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THE VALLETTA BRAND

AUDIENCES' EXPERIENCES OF THE VALLETTA 2018 BRAND

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Objectives

The study aims to offer an insight into how audiences engage with the different forms of communication forming part of the Valletta 2018 communications programme. Longitudinal in nature, this project aims to determine the effects that each type of communications purport on different audiences as reflected in individuals' attitudes and behaviours.

Methodology

In acknowledging that audiences engage with brands through a multitude of encounters that range from direct instances³ to other indirect experiences⁴, the study adopts a mixed methods approach involving real time experience tracking (RET) (Baxendale, Macdonald, & Wilson, 2015; Macdonald, Wilson, & Konus, 2012) as well as focus group discussions about audiences perceptions on encounters and experiences with the Valletta 2018 brand.

³ like advertising or actual event participation

⁴ involving word of mouth from friends or acquaintances or third party social media contributions (as would be acquaintances posting on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram among others)

Key to this methodology is the use of a custom-designed smart phone app that offers an improved participant engagement with RET approaches. This app presents participants with a series of questions related to personality characteristics (to ease individuals' clustering) as well as brand experience (by relating to sensory, affective and intellectual dimensions that are relevant to Valletta 2018 as an experienced brand).

Results

Participants could be categorised in three personality types: resilient, undercontrollers and overcontrollers. Resilient personalities are characterised by distinct levels of neuroticism and above average extroversion, agreeableness, openness and conscientiousness. Overcontrolled personalities lack extroversion and openness but feature relatively high levels of neuroticism, whereas undercontrolled personalities lack agreeableness and conscientiousness but feature relatively higher levels of neuroticism.

Members of the resilient group tend to form a weaker impression about Valletta 2018 following their participation in the brand, potentially as a result of the brand's loss of appeal to the participants' senses. This change is also manifest as a weakening of emotions evoked by the Valletta 2018 brand among members of this group, who see their curiosity and cognitive (intellectual) engagement declining.

Most encounters reported were related to the Valletta Pageant of the Seas, followed by the Valletta Film Festival and Ghanafest. Most encounters involved internet browsing, television viewing chats with acquaintances or face-to-face. On a five point scale, participants perceived the Malta International Arts Festival as the event that offered most value and motivated participation, followed by Strada Stretta events and the Malta Jazz Festival. Participants found the Malta Jazz Festival, Strada Stretta events, the Valletta Green Festival and the Pageant of the Seas as the more satisfying experiences.

Way forward

Qualitative interviews and focus group discussions with event participants and related stakeholders are in progress. The results of the qualitative data analysis related to these research work areas are also expected to be published in the first quarter of 2017. RET data collection is planned to happen between May and July 2017, while any additional qualitative work is planned to take place in September/October 2017.