Best Research Project/Initiative Winning Entry

Entrant:

Name of project

The Social Lives of Others

Description

This project was a commission from the BBC Digital Audiences team.

The BBC reaches 97% of the UK population each week with its programmes and services on TV, radio and online. Its long-held mission remains to inform, educate and entertain, and its digital offering is ever more important in providing something for all audiences and placing BBC at the heart what audiences do digitally. BBC has an extensive presence on social media, with hundreds of accounts designed to reach millions of people around the world every week.

The BBC Digital Audiences team is responsible for research and measurement of the UK audiences on digital platforms. As well as analysing and reporting on the day-to-day performance of the BBC's online properties, the team also conducts research exploring audiences' changing digital behaviours, needs and preferences, in order to inform editorial and strategic decision-making and, ultimately, maximise the reach and appreciation of the BBC online. The team's key internal stakeholders include the editors and managers of some of the BBC's biggest social media accounts including BBC News, BBC Sport, BBC One and BBC Radio 1.

Craft is a strategic insight agency specialising in the TMT sectors. We are guided by the

desire to illuminate the realities of how people make decisions, use media and what this means for advertisers, agencies and owners.

Our ethos is to 'Get Closer, Go Deeper.' That means immersing ourselves in the realities of audience behaviour when collecting data, analysing it using rigorous techniques and theories from across academic disciplines.

We aim to understand what consumers really do, not just what they say they do. We are method-neutral and platform agnostic in our approaches. While employing traditional ethnographic, qualitative and quantitative methods (face-to-face and online, be that app or browser-based), we are increasingly tending towards in the moment and passive data collection, as well as immersive and observational techniques. We continue to pilot and harness the latest technologies to collect data.

Analytically we continue to involve academics to further our thinking. We are collaborating with the School of Media and Communications at Bournemouth University and a media psychologist at the University of Salford to develop a framework explaining the needs satisfied by a range of media consumption behaviours.

We are fortunate to have been commissioned to address a wide variety of strategic and tactical business needs. As well as showcasing the value of audiences Craft uses audience insight to inform:

•Platform and distribution strategies

• Content and editorial strategies, across broadcast, mobile, print, digital, social and online platforms

• Brand, sales and commercial strategies

• Product development

Our clients come from across the TMT sector, including broadcasters, telcos, platform providers, social networks, consumer electronics manufacturers and publishers.

Explanation

According to Ofcom 58% of adults use social media weekly, for 52 minutes per day. Analyses show 16-24s are not only considerably likelier to use social media more, but also to use Instagram, WhatsApp and Snapchat alongside Facebook and Twitter. The majority of BBC's social media activity focused on Facebook and Twitter. With young audiences at the forefront of the BBC's digital strategy, the project had two main objectives, namely to provide:

1. A deeper understanding of young audiences' usage and perceptions of newer social networks in relation to more established ones and wider digital media consumption

2. Insight on which (if any) services the BBC should prioritise, and how it can deliver best-in-class content to build/strengthen its relationship with young audiences

The project's exploratory nature necessitated ethnographic and qualitative methods, supplemented by analysis of existing data and a panel survey. The approach was informed by the needs to:

• Meet the audience on their turf – to maximise engagement we used tools sympathetic to the user experience, in environments where the audience is naturally active.

• Capture contextualised data in the moment – recall of fleeting, ephemeral snippets of behaviour can be poor. Methodologies relying on recall can suffer from unreliability in self-reporting claimed behaviour and a tendency towards the generic. Furthermore, context is king in helping explain why a certain behaviour may or may not be significant

• Ensure that findings were reflective of day-to-day experiences, rather than a single snapshot in time when insights may be skewed by individual pieces of content

That meant using smartphones, where the majority of relevant behaviours take place, to collect data longitudinally and at the point of consumption wherever possible. Beyond that we deployed digital data collection techniques including EyeCams and online communities. The approach consisted of:

1. A weeklong phase of smartphone screen capture – 30 participants used an app to capture screenshots and provide contextualising commentary of all social media usage. It proved so successful we received 2,140 uploads, a record response

2. A weeklong task-based video ethnography phase – placing AV capture glasses and FlipCams with eight participants to capture POV video of their usage. Participants demonstrated their behaviours in key genres (news, music, sport, entertainment), and shot contextualising pieces-to-camera. This generated almost 18 hours of footage, all rigorously time-coded and analysed

3. An online community – the original 30 participants evaluated different uses of the networks by BBC and other content providers

4. Home visits – co-analytical interviews exploring attitudes, interrogating hypotheses and future-gazing with the eight participants from the ethnographic phase

You can view a summary video introducing the method here - https://vimeo.com/154080815 (password: overshare).

As well as a story-led thematic presentation rich in individual stories, synthesizing desk research, quant, ethnographic and qualitative data, we devised a model of how young

audiences see the three services and where the BBC has permission to operate (attached). And we produced films illustrating use cases of the networks (password: overshare):

WhatsApp - https://vimeo.com/154080813

Snapchat - https://vimeo.com/154080814

Instagram - https://vimeo.com/154080816

Evaluation

The networks could be categorized thus:

• WhatsApp is home – communication tends to be private among tight and close social groups, permission for brands to operate here is hard-won

• Snapchat is a private members' club – activity takes place mostly among acquaintances but is less circumscribed than WhatsApp. Brands can operate here as long as they are tonally and topically congruent with the network's irreverent purposes

• Instagram is a truly open social network – its rules most closely match those of Facebook and Twitter. Brands are expected to operate here. Media brands must have a presence to be credible.

In addition to that broad typology, there were different needs for different genres and different expectations of where, when and how the BBC could operate. We provided strategic and executional guidance on how the BBC should develop its offer across the three networks by genre.

The outputs from the project were initially presented to social media editors and managers from divisions across the BBC including TV, Radio, News and Sport. Since then, the insights have been presented to staff across the organisation at large open sessions and circulated via the internal 'Audiences Portal,' resulting in the second most read page on the site in 2015. The insights have helped to inform editorial and strategic thinking for output as diverse as BBC Three and Panorama, and will continue to feed into decision-making as the BBC expands and enhances its presence on the newer social s platforms – in particular on Instagram and Snapchat.