

Segmentation in action

Sharon Ament makes the case for lifestyle segmentation

The Natural History Museum deals with the science of nature and, as you might expect from an organisation that is imbued with the science of taxonomy and systematics, classification and naming come naturally to all parts of the organisation. Being so familiar with naming and identifying species, it seemed a natural progression for the marketing team to adopt a similar approach to its audience work.

Back in 2005 we embarked on a programme called Audience Focus. It flowed from a major piece of work

relating to the re-branding of the museum and the re-organisation of our website. It aimed to set the strategic priorities in relation to the Natural History Museum's many and multifarious audiences (over 3.7 million visitors per year and 15 million website visits).

Audience Focus sharpened our act and allowed us to better understand our audiences and our market share. It provided a system for those teams responsible for developing products and programmes, and for our professional communicators to focus on priority audiences. From it led the attitudinal and behavioural segmentation that has driven our communications and product development since.

Our marketers turned to the experts in order to identify and define the segments. They worked with research company Muse to undertake an analysis of the market and used Target Group Index (TGI) to arrive at six different audience types. Being true to our type, we classified and named our segments: Cultured Pleasure Seekers, Learned Liberals, Family Focused, Older Outdoors, Theme Park Purists and TV Junkies. Of these we identified three segments that had the most propensity to visit the museum.

Family Focused

Typically defined as the average middle-class family, much of their leisure time revolves around the children and family. They are not particularly aware or progressive, as the family is the main priority; however, they believe that it is important for their children to learn new things.



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Cultured Pleasure Seekers

Typically defined as students and young professionals making the most of life. They are active and sociable with a hedonistic streak and have a clear interest in the arts and culture.

Learned Liberals

Typically defined as middle-aged 'culture vultures' who are either independent adults or parents who have slightly older children. They are cultured, liberal, socially aware and strong-minded. They are spiritual, adventurous and like to be challenged.

Apart from school groups, overseas visitors and specific under-represented audiences, to date these three audience types have been prioritised in our work with the general visiting public, the group that comprises most of our visitorship.

Taking this approach necessitates regular reviews and, as I write, we are currently debating expanding these priorities to include Theme Park Purists. This follows work undertaken in 2008, which further refined our overall segmentation and which brought more intelligence about this segment to the fore.

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While segments that have children will remain core to the museum – and we will continue to concentrate programming and communications towards these audiences – Cultured Pleasure Seekers and Learned Liberals without children offer the greatest opportunity for growth and we have developed a number of activities specifically towards these markets.

One most recent example of how segmentation can play a crucial part in our public offer can be seen with the *Darwin Big Idea* exhibition, which opened in November 2008 and will run until April 2009. Learned Liberals were identified as the audience for this exhibition, and the profile of this audience segment was used by the exhibition design team to tailor the exhibition content.

The Learned Liberal profile shaped the integrated communications campaign with concepts being tested on groups by Touchstone Partners Ltd to determine price sensitivity, visitor number forecasts and communications messages.

Krow, the museum's advertising agency, used the profile to ensure that their creative spoke to the Learned Liberal audience. Out of the many concepts one was chosen following online market research.

The communications aim was to hit every Learned Liberal within our target market area, and media buyers Total Media used the profile to target publications such as *Guardian Guide*, *Time Out* and *Sunday Telegraph*, and radio through a Classic FM Box Office campaign. As a result, we are exceeding our visitor targets, with a huge satisfaction rating and great sales in the exhibition shop.

Running alongside *Darwin* is the *Wildlife Photographer of the Year* exhibition and *Late Nights*, both targeted at Cultured Pleasure Seekers. While *Wildlife Photographer of the Year* has been a long-standing show at the museum, *Late Nights* was invented purely to capitalise on what was then a newly identified part of our market. We began *Late Nights* in

2005; it now takes place on the last Friday of every month throughout the winter and spring (October–April).

The *Late Nights* initiative proves that matching the product to the audience can bring great benefits. From the menus in the bars and restaurants to the choice of music, each element of the offer is tailored to that young aspiring audience. The tapas, champagne, cocktails and wines have been carefully chosen and appeal to the thousand-plus visitors that attend each night. People are choosing to visit *Wildlife Photographer of the Year*, to meet friends, to socialise in a cultural venue, and this is something totally new to the museum. In 2009 we have started experimenting with a café 'scientifique-type' debate about a hot intellectual Darwin-related topic – debates that have proved to be highly successful and have sold out.

For the Natural History Museum, choosing to concentrate on building particular audiences and applying our resources and energies to those audiences is really paying off. And as you might expect in this year that celebrates Darwin's bi-centenary, we will continue to evolve our approach to become even more successful. ●



Sharon Ament

Director of Public Engagement
Natural History Museum
e s.ament@nhm.ac.uk