

Impact case study (REF3b)

Institution: University of Nottingham
Unit of Assessment: 36 Communication, Cultural & Media Studies, Library & Information Management
Title of case study: Developing the Role and Visibility of the Promotional Screen Industries
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Dr Paul Grainge (Associate Professor of Film and Television Studies, Nottingham, 2001-present) and Dr Catherine Johnson (Associate Professor of Film and Television Studies, Nottingham, 2010-present) have been pioneering the study of the promotional screen industries, raising the status of a vibrant sub-sector of the global creative industries. Through engagement with key media practitioners, they have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ generated new ways of thinking about the role of promotion that have influenced the BBC's use of online content ❖ helped the UK's leading broadcast design company Red Bee Media (with a global client base including the BBC, UKTV, Virgin Media, CCTV and Discovery International) to develop strategic business planning in TV and digital promotion ❖ increased public understanding of the art and heritage of screen promotion through public events that have raised the visibility of the creative and professional discipline of promotional design ❖ informed educational content planning at the British Film Institute.
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Grainge and Johnson have an established history of undertaking research that examines the ways in which the film and television industries are adopting the discourses and practices of branding and promotion. For Johnson this has involved sustained consideration of the emergence of branding as a key strategy for Western television industries and the shifting marketing strategies used by television broadcasters in the UK and the U.S. since the 1980s (see References B and E). This has included an on-going relationship with Victoria Jaye (Head of IPTV and TV online content for BBC Vision) first initiated in the AHRC/BBC Knowledge Exchange workshops in 2006. Grainge's work on branding and the U.S. film industry dates from 2002 and has provided key insights through publications and research grants into the industrial and textual economy of branding in Hollywood (Reference A). More broadly, it has opened out debates on the function and status of 'ephemeral media,' describing promotional short-forms such as logos, promos, idents, and trailers (Reference C, D and F). This research has been advanced in three grants with a deliberate focus on industry-academic knowledge exchange. This includes the <i>Ephemeral Media</i> workshop (2008-9), funded as part of the AHRC's <i>Beyond Text</i> programme, which involved the BBC (Victoria Jaye), the BFI and Red Bee Media as participants, the AHRC Follow-On Fund award <i>TV and Digital Promotion: Agile Strategies for a New Media Ecology</i> (2012-13) that deepened relations with Red Bee and the BFI, and the EPSRC Cross-Disciplinary Feasibility account award <i>Towards Pervasive Media</i> (2009-11) which laid the ground for industry-academic research collaboration with the Horizon Digital Economy Research hub based at the university (see REF5).</p> <p>Key findings and insights stemming from the research of Grainge and Johnson can be summarized as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ the U.S. and UK film/television industries adopted branding as a systematic practice from the 1980s in response to increased competition for viewers and revenue ❖ the branding of television corporations, programmes, channels and services has become a key strategy that aims to increase revenue streams, capture audience attention, increase viewer loyalty and communicate the values of television to viewers ❖ identifying how branding strategies are enacted across multiple media platforms as the film and television industries attempt to utilise the potential of new platforms (the internet, mobiles etc) for marketing and distribution. <p>Critically, the underpinning research has engaged with a problem identified by industry and summarized by Red Bee Media as how to 'build bridges between content and viewers' in the digital media ecology (www.redbeemedia.com/about-us/overview). The research findings demonstrate the significance of promotional media in contemporary screen culture, and the terms upon which such media is required to be agile in a multiplatform and highly competitive media landscape. This has been developed through two major book projects on branding in the film and television industries (References A and B), a workshop and edited collection on ephemeral media (Reference C), and industry fieldwork with Red Bee Media, a world-leading digital and</p>

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communications company which employs 1,500 staff and has an annual turnover of £130million. Furthermore, the findings redress the sometimes dismissive attitude towards marketing and promotion within academic and industry discourse by highlighting the nature of promotion as a creative and professional discipline. The research has produced new knowledge about media promotion for industry practitioners, raised public awareness of the creative work involved, and has facilitated knowledge exchange between academics and industry practitioners in strategic areas of TV and digital promotion such as 'social television.'

3. References to the research

- A. Grainge, P. *Brand Hollywood: Selling Entertainment in a Global Media Age*. London: Routledge, 2008. Listed in **REF2**. Research for the book was funded by AHRC Research Leave, January - May 2007, £21,350, AH/E50017X/1, rated 'outstanding'. This book received excellent reviews in leading academic journals such as *Velvet Light Trap* and *Screen* and has been adopted as a key text on branding for film courses in Europe and the U.S.
- B. Johnson, C. *Branding Television*. London: Routledge, 2012. Listed in **REF2**. Research for the book was funded by AHRC Research Leave, January-April 2010, £34,543, AH/H005560/, rated 'outstanding'.
- C. Grainge, P., ed. *Ephemeral Media: Transitory Screen Culture from Television to YouTube*, London: BFI Publishing, 2011. Listed in **REF2**. This includes contributions by leading international scholars in television, film and new media studies such as John Caldwell, John Ellis, Barbara Klinger, Jon Dovey and William Uricchio.
- D. Grainge, P. 'Elvis Sings for the BBC: Broadcast Branding and Digital Media Design'. *Media, Culture and Society*, 2010, 32(1), 45-61. Listed in **REF2**. This is a leading peer-reviewed journal in the field of media studies, ranked 20 out of 72 in Communication and 41 out of 137 in Sociology.
- E. Johnson, C. 'From Brand Congruence to the 'Virtuous Circle': Branding and the Commercialization of Public Service Broadcasting'. *Media, Culture and Society*, 2013, 35(3), 314-331. Listed in **REF2**. This is a leading peer-reviewed journal in the field of media studies, ranked 20 out of 72 in Communication and 41 out of 137 in Sociology.
- F. Grainge, P. 'A Song and Dance: Branded Entertainment and Mobile Promotion'. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 2012, 15(2), 165-180. Listed in **REF2**. This is a leading peer-reviewed journal in the field of cultural studies, ranked 10 out of 35 in Cultural Studies.

Proof of quality of research

- ❖ Final report on the *Ephemeral Media* workshop, which ran October 2008 - November 2009, and received £23,873 from the AHRC *Beyond Text* programme (AH/G00062X/1), for which Grainge was PI. The workshop was chosen as one of four impact case studies in the *Beyond Text* programme, and was selected to be one of the key project presentations at the Beyond Text Final Festival (29 March 2012). Available on request.
- ❖ Final report for the project *TV and Digital Promotion: Agile Strategies for a New Media Ecology*, running January 2012 - March 2013, funded by an AHRC Follow-On Fund Award of £88,190 (AH/J006475/1), for which Grainge was PI and Johnson CI, Available on request.
- ❖ Final report for the project *Towards Pervasive Media*, running October 2009 - March 2011, which received £35,577 from the EPSRC Cross-Disciplinary Feasibility Account programme (EP/H024867/1), for which Steve Benford was PI, and Grainge and Pearson were CIs (see **REF5**). Available on request.

4. Details of the impact

Research on the function of the promotional and ephemeral (short-form) texts that surround film and television content **has helped generate new ways of thinking that influence creative practice**. The ephemeral media workshop (July 2009) held at Nottingham was especially influential in giving the BBC a new vocabulary for how it can use and repurpose ephemeral items from its archives and give them value as assets. Victoria Jaye (BBC Vision) confirms that the term ephemeral media 'has really got some traction in this organization thanks to the AHRC workshop at the University of Nottingham' (**Source C** p.114). Jaye explains how the BBC has looked anew at the value of audition tapes and artefacts from its archive, and how these can be used within the online programme pages of the BBC. As such, the ephemeral media workshop provided a stimulus to a senior BBC executive for thinking about how broadcast ephemera might be utilized to offer promotional and public service value for the BBC. According to Jaye, the 'BBC has benefited from the thinking and the language I have brought back to the organisation in terms of how we conceive

the opportunity and describe our public service role in the digital media landscape' (**Source D**).

For Charlie Mawer, the Executive Creative Director of Red Bee Media with responsibility for all creative work in the Creative Division, the workshop provided 'new references and case studies that [he] could use to stimulate new thinking' about promotional design (**Source D**). Moreover, the event led to strategic networking opportunities between Mawer and Jaye, deepening agency/client relations between Red Bee and the BBC that have underpinned subsequent projects such as the TV promotion of the BBC iPlayer (2012). The workshop enabled Jaye and Mawer to 'gain kudos' and develop 'thought leadership' in their sectors, something which has practical currency and economic value in selling market expertise (Red Bee's Creative department brought in revenues of £35 million in 2012) (**Source D**). Jaye was invited to MIT and has written 'presentations and strategic documents that draw on the insights and discussions we had as part of the ephemeral media workshop' (**Source D**) and Mawer has been cited by journalists based on videocasts and a prime-time television feature on BBC *East Midlands Today* (22 November 2009) that stemmed from his plenary. The workshop generated new ways of thinking about the role of promotional short-forms for industry beneficiaries, and these new ways of thinking have been furthered in presentations by Johnson on branding and the television industry to Ofcom in 2010. This knowledge has been shared at an institutional level at Red Bee and the BBC helping to **develop relationships that have enabled media companies and professionals to refine and sell their expertise**.

In industrial terms, sustained collaboration with Red Bee Media, central to the AHRC Follow-on award, has **informed strategic business planning and helped professionals and organizations adapt to changing cultural values**, specifically, as mentioned, the challenges of 'build[ing] bridges between content and viewers' in a multiplatform environment. Through engagement with strategic Red Bee projects/personnel, including 32 practitioner interviews, the research facilitated self-reflection about disciplinary practice in the promotional screen industries. Knowledge exchange resulted in two internal reports to Red Bee's Creative division, the chief beneficiary being Red Bee's senior management team. According to Red Bee's Director of Creative, responsible for the overall management of the Creative Division, the reports have 'helped us to think more deeply about the theories and disciplines of our work in TV promotion and design . . . and have been influential in informing our strategic business planning' (**Source A**). He continues: 'a further benefit of this work has been to widen our company's awareness of academic work currently happening in the UK with a focus on our industry . . . enriching our understanding of our craft and influencing our thinking on new areas of research to guide and inform our future business models' (**Source A**). In this last respect, the research has catalyzed industrial-academic collaboration in the emerging area of social television, with a 'hothouse' on the subject hosted by the University of Nottingham in September 2012 bringing together industry practitioners with academics from the major research hubs Horizon (see above) and Research and Enterprise in Arts and Creative Technology (REACT), funded respectively through RCUK's Digital Economy and Creative Economy themes (for more on collaborations with both Horizon and REACT, see **REF5**). This event brokered the partnership of Red Bee, Thinkbox (the trade body for television marketing), British Telecom and Ofcom in audience research on the multi-screen household, funded by Horizon. As a direct result of the hothouse, one Red Bee planner 'reached out to the Heads of Research at UKTV, Channel 4 and the BBC to discuss the possibilities of collaborating with all of them and Horizon to help shape academic research questions that might inform future business strategy and audience understanding' (**Source B**). The research has therefore helped stimulate and shape a key collaborative project around social TV that will continue to inform business strategy in this area.

Finally, the research has had **public impact raising the visibility of the creative and professional discipline of promotional screen design**. Specifically, Grainge/Johnson's engagement with key practitioners led to the presentation of promotional work and heritage at the BFI Southbank in two panel events funded by the AHRC Follow-on Fund (28 November 2012). These panels focused on 'The Contemporary Art of TV Promotion and Design' and 'Pioneers of TV Promotion and Design' and featured the Executive Creative Directors of Red Bee and Crystal CG, major industry figures including Martin Lambie-Nairn and David Liddiment, and continuity announcers and trailer-makers from the 1960s including David Hamilton and Maurice Kanareck. Curated by Grainge/Johnson in collaboration with the BFI, these panels offered public audiences the opportunity to learn about the creative process of TV and digital promotion, now and in the

past, and were both sell-out events attended by 250 people (125x2). Of the 66 feedback cards collected, 99 per cent of respondents said 'the event increased their understanding of the art of TV promotion and design' and that they had 'learnt something new about the way TV promotion and design is created' (**Source E**). Members of the public commented on the events being 'wonderful' and 'highly informative' with the 'archive promos being extraordinary.' Some said it was 'great to have an unexplored art form given prominence,' and others encouraged 'more BFI joint sessions like this' (**Source E**). This impact has been broadened through YouTube videos made by Grainge/Johnson on 'Interstitials' and 'Idents' which have received 3,500 views (2009 - present) and a range of user comments (e.g. 'that was surprisingly interesting. I haven't even thought about those things that much before' (**Source G**)), further enhancing the visibility of the promotional screen industries.

Curating these events had a wider impact on the BFI, enabling personnel within its television archive to digitally restore examples of historically valuable promotional texts for future public screenings, and helping the BFI to develop **educational content planning**. According to the TV Programmer at BFI Southbank, 'working with the University of Nottingham enabled us to identify an area we haven't addressed before and to stage an event that attracted a new constituency of students studying Media and Design at Art College' (**Source H**). Specifically, the panel events were preceded by a BFI masterclass for 15-25 year olds on ident and logo design, led by two creative directors from Red Bee. The masterclass was part of a broader competition in which young adults across the UK were invited to submit ideas for a logo/ident for the BFI's 'Future Film' educational programme. The masterclass was attended by fifty students from leading design colleges including Ravensbourne and Edinburgh Napier, and provided insight into the creative practice of promotional design. In the feedback questionnaires, 100 per cent of respondents said they 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that the 'masterclass taught them about the creative process of making idents and logos' and were 'more likely to consider a job creating logos and idents' as a result (**Source F**). More broadly, promotion was included as a dedicated panel session (led by Grainge) at the *BFI Media Conference* (4-5 July 2013), an event focusing on the professional development of teachers of screen media. Through curation of the public events, the development of the masterclass as an educational event, and the contribution made to the conference, Grainge and Johnson worked with two divisions of the British Film Institute – BFI Southbank and BFI Education – illustrating just some of the ways in which the Department of Culture, Film and Media is benefitting from Nottingham's status as the BFI's HEI partner of choice (**Source I** p.42; see also **REF5**).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

Source A - Letter, Director of Creative, Red Bee Media

Source B - Letter, Strategic Planner, Red Bee Media

Source C - Interview in Paul Grainge *Ephemeral Media*

Source D - Interviews, AHRC Impact Analyst

Source E - Feedback postcards, BFI Southbank public events

Source F - Feedback questionnaires, BFI Southbank educational masterclass

Source G - Video, 'Interstitial - Words of the World'. Available from:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=ae2C-GzgogQ&feature=player_embedded

'What's the Point of Studying Television Idents?' Available from:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=wsCUcmfaZLo

Source H - Letter, Television Programmer, BFI Southbank

Source I - Strategy Document, *BFI Plan 2012-2017*, British Film Institute