Embracing Digital Transformation (EDT)

*How the Creative and Recreation Sectors
of Aotearoa applied new digital delivery models
due to COVID-19*

2022

Kia toi te mahi hangarau
Kia toi te mahi auaha
Kia toi te ira tāngata
Ko ngā toi Māori ka puta.
E kōkō ko Toi Mai ē!

Nā tō rourou, nā taku rourou, ka ora ai te iwi
With your food basket and my food basket the people will thrive

Executive Summary

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

In 2020, the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) established the WDC/TITO COVID-19 Response Projects Fund to 'enable Transitional Industry Training Organisations (TITOs) and Workforce Development Councils (WDCs) to lead COVID-19 response projects that support the recovery of industry from the impacts of COVID-19.'

Toi Mai utilised the TEC fund to undertake research on digital transformation within five Creative, Cultural, Recreation and Technology (CCRT) sectors:

- Comedy;
- Personal Training & Fitness Instruction;
- Dance Instruction;
- Kapa Haka; and
- Polyfest.

The sectors chosen reflect a breadth of CCRT, with a range of focuses, from the singular event of Polyfest, the businesses of Personal Training and Dance Instruction, the sole-trader focused Comedy sector, and whānau and rohe focused Kapa Haka. During the pandemic, these sectors all experienced significant industry disruption. Live, face-to-face and in-person participation or performance was not possible, and as a result some people working in these industries adapted and moved to online modes of delivery.

The report sets out insights and opinions provided by those interviewed, and the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and risks of an online practice. As well as seeking the experience of each sector, the report sets out the areas of shared commonalities across sectors. Toi Mai interviewed people in three sectors:

Comedy, Personal Training & Fitness Instruction, and Dance Instruction. Toi Mai commissioned Te Amokura to interview practitioners in the Kapa Haka & Polyfest sectors.[1] Recommendations for future action are provided below.

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1 Findings from Te Amokura are incorporated within this report under these sectors, and in Aronga Mātua- Priorities. Their full report is included as Appendix Two.

SCOPE

This report provides the findings of qualitative research into the digital and online experience of those working and making content in the sectors of Comedy, Dance Instruction, Personal Training & Fitness Instruction, and Kapa Haka & Polyfest during the COVID-19 pandemic, beginning in March 2020, through subsequent lockdowns and alert level changes (including mask mandates in facilities and venues and managed isolation), through to September 2022. The focus of this report is on the experience of people:

- who were already practising in these sectors prior to the pandemic:
- who chose to deliver original visual and audio content via internet platforms, for example Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, etc created in Aotearoa New Zealand;
- whose primary provision prior to the pandemic was face-to-face/in-person;
- who developed or extended their online provision through the pandemic; and
- who were still practising in these sectors at the time of the qualitative research being undertaken.

INTERVIEWS

Most participants were interviewed one-on-one, aside from one wānanga interview for creators in the Kapa Haka sector, three one-to-two participant interviews for co-managed dance studios, and one two-to-one interviews in Personal Training & Fitness Instruction.

All participants signed an information release agreement for this project, with the proviso the content of their interviews would remain anonymous. Quotes in this report have been edited for brevity, clarity and anonymity.

53 interviews of 59 persons were undertaken, comprised of: 15 people in Comedy, 12 in Personal Training & Fitness Instruction, 15 in Dance Instruction, 12 in Kapa Haka, and five in Polyfest.

- 63% interviewees identified as women, 34% identified as men (3% prefer not to identify).
- The largest age bracket was those aged 31–35 years (26%).
- Multiple participants identified as more than one ethnicity.
- Māori (16 participants) and Pākehā (30 participants) were the largest two groups.
- 45% participants identified as sole trader/freelancer, 18% as business owner, 15% as employee, and there were a range of other responses from participants that sat within multiple employment scenarios.

More information is provided in Appendix Three: Interview Data.

OBSERVATIONS BY SECTOR

Comedy

Whilst perspectives and experiences in the Comedy sector were varied, a common thread was that many made content online as a creative output, because their usual creative outlets were unavailable or at greater risk of cancellation during COVID-19. Building a brand and profile online can have significant benefits to comics, including increased ticket sales and increased income via marketing and sponsorship as well as a sense of career autonomy. However, many were aware their career may now be negatively impacted due to a lack of interest in developing digital content, or skill deficiency in the online world.

Personal Training

The common story of the Personal Training sector was of small-business survival during the COVID-19 pandemic and client retention. Perhaps due to the number of sole-traders, and fewer overheads for those working in the sector, there was notable exploration of growth, with some looking at how they scale their business, or deliver to a global niche, or utilise the marketing reach of online.

Dance Instruction

With a focus on Dance Instruction specifically, interviews with this sector also told a story of small-business survival during the COVID-19 pandemic. There were stark differences between those primarily teaching adult students, and those primarily teaching children. Switching to an online delivery model was a necessity to retain clientele and ensure there was a business to return to once in-person delivery was possible. Many studios still have lower student numbers than those prior to COVID-19 and those studios with children students in particular still haven't recovered to pre COVID-19 numbers.

Kapa Haka and Polyfest

In preparation for Te Matatini and the Auckland Secondary Schools Māori & Pacific Islands Cultural Festival (Polyfest) competitions, rōpū moved rehearsals online via a number of platforms. While technical difficulties abounded, including Wi-Fi connection, device availability, some without technical skills, internet lag and music issues, the most significant impact was the loss of wairua in rehearsal and whakawhanaungatanga.

The Report

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Section One:

SUMMARY OBSERVATIONS ACROSS SECTORS

Across all industries, there was a common thread that online activity had increased over the last three years, and in many cases COVID-19 provided the impetus to upgrade software, implement new systems, or learn and start using online tools that had not been explored previously.

I think COVID gave us a real clear reason to go, okay, what are the tools that exist? And how do we utilise them to their fullest?

Competency and confidence working online

Competency, attitude and interest were strong defining factors concerning the level of success participants had online. It was seldom to do with previous technical knowledge, and more clearly about the mindset of those that saw this as an opportunity to learn more in a particular field. While not specifically questioned, it did not seem as though participants have changed their mindset regarding competency and interest during the course of the last three years.

Many were nervous too, or simply didn't want to engage online, and some of them were worried they might get left behind. Others were worried it might change their career away from the one they want to be building.

Audiences and platforms
In a rapidly changeable environment of social media platforms, it is advisable to think about what audience a content creator wants to reach, and how the content creator needs to grow and activate that audience. Each platform has its own unwritten rules of engagement and algorithm preferences, and content creators are more likely to have success if they understand and make content specific for the platform.

Currently:
- TikTok introduces a much wider audience, allowing content creators to engage with new people, and build an audience on a global scale.
- Instagram tends to lead to more tangible benefits here in New Zealand of job offers and ad deals.

Platforms and the pace of change
Working online is still a difficult prospect for many. There is difficulty in chasing the zeitgeist, platform rules can change, algorithms require understanding, and trends come and go, often quickly. For the most part, those working online have not considered issues such as 'vendor capture' in the context of evolving platforms, in which a creator becomes reliant on one platform.

Algorithms steer audiences to content to those most likely to engage with it. Sometimes this content gets served to the opposite audience it is intended for, as algorithms prioritise engagement, especially when considering topics of gender, race, and politics, for example.

Adverse impacts of social media
There is a vocal minority that dislikes social media regardless of platform, spread across age groups, but particularly strong amongst people aged 35 and under. There were feelings that social media is causing harm to youth, is adversely impacting attention spans, and has negative impacts on mental health.

Video on Demand and live streaming
Video on Demand was a convenient way for makers and audience to engage in both producing and consuming material, in their own time, but live content was more likely to build a community and momentum. Depending on the content being made, it was felt that video on demand had to compete with a global market whereas live content was more local, and focused on community and engagement.

Zoom
Despite technical innovations over the last three years, respondents have still not experienced/found a platform made for singing or dancing in mind, and lagging music remains a significant issue for many. Zoom was the chosen platform for most conference platform needs, across all sectors, to facilitate live gathering.

Authenticity

One theme touched upon by every sector was authenticity. No one specifically defined the meaning of authenticity, but it was treated as a panacea, something to aspire towards, and something those achieving success strived to maintain. In contrast, the idea of being inauthentic held a stigma, and was to be avoided.

It is clear that people want to make content that feels authentic to them, however they might define authenticity, and that most people believe that audiences can tell the difference between authentic and inauthentic content, and believe that an audience would only engage if the creator was considered authentic.

Audience and community

While the terms audience and community can be used interchangeably, considering the words community and audience as two different things could be beneficial for those working in an online space. Sometimes this difference is clear in the number of followers someone might have, but it can also depend upon what platform is used.

Community:
- Starts off as friends and family and grows to be fans known to the content creator.
- There is direct end personal communication between content creator and the person consuming.
- At the moment, Instagram is generally more aligned towards building community.

- A community is more likely to consider themselves a participant and can be activated.
- A community expects more personal contact.
- The content creator is both member of, and head of, the community, so the community can exist and engage without the content creator present, but the community will look to the content creator to moderate.
- The content creator can set and enforce the rules of engagement of a community.

A community can be transformed into an audience, but it requires a transition of expectations.

Many people said they started off engaging with all their direct messages (DMs) and comments, and nurturing that form of engagement, but if their following grew, or they didn't want to engage that way anymore, then there was a feeling of pressure to keep going, or fear that there would be negative reactions if they change.

Audience:
- An audience could be considered wider or broader than a community, and anonymous.
- There is indirect and general communication between the content creator and audience.
- TikTok is generally more aligned to building audience.
- An audience is more inclined to comprise viewers and be passive.
- An audience is surprised and delighted by contact.

- An audience is more inclined to behave as if the content creator isn't there, and talk about them, rather than to them.
- An audience is more likely to engage in negative feedback than a community.

If a content creator has a wide audience, a community can be activated within that audience, such as through signing up for a newsletter and/ or exclusive content. Likewise, fan clubs and private groups help activate community through a closer association or contact with the content creator, and with a group of like-minded people.

Niche audiences

The global reach of digital platforms enables audiences to be attracted on a global scale through identifying, and micro-targeting, a niche audience. This reach is particularly applicable for many marginalised and/or minority communities, such as LGBTQI+, ethnicity, neurodiversity, and so forth. Those from minority and marginalised communities working online indicated a strong ability to find and nurture their own audience. Many conversations with those interviewed touched on the capacity of digital platforms to provide access to audiences without having to go through perceived tastemakers and gatekeepers.

Financial Considerations

Many had experiences with a shifting economy in this new online environment. The cost of operating online added new expenses for subscriptions, new tech gear and data boosts, but the payment for their

services being provided online was often under pressure, and often less.

There were exceptions to this, with some maintaining their rates, and others discovering new income streams.

Financially, it is clear there can be real benefit in working online. Building a following, and building a recognisable profile, can lead to increased income and significant deals that aid the building of a portfolio career.

Mental health and wellbeing

For many, both creator and consumer, the ability to engage online when in-person contact was not available was considered a positive thing for mental health and wellbeing. Most spoken to had a keen understanding of, or were learning, how best to manage their own mental health and wellbeing when working online.

Content creators are advised to set appropriate boundaries in order to manage mental health in the online space. Offering performance/content to an audience/consumer can lead to a large volume of critiques and worse. Content creators need to consider when and how it is best to engage with such commentary (if at all), especially when trying to build a profile.

Technical advice and lessons

Those online have gathered a large number of technical tips, big and small, in order to work with more ease. Based on interviewee feedback, it

would be advantageous for peak bodies to assist their sector by gathering and publishing more technical advice from their members.

Technical issues

The most common issue was internet connectivity and Wi-Fi speed. This issue was especially felt by those using video conferencing tools and uploading video.

Risks of working online

Working online exposes new risks. Some of those most frequently cited included:
- trolls, abuse and negative feedback – many spoken to felt they were minimally impacted by this behaviour, but it was experienced;
- unsolicited engagement and parasocial relationships – these were common, and complex to manage as many times the audience was engaging with enthusiasm, but overstepping;
- content creator burnout – a common fear especially articulated by those not currently making content;
- a fear for many was working with a brand that was poorly aligned with the content creator's brand, and receiving negative feedback or loss of reputation. For many content creators, who often operate as sole traders and thus carry financial risks with losing work, it can be a challenge to know what partnerships best align;
- hybrid models of operating both in-person and online have eased the path out of lockdowns, but have created significantly more difficulty for many to deliver in-person and online at the same time; and

- the fairness of an online world, which is an issue for some: access to internet and devices, as well as access to time and physical and suitable space(s) to film within a house (especially during lockdowns), can be barriers for equitable engagement online.

Limitations of working online

Any content creators who had attempted to replicate a live activity, or remodel a live activity for an online context, were keenly aware of the limitations of this shift. The most frequently mentioned difficulty was that of sound quality and digital lag, and how these affect singing, dancing, performance and timing.

Online will never be the same

Overall, many of those who were interviewed intimated they were making the best of a bad situation. Switching to online delivery, online creativity and an online community was a necessity, and they learnt things along the way, but the value of their art form, or profession, comes from an in-person connection that an online connection simply cannot provide.

TECHNICAL LESSONS & ADVICE ACROSS SECTORS

A wide variety of technical lessons and advice were gathered from participants. Some pieces of advice contradict others, so the following serves as an example of what content creators and those delivering online could choose from as they plan. Such lessons and advice could be expanded further, by individual industries, to create guideline documents and good practice.

PLAN AHEAD

- Over prepare content/lesson plans – the speed can function differently online, so better to have a surplus of material
- Create rules of engagement for your participants
- Work out your key timings
- Consider a room monitor if you have a busy Zoom, and your focus can't be on late comers and questions
- Mark up your positions in relation to the camera so you're in the ideal spot in frame
- Consider everything that will be in frame- decorate your space appropriately
- Consider angles in advance – if you're doing movement, what is the ideal frame and angle for viewers to see what you are doing
- Consider what time of day to post/host/engage depending on your audience

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

- Mute all participants as a standard plan
- Ask that Zoom names are changed in advance according to what is appropriate
- Only let in participants with the correct naming
- Ask participants to log in 10min early
- Camera must be on to attend
- Set and enforce rules of timekeeping – e.g., you've got 30sec to introduce yourself before I mute you and move to the next person
- Enthusiastic participation of one person can derail the lesson plan for all people; consider using the chat window for engagement and questions, that you can chose when to interact with/ respond to
- Use focus mode when needed
- Ask kids to put their hand over camera when they need to ask a question

CREATING A BUZZ

- Record a lot of content in one sitting– then release clips over several weeks in the lead-up to an announcement or on-sale event
- Create event-viewing for the release of long form content (e.g., broadcast); plan for collaborators to be part of the event-viewing, comment and engage with collaborators and audience
- Social media posting performs best after dinner, and poorly on weekends
- Know what music is trending, what content is going viral.

PRESENTING/GOING LIVE

- Ensure you have stable internet – you might need to be wired
- Prepare scripting for yourself – dead air is noticeable, and you cannot work off the room the same as a live environment
- Have other devices/multiple screens so you can see chats and other functions
- Turn off Wi-Fi or notifications so you don't get alerts while presenting
- Algorithms on social media platforms favour Lives

LIGHT AND SOUND

- Check your light and audio quality in advance
- Get a microphone – any mic is better than using a laptop mic, especially if you are moving away from the laptop
- Pad the room with cushions and hang blankets if the sound is too bright and bouncing
- Consider a smaller room to get better audio; podcasts are often recorded in cupboards to get the best audio
- Consider natural lighting if possible
- If using lights, try playing with their positions; being lit from the side and from the front is often better than being lit from above or behind
- Use a combination of lighting angles to give you a 3d look on screen
- Try pointing a bright light at a wall that will then bounce onto you, rather than pointed straight at you
- Try out different bulbs
- Look at buying lighting diffusers, or try using baking paper or a scarf to diffuse light

FUTURE PROOF

- Archive/save your content on your own drives (not just the platforms it was shared via)
- Make notes and tag your saved content – you might be able to re-use it again, re-cut it for future compilation clips, or re-voice it as part of a different piece of content
- Save lesson plans and notes
- Think about materials you are using/creating that you could later re-purpose for an e-book or some other paid resource
- Action your online audience to join your newsletter, that way you have their email address and won't lose your audience to platform changes
- Check if you need to licence music before using – you don't want to lose the ability to use your content because you didn't licence music
- Consider purchasing production music instead of having to licence contemporary music
- Set and maintain boundaries for yourself of how to engage with people online, and how to look after your mental health

LEARN AND IMPROVE

- Social Media analytics can detail engagement and drop off, and you can amend your content to maximise
- Tech develops – if something seemed too difficult or the wrong fit when you first tried it – check again
- The internet is full of tips and instructions for all sorts of issues – use search engines to find your way through
- Make your own notes after sessions/lessons/performance – what can you improve upon for next time
- Enforce the rules you set for participants, add new rules if you need to

PHONE FILMING

- iPhones are currently considered the superior phone for filming, especially on particular platforms
- Consider whether filming landscape or portrait is best for your outputs; do you want to repurpose content onto reels?
- Consider if it's better to film landscape and then crop to suit the different platforms, rather than portrait which works best for some but doesn't work across all

ARTISTIC TIPS

- Make content that suits the format/platform. Don't try to replicate live, or assume content that works on one platform will work on all of them
- Agree to be a guest on other people's platforms/shows/events
- Remember not all content is for all people, it's ok if someone doesn't like yours
- Consider eye-line to the camera in what you want to communicate

TECH GEAR

Consider purchasing/upgrading
- Phone (Apple vs Android)
- Microphones
- Tripod
- Ring light
- Diffuser light
- Earbuds and Apple Watch that allow music and mic control without having to return to laptop
- Buy snap cam/ mirror flip add-ons for teaching movement

BENEFITS OF ONLINE

Despite many obstacles and issues, and during COVID-19 in particular, it is clear that there are many benefits to be gained working online.

Retention of clients

One of the primary reasons, for Personal Training, and Dance Instruction in particular, to shift their delivery online was to retain clientele, and many felt like they had been able to achieve that to varying degrees.

Progress existing goals

Whilst online was a poor substitute for in-person rehearsals, those in Kapa Haka, Polyfest and Dance Instruction all found a way to continue rehearsing via online platforms. The standard achieved was not 'competition-ready' but did mean the participants had progressed during the times they could not meet in person.

Financial gains

It is clear there can be real benefit in working online – building a following, building a recognisable profile can lead to significant benefits that have a positive financial influence on the sustainability of individual careers, while also allowing a development of complementary skills that will have benefit to the portfolio career of any creative, and many small businesses.

Income opportunities are heightened through these online platforms, as brands seek endorsement and full advertising campaigns created and posted by content creators with their own audience. At this point in time, this operating environment is without

regulations and expectations, as content creators strike their own deals based on their own rationale, and this seems to have a large degree of variance across sectors, and individuals.

Real world impact

Working online and building a profile online can lead to increased opportunities face-to-face and in-person. For some in the Dance Instruction and Personal Training spaces, for example, they attracted new clientele ready to join when in-person was available again, and comedians have also seen online engagement result in ticket sales for in-person events. Online communities can be called into action for real world impact.

Diversity of voices/level playing field

Many conversations touched on the digital space providing a platform, and access to the audience, without having to go through tastemakers and gatekeepers. In turn, this leads to more diversity of voices, and a more level playing field that allows for and greater autonomy of creative and career.

Building your own audience

This lack of gatekeepers, or tastemakers, meant that content creators feel they can access their own audience and build an audience in ways they haven't been able to in the real world. Online allows a speed and ease of sharing, with minimal barriers to access, that has enabled many content creators to connect with their community and build their audience. This applied across marginalised and minority communities, as well as various niche speciality interests.

Digital Communities

Further to the diversity of voices and building an audience, the online space has allowed for digital communities to be created and allow content creators and consumers to find their communities in a global context. Many spoken with referenced overseas content creators when citing their influences and aspirations, and many had found digital spaces had allowed them to connect with these other content creators in ways that would be unlikely in a real-world setting.

Autonomy of career

During a time where much felt out of their control, those that really applied themselves in the online world felt like they had achieved more autonomy in their career, more ability to positively influence the opportunities that came to them. The feeling of autonomy and self-control was powerful for these people. They felt they had opened up new ways of working, new ways of creating, and new income streams.

Maintain community and whanaungatanga

Many spoken with touched on the personal elements of their COVID-19 journey, and that online had allowed them to stay connected to their family and community, which had been invaluable for their wellbeing. For many in the Kapa Haka space, the first forays online were focused on whanaungatanga rather than rehearsal, and many set up tuakana-teina models to help whānau get online.

Going Global

Digital platforms have given New Zealanders accessibility to those who wouldn't have been exposed to it in the past. For Kapa Haka fans around the world, it's access to their favourite rōpū, waiata and Haka. For many Pacific peoples, it meant being able to tune in for Polyfest from across Te Moana-Nui-a-Kiwa. For Personal Training and Dance, a digital economy means the opportunity to build a niche but global business. For Comedy, this means the ability to build an international tour, with platform analytics knowledge in advance of where audiences were viewing from. For many New Zealanders overseas it's another way to connect back home.

Growth opportunities

Some have recognised the growth opportunities of the online space and the weightless economy, and responded with global reach ambitions, or diversified income stream plans. For those that build profile and brand online, they are exploring the growth opportunities and financial gains available to them.

ARONGA MĀTUA - PRIORITIES

The following priorities have been identified by those interviewed for this project. Some of the priorities are sector-specific whereas others are, also, high level recommendations from insights gathered across sectors.

1 Upskill & Reskill. Provide opportunities for upskilling/reskilling for creators to embrace digital delivery of their work, to learn content creation, particularly mid-career creators who have beginner and immediate-level digital competencies. Specifically:

- Commission funded sector-led and peak body-led upskilling and re-skilling workshops and materials, which will allow development and dissemination across sectors of good practice. For example, the New Zealand Comedy Trust has piloted workshops, such as the Comedy Sandpit conference in October 2022, for sharing knowledge within the comedy sector around online practice and brand development. With further funding support these workshops could be developed into a series, run throughout New Zealand, and with some specifically pitched toward mid-career and established career practitioners that have limited digital skills, including, for example, music, stage, and dance.
- Commission funded sector-led and peak body-led capture and publication of technical lessons and advice specific to their sector.
- Toi Mai also recommends developing – in consultation with peak bodies – industry-specific digital skills for embedding in qualifications, such as skills standards and learning modules, including website and social media presence, online marketing, niche and micro marketing, guidelines for wellbeing working online.

2 Further Research. Toi Mai recommends commissioning a wider survey, including other arts industries, including quantitative data gathering, particularly around technology, devices, internet connectivity and access, and gather further qualitative insights,

including best practice developed for Māori by Māori and for Pacific by Pacific for performing and distributing indigenous arts online.

3 Develop online capability for Kapa Haka and Polyfest. Specifically:
- Provide equitable funding towards Te Matatini. Increased funding for Te Matatini – comparable to other national organisations – will enable growth and innovation in Kapa Haka, particularly for digital expertise, provision, performance and dissemination online.
- Continually invest in Digital Infrastructure. For whānau, hapū, iwi and Pacific communities, in particular, providing equitable access to internet connection, hardware and devices, coupled with digital skills training will raise the knowledge, awareness and understanding of using digital mediums.
- Commission a wānanga process through Te Matatini to discuss the security and future of Kapa Haka in regard to online, social media, and content sharing. This will enable marae and rohe to define how they want to protect their taonga moving forward, and ensure Te Matatini are aware of what each rohe want.
- Continually invest into Māori & Pacific Peoples' agencies and practitioners. Establish a new appropriation fund focused on growing the cultural and creative sector.

4 Cross-sector collaboration. Responding to the speed of change, and the vastness of opportunity online, the Comedy sector would like to work with partners across other sectors to host a series of monthly conversations, each with a different theme to discuss and workshop, for example crisis management preparation for an online issue, vendor capture and how to mitigate it, live-streaming live performance, fostering community and building engagement. Each monthly conversation would have a panel of guests from different sectors with expertise relevant to the subjects, that would encourage sharing and learning from a range of sources beyond the Arts.

5 Education campaign. Develop an advertising campaign that highlights some well-known content creators and influencers to discuss both positives and negatives of their online career. This would serve to inform, and outline some key skills and competencies required, for young people considering content creation and social influencing as career options.

6 Toi Mai recommends this research is socialised across creative training providers. Some students are already actively developing their online profiles alongside their training in different performing arts and creative careers. Tutors of these sectors may be less aware of how significant a tool this will be for future creatives. Networking events of training providers could be hosted in key locations, with a creative practitioner engaged to speak about the opportunities and benefits an online profile can bring to their career.
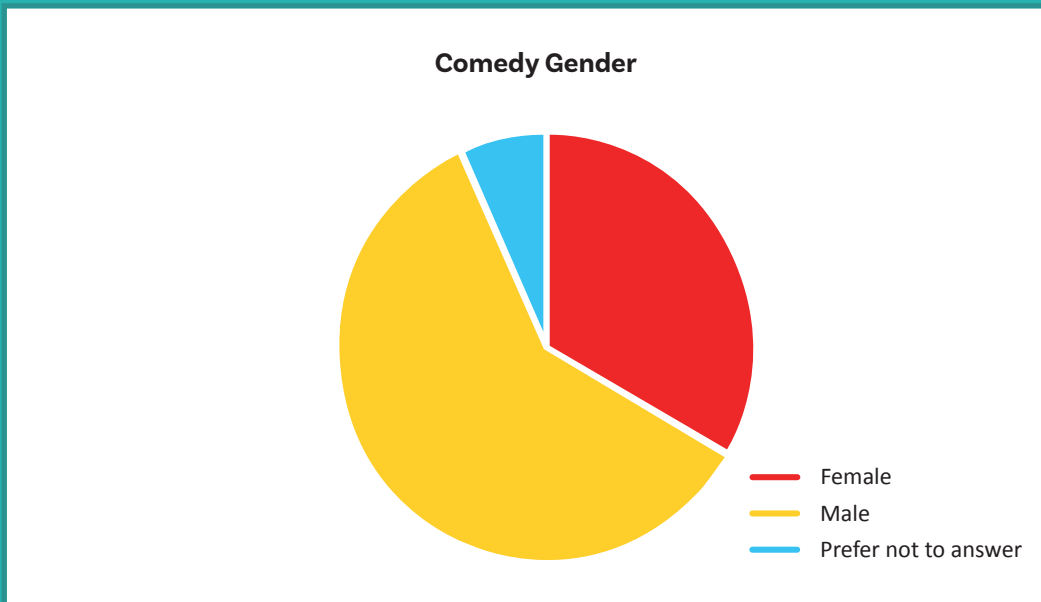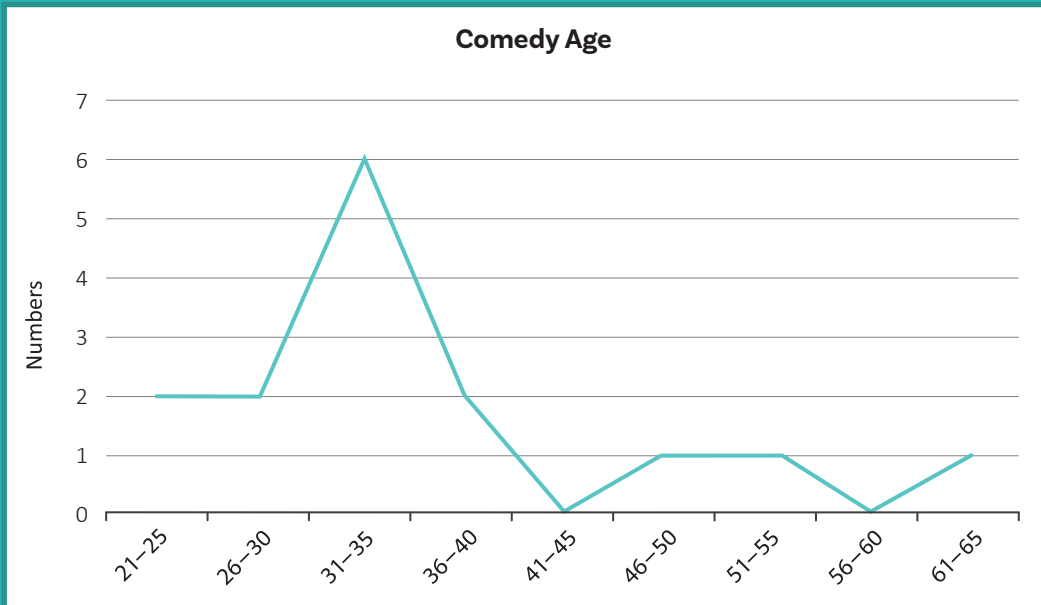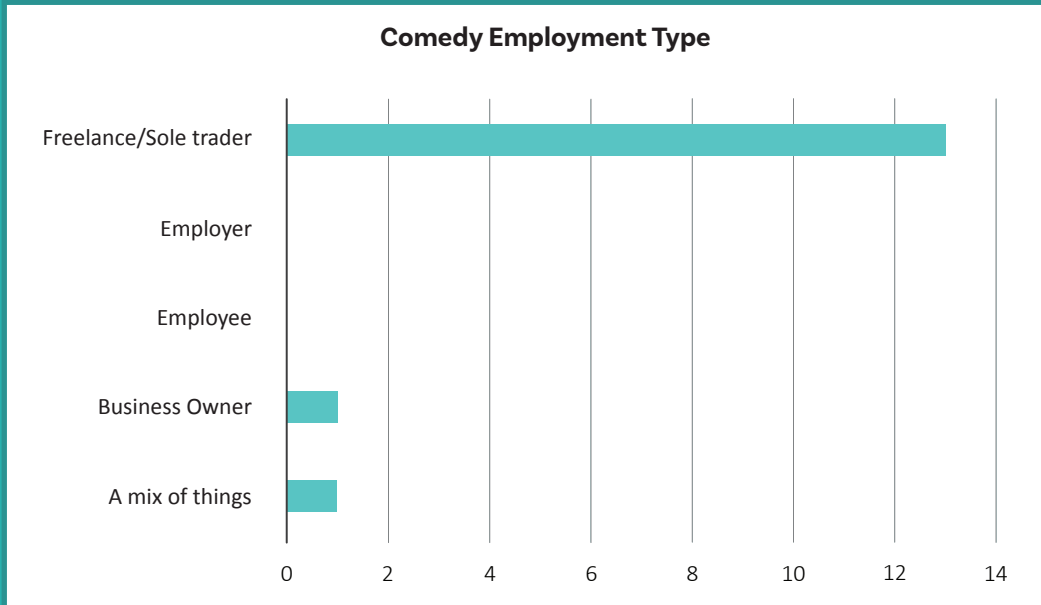
Section Two:
Observations by each sector

2.1 Comedy

Another gain is more opportunity for work. Another gain is brand/name recognition, so I am now being recognised by some … members of the community in New Zealand. Which leads to … ticket conversion and sales. I have audiences that are like, I saw you on TikTok. I saw your speech on TV. Like that all kind of culminated to a real-world impact.

15 professional comedians, aged between 21 and 65, were interviewed, with a slight majority of male and Pākehā participants. Geographically, participants were mainly based in Auckland, as is reflective of the New Zealand comedy industry.[2]

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2 The focus was on comedians who mainly work with live audiences in-person who developed bespoke digital content during the pandemic.

Comedy Employment Type

Employment Type	Value
Freelance/Sole trader	13
Employer	0
Employee	0
Business Owner	1
A mix of things	1

Comedy Age

Age	Numbers
21–25	2
26–30	2
31–35	6
36–40	2
41–45	0
46–50	1
51–55	1
56–60	0
61–65	1

Comedy Gender

- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to answer

The live performance and events industries were some of the first impacted by COVID-19, with many events cancelled prior to the implementation of Alert Levels. The shutdown of the sector meant the loss of income was felt immediately.

And I think what really hit, so first of all, that was the financial thing of 'Jesus, how do I buy food?' But then there was the total existential angst of how long is this for? Will we ever do stand-up comedy again?

It was both comforting and terrifying to feel the industry globally was in the same fight as us. The more we understood COVID, and how that specifically pertained to live performance there was a genuine concern, at the time, that industrially, this could cripple the live performing arts to an unrecoverable state.

Over the course of two and a half years of COVID-19, digital experimentation and exploration increased across the sector. We found that even those that initially had no interest in engaging online, found themselves doing more than usual, or, upon reflection, having done more than they had realised at the time.

The Comedy sector is considering deeply and holistically the opportunities and risks associated with the digital/social media space. The high-profile successes of a few in the Comedy sector have meant those spoken with felt the subject of going online is one being considered widely across the whole sector, whether they engage or create for online, or are opposed to it.

There are substantial conversations happening within the sector regarding content creation versus influencing, about developing an online voice and persona, building and protecting a brand, about digital competency and accessibility, and about the increasing relevance of the digital space having real-life influence.

By and large, being active online for comedians fell into three main categories:

1. The necessity of working in an online format in order to make money and pay the bills (for example, a Zoom stand-up show for a corporate client, conference work or a performance set).

    First and foremost, our reason for engaging online was financial need. So, the psychological benefit of keeping busy was sort of an afterthought. It was an added benefit, but it also came with an added stress

2. The creative desire to make something during a period of time when normal performance opportunities were unavailable, or less available.

    I can get very depressed when I'm bored. I don't cope well. … So, I just wanted to create a thing that would distract both me and also give other people a better creative motivation. Even when something's silly and frivolous … something creative to do can be a wonderful thing to distract people from the hamster wheel.

The main reason I made it was satisfying the need for live performance and using skills and relationships I had built as a comedian.

3. Brand and profile building in a way that has led to other tangible benefits, such as job opportunities, reaching new audiences who then buy tickets, sponsorship, and advertising opportunities.

    Brand deals and stuff started to come through, which kind of confirmed that you're onto something. … I realised there was actually like money to be made in this for me as well.

    Last Comedy Fest, my show sold out and I did no marketing. I paid nothing for marketing. And I know people who travelled for it, drove … to Wellington to come see my show.

    I noticed myself getting cast and more comedy gigs, which is awesome, because I'm like, Cool. I'd love to get more gigs. However, you do realise that I think that's because they want to use your marketing, your platform. And I think we need to be clearer nowadays with contracts and stuff like that.

BUILDING AN AUDIENCE

Engaging with their community, and building an audience, was a common thread.

Those we spoke to felt comedy in New Zealand traditionally courted, or focused on, a mainstream audience, and there is a trend in emerging comics who resist the pull (and pressure) to the mainstream, in favour of making shows or content for what they see as 'their own' audience. This audience tends to include more who are younger, and/or browner, and/or of the LGBTQI+ community, and/or less affluent.

Middle New Zealand has been appealed to for so long, it's everyone else that hasn't. If you try to make comedy for everyone, you are actively excluding minorities. That's what happens.

It's an undervaluing of that demographic which is really ironic because it's literally the most valuable. … And so, my approach was, now I'm gonna value that audience. And I'm just gonna make … for them. … I'll just continue to do it because it makes sense business wise, but it's also just personal to who I am.

Who are the most active consumers across the board? [It's brown people/brown audiences] We have the least money, but still buy the most shit….The only hindrance is you giving us the chance to come. … How do we get that audience? Just talk to them how they wanna be spoken to.

These comics felt that comedy, and performing arts in general, had previously not been made for such audiences in New Zealand and traditional performance spaces have not welcomed these

audiences (either due to location, cost, fear, lack of familiarity, for example).

I brought a whole heap of people, my friends and family. … And I realised how different all these people were. They're combinations of … uni students, … church people, single mums, just a whole bunch of people that I'm used to seeing, but people that aren't used to theatre. So, I was like that became my goal to get people who are not invited to theatre into the theatre space.

However, performing online provided the opportunity to access audiences directly.

It's immediately more accessible in a way…. It's instant. It's now. But also, like, if you think about traditional theatre spaces, or comedy spaces, or bars or whatever, like they weren't actually built … for brown audiences in mind. … [Online is] It's a different thing. It's a different way of experiencing stuff … it's comfortable and you're in your own space, and you're not feeling like an alien for being like, in a theatre or whatever.

That's also the thing about being online is [that]. … I don't have to go through the filtering up with an external third party [to approve me]. It's like here I am. And if you like it, come here. It has shown producers … there is room for comedy that's political and not traditional. … There's … so few Māori women in comedy, so I think when people feel seen or represented, then they will come. They will support.

These performers feel confident they are building a strong community and audience, that they can serve authentically, and convert into ticket sales to build a successful career.

It's kind of nice having an audience who feel like they already know you, or they know what you're about. We're getting a lot of people who have never seen comedy live before come through. Predominantly in my audience last year, most of them had never been to a comedy show before.

Even from those reluctant to engage online, there was acknowledgement that the online world had assisted in the presence of more diverse voices.

We've already talked about all the pluses, all the good things that social media can do, for communities, for people, for marginalised people, for people who are trying to be creative, who are struggling to find a platform, all of those things … also for like, the spreading of injustices, so that people become aware of it, even that is really powerful and important.

CAREER AUTONOMY

Many noted career success and/or progression often feels like it is in the hands of others (such as casting agents or venue bookers, for example), and they spoke about the ability to influence their own career through creating and building an online profile. Those that really applied themselves in the online world felt like they had achieved more autonomy in their career, and more ability to positively influence the opportunities that came to them. The feeling of autonomy and self-control was powerful for these people, particularly in the environment of COVID-19 cancelling other work. The sense that the gatekeepers were now removed or had to come to them was a common thread.

Autonomy. Like the empowerment, the control I have in my own career... I hate leaving the power in other people's hands and letting them make the call. That's always what's driven me to make my own live work. ... How can I keep improving myself to move my career forward? So that's been my greatest thing.

I'm glad that I kind of learned that proactiveness actually just before the pandemic because I need[ed] to take my own career into my own hands, make opportunities happen for me. The reality of the situation is some people can get a tap on the shoulder to make stuff and I've gotten that before, but that's not always gonna happen.

I think as we speak, I'm at 79k on TikTok. I'm pretty happy with that growth. Trying to go about goal setting, so my goal is 100k a year. Positives that have come from it are financial opportunities, because I've

grown myself. I've been approached by brands and sponsorships.

However, this desire for autonomy also felt like a burden for some, as they may now have to build their career in a new way.

I think even the most talented performers still have to have even the smallest online presence, even if they hate it. … because that's where our marketing is nowadays, like a poster run isn't going to do the same thing as Facebook or Instagram.

I'm very much an actor for hire. Comedian for hire. That's my passion. I enjoy the art of acting. I don't necessarily enjoy the art of creating as much. … I just didn't really feel like I wanted to create, didn't feel inspired to create anything and I also didn't feel like I needed to pump work out.

It's really interesting, because those things with me as a performer in their show, their brands, their thing, I just get to come along and do a spot. So, there's this thing of like, if it fails, or if it's bad, it's not like a reflection on my social media presence as a whole. It's a reflection on whatever they're doing.

Those we spoke to identified significant opportunities in this space that can have a positive financial influence for those that choose, or have chosen, to build an online brand or profile, while also allowing for the development of complementary skills that will benefit the portfolio career of a creative. For example, brands seek endorsement

and full advertising campaigns developed by content creators and broadcast through their social media channels. However, at this point in time, this operating environment is without regulations and expectations, as content creators strike their own deals based on their own rationale.

You have to think about, what is a marketing advertising budget for something like this? So, marketing for The Warehouse, say, would spend hundreds of thousands of dollars [through an agency]. And they're getting talent, directing, writing, and advertising, concept creative concept [with me].

What is clear too, is the growth surge in this area means old systems will soon be challenged. Those building a social media profile are experiencing the benefits and opportunities of a new online zeitgeist, auditions and opportunities are being granted to those with large followings, and comedians are finding existing agents struggle to provide adequate representation in this space. There are currently no industry standard guidelines or rates for online performances or content creator endorsements, and performance contracts and expectations have changed to leverage the marketing power of those with online profiles.

The Comedy industry almost always approached things in the online and social media realm with a degree of caution and cynicism. Platforms change quickly, and those spoken to commented on the difficulty of trying to meet a zeitgeist moment with

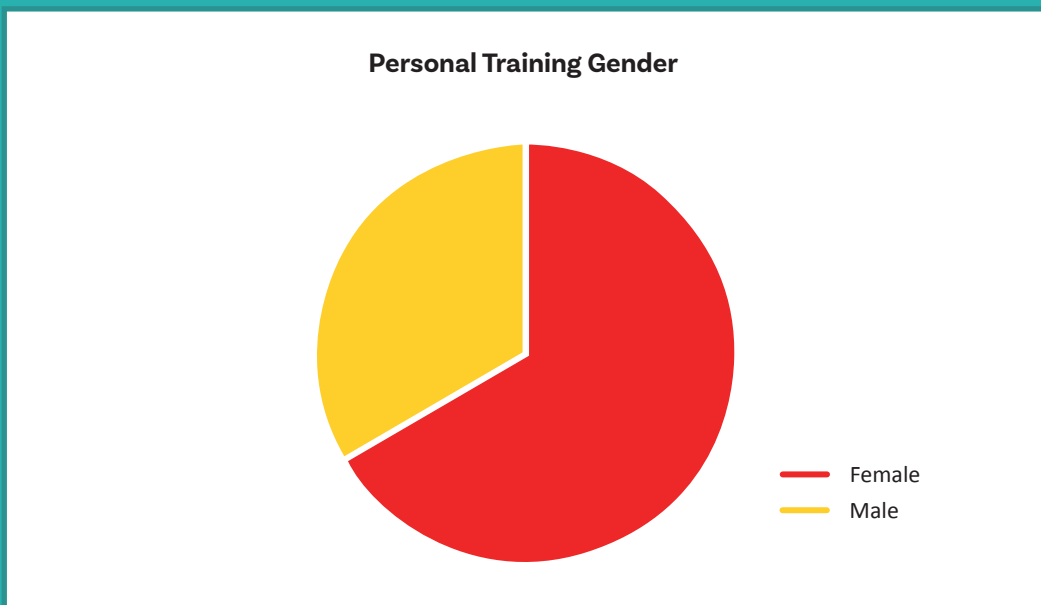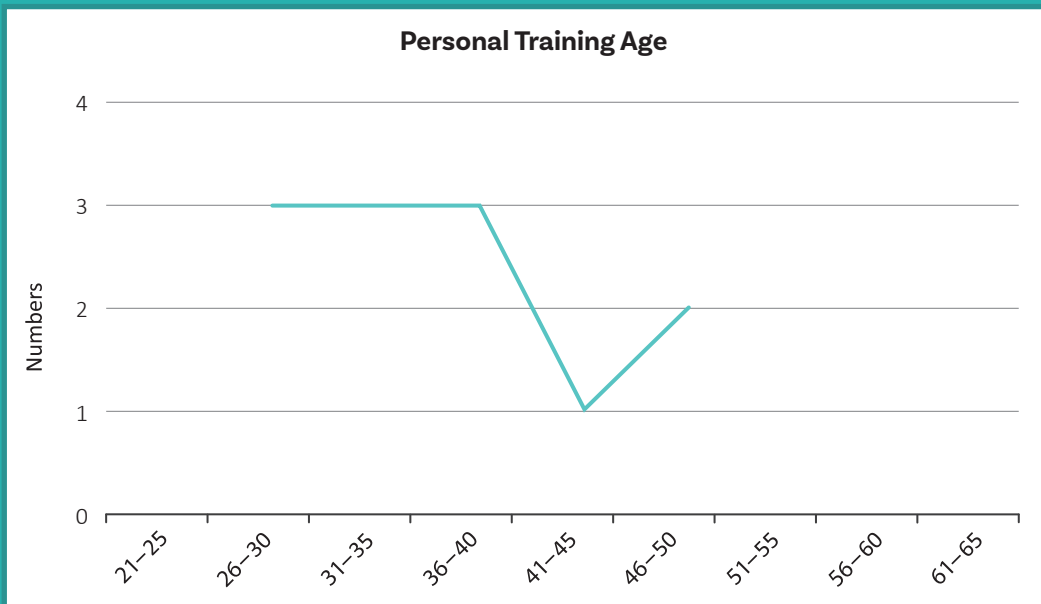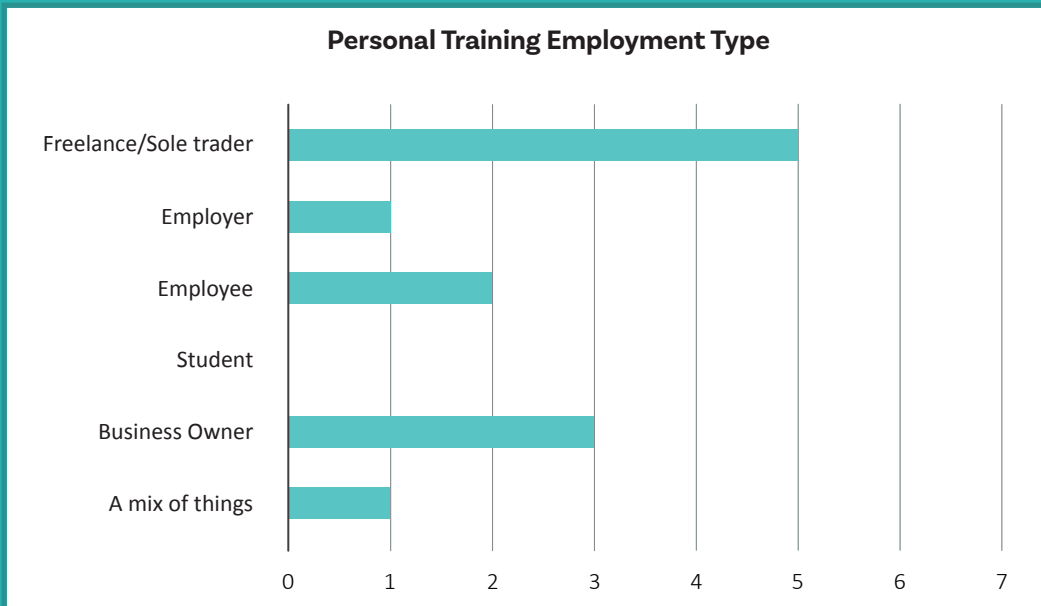the right content, on the right platform, for the right audience at the right time.

It was June, right, it was a day after maybe a few days, the Black Lives Matter movement was really exploding, and the entire online conversation shifted. … And I just remember being totally overwhelmed. … I felt very uncomfortable about putting on my little show, when it felt like the entire conversation was being centred on this very serious issue.

The old days of YouTube and then we went to Vine and then Instagram then TikTok now. The platform that you're on is constantly moving, and it's whether you can keep up with it.

2.2 Personal Training & Fitness Instruction

The highlight was the support that you get from your community as a personal trainer. People have a lot of love for each other and in trying times people actually band together to support you. ... And that, to me, has always been the beauty of personal training and that was the beauty of going online.

12 people who work in the personal training and fitness sector were interviewed, aged 26 to 50 that skewed towards sole traders, Pākehā, and females under the age of 40, with a spread across the country.

Personal Training Employment Type

Employment Type	Value
Freelance/Sole trader	5
Employer	1
Employee	2
Student	0
Business Owner	3
A mix of things	1

Personal Training Age

Age	Numbers
21–25	
26–30	3
31–35	
36–40	3
41–45	1
46–50	2
51–55	
56–60	
61–65	

Personal Training Gender

- Female
- Male

COMMUNITY AND PARTICIPATION

An important focus amongst personal trainers or instructors, regardless of immediate financial need, or technology capability and 'technical know-how,' was to form a community with clients.

I wanted my clients to get to know each other so that they could do sessions outside our PT sessions. I wanted to try to create a community.

[We] wanted to do our best to keep our services or our community's needs being met. So very much what, what can we do to help our community as they go into isolation for, we didn't know how long.

I felt very responsible and probably very encouraged by the response I had from these ladies like it wasn't just thanks for that. It was a real heartfelt gratitude [for the online service] from several ladies. Okay, this is keeping me going like thank you so much, you have no idea. The community grew very, very strong, very tight.

However, some commented that while digital offerings could create a community, they could not replace the benefits of in-person training.

You get the hug at the end. You get a high five. I don't know if you're supposed to high five anymore. But you don't get that level of care when you're on a digital platform that you do in person. You can reach more people. But I think that there's a little bit lacking there that can be brought forward in person.

AUTHENTICITY

When working in an online space, it was felt it was important to behave authentically, to be yourself.

If you see me at 6:10am I'm not like that [from the videos on the website] … so that was an attractive trait that people wanted it to be like that. I think that was really important … I think it was good for other people to feel a sense of like, "Oh, she's normal like me."

RETENTION AND ATTRACTION

Social media and offering online classes could be a valuable way to both retain existing clients, as well as potentially attract new clients, either online, or in-person.

I actually picked up clients through advertising online that I now have in person. So, because of all that work that I did, I perpetuated more business that's kept me in a completely different realm where I no longer work in a gym. I run my own practice.

I now offer a two-part service and part of that is online, and part of it is in person. I can still do a lot of the in-person stuff online. So that is an option for people if they can't get to me … They'll go home and we'll jump online and I'll teach them how to use their home, which I think is a huge benefit is how do you work out in your space?

I'm still [doing] online (sessions) one day a week where I train the clients that have moved cities like Auckland, Hawke's Bay and Christchurch.

Providing online classes and bespoke training allowed personal trainers and instructors to reach audiences further afield, including internationally.

I've got clients in America. I've got clients in Scotland, and I've got clients in Sweden. I find that with the online stuff, most of it is from people overseas. I guess when you're overseas New Zealand sounds like a pretty cool place.

Yeah. [We have clients] all over the world. You can do it at any time.

However, competing in the online market, with larger fitness operators, better resourced, already offering training can be difficult.

If I'm honest I feel the reason I didn't really get into these online videos (post-COVID) is if we are going to do things, I like it to be done the best it can possibly be. So, I feel like this served a purpose while we needed it. But the reason we didn't push on and continue with this is, I feel like we would be a small player in a big, big market. And I don't think we could offer the same service.

[The] key challenge to going online is … the business model. What is your business model? If you want a membership, which is where you get monthly recurring revenue, that's generally a low ticket and you need to be able to go wide. So, if you don't have the presence online, you're not going to be making much money. Online is so saturated … you have to really stand out from the crowd.

And, despite mixed levels of success across the sector, not all wanted to continue offering online delivery of training.

We've reverted back to our core business, which is face to face, hands on … [Online] is not our core business. … It's something that we personally don't enjoy ourselves. So, it's very hard to sell something you don't believe in. … It's just not my cup of tea.
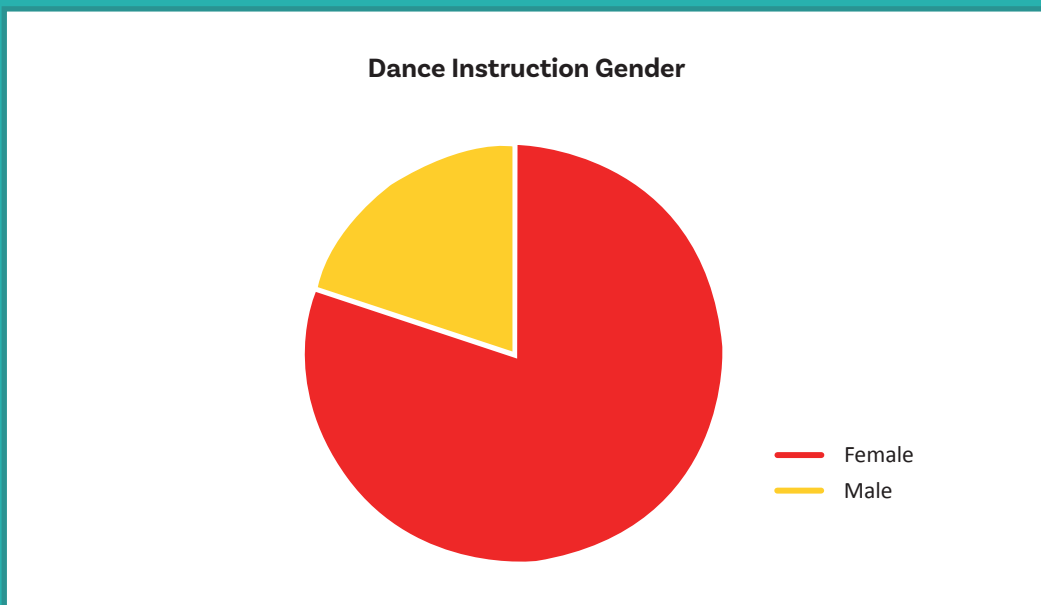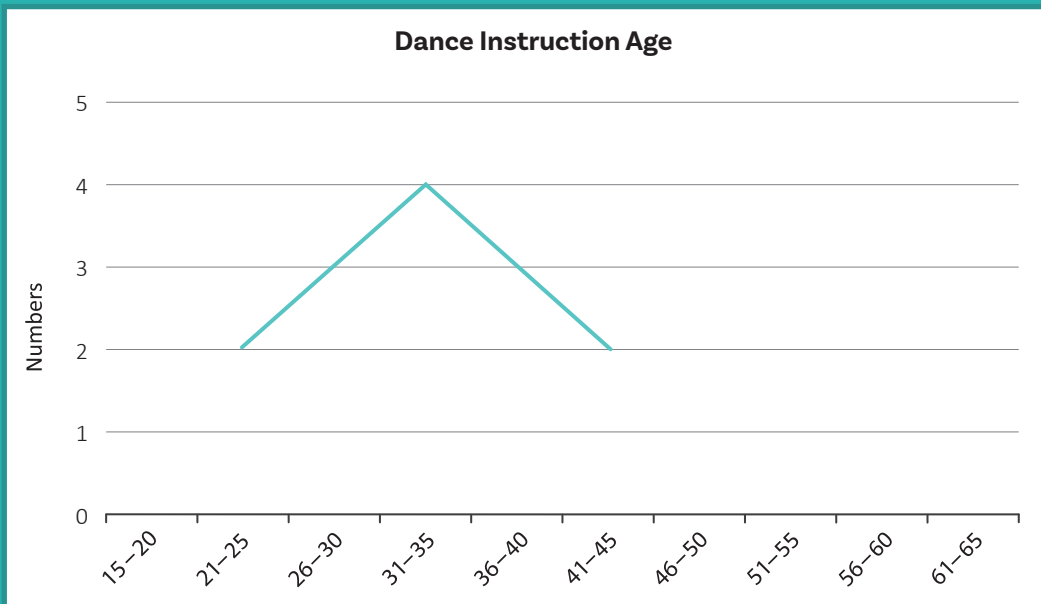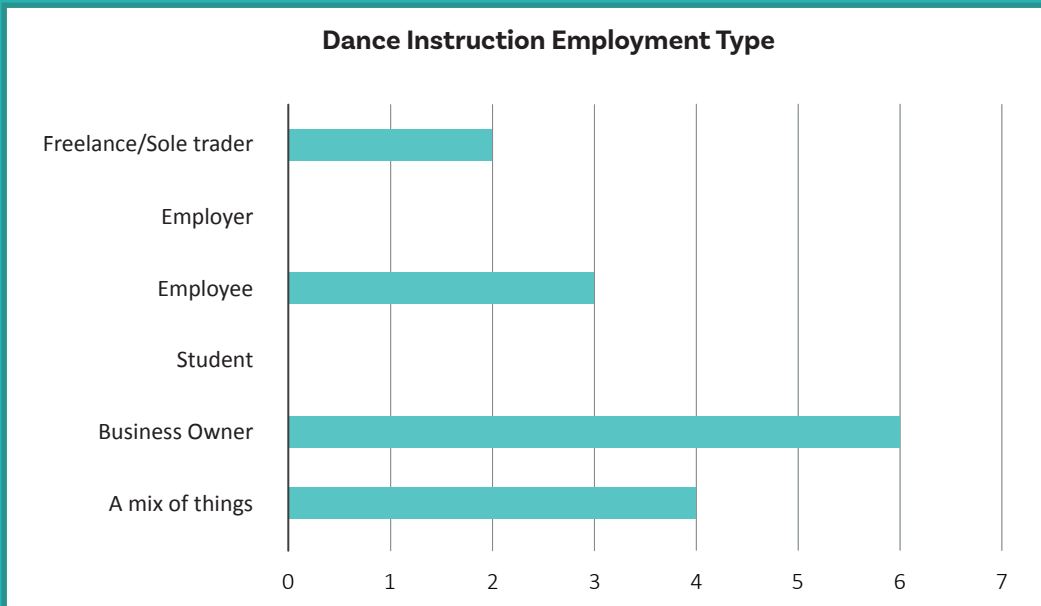
Some felt there needs to be more training in this area for people who work in this sector:

I think there's not enough education in personal training courses about this and there should be [online business component]. I think it's a massive industry. For example, if I had been told even back when I started … you should have an online section … I could have made more money, actually, and I could have provided a better service, and I would have needed less clients. I would have got paid for the free time that I gave away trying to do that in the background.

2.3 Dance Instruction

The customers and our families were aware that if they invest in this process during COVID there will still be a studio for them to come back to and that was kind of our big communication push to families. And we were being honest about the classes, that they might not be as engaging or might not be as inspiring as what it would be in person. But we're kind of in survival mode … we want to just keep going until we can return to a studio so there's something to return back to.

15 people working in the dance instruction sector were interviewed, and they were aged 21 to 45 years. With a focus of dance instruction (rather than professional performing companies) participants mainly comprised private studio owners, and skewed toward Pākehā, female, and those under the age of 40. They were largely based in Auckland as participants there had a longer experience of lockdown and so a longer experience of operating online. A range of dance styles and operators were interviewed in order to reflect the difference of clientele across the sector (not education providers), including cultural dance, dance as therapy, dance as fitness, wellbeing through dance, traditional dance studios, adult focused businesses, children focused businesses, as well as classical and contemporary dance forms.

Dance Instruction Employment Type

Employment Type	Value
Freelance/Sole trader	2
Employer	0
Employee	3
Student	0
Business Owner	6
A mix of things	4

(x-axis: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7)

Dance Instruction Age

Numbers

Age	Numbers
15–20	
21–25	2
26–30	
31–35	4
36–40	
41–45	2
46–50	
51–55	
56–60	
61–65	

(y-axis: 0 1 2 3 4 5)

Dance Instruction Gender

- Female
- Male

The Dance Instruction sector was one where the word 'pivot' was used or referenced frequently. Due to the timing of the first lockdown being in term time, a lot of interview subjects went from an entirely in-person model to an entirely on-line model almost overnight.

Crucially … pre COVID we didn't have any online presence in terms of classes. We had a really good social media presence, but we didn't have any online classes.

There were noticeably different experiences for those offering classes to primarily adults, compared to those offering to primarily children, and a term-long subscription was a significant defining element in these differences. Those with a casual membership (often those running adult classes) tended to take a moment to think about what and if they should move online. They also often struggled to engage their audience, and underwent significant financial pressures, and were more likely to have given up attempting to offer their product online.

Those with subscribed (and prepaid) attendees, the model more common for children enrolled for a term or year, felt an obligation to deliver classes online and to preserve the existing clientele.

Pivoting into an online offering required extensive investment in time. Dance teachers had to do substantially more work for online classes in comparison to in-person classes.

The preparation required from the staff was definitely a lot more for online. Our goal setting as a team was that we wanted to keep the studio going so there was a job to come back to after COVID. But that meant the teachers were having to do significantly more. There was extra preparation … how I interact with them on Zoom, how do I keep them engaged, and so there was a lot more preparation on their side for what felt like the same delivery, the same value to the students.

It was a lot of work for our teachers because they needed to come up with a 45-minute video per class that they taught per week. … A live class will have water breaks, toilet breaks, you talk to the kids about how their daily life is so when all those elements are gone and you put together a class where it's just you filming, to come up with even like 30 minutes of back-to-back content is so hard.

The idea of community, of both students and instructors, was also a driver for studio owners to develop online classes.

Looking after the students was a big thing, students and the teachers. I didn't want them to not feel safe. … So yeah, we did give a lot of refunds, hold credit. [I was thinking] that you're protecting the students, the brand, and looking after the teachers was really important to me as well.

Pivoting into an online offering was a challenge.

It was very, very stressful, dealing with all the digital side of things. I think a lot of the time, because stuff

would be outside of your control as well. And I've struggled with that. … We had some times when Zoom would crash and things like that. Just the stress of it … was rough for wellbeing.

We did look at what other things we should buy or invest in, how far do you push it? You know, like, we're using a third party like Facebook, do we create our own app?

It's pretty constant [hassles], and it all keeps changing too, the ways Zoom keeps changing all the time, and having to keep up with it.

With multiple clients, coordinating and organising classes proved difficult.

My studio coordinator … was sending out the link with a personal message each time. So, every morning, she'd send out the link for those classes that day.

Many found the support of their industry sat within a context of competitiveness.

The initial wider community of dance studios was very, very supportive. Everyone was like, Okay, we're gonna get through this. And … then people were unfortunately closing … or they were seeing studios doing different things that they hadn't thought of. And then it kind of changed a little bit. … We saw arguments online; I think people forgot manners and forgot how to talk to people.

Management of staff, and their wellbeing, motivation, and ability to work in this new environment was another challenge for the small business owner.

I think just based on the fact that all my staff are in their early 20s, or late teens, and so they're all flatting. So, they were like, trying to teach these awesome dance classes in a house with terrible internet, no space, carpeted floor.

We also knew our teachers needed to still teach and we needed to pay them. And at that stage, there was none of this relief stuff or there was talk about that it was coming but to start with what did that look like?

Looking after our staff was quite important to us. I remember we decided to send them care packages … We spent a whole day driving around all of Auckland, … so we could knock on their door and then run back and then they'd open the door and have a little wave and say hello just to make sure that they knew that they were looked after as well.

FINANCIAL PRESSURE

All dance instruction practitioners faced issues with their financial models. The cost of operating online was greater, as subscriptions and data boosts had to be purchased, but at the same time students and parents were often expecting or asking for discounts, and many practitioners voluntarily gave away content for free as an act of kindness or community building. Many questioned the financial value of their own service when filtered through an online portal, and many studios chose, or felt pressure, to reduce their prices in response to the perception of a lower quality of experience.

I didn't feel comfortable asking parents to pay for an online video.

It still felt like such a step down from our normal service.

No, we didn't charge them more. A few parents asked to pay less. And we were just like, sorry, our staff are doing more work. We are gonna pay our staff the same and that means that our fees can't change. Our landlord didn't give us a rent break either, so our outgoings are the same. It's actually more because we have to pay for all this online platform. We can't afford to take less in fees.

There was quite a bit of conflict at one stage. Parents would be like, oh, so why is that dance studio offering all their classes for $5 each? And to be honest, I stuck to my guns and was like, Look, I know it's not in person, but we are still providing the same service.

A few studios successfully operated 'pay it forward' schemes, to enable students to be sponsored by other students/parents, to help lessen the attrition. Within the dance community, there was only one studio that we spoke to that seemed to have worked out how to not only maintain their normal fees, but successfully charge more during this time.

We created tiered package options that parents could subscribe their kids to. So like Studio A, B and C. … So, people could pick what they wanted to invest in, what package they wanted.

After navigating the many obstacles and new lessons from the last few years, some are now extremely exhausted and facing new waves of stress and pressure from reduced financial reserves, diminished student numbers and the cost-of-living crisis.

While all experienced an attrition of their clientele, a few had some success in the online space (and seemingly were more successful at retaining clientele), and this seemed to be due to amplifying a point of difference by providing alternatives more suitable to the online platforms.

We offered things like Zoom sessions with international dancers overseas.

The usual classes were mixed up with guest tutors that we would bring in. We had things like self-love week, and we bought in a drag queen, and she would like to talk about her process. They got to experience all these different things and different facets in the arts, so it wasn't just about dance.

During that time, we also learned about engagement. It's not just about classes, you have to do a little extra to keep them. So that's when we started … running online competitions for our students. … rather than just doing dance, we engaged students, parents as well. So, it was like a family night for us, tombola night or a quiz night.

Obviously, preparing to teach little kids compared to all the different age groups, we learned that there were different … tricks and stuff, like lots of games and scavenger hunts, and finding things around the house. … And we did heaps of like, themed weeks, like dress up weeks, and just anything to keep the motivation going in life.

Every interviewee with child students spoke of the concerns and challenges of delivering to them in this new environment. There were distinct phases for children, in terms of how much online engagement could be managed, and in relation to how schools were operating and depending on the age of the tamariki. Studios switched between live Zoom classes and video-on-demand classes in response to changing moods and levels of tolerance.

One of the concerns was that these children have a hard time engaging online. … And I think towards the end, people were saying actually 15-20 minutes max and after that time, it's just not useful.

And then our customers, but in particular, the kids were really struggling to engage. They weren't getting the social connection that they really love from dance either. They wanted to get on the Zooms and just talk.

We had some great work stories from Zoom like hamsters joining class. … You're working with four- and five-year-olds and parents would set them up, ready to go, and the kid is like, `This is dance class, here's my hamster' and then just a teacher wondering where the kid has gone and giving dance class to a hamster.

REPRIORITISING BUSINESS VALUES

All interviewees acknowledged that the quality of dance that could be achieved, and the quality of their dance instruction, declined rapidly, especially with children, and, in response, they needed to re-evaluate the core values and purpose of their business. A change of priorities was noted by the majority — that dance instruction was not the primary purpose of their business, but rather connection and building a community.

The biggest thing we find here is connection for our kids. That's why a lot of them come here to be dancing with their friends. So that was at the forefront of like, okay, how can we still connect with these kids and their parents? For however long we need to.
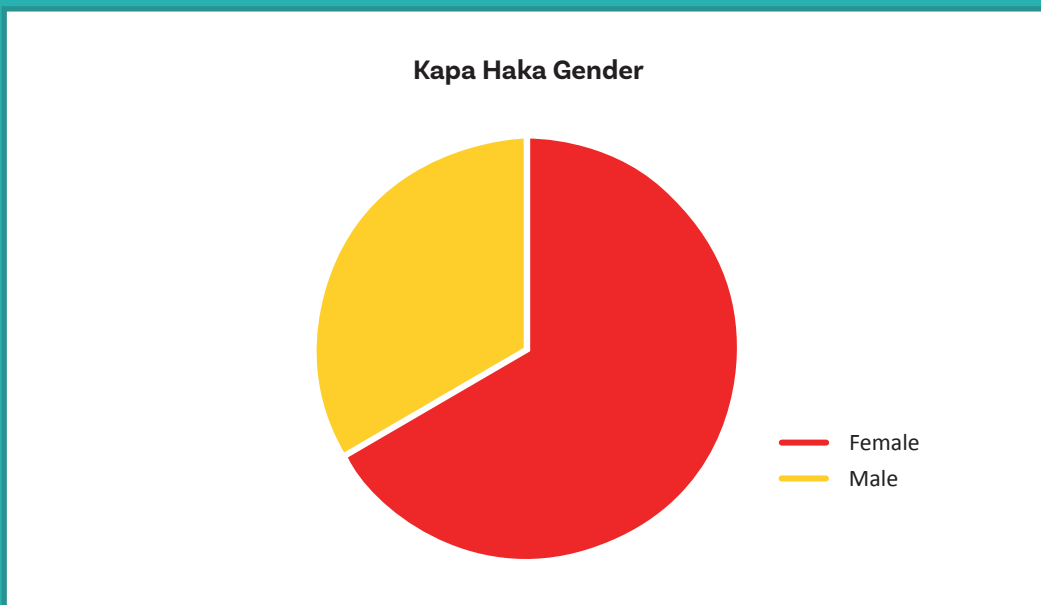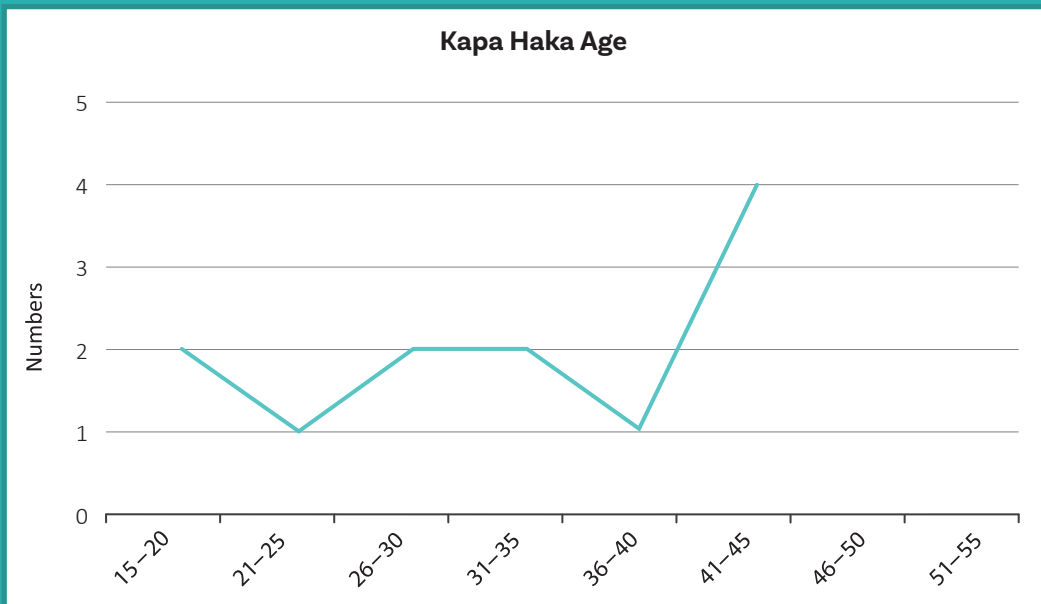
But after that first lockdown, … we realised they needed that social connection. So, we added on some catch ups, which would just be to chat on Zoom, and they have something that they've already learned.

As a studio, we try not to focus too much on a perfect result. The whole thing is about building a love for dance. … But absolutely I think it really showed us how important it is to have the social side of it. … So, we just lowered expectations for what any sort of show would look like at the end of the year where like, it's all about giving it a go and just having your time on stage.

2.4 Kapa Haka

Actions were fine, but haka is more than actions. Most of the time, wairua helps uplift the rōpū as a whole and these things aren't connecting online. Natural wairua is carried together.

Te Amokura interviewed 12 people involved in Kapa Haka, aged 15- 45 years. Participants were at the forefront of Māori broadcasting and performing arts, which included a Kapa Haka tutor/cultural advisor, secondary schools Kaiako/tutor, and Whakaata Māori. Participants were based across Tāmaki Makaurau, Northland, East Coast, Taupō and Pōneke. A representative of Te Matatini was also interviewed.

Kapa Haka Employment Type

Employment Type	Value
Freelance/Sole trader	6
Employer	1
Employee	3
Student	2
Business Owner	0
A mix of things	0

Kapa Haka Age

Age	Numbers
15–20	2
21–25	1
26–30	2
31–35	2
36–40	1
41–45	4
46–50	
51–55	

Kapa Haka Gender

Female
Male
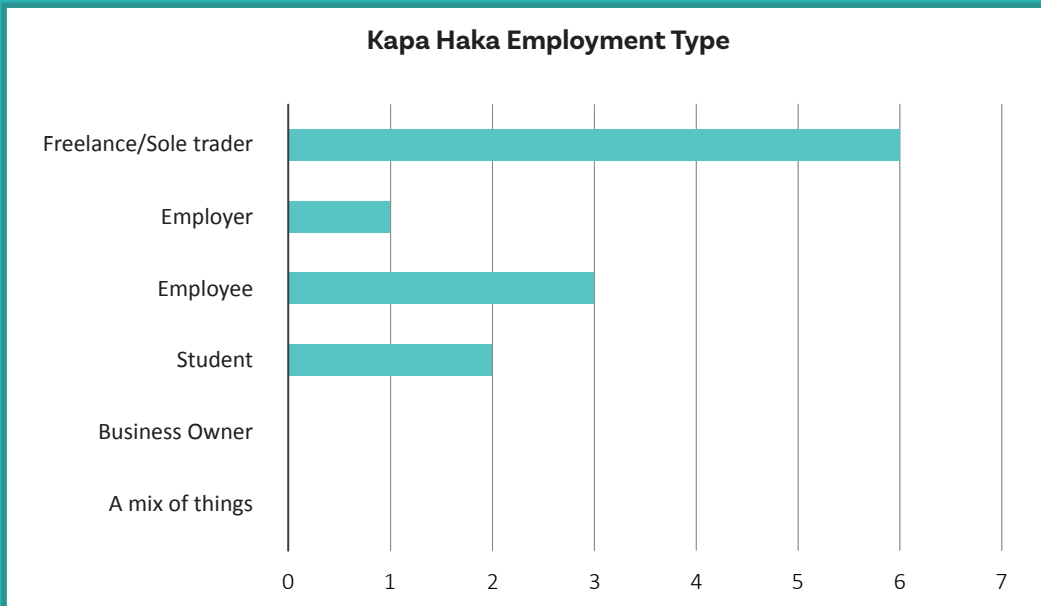
Performing Arts is an in-person, kanohi-ki-te kanohi interaction, bringing whānau and groups together to learn, entertain or compete.

While technology has enabled Kapa Haka to be accessed through different mediums such as television, radio, and social media, the rōpū have traditionally run practices in person. If rōpū are preparing for an event or competition, weekday evenings and weekends are taken up with wānanga and practices.

COVID-19 changed everything, and its impact was felt far and wide in Kapa Haka circles. The restriction of any in-person gatherings led to postponements and then cancellations of festivals and events.

Initially, the main focus was on the health and wellbeing of whānau, so interaction online was used to check in with one another. The public uncertainty over this time only exacerbated those feelings of isolation.

Whanaungatanga is an important part of Kapa Haka, and without regular in-person training, online catchups were the best alternative.

Connections are a huge part of te ao Māori. Facebook and Instagram are good tools to enhance connectivity during uncertain times.

The barriers and challenges of using an online platform for Kapa Haka were felt by everyone who attempted to do so. Having an internet connection was the first hurdle, and the next issue was the

hardware, as without a suitable device to use it was impossible to participate. If the rōpū managed to get through those initial barriers, the main limitations were latency issues, the quality of sound and not being able to use multiple microphones at once.

We tried to use Zoom as a tool with a small group, but it wasn't fit for the purpose of kapa haka training, so we didn't have any official practices.

With technology we can still do, mihimihi, karakia opening and closing. The waiata is a bit awkward, and the sound isn't crisp.

Our ability to adapt has been slower, however, our kids could adapt. Our kids are digital natives, it's not new for them to adapt.

I went to practise on my phone, the screen was small, but if I had a laptop, it would've been much easier as I wouldn't need to hold the phone so I could stand and sing.

Whilst the challenges seemed insurmountable for some who didn't persist online, others adjusted and lowered expectations to continue working in these spaces (some of the adjustments made included splitting up into smaller groups such as sopranos and altos, for example, or tutor-led sessions working on actions).

However, it did take time for those engaged online to figure out how to conduct Kapa Haka digitally and what could be achieved within the limitations.

We did try to package videos; it took a little bit of work and a little bit of editing and technology. It can be done, but there's a whole lot of work that goes into the preparation of this.

We did have challenges in trying to keep up the momentum of getting people online. We used a private page on Facebook.

You can teach all the material online, but you cannot see whether the person is learning all the material, or whether the material is being embedded into the soul of the person. Most times people can muck around.

For one particular group, the digital option enabled them to "keep on top of their goals and get to the stage."

However, not all felt the technology was fit for purpose.

This didn't last long, we only tried this once, so we reverted to using the digital space as a means of communication instead.

Commonly used platforms were Zoom, Facebook groups and Facebook Live sessions and Google Classroom.

Most platforms were generally used for communication within the groups, to either post videos or lyrics of items as a learning tool for performers outside of team training. At the top end of the scale, rōpū are highly competitive and

privacy is of utmost importance, so digital security was a matter of concern for some.

A lot of work is put into some compositions, so when sharing takes place between students and rōpū, it's over.

We would put material online on a private channel on YouTube as we found that access was problematic with emails, etc … so placing it on YouTube was much easier for the rōpū … but if someone was signing into the YouTube channel with a different email that wasn't registered, they could not get access.

Kapa haka does tend to be more secretive because we are performing in a competition, we had to be mindful of how we were putting footage out there.

Some interviewees also noted the importance of Kapa Haka as taonga and potential issues with sharing content online:

For Māori, it can be a hard place to navigate, it's a balancing act of protection vs. entertainment.

Tikanga has been challenging. Because when you let the waiata out into the public domain via a public platform, a social media platform you have let the genie out of the bottle really and it's hard to get it back.

When you are sharing it with the wider world and unfortunately, some people want to mistreat or diminish the mana of our culture or our waiata into

re-editing or augmenting or having a tutu with those taonga and so, there is a risk.

Throughout the pandemic, Tāmaki Makaurau groups, with their additional lengthy lockdowns, were impacted more severely than the rest of the motu.

Comparing yourself to others is a negative aspect of being online, seeing other rōpū outside of Tāmaki practising while we were in lockdown as a hard watch, social media definitely made us anxious.

Looking to the future, some people, rangatahi in particular, could see ways to expand the use of digital tools in a way that is still authentic to the kaupapa.

We should've used an app for choreography to shift performers around on the stage.

If you want to provide assistance to your rōpū, self-analysis videos, and practice actions, practices were for advancement. You have to trust your members and you don't want to go through too many processes even though there is a high risk of material getting out and people using it.

Hologram performances, linear standard kapa haka, this is where the future is, beaming performers onto stages.

Digital will become the forum to develop the art, because people are pushing the boundaries in this space, and it moves to the next phase.

However, during the pandemic, the use of online and digital tools was making the best of a bad situation. Many interviewees felt Kapa Haka needs to be in person.
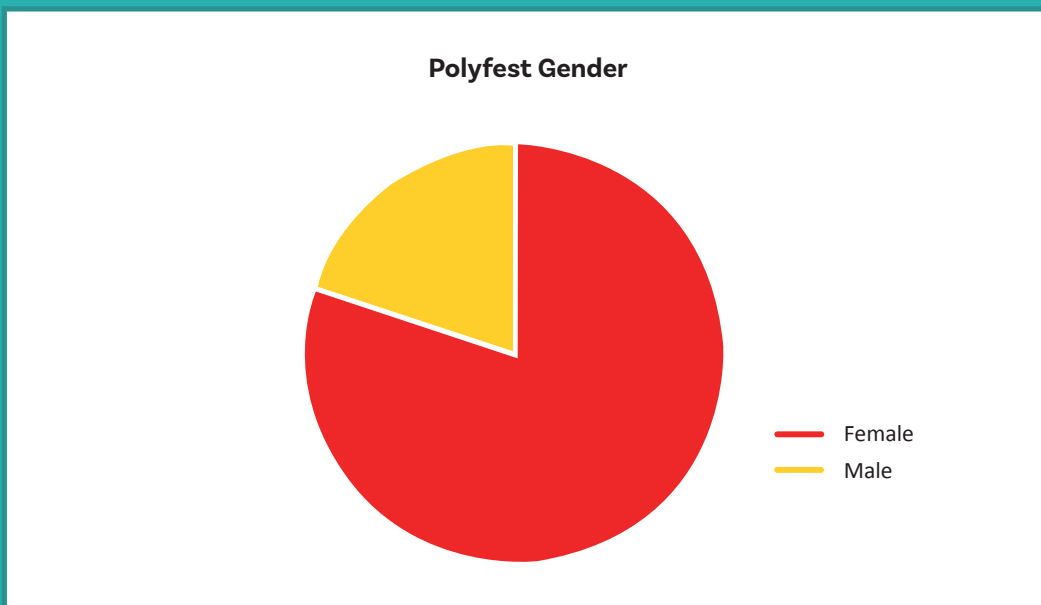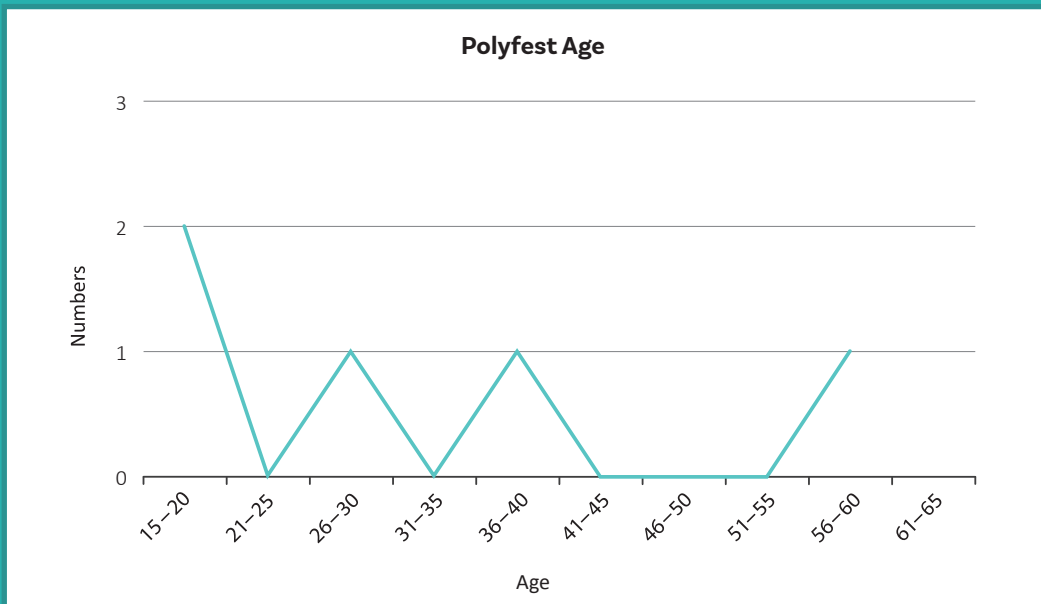
The difficulty with online training is you aren't able to really experience the person and how the wairua of that person is.

Kanohi-ki-te kanohi is the main preference for performance. I want to be able to smell and hear your performance, I can't sense that from on-screen.

2.5 Polyfest

Before COVID, we had five days a week training leading up to Polyfest.

Te Amokura interviewed five participants from The Auckland Secondary Schools Māori & Pacific Islands Cultural Festival (Polyfest); four Samoan and one Tongan, aged between 15 and 60. This group was the smallest sample size by sector for the project.

Polyfest Employment Type

Employment Type	Value
Freelance/Sole trader	0
Employer	0
Employee	1
Student	2
Business Owner	2

Polyfest Age

Age	Numbers
15–20	2
21–25	0
26–30	1
31–35	0
36–40	1
41–45	0
46–50	0
51–55	0
56–60	1
61–65	

Polyfest Gender

Female
Male
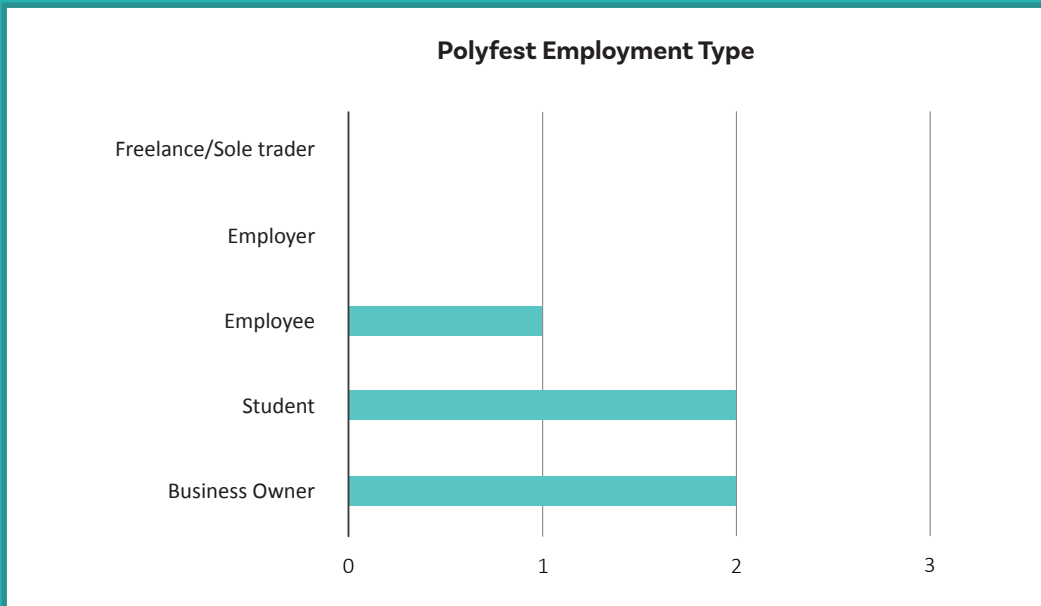
As with Kapa Haka, COVID-19 had a similar impact on Pacific whānau and the spirit of their practices online.

For example, from a teaching perspective, it was hard to teach effectively through these digital means while students had other commitments within their household and communities.

Sometimes students weren't always available to log on for practices, so it made it hard for the rest of us if parts were missing.

Many would also be distracted by siblings and other whānau members while connecting from home.

Every time we would go online, sometimes at home, my parents or siblings were distracting, especially having a full house.

Another issue was that an online environment couldn't replace being physically present with other people.

It was a bit hard to have our practices online, cause sometimes it would feel lonely logging on. I missed interacting with my peers.

There were also difficulties for teaching online.

Culturally online it was not ideal due to the movements we do with hands, feet etc. Because they are beginners, we need them to stand up so we can judge their movements. This was not do-able online.

Students also experienced 'screen fatigue.'

Sometimes when I would log on, I would feel tired, cause sometimes performing and learning online can be quite draining mentally.

Audio limitations were also an issue for Pacific groups as the delay and latency via digital platforms resulted in not hearing correct pronunciation of words or sounds.

Being online affect[ed] the sounds, i.e., drums, singing, movements.

Fundamentally, shifting to an online format allowed performers to progress in their existing goals, but it was not the same as in person.

When we came back into person training, we had already learnt the material and moves. It was more about the polishing of the performances together.

It feels more real when we come together and practise together. It creates more excitement for us, and we can encourage each other in real time.

Microsoft Teams proved to be the most popular platform for those interviewed as most students and users had this subscription through their schools already. One tutor said, while Teams was her default platform in the beginning, she's now expanded to use TikTok, Instagram and podcasts.

Online engagement found new disadvantages in terms of accessibility.

But because we did it virtually, I discovered that some families don't have laptops or PCs so what they used was … the phone was used … for videoing, you know and there was no access for the lyrics, like, to open up another device so that they can see the lyrics.

But there were also some advantages to being online.

It reached more students. … The family that struggled to bring the students to the venues … doing it virtually, gave them the more opportunity because [it was] in the comfort of their own home.

We were able to also include our students from outside of Auckland, so it wasn't just an Auckland base, so anyone, even Dubai, France, and the UK, took part in our classes.

Appendix One:
In Depth Observations across sectors

1.1   Competency and confidence working online

Across all interview responses, generally most respondents fell into one of three perspectives about operating/working online:

- Those that felt they lacked knowledge and were intimidated by working online and with digital tools;
- Those that were comfortable doing some activities online, but had no interest in furthering those skills to work more online, or to learn beyond a comfortable level; and
- Those that were comfortable with digital and online skills, and confident to research themselves and learn more if needed.

This mindset around digital competency, rather than the skill level itself, could be seen to correlate with how successful their online journey was, and how many obstacles they were prepared to tackle and overcome.

Those that showed competency in digital and online skills said the following:

I don't know an obscene amount about computers. I've never done any training… you just keep googling … You know, when you first start out, it's like what is live streaming? You just Google that and you watch a video and then it's like, ah, I need to figure out what a RTMP is.

There's a bit of digital literacy you need to kind of have to be able to do it…. It is a sort of advantage just being young and on your phone a lot … You have to be a consumer of the industry.

When I went online, I started to experiment … with getting online coaches, learning different systems. … I learned so much about online marketing stuff. I never had time, or I never gave myself time to learn about how to use community groups, how to run events, and then run chat groups that connect to the event that create a hum and actually the purpose of them (the chat groups).

I'm learning to like, edit these things really fast. In an hour every morning; idea, shooting, edit, upload. I wake up at like 8am, have coffee, do the video, by ten people are calling about it and I'm doing yoga outside.

Those that showed some skill and comfort online, but didn't want to extend their efforts noted that:

[I don't want to] cut corners and start to start to play the algorithm game rather than play the 'get good at comedy' game. Because … everyone is playing the algorithm game. How do you finagle the algorithm so that people come to you quickly, I don't want to do that.

People who weren't creators were saying, why don't you? … Where's your YouTube channel with a subscription service? I don't know who … makes money out of that…. I don't know. I mean, some people might, but that's a lot of content to produce.

You know, I'm not a natural on digital platforms. I basically found the thing with the least barrier to trade, and that was to pay for a Zoom premium account, which I did anyway to catch up with friends. I could push the video straight to YouTube.

I don't look down on anyone that does social media content, but that's just not what I wanted to do. And sometimes it's just helpful to just stay true to what you want to do.

Those that did not enjoy the online space and showed a skills deficit commented that:

We had really, really low numbers. So, the second time we went into lockdown, we decided not to do it anymore. There were like three or four people.

We tried the online classes to make sure that people know we're trying.

So, for us to deliver those classes that means more than 20 classes at the same time. That would require us to have 20 different accounts of either Zoom, or any other online services. … And getting onto the learning curve was a challenge for us because right

from day one, we started noticing challenges, you know, playing music in an online scenario that we've never taken into account.

Many, of all levels of competency, could see their work and sector changes in response to the growth of digital.

I think it's really unwise to not use the capabilities of screen. Because at the end of the day the screen is sort of like the business side now. Where that's where you're gonna get your numbers, that's where you're gonna get people that might buy tickets to your shows.

The concept of being able to be in your home and be professional has really leapt to a new standard. It's also created a market need, which has allowed prices to drop, which has made things more accessible.

1.2 Audiences and platforms

Connections are a huge part of te ao Māori, Facebook and Instagram are good tools to enhance connectivity during uncertain times.

Conversations about different platforms were among the most common across all interviewees, and especially those from Comedy, Personal Training & Fitness Instruction and Dance Instruction.

Each platform comes with a different generation of audience, and a different way of working with the algorithms to try and ensure you reach your audience.

Each platform has a different character. Facebook is definitely for sharing amongst your friends and family. Instagram is for sharing to your following. Twitter is like the Wild West, shouting into the void. TikTok is like serving crack to 14-year-olds…. They might see one of your videos, and they never see any of your other stuff again, and never remember your name. And yeah, never find your page again. Whereas I think Instagram, Facebook, they're a bit more about who you are, and about what you're building.

In Personal Training and Fitness, Facebook was a preferred platform when starting out.

And Facebook is so easy ... I always thought oh, maybe I wish I just started with a really cool app or something. But I wouldn't have got that brand. I wouldn't have got the community.

[We used Facebook Live for] two-way communication so we wanted to be able to get feedback from people.

While a variety of social media and platforms were discussed, the most common discussion was around the comparison between Instagram and TikTok, which operate similar models, and those navigating both, or a potential change from one to the other.

The underlying belief from most participants is that with Instagram, content creators build an audience and then make every video/post assuming it's going to their target audience, and that they can talk to their followers like they know the content creator.

I've got the Instagram breakdown of my audience. It's women 25 to 35 living in Auckland. Yeah, it's Grey Lynn, Newmarket, like those mums you know, with a young kid.

[Instagram] Stories ... They're good for if you want to build an engaged following and share more of yourself or learn more about your followers.

Instagram has been the most successful for me. Because TikTok you can't really message people.

A main reason for doing Insta [Live] was for advanced seniors or teachers to have some way of learning and getting the endorphins running, having a fun dance class to do if you are an adult or someone advanced. ... And also, to give a 12-year-old who wants a challenge, give them the chance to learn a teacher's dance. And then, yeah, maybe just to try and keep customers.

I look at it as a holistic approach. So, Te Whare Tapa Wha. So that's the whanau, the tinana, the whole, whole thing. So yeah, Instagram Live was really good.

The increase in popularity of TikTok, particularly during the pandemic, has seen the rise of a new aesthetic for both content and look, as well as new rules of engagement.

With TikTok, interviewees felt content creators needed to make content that can be successful on the 'For You Page' and a creator has to make each piece of content assuming no one has ever seen the creator before.

Interview participants saw this feature both positively and negatively, likely informed by their success on each platform.

I feel like TikTok is less cynical than Instagram. You can be more earnest there.

I was very resistant to starting [TikTok]. It's just a bunch of young teenyboppers and what's it going to help me with? But it's actually got a lot of people over to my Instagram account, which is great.

And the thing I began to realise with TikTok was I can't just throw my leftovers there. I was growing an audience and there's actually an audience here that I need to respect, and I need to begin to commit to this place, in the same way that I'm connecting to Instagram.

There is a search for authenticity on [TikTok] …TikTok is the youth, Gen Z space. That's like immediate and anti-aesthetic. Like, you know, rough. It's ugly. It's like a complete rejection of Instagram.

I create TikTok content. It doesn't look like Instagram content, even though it's the same content. I change it up a little bit. So, I'd make sure, if I post on TikTok that I put different captions on it so that it looks more like it belongs there.

It's just another format. And we're kind of trying to cross contaminate. So, if it goes on TikTok, it goes on Instagram Reels, but also if we post something on YouTube, we take little bits of it to TikTok and try and cross contaminate a little bit that way.

There was a perception among content creators that Instagram provided more tangible benefits, such as job opportunities, an engaged audience that showed up in-person, casting opportunities (for Comedy), as well as the most direct advertising and sponsorship opportunities to interviewees, or new clients (for Personal Training).

[Someone I know on] TikTok, he's got like 25,000 followers. I have under half that on Instagram, but the TV people, the sponsorship people, the

opportunities are coming through Instagram because that generation isn't on TikTok. So, he's got more of an audience than me, but I get paid more.

Social media is genuinely where I get all my clients. They approach me through Instagram typically. It's where they come from. So, I figured, well if I'm putting a brand out there on social media, I need to make it look more polished and then my garage with stuff leaning up against the wall, you know, car seats and just random boxes of things.

1.3   Platforms and the pace of change

The old days of YouTube and then we went to Vine and then Instagram then TikTok now. The platform that you're on is constantly moving, and it's whether you can keep up with it.

While comparing the benefits and risks of each platform, most of those spoken with were also aware of the perilous nature of all platforms, and in particular how quickly the landscape of platforms can change.

You're subservient to that app. Whatever changes they want to make to the app. It's going to affect what you're doing, so you don't put all your eggs in that basket, because it's not like a safe brand for content because you have to always work to what the form is.

Instagram's no longer really going to be a photo sharing app now. More of a video app trying to compete with TikTok. And probably within three years, the kind of content I'm making will not even be able to exist because a new thing will be emerging.

We were doing Instagram lives and then quickly discovered that teenage girls don't use Instagram anymore. Oh God, here we go … another platform. So, we've been developing really really short bite

sized content for TikTok and finding out what engages.

But people cancel because they feel bad. And they see it on Facebook, and they're like I'm not working out. I'm gonna cancel. Facebook, there is a downside, because it's constantly in your face.

Few interviewees had any comments about how to manage this, or plan for the future.

[We were taught about] getting them onto your mailing list because once you have someone's email address, they can obviously unsubscribe, but you can sell to them through email. Email is not going anywhere unless the whole internet shuts down. So, we learnt about that. So, setting up your back-end systems.

So, I used a third-party app [to see who was unfollowing me]. Turns out that's a no no, you're not allowed to do that. And then my page just got shut down. No warning. I got an email saying you breached the terms and conditions of Instagram.

And many were aware of and concerned about the impacts and side effects these platforms were having, including 'vendor capture,' creator burnout, original content and attention spans.

When I started making videos on Instagram, my average video length was like two and a half minutes, three minutes. And that was good. But now, two years later, if anything's over a minute you're

really asking a lot of your audience, and because of TikTok, some stuff is now 30 seconds.

It's designed to go viral within the first three hours of posting and then it is forgotten completely. And that's the nature of it … it becomes a ravenous beast that just wants more and more and more, … if you don't keep feeding it, the hole will just get bigger. I know people that have just been like, drilled into the ground as content creators. … Content creator burnout is a really common thing that I see.

What's really heart-breaking is that I'll be on TikTok occasionally, and I'll see a sketch or some kind of observation that I'm like, Oh, that's really funny. I really liked that. That was really good. And then I'll be scrolling a day later, and I'll see the exact same thing, and I see another one that's the exact same thing. And now I'm like, who was the original and was the first person I saw the original? I don't know now.

1.4 Adverse impacts of social media

Those working in or near content creation for social media platforms were particularly conscious of the ills of social media, for both content creators and consumers. A small percentage of those spoken to were vocal in their opposition.

Social media is just the pits.

I do think social media and digital spaces are quite detrimental for mental health, especially for younger people who haven't developed their brains fully yet and are still being influenced and shaped by a lot of things. And it's for all the reasons we already know, … that's part of the reason why I don't want to engage on social media as a creator … I just feel like a cog in the … addiction.

People like to paint social media as this, pure platform where you can just create whatever you want and put it on and it's like, it's almost anti-establishment in that way. But I feel like when we talk about social media, in that way, we're all lying to ourselves a little bit.

That does make me wonder about what that's going to affect in real life space. Even [considering] theatre tours, like an hour, feels too long for students now…. students don't have it in them.

I'm also like, man, social media is just so much noise. It's just everybody going, Hey, look at me, look at me, look at me, please look at me, please look at me.

I guess one of the things that put me off doing social media comedy at all, is that I don't know how I feel about capitalising on people's attention. Because in my philosophy, life is something that you only get to live once. And it's a very short period of time, you have. So, I don't know how I feel about capitalising on taking people's time to focus on my content.

There's lots of reasons why I don't love [social media]. Time. Over analysing. Feeling like a dork. Insecure, like you know, you start scrolling and then you feel that you're got so much going on your brain like, you feel like you're not good enough. … Some days it just doesn't affect me.

1.5   Video on demand/live streams/conferencing

There was an array of experiences around the positives and negatives of delivering pre-recorded content, live streamed content (on social media channels), or conferencing platforms (such as Zoom or Teams). Irrespective of platform, there were repeated issues.

The mechanics of getting people (online) to the same place is not awful, but … there's some people you just cannot get sorted. So, you'll ask them to check their email for the link an hour before class and then people are emailing 10 minutes after class starts or even send me a Zoom link, when it's already begun.

In the Comedy sector, each platform serves different purposes, mainly around the way a platform engages with an audience. Social media platforms were commonly used for both pre-recorded material and 'go lives,' conferencing platforms were commonly used for corporate gigs, speaking/hosting online events, and a lot of the 'new' experiments.

We experimented with releasing it on Instagram at the same time, …but Instagram TV didn't work as well as YouTube. Something about YouTube where you don't have to sign up for it, which made it work. … I was adamant that YouTube was the way to go. Because YouTube will be watched by 10-year-olds and 80-year-olds.

In the Dance Instruction sector, 'go lives' were more common for those that had adult students but were used by many in relation to community good will, and marketing. Video on demand approaches required additional preparation and work for teachers but allowed students to engage on their own time. Conferencing platforms allowed for live engagement and connection but were hectic to manage.

And then it was also really nice, from a dance teacher's perspective, being able to roughly see people following along when you're teaching because that was something really unheard on Instagram … And that was really fun when you could see us all dancing along together.

The videos that we would record and send out would usually just be the things that we had worked on in class, the things we've taught them in the live classes.

In Personal Training, the delivery of live content was preferred, due to the desire to interact with clients in real time, and Facebook Live was the preferred platform.

[We used Facebook Live for] two-way communication so we wanted to be able to get feedback from people.

The response from that was there was a demand for more live interaction workouts. We would go onto Facebook live and stream live workouts. … They were a lot more successful because I think it was that live interaction, that social interaction that you can't really get from a pre-recorded workout.

In Kapa Haka and Polyfest, both utilised pre-recorded content hosted privately on YouTube to teach actions and kupu, but utilised conferencing platforms to whakawhanaungatanga and to rehearse.

YouTube worked really well for us. The only concern was, I wonder how the kids are actually learning.

We had audio recordings of the brackets so you could learn the words and visual recordings to learn the actions.

Respondents from Polyfest mostly spoke about their experience with Teams, as they were using school provided platforms.

We had breakout groups, we used Teams. We had team challenges and breakout groups for men and

women because it was tough to practise online with a big rōpū.

Microsoft Teams was like solely for use for children to learn. So, we didn't allow any random people to see our content.

Some content creators developed a high level of proficiency working across and with multiple platforms.

I was streaming on YouTube. ... Then I got into restreaming ... so that's when, say you're using OBS as your software, so you've got your computer and you've got a camera. If you're using a proper camera, you need a thing that sits in between the camera and the computer. Yeah, so that's like a video switcher. Like the ATEM that I bought. So, it goes computer, ATEM camera, right? So, then you've got a video signal that's sitting in your computer, and you've got to send that to the internet.

For each of the sectors, there was some thought of what it means to have content online 'forever more,' and it seems that pre-recorded content (as opposed to live streams or conferencing) is seen as this biggest risk.

For Māori and Pacific performing artists, it brings questions of security and protection of cultural taonga.

When you are sharing it with the wider world and unfortunately, some people want to mistreat or diminish the mana of our culture or our waiata into re-editing or augmenting or having a tutu with those taonga and so, there is a risk.

1.6 Zoom

While many tried a few different live-streaming and conferencing platforms Teams and Google Meet, Zoom was the conference platform of choice for the vast majority of those interviewed. All of the available platforms seemed to have some issues that made them not fit-for-purpose, but Zoom was the best of an imperfect set of options and was quickly familiar to many New Zealanders.

So, we tried a couple of options. … We did try Google Meet. We did try Microsoft Teams. But eventually Zoom worked for us. Because Google has a limitation in terms of the sound, Teams we had difficulty on an internal level.

There were varying degrees of competency with the platform, with some having discovered features and add-ons, such as the ability to mirror images, that helped with those trying to follow dance instructions. However, all those spoken to mentioned multiple issues, the most significant of which was music settings, and lag.

I use Zoom. And that seemed to work, alright. Again, some people's connections … So, you know, I was delayed, or the music was delayed. Yeah, and then little things like, … someone's not on mute. And yeah, it's distracting and a bit of a circus.

[With 80 classes a week,] we needed multiple Zoom running at the same time]. … So, I ended up setting

up a three zone… three users within our Zoom account. … The logistics of all of that to start with was just like, how do we do this? So, sharing with other studio owners was quite key, it helped out a lot, which was really good.

Workarounds were a common theme, especially when it came to Zoom and other conferencing platforms.

I'd never done Zoom before or any of this. So, there was lots of learning, what backgrounds worked for me and what is the best kind of sound for this? [I was doing a radio thing] for RNZ, we were doing it via Skype. And I said, I can't see when you're about to talk, so let's do it on Zoom. And they said, Zoom sound is no good. And I said, Okay, we'll do Skype sound, but Zoom visuals. And now they do that all the time.

You can imagine running music online on a speaker, laptop speaker, how difficult that is, so we had to figure out, you know, a service right, to play the background music through a system.

And despite its issues, Zoom was the preferred conferencing platform for most.

Although I think even though it's definitely worse for the teacher, I think we would do Zoom again.

1.7 Authenticity

While it was not a specific area of enquiry or question within the interviews, the subject of authenticity was a theme that came up often across all sectors and fed into participants' responses across areas of discussion. Lines of thinking included how to find ways to authentically connect, the fear of being seen as inauthentic, authenticity and community, and authenticity and audience expectations.

THE SEARCH FOR AUTHENTICITY

Seeing value in authenticity as a business, or as a creator, and trying out different things to find something that could be successful for them was commented on.

Our dream is also to find ways to authentically connect people through their experience and make it a shared experience. I think that's going to be the thing that differentiates us from other online fitness providers.

If you can find a hook and a brand, then it just suddenly becomes a lot easier like Celeste Barber is amazing, doing a thing, a simple thing, before anyone else did. You wouldn't dare to copy any of that stuff because you're like, that's her brand. I would happily do something like that, but I just need to find out what that thing is.

AUTHENTICITY AS A MEASURE AGAINST SUCCESS

Both those with success and those seeking further success noted a fear of 'selling-out', the value of authenticity, and a fear of being perceived as inauthentic.

I still have to earn an income. And the temptation when you ... get approached by ad companies to do ads, and ads pay a lot of money, and they want to use your platform to advertise their product. And it's very hard to turn down like $10,000 for posting a few videos on your Facebook page, or your Instagram page. But then every time I do it, my heart truly breaks. I go like, Oh God, selling out. Oh, God. It's like taking me away from that thing I love.

[Others] were so creative, and really, really unlocked something in themselves and helped them explode. You know, I had no desire to emulate that, just because I think why it works is because they obviously had to make them and wanted to and enjoyed it.

AUTHENTICITY IN RELATION TO AUDIENCE EXPECTATIONS

Audiences are intelligent and intuitive. And they will enjoy things on the merits of the person who's presenting them and what is authentic to who that person is. ... Like, if a really funny person who doesn't have access to high production value makes really funny stuff. No one cares about where they're doing it if it's funny.

This is my interpretation is not objectively true, but it's less about the platform. ... And trusting that an ... audience can see that, you know, that's what you're meant to be creating.

...the reality is with a personal trainer, people come for your personality and for who you are. They buy the brand. ... And it comes from the connection that you make with people.

AUTHENTICITY IN RELATION TO COMMUNITY

Considering I tick a lot of boxes, you know, LGBT, brown. ... I use my social media to try and normalize same sex relationships as well. Because, you know, there's so many young kids out there, not just our kids that are in the closet and don't feel like they can come out ... so my wife and I think it's really important that actually they can see, you can be married, you can be happy. It's okay to be who you are.

1.8 Audience and Community

It was just for like my friends or whatever. But I've always kind of had a theory that and I don't know if it's true, but if you're good enough at something consistently for long enough people just will find it.

Many of the stories of success began the same way - 'it was just for my friends or family; I didn't plan for what came after.' Over time, a community developed into an audience. While the terms audience and community can and are used interchangeably in this report, in this section we differentiate the two to indicate a difference in the level of connection between creator and viewer, and often a difference in the participation level as well.

BUILDING AND NURTURING COMMUNITY

The environment of the lockdown, and the messaging of the 'Team of 5 Million' fed into a lot of people's psyches early in the timeline, and many wanted to help the best way they could. Many in the Fitness, Comedy and Dance industries mentioned doing 'lives' or sharing clips on Instagram or Facebook.

We also shared a whole lot of content. I went into the studios before we went into full lockdown, and recorded every preschool dance, just me doing it and walking it through for them and like a one minute video, and we just shared a whole folder with not only our customers, but I also put it on those community Facebook pages for places where we teach... And so, we just did it all for free. But people really liked that.

I was doing things like making macadamia nut butter and filming it and doing live cooking things and doing adventures ... not sketches but like still definitely online content, but more like everyday style content. ... So, I guess it was still performing. It just wasn't in the form of what I usually do.

I remember doing that first Instagram live class and Instagram live in itself as a platform as interesting and that, unlike Zoom, there's no feedback. So, you're just looking at yourself, obviously dancing, and people can comment and stuff. So, it was definitely an interesting experience, but so much fun.

Others commented on the deliberate nurturing of and responding to their community.

So, I personally spend maybe two hours a week creating advertising. Also, and this is part of the game of social media, you're building a tribe, and you must interact with your tribe.

I always say [to my community] online, it's okay to be broke. If someone wants tickets to the show I will buy for them, because I'm working towards getting the audience in. I get loads of DMs of people being like... could I get a free one?

I knew that was the perfect moment to do it. I could just tell by the way the audience were reacting online.

Then I guess what we found is that our kids formed these groups by themselves ... So, like, we have competitive teams, and all of a sudden there were these small little chat groups that popped up for them to communicate because usually that stuff would happen in person and in class and whatnot.

However, it's worth noting that the transition from community interaction to a wider audience focus can be a difficult one, as the way of engaging with community changes.

I reckon I was and still kind of am pretty bad at boundaries. I would reply to every single message, it would take three hours some mornings, I would wake up, reply to every single person. But I actually do think at the start that's what keeps people hyper engaged, because people would say, I can't believe you replied, but of course.

[My virtual assistant works for] a monthly fee and she is repurposing all of my Instagram reels to TikTok. She does all my initial direct outreach. So, all the new followers that I get she sends a welcome message to, and then I take over from there because I like the personal approach. She replies to all the comments on both Instagram and TikTok. She really focuses on my content.

The number of times we've been told off for posting something that's offended someone once before or, oh, you can't use that phrase or whatever. We've got to be quite conscious about it because we're speaking to the world now. As much as I've always tried to push us to be dirty or rougher. We're all sort of realising we just need to keep it clean.

Sometimes, particularly with younger generations, giving attention, then creates conversation. ... But I don't want to get too into the conversation with them because it can be difficult for people to read ... boundaries.

BUILDING YOUR OWN AUDIENCE

The ability to build an audience was touched on by several sectors, especially Comedy as previously discussed. In different sectors, that audience was referred to as community or clients.

I actually picked up clients through advertising online that I now have in person. So, because of all that work that I did, … I [now] run my own practice. … That's very important, because that's how I develop, and it means that I can share more of what I develop with the people that I'm teaching.

It transitioned really seamlessly, which was really awesome. It was just so nice. If we had met someone online, or they came along to a class in person and said I did your Instagram lives, I absolutely love them. They got me through lockdown. That was a really beautiful part. Just that connection again, with people in person.

It's an undervaluing of that demographic which is really ironic because it's literally the most valuable. … And so, my approach was, now I'm gonna value that audience. And I'm just gonna make … for them.

Many conversations touched on the digital realm providing a platform without tastemakers and gatekeepers, which enabled more diversity of voices. In turn, audiences were now influencing the gatekeepers, and where they looked for new talent.

I also think that there are women who will contribute to questions in the chat function that wouldn't put the hand up in a room that's male dominated.

That's also the thing about being online is … in lots of ways it levels some playing fields. I don't have to go through the filtering up with an external third party [to approve me]. It's like here I am. And if you like it, come here. It has shown producers like there is room for comedy that's political and not traditional…. There's like so few Māori women in comedy, so I think when people feel seen or represented, then they will come. They will support.

So as podcasting has become easier and less technically demanding for you to figure out exactly how all the bits work because some technology platforms have solved those problems and made it easier, it has ushered in new people to make shows. It has widened the net in terms of who you hear from and who's successful. … as these platforms mature, they become easier to use. And that's when you get that democratisation of voices coming in.

That is a very clear and valuable merit that social media has, in that it gives … a lot of people who are from diverse backgrounds the experience necessary to then become people who give others the opportunity. … And now, those people who are from diverse backgrounds can now start to be the people who opened the doors for other people who would have never had a chance if they weren't in that position.

It is good that people in the TV industry are listening to what is happening in the world.

FINDING A GLOBAL COMMUNITY/ AUDIENCE

Digital platforms have given Kapa Haka accessibility to those who wouldn't have been exposed to it in the past. It is a glimpse into the Māori culture, its past, present and future. For Kapa Haka fans around the world, it's access to their favourite rōpū, waiata and haka. For many New Zealanders it's another way to connect back home. #Māoritok became a hashtag viewed globally, particularly with the success and global sharing of Ka Hao/Rob Ruha song, *35*.

Polyfest was live streamed through Whakaata Māori, allowing access to not only Aotearoa but the world. Statistics show top viewership came from Australia, USA and Hungary. Through their new partner, Pasifika TV, for the first time audiences in the Pacific watched the festival on TV at home. As always, festival content was also accessible on TikTok and Facebook to engage younger demographics. Without being present, live shoutouts on screen helped engage the audience even further while watching online. Some schools even showed the Livestream in their halls allowing students to watch performances together.

For dance, and fitness, the ability to reach a global audience opened up new opportunities.

This was epic, because … Everyone who was overseas, not just in Berlin, got to access [Company name]. And this was really exciting because it kind of felt like we were going global in a way.

Somewhere where you have the Zoom with me here and my mother in the UK. We're both dancing. I'm 7am, you're 7pm and were both dancing together

having that built in and integrated into the software. There's nothing like a shared experience.

I've got clients (customers) in America. I've got clients in Scotland, and I've got clients in Sweden. I find that with the online stuff, most of it is from people overseas. I guess when you're overseas New Zealand sounds like a pretty cool place.

Comedy too has found more attention from audiences globally.

We're in a really interesting space right now where kiwis are cool. Everybody wants a little piece of New Zealand. And so, you've got these people that 10 years ago didn't think we were a real country are now seeking out anything, whether it's Wellington Paranormal, whether it's the Alone Rangers. There is a thirst for our bizarre accent and our self-deprecating sense of humour.

In five years' time, I'd like to have grown my Instagram and TikTok to a point where it becomes sufficient for touring. So, if I take a show on the road or go on tour, people will know me from wherever, and they'll come to the show, and it can become self-sustaining. To have an audience waiting for you to tour.

However, by contrast some were keenly aware, when moving online, they were now operating in a global market, with global competition.

I guess I wouldn't try again, for a while online. Unless I could figure out some point of difference, something that will work.

1.9   Niche audiences

The power of 'niche' in the weightless digital economy was not a specific line of questioning, but a common theme that emerged across multiple industries. Further to the mindset of comedians building their own audience outside of the usual Comedy demographics discussed previously, there was the understanding that with the internet, and with global platforms, a small audience could be attracted on a global scale.

The reason I favoured TikTok, once I learned how it works, was that I understood that the algorithm allows you to reach audiences beyond New Zealand. … because TikTok is global, I'm building a global audience.

The global appeal of niche means the building of an audience for many who identify as marginalised and/ or minority, LGBTQI+, ethnicity, neurodiversity, and specific areas of subject interest in Fitness, Dancing and Comedy, for example.

It's better in the personal training industry to have more of a niche because then people come to you for a certain thing. You can't really coach everyone.

We would start doing more of what we've done in real life, which is creating themed courses. So, creating blocks. And making it very targeted. That is probably where we would go, I think if we were successful, and you'd start just micro targeting our niche, around the world.

The fandom is online now. … The community finds each other in real life. The fans meet up and eat cake and talk about how much they love the show and then those people consume everything [content]. Yeah, they've gone back and watched all the early videos online.

BUILDING COMMUNITY

While not expressly experienced by those that we interviewed, there was also some discussion around content creators/online practitioners who might have a wide audience, but build a smaller and more engaged community through platforms like Substack, or simply through email and Facebook groups. This would allow them to engage more authentically than via 'public broadcast,' and in some cases to monetise the small community, for example they pay a subscription for more content, and this is given a greater value exchange through the building of community.

1.10   Financial considerations

Many interviewees had experiences with a shifting economy in this new online environment. The cost of operating online added new expenses for subscriptions, new tech gear and data boosts, but the payment for their services was often less. This discrepancy was experienced widely across Comedy, Dance and Personal Training.

As mentioned previously, some personal trainers and most dance studios experienced clientele who expected reduced rates. Comedians were offered fees that could be as low as 50% of their usual live fee. Many created new engagements/classes for a koha donation, and lots of practitioners were giving away their content/expertise and time for free in support of the community and to ensure goodwill for their business/brand.

During that first lockdown, we said we'd be offering Instagram live classes. And we also gave them access to another group's online pre-recorded lessons. We're like, if you just need something, we've got this content sitting here. Let's just share and share alike (between studios) so we basically just gave them two weeks' worth of dance classes, I think for free.

I ended up just creating a whole bunch of online classes that were all … individual one-off classes … it ended up being more like four or five times a week.

… I was running these [classes] on a koha model. You contribute $20 or whatever you can contribute. … I paid 80% of the koha to whoever was guest teaching it. … it was nice to, you know, throw money back at out of work comedians at the time who were broke.

There were exceptions to the trends, with some people having to enforce old standards.

The other thing that came up really quickly in 2020, was money. And what you get paid for doing online stuff. And I insisted, right from the beginning. I had to argue this with at least one of my agencies. I will charge exactly what I charged for being in the room. … Because once they've paid less, they'll never want to pay more again.

In the creative realm, there was significant income earned from online brand/profile building, advertising, sponsorship, new opportunities and, in one example, a TV series has now been commissioned from an online creation.

I do remember and still feel a sense of satisfaction that I could monetize something that I was doing for love.

Others saw the opportunities for business growth that have come out of this period.

We've created this franchise package and it was great because all of the videos of classes and choreography that we have online, we were able to then create an archival directory that had all of our

classes. … That could last you for maybe a year if you wanted.

I reckon there's a huge opportunity for when members leave gyms. Because everyone leaves eventually, for whatever reason. … Even though they couldn't attend that gym anymore, they could still be a subscriber in another way. It would be quite cool to use it as a catchment tool and not lose them completely forever.

1.11 Mental health and wellbeing

Happily, most spoken to had a good understanding about, or were learning, how to best manage their own mental health and wellbeing in an online realm. Many spoke about their ability to limit their screen time and interact in the real world, go for a walk or run, for example.

...social media is the first thing that I take away, because it's not a necessity for me to function in my business. So, it's the first thing that I go actually no I don't need to do that.

If I am feeling good and feeling fulfilled and confident in my craft, then I feel fine [with the internet responses]. I might encounter a bad comment and be like, that's a shame. ... I'm trying to get better at recognising that maybe now's not the best time to read the comments.

Actually, I got a burner phone recently, and it's ... an old school Nokia. I can't get Instagram on it. All I can do is text and call. I've given it to four people, two of them being my parents, one being my sister. And sometimes like some evenings, I'll turn my [other] phone off and I'll be off the grid [with my Nokia].

Many could see the benefits that the online space provided during the time of lockdowns, as a means of connection to their whānau, friends, community.

Given the global lockdowns, others were able to reconnect with people across the world that they would normally only see when they were in the same location.

I had parents saying, the only thing keeping my kids going is the dance classes, and all the extra stuff you're providing. So, I think a lot of it was just supporting all the kids, especially mentally and keeping them all going and providing that social interaction with their dancing friends online.

Others found when their regular ways of performing or working were cut off from them, online spaces offered an alternative, even if it wasn't the same.

I feel less worthy … than when I have work. That just comes from my job which was just you know, like, you get paid if you have work, and if you don't have work, you think to yourself, What am I doing? Yeah, so I think maybe having followers and having people engage with your content is [really like a digital version of that validation].

However, it was also noted that this online work was different.

It's exhausting to emcee a full day of an event. It's twice as exhausting, if not more, to do that from home.

All that were involved with clients, students, and especially children were well aware that as good as it was to have the online option, that outlet for positive wellbeing, was impacted by the online format.

I personally felt like … there was a really big mental health association with Zoom, and I think that's the hardest thing when you talk to like a kid or a student or a teacher, whose creative outlet is dance and so they've had a bad day, but the dance classes should be the outlet to kind of release those emotions. Zoom was very soul destroying; it was kind of taking away that outlet. There was no real escape for our teachers and our kids.

1.12 Technical advice and lessons

There was an understanding in those first six months, what I refer to as pandemic rules…. this is gonna look a little shit. … [and] sound a little shit. We're all in it. I think that's changed in the past few months as countries have come out of it, at different rates. And so, depending on where you're coming from or to in the world, there'll be an expectation of professionalism in presentation [online] that wasn't there before.

Across nearly all interviews, there was a feeling that COVID-19 provided the impetus to make changes in their technical systems, upgrade or try new things.

I think COVID gave us a real clear reason to go, okay, what are the tools that exist? And how do we utilise them to their fullest.

A wide variety of technical lessons and advice were gathered from participants covering such topics as: planning ahead; creating rules of engagement; creating a buzz; presenting/going live; light and sound; future proofing; learning and improving; phone filming; artistic tips; and tech gear.

I started filming to create a video library. Different bodyweight movements and then categorising them on my computer. … So, I've got a video library now of probably 600 Plus moments. What I need to do

now is get a good microphone and overlay audio on top of the video so I'm explaining what's happening.

Running it by myself, I can handle about 20 people. Larger events attracted 200-300 people, and in those cases I would have to get a helper to do room monitoring. With Zoom, there's a lot of letting people in the room and muting people who are chatting and this person over here their mic is making echoey noises.

What I wish I'd done: keep better records, keep my notes so I can rinse and repeat when I do it again. Look at what lessons/sessions could be passive income streams. What can I achieve without my being there.

1.13 Technical issues

As might be expected, there were plenty of technical issues encountered within this new environment. The most common complaint seemed to be internet speeds and upload times.

But then our flat did run into some issues, … you don't actually know, as the person on the video, … that you've cut out. … you see people typing in the comments, "You're frozen" or "we can't see you anymore," and you're just like, Oh my gosh. So yeah, internet connection did cause a bit of stress for me at my flat that I was in at the time.

It would take hours, hours to upload each episode. And everyone had to get off the internet for the whole morning, while it uploaded, and then get ready for the timed release.

The internet wasn't great, especially for the ones who were flatting but we made it work.

As well as the pains of Zoom not working well for singing especially, there were other wish lists of platforms that were felt to be out of reach.

Vimeo OTT is exactly what we needed. But its starting point is $37,000 per annum. We're like how can you? … It's like the Netflix of building your own on demand fitness stuff.

Very few ran into issues like Zoom-bombing.

I have put out notices to students etc about the scam industry. A hacker will come in and post a link [in the FB event page, or school page etc] that looks a lot like the link to the class, and their link goes to a paywall demanding a credit card. … It's happened to me. It's happened to my students. I just have to watch … for scammers.

1.14 The risks of working online

Developing content for online consumption comes with both risks and rewards, and so a risk can be an opportunity, an opportunity a risk.

TROLLS, ABUSE AND NEGATIVE FEEDBACK

Somewhat surprisingly, nearly all those spoken to said that they did not experience much negativity online, or they rated the impact of any such negativity online as very insignificant to them.

I think I've spent so much time online from such a young age that I know that essentially internet people aren't real. The kinds of things that people say online is not anything they would say in real life.

It's nothing that was destabilising or demoralising.

Of course, there were exceptions.

You finally feel some sense of security and ownership of yourself, and then you get like this comment from someone who doesn't know you, being like, I figured you out in these 30 sec videos and fuck you.

I think being just any female in the public eye at all. You just get the dumb guys being like, here's 40 dick pics in a row, you know, like that. Quite literally, that, recently.

A common thread, from a range of career levels, was that engagement via their own channels was almost exclusively positive, whereas content shared, cross-promoted or linked via another platform (for example, a broadcaster or a brand), resulted in the most vitriol engagement. This issue extended into commentary about specific social media platforms: Instagram, for example, is a 'following', an audience that has chosen to follow that creator, whereas TikTok is not, and the audience is 'served' content by a range of content creators. Online commentators seemed to consider that third party posting provides them a degree of anonymity that allowed for abuse. Some participants commented that this can have an impact on their decision-making in accepting work and consider if the third party will moderate and/ or delete unnecessary commentary and keep the creator
(and their friends and family) safe.

Obviously, I'll get the odd racist … but I don't actually feel that. I delete it. Not for me, but because it feels like since it's my space, I'm responsible for what other people are consuming, even in the comment section. Yeah, because I can control that. So, I will delete stuff.

I've seen ruthless TikTok comment sections. TikTok feels like the jungle [whereas] Instagram, it's quite easy to curate and keep yourself safe.

UNSOLICITED ENGAGEMENT

Some of the side effects of building an online audience, is that individuals can be a little over-invested in a content creator, and while not strictly 'trolling' the effects of some engagements can still be difficult. On platforms that have subscription and patron models, those donating can feel an ownership of a creator's online career, an entitlement to their time, and expectations that need managing.

It's parasocial relationships, when people think they know you, because they've consumed you and then they have an expectation of you.

I can get quite annoyed at my followers generally because I get random messages too. I'll get like, hey, just wondering if you think it's appropriate for me to get this tattoo... I'm not a cultural advisor, or ... I'm trying to be a better pākehā and I'm just wondering what I should do about this.

While no interviewees felt that any individual engagement was particularly significant to them or their own wellbeing, they did make commentary around their mental health and managing how they engage online.

I've had to keep an eye on it [mental health] and really deploy the mental health tools in my toolbox when I've needed to. ... There's no world where a human being is mentally capable of processing 1,000 opinions about them in two hours of scrolling ... that's like doing a gig at the Civic Theatre and after the gig going up to each audience member one at a time to ask, What did you think of it? ... That is a nightmare.

CONTENT CREATOR BURNOUT

Those spoken to in our interviews were mostly fairly new to being 'online content creators' (since the pandemic). Those that had given themselves targets and plans of how much they would grow their following, or how often they would post, articulated a small amount of burnout and exhaustion. Conversely, those that had no schedule to meet and made when they wanted to, seemed to articulate less of this. Many, including those that chose not to make content online were aware of the concept of content creator burnout, as something that's becoming further articulated as the growth of content creators continues.

The biggest challenge is idea generation, and working on the net in that space, really burns you out, trying to generate content every day. … You see this happening so much on every platform, all these creators are burning themselves out of the pressure cooker. … eventually when you do the original stuff, you're gonna run out of that and you're gonna land into the same territory that everyone else is doing, until that's where you have to balance your energy.

Others spoke of the pressure that social media and their associated engagement tools create.

With online stuff, it's like, 63% of people moved on when I hit this bit in the video so I will stop revealing stuff about myself because when I do that, they leave, and they find it boring. So yeah, that totally happens. … TikTok is a real killer for this. … it's destroying everyone's attention span, so it's a little bit… like a race to the bottom.

Followings go up and down which is an interesting thing. … you have to weigh up the worth of things because let's just say I do three comedy shows a year. I want those to hit the most. I want that to be the biggest thing.

BAD BRAND ALIGNMENT

Some working in this space were scared of making bad decisions in terms of alignment with a brand or a brand's kaupapa, and of making choices that might limit or change the path of their future trajectory.

I'm quite conscious of what I align myself with [in regard to brand alignment] I mean, there's been stuff that I've only just recently come off of that I wasn't fully aligned with... Maybe it's a privilege for me to have that mindset. I think some people actually can't afford to be picky with themselves, but because I can I feel obligated to use that.

HYBRID MODELS

Coming out of lockdowns, and back into the studio, posed a new problem for many in dance instruction.

Even now we've always offered a hybrid Zoom and in person model. We hate it. ... It's really hard to focus on the kids in the room, and the kids on the screen.

It's very challenging, teaching a class in the studio and having someone on Zoom. At the start of this year, our staff were just over it, let's just not do that anymore. But it also kind of got to the point where I think you have to be able to offer that because people won't sign up otherwise.

While it could have been seen as an opportunity to extend their clientele reach and maximise attendance beyond the physical capacity of a room, all participants spoken with disliked hybrid dance classes, and felt the benefit did not stack up to the obstacles of serving them.

Yeah, it was a challenge. It really was. And it became an alternative to attending class which is not what we intended it to be. I felt the quality of the present class lesson dropped.

It was sort of a nightmare for teachers. I guess for the first few new classes, teachers kind of adjusted to it. But then they slowly gradually started to realise that the pace is quite difficult. Because the real time learning for the in-class studio students was really good. But then there was a bit of a lag when it came to the online classes.

One studio experimented with a different model of the hybrid class, in order to accommodate staff isolation requirements that were frequent.

This year, I purchased a projector. Because this year has been like a whole different learning challenge. … our staff have just been ripped through with COVID. … So, at the start of this year, when staff were off, and isolating, but still well enough to teach, we would project them on class studio.

However, in live performance such as comedy, hybrid events offer the opportunity to maximise audience reach and income, via additional online viewership of a live performance. This likely works better than the dance instruction model, as those watching online do not need to be specifically catered to or engaged to participate.

[We performed] a live show. … And we also live streamed that show and sold tickets for the live stream. … So, we did a digital GA ticket, and the idea was you watched at the same time we were live, but you had 48 hours or something. It went really well. We made more money off of [the live stream tickets] than we did on the live show.

Live streaming and re-streaming do come with their own body of work to manage though.

I tried to lob it everywhere [re-stream on multiples]. I think it actually got a bit hard because you've got to kind of manage each stream individually while it's up, like check comments, check its working, check its

live. … When you're a one-man band, it does get a bit taxing.

The hybrid model of conferencing also went through a development during COVID-19. Previously the domain of big and tech companies, the last few years saw many more companies experimenting with hybrid, and realising they were able to serve a larger attendance.

So, I had done hybrids before…. you've got 500 people in the room, but you've also got a camera down the back of the room, and it's being live streamed to people all over the world. And their questions come up on the screen behind you … I feel even more comfortable with that hybrid situation now.

FAIRNESS

A new question to arise out of the shift to online was that of fairness, both for access to equipment, Wi-Fi, data but also looking at how that might bleed into whether people could even participate in online activities.

For some people, like some of our kids, I believe, didn't come online, because they were too embarrassed of their house or their surroundings. And that's heart-breaking. But that's the reality, you know, or they've got too many little siblings that are too hōha when they're trying to do their dance.

Even in competition, nationals and worlds went online and I was like, What is the point of that? ... how was that fair to be judged in dance where there is someone who's got the top of the range, computer equipment and video equipment then everything looks amazing. And then you've got a group of kids that want to enter, they just dance for fun that are doing it in their garage. ... I was not a fan of it.

Conversely, for some the online space was seen to break down some barriers

When the students aren't in front of a mirror, and they don't have that constant view and thought process ... I feel like they actually dance better in a performance. ... So, I think the plus side of doing zoom without mirrors was that the kids became a little bit more ... willing to let go.

... Online they were fearless. Because they were in their living rooms, and it wasn't quite real. Totally fearless at home, which allowed them to break

through a bunch of different barriers at the same time. But they weren't getting to practise facing their fear. They still had to do that practice eventually.

1.15   The limitations of working online

One of the most frequent lines of conversation around the limitations of working in an online way was music and rhythm. This came up repeatedly and significantly for Kapa Haka, Polyfest and Dance Instruction, and was a factor of disruption for Personal Training too.

… there was a big headache for our tap teacher and then also musical theatre. … it was really hard if they were working on something like some kind of a harmony or some kind of like a different melody.

Tap dancing and musical theatre were felt to be the biggest impacted amongst the dance genres, but all genres were impacted in terms of accuracy, timing, framing, precision of movement and even just the left and right basics.

Teaching the words and ensuring pronunciation was perfectly correct was mentioned by Polyfest leaders and students. Harmonising and hearing the blend of vocals are an essential part of Kapa Haka and for Polyfest competitors so until there is software that can achieve that, the benefits of practising online are limited.

We could use technology for the early stages of learning words and actions, but not long-term.

I recorded myself on video and send it to the tutor who would upload to Microsoft Teams to learn from home.

For comedy, many felt that stand-up performance simply could not function well in an online,

conference platform context. Participants said they see stand-up as a conversation, between performer and audience, and the one-sided necessity of conference platforms did not translate.

Doing online stand-up was never appealing to me, it didn't really make sense.

This sentiment repeated many times across the interviews. Some shifted from this position during the course of the pandemic, but most did not, and instead moved their creative talents into other outputs. Quite a few of the Comedy interviewees expressed the grief at the loss of their first love- other outputs were fine, but they weren't stand-up.

I didn't want to do [stand-up] … I didn't write material to try it at Zoom open mics. … This is not what I do. You know, this is not satisfying the part of me that needs to perform stand-up comedy.

I think there was a key element that made it bad and certain things that made it good. When people who were putting on gigs … tried to make the comedy show reflect a live experience, it was bad. … But when, when a corporate or a gig just was like … this is what it is and we're going to lean into what it is, and we're not going to try and make it something else. It wasn't great or anything, but it was so much better.

1.16 Online will never be the same as kanohi-ki-te kanohi

Overall, the context of most interviews leant into the fact that they were making the best of a bad situation. Switching to online delivery, online creativity, online community was a necessity, and they learnt some things along the way, but the value of their art form, or profession, comes from an in-person connection that online simply cannot provide.

I think a lot of the value (of what we do) especially for the children with disabilities is the social connection and social interaction. Like that's something core at the heart for autism, and other disabilities is that social connection.

The difficulty with online training is you aren't able to really experience the person and how the wairua of that person is.

It's just awful. And so, we just found the internet was just so hard to get that right, so we just said do your best, do it. If you're enjoying it. If you're struggling, don't worry about it.

Kanohi-ki-te kanohi is the main preference for performance. I want to be able to smell and hear your performance, I can't sense that from on-screen.

I would just say that in general, although we've seen so many positive things come out of online classes. I think it's still safer in person, especially when it comes to our conversations that we have before we dance.

Because, you know, live is kind of unreplaceable, as far as a performer is concerned, and it's just something special that, I think, is also a really critical part of the life and health of an entertainment industry.

1.17 The benefits of working online

Despite the detailed obstacles and issues, it is clear that there are many benefits to be gained from working online. Those interviewed noted that moving online had helped in the retention and attraction of clients, and that when in-person was not available they were able to progress existing goals. For those that build profile and brand online, there was real world impact for them, and financial gains to be had. A content creator can earn an above median salary from a few advertising deals published through social media platforms.

For minority and marginalised content creators, being online has provided direct access to their own communities without gatekeepers. This benefit has enabled digital communities to develop, and individual content creators to grow in skill and profile in response to their audience. In turn, this situation contributes to a greater diversity of voices in an online space.

During a time when many things felt out of content creators' control due to COVID, those that really applied themselves online felt like they had achieved more autonomy in their career, were able to positively affect the success (and sustainability) of their business and had more ability to influence the opportunities that came to them. Some have recognised the growth opportunities of the online space, and responded with global reach ambitions, or diversified income stream plans.

The most frequently mentioned benefit from those we interviewed was at the personal level. During COVID-19, online had allowed them to stay connected to their family, friends and community, and work, which had been invaluable for their wellbeing.

Appendix Two:

Te Amokura Report

The voices of Māori & Pasifika performing arts

**Insights report
2022**

Prepared for

**TOI MAI**
Workforce
Development
Council

Appendix Three:

Interview Data

53 interviews of 59 persons were conducted, comprised of: 15 people in Comedy, 12 in Personal Training, 15 in Dance Instruction, 12 in Kapa Haka, and five in Polyfest

63% interviewees identified as women, 34% identified as men (3% prefer not to identify)

Interviews by Gender

- Female
- Male
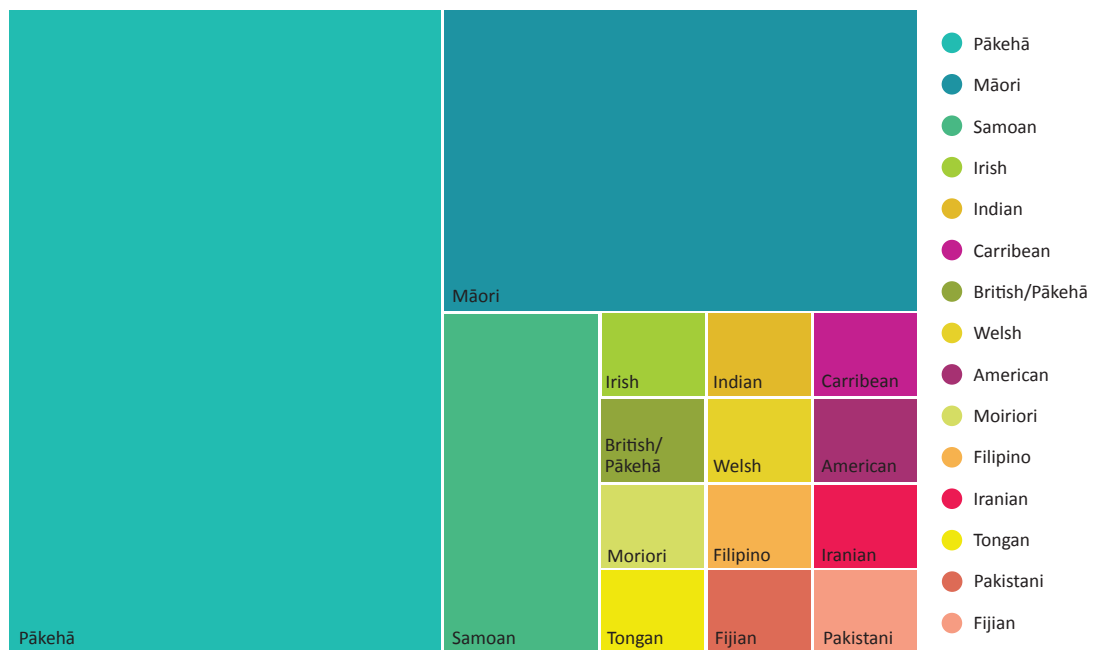- Prefer not to answer
- Non-Binary
- Other
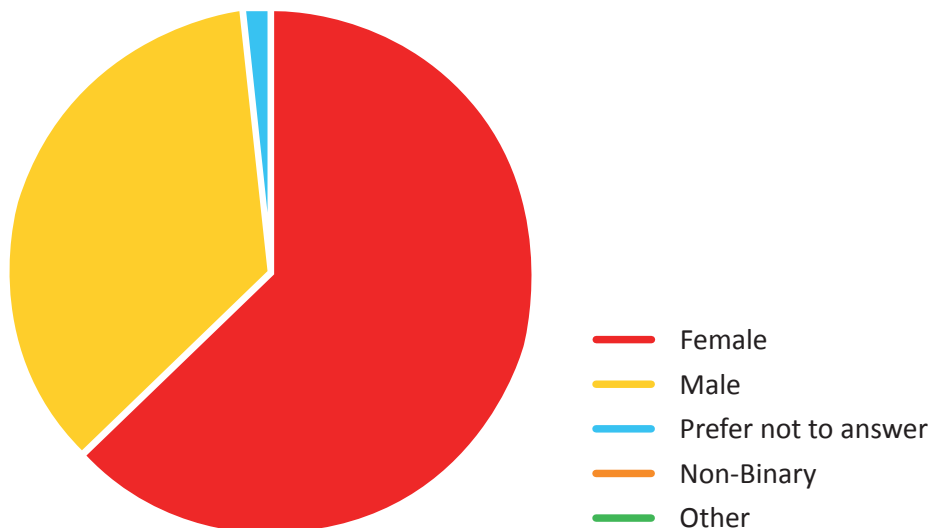
There was a good spread of ages across those interviewed, with the most represented age bracket being 31-35 years old, with 26% of interviews

Interviews by Age

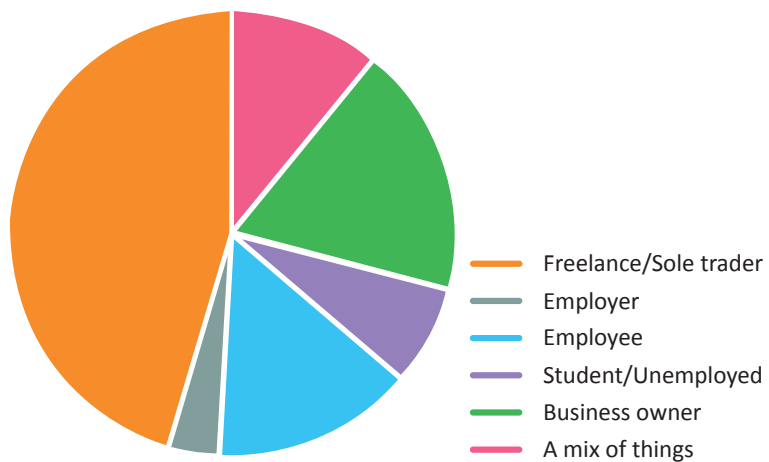| Age	Interviews
66–70	0
61–65	1
56–60	1
51–55	3
46–50	4
41–45	7
36–40	10
31–35	15
26–30	11
21–25	5
15–20	4
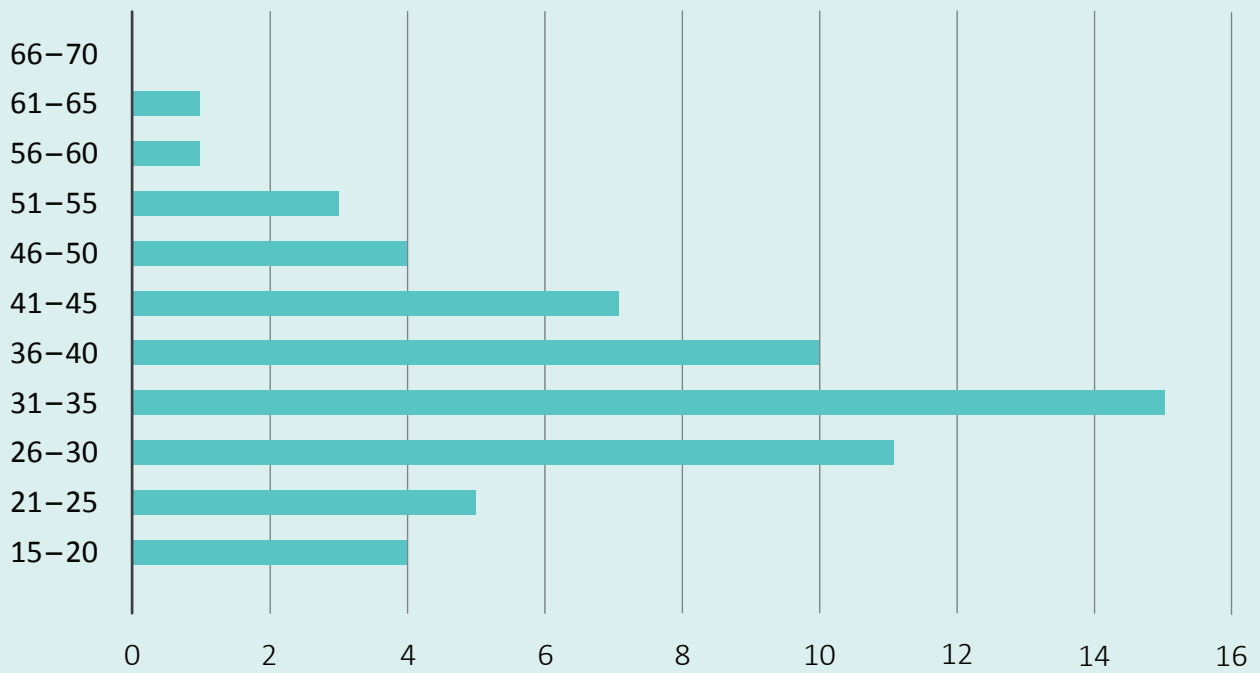
Multiple participants identified as more than one ethnicity, with Māori and Pākehā being the most identified with 16 and 30 participants respectably.

Interviews by Ethnicity

Pākehā
Māori
Samoan
Irish
Indian
Carribean
British/Pākehā
Welsh
American
Moiriori
Filipino
Iranian
Tongan
Pakistani
Fijian

Interviews by Employment Type

Freelance/Sole trader
Employer
Employee
Student/Unemployed
Business owner
A mix of things

45% participants identified as sole trader/freelancer, 18% as business owner, 15% as employee, and a range of other responses from participants that sat in multiple employment scenarios.