

Audience Development British Arts Festivals Association

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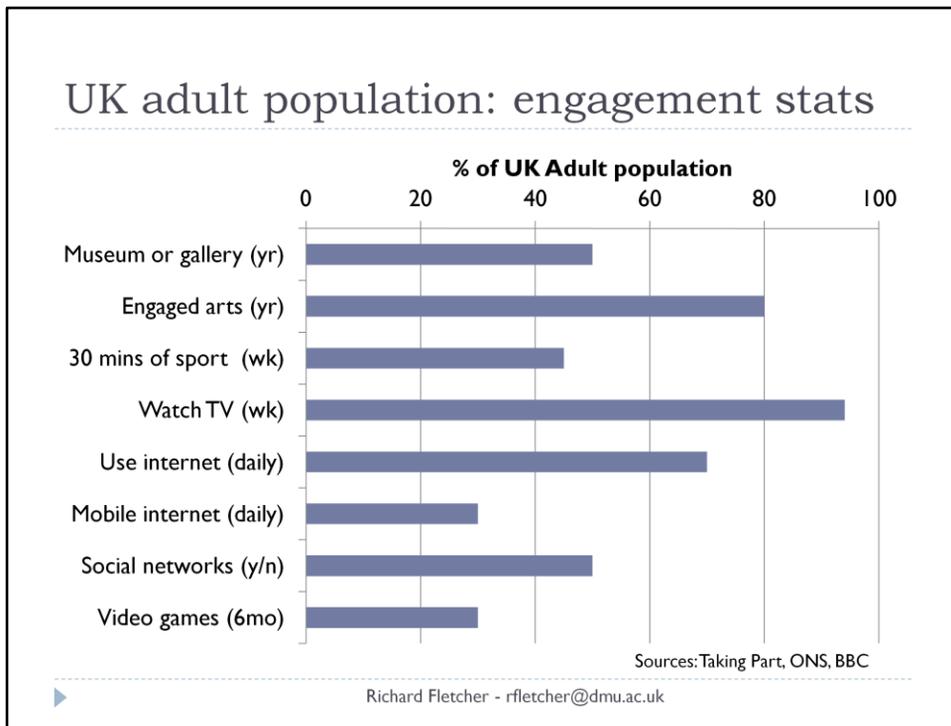
1.

Hi, intro – DMU A&FM, researcher, worked with BAFA and BAFA members on research. We do a combination of nuts and bolts impact, consultancy type stuff- practical help and advice – alongside the more blue sky ‘true’ academic type stuff. This is about audience development as we go forward further into the 21st Century. Now, as an ‘objective’ AD is one I consider to ALMOST be so broad as to be meaningless – surely it’s the core motivation for all arts organisations (and most artists) –

OF COURSE there are other argument to be made – but the shared concern to focus on for now is simply – bums on seats.

And this has relevance for all types of culture, leisure, activity and events; not just whatever you might consider “the arts with a capital A”

So, let’s look at some basic stats to start off with:



2.

You may probably be familiar with some or all of these measures, and the data sources they come from. What does it tell us?

Visited a museum or gallery in the last year (~50%)

Engaged with the arts in last year (~80%)

At least 30 mins of moderate intensity sport in last week (~45%)

Average of 4 hours of TV a day – *TV also reaches 94% of people in the UK (weekly)*

Use the internet everyday (~70%) (*would have been about ~30% in 2006*)

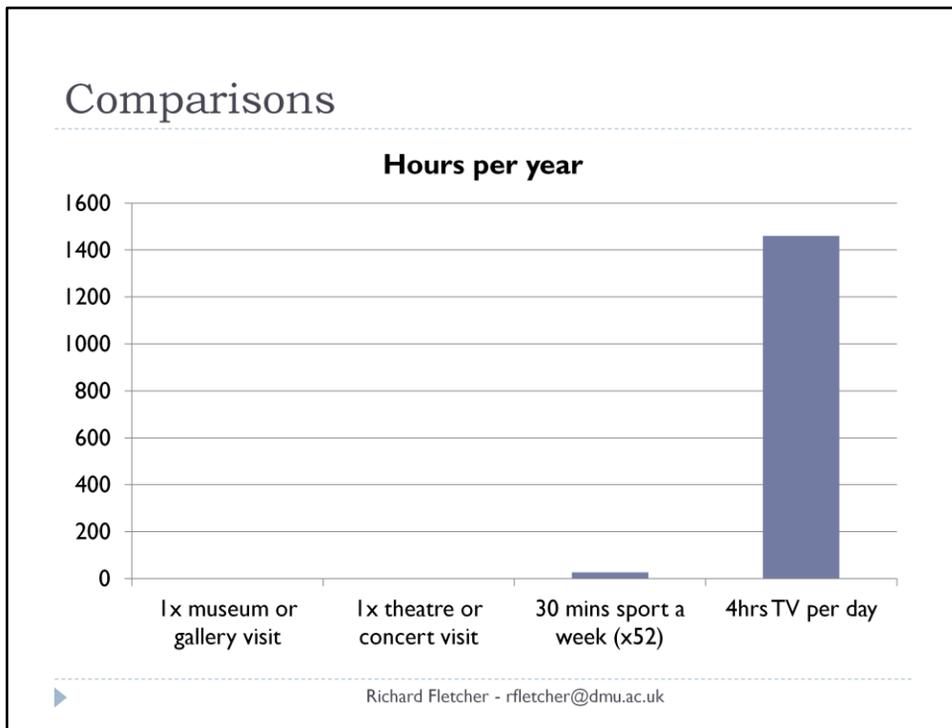
Use internet everyday on a phone (~30%)

Use social networks (~50%) (*almost 90% among 16-24s*)

Played any kind of computer or video game in the last 6 months (~30% - *this is 80% for 16-24s - - final caveat these stats are from 2005!*)

These kinds of broad, abstract questions are the kinds of measures that government can use to inform POLICY at various levels – and that we can use to inform our PRACTICE and help FRAME what we do in a bigger sense. Of course there are caveats – but it is the best we've got.

Sure – these measures aren't all strictly comparable, it nevertheless throws up some observations.



3.

The average TV watcher spends in the region of 2 months A YEAR (~1500 hours) watching TV — with some quick assumptions - 3000 times MORE than they spend in galleries – and 750 times MORE than they spend in theatres. Am I stating the obvious? Yes, but in any investigation it's a very good place to start.

“Half our waking hours are spent on TV, Mobiles, Computers” – OFCOM, 2010

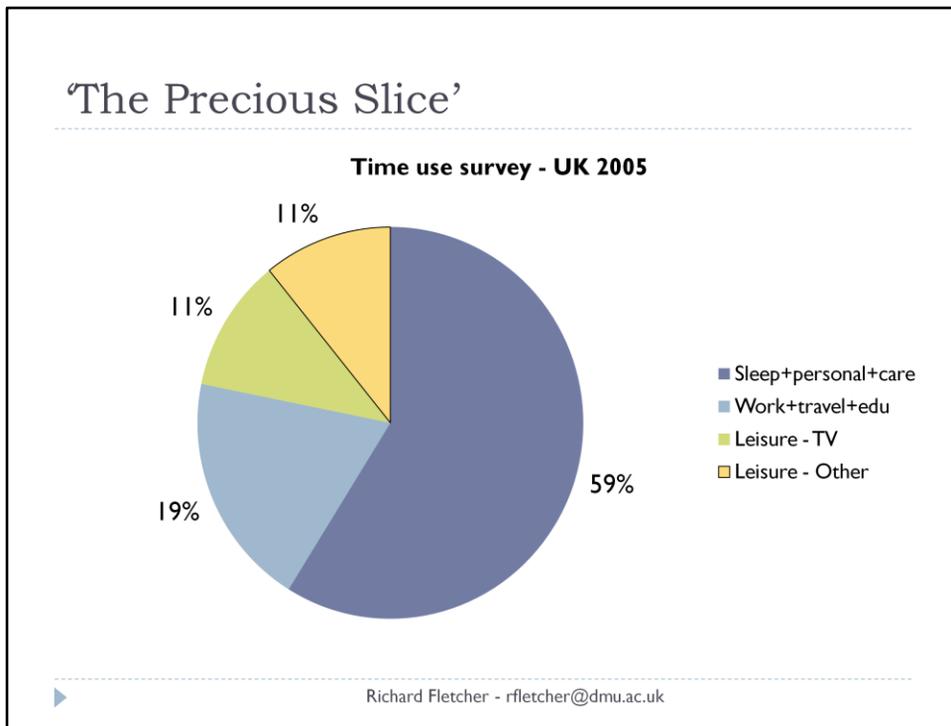
The screenshot shows a web browser displaying an Ofcom article. The page title is "TV, phones and internet take up almost half our waking hours". The article text states: "UK consumers are spending almost half (45 per cent) of their waking hours watching TV, using their mobiles and other communications devices, new Ofcom research reveals today." It further details that consumers are sending four times as many texts per day than in 2004, spending a quarter of their internet time on social networking sites, and spending 3 hours and 45 minutes per day watching TV. It also notes that the average person crams 8 hours 48 minutes of media into just over seven hours during the average day. The article mentions the growing popularity of smartphones and the changing way we use our mobiles, which is increasing our overall use of communications. It is particularly driven by the under 25s, although the over 55s are catching up, with half now having broadband at home – the fastest growing age group. The article is part of "Communication fast facts 2010". The page also features a navigation menu with "News features", "Advice and complaints", "Ask Ofcom", "Guides and tools", "Price Comparison", "Parents", and "4G". There is an "Ask Us" section with a "Top Questions" link, a search box, and a "Select a subject" dropdown. A "ParentPort" section is titled "Working together for media standards". An "Advice and complaints" section lists "Your fixed line, mobile and internet", "TV and Radio Programmes", and "TV and Radio reception problems".

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4.

Ofcom in 2010 said: nearly half our WAKING HOURS are spent on TV, Mobile or PC ‘communications devices’ (I doubt they mean FAX machines) – the 16-24 year olds actually fit 9.5 hours of media consumption into 6.5 hours of ACTUAL TIME. (through multi-tasking/multi-screening). This is quite impressive! I’m not making any judgements now, the usual ‘high culture’ ‘low culture’ thing – but our first instinct, OUR GUT reaction can often be one of ‘oh bloody hell, I guess we’re doomed then’.

This is just what the statistics, and they are abstract - but they tell us about HOW PEOPLE SPEND THAT PRECIOUS SLICE OF TIME THEY AREN’T WORKING OR ASLEEP.



5.

It IS A PRECIOUS SLICE indeed. From the Time Use survey – 60ish% of time spent on sleep – 20ish% on work – 22% broadly ‘Leisure’ --- of which half is TV! The remaining slice is where people will go to your events.

While we’ve known for many years that we work some of the longest hours in Europe – and the recession has contributed in three ways:

More unemployed and UNDER-employed

New jobs more likely to be part time and self employed (long hours/less income)

Those with jobs left are working more hours than before (A to keep their jobs and B to make their pounds go further)

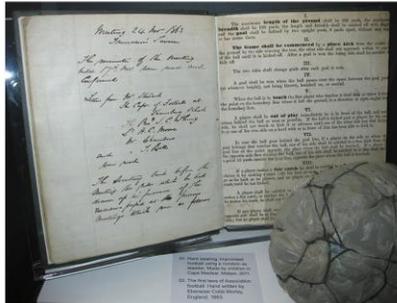
Well, put simply -We ALL want more engagement with the arts and sports – both at a broad scale, and of course, we ALL want more people to come to OUR shows, events, festivals.

WE can all agree– even a tiny fraction of that time (those 1500 ish hours a year) would be a huge amount for us!

Obvious. But what’s the solution? More marketing? More education? More subsidy = cheaper tickets? Subsidy from different places?

There are many good suggestions and initiatives along these lines – but in some ways they still sound so much like faffing around the edges and not really grabbing the bull by the horns:

Adaptation or fossilization?



'The Laws of the game' - 1863



Theatre Royal, Drury Lane – 1775
(est 1663)

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6.

Which is that – and particularly in respect of this session being called Flash Forward – so much of 'live events' remain 'trapped' in the form it came into being in the 19th Century.

Just two example here – whether the FA, founded 1863 – or the Theatre Royal – allegedly the oldest – 1663 - though I can also point out it has been built and destroyed at least 3 times over that time.)

Now, I want to take care to STRESS that this is as much a negative as a positive - That is a fair achievement. What else – industries, social norms, cultures - from that day still exist? We could even argue that culture – at its broadest – is the ONLY thing that 'carries over'?

At the same time we could of course counter-argue that modern theatre, or modern football - IS a completely different thing now. They have changed, and renewed themselves, and stayed relevant in one way or another.

But regarding the Audience - we are talking about a product that is – by comparison to the 'on tap' service we are used to with everything else – Expensive, inconvenient, and rooted in the standards and methods of centuries before.

The value of live over digital

The screenshot shows a TED talk page for Ben Cameron. At the top, there's a header with the title "The value of live over digital". Below that, a navigation bar includes a subscription form for TED Talks updates, with options for "Daily" and "Weekly", and a "Subscribe" button. The main content area features the title "Ben Cameron: The true power of the performing arts" and a video player showing Ben Cameron on stage. To the right of the video, there's a "262,978 Views" counter and a "Like" button. Below the video, there are social media sharing options (Share, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Email) and a "More" button. The page also includes a "TED CONVERSATIONS" section with a link to "Start a TED Conversation" and a "RELATED PLAYLISTS" section featuring "Re-imagining school". At the bottom, there's a footer with the name "Richard Fletcher - rfletcher@dmu.ac.uk".

7.

In his TED talk, Ben Cameron compared our current concerns to the Protestant Reformation of the 16th Century - he described the performing arts as: Poised on the brink, not of Annihilation but Reformation – as with religious reformation of 16th Century – both spurred by technology, both predicated on fractious discussion, internal doubt, massive realignment of antiquated business models – both asking – WHO is entitled to practice, HOW are they entitled to practice – AND INDEED – do we need anyone to intermeditate for us, in order to have an experience with a spiritual divine?

Big questions!

If all this generic, 'content' is available 24/7 on tap - Why do we need culture (or 'digested experience' as BC calls it) now more than ever?

I don't think I have to get up on a high culture, high horse to make this claim – but without it – without the ability to see through another's eyes – to empathize – emotional intelligence – whatever you want to call it – we are left with only the worst of culture – we know, we all feel it – I'm not going to try to lay the blame at any doors in particular - from news media, to advertising, to reality tv - we are encouraged to view our fellow human beings with jealousy, suspicion, contempt...

And of course – we shouldn't allow ourselves to simply be a mask, or 'lipstick on the gorilla' for all that we see as the worst in society.

Steps forward

- ▶ What would it mean to have culture on 'every' agenda?
- ▶ Keep our house in order
- ▶ Work on your 'languages'
- ▶ What works?
- ▶ A society that values participation more than consumption?

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8.

Can't remember who said it about conferences; but it was (very very cynically) 'conferences are places where people who can't get anything done come together to agree that nothing can be done about it.' – I'd like to think not – and if we aren't involved, we aren't the ones to help put culture on the agenda, I don't know who is. So – Just imagining it is the first step – what would it mean – ultimately for the way we live our lives? What new faces would be involved in the discussion –, how could we have a more constructive discussion? Culture – yes - we can effect everything – but everything affects us too!

And we have to hold to a high standard. There's no good smiling to each other here, and stabbing each other in the back as soon as the next mad dash for ever decreasing funding starts. This also means having a great deal of faith in the 'general public'. Maybe what you are offering is bad. Maybe your business model is out of date, wrong. Just seeing those iconic moments from the Olympics again – and those behind the scenes moments we didn't see – few could deny they were affected by them. But as explained – you need the professionalism, the attention to detail to MAKE THE CASE – whatever additional benefits might be experienced. Commit to evidence, not assumptions.

While we're happy to bemoan the lack of cultural 'understanding' and appreciation from one decision making group or another – are we really doing the most we can to find the common language that others use? Why networks and events like this are so crucial, bringing together public, private and third sector organisations. If it is so BLINDINGLY obvious that we're a good investment – where are our audiences, or perhaps - where's our bailout?

What works in this respect? Organisation, co-operation, getting rid of silos, campaigning. What good work towards this –BAFA and networks like this – Family Friendly Arts Conference and Festival – What Next? Arts – Everyday Participation and Cultural Value projects from AHRC. - cannot ignore the work of the Olympics. Can we ultimately - work towards a society that values Participation more than Consumption? If you thought solving the 'problem' of kids playing video games and not going to the theatre was a struggle – this one is far, far greater.

All I'd like you to take away is that when you get back into the office tomorrow, if we could all take a bit of your time – and think about the future, think what you'd like to see – and then follow through - work with your peers to make the case, make yourself heard, and make it happen. Thank you.