the audience agency

Reviewing the Family Friendly Campaign- 1994-1995

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Assessing the Family Friendly campaigns led by Arts About Manchester, the report assessed not only the campaign elements (e.g. a qualitative assessment of print and information, welcome and staff, promotions) but also drew on wider research into the behavior of families in museums. Overall findings tracked marked developments in campaign performance, but recognised issues around product development alongside the campaign's long-term potential.

The Audience Agency is a not-for-profit organisation created out of the merger between All About Audiences, formerly Arts About Manchester, and Audiences London Plus in 2012.

Family Friendly 1994 & 1995

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Report on 1994 &1995 'Family Friendly' campaigns run by Visual Arts Marketing Development Unit, Arts About Manchester

1. 0 Background

Arts About Manchester is a membership based arts marketing consortium which has traditionally provided services to performing arts organisations. In 1993, a Unit was set up specifically to help Greater Manchester museums and galleries develop audiences. Many of the tried and trusted arts marketing tools, such as discounting ticket prices, advertising and subscription schemes, are not appropriate for a sector that largely provides free entry. Museum and gallery marketing budgets are also either modest or non-existent. There was unanimous agreement amongst curators on their aims (to increase visitor numbers and improve the quality of the visit) but they offered a diverse product, from galleries that concentrate on contemporary art to museums that display natural history objects, from sophisticated marketing operations to tiny volunteer-run museums unfamiliar with the concept. We therefore set out to make use of collective action within a generic campaign.

2.0 Families as target group

The target group we identified as meriting marketing action on a generic basis was the family: it was volunteered by the majority of gallery staff as an important target group for them, and likely to remain so, well into the next century. Campaigns were planned for the holiday periods autumn half-term 1994 (22 October-6 November) and Easter 1995 (8-23 April).

2.1 For the purposes of the campaign, a family was defined as an unaccompanied group consisting of at least one adult with at least one child assumed to be aged between 5 and 14. Using CACI site report, the current potential family market was calculated, against which we could measure success.

Total resident population within 30 minute drivetime: 1970,033
Adults with children 5-14: 275,000 (14% of total no. of population)
Of these, 30% attend both museums and galleries ie:

- 82,500 adults
- 45,000 households
- 1 household in 17

2.2 The group of adults of young family age is expanding as a percentage of population: an extra 1.1 million will be entering the age group 30-44 during the next decade. The family target market therefore offers significant growth rate.

3. 0 Background Research

Qualitative and desk research were both undertaken. Focus groups examined reactions to museum and gallery provision and to print, conducted with known family attenders and recruited using existing addresses collected at galleries.

3.1 Brief summary of qualitative research findings on provision: In brief, any provision was welcomed by parents, no matter how low-tech (such as drawing tables) but needed a guarantee it was always available rather than for one or two exhibitions only. The best provision engaged adults alongside their children. When galleries had made special provision in imaginative ways, parents felt it wasn't 'sold' sufficiently well in publicity ("we only came at the tail end of the exhibition. If we'd known there was going to be so much they could do, we'd have come earlier and told others about it too").

Attendants at some galleries were singled out for praise since their welcome had increased enjoyment of the visit to a significant degree.Similarly, if staff made their disapproval evident, families were reluctant to return.

Certain facilities inside the building were imporatnt to the quality of the visit (eg. toilets, plenty of places to sit, something to drink). If these were not available, even though the exhibition or workshop visited were excellent, the family was reluctant to return.

3.2 Brief summary of qualitative research findings on print: Reactions to print showed that parents picked up leaflets obviously directed at children (bright primary colours, simple text, child-like illustrations, photographs of children enjoying activity). When galleries included information about provision for families within their general print, it was often overlooked even by regular attenders who accused galleries of "burying" valuable details. Unless a gallery had a consistent repuation for provision they "wouldn't think of looking in the leaflet" and preferred a generic family leaflet available in parallel to the main publicity. Schools were singled out as a valuable information route that was under-utilised by museums and galleries.

3.3 Desk research: Findings from the Natural History Museum (published 1988) and the Science Museum (published 1992) about the behaviour of families in museums were both drawn on. These were characterised by the phrase "forage, broadcast and comment" describing the family unit's actions as they collect information and tell other family members about it. Long conversational periods during the visit led to a "remarkable retention of information" and emotional feelings attached to seeing exhibitions.

4. 0 Campaign strategy

The campaign was called **Family Friendly: museums and galleries** to ensure easy recognition of the product on offer.They ran during Autumn half-term 1994 (22 October-6 November) and Easter 1995 (8-23 April).

4.1 Product: Museums and galleries were presented with research findings (Arts About Manchester's own qualitative research as well as desk research) and an outline of the proposed campaign - Venues were requested to provide events and facilities and responded by organising hands-on activities alongside permanent collections and temporary exhibitions eg. drawing tables, bean-bags to sit on, games and quizzes to pick up at the front desk. One item was singled out at each venue that the casual family visitor could see or do (ie. independently of workshops). Children's menus or family offers were provided in cafes.

4.2 People: Personal communication with families, when information gathering and during a visit, was adressed by:

- Tourist Information Centre familiarisation trips. TIC staff often compile packs of information for local people who make use of their services for holiday information. Family Friendly branding kits for their premises were provided prior to the Easter '95 campaign.
- making visits to front desk staff to explain the campaign. This option was chosen rather than organising a meeting, because of their work schedules.

4.3 Physical evidence: A warm welcome was provided to families via:

- balloons (printed with the Family Friendly logo) used in entrances, foyers and on the street.
- facilities provided such as cafe menus, special furniture (Cornerhouse bought high chairs for their cafe before the second Family Friendly promotion) and baby changing facilities (signage to these was improved at several venues).

4.4 Promotion:

- a logo for generic and participants' publicity was produced

- a sufficiently attractive events guide was not an affordable option: instead, a flyer with Freepost coupon and telephone number was distributed. Responses yielded a potential audience, who were then mailed an internally produced guide, as well as providing a mailing list for future campaigns.

- bulk distribution plus leaflets handed to school children visiting museums and galleries, to adults queuing for the Lion King, leaving Ikea or Toys R Us. Easter '95 Family Friendly did not use hand to hand distribution in order to evaluate the contribution it makes to awareness.

- free balloons, printed with logo, were provided as an incentive to visit. A generic activity book was originally planned but proved too expensive to produce.

- our generic media work was supplemented by participants' local press work.

4.5 Price: The majority of venues and workshops were free; otherwise family tickets were offered.

4.6 Monitoring: A generic questionnaire was handed out with balloons. This was amended slightly for Easter Family Friendly (for example, the age categories of teenagers were broken down further). Qualitative research was undertaken by telephone after autumn Family Friendly . Family consumer panels were originally planned for 1995 but have not been set up: this idea will be followed up in 1996.

5.0 Results from questionnaires

5.1 Autumn 1994:

- 22 organisations took part in each, organising 31 events

- press and television coverage

- 553 requests received for the Family Friendly guide; if all acted on the information, this represents a possible 1500 visitors for GM museums and galleries during the Family Friendly 2 week period, assuming each enquirer brings 2 children.

- awareness: 27% had heard about Family Friendly before their visit, 55% through our campaign, 25% through the media and 20% through venues' own publicity.
  51% responded to our letter, 29% to a leaflet they picked up and 18% to a leaflet handed to them.

- word of mouth: 2% had heard about Family Friendly through school, friends or relatives

- although not an objective, we attracted a significant new audience: 47% were making their first visit to that venue and 8% were making their first visit to any museum or gallery in the last year.

- age of children within family group: of the 935 children classified on the questionnaire, 167 were under 5 (18%), 617 were between 6 and 11 (66%) and 153 were between 12 and 16 (16%).

- composition of the visiting family group: 45%groups were made up of children of between 6 and 11 without younger or older children with them, followed by 20% of 6-11s with under 5s.
  40% of visits were made by a male/female adult couple plus children.
  38% were made by female adult only plus children.

- satisfaction ratings via the questionnaire and the qualitative research: 87% chose a 'smiley face' to represent their visit, 11% chose a non-commital face and 2% were unhappy with their visit. Telephone research with a small sample (15 families) provided a 98% satisfaction trating and gallery staff reported many happy families leaving their buildings. made comments such as " its hard to find anywhere to go as a family that we can all enjoy", "..wasn't expecting to find anything on when we visited", "we didn't have to spend a fortune".

5.2 Results from Easter 1995:

- 31 organisations took part, of which 20 were museums or galleries and 11 were theatres, offering 38 events.

- Just over 1,000 requests for the Family Friendly guide, representing a possible 3,000 visitors, assuming each enquirer brings 2 children.

- awareness: 62% had heard about Family Friendly before their visit, 47% through our campaign, 6% through the media and 15% through venues' own publicity. 20% responded to a letter, 21% picked up a Family Friendly leaflet and 0.5 % were handed a leaflet.

- word of mouth: 18% had heard about Family Friendly through school, friends or relatives.

- first visits: 38% were making their first visit to that venue and 2% were making their first visit to any museum or gallery in the last year.

- childrens' ages and composition of the visiting family group remained similar to those in 1994. The questionnaire for the second campaign was modified to collect information about the age breakdown of those over 12 (18% were over 15).

- satisfaction ratings: 83% chose a 'smiley face' to represent their visit, 6% chose a non-commital face and none were unhappy with their visit.

- at the most conservative estimate, 6.7% of our target market experienced *Family Friendly* (3,000 visitors): we received just over 1,000 requests for the events guide. If all these visited just one event, taking 2 children with them, we achieved 3,000 visitors.

5.3 Comparisons and conclusions from results

- an unprecendented success in bringing Greater Manchester museums and galleries together in generic campaigns: the number of museums and galleries participating remained almost constant.

- approximately 4,500 visits were made over the two campaigns. In addition, those who visited participating museums and galleries during Family Friendly who may have been unaware of the promotion, would have benefited from the specially programmed events and free ballooons, augmenting their experience.
The number of adults reached represents 2% penetration of the potential market.

- word of mouth increased significantly over the 2 campaigns (from 2% to 18%), indicating that Family Friendly offers benefits that its target market will communicate effectively to others. This represents a valuable addition to other promotional routes.

- awareness of Family Friendly before a visit was made increased from 27% to 62%. Surprisingly, word of mouth contributed to this big increase more than the use of the core mailing list recruited from 1994. Awareness via the Family Friendly leaflet remained fairly constant (29% and 21%). The 'hand-to-hand' distribution used for autumn '94 resulted in too low a response rate (18%) to justify the expense within a relatively small budget, compared to the results achieved form bulk distribution.

- first time visits to the surveyed venue dropped (47% to 38%), as did the number of families making a first visit to any museum or gallery (8% to

2%). As awareness of Family Friendly grows, this is to be expected. If museums and galleries wish to introduce new family attenders, penetrating more of the potential market, future promotions must be adjusted accordingly (eg. taking leaflets further afield geographically).

● the age spread of children in the visiting family group was wider than originally assumed. Only approximately two thirds of all children visiting were aged between 6 and 11. This is traditionally the age group catered for by workshops, hand-outs etc., leaving the needs of under 5s and older teenagers unconsidered.

6.0 Issues

6.1 Product development still remains an issue for many museums and galleries. Awareness and understanding is now very high within Greater Manchester venues that not only is more work needed on product development (especially within galleries without permanent collections) but that this has to be constantly available. Products which are suitable for a family group, covering the wide age spread that Family Friendly attracted, pose a particular challenge to devise. Satisfaction ratings, however, remained gratifyingly high.

6.2 Monitoring within venues (ie distribution and collection of questionnaires) was erratic. Samples were not sufficiently large to provide meaningful results for individual venues, as originally intended. The motivation of front desk staff is usually the issue and can be undermined by a noticeable lack of enthusiasm or commitment from curatorial staff.

6.3 The relationship between education, curatorial, marketing and attendant staff was brought into focus. Family Friendly was most successful in those venues which have a good information system and all staff understand and accept they have roles to play in developing audiences; where the campaign was 'relegated' to education or marketing, potential was not realised and the 'feelgood' factor reported by some venues was not in evidence.

7.0 Future Development

7.1 Family Friendly campaigns in '94 and '95 have provided a good basis for future action: a mailing list of 1,500 addresses (which represents at least double that number of potential visitors) can be sent a Family Friendly Newsletter covering workshops, events and exhibitions at other holiday periods.

7.2 Family consumer panels can be recruited from the mailing list and used to augment the monitoring and provide more information on product.

7.3 The Family Friendly logo is now used by museums and galleries (and performing arts organisations) alongside events in their own publicity. We plan that its use should carry a minimum guarantee (baby changing facilities, something to do for families, a warm welcome etc.) and this

'kitemark' is currently being negotiated with all the museums and galleries in Greater Manchester.

7.4 Family Friendly museums and galleries could become a unique selling point for Greater Manchester, used as a promotional tool to families outside the area. Short break packages for families will be offered as part of Midsummer Manchester (Greater Manchester's arts season) and hotels approached to offer family accommodation deals at other holiday periods.

7.5 If sufficient sponsorship is raised, a generic incentive (for free distribution to all family visitors) will be developed which will reinforce the experience of the visit at home, such as an activity book.

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