

Amaterasu Za Website Research

Research Plan, User Interviews, Findings

OVERVIEW

Amaterasu Za is a New York City-based nonprofit theater organization that offers bilingual Japanese-English performances, classes, workshops, and online events promoting cultural exchange. The current website was built in Weebly by the organization's founder. Amaterasu Za's unique offerings have garnered some interest, but information on the website is difficult to find. The high level goals are to redesign the website, make it easy to learn about and sign up for events, and come up with a social media strategy that is effective but also sustainable for the current volunteer organizers.

RESEARCH GOALS

Amaterasu Za has a niche but very passionate audience of theater and Japanese culture enthusiasts. Their online presence should exhibit the uniqueness and value of their offerings. To best accomplish this, we are seeking to answer the following questions:

1. What entices someone to participate in a local or online theater event?
2. What information does a site user need in order to feel comfortable donating?
3. What are some of the pain points of the current Amaterasu Za website?
4. What are comparable organizations doing successfully in their online presence to attract interest and donations?

RESEARCH METHODS

1. User interviews
2. Competitive analysis

USER INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

I recruited 5 research participants via social media who met the following criteria:

1. Interested in theater, particularly Japanese theater forms
2. Fluent in English and either fluent in or currently studying Japanese
3. Have donated to the arts

We then walked through the current website together via video conference and discussed their impressions, their points of confusion, and their typical preferences and behaviors when interacting with other theater and arts organizations online.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. When researching a theater event or organization, what kinds of things do you try to find out?
2. What are your overall impressions of the Amaterasu Za website?
3. Based on the website, what would you say Amaterasu Za offers?
4. What would you do to find more information about them?
5. What would you like to know that you feel is missing?
6. Based on what you learned, would you be interested in attending an event or workshop?
7. Based on what you learned, would you be interested in/feel comfortable donating?
8. What kind of information do you feel you'd need to know about an arts organization before donating?
9. How do you prefer to donate? (org website, 3rd party donation website, send check, etc.)
10. How do you find out about theater events happening either online or locally?
11. When attending a theater performance/event/etc, how do you prefer to reserve and pay? (Buy tickets in advance online, buy at the door, reserve online and pay at the door, etc.)

INTERVIEW RECORDINGS

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/tkej27ycy0t8s/AACLUC2dOQdyZJaJ42dMFkvva?dl=0>

INTERVIEW NOTES

Katie, 25F

English teacher & directorial assistant; aspiring theater director

From Boston, MA; lives in Yokohama, Japan

Impressions of the Amaterasu Za website:

- Confused by the size of the logo image, has to scroll down to see what the organization does
- Wants to see more pictures of performances; “theater is very visual”
- Took a while to find contact information

- Confused by “workout sessions”
- Can’t find when the organization was established and what their history is
- Is very interested in their offerings
- Wants a better impression of the quality of their work

Needs to know:

- Who is doing the creating, what have they done in the past

Behaviors and preferences:

- Donates time instead of money
- Cold contacts organizations to volunteer her time
- Finds out about theater/arts events via social media, mostly researching individual actor/staff’s twitter accounts
- Prefers to buy tickets to performances/events online if refunds are available, otherwise at the door as long as there isn’t a danger of tickets selling out
- Would google to look up more information beyond the website

Laura, 23F

English teacher, theater enthusiast

From Minnesota; lives in Hyogo, Japan

Impressions of the Amaterasu Za website:

- Wants to see what they do without scrolling down
- Wants to see a more basic overview description of the organization
- Is a visual person and wants to see more pictures
- Unsure about which events are upcoming and past
- Struggled to find contact information
- Very interested in their bilingual and all-female offerings
- Wants better organization of information - donation info hard to find, contact form hidden under classes
- Expected a donate button to the right
- Would love to see clips of online events

Needs to know:

- What kind of projects are they working on
- What is her money going toward

Behaviors and preferences:

- Has already donated and viewed the Oedipus Rex livestream
- Found out about Amaterasu Za via social media recommendation
- Regularly donates money to arts organizations
- Prefers to donate via a website rather than something like PayPal; no extra steps

- Finds out about theater/arts events via social media, acquaintance recommendations, or location and/or interest-based lists/compilations (e.g.: Minnesota community theater groups)
- Would ask friends/social media contacts for more info beyond the website
- Prefers to buy tickets to events online if there is danger of them selling out, prefers to buy at the door if she is not sure of her schedule

Alex, 21F

Japan studies student and theater enthusiast from England

Impressions of the Amaterasu Za website:

- Design is very simple
- Wants to see offerings on landing page
- Hard to understand if events are past or upcoming
- Would prefer better organization, i.e. reverse chronological format on the ongoing projects page
- Info in general is clearer on other pages than on home page
- Website piqued interest because offerings are specifically right up her alley

Needs to know:

- Summary of offerings
- Legal name of organization for research prior to donating
- What donation money is being used for

Behaviors and preferences:

- Finds out about theater events via friend recommendation, local advertising, and social media
- Likes to buy tickets online and receive a physical ticket as a memento

Carol, 32F

Japanese translator & theater enthusiast from Amsterdam

Impressions of the Amaterasu Za website:

- Design is bland
- Wants to see photos on the home page
- Wants to see video clips
- Hard to understand which events are ongoing and past
- Would like to know which events are live vs streaming
- Had a difficult time parsing the copy because all text was the same size/color
- Wants to know more about team's roles within the organization not just their pasts as professionals
- Wants to see pictures of the team members in action with Amaterasu Za

- As someone familiar with Japan and Amaterasu she would like to see some more information about Amaterasu and her connection to theater
- Lots of text, copy needs to be spread into more digestible blocks

Needs to know:

- Clearer explanation of offerings
- Current and past projects, upcoming schedule
- What donation money is being used for
- Snippets of classes/events, preferably on social media
- WHY they do what they do

Behaviors and preferences:

- Finds out about theater events via social media and theater news websites, local library, etc
- Likes to buy tickets online
- Would donate to an organization doing work that interests her even if she cannot physically take part in events/activities
- Always checks instagram or youtube first when researching a theater organization

Taylor, 29F

Theater enthusiast from Chicago, works at the Japanese consulate, has organized informational panels on Japanese theater at local anime conventions

Impressions of the Amaterasu Za website:

- Text is difficult to read
- Wants to see photos and videos
- Finding critical information took a while
- Interested in the offerings but needs it to be clearer when events are taking place and easier to sign up
- Would like to see team bios reorganized

Needs to know:

- What is offered, when, and cost

Behaviors and preferences:

- Prefers donating online
- Prefers buying tickets online
- Finds out about theater events via Facebooks events feature

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW FINDINGS

Goals:

All participants want a clear picture of what an organization offers before deciding whether to participate in an event or donate

Needs:

- Pictures and video
- Clear event schedule and easy signup
- Info on past events
- Breakdown of how donation money is being used
- Active social media accounts

Pains:

- Too much text
- Text hard to read
- Chronology of events unclear
- Unsure how to sign up for events
- Lack of photos makes offerings unclear
- Hard to find contact information

Motivations:

- Support work in the arts that is important to them
- Participate in events that provide a rare blending of their niche interests
- Learn more about Japanese culture

Behaviors:

- Find out about theater events via social media and friend recommendations
- Always check an organization's social media accounts
- Donate money online
- Buy tickets primarily online

COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS SUMMARY

How are comparable organizations organizing their information, attracting engagement, and staying active during the pandemic?

Web:

- Captivating photography & video
- Easy-to-find information
- Prominent donation CTA
- Prominent social media links
- Up-to-date calendar with booking capability

- Online events very clearly indicated

Social:

- Promote upcoming events
- Use imagery from past performances to keep feed active and continue showcasing offerings
- Snippets on YouTube or Instagram to entice participants
- Collaborate with contributors
- Showcase the organization's personality