

Interrogating Mediated Youth Drinking Cultures: Locating and Studying the Digital Audience

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Overview

Flaunting it on Facebook: Young adults, drinking stories and cult of celebrity

Ø Project background

Exploring 'Audience' Issues

Ø Blurring boundaries

Studying the 'Audience' Online

Ø Conceiving of and studying 'users'/ 'audiences' of SNS

Flaunting it on Facebook: Young adults, drinking stories and the cult of celebrity



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Project Background

An analysis of three themes:

1. Young people & drinking cultures
2. Identities in 'late modernity' (ties to pervasive celebrity culture)
3. Rapid growth in use of social networking sites (SNS)

The study of 'mediated youth drinking cultures'

Project Background

1. Young people and 'drinking cultures'
 - Ø *Normalised* practices around (heavy) drinking
 - Ø Involving fun and being socialable
 - Ø Drinking stories told & re-told
 - Ø Identity construction, maintaining friendships
 - Ø Commodification of pleasure: 'cultures of intoxication'

Project Background

2. Identities in 'late modernity'

- Ø Reflexive project of performing the self
- Ø Discourses of individual freedom, self-expression
- Ø Neoliberalism: 'Free' choice to become whomever we want to be, consume what we will
- Ø Enthusiastically endorsed by business practices of branding/marketing
- Ø Not just young people: manifested in broader 'culture of celebrity', self-commodification and excess

Project Background

3. Rapid growth in use of SNS

- Ø Especially young people. WIPNZ (2010) 82% of 12-19s
- Ø Most popular in NZ Facebook (75%), Bebo (18%)
- Ø Broader research reveals...
 - Ø SNS 'sticky' technology (visited frequently)
 - Ø Extend face-to-face relationships
 - Ø Graphic images (photographs/video) significant & continuously rejuvenated
 - Ø Visually privilege social connections and offline socialising
 - Ø Blur private/public space, private id/public persona

Project Background

Focus today... what happens when young people's drinking cultures go online?*

* Moreno et al (2010)*: 225 of 400 (56.3%) 17-20 year old SNS profiles contained in total 341 references to alcohol.

Moreno, M.A., Briner, L.R., Williams, A., Brockman, L., Walker, L. Christakis, D.A. (2010) A Content Analysis of Displayed Alcohol References on a Social Networking Web Site, *Journal of Adolescent Health*, in press

Exploring 'Audience' Issues

What 'digital audience' issues are raised?

Ø *conceptualising* and *studying* the use of SNS

Entails dealing with 'blurry boundaries'

Ø Users/navigators vs. 'audiences'

Ø Public vs. private (networked publics)

Ø SNS vs. 'mainstream' media (newspapers, television)

Ø Interactive cultures vs. commodified consumers

Ø Empowerment vs. dis-empowerment

Exploring 'Audience' Issues

1. SNS users as users/navigators of new media

SNS = interactive space for young people

Active producers of a mediated culture embedded in day-to-day life & 'tailored' to their needs

Identities performed & social relationships developed

Celebrate and celebritise their lifestyles

Empowerment (young people highly value SNS)

Exploring 'Audience' Issues

2. SNS use creates complex 'networked publics'*:

Persistence

- ∅ Recorded for posterity

Searchability

- ∅ Search and discovery tools (find like minded selves)

Easily Replicated

- ∅ Contributions copied from one place to another

Invisible audiences

- ∅ Impossible to fully ascertain who might 'overhear'

* Boyd, D. (2007) Why Youth (Heart) Social Network Sites: The Role of Networked Publics in Teenage Life. In D. Buckingham (ed.) *MacArthur Foundation Series on Digital learning: Youth, Identity and Digital Media*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press

Exploring 'Audience' Issues

Unseen/invisible **audiences**...

- Ø Employers
- Ø Mainstream media (e.g. newspapers)
- Ø Parents

... Can use the *same features* of networked publics that 'empower' users to surveil users

SNS providing copy for mainstream media

Blurred boundaries between private & public life

'Dis-empowerment' for users

Exploring 'Audience' Issues

3. Routine 'performance of the the self' online mimics broader mediated & commodified culture of celebrity

Sustained by 'mainstream media': Source of profit.

'Users' of SNS embedded in this culture as an 'audience' of mainstream outlets



Exploring 'Audience' Issues

The screenshot shows the website 'Befuddle: The Home of Drunk Celebs' in a Windows Internet Explorer browser window. The address bar shows 'http://www.befuddle.co.uk/'. The browser's search bar contains 'drunken celebs'. The website's main banner features the word 'Befuddle' in a glowing, stylized font next to a cartoon illustration of a blonde woman in a pink outfit lying on her side. Below the banner is a navigation menu with links for 'home', 'about', 'disclaimer', 'drunk celeb of the week', and 'site map'. On the left side, there is a 'Drunk Celebs' section with a list of names, each preceded by a star icon. The main content area features an article titled 'Nicola T Drunk Nipple Slip' with a sub-headline: 'Celebrity Big Brother model Nicola T. What does the T stand for? Well it's certainly not fit-tape as Nicola Tappenden is pictured baring her nipple.' Below the text are six small images showing Nicola T in various poses. On the right side, there is an 'Advertising' section with a vertical banner for a lottery jackpot. The banner text reads: 'David E won £629,548!', 'Current Jackpot is £1,359,942.08', and includes buttons for 'DEAL' and 'NO DEAL'.

Befuddle: The Home of Drunk Celebs - Windows Internet Explorer

http://www.befuddle.co.uk/

Google

drunken celebs

Befuddle: The Home of Drunk Celebs

home about disclaimer drunk celeb of the week site map

Drunk Celebs

- Abbie Eastwood
- Abi Titmuss
- Aisleyne Horgan Wallace
- Alanis Morissette
- Alexandra Holden
- All Landry
- Alicia Douvall
- Alicia Keys
- All Saints
- Alyson Hannigan
- Amanda Holden
- Amy Winehouse
- Andrea Corr
- Angela Griffin
- Angelina Jolie
- Anna Friel
- Anna Kournikova
- Anna Nicole Smith
- Anne Hathaway
- Ashlee Simpson
- Ashley Massaro
- Ashley Olsen
- Ashley Rae

Nicola T Drunk Nipple Slip

Celebrity Big Brother model Nicola T. What does the T stand for? Well it's certainly not fit-tape as Nicola Tappenden is pictured baring her nipple.

Advertising

David E won £629,548!

Current Jackpot is £1,359,942.08

DEAL

OR

NO DEAL

Exploring 'Audience' Issues



Britney Spears 'captured' drunk on Befuddle.co.uk

Exploring 'Audience' Issues

4. SNS as a new market 'place'

500m Facebook users (re)constitute a 'mass' 'audience'

But one which can be intimately, *individually* 'known' via data *users* themselves provide

Corporations (incl. alcohol corps) sophisticated SNS marketers; e.g. viral marketing

- Ø A new age of selling: tailored marketing that commodifies online culture. 'Brand you'.

Murdoch (News Corp) buys into Myspace

Exploring 'Audience' Issues

MONDAY, MAY 10, 2010 THE DOMINION POST C5
BUSINESSDAY

INFOTECH

BEST INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SECTION - QANTAS MEDIA AWARDS

From Bulls to Silicon Valley like Wildfire

Tom Pullar-Strecker

KIWI Victoria Ransom has joined Silicon Valley's elite after securing US\$4 million (NZ\$5.6m) from "tier one" venture capital group Summit Partners and angel investors for a minority stake in social media marketing company Wildfire Interactive.

Ms Ransom, 34, who grew up near Bulls and now lives in San Francisco, says software developed by Wildfire has been used to manage more than 30,000 campaigns on sites such as Facebook and Twitter. She founded the company less than three years ago with her partner, Alain Chuard.

The online campaigns include a Facebook competition that invited Indonesians to suggest what clothes president Barack Obama should wear and what he should eat during his postponed state visit to Indonesia, originally scheduled for March, and to enter a draw to an event attended by Mr Obama.

"There were tens of thousands of entries and I believe the US embassy site in Jakarta has more Facebook friends than any other US embassy in the world."

Wildfire's software lets organisations run competitions and polls and offer



Jackpot: Victoria Ransom's Wildfire software lets organisations run competitions and polls and offer vouchers through social media sites.

Campaigns can be embedded within Facebook, which also invested in Wildfire after it beat out 600 entries to win a

US\$400,000 competition for application developers in 2008.

"Facebook is a big part of what we do. What we have created is software to help businesses with their social media marketing, so they can use our technology on a self-service basis to set up different kinds of engaging social media campaigns they can publish to their Facebook page, website or Twitter," Ms Ransom says.

"In a few easy steps they can set up a coupon campaign that is actually an application living within Facebook, so all the feeds and friend invites and viral channels that are available in Facebook and Twitter can be embedded into the campaign."

The software has been used for New Zealand campaigns, such as one to promote More hours involving the All Blacks.

Ms Ransom says US games company Electronic Arts has used Wildfire's software to run a promotion that invites people to submit their ideal "kill sequence" in its *Dawn Space 2* computer game. "The winner gets their image to be one of the characters in the game."

The size of the shareholding acquired by Summit Partners and angel investors Jeff Clavier, Aydin Senkut and Gary Vaynerchuk is confidential, but Ms Ransom says she is very happy with the valuation attributed to Wildfire.

Wildfire employs 26 staff and Ms Ransom expects it will use the fresh equity to double or triple its staff numbers by the end of the year. "There are a lot of new directions we are going to take the technology in. We are continually building out our platform to become 'the' self-service platform for companies to fulfil their social media marketing needs in a way that is easy, affordable and scalable."

The company employs 10 developers, including three based in Wellington, and will look out for talent here, she says.

"If you are a technology company, one of the things you constantly need to do is find good developers. It is pretty competitive in Silicon Valley."

Ms Ransom believes Wildfire could be based anywhere, but being in Silicon Valley has had some benefits. "This is the hub of the social media world. Our offices are just down the road from Facebook."

She hopes to return to New Zealand one day.

"It is not in the immediate plan. We are full on building the company. But I'd love to think I would be returning there at some point."

Victoria Ransom's software 'Wildfire' gains 'Tier One' venture capital funding from Summit Partners of Silicon Valley: NZ\$ 5.6 million in May 2010

Exploring 'Audience' Issues

"Facebook is a big part of what we do. What we have created is software to help businesses with their social media marketing, so they can use our technology on a self-service basis to set up different campaigns they can publish to their Facebook page, website or twitter.

In a few easy steps they can set up a campaign that is actually an application living within Facebook..."

Victoria Ramson, quoted in *Dom Post Business Day* section May 2010, p.C5.

'Users' of SNS interpellated as 'consumers'

Exploring 'Audience' Issues

The screenshot shows a Facebook group page titled "A petition to bring Tui beer to England". The page is viewed in a Windows Internet Explorer browser. The Facebook logo is visible at the top left, and there are login fields for email and password on the top right. The group's profile picture is a circular logo with a Tui bird and the text "TUI BEER". The group description reads: "As many of you no i spent 7 months in New Zealand and i became quite fond of the beer tui and want to bring it to England!". The page shows several posts from members, including one by Charlie Lambert, Simon Murphy, and Ewan Dickson. There is also a post from the group titled "A petition to bring Tui beer to England Photos".

Blurry boundaries between user generated and marketing content

Exploring 'Audience' Issues

5. Power struggles over the social shaping of SNS technology



Cover of *Time*, May 31 2010

Studying the 'Audience' Online

We are faced with 'BLURRY' complexity

- Ø Audiences/users/navigators/consumers...
- Ø ... that can be conceptualised at different 'levels' and from different perspectives

So...How is the project studying use of SNS?

- Ø What participants, methods etc?

Studying the 'Audience' Online

Participants: young people 18-25 living in Aotearoa/NZ

Ø Local advertising, email requests, snowballing

Groups where drinking normalised activity

Initial sampling across ethnicity

Ø Maori (15 groups of 3-6 participants)

Ø Pasifika (15 groups of 3-6 participants)

Ø Non Maori (15 groups of 3-6 participants)

Include different social classes, geographic locations, genders, ages

Studying the 'Audience' Online

Stage One: Friendship Group Discussions

Semi-structured

Major discussion themes...

- Ø Social lives, drinking practices & behaviours
- Ø Use of new technologies in everyday life (mobile phones, ipods, PDAs and SNS)
- Ø What functions they serve, and how participants are using them (or not)

Studying the 'Audience' Online

Major discussion themes (continued)...

- Ø Drinking stories about particularly memorable episodes encouraged: explore how these have been told
- Ø How meanings about friendships, drinking & technology collaboratively made
- Ø Transcribed & analysed thematically

Studying the 'Audience' Online

Stage Two: Individual Interviews with Online Access

- Ø 8-10 participants from each ethnicity, open & flexible interviews
- Ø Uses of new technology, particularly SNS
- Ø Use of digital images & video in sharing drinking stories
- Ø Space to voice views that sit outside group norms

Studying the 'Audience' Online

Stage Two: (continued...)

- Ø Provided with laptop: browse web & show sites, images, & videos they access & talk about
- Ø History kept on project laptop & interview/online browsing recorded by digital video
- Ø Interview 'audio' transcript thematically analysed. Browsing* = rich multimodal data: transcribed & analysed using multimodal discourse analysis

* May adapt Helen Wood's (2007) concept of 'flow' to convert video into descriptive 'viewing strip' that can be juxtaposed to interview material

Studying the 'Audience' Online

Stage Three: Analysing Representations of Young people's drinking on popular websites

- Ø 'Drunken Celebs'
- Ø Commerical sites & campaigns
- Ø Sites that come to attention from Stages One & Two
- Ø Multimodal discourse analysis

Conclusions: Locating & Studying 'Digital Audiences'?

Use of SNS as complex and multifaceted

A three stage model that aims to capture some of this complexity

I'd be happy to fill in details if I've left any time

Exploring 'Audience' Issues

The screenshot shows a Windows Internet Explorer browser window displaying the Facebook page for 'Aussies Against the Alcohol Tax Increase (AATATI)'. The browser's address bar shows the URL: <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=11749996093>. The page features a blue header with the Facebook logo and a login section. Below the header, there is a 'Sign Up' button and a message: 'Aussies Against the Alcohol Tax Increase (AATATI) is on Facebook. Sign up for Facebook to connect with Aussies Against the Alcohol Tax Increase (AATATI)'. The main content area includes a profile picture of a hand holding a glass of beer, a 'Join' button, and navigation tabs for 'Wall', 'Info', 'Photos', and 'Discussions'. The 'Info' tab is selected, showing the following details:

- Basic Info**
 - Name: Aussies Against the Alcohol Tax Increase (AATATI)
 - Category: Common Interest - Food & Drink
 - Description: After all the taxes we pay on everything here in Aus the Government has come up with a cunning plan to stem binge drinking and its associated violence by taxing everyone some more for our beloved beverages. We work hard everyday to earn a pay cheque for which a fair amount is spent on tax, our mortgage (costing us a fortune) and petrol. Most of which put some people to strain. Now after all this, most people want to sit down to a hard earned brew...why tax us some more on the liberty!
 - Privacy Type: Open: All content is public.
- Contact Info**
 - Location: Adelaide, Australia
- Recent News**
 - News: I'd say everyone. Have a look at this. Posted to me by Stephen Riden. can you post up this link to a youtube clip we made for the senate committee: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6A4dc0thvU>

At the bottom of the page, there is a blue oval containing the text: 'Online campaign against Rudd government's alcohol tax increase (members 68,813)'.