Seminars: Strategic Workshops

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Using research to ensure you offer value to your public

Rachael Easton is Head of Audience Development at Audiences South. She previously worked for Tickets.com and Blackbaud selling ticketing systems and training people in how to use them. Previously she was Marketing Manager at Sunderland Empire. Rachael has expertise in the complexities of the use and value of secondary data within an organisation and her work frequently focuses on operational and staff driven approaches to data capture and marketing planning.

Leo Sharrock is Marketing Intelligence Manager at Audiences South. He graduated from the Shakespeare Institute in Stratford-upon-Avon with a Masters degree in Shakespeare Studies, before going on to crunch data for a living. His role at Audiences South focuses on helping organisations to understand which sections of the community to engage and on how those engagements might best be planned and developed. Recent work has included producing Arts Council England's annual Target Group Index national and regional reports and working with the Audience Data UK (ADUK) project to test Stephen Cashman's A-Z. He also produced an online guide to *Researching Audiences and Visitor Data* to support the AMA/ADUK's *Dazzled by Data* workshops.

This seminar looked at how marketing research can offer true insight, allowing your business planning to be based on solid evidence, your marketing to be more strategic, and your communications more effective. It offered an overview of different research tools that can equip your organisation to engage with its publics, and become more successful as a result.

Research, Why Bother?

The current economic situation leaves us with little choice. Research is essential for us to make the best decisions – so that we know who is out there and what do we need to do to maximise the income potential from them.

By using data we can be more proactive, we can do things based on fact which gives us confidence and helps to keep the doubters at bay.

We need to demonstrate our impact.

It then begins to become a creative breeding ground for ideas. The knowledge sparks us into action down different avenues than we might not otherwise consider

Case Studies

We received the brief for this session at the AMA quite late because one of the speakers pulled out and we are the replacements but this helped, because we decided to focus on simple and freely available tools which can be used to turn research into action.

These case studies will hopefully provide inspiration and ideas.

Portsmouth PIFs Project

So-called because of the ACORN group called PIFs – Post Industrial Families. Acorn stands for A Classification Of Residential Neighbourhoods and is a popular socio-demographic profiling tool.

We were approached by Portsmouth City Museum and Portsmouth City Council to analyse the cultural offering in Portsmouth and to see how the museum fitted in.

It began desk research – undertaking an audit of the different organisations in the area. We then asked them about the information they were capturing as a result of ticketing and surveys and where possible used this data to build up a picture of the audiences in Portsmouth.

Interestingly we discovered as a result of the mapping and profiling that the ACORN 'Post Industrial Families' group featured strongly in Portsmouth. In the UK as a whole they make up about 4% of the population but in Portsmouth it is over 20%. Looking at their profile it looks like they are not strong arts attenders. This could be seen as a problem but you could also turn it into an opportunity or challenge and because it is a large group it could be fertile ground if the right offer and connection could be made.

So, we ACORN profiled the Portsmouth City Museum visitors. The graph below shows the ACORN groups of the audience compared to the ACORN groups of Portsmouth. The large light turquoise circle at the top right hand shows that this group – the PIFs are under-represented and are a large group.

Portsmouth City Museum
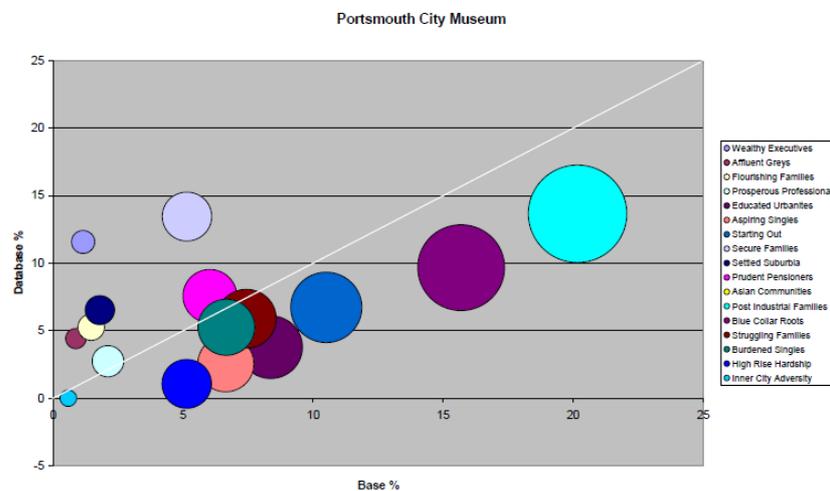
Next we used data from an Arts Council Area Profile to give us more information about the people living within given areas. Area Profile Reports (www.artscouncil.org.uk/areaprofiles) are free to all Arts Council England RFOs and are £25 for MLA affiliates or clients of the Arts Councils of Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland. They provide information on things such as the number of people living there, their socio-economic groups, ethnic make-up, gender or religious background. It also has information from the Target Group Index (TGI) which will provide a guide as to how many people are likely to be arts attenders (based on the Annual Household Survey).

Then we brought all the organisations together and asked them for their ideas about moving forward.

It appeared that it was the libraries that were being most successful at attracting this group. So this was a good 'in' because we had a captive set of people that could be brought into focus groups. This gave us a better understanding of this group, including their attitudes to the arts and the ways in which they might be persuaded to become involved.

It was clear that they were a hard-working 'time-poor' set of people. They didn't have much flexibility in their spare time. Many would like to access the arts but couldn't because they had families and hectic schedules. They weren't keen on traditional spaces, had families and not much dispensable cash.

As a result, events which took place at different times in spaces outside the venues were created. An out-to-lunch programme took museum events into outdoor spaces during the middle of the day. The proportion of PIFs rose from 17% to 25% involved in the Museum. They then looked at new ways of taking them from this programme into the museum building itself. They tried to broaden and demystify the experience.

It is now part of Portsmouth City Council's ongoing strategy, it has encouraged greater collaboration between arts organisations and encouraged a range of new ideas.

The marvellous thing about this project was the way in which it turned the audience – product equation around. Instead of devising a product and then trying to find an audience for it, we started with an audience segment and constructed a product for them.

Panto Sponsor

One of the organisations we work with lost their RFO status in the last round of ACE funding decisions. As a result, they decided to try and plug the gap by going to a sponsor for the pantomime. To do this, a profile of the panto audience was created using some of the techniques mentioned above. This meant that they then had a very good idea of who the audience was and consequently had indications of potentially relevant businesses.

They created a tightly targeted direct mail campaign for local businesses based on this research and within two weeks had a sponsor for £20,000.

Resource Checklist

- ACORN – www.caci..co.uk/acorn
- Mosaic - www.business-strategies.co.uk
- Audiences Insight – www.artscouncil.org.uk/audienceinsight
- Mapping – www.audiencedevelopment.org
- Area Profile Reports – www.artscouncil.org.uk/areaprofiles
- ONS – www.statistics.gov.uk
- Google Maps – www.google.co.uk
- Up My Street – www.upmystreet.co.uk
- ADUK – www.aduk.org
- AMA – www.a-m-a.org.uk
- PSPP - www.gnu.org/software/pspp

Work in progress - Clustergram

One of Audiences South's current projects involves re-examining the audiences for 'World Music'. A large classical music venue has tended to label things 'world music' but this includes people like Ladysmith Black Mambazo as well as Ravi Shankar. Using a piece of free software called PSPP we are going to re-cluster this audience – finding which parts of the audience act in similar ways and have similar interests – based initially on their booking histories and then followed up with qualitative research.

There is a range of developing software which is open source and which is usually free to download and use. PSPP is one of these – it's like SPSS and based on the same idea but is open source and free.

Arts Audiences Insight

This has been developed by Arts Council England.

Mosaic and ACORN is more commercially driven, so there has been a call for something more tailored for the arts. Arts Audiences Insight therefore has been produced with this mind. It has been developed from the 'Taking Part' (DCMS) data and is based on arts attendance and participation.

Once the segments had been established, further socio-demographic and geographical information has been overlaid to create a detailed picture of the segments.

It's freely available from the site (www.artscouncil.org.uk/audienceinsight). All the supporting resources are free – maps, profiles etc can all be downloaded. It's possible to profile your own data (small charge) – you will need to register to join the user group.

Audience Insight has 13 segments ranging from highly engaged at the top to not engaged at the bottom. The highly engaged segment will be going/participating at least three times a year, those in the middle between one and three times and those at the bottom less than once a year. Of those in the middle who are engaging a little, the ones on the left are attending and participating and the ones on the right are participating only. Audience Insight provides more detail of each segment.

Highly engaged	Urban arts eclectic 5%	Traditional culture vultures 4%
Some engagement	Fun, fashion and friends 18%	Bedroom DJs 3%
	Mature explorers 11%	Mid-life hobbyists 4%
	Dinner and a show 20%	Retired arts and crafts 3%
	Family and community focused 11%	
Not currently engaged	Time-poor dreamers 7%	Older and home-bound 6%
	A quiet pint with the match 8%	Limited means, nothing fancy 2%

Group Exercise

Delegates were broken up into three groups and asked to investigate the population of
Leicester using the Audience Insight model. Each group was given a particular segment:
Urban Arts Eclectic, Bedroom DJs and Time-Poor Dreamers and told to imagine that they
were The Curve. The questions given were:

- Can you describe your segment to us?
- Do you currently attract your segment?
- Could you attract more?
- How? 4(?) Ps

As resources, each group had a description of their segment, a Leicester segment profile
and a Leicester map of the segment.

Group 1: Urban Arts Eclectic

5.1% in Leicester – slightly higher than the national average
Ambitious, seeking experiences, youngish, affluent, sociable and confident
Names: Emily and Justin
Already attracted – because Curve is new and they have sought it out
Programming, workshops and extra opportunities to engage
Website important
Central areas of Leicester and Bradgate [area just outside Leicester]
Collaborating with other venues to offer joint programme, make connections with Arts
Depot and Cultural Quarter [geographic neighbours / area which Curve is part of]
Food, restaurant – evening out
Offer exclusivity – rehearsals, meet directors

Group 2: Bedroom DJs

Damian and Gaby
Self-sufficient, live in their bedrooms, creative in their own ways, have a network
which they connect with online
Fashionable
Slightly higher than average in Leicester population
Difficult to communicate with – but virtual media important, use cinema connections
Free participatory event – build a website together – vote online
Match their aspirations

Group 3: Time Poor Dreamers

Kelly and Dave: two kids and married
Dave – works the nightshift in warehouse. Kelly – works as a checkout supervisor
Like Argos, Primark and George at Asda
Friday night pub, Saturday night – watching tv: X-Factor and Chinese takeaway
9.2% of Leicester population – higher than average
Michael Jackson show has potential to attract this audience
Pantomime for family
Al Murray one night show
Britain's Got Talent
Take information to them – partner with supermarket