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Brands, media usage and preferences among 11–15 year olds

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This case study explores how young people regard brands, media and social media in order to better understand their preferences, use and perceptions. Which brands are their favourite and why? Which particular media and social media do they use on different occasions when they are on their own or for social activities? What expectations do they have of brands and media? How new media and technologies relate to old and traditional media in their opinion and how different brands fit into their lifestyle practices and everyday life?

“Citrus Saturday is a charity, a youth activity, a business. It is helping young people like us get into business”

Young people (both girls and boys) aged 11–15 years old participating at the Citrus Saturday workshops, worked in teams and collaborated on a brands and media mapping activity. Tweens and teenagers

shared their media use styles, their favourite brands as well as their preferences and perceptions of the different brands and media. A mapping was created

representing the relationships (connections and clusters) between their favourite brands and media as well as where they would like to see Citrus Saturday in this mapping. The

activity was very successful, generating a lively discussion and great excitement among participants together with a series of interesting and informative findings.

The mapping activity enabled young people to form free associations of their favourite brands, media and social media, grouping them in ways in which seemed most natural to them. A

“Citrus Saturday is what we enjoy. For fun, money and the experience of it”

variety of media-related attitudes and behaviours were identified, relating to the uses, perceptions and gratifications that young people attach to different media, social media and brands, clearly distinguished by the groupings that were selected.

“I have three PlayStations but I do not use them anymore – there are no Nintendo games on them”

“Everyone watches the Simpsons, we were all watching it last night”

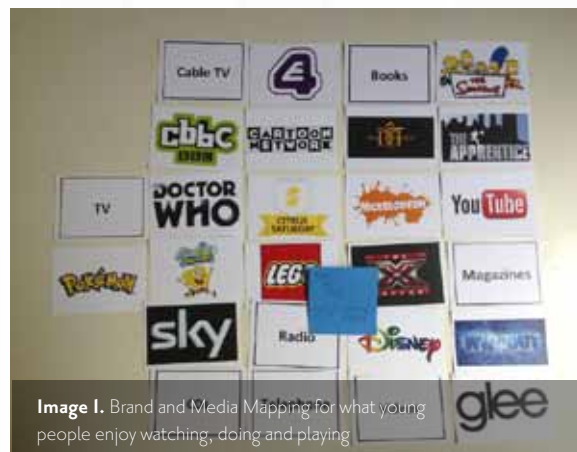


Image 1. Brand and Media Mapping for what young people enjoy watching, doing and playing

The first grouping that came out of the mapping activity included a combination of TV programs, social media, toys, cable TV channels, as well as more traditional





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“Everyone uses Xbox and Wii – they have more games”

“old-fashioned” media – a term used by many of the younger participants – which included books, magazines, telephone and

radio. Favoured brands and media within this grouping include: Pokémon, The Simpsons, YouTube, SpongeBob, The Apprentice and Citrus Saturday.

Throughout the mapping activities, young people seemed to associate brands and media in ways that fit their lifestyle choices and everyday lives, integrating media in unusual ways, seeking

I love my iPhone – smashed but ok”

thematically and personally relevant content, looking for social contexts and associated content, for instance, favourite music or games, rather than just the media and social media by themselves. Media and social media use seems fully incorporated within a young person’s individual lifestyle practices and preferences.

Mobile phones and game consoles top the list of favourite media with tweens and teenagers in our study,

mainly due to the ability of the particular media to be seamlessly incorporated in accessible and desirable ways within young people’s everyday lives and the lives of their friends. Media and brands are deeply involved in

“Everyone now is on twitter and you get notifications because twitter is on your phone constantly with you”

a young person’s life, taking different forms depending on issues of identity, peer culture or just wanting to fit in. Young people explained how they greatly value the personal qualities of their phones with Blackberry and iPhone being the most popular brands in this age group, while Xbox and Wii being named as their favourite, most popular game consoles.

Although many young people in our study described how they really enjoy having access

“Amazon, it’s an app”

to a plethora of brands and media and the possibilities that these bring, they also pointed out that they only

use a handful of brands, media and social media on a day-to-day basis. Their choice when selecting a new piece of technology or an item from their favourite brand is greatly influenced by personal lifestyles and social relations with their siblings and friends, weaving their favourite brands and media into the pattern of their everyday life.

“If you are not smart enough on anything just ask Google”

Young people seem to spend more time on their mobile phones, especially smartphones, than on any other media device. Social media that was previously accessed through a website is now accessed via an app on their phone. As one of the participants explains “a phone is much more simpler and it is with you all the time and you don’t have to log on



Image 2. Brand and Media Mapping for electronic devices young people own and use

to a computer to do that because you have got a phone with you.” One of the younger participants also added, “I am on my phone usually most of the time because it’s just portable.”

All participants have several games that they are passionate

“Wikipedia is the only way I get A’s in my homework. Copy and paste, hashtag!”



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about playing. Younger participants tend to play Pokémon, Mario games, Sonic the Hedgehog and FIFA games. As one participant explains “with my cousins I like to play Mario Kart, which is really fun because loads of us can play together.” Pokémon was also mentioned as one of their favourite games but also as something

that they enjoy doing in their leisure time. For older participants favourite games included Just Dance, Call of Duty, Jetpack Joyride and Run.

“What we eat – we eat Kellogg’s for breakfast”

As the mapping activity progressed, young participants created more groupings. One of these groupings was about the Internet and the activities that young people engage in while online, activities relating to both homework and leisure. Evolution in media environments and the

possibilities that the Internet offers have transformed and enhanced existing education and leisure activities for young people. Currently, all kinds of media and technologies are available as options for young people’s education and leisure, feeding their imagination, answering their questions and providing limitless opportunities to learn about anything at any time.

“Love hula hoops. Bought them yesterday”

Young people across all teams participating in the brands and media mapping activities agreed that Wikipedia is the main place that they go to do their homework, while Google is where they go to do their research on any aspect of their studies or find out about anything they want to learn. Google Translate was also mentioned as an invaluable online resource, supporting them in their language learning.

Although most of their favourite social media are accessed via apps on their phones, younger participants grouped Pinterest and Twitter in this category rather than in the Apps category, contrary to older participants who also grouped Twitter in the Apps category. When the younger participants were asked about this finding,

“Everyone has Walkers”

they explained that particular social media are accessed via the Internet from their computer while others via apps on their phones.

The “What we eat” grouping, generated great enthusiasm with participants holding on to their favourite food and drink cards. The grouping was formed very quickly, became one of the larger ones, with participants stressing to each other, “don’t forget the Jaffa Cakes” in order to not forget or misplace any of their favourite brands.

Names of brands were hollered including McDonalds, Walkers, Jaffa Cakes, Ribena, Hula Hoops and Starbucks. When one participant raised the “Haribo” card, several younger participants started singing the brand’s song from the Haribo advert. Tweens and teens even started describing how and when they eat or drink their favourite products, recalling their last purchase of the product and even adding an extra post-it “Yum” to this category to express the feelings associated with their favourite foods and drinks.

“Everything you get in GAME and it is cheaper. Me and my friends go to CEX all the time. Got a Pokémon game for £4”



Image 3. Brand and Media Mapping for what young people enjoy eating



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“I live in Primark”

The final grouping was on places where young people shop, both online and offline.

Although in general the mapping for both girls and boys had the same brands, it differed in that girls preferred ASOS, Converse and Accessorize while boys' favourite brands were Adidas, Nike and Reebok. All teams agreed that Primark and H&M are the places where young people shop most frequently. A key finding voiced by younger participants was the idea of living on their favourite brands. When tweens and teens were asked about the meaning of living on their favourite brands and media, they explained that in this manner they wanted to stress the frequency and love for a particular brand or media and how deeply it is embedded within their everyday life. In this category it was also discovered that young people enjoy both shopping and trading for their favourite items and that they like a good bargain. “Everything you get in GAME and it is cheaper. Me and my friends go to CEX all the time. Got a Pokémon game for £4”, one participant explains, while another describes why they do not buy their music as much via iTunes anymore, “iTunes, but you have to pay for that.”



Image 4. Brand and Media Mapping for where young people shop

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