THEME 5
THE VALLETTA BRAND

EUROPEAN CAPITAL
OF CULTURE

EVALUATION & MONITORING
Research Findings 2016

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The Valletta 2018 Evaluation & Monitoring process is a means through which the Valletta 2018 Foundation gains a deeper insight into the various impacts of the European Capital of Culture (ECoC) title on different spheres of cultural, social and economic life. The goal of this process is twofold (i) To understand the changes brought about by the ECoC title, and (ii) To address any shortcomings and challenges faced by the Valletta 2018 Cultural Programme throughout its implementation.

This process comprises a series of longitudinal studies commencing in January 2015, three full years before the European Capital of Culture year, and running through the ECoC, with results preented in 2019, thereby capturing data before, during, and in the immediate aftermath of Valletta holding the ECoC title.

This process is divided into five themes:
1. **Cultural & Territorial Vibrancy**
2. **Governance & Finance**
3. **Community Inclusion & Space**
4. **The Tourist Experience**
5. **The Valletta Brand**

This research is a collaborative, mixed-methods process, involving a number of public entities, collecting and analysing data primarily of a quantitative nature, together with independent researchers working with data that is predominantly qualitative. These entities and researchers constitute the Valletta 2018 Evaluation & Monitoring Steering Committee, that was set up to manage and implement this research process.

The public entities forming part of the Steering Committee are:
- National Statistics Office
- Malta Tourism Authority
- Jobsplus
- Economic Policy Department within the Ministry of Finance

The independent researchers participating within this process were selected according to their area of expertise. The areas covered are:
- Cultural Programme
- Branding
- Sociology
- Built Environment
- European Identity

Although each of these researchers, and their respective teams, are carrying out data collection and analysis specifically within their respective fields, various points of intersection and collaboration across the various areas have been established so far. The data being collected throughout each study is being shared with the Steering Committee in order to create synergies between the different fields being analysed.

The research methods adopted throughout the various studies that comprise this process vary greatly, ranging from quantitative surveys to in-depth interviews, focus groups and real-time experience tracking.

THE VALLETTA BRAND
THEME 5

Branding and communication forms a crucial aspect of any European Capital of Culture, to the extent that in many cases the brand of the respective ECoC becomes synonymous with the sweeping social, cultural and infrastructural changes which the city has undergone. As in any organisational setting, having a clear brand identity allows an organisation to strategise and communicate its goals and engage with diverse communities in a more efficient and cohesive manner not only during the ECoC year itself, but also in the aftermath of the title.

This theme focuses on this issue, analysing the extent to which the Valletta 2018 Foundation has succeeded in communicating its brand, and the degree of engagement with the Valletta 2018 communications strategy. The research study within this theme, conducted by Dr Emanuel Said, tracks user engagement with the Valletta 2018 brand through a process of real-time experience tracking, whereby participants are monitored periodically for their engagement with Valletta 2018 and its various activities throughout the year.

AUDIENCES' EXPERIENCES OF THE VALLETTA 2018 BRAND

DR. EMANUEL SAID

ABSTRACT

Longitudinal in nature, this project investigates how audiences engage with cultural brands by taking a processual, longitudinal view employing real-time experience tracking (RET) and other qualitative (focus group discussions and face-to-face interviews) data collection approaches. The use of RET is an innovative aspect in studying cultural brands, moving away from the exclusive focus on influences that impact on audience engagement (as in past studies) to the actual process of engagement and value co-creation along multiple touchpoints that constitute the Valletta 2018 brand.

Results emerging from the first wave of RET and associated qualitative data collection efforts are so far encouraging, although incomplete. Indeed, RET suggests that individuals co-create different levels of value when engaging with direct vs indirect encounters. Also, engagement tends to suffer from loss of sensory appeal across a particular type of audience members who are typified by a resilient type of personality.

Further insight is emerging as these results are evaluated from a qualitative perspective through interviews and focus-group discussions currently under way. Further depth is expected to be attained following further administration of RET during 2017 and 2018 involving larger numbers of participants than that attained in 2016.

Keywords: Real-time experience tracking, brand engagement, brand communications, co-creation

INTRODUCTION

The project studies how audiences engage with the different forms of communication that the Valletta 2018 communications programme is transmitting. Longitudinal in nature, this project relies on an innovative data gathering approach involving real-time experience tracking, and aims to determine the effects each type of communications transmitted by Valletta 2018 purport on the different audiences as reflected in individuals' attitudes and behaviour.

This study builds on the quantitative initiatives the Evaluation and Monitoring committee is undertaking in the form of periodic CATI Valletta Participation Surveys, and investigates how audiences engage with the Valletta 2018 brand involves:
- exploring the touchpoints[1] that feature in individuals' engagement with the Valletta 2018 brand;
- determine the sequences of encounters that individuals experience in their engagement with the Valletta 2018 brand
- assess the effects that such encounters produce on individuals experiencing the Valletta 2018 brand.

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[1] A touchpoint is an episode where an individual (part of an audience) has a direct or indirect contact with a (cultural) brand (after Baxendale et al., 2015).

METHODOLOGY

This study looks at the process of engagement rather than at the influences or outcomes of audience engagement with cultural events within the Valletta 2018 Programme. It is this process that lies at the basis of audience (behavioural) segmentation that can help producers or creators better plan initiatives that target specific audience segments more effectively in future initiatives – both locally and overseas. Moreover, this study is intended to help the Evaluation and Monitoring committee assess the success of the Valletta 2018 communications strategy.

This study focuses on the individuals' experiences of the cultural brand as the unit of analysis, with analysis levelled to the audience individuals and their experiences, differing from earlier cultural participation research projects that focus on either the producers/creators' views or the participants' post-hoc perceptions about experienced events.

Individuals experience and engage with the Valletta 2018 brand in two key ways: by experiencing communications transmitted directly by the Valletta 2018 Foundation or by engaging/experiencing indirect communications like word of mouth and social media exchanges. Audiences (and stakeholders) experience a holistic engagement with a cultural brand across multiple points of contact (Grewal, Levy, & Kumar, 2009), touchpoints (Gentile, Spiller, & Noci, 2007) or discrete encounters (Meyer & Schwager, 2007) as audiences (and stakeholders) progress in their journey with the brand (Payne, Storbacka, & Frow, 2008).

This study recognizes brands (particularly cultural ones) as dynamic, continuous social processes (Muñiz Jr. & O'Guinn, 2001). Individuals (audiences), production actors (performers, producers, creators) as well as other stakeholders constitute a network of resources (rather than dyadic relationships[2]) who co-create brand value (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008). Brand value emerges from stakeholders' experiences[3] with the brand and as a result of sustained negotiations and symbolic interpretations of brand-related information. Brand value also emerges from personal narratives based on personal or impersonal experiences with brands (Muñiz Jr. & O'Guinn, 2001). Brand value is located in the minds of audiences and stakeholders (Ballantyne & Aitken, 2007) who form brand communities – or specialised non-geographically bound communities, based on a structured set of social relationships among admirers of a brand (Muñiz Jr. & O'Guinn, 2001). These relationships are also at the core of brand resonance – or a brand's most important building block (Keller, 2001).

Audiences' engagement with cultural brands exhibits community-like qualities as understood in sociology, and address identity-, meaning- and status-related concerns for all network participants above. There are 12 value-creating practices in brand communities, organised in four thematic categories (after Schau et al., 2009). Of these, community engagement, impression management and social networking are most relevant to cultural brands.

Brand resonance involves relationships that are described in four dimensions (Keller, 2001). On top of loyalty and attachment, community and engagement dimensions are most relevant to cultural brands as is Valletta 2018. The community dimension relates to that broader meaning to audiences who identify themselves with a brand community and sense affiliation (if not kinship) with other individuals associated

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[2] After Ballantyne and Aitken (2007); Ind and Bjerke (2007); Jones (2005); McAlexander et al. (2002) and Muñiz Jr. and Schau (2005)
[3] Or the subjective response to the holistic direct and indirect encounter with the brand after Lemke et al. (2011).

with the brand (such as fellow audience members experiencing the brand, performers, producers and creators among others). Active engagement, by contrast, is where audiences assert loyalty to a brand. Within this dimension, audiences invest time, energy, money and other resources into the cultural brand beyond those explained during the purchase or consumption of cultural events (after Keller, 2001).

This rationale suggests five important considerations that the methodology employed entertains. First, rather than considering the Valletta 2018 as a static property, this study looks at the process through which audiences engage with the Valletta 2018 brand. Second, this process involves a network of actors (audiences, performers, producers and creators) using operant and operand resources[4]. Third, audiences engaged in this process experience multiple touch points. Fourth, a variety of individuals are involved in audience and performer/provider spheres. Fifth, individuals experience cultural brands in a collective consumption context, highlighting the multitude of touchpoints that audiences encounter in their participation in cultural events and associated co-creation of value (after Kelleher et al., 2015).

In response to these five considerations, the study's methodology acknowledges that audiences engage with Valletta 2018 brand through a multitude of encounters that range from direct instances (like advertising or actual participation in an event) to other indirect experiences (like word of mouth or third party contributions on social media). These encounters impact on individuals' attitudes towards Valletta 2018 brand.

Traditional survey methods can capture and measure such impacts but rely on individuals' memories of encounters with the Valletta 2018 brand after that such events occur. Memories fade rapidly and are often biased by whether or not a participation actually happened (Bryman, 2012; Malhotra & Birks, 2007; McGivern, 2013). A richer account about the total effect of the different encounters an individual makes with a brand can be constructed though ethnographic approaches that require observers participating in the experiences with observed individuals. Ethnographic methods are limited as individual observers can only shadow a limited number of individuals for a restricted period of time (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; van Maanen, 2011). Moreover, individuals' behaviours tend to change as a result of individuals' own social desirability – or the unconscious desire to "please" the observer (Adler & Adler, 1987; Bryman, 2012; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Patton, 1980; Paulhus, 1991).

An alternative approach involves engaging research participants to interact with the researcher using the participants' own mobile phone. Data is collected in real time (hence the term "real-time experience tracking" or RET) (Baxendale, Macdonald, & Wilson, 2015; Macdonald, Wilson, & Konus, 2012) and mitigates the challenges of traditional ethnography in two ways. First, whereas a researcher/observer cannot easily track audiences 24 hours daily, participants' mobile phones can. Second, unlike human observers, participants' mobile phones do not influence participants' perceptions on encounters and experiences.

A process view to audiences' brand engagement is drawn from four essential steps, where research participants:

1. Fill out an online questionnaire about their personality as well as their sensory, behavioural and intellectual dimensions of Valletta 2018 brand experience;
2. Answer a short questionnaire whenever they encounter Valletta 2018 by way of noting Valletta 2018 communications or participating in events or experiencing (other direct or indirect ways) the brand;

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[4] Audiences use knowledge and skills (operant resources) to engage with cultural brands and transform physical or experience (operand resources) into meaning, experiential benefits and value.

3. Fill in an online diary in which they corroborate/reflect on their on their encounters with Valletta 2018
4. Complete an online questionnaire (modified version of (1) above) to assess any change in attitudes and views about their Valletta 2018 experience.

Established RET methods rely on two types of data collection channels: text (SMS) messaging and online (involving pre-RET and post-RET surveys as well as an online diary) (Macdonald et al., 2012). In these studies, participant contributions through online diary are not obligatory and result in poorly capturing participants' reflections about their experience with brands. The method employed for researching the Valletta 2018 brand moves from utilising traditional mobile phones to using participants' smart phones that are in widespread use among Maltese (and foreign) consumers[5]. The use of smart phones enables observers to use a purposively developed app that captures the relevant data in steps (2) and (3) above in one stage.

Up to this date and in line with the project's planned efforts, this study involved the design, production and piloting of the new RET app. Just Some Coding Ltd were contracted late in October 2015 and the app was piloted in February 2016. Following observations emerging from the use of the app during the piloting, a new, improved app was launched for a larger scale field effort in May 2016, involving an eight week data collection period ending on 15th July 2016, that coincided with the tailing of Valletta 2018 cultural activities in Summer 2016.

From a methodological perspective, there are five key limitations impacting on the study's validity and reliability. First, participants may have reported experiences well after the encounter happening, if at all – and is a common aspect manifest in indirect methods of data collection (such as self-completion surveys). The capture of GIS data remains a valid opportunity and can be captured only if research participants consent, albeit associated with ethical reservations.

Second, as with survey methods, researchers' questions (as an intervention) may influence participants' attitudes towards a brand. Third, there is a possibility that specific types of encounters remain only sparsely represented, as reported in earlier studies even when large numbers of participants are engaged in RET studies. This study tried to mitigating this challenge by administering more than one wave of participation (for each participant) following the suggestions of Baxendale et al., (2015) and Macdonald et al. (2012). Asking participants to keep engaged with RET for longer periods than one week was ineffective and is consistent with earlier experience (as well as published studies) where high participant dropout rates in longitudinal investigations are reported (McGivern, 2013).

Fourth, RET participants may fail to report all encounters with the Valletta 2018 brand for various reasons. This study aimed to alleviate the effect of these challenges by administering incentives that help individuals remain committed to their participation in the study. Incentives involved free (or sponsored) access to various events within the Valletta 2018 programme of events, but could not effectively alleviate challenges emerging from diminishing participant engagement with RET.

Fifth, although most Valletta 2018 audiences rely on mobile telecommunications equipment, a proportion of these audiences do not make use of smartphone equipment, thereby precluding specific audience groups from being represented in this study.

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[5] In 2014, 42% of mobile phone users made use of a smartphone – up from 37% in 2013. A prevailing majority of smartphone users are younger than 34 years, with proportions of smartphone users (over total mobile phone users) declining with ages older than 35. These proportions are expected to increase drastically during 2015 and 2016. Source: Malta Communications Authority, 2014.

FINDINGS

The first time use of the RET app in a cultural brand context offered encouraging results although the data collected from this first wave of field work was less than suitable for the intended latent cluster and longitudinal analysis. Nonetheless, the initial results are summarized below.

RET was administered between 15th May and 15th July (both dates included) and attracted 130 participants, of whom, 62 reported a total of 367 encounters. Of these participants, 42 were female. 23 had achieved a post-graduate qualification, while another 21 had obtained a university degree. 26 participants lived in the Northern Harbour region while another 11 lived in the Southern Harbour. 36 participants were married, while another 16 were single. Overall, participants had an average age of 46.5 years (median age of 45), featuring a bimodal age distribution that ranged from 17 years old up to 70 years old.

A total of 56 participants could be categorized in three personality types: resilient (n = 18), undercontrollers (n=19) and overcontrollers (n=19) (after Asendorpf, Borkenau, Ostendorf, & Van Aken, 2001; Rammstedt, Riemann, Angleitner, & Borkenau, 2004). The other 6 could not be categorized either because they submitted incomplete data, or their responses lied well outside the $z = \pm 3$ range.

Table 1 Cluster membership *(Source: Author)*

Number of Cases in each cluster		
Cluster	1	19.000
	2	19.000
	3	18.000
Valid		56.000
Missing		.000

	Zscore: Extraversion	Zscore: Agreeableness	Zscore: Conscientiousness	Zscore: Neuroticism	Zscore: Openness to experience
	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
1	-.54936	.06840	.16239	.28491 .	-.53047
2	-.02871	-.37415	-.10443	-.72261	.40295
3	.88374	76034	.59042	91773	.48310

Cluster 1:   Overcontroller
Cluster 2:   Undercontroller
Cluster 3:   Resilient

Resilient personalities are characterised by distinct levels of neuroticism and above average extraversion, agreeableness, openness and conscientiousness. Overcontrolled personalities lack extroversion and openness but feature relatively high levels of neuroticism, whereas undercontrolled personalities lack agreeableness and conscientiousness but feature relatively higher levels of neuroticism.

As for brand experience (after Brakus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello, 2009), this study notes that overall, no discernible improvement in participants' impressions on their Valletta 2018 experience from the start to the end of the RET data collection (all paired t-test comparisons suggest no significant difference in sensory, behavioural and intellectual dimensions in responses at start and at end of the field work). However, at a cluster level, it is members of the "resilients" group who demonstrate a net change in their perceptions of brand experience during their engagement with Valletta 2018 events (see Table 2).

Table 2 suggests that members of the "resilients" group tend to form a weaker impression about Valletta 2018 following their participation in the brand, potentially because of the brand's loss of appeal to the participants' senses. This change is also manifest as a weakening of emotions evoked by Valletta 2018 brand among members of this group, who see their curiosity and cognitive (intellectual) engagement declining.

Table 2 Net change in participants' impression on their Valletta 2018 experience during the time of study *(Source: Author)*

Effect (average agreement score change from start to end of RET) at 95% confidence interval			
Cluster	**Resilients**	**Undercontrollers**	**Overcontrollers**
Valletta 2018 makes a strong impression on my senses	Decrease	No change	No change
I find Valletta 2018 interesting in a sensory way	No change	No change	No change
Valletta 2018 does not appeal to my senses	Decrease	No change	No change
Valletta 2018 induces feelings and sentiments	No change	No change	No change
I do not have strong emotions for Valletta 2018	Decrease	No change	No change
I engage in a lot of thinking when I encounter Valletta 2018	Decrease	No change	No change
Valletta 2018 does not make me think	No change	No change	No change
Valletta 2018 stimulates my curiosity	Decrease	No change	No change

Most encounters reported related to Valletta Pageant of the Seas (93 encounters) followed by the Valletta Film Festival (57 encounters) and Għanafest (36 encounters) (see Table 3).

Table 3 Events encountered by participants *(Source: Author)*

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Internet browsing	109	29.7
	Other	49	13.4
	Saw on TV	43	11.7
	Chat with friends/family face-to-face	43	11.7
	Participated in the event	36	9.8
	Posted on social media myself	34	9.3
	Heard on radio	27	7.4
	Read on newspapers/magazine	14	3.8
	Overheard a conversation	12	3.3
	Total	367	100.0

Most encounters involved mere internet browsing (109 encounters), television viewing or chat with acquaintances face-to-face (43 encounters each) (see Table 4).

Table 4 Participants' experiencing of events *(Source: Author)*

		How important is this event for you?			How satisfied are you with your experience?		
		Mean	Standard Deviation	Total N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Total N
Which event did you encounter (choose one)?	Valletta Green Festival	2.536	0.881	28	3.750	0.645	28
	Valletta Film Festival	2.912	1.090	57	3.614	0.750	57
	Għanafest	2.694	1.009	36	3.639	0.723	36
	Malta Jazz Festival	3.211	1.182	19	4.053	0.705	19
	Malta International Arts Festival	3.480	0.770	25	3.800	0.707	25
	L-Għanja tal-Poplu - Festival	2.538	0.967	13	3.615	0.961	13
	Darba Waħda...	4.500	0.707	2	4.000	0.000	2
	Il-Warda tar-Riħ - Windrose	2.000		1	3.000		1
	Malta Fashion Week	2.000	0.853	23	3.478	0.790	23
	Blitz	3.000	1.000	5	3.800	0.837	5
	Strada Stretta (Events)	3.318	1.287	22	3.773	1.307	22
	Pageant of the Seas	2.968	0.983	93	3.667	0.913	93
	Other	2.767	0.972	43	3.767	0.782	43

On a five point scale, participants perceived the Malta International Arts Festival as the event that that offered most value and motivated participation, followed by Strada Stretta and Malta Jazz Festival (mean scores: 3.480, 3.318 and 3.211 respectively). Although participants seemingly found the Malta Jazz Festival, Strada Stretta, Valletta Green Festival and Valletta Pageant of the Seas as that experience that reached audience expectations (or satisfying) (mean scores: 4.053, 3.773, 3.750 and 3.667 respectively) (see Table 5) these observations remain unsupported by tests for significance (ANOVA).

Table 5 Perceived value and satisfaction with encounters across different events *(Source: Author)*

		How important is this event for you?			How satisfied are you with your experience?		
		Mean	Standard Deviation	Total N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Total N
How did you experience the event?	Internet browsing	2.716	1.019	109	3.596	.668	109
	Saw on TV	2.837	1.067	43	3.744	.790	43
	Heard on radio	2.926	.730	27	3.741	.656	27
	Read on newspapers/magazine	2.714	.914	14	3.714	.914	14
	Posted on social media myself	2.765	.890	34	3.294	.970	34
	Chat with friends/family face-to-face	3.047	1.133	43	3.907	.811	43
	Overheard a conversation	2.333	.985	12	3.333	.492	12
	Participated in the event	3.417	1.204	36	4.139	1.018	36
	Other	2.939	1.107	49	3.714	.935	49

Participants also perceived participation in events as the most important experience, followed by chats with acquaintances and hearing (about the event) on the radio (mean scores: 3.417, 3,047 and 2,926 respectively). Study participants see participation in events, chatting with acquaintances and engaging with an event through television as the more satisfying experiences (mean scores: 4.139, 3.907 and 3.744 respectively) (see Table 6). In both instances, observations are significant at a 95% confidence interval. These observations also suggest that direct experiences (like participating in events) offer more value to participants and are more satisfying than indirect experiences (see Table 7). Observations at this level of analysis are significant at 95% confidence interval. Further analysis of these perceptions across personality types (see Table 8) revealed that the relatively higher importance and better satisfaction linked with direct experiences prevailed over all three types of personalities (at 95% confidence interval).

Table 6 Perceived value and satisfaction with types of encounters *(Source: Author)*

Type of experience		How important is this event for you?	How satisfied are you with your experience?
Indirect	Mean	2.79	3.64
	N	282	282
	Std. Deviation	1.002	.771
Direct	Mean	3.42	4.14
	N	36	36
	Std. Deviation	1.204	1.018
Other	Mean	2.94	3.71
	N	49	49
	Std. Deviation	1.107	.935
Total	Mean	2.87	3.70
	N	367	367
	Std. Deviation	1.051	.832

Table 7 Perceived value and satisfaction across types of encounters *(Source: Author)*

Type of experience		How important is this event for you?	How satisfied are you with your experience?
Indirect	Mean	2.79	3.64
	N	282	282
	Std. Deviation	1.002	.771
Direct	Mean	3.42	4.14
	N	36	36
	Std. Deviation	1.204	1.018
Other	Mean	2.94	3.71
	N	49	49
	Std. Deviation	1.107	.935
Total	Mean	2.87	3.70
	N	367	367
	Std. Deviation	1.051	.832

Table 8 Perceived importance and satisfaction of direct and indirect experiences across the different personality types of participants *(Source: Author)*

Personality cluster membership	Type of experience	How important is this event for you?	How satisfied are you with your experience?
Overcontroller	Indirect	2.78	3.72
	Direct	3.57	4.50
	Other	2.71	3.82
	Total	2.84	3.79
Undercontroller	Indirect	2.59	3.44
	Direct	3.88	4.13
	Other	2.71	3.36
	Total	2.73	3.49
Resilient	Indirect	3.00	3.69
	Direct	3.50	4.25
	Other	3.33	3.89
	Total	3.10	3.77
Total	Indirect	2.79	3.65
	Direct	3.63	4.33
	Other	2.94	3.71
	Total	2.89	3.71

At a more detailed level of analysis, there are differences in the perceived value and satisfaction that experiences offer to different types of participants (see Table 9 and Table 10). For instance, Resilients perceive more value in encounters that involve an interaction with family and friends rather than just participating in events, whereas overcontrollers and undercontrollers perceive more value in direct participation in events rather than indirect experiences. Resilients also perceived more value (and satisfaction) in encounters involving the Malta Jazz Festival. By contrast, Overcontrollers perceived more value in encounters related to Blitz, while Strada Stretta events offered better occasions for perceived value to Undercontrollers.

Table 9 Perceived importance and satisfaction of different types of experiences across the different personality types of participants (Source: Author)

| Personality cluster membership	How did you experience the event?	How important is this event for you?	How satisfied are you with your experience?
Overcontroller	Internet browsing	2.65	3.61
	Saw on TV	2.96	3.85
	Heard on radio	3.00	4.22
	Read on newspapers/magazine	3.14	4.29
	Posted on social media myself	2.67	3.22
	Chat with friends/family face-to-face	3.00	3.87
	Overheard a conversation	1.60	3.40
	Participated in the event	3.57	4.50
	Other	2.71	3.82
	Total	2.84	3.79
Undercontroller	Internet browsing	2.61	3.50
	Saw on TV	2.00	3.14
	Heard on radio	2.50	3.50
	Read on newspapers/magazine	2.25	3.50
	Posted on social media myself	2.86	3.14
	Chat with friends/family face-to-face	2.85	3.62
	Participated in the event	3.88	4.13
	Other	2.71	3.36
	Total	2.73	3.49
Resilient	Internet browsing	2.88	3.72
	Saw on TV	3.22	3.89
	Heard on radio	3.00	3.46
	Read on newspapers/magazine	2.33	2.67
	Posted on social media myself	3.00	3.62
	Chat with friends/family face-to-face	3.57	4.57
	Overheard a conversation	2.83	3.33
	Participated in the event	3.50	4.25
	Other	3.33	3.89
	Total	3.10	3.77
Total	Internet browsing	2.70	3.61
	Saw on TV	2.86	3.74
	Heard on radio	2.92	3.73
	Read on newspapers/magazine	2.71	3.71
	Posted on social media myself	2.79	3.30
	Chat with friends/family face-to-face	3.05	3.91
	Overheard a conversation	2.27	3.36
	Participated in the event	3.63	4.33
	Other	2.94	3.71
	Total	2.89	3.71

Table 10 Perceived importance and satisfaction of different events experienced across the different personality types of participants (Source: Author)

Personality cluster membership		How important is this event for you?	How satisfied are you with your experience?
Overcontroller	Valletta Green Festival	2.25	3.75
	Valletta Film Festival	3.04	3.81
	Għanafest	2.89	4.06
	Malta Jazz Festival	2.83	4.00
	Malta International Arts Festival	3.36	3.82
	L-Għanja tal-Poplu - Festival	2.73	3.64
	Darba Waħda...	4.00	4.00
	Il-Warda tar-Rih - Windrose	2.00	3.00
	Malta Fashion Week	2.30	3.40
	Blitz	3.67	4.00
	Strada Stretta (Events)	2.38	3.38
	Pageant of the Seas	2.87	3.77
	Other	2.79	3.89
	Total	2.84	3.79
Undercontroller	Valletta Green Festival	2.13	3.50
	Valletta Film Festival	2.56	3.22
	Għanafest	1.50	3.50
	Malta Jazz Festival	3.33	4.00
	Malta International Arts Festival	3.57	3.43
	Malta Fashion Week	1.67	3.33
	Blitz	2.00	3.00
	Strada Stretta (Events)	3.82	4.00
	Pageant of the Seas	2.63	3.29
	Other	2.60	3.60
	Total	2.73	3.49
Resilient	Valletta Green Festival	3.10	3.90
	Valletta Film Festival	2.88	3.56
	Għanafest	2.85	3.15
	Malta Jazz Festival	4.25	4.25
	Malta International Arts Festival	3.60	4.20
	L-Għanja tal-Poplu - Festival	1.00	3.00
	Darba Waħda...	5.00	4.00
	Malta Fashion Week	1.71	3.86
	Blitz	2.00	4.00
	Strada Stretta (Events)	4.00	4.00
	Pageant of the Seas	3.44	3.96
	Other	3.00	3.78
	Total	3.10	3.77
Total	Valletta Green Festival	2.54	3.73
	Valletta Film Festival	2.90	3.63
	Għanafest	2.71	3.66
	Malta Jazz Festival	3.21	4.05
	Malta International Arts Festival	3.48	3.78
	L-Għanja tal-Poplu - Festival	2.58	3.58
	Darba Waħda...	4.50	4.00
	Il-Warda tar-Rih - Windrose	2.00	3.00
	Malta Fashion Week	2.00	3.55
	Blitz	3.00	3.80
	Strada Stretta (Events)	3.32	3.77
	Pageant of the Seas	2.98	3.70
	Other	2.77	3.77
	Total	2.89	3.71

Although participants see online media as a means of interacting with a brand offering lesser perceived value, a question remains relating to how such experiences unfold. Indeed, this study considers participants' experience by looking at statistics compiled separately (through www.mention.com real time media monitoring service). This study looks at three forms of online media: Valletta 2018 website website[1], Tal-Kultura Volunteers Programme[2] website and social media and three social media channels (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram)

Throughout 2016, web users visiting the Valletta 2018 website increased by 67.9% over the 2015 numbers (75,941 users total). Over 2016, the same web site recorded 110,670 sessions (or an increase of 35% over 2015). 7th June 2016 was the busiest day for the Valletta 2018 website, reaching almost 2000 sessions, coinciding with the Pageant of the Seas event.

Figure 1 Valletta 2018 website sessions (*Source: Valletta 2018 Foundation*)
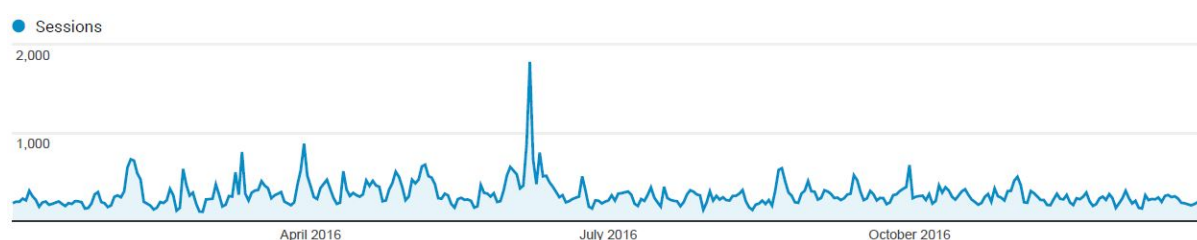
As for social media, statistics suggest a steady increase in followers across all three major social media channels on a month-by-month basis (see Figure 2). Indeed, Facebook likes grew to over 15,000 by December 2016 (up from just over 9,500 in January 2016), while Instagram and Twitter followers grew steadily of the months measured (from June 2016 to December 2016).

Figure 2 Valletta 2018 audiences' interaction on social media (*Source: Valletta 2018 Foundation*)


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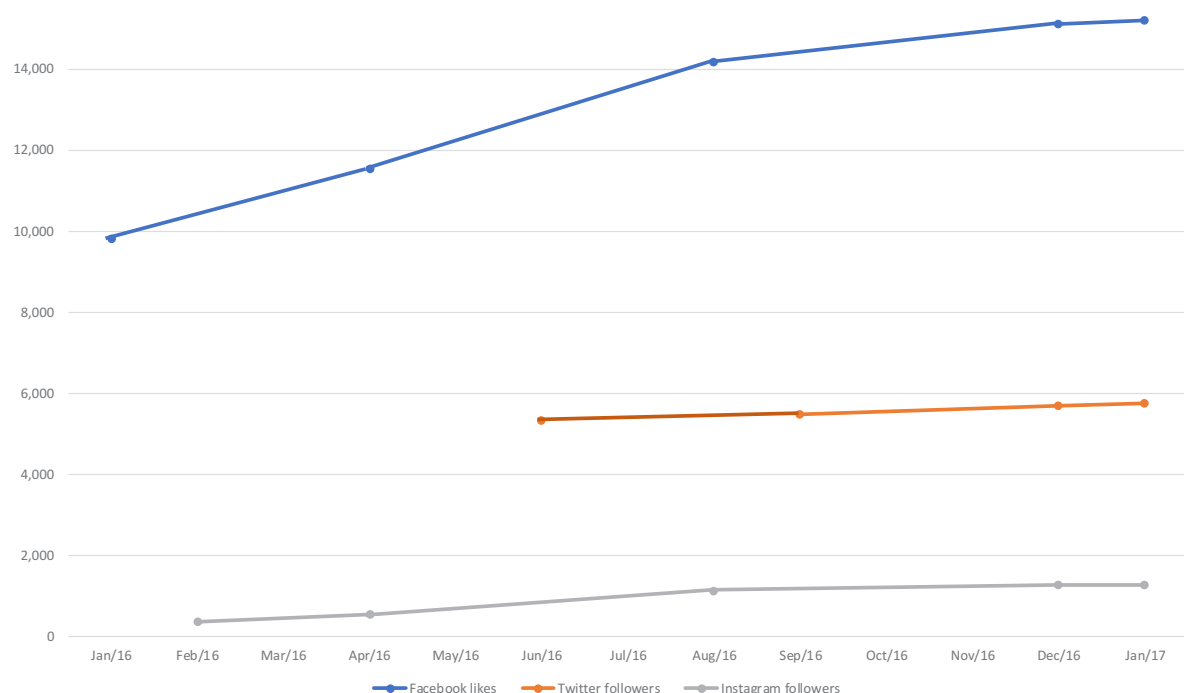
[1] www.valletta2018.org
[2] www.talkultura2018.org

The dominating engagement of audiences with Facebook is also consistent with the local social media landscape as Facebook remains the most popular social medium with Maltese online audiences. As expected, 33% of the audience engaging with Valletta 2018 on Facebook is aged between 25 and 24 years, while a further 24% are aged between 35 and 44 years. 58% of audiences engaging with Valletta 2018 on Facebook are female.

Audience engagement with Tal-Kultura 2018 is a relatively more recent phenomenon. Numbers suggest that audiences are quickly engaging with Tal-Kultura 2018 social media – with www.mention. com statistics for December 2016 only reporting 1,271 Facebook likes, 147 Twitter followers and 406 Instagram followers.

In print media, similar growth trends are evident (see Figure 3) with mentions about Valletta 2018 events and related matters growing virtually exponentially since 2011.

Figure 3 Local print media reports *(Source: Valletta 2018 Foundation)*
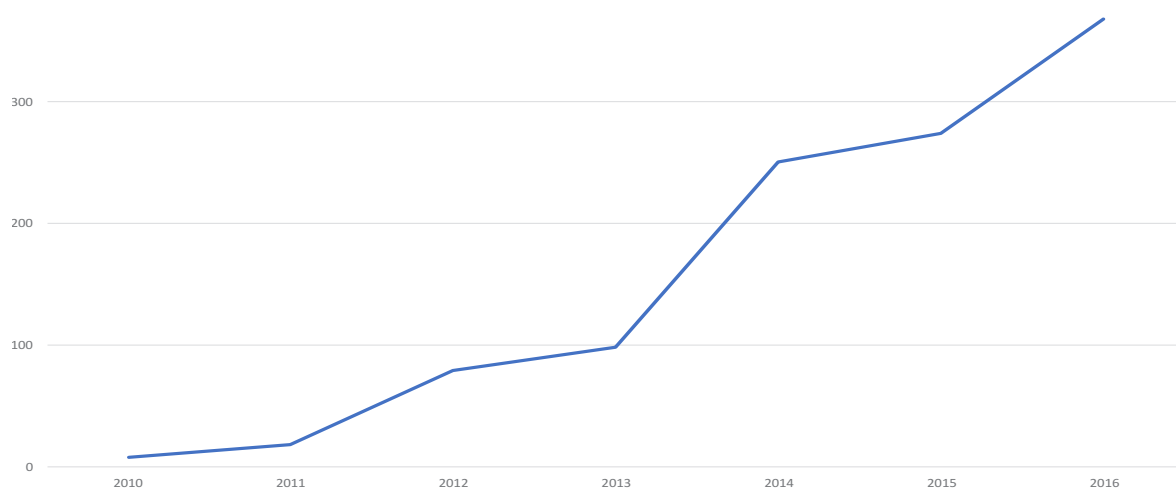
This analysis is still incomplete and more insight is being generated as the results from RET (and participants' reflections) are compared with trends observed in participants' social media engagement as well as observations emerging from qualitative research currently underway (focus group discussions).

CONCLUSIONS & WAY FORWARD

The study employs an innovative approach that looks at cultural brands and audience engagement from a processual, longitudinal viewpoint. This methodology relies on the employment of a custom built smartphone app that has so far offered encouraging results, leading to an insight about how participants co-create value in their engagement with cultural brands across the different touchpoints that constitute the totality of a brand experience.

During 2017, the project is foreseen to unfold dramatically as qualitative focus group discussions and face-to-face interviews are concluded and new elaborations emerge by corroborating on the RET findings. Ensuing efforts will involve the administration of the RET App during the second quarter of 2017 that shall look more deeply into specifically selected cultural events and employing a wider scale sampling approach. Similar waves of research are planned for 2018, with a final set of findings emerging from an analysis of quantitative and qualitative data planned to be published in 2018 and 2019.

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CONCLUDING REMARKS

Valletta 2018 has sought to establish a strong and iconic brand, reflecting both the city's unique identity and its contemporary cultural vibrancy. The Valletta 2018 visual identity, together with its communications strategy and approach to public engagement are crucial to spreading knowledge about Valletta 2018's core narrative and mission.

This report looks into the reach of the Valletta 2018 brand, investigating the different forms of brand engagement in order to assess the effectiveness of the Foundation's communication channels and to identify new opportunities for public engagement. The ongoing of this research enables it to impact directly upon the Foundation's operations by iteratively addressing its communications strategy and enabling impacting upon communication campaigns for various projects and activities.