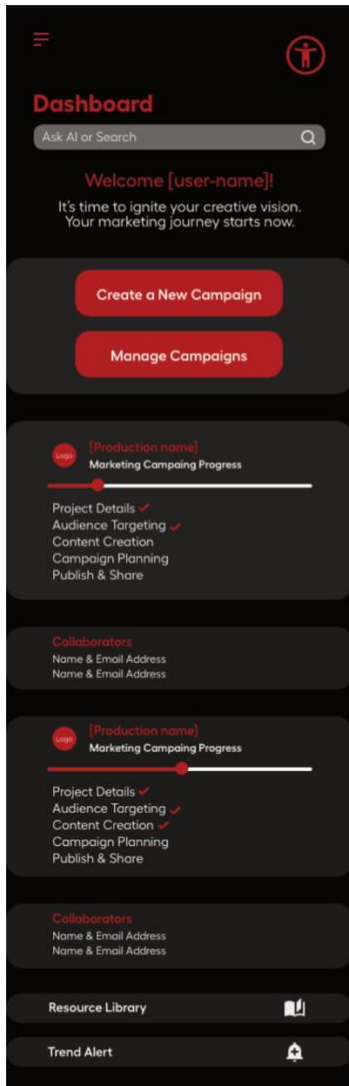
Register screen



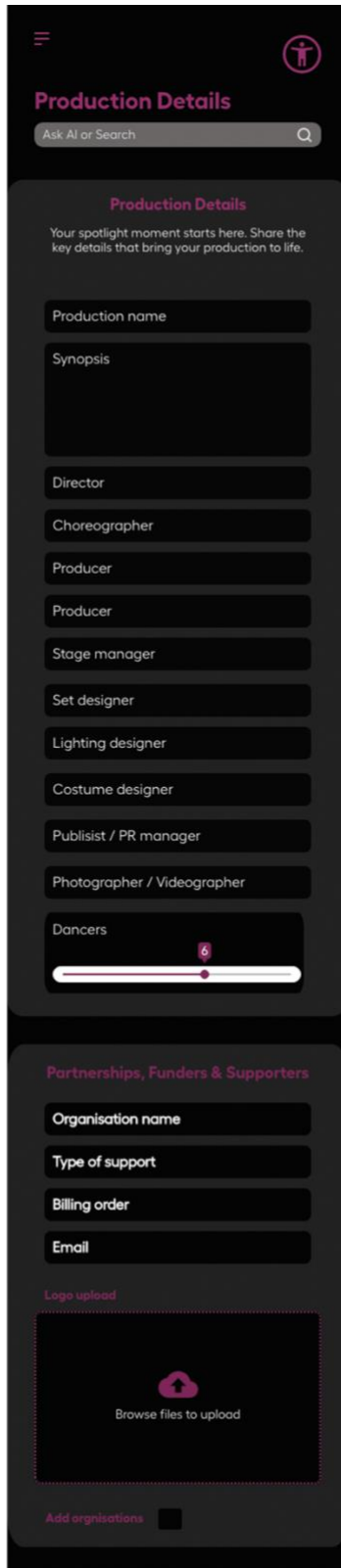
Sign in screen



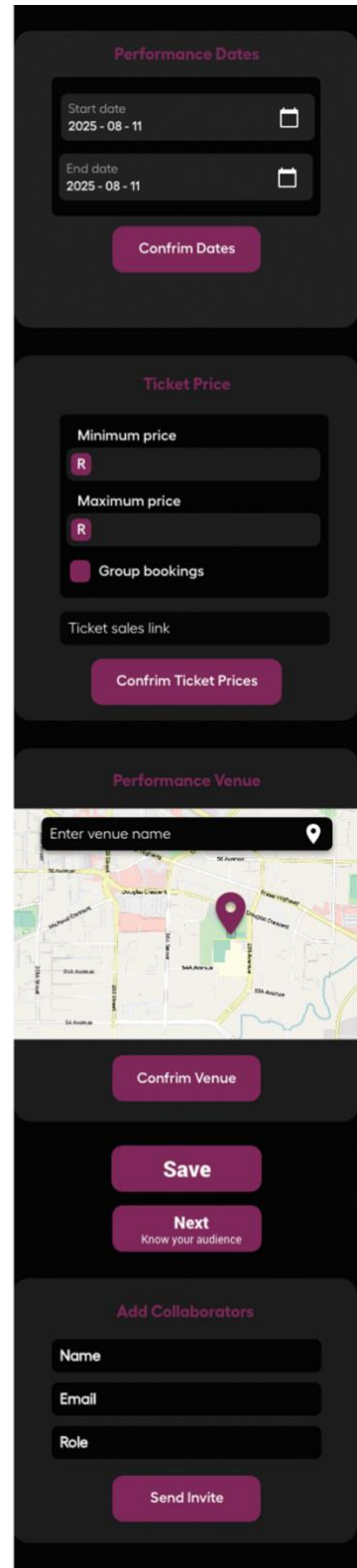
Dashboard screen



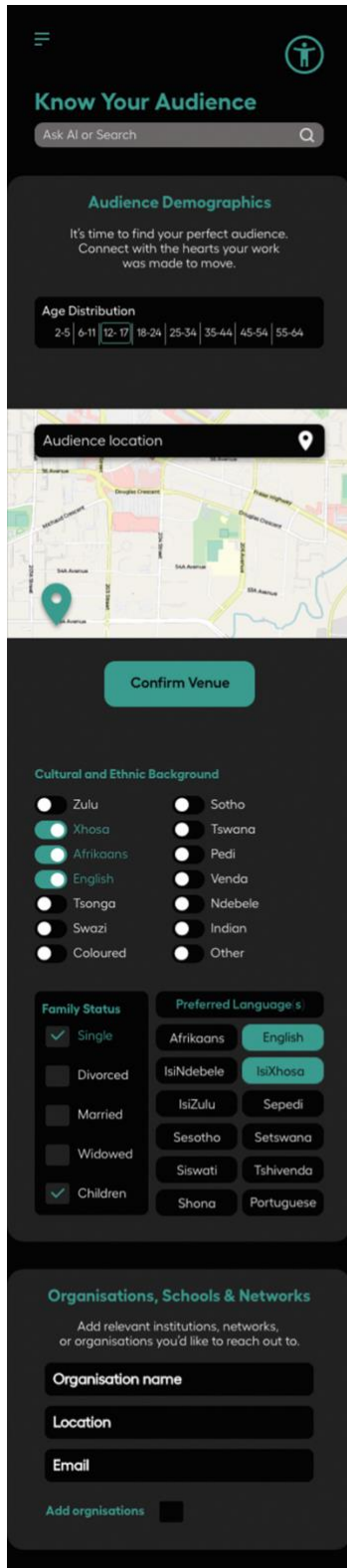
Production details screen



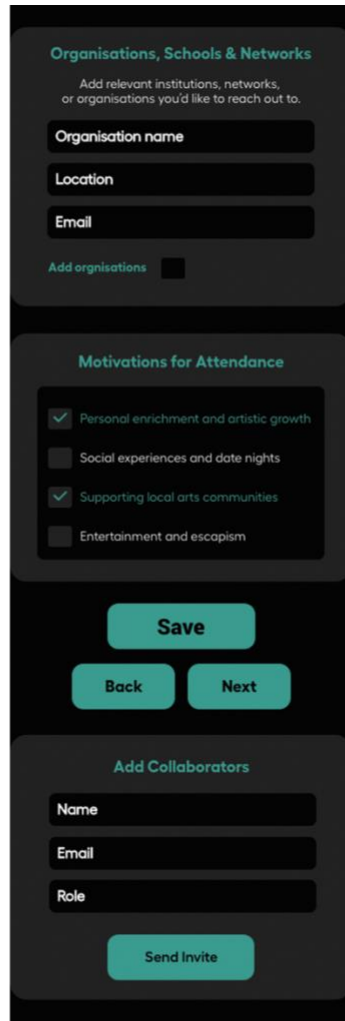
Production details screen continued



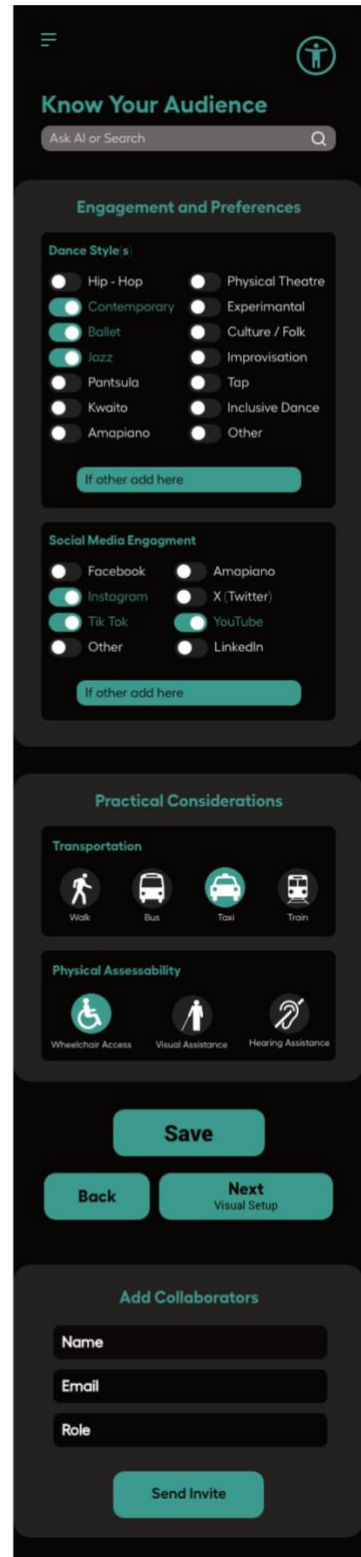
Know your audience screen 1



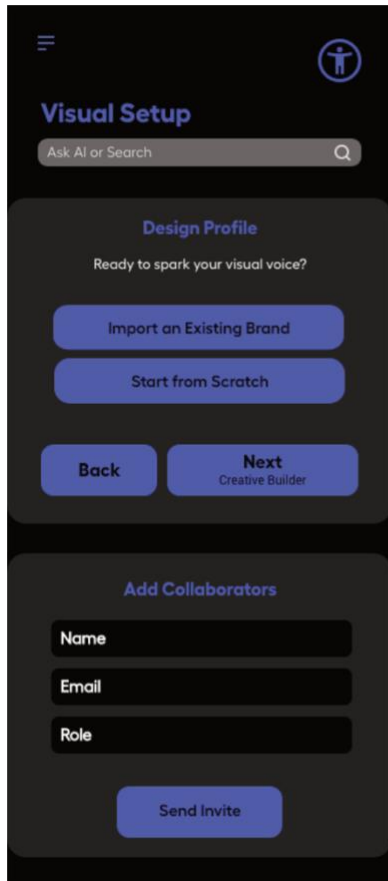
Know your audience screen 1 continued



Know your audience screen 2



## Visual setup screen



## Resource library screen

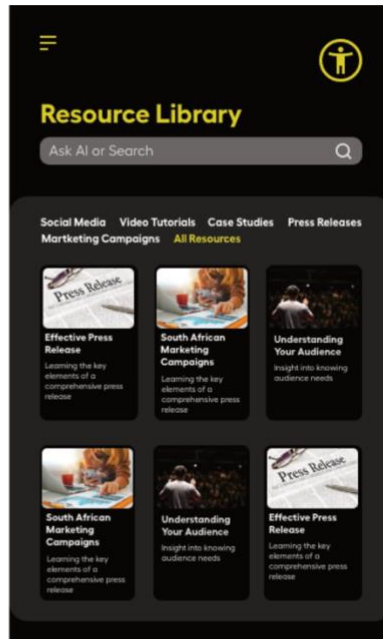


Figure 30: StageSpark high-fidelity mock-up.

## 5.6 StageSpark app visual identity

The app's name, StageSpark, is derived from the two words: stage and spark. The word stage immediately connects the app to its audience of dance theatre company individuals who lack knowledge of designing dance theatre marketing material and are tasked with the responsibility. It is intended to evoke a sense of performance, artistry, and the space where a creative vision is brought to life. Spark adds a dynamic and action-oriented dimension to the name, suggesting the app is a catalyst that ignites marketing and accelerates efforts. When combined, the name StageSpark is intended to be a confident, memorable name that directly communicates the app's core purpose. Transforming a production from backstage into the spotlight. The wordmark itself is a simple, bold font presented in white text on a black background to maintain a professional, neutral, and simplistic aesthetic. The high contrast choice is also for accessibility.



Figure 31: StageSpark app logo.

The app icon is the letter S, which could be a simple identifier. The minimalist design aligns with the app's overall goal of being clean and simple.



Figure 32: StageSpark app icon.

The foundation of the design lies in a high contrast combination of black and white. The black background specifically evokes the theatrical setting, where the focus remains on the elements presented in the foreground.

A selection of accent colours is used to provide variation and a multi coloured feel, avoiding the cliché of typical national colours while still giving a subtle idea of South Africa.



Figure 33: StageSpark app's colour palette.

## 5.7 Core Features: Function and Justification

The defining features of the StageSpark app are detailed in the sections below, describing how each core feature functions as a direct response to the user's needs and challenges. These features represent the tangible design intervention derived from the research, translating the co-design workshop findings, such as the skills gap, time constraints, and lack of design knowledge of marketing material, into an app. The justification for each feature is rooted in the research, ensuring the app is not only robust but also meets the objectives of the research.

### 5.7.1 App feature: Language selection and onboarding

A unique advantage of the app is that language selection is the first option upon entering, preceding basic navigation. On first launch, users are prompted to select their preferred language. This approach prioritises South Africa's linguistically diverse users within dance theatre companies. This ensures that all subsequent onboarding steps, interface elements, and guidance are delivered in a language the user understands, fundamentally removing the language barrier that excludes many South Africans from digital experiences. Following the language selection, the onboarding process starts with a visually engaging onboarding tour, relevant to dance theatre. For example, onboarding screens introduce users to key app concepts such as

identifying target audiences as *Define your audience*, producing professional and contextually relevant content as *Create professional content*, and planning and sharing with confidence as *Plan and share with confidence*. Furthermore, the users retain the option to skip, revisit, or proceed through the onboarding tour at any time.

The deliberate reversal of conventional onboarding, emphasising language choice before all else. Gives a culturally relevant introduction and was informed by insight from Statistics South Africa, and the lived experience of stakeholders. Only 8% of South Africans speak English at home. 30% of the population is comfortable with expressing themselves in English. (Stats SA, 2022:22).

Language	Census year			
	1996	2001	2011	2022
Afrikaans	14,5	13,4	13,5	10,6
English	8,7	8,3	9,7	8,7
IsiNdebele	1,5	1,6	2,1	1,7
IsiXhosa	17,9	17,6	16,0	16,3
IsiZulu	22,8	23,8	22,7	24,4
Sepedi	9,2	9,4	9,0	10,0
Sesotho	7,7	7,9	7,6	7,8
Setswana	8,2	8,2	8,0	8,3
Sign language	-	-	0,5	0,02
SiSwati	2,5	2,7	2,5	2,8
Tshivenda	2,2	2,3	2,4	2,5
Xitsonga	4,4	4,4	4,5	4,7
Other	0,6	0,5	1,6	2,1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>100,0</b>

Table 6: Dynamics in languages most often spoken by households over the period 1996-2022 (Stats SA, 2022:22)

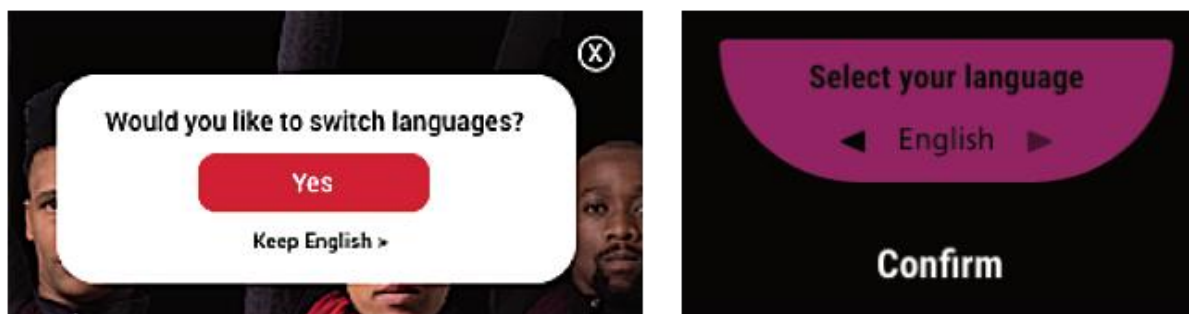


Figure 34: Screenshot of the language selection screens

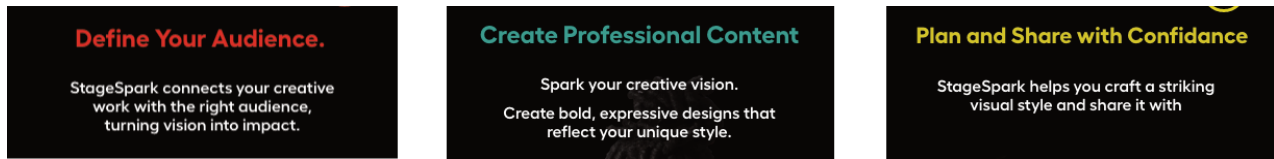


Figure 35: Screenshot of the onboard tour screens.

### 5.7.2 App feature: Hamburger menu

The global navigation, accessed via the hamburger menu icon, is essential for preserving valuable screen space on the mobile device. Allowing the interface to remain clean and focused on the primary workflow. The hamburger menu ensures that users with no marketing material design skills can navigate the app confidently and maintain control of the marketing design activities. This design choice directly addresses the challenge of overwhelm and complexity identified in the thematic analysis of the co-design workshop.

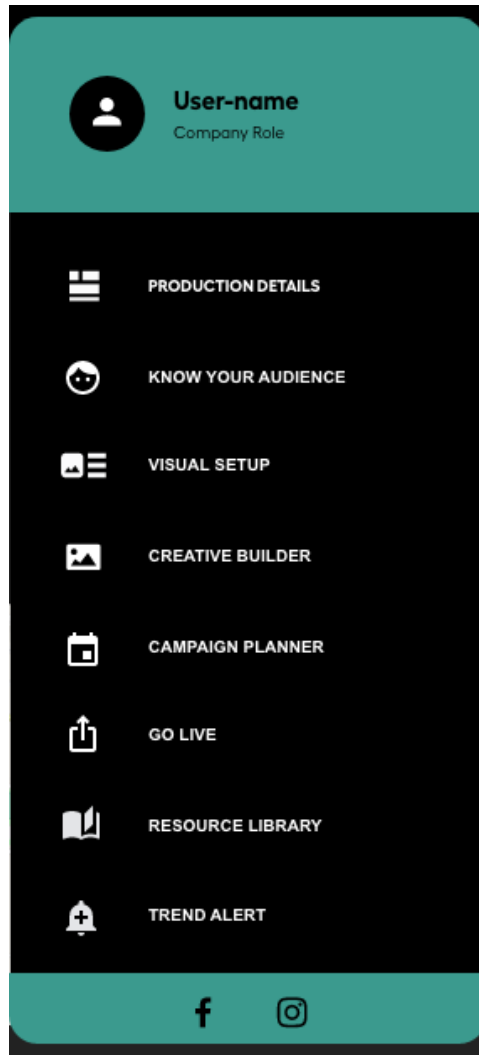


Figure 36: Screenshot of the hamburger menu.

### 5.7.3 App feature: Accessibility widget

The accessibility widget feature is represented by a universal accessibility icon presented on every screen, starting from the *Dashboard*. Its purpose is to ensure inclusive design by providing users with a personalised interface to customise the StageSpark app, based on their individual accessibility needs, without altering the underlying code (Waller et al., 2015:297). This feature includes essential options such as contrast+, Bigger text, and dyslexia friendly views. By integrating this level of universal design, the app ensures that the platform is truly accessible to the varied skills and physical needs of the targeted diverse users (Erdtman et al., 2021:159).

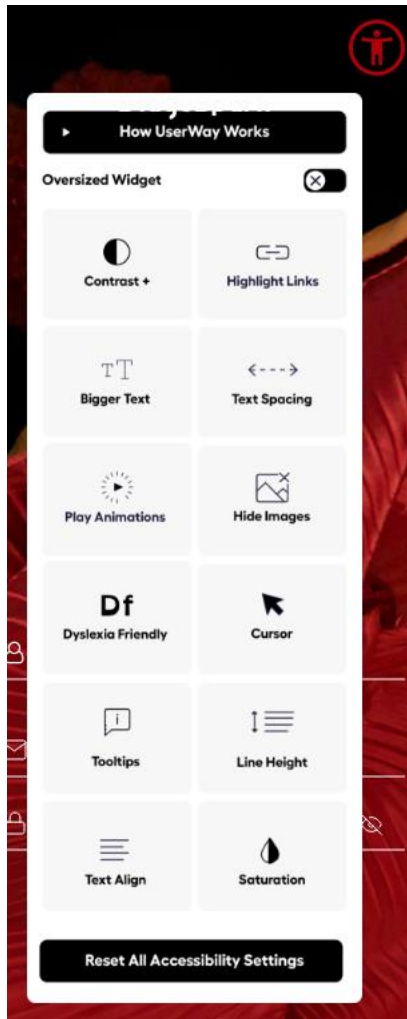


Figure 37: Screenshot of the accessibility widget.

#### 5.7.4 App feature: Dashboard

The dashboard was not part of the original features but was developed by the researcher during the design process, in response to the need for a control centre within the app. Serving as a home screen, the dashboard provides users with an overview of all the active productions and workflow progress. This ensures that users can navigate confidently and maintain oversight of their marketing design activities.

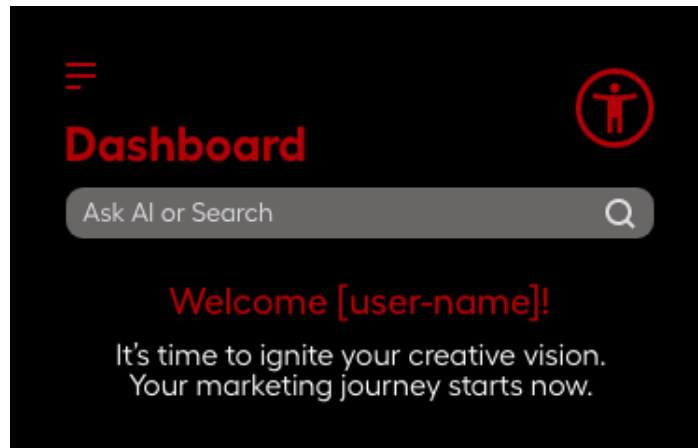


Figure 38: Screenshot of the *Dashboard* screen.

#### 5.7.5 App feature: Embedded IA

A distinctive feature of the app's user interface is the AI bar, positioned prominently at the top of every workflow page. In contrast to conventional pop-ups, the AI prompts are always accessible but never disruptive, allowing users to seek real-time support, contextual advice or creative inspiration at any point in the user flow. This design addresses challenges such as the skills gap and time constraints.



Figure 39: Screenshot of the *Embedded AI* screen.

#### 5.7.6 App feature: Add collaborators

The app includes integrated team collaboration at the end of every workflow page, enabling users to invite collaborators by simply entering their names and email addresses. As users go through the process, such as defining production details and identifying target audiences. They have the choice to add collaborators directly to the workflow. This allows opportunities for teamwork and shared input, streamlining communication and feedback when it is most valuable. Helping app users connect with the dance production team members. All collaborators added receive notifications and can access the production they are invited to join.

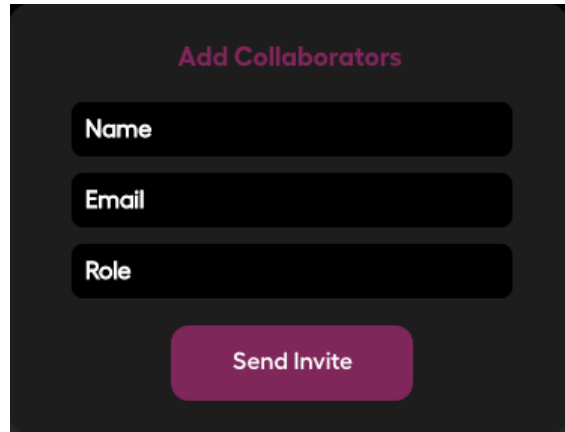


Figure 40: Screenshot of the *Add collaborator* screen

### 5.7.7 App feature: Production details

During the design process, the feature was initially conceived as the production identity was refined and renamed to production details in order to reflect theatre production terminology and increase usability. This feature is essential for each new project, prompting users to enter and consolidate essential information about the dance theatre production. Users are guided to input core data, including the production's name, synopsis, production team members, cast, performance dates, ticket prices, venue and other critical information.

By opening the workflow with production details, the app ensures that following planning for marketing, audience targeting, and content creation is always grounded in accurate and comprehensive production details.

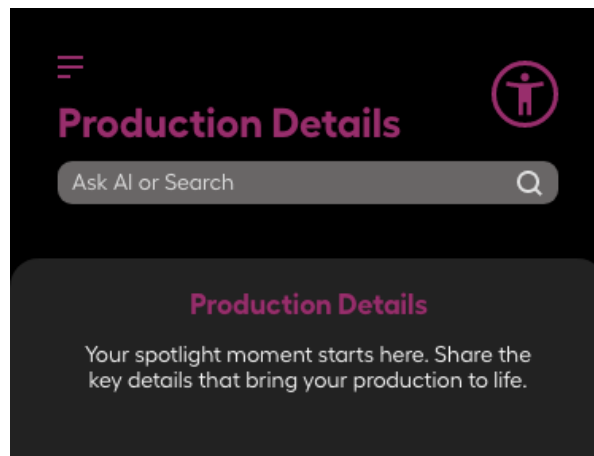


Figure 41: Screenshot of *Production details* screen.

### 5.7.8 App feature: Know your audience

The feature originally titled audience targeting was renamed know your audience to create a user-friendly and engaging user experience. Whereas audience targeting is a technical term, the phrase know your audience invites users into the process, aligning with the language used within dance theatre companies. Within the workflow, users are prompted to explore and define detailed characteristics of their intended audience. This includes age distribution, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, motivations for attendance, social media engagement patterns, and considerations like accessibility and transport needs.

Shifting users to dance theatre production marketing planning that shifts towards audience development. The interface uses prompts and toggles to help users build audience profiles. These profiles guide the following app activities, ensuring that a thorough understanding of the audience informs content, platform choices, and campaign timing.

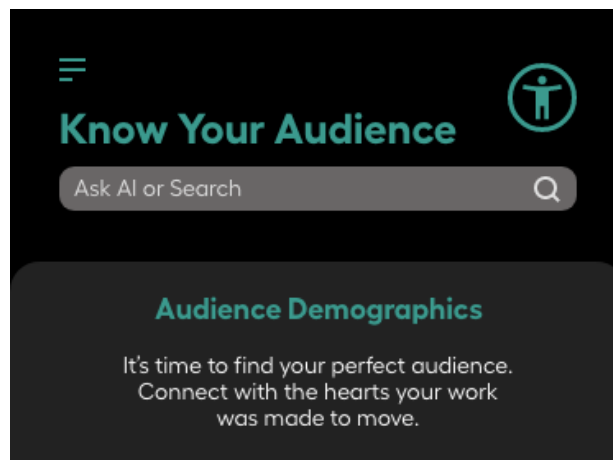


Figure 42: Screenshot of *Know your audience* screen.

### 5.7.9 App feature: Brand identity

Brand identity was renamed visual setup to improve usability. Visual setup enables users to either import an existing brand identity or create a new visual identity by allowing users to select visual elements such as colour palettes, typography and core graphic styles. This feature empowers users to create a consistent and professional brand identity from the outset.

Two pathways are offered: for those with pre-existing brand identities, the import function streamlines the process of maintaining a visual identity across the production's marketing; for those starting anew, the start from scratch option is supported by prompts to make design choices less daunting. Prioritising visual setup at this phase ensures that all marketing material is coherent, recognisable and tailored to the dance theatre productions' unique character.

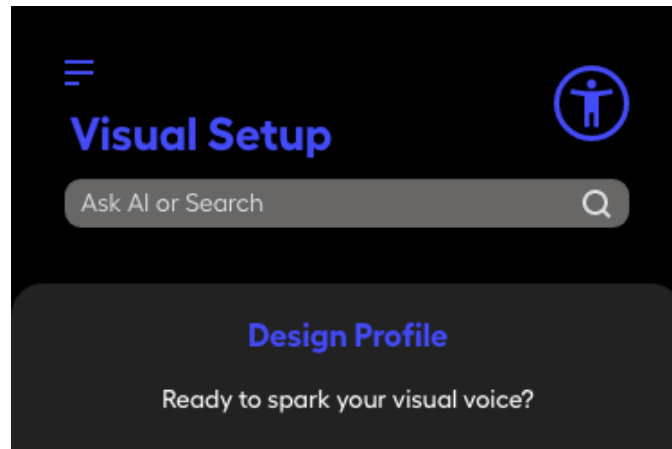


Figure 43: Screenshot of the *Visual setup* screen.

#### **5.7.10 App feature: Marketing materials and creation**

While the current version of the app does not yet include a marketing material creation feature, this functionality has been identified as a valuable area for future development. The envisioned solution would enable the design of a full suite of marketing material, such as social media posters, flyers and press releases, directly within the platform. Drawing from production details, know your audience and visual setup. Such functionality would offer automated adaptation for various platforms, supporting both consistency and creativity regardless of the user's marketing design experience. This would streamline the path from planning to audience engagement, reducing the need for external software.

#### **5.7.11 App feature: Planning and strategy**

The prototype does not incorporate planning and strategy; the value of this feature was identified through the research process. In future development, planning and strategy will serve as a roadmap for marketing timelines and set measurable targets for audience engagement and ticket sales. Supporting both long-term and day-to-day marketing activities, integrating seamlessly with *Production details*, *Know your audience* and *Visual setup*.

#### **5.7.12 App feature: Sharing and distribution**

Although the current prototype does not include sharing and distribution, the research stresses the value of facilitating seamless dissemination of marketing materials. In the future prototype consideration, this feature would enable users to publish content directly into multiple platforms without leaving the app. Sharing will allow users to share the app with potential users as well. This feature would also enable tracking of audience reach, engagement metrics, and marketing performance, allowing users to tailor future marketing design efforts based on real-time feedback.

By streamlining sharing and distribution, the intervention would further reduce barriers for practitioners with limited digital expertise and help ensure that well-crafted content reaches both existing and new audiences at scale. The inclusion of such a module is a recommended direction for subsequent development phases, supporting more sustainable audience development and stronger impact for South African performing arts projects.

### 5.7.13 App feature: Trend alert and updates

While *Trend alert* icon is visually present on the *Dashboard*, *Updates* is not included in the UI prototype. This Trend alert feature will provide regular access to new insights on marketing design, digital marketing, audience development, technology and anything related to dance theatre or theatre.



Figure 44: Screenshot of *Trend alert*

### 5.7.14 Resource library

The resource library offers users a comprehensive hub of targeted reference materials designed to support every phase of the marketing process. Organised, the library includes case studies, video tutorials, press release samples and many more resources tailored for the South African dance theatre app users. By combining these resources in one location, the library lowers barriers to self-learning and empowers the users with varying levels of marketing knowledge and digital expertise to build new skills as needed. The content is searchable and filtered by topic area, enabling users to find timely support for emerging challenges or rapidly evolving trends.

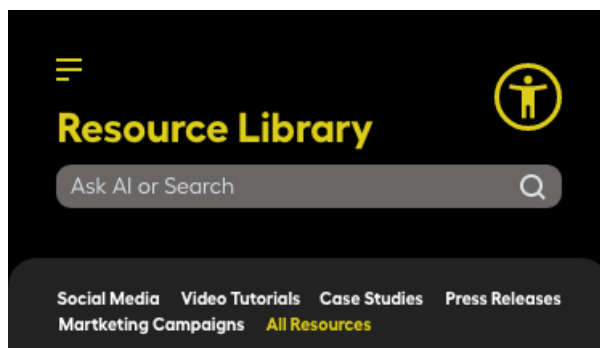


Figure 45: Screenshot of the *Resource library*

The chapter details the StageSparks app's core concept, user flow, wireframe, interface prototype and visual identity. Outlines the functions and features like the accessibility widget, embedded AI, and visual setup, which are designed to assist under-resourced dance theatre companies in creating effective visual communication materials for diverse audiences.

## **CHAPTER 6: Conclusion**

In conclusion, this research project has produced a practical solution to address the complex, wicked problem of dance theatre marketing in South Africa. Using co-design processes, the study resulted in a designed outcome in the form of the StageSpark app, which could alleviate the resource and skills gap of dance theatre companies. StageSpark, a prototype marketing and design app, empowers dance theatre companies with limited resources to connect with diverse South African audiences effectively. The StageSpark app would operate within existing hierarchies in South African dance theatre companies, where decision-making often lies with the artistic director, funders and boards. If these decision makers do not value marketing or support digital tools, the impact of the co-design solution, like the StageSpark app, may be limited regardless of its usability. The findings confirm the concept of wicked problems as relevant for understanding dance theatre companies, by showing that financial constraints, audience development and limited marketing knowledge are interdependent and resist simple solutions. This study has actively put design thinking and co-design into practice by moving from empathise to an app prototype shaped by stakeholders, treating the StageSpark app as practice-led research output that generates knowledge through making. This research carries a profound significance, as one of the valued research participants sadly passed away while the findings were being documented. The insights provided by the participant were invaluable, and a small part of their wealth of knowledge and passion for theatre is now permanently captured within this research. The practical relevance of this research is underscored by the researcher's positionality as a dancer, actress, choreographer and visual communication designer. While writing this design report, the researcher was elected to the interim board of the Western Cape Provincial Arts Education Authority, highlighting the potential for this research to be used and referred to at this high level of policy development in the Western Cape.

The research answered the main research question: how can a co-design approach enable dance theatre companies in South Africa to communicate effectively with diverse audiences? The success of the co-design process enabled one version of what might be seen as an answer to this question. Further research recommendations are a longitudinal study to track the StageSpark app's impact.

Further research could focus on three core areas: a longitudinal study is necessary to empirically track the solution's sustained impact over multiple years, measuring metrics such as audience growth and revenue to assess its long-term efficacy. A comparative is recommended to test the generalisability of the co-design methodology itself by applying the process to a different South African arts discipline, such as community theatre. Future research could investigate the structural factors influencing tool adoption, particularly focusing on how a company's existing digital readiness affects the successful integration of a co-designed digital solution like StageSpark into their organisational practice. Finally, future iterations of the StageSpark app would benefit from making the collaboration feature more transparent, thus alleviating the dilemma of app usage and acceptance by decision makers within dance theatre companies.

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## **Addendum 1: Co-design workshop questionnaire**

### **Section 1: General information**

This section gathers basic details about you and your company to understand your marketing context. Responses are anonymous and for research only.

#### **What is your role within your dance theatre company?**

- Artistic Director
- Manager/Administrator
- Performer
- Marketing/Communications Staff
- Other (please specify)

**Specify if other is chosen in the previous question.**

#### **What is the size of your dance theatre company?**

- 1–5 employees
- 6–10 employees
- 11–20 employees
- More than 20 employees

#### **Does your dance theatre company have a dedicated marketing team?**

- Yes
- No

#### **How do you currently handle the creation of marketing and visual communication materials?**

- In-house (staff members)
- Freelance designers/consultants
- Volunteers
- Other (please specify)

**Specify if other is chosen in the previous question.**

#### **Is there any general information you want to add about your dance company?**

### **Section 2: Demographic and organisational details**

This section gathers information about your dance theatre company's location, size, and experience. It helps the researcher understand the background of participants and identify common trends.

**Is your company based in Cape Town?**

- Yes
- No

**If the answer is no specific where it is located?**

**How many years has your company been active?**



- Less than 1 year
- 10 years or more

**Section 3: Current skillsets and practices**

This section explores your team's experience, tools, and approaches to creating marketing and visual communication materials. Your responses will help identify existing skills and areas where support may be needed.

**How would you rate your team's overall skill level in creating marketing and visual communication materials?**



- Beginner
- Advanced

**What tools or software does your team use for marketing and visual communication?**

- Adobe Photoshop/Illustrator/InDesign
- Canva
- Microsoft PowerPoint/Word
- Social media platforms (e.g., Instagram, Facebook tools)
- AI
- Other (please specify)

**Specify if other is chosen in the previous question.**

**In your opinion, what are the benchmarks (standards or best practices) for successful marketing design in the dance theatre industry? You may consider aspects such as branding, social media engagement, audience reach, and the quality of promotional materials.**

**What types of marketing materials does your company create most often?**

- Posters
- Flyers
- Social media posts
- Email newsletters
- Event programs
- Other (please specify)

**Specify if other is chosen in the previous question.**

**Section 4: Challenges and areas for improvement**

**How much time does your team generally spend creating marketing materials for an event or production?**



- Less than 1 day
- More than a week

**What are your team's most significant challenges when creating marketing and visual communication materials?**

**How do you think these challenges could be addressed?**

**In which areas would your team most benefit from support or training? (Select all that apply)**

- Graphic design basics (e.g., layout, typography)
- Branding and identity design
- Social media content creation
- Copywriting and messaging
- Using design tools/software
- Other (please specify)

**Specify if other is chosen in the previous question.**

***Do you have any additional comments or suggestions regarding the challenges and needs of your dance theatre company in designing marketing materials?***

### **Section 5: Feedback on proposed intervention**

This section seeks your input on potential solutions to improve marketing and visual communication for dance theatre companies. Your feedback will help shape and user-friendly design interventions.

**Would your company be interested in participating in a workshop or training program to improve your team's skills in marketing and visual communication?**

- Yes
- No

**What format would be most effective for such a program?**

- In-person workshops
- Online training modules
- One-on-one coaching
- Self-help design intervention
- Other

**Specify if other is chosen in the previous question.**

**What self-help features are most helpful in a design intervention or toolkit?**

- Step-by-step guides for creating marketing materials
- Pre-designed templates
- Access to free or affordable design software
- Case studies/examples of successful campaigns
- Other (please specify)

**Specify if other is chosen in the previous question.**

### Section 6: Workshop availability

This section assesses your interest and availability for participating in workshops aimed at improving marketing and visual communication skills. Your responses will help in planning an effective session tailored to your needs.

**Indicate the best available dates for the co-design workshop.**

- Friday, March 14<sup>th</sup> 2025
- Friday, March 28<sup>th</sup> 2025
- Wednesday, March 19<sup>th</sup> 2025

**Indicate which dates you would prefer to attend the co-design workshop.**

**Indicate the best time to start the co-design workshop.**

- 9am
- 10am
- 2pm

**Indicate the approximate amount of time you have available for the co-design workshop.**

- 2 hours
- 3 hours
- 4 hours

**Would you be open to participating in a follow-up co-design workshop?**

Yes

no

### SECTION 7: Continued consent

**Would you be open to participating in a follow-up co-design workshop?**

- Yes
- No

### Section 7: Continued consent

By proceeding with this questionnaire, you confirm that you understand the purpose of this study and voluntarily agree to participate. You acknowledge that your responses will remain anonymous and will be used solely for academic research. You may withdraw from the questionnaire at any time without any consequences. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the researcher at [.....].

**I consent to Christelle Dreyer, a Cape Peninsula University of Technology student, collecting data from this company for her Masters in Design research.**

- Yes
- No

## **Addendum 2: Co-design workshop facilitation guide**

### **Workshop Overview**

#### **Objective:**

- Identify key marketing challenges faced by dance theatre companies.
- Explore current skill gaps and resource constraints. (*The online questionnaire supplies these*)
- Brainstorm potential solutions and essential elements of a design intervention.

**Participants:** Selected respondents from the online questionnaire who expressed interest.

**Duration:** 3 to 4 hours (adjustable based on availability).

### **Workshop Agenda**

#### **1. Introduction/Welcome & Purpose of the Workshop (By the facilitator, 10 min)**

A brief overview of research aims and co-design methodology.

**Purpose:** The goal of this workshop is to co-design a practical marketing design intervention tailored explicitly for dance theatre companies and individuals who may not have in-house designers or extensive design experience.

**Aim:** The research aims to develop and co-design a design intervention to guide dance theatre companies that do not have a marketing department or lack the in-house knowledge to design effective marketing and visual communication material for potential audiences. The co-design process has been chosen to ensure that the development of the design intervention is effective, relevant, and user-friendly for non-designers within dance theatre companies.

**Co-Design Methodology:** Co-design is a collaborative approach to design that actively involves all stakeholders, particularly end-users, in the design process. Rather than designing for users, co-design focuses on designing with users. It acknowledges that the people using a product, service, or system have valuable insights, experiences, and knowledge that can inform better design outcomes.

**Key message:** We're not designing for you. We're designing with you to create something beneficial for your context.

**We're not designing for you.  
We're designing with you.  
To create something beneficial.**

Key message made for the projection.

- Continued Consent from the participants.
- Remind participants about ethics clearance and that all data will be anonymised in the research report.

**Materials:** printed agenda (if needed), consent forms.

**Activity:** Thank you all for participating!

## **2. Icebreaker: "Your Marketing Story" (Whole group – 10min).**

**Objective:** Establishes group rapport and sets the discussion context.

**Activity:** Each participant shares an experience they've had with marketing. Verbal. Recorded for data purposes- ask participants' permission.

Each participant will be given signs for them to indicate how they feel about the stories being told. These signs will be the emojis used in Facebook comments.



Happiness, joy,  
amusement, laughing out loud



Surprise, shock,  
astonishment, awe



Sadness, crying,  
feeling upset, disappointment



Anger, frustration,  
rage, annoyance



Cool, confident, casual,  
laid-back, or "deal with it."



Love, adoration, infatuation,  
feeling loved, admiring something



Disapproval, dislike,  
disagreement, not good



Approval, agreement,  
liking something, good, positive



Love, affection,  
appreciation, liking something

Emoji explanation made for the projection.



Emoji signs made for participant use.

**Prompts:**

- **"Marketing in one word, how does it feel to you?"** (This is a quick, easy, and emotional check-in.)
- **"Tell us about a time you had to promote a performance. What did you try, and how did it go?"**  
(This opens the general discussion about marketing experiences.)
- **"What's one thing you've tried to promote a performance that surprisingly worked?"** OR  
**"What's a marketing idea you were excited about, but it didn't go as planned?"** (Choose one to provide a balance of positive and negative experiences).
- **"What kind of help or support do you wish you had when promoting shows?"** (This starts to link directly to the workshop's goal of identifying the needs for the design intervention.)

- **"Thumbs up or down – how confident do you feel doing marketing stuff?"** (This is a quick way to gauge the overall confidence level in the room.)

**Materials:** None (verbal only), poster with prompts, Emoji signs.

**Marketing in one word,  
how does it feel to you? .**

**Tell us about a time you had to  
promote a performance.  
  
What did you try,  
and how did it go?**

**What's one thing you've tried to  
promote a performance that  
surprisingly worked?**

**What's a marketing idea  
you were excited about,  
but it didn't go as planned?**

**What kind of help or support  
do you wish you had when  
promoting shows?**

Prompts made for the projection.

### **3. Questionnaire Findings (2-3 minutes)**



**Objective:** Shows participants that their time spent filling out the questionnaire was valued. Immediately establishes the relevance of the workshop. Frames the subsequent activities around real user needs.

Your responses to the questionnaire were incredibly helpful in shaping this workshop.

These insights, along with others, will guide the discussions as we develop a design intervention tailored to their needs.

- We found that many of you highlighted (Specific Challenge 1, e.g., difficulty creating visually appealing social media content) is a significant hurdle.
- Additionally, there was a strong desire for more guidance on (Specific Need 1, e.g., how to effectively use free design tools).
- We also noted that (Specific Challenge 2, e.g., limited time) was a recurring theme, so we'll be mindful of creating time-efficient solutions.



<p><b>Addressing Marketing Challenges</b></p>	<p><b>Benchmarks for successful marketing design</b></p>
 <p>Practical design templates Workshops on social media content Access to affordable design tools</p>	 <p>Strategic Digital Engagement &amp; Web Consistent, High-Quality, Authentic Content Audience-Focused &amp; Accessible Design Community &amp; Brand Development</p>
<p>What specific features, resources, or guidance should the design intervention offer to effectively address the marketing challenges you've identified?</p>	<p>How can the intervention guide users to achieve these high-quality and effective marketing design benchmarks?</p>

Questionnaire Cards for the participants to use.



Printed cards for participants to use

**4. User/Role-Based Persona Mapping (Individual - 30 min)**

**Objective:** To build shared understanding and empathy for the individuals within dance theatre companies who will engage with the design intervention by collaboratively creating detailed, fictional characters representing different roles involved in marketing. This will help understand diverse user types and surface their specific marketing pain points and goals.

**Activity:** Participants will develop "personas" representing fictional but realistic individuals who handle marketing responsibilities within dance theatre companies (e.g., an Artistic Director wearing many hats, a

dedicated Marketing Coordinator in a larger company, a volunteer handling social media for a small collective). They will identify their marketing pain points and available resources.

**Prompts/Template:**

**1. Persona Identity & Snapshot (prominent)**

**[Placeholder for Avatar]:** A designated circle or square where participants can draw or imagine an avatar for their persona. Adding a human element to the persona.



Avatars for the participants to use.



Printed Stickers for participants to use

- **Persona Name:** An ample, bold space for the persona's fictional name (e.g., "Creative Carla," "Budget-Conscious Ben").
- **Role/Title:** (e.g., Artistic Director, Company Manager, Marketing Volunteer).
- **Company Type:** (e.g., Small Independent Troupe, Established Regional Company, Youth Dance Program).
- **Brief Bio/Description:** A short paragraph summarising who this persona is and their general involvement with marketing.

## 2. Key Demographics & Traits

- **Demographics:**

Age: (e.g., 30s, 40s)

Location: (e.g., Cape Town, Rural SA)

Education: (e.g., Arts Degree, Business Diploma)

- **Key Traits:** (Adjectives describing their personality or working style related to marketing) (e.g., "Resourceful," "Time-strapped," "Creative," "Detail-oriented," "Tech-averse," "Passionate")

## 3. Marketing Goals

- **Heading:** "Goals"
- **Content Area:** What specific objectives does this persona aim to achieve through their marketing and visual communication efforts for the dance company?

*Examples:* "Increase ticket sales by 20% for next show," "Build stronger brand recognition," "Attract new, diverse audiences," "Improve funding proposal success rates".

## 4. Challenges & Pain Points (the most significant and most critical)

- **Heading:** "Challenges & Pain Points"
- **Content Area:** What are the most significant difficulties, frustrations, or obstacles this persona encounters when creating and implementing marketing materials?

*Examples from previous discussions:* "Lack of high-resolution images; difficulty hiring photographers". "Lack of specialised skills to create materials promptly; high cost for NPCs". "Keeping up with trends and the high cost of media publications/mentions". "Limited time, small budget, understanding target audience".

## 5. Available Resources & Tools

- **Heading:** "Available Resources & Tools"
- **Content Area:** What tools, software, staff support, budget, or skills does this persona currently have access to for marketing?

*Examples:* "Smartphone camera," "Canva," "Social media platforms (e.g., Instagram, Facebook tools)," "Adobe Creative Suite (Photoshop/Illustrator/InDesign)". "A small volunteer team," "No dedicated marketing budget". "I use Canva".

## 6. Feelings & Hopes

- **Heading:** "Feelings about Marketing"
- **Content Area:** Describe the persona's current emotional state or attitude towards their marketing responsibilities.

*Examples:* "Overwhelmed," "Stressed," "Excited by potential," "Hopeful for improvement," "Frustrated by limitations".

- **Heading:** "Hopes for a Design Intervention"
- **Content Area:** What specific benefits or solutions does this persona hope to gain from a marketing design intervention or toolkit?

*Examples:* "Easy-to-use templates," "Guidance on graphic design basics," "Tips for social media content creation," "Help with reaching diverse audiences effectively".

## 7. Quote

- **Heading:** "Quote"
- **Content Area:** A representative fictional quote that encapsulates the persona's attitude or a key challenge or goal.

*Example:* "I wish I had more time and design skills to make our posters truly stand out!!".

**Material:** Pre-designed persona templates and pens.

Avatar Name:		
Avatar	Role/Title:	Company Type:
	Brief Biography/Description:	
	Goals:	
	Challenges:	
Status	Opportunities:	
Age:	Available Resources & Tools:	
Location:	Feelings about Marketing:	
Education:	Hopes for a Design Intervention:	
Key Traits:		
Quote:		

Persona map for participants' use.

Avatar Name: e.g. "Creative Carl," "Budget Conscious Ben"		
Avatar	Role/Title: e.g. Artists Director, Company Manager, Marketing Volunteer	Company Type: e.g. Small Independent Troupe, Established Regional Company, Youth Dance Program
	Brief Biography/Description: A short paragraph summarizing who this persona is and their general involvement with marketing.	
	Goals: What specific objectives does this persona aim to achieve through their marketing and visual communication efforts for the dance company? E.g. "Increase ticket sales by 20% for next show," "Build stronger brand recognition," "Attract new, diverse audiences," "Improve funding proposal success rates". Examples: "Increase ticket sales by 20% for next show," "Build stronger brand recognition," "Attract new, diverse audiences," "Improve funding proposal success rates".	
	Challenges: What are the most significant difficulties, frustrations, or obstacles this persona encounters when creating and implementing marketing materials? E.g. "Lack of high-resolution images, difficulty hiring photographers," "Lack of specialized skills to create materials thoroughly, high cost for MPGs," "Keeping up with trends and high cost of media professionals/vendors," "Limited time, small budget, understanding target audience".	
Status	Opportunities: Based on the challenges, what are potential solutions, tools, or support systems that could help this persona? E.g. "A guide on how to take better photos with a smartphone," "Easy-to-use templates for social media that don't require advanced design skills," "A checklist for creating a basic marketing plan," "Access to a library of affordable or free stock images," "Step-by-step guides for creating marketing materials".	
Age: (e.g. 30s, 40s)	Available Resources & Tools: What tools, software, staff support, budget, or skills does this persona currently have access to for marketing? E.g. "Smartphone camera," "Camera," "Social media platforms (e.g., Instagram, Facebook tools)," "Adobe Creative Suite (Photoshop/Illustrator/Designer)," "A small volunteer team," "No dedicated marketing budget," "Word/Canva".	
Location: (e.g., Cape Town, Rural SA)	Feelings about Marketing: Describe the persona's current emotional state or attitude towards their marketing responsibilities. E.g. "Overwhelmed," "Stressed," "Excited by potential," "Hopeful for improvement," "Frustrated by limitations".	
Education: (e.g., Arts Degree, Business Diploma)	Hopes for a Design Intervention: What specific benefits or solutions does this persona hope to gain from a marketing design intervention or tool? E.g. "Easy-to-use templates," "Guidance on graphic design basics," "Tips for social media content creation," "Help with reaching diverse audiences effectively".	
Key Traits: (Adjectives describing their personality or working style related to marketing) (e.g., "Resourceful," "Time-strapped," "Creative," "Detail-oriented," "Tech-averse," "Rationalist")		
Quote: A representative fictional quote that encapsulates the persona's attitude or a key challenge/goal. E.g. "I wish I had more time and design skills to make our posters truly stand out".		

Persona map made for the projection.

### Short Break (5–10 min)

## 5. Aligning Questionnaire Data with Personas (Individual – 20 min)

**Objective:** Identify how the persona map aligns with the answers to the online questionnaire. Validate and enrich personas with real data.

**Activity:** Results of the questionnaire will be presented on cards, which can be placed as needed and used on the Giga-Map. Participants can create sticky notes and provide verbal comments, which will be used to build the Giga-Map in the next exercise, followed by a brief discussion on the findings.

**Material:** Persona maps, Questionnaire cards, sticky notes, markers



Sticky notes to be used.

Shaped sticky notes add an extra layer of meaning and visual organisation.

- **Speech Bubble Sticky Notes:** Ideal for capturing direct quotes, specific pain points, challenges, or "voice of the user" statements during the discussion. For prompts like "What are the biggest challenges you face when trying to market your performances?" or "What hasn't worked so well?".
- **Heart Sticky Notes:** Perfect for identifying "What has worked well for your marketing in the past?", positive experiences, desired outcomes, hopes, or elements participants love about specific marketing approaches.

- **Arrow Sticky Notes:** Useful for showing connections, causality, or progression between ideas on the Giga-Map and, for instance, linking a challenge (speech bubble) to a potential desired outcome (heart), or showing a flow from a current practice to a needed resource.
- **Square Sticky Notes:** Ideal for capturing factual data points, specific examples, numerical insights (if applicable from the questionnaire), or key themes that are more declarative than emotional or relational. Use them for prompts like "What specific tools are most commonly used?" or "What percentage of respondents mentioned budget constraints?" or "List the top 3 challenges identified in the questionnaire."

## 6. Giga-Mapping (Identify challenges, needs and opportunities) (Whole Group - 35 min)

**What is a giga-map?** Giga-mapping is an extensive mapping across multiple layers and scales, intending to investigate relations between seemingly separate categories, thereby providing boundary critiques on the conception and framing of systems.

**Objective:** To expose and analyse the challenges participants face as non-designers. Identify key relationships, complex patterns, and priority challenges.

To collaboratively explore the current marketing landscape for dance theatre companies and identify key challenges, resources, and existing practices. We'll use some common themes and challenges you shared in the questionnaire to kickstart our discussion.

**Activity:** The group will then discuss the presented findings and provide input, which will be recorded to map across the multiple layers of information and investigate the relationships between the created information.

### Prompts:

- What are the different roles involved in marketing within your company? (Informed by questionnaire data on roles)
- What types of marketing materials do you currently create or use? (e.g., posters, social media graphics, email newsletters) (Informed by questionnaire data on materials)
- What are the biggest challenges you face when trying to market your performances?
- What resources (time, budget, skills, tools) do you currently have available for marketing?
- What platforms (social media, print, email, etc.) do you use to reach your audience?
- What has worked well for your marketing in the past?
- What hasn't worked so well?

- What **outcomes do you hope to achieve** with your marketing efforts? (e.g., increased audience attendance, stronger brand recognition, reaching new audiences)
- Consider the size of your company – how does this impact your marketing? (Informed by questionnaire data on company size)

**Material:** Utilise a large piece of paper on the table, along with pens, Sharpies, colored sticky notes, etc.

**Note for Facilitator:**

An example of a digitised giga-map to show how highly nuanced visualisation can map a wicked problem in all its complexity.

Participants need to write clearly when capturing ideas and thoughts so that they can transcribe them for the giga-map.

**Short Break (5–10 min)**

**7. Ideation Phase: (Individual – pairs/group - 40 min) Ideation Activity Breakdown: Step 1 (10 min), Step 2 (15 min), Step 3 (15 min).**

**Objective:** To transition from identifying marketing challenges to brainstorming tangible ideas and solutions for inclusion in the design intervention.

In this section, we'll move from understanding the problems to exploring possible solutions. Let's use the challenge areas we identified and prioritised during the Giga-Mapping session as the starting point for our brainstorming.

**Activity:**

**Step 1: Challenge Selection (10 min)**

Each participant chooses *one* key challenge from the Giga-Map that resonates with them or their context.

**Step 2: Idea Storming (15 min)**

Participants brainstorm potential ways to *solve* the selected challenge in pairs or small groups. Prompt them to think about:

- Existing strategies they've tried
- Tools or resources they wish they had
- What a non-designer could easily use
- Inspirations from other industries (e.g. music, film, education)

Use the "**How Might We...**" question format to reframe problems into possibilities, e.g.:

- "How might we create low-cost but engaging marketing visuals with no design team?"
- "How might we make creating social media content faster and easier?"
- "How might we make complex marketing concepts or tools simple and actionable for someone without a design background?"

## How might we...



The image shows four identical horizontal rectangular boxes stacked vertically. Each box is filled with horizontal lines, suggesting a space for writing or drawing. These boxes are intended for participants to write their ideas in response to the questions listed above.

How might we pages to be used.

### Step 3: Share & Cluster Ideas (Group - 15 min)

Each group shares 1–2 promising ideas. These are written on large cards or sticky notes and placed on a table. Similar ideas are clustered to start identifying potential sections of the future design intervention.

**Materials:** Pens, sticky notes, large idea cards, markers, poster paper.

### 8. Define Design Intervention Elements (Whole group - 25 min)

**Objective:** To begin shaping what the design intervention might include based on the ideas brainstormed.

**Activity:** The facilitator presents this question:

- **If we had to walk away today with a basic outline of design intervention, what would the essential building blocks be?**

Prompt participants to discuss and define:

- **Sections or themes** (e.g. "Audience Templates," "Quick Content Hacks," "DIY Design Tips")
- **Formats** (e.g. printable guides, templates, mobile-accessible, Canva-based resources)

**Support needed** (e.g. tutorial videos, peer examples, glossary)

**Objective:**

- Provides concrete inspiration for participants.
- Sparks new ideas and possibilities.
- It helps to bridge the gap between abstract ideas and tangible solutions.
- Allowing participants to visualise the design intervention's potential.

**Define Design Intervention Elements:**

When discussing design intervention formats, show examples of different types of resources:

- A printed guide layout.
- A screenshot of a mobile-friendly website.
- A video tutorial interface.

All ideas are noted visibly and used as a base for your design intervention structure prototype in Workshop 2.

**Material:** Sticky notes, pens/markers, large paper

**Agenda Snapshot**

SESSION	ACTIVITY	TIME	PURPOSE
1	Welcome & Purpose	10 min	Set context
2	Icebreaker – Your Marketing Story	10 min	Build trust and shared understanding
3	Questionnaire Findings	3 min	Share questionnaire results
4	User/Role-Based Mapping Persona	30 min	Understand user types, pain points and goals
<b>Break 5 – 10 mins</b>			
5	Aligning Questionnaire Data with Personas	20 min	Connect real data with personas
6	Giga-Mapping	35 min	Identify and prioritise opportunities, needs and challenges
<b>Break 5 – 10 mins</b>			

7	Ideation Phase	40 min	Brainstorm and cluster intervention ideas
8	Define Design Intervention Elements	25 min	Shape the initial structure for the intervention

**Facilitator Notes:**

- Maintain a **neutral role**, guiding discussion rather than leading it.
- Encourage **collaboration and open conversation**.
- Document all ideas with **photos, notes, and voice recordings**

How does the workshop align with the questionnaire response?

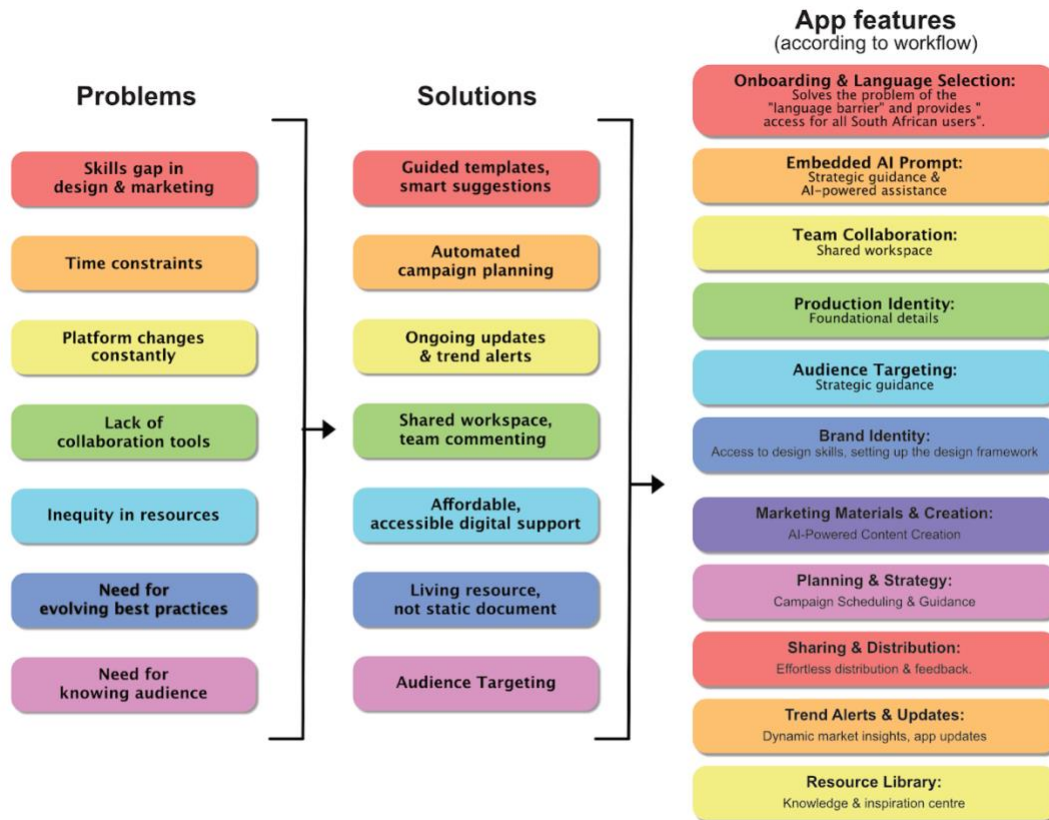
- **Participant Roles & Company Sizes:** The workshop incorporates prompts in the Giga Mapping activity to explore the various roles within dance theatre companies (e.g., Artistic Director, Managing Director) and different company sizes, both of which were detailed in the questionnaire.
- **Tools & Software:** The workshop acknowledges the use of specific tools and software reported in the questionnaire, such as social media platforms and Adobe Creative Suite.
- **Marketing Materials:** The workshop's focus on marketing materials aligns with the questionnaire's questions about the types of materials companies create (e.g., posters, social media posts, email newsletters).
- **Benchmarks for Success:** The workshop touches on benchmarks for successful marketing design, which were explored in the questionnaire (e.g., audience engagement, branding, accessible design).
- **Design Intervention Needs:** The workshop's "Build Your Ideal Design Intervention" activity includes categories that emphasise needs frequently mentioned in the questionnaire, such as graphic design basics, social media content creation, and funding proposal guidance.

### Addendum 3: Online prototype testing guide

#### Session Overview (5 min)

- Welcome, purpose (“test UI clarity and flow”)
- Logistics: “Session is one hour, we’ll share tasks, you think aloud, no wrong answers.”
- Consent reminder (recording, notes)

#### Recap: Co-design Workshop



#### Welcome & UI Primer (7 min)

##### Welcome & Purpose

Thank you for joining. Today, we’re looking at the app’s user interface, everything you see on screen and interact with: buttons, menus, icons, labels, colours and layouts.

**Our goal is to find spots that feel confusing, hidden or unintuitive, so we can improve clarity and accessibility.**

#### What Is “UI”? (1 min)

User Interface = everything you click, tap or read on screen:

- Visual elements: buttons (e.g. “Sign In”), arrows, icons (eye-toggle, accessibility).
- Navigation: menus, carousels (“Select your language” with left/right arrows).
- Forms: text inputs, checkboxes, dropdowns, maps.

- Feedback: disabled states, highlighted selections, confirmation buttons.

### **Quick Screen Walkthrough (3 min)**

- Share three static screenshots in sequence (via screen share):
- Language Selector (magenta banner, sign-language clip).
- Login Screen (email/password fields, eye icon, “Forgot Password?”).
- Audience Setup (checkboxes, map pin, transportation and accessibility icons).

### **Think-Aloud & Ground Rules (2 min)**

- Encourage: “Speak your thoughts—what you expect each icon or label to do.”
- Remind: “We’ll move quickly—no more than 6 minutes per task—so let’s dive in.”

### **Task Scenarios (40 min total)**

**Perform each task aloud. We’ll pause for follow-ups after each.**

#### **Task 1: Change Language**

Action: Scroll the language carousel, select a new language, and tap Confirm.

UI Focus: Carousel arrows; “Select your language” banner; Confirm button.

Follow-up questions:

- Which element made it clear how to scroll and choose?
- Did the person signing add confidence or create a distraction?

#### **Task 2: Sign In / Registration**

Action: On the login screen, sign in with test credentials. Note the eye-toggle and “Forgot Password?” link.

UI Focus: Input fields; eye-icon; call-to-action buttons (“Sign In” / “Register”).

Follow-up questions:

- Were labels and icons self-explanatory?
- ◦ How would you improve any unclear element?

#### **Task 3: Define Audience Demographics**

Action: Navigate to Know Your Audience, select age group and gender, place the map pin, then Confirm Venue.

UI Focus: Radio buttons vs. checkboxes; map interaction; Confirm Venue button.

Follow-up questions::

- Which controls felt intuitive or confusing?
- Did you know how to finalise your choices?
-

#### **Task 4: Select Accessibility & Transport**

Action: Choose transport icons (Bus, Taxi, Train) and toggle visual or hearing assistance. Tap Save.

UI Focus: Icon clarity; multi-select behavior; save feedback.

Follow-ups:

- What did each icon communicate?
- Would you add labels or tooltips?

#### **Task 5: Invite Collaborator**

Action: In the Add Collaborators form, enter name, email, and role, then send invite.

UI Focus: Form fields; dropdowns; Send Invite feedback.

Follow-ups:

- Did the form layout make sense?
- What extra field or instruction would you include?

#### **Task 6: Visual Design Probes**

##### **Colour & Contrast**

- How do these colours feel? Too bright/dull?
- Is the contrast between text and background sufficient?
- Does the primary action button stand out clearly?

##### **Imagery & Iconography**

- Do the photos/illustrations (e.g. sign-language clip, dancer shots) feel relevant and expressive?
- Do the icons (transport, accessibility, edit tools) all share a consistent style?
- Which image or icon felt confusing or out of place?

##### **Typography & Readability**

- Are font sizes and weights easy to read at a glance?
- Does the hierarchy (headings vs. body text) guide your eye effectively?
- Any text that felt cramped or too spaced out?

##### **Overall Look & Feel**

- Does the UI's aesthetic match your expectations for a dance-theatre/design tool?
- How would you describe the mood or "personality" of these screens?
- If you could tweak one visual element (colour, image, icon, font), what would it be and why?

#### **Overall Impressions (3 min)**

1. Which UI feature did you like best, and why?
2. What frustrated you most about the interface?
3. If you could add one micro-interaction or helper text, what would it be?

### Probing Questions When Silence Strikes

1. What's on your mind right now as you look at this screen?
2. Can you walk me through what you're thinking?
3. What did you expect to happen when you clicked that?
4. Is anything about this screen catching your attention?
5. What would you try next if you were on your own?
6. How does this compare to other apps you've used?
7. What do you think this icon/button is for?
8. If you had to describe this step to a friend, what would you say?
9. Is there anything here that feels unclear or surprising?
10. What would make you feel more confident using this feature?

## ANNEXURE

### 1. Declaration of generative AI use

In accordance with the CPUT Plagiarism Policy, the Student Rules and Regulations, and the principles in the CPUT Student AI Practice Guide, I declare the following:

I have not used any generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, etc.) during the development of this thesis/dissertation.

I have used generative AI tools, as detailed below.

### 2. Nature and extent of AI use

Please tick all that apply and briefly describe the purpose of use:

- Idea generation or topic refinement: \_\_\_\_\_
- Outlining or structuring chapters: \_\_\_\_\_  Drafting sentences or paragraphs: \_\_\_\_\_
- Summarising or paraphrasing content: \_\_\_\_\_
- Grammar or language correction: Sentence & spelling correction \_\_\_\_\_
- Citation or referencing assistance: check for correction \_\_\_\_\_  Data visualisation or image generation: \_\_\_\_\_  Code generation or computational assistance: \_\_\_\_\_  Other (specify): \_\_\_\_\_

### 3. Integrity and institutional compliance

- I confirm that any content generated or influenced by AI tools has been critically reviewed, edited, and integrated by me, and that the final submitted work reflects

- my own academic judgement and intellectual contribution.
- I understand that presenting material created by an external system – such as a generative AI tool – as my own, without acknowledgement or review, may be considered a breach of academic integrity and could constitute plagiarism.
  - I take full responsibility for the originality, accuracy and academic integrity of this work.

#### **4. Acknowledgement of institutional policy**

I understand that:

- The CPUT Plagiarism Policy prohibits presenting the work of others as one's own without proper attribution, including the use of external assistance.
- The Student Rules and Regulations require that all students conduct themselves with academic honesty and uphold the values of integrity and accountability in all assessments.
- Failure to uphold these standards may lead to formal disciplinary procedures.

#### **5. Supervisor awareness**

I have discussed the use of generative AI with my supervisor(s).

My supervisor has not raised any objection to its appropriate and disclosed use in this research.

#### **6. Record of use**

I confirm that I have retained documentary evidence of my use of AI tools (e.g., prompts, generated outputs, draft versions) and will make this available if required by the university.

Student signature and date: 4 February 2026

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'M. J. J.', written over a horizontal line.