

Effectiveness, Technology and Purple – What I Learnt at The Big TV Festival

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I was lucky enough to be invited to the second Big TV Festival this year, a 2 day trip with talks and sessions from some key names in the world of TV.

The event began with everyone being whisked away to the magical land of Robin Hood, where we were met by a fleet of equally magical coaches. What were we doing? Where were we going? Was this FYRE festival's second coming? There were so many questions. Luckily, we soon arrived at Sherwood Forest and realised that we were not staying in white hurricane shelters but cosy log cabins, and so we settled in for night one with pizza and prosecco in hand.

The festival kicked off the next morning – Scarlett Moffatt and Jamie Laing introduced themselves as our hosts and we then heard from various speakers across the two days as to the future of TV, emerging trends that we should watch out for and some interesting takes on

what makes an effective TV campaign. My favourite session though was when Rory Sutherland blew everyone's mind by informing us that the colour purple does not exist in nature. Instead our brains create the colour as a reaction to the absence of green. I was amazed!

Technology in general was a key theme of the festival and speaker Adam Zuckerman (Discovery) took us through its upcoming evolution and emerging developments in the world of the physical TV. If you as much of a tech believer as him, TV sets as we know them are set to change – with Zuckerman predicting that the next 20 years would see the introduction of wallpaper TVs at home that blend back into the furniture when not being used, and window-TVs within the world's emerging fleet of self-driving cars. Forget those saying TV is dead, Adam sees our TVs as an even more central part of our lives in the future – a hub of the home connecting all our smart devices, which brings with it even more opportunities for targeting and personalisation.

Linking on from technology, another topic widely discussed was social media. From Richard Cowles (Executive Producer of Love Island) talking about editing Love Island based on social comments from the previous night's show, to Mo Gilligan using social media to expand the Big Narstie Show to audiences that aren't as exposed to grime culture. The clear take-out was that social is key – audiences are having valuable interactions online around our favourite shows. Of course, we already knew this, but the value lies in what can be extracted from these conversations to further bolster the power of TV.

Ogilvy's Rory Sutherland took a slightly different approach – “don't worry about technology” he told the audience. His rationale being that people have needed to sit down and be entertained from the beginning of time, and the only threat that he sees to television is if an extremist anti-comfort regime comes into power and bans sofas. And we already know this to be true from pre-existing research – people are certainly not watching less content on their TV's, and in fact 70% of VOD viewing is now done through a TV set due to the increased connectivity of our big screens. TV viewing itself remains resilient and stable, with Live/Playback/VOD viewing totalling an average of 3 hours 18 minutes per day in 2017, only 5 minutes less than the same figure for 10 years previously.

Sutherland also spoke about the problems with efficiency-based strategies as efficiency so

regularly gets confused with effectiveness, but can often come at the expense of favouring short-term performance over long term gain. He went on to make an interesting comparison between marketing budgets and engagement rings – in the same way that we are willing to splash out on an extravagant diamond ring as proof of a long-term commitment to another person, we can also apply the same theory to marketing. Ultimately, advertising must convey a message and convince someone to take an action based on that message. To convince, there needs to be a value behind the message – be that marketing budget or an engagement ring. Without a perceived value, we are simply conveying a message. While that may be 'efficient' at driving shorter-term metrics such as sales, it is unlikely to move any longer-term brand metrics. This was echoed by Hillarys' Susan White, who talked about how Hillarys has benefited from an increase in brand metrics such as consideration since incorporating brand and sponsorship activity into their advertising mix.

Overall, we managed to pack a lot was packed into our 48 hours at the festival, so much so that I haven't even got round to telling you about the evening party or the amount of alcohol consumed (47 hot tubs worth of alcohol for those wondering). I learnt a lot about how TV is likely to change/adapt in the future and how we can prepare for these new trends. But my key take-out from the event? PURPLE IS NOT A COLOUR.

EDINBURGH EVENTS FUTURE OF TV