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The impact of the Liverpool ECoC within social media environments

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Executive Summary

Background to the study

One of the major topics of debate in media research today is whether the Internet should be treated as the dominant form of information distribution, outstripping the impact of other media, such as television, radio or print. Opinions vary about this, but numerous examples of successful online media campaigns abound, such as Barack Obama's use of social media during the US Presidential campaign. Today, other governments are quick to utilise similar environments, and 10 Downing Street has accounts with both YouTube and Flickr, the popular websites used for video and photo sharing respectively.

Additionally, marketing and communications departments in business, industry, the arts and the media are rapidly re-organising their strategies around the rise of digital convergence and in light of evidence that demonstrates the decline (or fragmentation) of mass media audiences.

These circumstances are pertinent to the hosting of European Capital of Culture by Liverpool in 2008. In short, if we want to understand how audiences were engaged during 2008, we need to complement a range of surveys and reporting with analyses of online activity, which have the potential to reflect both broader media perspectives and the views of people on the street.

This report studies a range of Internet environments to find out how people engaged with the European Capital of Culture (ECoC) in 2008. Yet, the Internet is an enormous space, encompassing all the world's media. For this reason, we made a strategic decision to target our research on specific dimensions of Internet activity, an emerging collection of online environments collectively known as 'social media'.¹ Such digital worlds are generating the largest amount of excitement at present and include such web platforms² as YouTube, Facebook, Flickr, and Twitter. Our findings complement the Impacts 08 research on press and broadcast content analysis.

By focusing on well-known social media online environments, our findings provide a snap shot of what was happening online during 2008 around ECoC. Our findings are indicative of public participation, interest and collaboration across the arts and cultural sector.

By analysing these alternative media environments, we were able to understand more about the range of perspectives that surrounded Liverpool ECoC, as well as achieve greater clarity on how such expressions of interest compare to traditional media debates. Thus, our conclusions reflect on the dramatic changes occurring within new media platforms and the way this affects engagement with major events and narratives around host cities and the value of cultural programming.

Key findings

How does this Liverpool ECoC online study contribute to a model for impacts assessment?

- We have established a benchmark methodology to assess the level of activity one might expect to generate across a range of cultural activities.
- We provide evidence of how institutions can leverage their communities more effectively by becoming 'early adopters' of social media and developing an 'innovators' community.
- We know that the fringe activity of Liverpool ECoC was critical to the amount of public engagement.
- We provide evidence of how Liverpool ECoC is primarily a locally engaged experience, often not national in its reach.

¹ Social media is defined by the way that it allows users to interact with and produce content. While it is often assumed that this can involve people sharing mundane data, it is clear that social media is becoming a mechanism through which major organisations distribute their information, from major media organisations to governments.

² A platform is a general term that describes an online environment. For example, Facebook and YouTube are both platforms.

How did Liverpool institutions use the Internet in 2008?³

- At least 50% of all surveyed institutions were using Facebook.
- 100% of the cultural institutions surveyed used Facebook to build their community. These Facebook environments became particularly active in the approach to 2008.
- 25% of cultural institutions were using Twitter to build their community by the end of 2008.
- Liverpool cultural institutions generally adopt new social media applications one year after they have become popular.
- Across all selected cultural institutions, there is a common audience of approximately 1,000 members. This critical mass indicates that there is a shared, local online audience across institutions.⁴

About the Liverpool ECoC programme

- The **GoSuperlambananas Parade** was the main overall success of online engagement throughout Liverpool ECoC, dominating each of the social media platforms we studied.
- The two most prominent **video sharing** event presence on YouTube during 2008 were the Spider (La Princesse), closely followed by the Mathew Street Festival, and Summer Pops.
- The most prominent **photo sharing** presence of any event was the Go Superlambananas Parade, though the largest institutional presence was generated by the Liverpool Daily Post photo campaign with Flickr. Significant activity was also generated by the Spider - La Princesse.
- The most prominent way that Liverpool ECoC activity was described by online users was through the phrase '**capital of culture**', which far exceeded 'Liverpool 08' or 'European Capital of Culture' as phrases.
- The **Opening and Closing** events of Liverpool ECoC created the highest peaks in Google searches, locally and internationally. This reinforces the importance of these moments as key markers in a year-long programme, largely as a media event.
- The ECoC period was a **defining moment** for Liverpool on Facebook, as the city attained status as a distinct city network during this period.
- Cultural organisations are just one grouping amongst many other Liverpool institutional groups with a Facebook presence.
- Members of Facebook groups that are based on content related to Liverpool08/ECoC content are primarily based in Liverpool.
- Over 500 Facebook pages, groups and events were created around Liverpool ECoC content, some of which utilised the Liverpool08 logo to identify their community.
- The MTV awards did not generate content unique to Liverpool nor strong associations with Liverpool ECoC specifically, but did create important associations with the city of Liverpool online.
- Over 50,000 photographs were uploaded to Flickr during 2008, indicating a growth of up to 23% of activity over the year.
- Over the 2008 period, key events to interrupt the dominance of football within Google searches were the opening of the Liverpool Echo Arena, Liverpool One, Liverpool 2008, Liverpool Sound, the Tall Ships, the Klimt Exhibition, and the Spider (LaPrincesse).
- Google searches did not indicate any cross-fertilisation of audience participation between Liverpool 2008 and Stavanger 2008 (the Norway-based ECoC), though they did suggest that Liverpool 2008 dominated the worldwide English-speaking searches for European Capital of Culture-related content in 2008.⁵
- Some of the major national organisations that provided significant amounts of online profile to Liverpool ECoC were BBC, Arts Council England and DCMS.

³ For further explanation of this term, see Appendix I: Target Online Environments.

⁴ Leading digital thinker Kevin Kelly says that having '1000 true fans' that support everything you do can be the key to success: "A True Fan is defined as someone who will purchase anything and everything you produce. They will drive 200 miles to see you sing. They will buy the super deluxe re-issued hi-res box set of your stuff even though they have the low-res version. They have a Google Alert set for your name. They bookmark the eBay page where your out-of-print editions show up. They come to your openings. They have you sign their copies. They buy the t-shirt, and the mug, and the hat. They can't wait till you issue your next work. They are true fans." See <http://www.kk.org/>

⁵ English is still the dominant language on the web, closely followed by Chinese and Spanish (Internet World Stats, 2009).

Principal recommendations

While each city has a uniquely defined cultural and arts sector, there are some key principles that can be derived from the Impacts 08 online media study and could be applicable to cultural event host cities elsewhere:

- **Collaborative calendars:** Internet guru Kevin Kelly urges that finding ‘1000 True Fans’ should be the target for online developers. In Liverpool, it is evident that the cultural institutions shared a core membership of around 1000 Facebook users in 2008. It is valuable to ensure that cultural and arts institutions coordinate events calendar around major events, or they may risk curtailing each others’ participation and frustrating their ‘true fans’.
- **Early adoption:** The development of Web 2.0 spaces means that, increasingly, the cutting edge of online development will reside in the hands of open source software development. The imperative for an ECoC is to establish an ‘early adoption’ team, to foresee which will be the most effective mechanisms through which to promote their work by using such spaces. This is preferable to developing separate new platforms, primarily because the user community will not move to a new temporary location. Ideally, institutions should also strive to be ‘innovators’ of new platforms, though this should be a targeted activity.
- **Open everything:** To optimise the impact of ECoC programmes, it is critical that the host organisation can share and distribute digital content as effectively as possible.
- **Enable the fringe:** There is clear evidence that user-generated spaces of digital communication are commonplace online and that they amplify the public profile of ECoC beyond the officially sanctioned sites. Moreover, there are generally far more supportive voices than dissenters. As such, it is valuable to embrace this activity as far as possible. Moreover, being too protective over brand use can limit public engagement and cause antipathy.

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'LIVERPOOL08'
EUROPEAN
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08
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project

“Two-thirds of the world’s Internet population visit a social network or blogging site and the sector now accounts for almost 10% of all internet time.” (Nielsen report, March 2009)

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1. Introduction

One of the major topics of debate in media research today is whether the Internet should be treated as the dominant form of information distribution, outstripping the impact of other media, such as television, radio or print. Opinions vary about this, but marketing and communications departments in business, industry, the arts and mainstream media are rapidly re-organising their strategies around expectations of online convergence and in light of evidence that demonstrates the decline (or fragmentation) of mass media audiences.

Thus, it is increasingly necessary to study online communications, to develop a broad picture of the marketing impact of any campaign or event. This is also a useful way of comparing such findings with research into traditional media narratives. In short, if we want to understand what happened during Liverpool's year as European Capital of Culture in 2008, we need to complement mass media reporting with analyses of online activity which has the potential to reflect both broader media perspectives and the views of people on the street.

This report outlines findings from a project commissioned by Impacts 08 into online activity around the European Capital of Culture (ECoC) 2008 programme in Liverpool. The project investigated a range of well-known Internet platforms (YouTube, Google, Flickr, Twitter) in order to document and analyse levels of participation during the ECoC period. The findings complement the Impacts 08 research on press and broadcast content analysis.

By focusing on well-known Internet environments, our findings provide a snap shot of what was happening online during 2008 around ECoC. Our findings are indicative of public participation, interest and collaboration across the arts and cultural sector. By analysing these alternative media environments, we are able to understand more about the range of perspectives that were activated by ECoC, as well as achieve greater clarity on how such narratives compare to traditional media debates. Thus, our conclusions reflect on the dramatic changes occurring within new media platforms and the way this affects engagement with major events and with narratives around host cities and the value of cultural programming.

The report is structured in four parts. We begin with an overview of the broader social and economic context within which mass media change is occurring. This will be helpful for readers who want to understand what, for instance, 'all the fuss is about' with recently popularised online environments such as Facebook, Flickr, Twitter, and so on. Second, we outline our methodology for the study, which is perhaps one of the major outcomes of the project. As there are no prior studies of this kind, we hope that our method can provide a model for similar studies in the future. Third, we describe our findings across the different platforms, before finally offering some discussion and concluding points, along with key recommendations. Throughout, we offer 'key learning points' to guide readers to the *bottom line* of what we have found and why it matters.

1.1. Context: Local is global: The online reach of Liverpool ECoC.

Over the last five years, our window to the World Wide Web has been transformed by the rise of what people now call *social media*. While this concept might sound as though it could apply equally to radio, television or newspapers, it refers primarily to the Internet and mobile communications, and describes how the Internet has changed from a collection of relatively static environments to dynamic social spaces. In the era of social media, individual and organisational publishers can share information much more easily through a process of ‘syndication.’ Quite simply, this means that when an individual publishes anything online, whether it is a film, image or article, thousands of other users can re-publish the content, thus sharing it with an infinite number of other audiences.

These new social media environments enable a remarkable degree of interaction and communication that transcends the capabilities and ethos of traditional methods. Social media (a central part of what are known as Web 2.0 platforms) consist of integrated multi-media environments which host a range of material, from the syndicated news coverage and discussion sections of the BBC website, to the wholly integrated platform of Facebook, to the mixed media space search engines that are YouTube and Google Video.

How does this change the lived experience of being online? Google AdSense provides a good example. Previously, when browsing for information through a search engine like Google, individuals would observe the same advertisements, though they may be targeted to specific geographical locations. Today, when a user searches Google, they will also be presented with advertisements that are tailored to their unique, personal interests, based on their previous online activity and their geographical location. Commercial organisations work with Google AdSense to generate more targeted adverts for their companies.

This characteristic distinguishes online activity from other media forms in the 21st Century, such as television, which are still based on a singular audience experience with limited local variation. Yet, through digital technology, audiences are moving from a *broadcast* to a *networked* model of communication. The Web 2.0 process of individualising the online audience experience transforms what was, for a short time, a *global* window into the most *local* window one could imagine, a personalised gateway to the entire Internet.

Across these platforms, there are also mixed zones where old and new media interact. For instance, in 2007, BBC undertook two major shifts towards new media. Their first was to purchase a YouTube channel, which allowed them to syndicate broadcast content via this increasingly popular platform. The second was their launch of ‘moveable panes’, which allow web users to transform their view of the BBC front page thus creating their own unique gateway into BBC content (see Figure 1).

The consequence of these design transformations is that, today, there is no such thing as a fixed BBC homepage that all users will see. To this end, the Internet is different from television, which, in comparison, relies on a broadcast of a single transmission to all users. With the Web 2.0 BBC environment, users make a series of choices to determine their experience of a particular online environment. These principles emerge from the Web 2.0 era and are pioneered in a range of social networking platforms such as Facebook, where each user has a uniquely characterised homepage, with content from their friends and from applications they have chosen to utilise. Their emergence is profound in terms of the history of the Internet, as they signal the end of the ‘homepage’ and the rise of user-generated content.

Figure 1: BBC website with moveable panes



The BBC's adoption of a social media model, coupled with its ability to create new platforms and technologies such as iPlayer, provides a persuasive imperative for other online publishers to follow suit and to build similar principles into their online management system. Indeed, the imperative is felt most in the public sector, which has struggled to stay abreast of such developments.

These transformations are important, especially when evaluating the impact of any online intervention, like the European Capital of Culture. Summarising what online populations have experienced, therefore, becomes increasingly difficult, since each user's experience is unique. Our traditional assumptions about what being an audience member involves have been brought into question due to the way that online experiences have been fragmented. For example, if we aspire to understand the level of public engagement any particular local initiative has affected, we cannot simply rely on website *hit counts* and must, instead, examine website *penetration*. Measures of such impact include, for instance, identifying how many other websites syndicate an institution's content, or how many RSS (Really Simple Syndication) newsreaders are accessing a news stream. To use language from the Web 2.0 era, it involves trying to identify the 'long tail' of online activity⁶. In addition to difficulties of isolating audiences, users are also now producers of content. Consider, for instance, the video responses in YouTube clips, which allow members of YouTube to post their own content. Often this content becomes part of subsequent audience user experiences.

To this extent, the initiative to study online audience activity around Liverpool's year as European Capital of Culture in 2008 is ambitious; the opportunities to inform subsequent cities and event-based research more generally are extensive, as this kind of research is highly experimental.

1.2. Aims and objectives

The present study takes on board these transformations both in online audience experiences and in established methods of analysis that rely on interpretive quantitative data, to make some qualified claims about the impact of Liverpool 2008, European Capital of Culture (from now on referred to as Liverpool ECoC). Our findings outline the quantity and quality of online content from major social networking websites. In particular, we have studied activity within three leading social networking sites – Facebook, YouTube and Flickr – in order to provide data about the range of platforms that have made substantive contributions towards discussions on Liverpool's experience as ECoC 2008. Conclusions from this project outline the range of voices that are contributing to discussions about Liverpool's year as European Capital of Culture, their tone, and their scope of interest. It also indicates the interrelations between Liverpool institutions and online platforms. To this extent, the work is not

⁶ This concept can be used to describe the trend of activity that surrounds an event or marketing campaign whereby there will be an initial, short-term and high-volume amount of activity. This is then followed by a lower-volume, longer lasting amount of activity. The important point is that the latter represents the majority of activity, so understand what happens in that later stage is important.

strictly limited to audience research, but charts the range of environments where the European Capital of Culture programme is infiltrating new media, as an indication of the level of penetration it is achieving.

We describe broad and deep cultural trends of Internet use, which can be utilised to express levels of public engagement with wider social and political issues. The measures utilised in this study offer such characterisations, focusing on a series of assumptions about online communities and what meaningful communication within them involves.

Principally, the study describes a series of online communities which emerged from and have engaged with content related to ECoC during 2008. We also provide a ‘health check’ for the leading cultural institutions within Liverpool. For instance, this check considers how many of these institutions are present within the dominant platforms of our time (such as Facebook), and explores the depth of that relationship. These issues are important to local authorities and their stakeholders, as they can assist the development of a more sophisticated and effective public relations strategy. More precisely, the health check is valuable in the following ways:

- *First*, its results will indicate the degree of willingness and the capacity of publicly funded institutions to interact with commercial platforms and, by implication, inform future funding expectations on delivering online content. For many years, the criticism of such institutions has been that a large amount of money is invested in platforms that have a limited life, high maintenance costs, restricted innovation and inadequate penetration given the profile of some such institutions. By understanding how public institutions are harnessing the potential of such Web 2.0 platforms as Facebook, we can describe a shift in how they operate. For instance, if a particular institution has no integration capacity with sites such as Facebook, then arguably this can considerably limit its reach.
- *Second*, it will demonstrate the ‘health’ of current activity within the city of Liverpool with regard to online presence.
- *Third*, it will explore the impact of the European Capital of Culture content online, by focusing on prominent platforms, in order to understand the importance of digital communities in generating participation alongside a ‘major event’.
- *Finally*, it will help explain what can be learned about differing models of online marketing and management, specifically the distinction between top-down programmed activity and bottom-up user-generated content.

In this context, the main objectives of this project are to:

- a) Explore how the Liverpool ECoC stakeholder communities are using social media. This has led us to examine the online activities of Liverpool-based organisations involved in the event’s governance, alongside those activities of key cultural partners, key media groups, key community-generated environments (and other prominent, local online environments), as well as the most prominent national organisations to promote Liverpool ECoC content.
- b) Identify a broad range of online activity surrounding the Liverpool ECoC programme. This has been focused on examining Facebook, Flickr and YouTube to discern levels of activity around ECoC programmatic content, across the year.
- c) Identify the presence of Liverpool ECoC within national online environments and national search trends.
- d) Compare the activity of Liverpool as ECoC with that of Stavanger in Norway (also ECoC in 2008).⁷

⁷ As it has been the case for a number of years, in 2008, the European Commission appointed two cities to have the ECoC. One within the EU, Liverpool, and another from a non-EU country, Stavanger in Norway.

2. Methodology

The methodology for this project evolves from and complements the ongoing Impacts 08 research on press and broadcast content analysis. In so doing, we target a series of online platform categories to investigate *local*, *national* and *international* online activity surrounding the Liverpool ECoC period. While the notion of geographic boundaries might seem to have less currency in a global online world, our operationalisation of these concepts provides specific opportunities to demarcate the breadth of online participation concerning the ECoC programme.

2.1. Defining the boundaries

We define **local** environments as those online web spaces that are either delivered by local institutions who have a substantial online networking profile (not just a website, but a social media facility), or segments of global platforms (such as Facebook) that are arranged by geographic location. For instance, in this category, we would include the Liverpool network in Facebook, or a specific Liverpool-based Facebook group.⁸ So, while Facebook is a global platform, our area of interest is the specific local content that is found there.⁹ Another example would be a YouTube institutional account belonging to a local cultural organisation, such as FACT or TATE Liverpool. Again, these are cases where the platform is global, but the portal's content is generated by a local community.

In contrast, **national** online environments are those that are delivered by UK wide institutions, which have dedicated space for discussions about the European Capital of Culture 2008. A good example of this – and one we study – is the BBC's central online space dedicated to ECoC.¹⁰ Here, what we emphasise and assume is that the broader UK reach of the platform will allow populations outside of Liverpool to be informed by what is going on - information which they otherwise would not be able to access unless they were part of the Liverpool online community.¹¹ For instance, on Facebook, it is possible to be a member of only one network at a time; it is not possible to simply browse the content of other networks. Thus, if one was a member of the Glasgow network, it would not be clear what is happening on Facebook within the Liverpool network. By examining national platforms, we can understand more about what dimensions of ECoC reached other parts of the UK.

Finally, we also studied **global** coverage, which we define as those platforms that cannot be characterised by precise geographical location. Specifically, we examined Google search trends to establish variation between UK and international search patterns around Liverpool ECoC. While Google does have a local domain – e.g., google.co.uk (UK) or google.es (Spain) - its *Insights for Search* trend software allows us to distinguish between these variations by country.

Within each of these categories, we characterised the type, content and impact of a platform, identifying innovation, openness of access, and application integration as indicators of good practice (i.e., that which maximises the opportunity provided by social media architecture). We have also recorded instances of brand appropriation, particularly where third-party communities utilise symbols and the identity of Liverpool ECoC.

⁸ It should be noted that Facebook users from any part of the world can join any Facebook network - so, a person from New York could join the Liverpool network. However, it is reasonable to assume that this is unlikely, since the main purpose of the Facebook network choice is to connect a user with a local, physical community. (Of course, other spaces within Facebook have a more global outlook, which transcends geographical location.)

⁹ In fact, in cases like this, it might not make sense to think of the platform as global, since it is entirely constituted by localised communities.

¹⁰ http://www.bbc.co.uk/liverpool/capital_of_culture/ (see Figure 8).

¹¹ Thus, we assume that audiences that are external to the region generally do not seek the local platforms for their information, but visit national providers instead.

2.2. Narrowing the sample

One of the major difficulties with studying online environments is narrowing the sample of interest. As such, the project set a number of conditions to delimit the data; for current purposes, attention is focussed on three main conditions (see 'Appendix I' for a full list).

The **first** condition of inclusion was that the chosen online environments or websites should reflect contemporary debates about critical developments in online environments. The emergence of Web 2.0 platforms such as Facebook has captured the imagination of cyber-citizens, reflected in the growth of users that has taken place within these environments over the last two years. In short, these digital worlds constitute a critical mass of online participation and their profile has been amplified by receiving considerable attention from traditional media. In the last year, headlines about Facebook have gathered governmental and media attention in a wide range of areas, including Barack Obama's Presidential campaign. Their exponential growth justifies our investigation of these new audience communities, though other reasons for studying them arise from a public relations perspective. Thus, it is critical that organizations engage with such environment, as they have become an increasingly important place where stakeholders, clients and their communities reside. However, it is also their prospective growth that adds value to studying these environments. So, the fact that there is a growing user base on YouTube makes it an appealing area of study from a strategic perspective, vis-à-vis the increasingly large audience numbers which can be reached.

Our **second** condition required that the online environment have a significant degree of user interaction built into its platform. For instance, the website of Liverpool08.com was designed as an information delivery site, rather than a mechanism for engaging audiences in debate and, thus, did not fall within our priority frame of interest. Again, our emphasis was on examining environments where substantial public participation through user-generated content is evident.

The **third** condition to inform our selection of data was that the chosen sites should emerge from other dimensions of the Impacts 08 media study. Thus, rather than begin an online search of content from a simple Google search, we accessed specific environments or communities from pre-determined points that emerged from other target areas in the Impacts 08 research programme.

To conclude, it should be noted that the difficulty of qualifying the comparative significance of online data consists in it being an unregulated and unconfined environment. For instance, we focus parts of our research on Google owned products, such as Google Insights for Search (see sections 2.5 and 3.5.4.) or, indeed, YouTube. However, it is clear that a search engine like Google does not capture the entirety of the Internet or users' experiences of it. As such, our data has some limitations, although, by focusing on high profile, mass-participation, online environments, some trend comparisons can be made that allow us to draw conclusions about the impact of Liverpool ECoC on online activity. For instance, our study of activity within Facebook establishes whether there was a significant presence of Liverpool ECoC interests, compared to, say Stavanger, the other European Capital of Culture in 2008. Alternatively, it is possible to identify the scope of contributors and activity that is present on YouTube, as an indication of the range of perspectives and interests that surrounded the year, but which existed outside of the mainstream media.

The data we collected relies primarily on descriptive statistical information, although our understanding of this data is assisted by knowledge derived from ethnographic research methods - specifically, becoming part of these online communities and taking part in what they do. It was essential that we, as researchers, had an awareness of the local community in order to better interpret the data.

The following sections provide more specific notes about the methodology utilised to meet the primary project objectives.

2.3. Exploring how Liverpool ECoC stakeholders use social media

Method: Online ‘health check’ of Liverpool ECoC stakeholders.

The first objective in this project is to investigate the prevalence of social media utilisation across various online environments engaging with Liverpool ECoC content. To meet this objective, we analysed a series of platforms, which were characterised as follows (see Appendix I for a full list):

- **Governance** (institutions in Liverpool representing the main brand owners and promoters of Liverpool ECoC, including the major tourism development agencies in the region and sub-regions).
- **Major cultural institutions** (the eight largest arts institutions in Liverpool, which form the LARC network).
- **Local media** (local media environments, such as online platforms for The Liverpool Post and Liverpool Echo newspapers).
- **Community-generated** (prominent local online environments for arts and culture, such as Art in Liverpool).
- **Other notable mentions** (other local platforms that achieved online prominence during 2008, such as the Liverpool Independent Biennial).
- **National organisations** (high-profile institutions with a prominent Liverpool ECoC space, such as BBC).

Seven dimensions of social media engagement were analysed across these categories of online environment:

- First, we established the prevalence of an **RSS feed** within online environments. The principal mechanism of achieving deep penetration online in a Web 2.0 era is the ability to syndicate content. A website environment that does not have an RSS feed will be unable to achieve this and will considerably limit its impact as a result.
- Second, we identified whether platforms utilised **video** content in any form. Again, developing rich content within a platform allows considerably more engagement from users who might – without permission – download content, store it and often share it. There are specific issues presented by this with regard to intellectual property, although the challenge for institutions in an era of Web 2.0 is to re-think its concerns about ownership of intellectual property.
- Third, we identified the prevalence of **discussion/comments** sections within sites, a minimal function to allow users to contribute and react in some form, whether or not it is syndicated.
- The final four categories focused on our **target environments**, which were Facebook, Flickr and YouTube. Our focus on these spaces was determined by their prominence but also distinguished between social networking with text (Facebook), image (Flickr) and film (YouTube). Of course, these categories are not mutually exclusive. For example, Facebook permits the uploading of both image and film, while Flickr recently introduced two new possibilities: uploading film and hosting/creating blogs. Nevertheless, they are each renowned for a distinct element and each have reached mainstream awareness over the last two years for this specialism.
- The investigation also included **Twitter**, the micro-blogging platform very popular among business people, journalists, scholars and social media experts, as a final example of an emerging environment to establish the prevalence of ‘early adoption’ within the city’s institutions.¹²

The findings emerging from this assessment are presented in section 3.1.

¹² In most cases, we determined utilisation of a platform by endeavouring to identify a link to the account from the website’s homepage. In some cases, the links were not prominent, thus limiting the visibility. See Appendix III for a strong example of a positive link.

2.4. Identifying types of online activity surrounding the Liverpool ECoC programme

Method: Monitoring the presence of the Liverpool ECoC programme on Facebook, YouTube, and Flickr.

Our second study objective required us to look specifically at programmatic content from the ECoC year. On this basis, we analysed the prominence of selected 2008 ‘major events’¹³ (used as a proxy for the ECoC programme) in our three primary online environments: Facebook, Flickr and YouTube. Each of these environments, require different methodological decisions to be made and these are outlined below. Findings are presented in sections 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4.

2.4.1. YouTube

Since February 2005, YouTube has dominated the distribution of moving images online. In 2007, TIME magazine decided that ‘the public’ was their person of the year, due to the way in which content generation had been made possible by platforms such as YouTube. YouTube’s prominence within the media sphere is also signalled by Google’s acquisition of the company in 2007, after its own platform Google Video failed to disrupt its market share.

YouTube’s prominence within the UK and international market provides a strong incentive to gauge public participation by studying its content. For example, the Prime Minister’s YouTube channel began in April 2007 and now has over 700,000 channel views and over 6,500 subscribers. Some of its most viewed clips include the PM’s comment on President Obama’s victory (6,000 views), his Ramadan message (18,000 views) and the spoof reply to the campaign for television presenter Jeremy Clarkson to be made Prime Minister (259,000 views).¹⁴ Further, the BBC YouTube Channel has over 3million views, with approximately 40,000 subscribers.

This project compared YouTube content across the range of target institutions outlined in section 2.3 to derive comparisons of activity levels. In addition, it investigated the prominence of specific Liverpool ECoC content across the major events that took place that year. Selection of the event was based on the Impacts 08 broader study parameters (see Appendix I for a full list). Our findings provide evidence to support claims about the activity levels that surrounded various dimensions of the ECoC programme. Beginning with the institutions we studied, it is clear that there is awareness of YouTube’s popularity and interest in using it as a medium of communication, but much scepticism or lack of knowledge related to how the platform actually operates.

Within YouTube, we searched only for institutions that have a YouTube channel and for the Impacts 08 selection of major events from 2008. While this may mean that we omit to analyse any institution that does *not* have a channel (for instance, in a situation where the institution has posted some videos, but not located them within a distinct YouTube channel environment), our decision to focus only on clearly defined channels is based on an assumption about levels of content. It is likely that significant YouTube presence will require a channel being created. Thus, any organisation that does not have a channel is unlikely to be a major contributor of content to YouTube.

We also omit content from other video hosting websites. We justify this on the basis of YouTube’s prominence, but also on its social functionality. For instance, it is apparent that a major producer of video content during 2008 is the Open Culture platform. While we do not make claims about the value of such interventions for 2008, Open Culture is a platform that does not permit the free syndication of content. It was essential for us to focus on environments where content could be shared as easily as possible by general audiences.

One of the difficulties of searching for content on YouTube is the sheer volume of results that one finds. Like Google, searching YouTube requires that researchers make some decisions to limit the amount of content

¹³ See Appendix I – section 5.1.2 for a full list of selected 2008 ‘major events’.

¹⁴ Figures from April 2009.

under analysis and establish clearly defined parameters on which to make comparisons. This was particularly important in our case when studying the major events of 2008. We chose to study the total number of views of the top ten videos associated with any one targeted major event. We found that, for many of the major events, this provided a reasonable indication of prominence. However, it is not an ideal measure, as there is some variance in the length of participant-activity life an event enjoys. For instance, the Liverpool Spider event¹⁵ took place over a weekend and had a high short-term impact, whereas the SuperLambanana activity¹⁶ spanned many weeks. In any case, when searching YouTube, it displays first the videos with the highest number of views. We found that, beyond the top ten videos, the difference in number of views is considerable. For instance, the Spider videos in the upper range demonstrated over 10,000 views on average. As one progresses to subsequent pages, the number of views drops to 1,000.

Searching for major events was also a complex task within YouTube. For instance, it was necessary for us to decide what search terms would best reflect the volume of content that existed around any event. In the case of the Spider, we experimented with the following search terms: Spider, La Princesse; la machine; la machine Liverpool. We also utilised quotation marks to ensure greater precision in findings. In theory, adding quotation marks to searches makes the findings more accurate and provides a useful benchmark comparison. In contrast, omitting quotation marks can yield results that are too broad. A measure to protect against this was the qualitative judgement as to whether the findings were relevant. In this process, we learned that the YouTube search engine automatically removes quotation marks and thus, the search process always required double-checking upon seeing the results. In addition to this, each of the researchers utilised a ‘confidence rating’ (from 1 to 5, where 1 was low and 5 was high confidence) which was attached to each search to provide further precision on our findings; we would discard results for which we felt the search was not providing meaningful results. Where there were differences of confidence, a discussion took place between the two researchers and a judgement was made. Any result with less than 3.5 confidence rating was omitted from our findings. We also omitted clips of events that comprised less than four videos and 500 views, on the assumption that this did not constitute substantial prominence.

Using another tool for data analysis, we were able to discern which were the ‘rising searches’ within Google. For instance, we can identify what were the most prominent parts of the Liverpool ECoC programme in any given month. To order to do this, we used Google’s Insights for Search, an analytical device that conveys information about search trends. From this, we can tell how search activity changed over the year with regard to Liverpool.

2.4.2. Facebook

Facebook is currently one of the most prominent social media networks. Launched in the US in 2004, and aimed initially at college students, Facebook became a web 2.0 phenomenon and a trend-setter in the online world. According to the Nielsen Report (2008), the total amount spent on Facebook increased during 2008 by 566% compared to the previous year, registering the highest average time per visitor. By November 2008, it had over 100 million users worldwide. Furthermore, the platform became the most popular social networking platform in the UK, surpassing MySpace and Bebo (*ibid.*). As was indicated earlier, Facebook can be understood as a *content aggregator*. Its success is in allowing users to bring in a variety of content to the same environment – image, film, music, dating software, computer games, and so on.

¹⁵ La Princesse was a 50 foot mechanical spider designed and operated by French performance art company La Machine, brought to the UK by Artichoke. The spider travelled around the city between 3rd and 7th September 2008, with a published timetable of ‘events’ to allow potential audiences to follow the spider’s activity.

¹⁶ A participatory public art project in which 125 decorated ‘superlambananas’, many created by community organisations, were exhibited around the city from June to August 2008. The ‘superlambananas’ were based on an original work by artist Taro Chiezo, commissioned for the Arts Transpennine exhibition in 1998.

As with YouTube's prominence within the UK and global market, Facebook content provides a strong mechanism through which to measure public participation in online media. Within Facebook, there are a number of different types of space. First, there are individual user accounts. Second, there are institutional pages managed by various types of individual, usually employers within the organisation. There are also 'fan' pages, which people can join, along with 'applications' which people can install. A good example of an application is the 'Scrabulous' game, a version of Scrabble that allows Facebook users to play each other online. Finally, it is important to note that physical geography is introduced within virtual worlds like facebook in numerous wayd. First, users within Facebook are required to affiliate their identity with a specific region or city. However, more important is the way that a user's IP address is utilized as a mechanism for targeted advertising. To this end, Facebook does introduce localised data to organise members and this affects how information is distributed. However, as noted earlier, Facebook does not preclude someone who is, say, based in Vancouver, from joining the Liverpool network, though it is reasonable to assume that most users affiliate themselves with their local physical population.

For the current Impacts 08 online study, we collected data generated by institutional members who use Facebook to communicate with their public. Thus, instead of looking for 'pages' which users can join only as 'fans', we examined the institutions that had set up 'groups', as we saw these as tools for promoting and encouraging users to generate their own content.¹⁷ In so doing, we recorded the numbers of members a group had as well as the number of wall post messages, photos, videos and links that the groups had uploaded and shared. In addition, we utilised a series of Impacts 08-prescribed 'search strings'¹⁸ to search for Liverpool ECoC content, paying particular attention to the top ten results and/or where the results showed significant followings in a group. In so doing, we also experimented with utilising quotation marks around searches, to observe the effect on the search, as explained in the previous page. For visualisation purposes, groups with less than 100 members and 50 wall posts were excluded from our findings. Also, institutions with 'pages' rather than 'groups' were also excluded on the assumption that these did not indicate community activity.

2.4.3. Flickr

One of the major mechanisms for sharing content online is through uploading digital photographs. Since the establishment of photo sharing online environments, Flickr has been and remains one of the most prominent communities. Similarly to YouTube, Flickr is a private initiative that attracted the investments of big online tycoons early in the Web 2.0 bubble. Set up by a Vancouver-based company in 2004, Flickr was purchased by Yahoo in 2005. Ever since, it has widened its user base and grown a reputation of being an active, vivid, global community interested in photo blogging - although user-generated photographs remain its core product community. Users can set up a free (basic) or professional (fee required) account. With the free account, users can upload a limited amount of content with few tools to organise the images. With a professional account – approximately £30 for one year - users benefit from many advanced options, principally being allowed to set up multiple photo albums, which permits a user to organise their images with greater flexibility. Since 2008, Flickr also provides video sharing.

The platform is widely known as a place where photographers and photography fans meet, new talent is discovered, and professional photographers showcase their work. Two main features account for such

¹⁷ There are a number of indicators that reveal whether the group is set up by the institution, though it is not obvious to the average Facebook user. For example, there is a considerable amount of unsanctioned logo use by third parties, so the normal rules of branding do not appear to apply within Facebook. Instead, to ascertain this information, we look to see whether there was a link to that group from the institution's website. Also, we examined whether there is an administrative officer assigned to the group who is an employee of the institution. If a link could not be found with a reasonable amount of searching of an institution's site, then we conclude that the website is not using social media.

¹⁸ Search strings are simply the sequence of terms that are used to initiate searches. In some cases, varying the search strings can affect the results.

popularity: *social tagging* (see Figure 2) and *Creative Commons*¹⁹ licences, which determine how browsers can use material.

Figure 2: Example of a tag cloud



Social tagging is the act of attaching keywords to a photo, thus enhancing its searchability within the application (see Figure 3). This is useful because searching for images is very difficult on the Internet, as there have not been platforms that allow such search functions. Users can also append different licences to photographs using *creative commons* licences. This feature helps educate Flickr users to protect their work and respect the authorship rights of other users. The choices offered by the platform range from 'all rights reserved' to 'attribution only', which gives third parties free use of an image, but requests that the photographer's name is acknowledged.

¹⁹ Creative Commons was founded in 2001 and aspired to introduce more flexibility into the copyright system – proposing a ‘copyleft’ approach, whereby creative content could be shared more easily and freely.

Figure 3: Social tagging

This figure illustrates the power of tagging content in social media platforms. See the third entry in the highest Google ranking for this search, which shows a Flickr photo of an event from a user's (non-official) account. Being able to generate such a high presence is possible through tagging, where previously one would need to pay to achieve such prominence among major search terms.

Google search results for "gosuperlambananas":

- Sponsored Link:** Buy Superlambananas (LiverpoolShop.com/SuperLambananas) - Liverpool's Most Iconic Sculpture Yellow, Pink, Skyline, Red & More
- Did you mean:** go superlambananas
- Go SuperLambBananas!**
 - Back to Graphic version. home · contact us · faqs · Artists · Media · News · Shop · Gallery · Sponsors · Auction Charities · shop ...
 - www.gosuperlambananas.co.uk/ - Cached - Similar
 - Shop
Gallery
Contact Us
Media
 - News
Artists
FAQs
Sponsors
 - [More results from gosuperlambananas.co.uk »](#)
- Flickr: "gosuperlambananas"**
 - Flickr is almost certainly the best online photo management and sharing application in the world. Show off your favorite photos and videos to the world, ...
 - www.flickr.com/photos/tag/gosuperlambananas/ - Cached - Similar
 - GoSuperlambananas! Liverpool 08 Lambananas - a set on Flickr**
(92 in set). Subscribe to a feed of stuff on this page... Feed – Subscribe to the set "GoSuperlambananas! Liverpool 08 Lambananas" ...
www.flickr.com/photos/.../sets/72157606128341396/ - Cached - Similar
 - [More results from www.flickr.com »](#)

We used several criteria to study the institutions and events related to Liverpool ECoC. We initially searched for and added to the database the Flickr accounts - groups and user - mentioned in the official websites of the institutions researched. We then noted the number of photos and contacts. To find the events, the same search strings used for the other platforms were utilised. Quoted and unquoted searches were performed. The search considered the number of photos uploaded and the number of groups in existence. In order to represent graphically the search results for Liverpool ECoC events, two significant decisions were taken: to exclude any events that did not turn up any search results and to exclude all the events that yielded less than 100 photos in their search results. When searching in Flickr, there were three options available. We could search using: 1) Flickr groups search; 2) full photo search; and 3) full photo 'tag' search. Each of these searches relied on two researchers to improve reliability.²⁰

²⁰ Note on methodology: We noticed that Flickr has a particular system of removing quotation marks around searches, which affects results and limits comparability across other platforms. For example, when searching “Liverpool” and ‘year’ the search field removes ‘year’ from the search. Alternatively, when searching with option ‘2) full photo search’, flickr also returns results that include both the photo titles and the text from the notes within photos. This did not affect the validity of results but made us exclude many search variations in order to ensure we got a more relevant data sample.

2.5. Identifying the presence of Liverpool ECoC within national online environments

Method: National perceptions of Liverpool ECoC, Google Insights for Search.

Our main interest in meeting this objective was to identify whether or not various national online environments were providing Liverpool ECoC content, links and activity. As such, the work involved examining specified institutional websites to record the nature of such information. It also involved examining national coverage of ECoC content to identify prominence and trends. This research relied on Google Insights for Search to provide data. Findings using this methodology are presented in section 3.5 and Appendix II.

2.6. Comparing the Liverpool ECoC online activity with Stavanger ECoC activity

It is particularly difficult to compare online activity across different cities, especially when comparing from one country to the next. First, there are problems of language and terminology where, for instance, even city names and titles vary. Second, there are regional differences in social media usage. For example, the prominence of Facebook within the UK is different from its use in other parts of the world.

We focused on comparing Liverpool with Stavanger, which were both cities that had the title of European Capital of Culture during 2008. The main reason for this was to assess whether there was any cross-fertilisation of activity evident in audience participation online and to provide a real-time direct comparison across two cities which held the title. For instance, it was of interest to see whether there were similar patterns of activity using the same kinds of available technology.

The primary mechanism we utilised for the comparison was Google's Insights for Search, which is a platform that generates comparative data with a regional focus. Using this software, we could identify trends of online searches throughout 2008, comparing Liverpool with Stavanger. Findings are presented in Section 3.5.

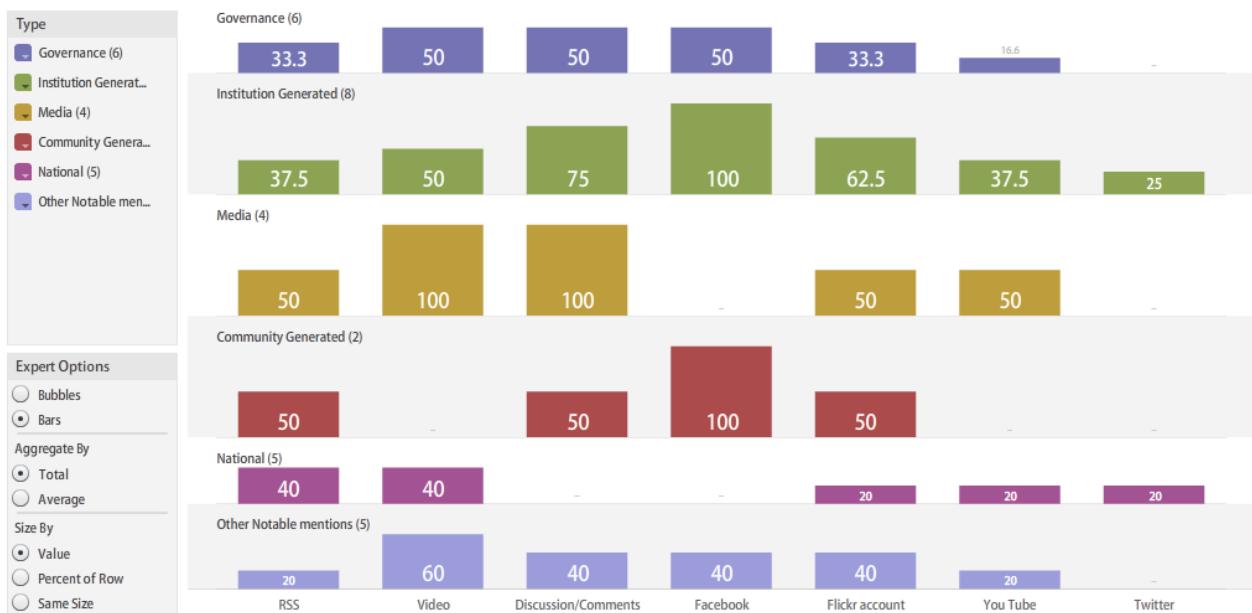
3. Main Findings

3.1. Online health check of ECoC 08 Stakeholders

3.1.1. Use of social media

Examining Figure 4, we can observe the prevalence of social media use during 2008 across a range of institutions. It shows that, in the approach to 2007, very few of the Liverpool institutions that we studied (see Appendix I) were present on Facebook. However, towards the start of the European Capital of Culture year, their presence grew dramatically and, by the end of 2008, **100% of all major cultural institutions** and 50% of ECoC governance institutions were utilising this environment as an integral part of their community engagement and public relations work.

Figure 4: Percentage of social media utilisation across selected Liverpool ECoC stakeholder platforms



3.1.2. Identity issues

By examining the Facebook environment more closely, it was apparent that there were many Facebook groups dedicated to the European Capital of Culture. They often identified themselves by utilising the logo of Liverpool08, thus borrowing the institutional brand identity without permission. These breaches of logo use are commonplace online, especially in a platform like Facebook, and while it might be tempting to protect a brand from use in such arenas, it is evident that it is considered an acceptable use of imagery. To this end, there is an imperative for institutions to become part of the online community, or suffer a loss of connection with their audience who will appropriate the brand themselves and critically scrutinise it.

3.1.3. Syndication capacity

Another key finding from this component of the study is that many of the institutional websites we studied are not built on RSS architecture. This means that they are unable to syndicate their content, which is perhaps the most inhibiting dimension of the platforms that were online during 2008. For instance, only 37.5% of all cultural institutions we monitored include RSS feeds on their main websites. Yet, if one compares Liverpool-based institutions with the online environments of national institutions we have chosen to survey, the situation is similar, thus indicating that syndication was not prominent across cultural institution websites within the UK during 2008. Moreover, looking across other measures, such as uptake of social media environments like

Facebook, Liverpool institutions compare favourably. Indeed, there was no evidence of discussion/comments sections or Facebook pages for any of the national institutions we studied (i.e., DCMS, Arts Council England, Visit Britain, BBC). This is not surprising if one considers that local institutions rely more on a close connection with their immediate audience than do national organisations.

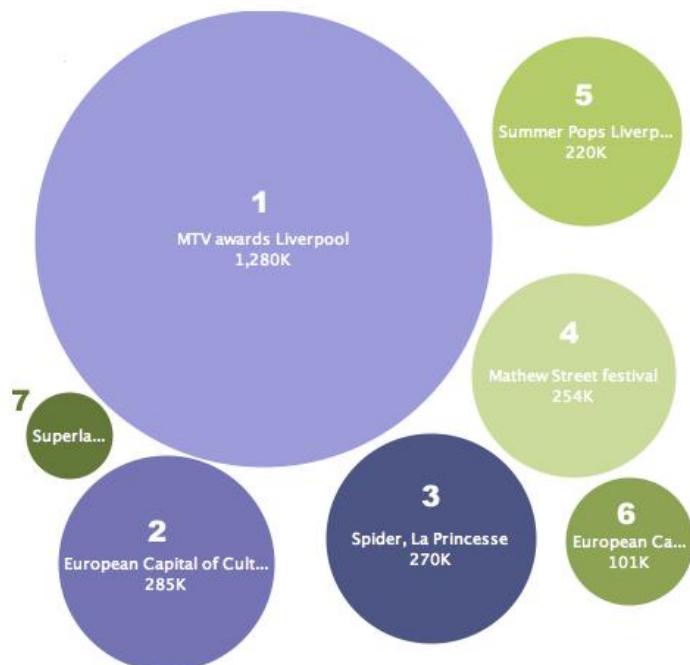
From these findings, one can conclude that the most effective utilisation of social media environments occurs at a local level, where people feel part of a meaningful, tangible community, one that might also meet face-to-face. This conclusion is reinforced if one examines examples of ‘top-down’ social media programming, such as the use of Flickr on the 10 Downing Street website. Flickr is a photo sharing platform, which thrives on the discussions that take place around photography. Within the 10 Downing Street site, it is apparent that discussions are not taking place and it is doubtful that the appropriation of social media for institutional public relation purposes is at all effective. In comparison, Liverpool social media communities are very active because they are self-managed and have grown from grass-roots upwards.

Overall, we conclude that the uptake of social media within the studied Liverpool cultural institutions is extremely positive. All institutions are engaged with social media practice in some form; 2008 was a critical period where adoption took place, perhaps promoted by the incentive to reach out further than before. However, there could be a more effective climate of ‘early adoption’ within Liverpool’s public sector and the maintained arts sector more generally, and this could be made viable by establishing a user community across these sectors.

3.2. Liverpool ECoC on YouTube

Figure 5 demonstrates the prominence of activity on YouTube across the major ECoC events of 2008. The size of the circles reflects the relative amount of activity that was generated and the numbers indicates how many views are attributed to each event. As indicated in the methodology, the figures were generated based on keyword searches of the event in YouTube and the results portray the accumulative views for the top ten videos for the event. For example, when searching for ‘MTV Awards Liverpool’ in YouTube, the top ten clips generated approximately 1,280,000 views. This was the basis on which all events were compared.

Figure 5: Prominence of Liverpool ECoC programme activity on YouTube (figures in 1,000s)



From this data, the most prominent material on YouTube emerged around the *MTV European Music Awards (EMA)* in November 2008.²¹ Following this was *La Machine*²², which stands out as the strongest second major event, along with the *Mathew Street Festival*²³ and the *Liverpool Summer Pops*.²⁴ Various interpretations of this data are possible. First, it is reasonable to conclude that the MTV EMA content is less likely to be content from the event itself, or it is likely to be pirated material from the MTV broadcast. After all, the MTV EMA happen each year in a different place and MTV is attached to a larger brand identity that would lead to content being posted online. Alternatively, if one conducts the same search utilising quotation marks, so that the exact terminology is searched, then we find only 22 clips and around 16,900 views. In any case, it is not possible to claim that the footage offers prominence to Liverpool, since the intellectual property resides with MTV. (Of course, this intellectual property is also breached by some of the YouTube content.) In any case, it would be more accurate to claim that *La Machine* was the most prominent Liverpool ECoC event on YouTube. This is also likely to be due to the type of event it was: a public spectacle that many people filmed and then uploaded to YouTube.

The major YouTube impacts during 2008 were as follows:

Table 1: Impact on YouTube of Liverpool ECoC

Search term	No. of clips	No. of views (top-ten clips)
1. MTV Awards Liverpool	183	1,280,000
2. European Capital of Culture 2008	793	285,000
3. Spider, La Princesse	263	270,000
4. Mathew Street festival	421	254,000
5. Summer Pops Liverpool	290	220,000
6. “European Capital of Culture 2008” ²⁵	71	101,000
7. Superlambana	40	46,100

3.3. Liverpool ECoC on Flickr

Our data from Flickr indicates the level of photo sharing that was associated with Liverpool ECoC. It shows how a range of institutions used Flickr and provides some basis for comparisons. An initial marker of activity levels is provided by analysing the type of account a user holds, and there is a clear distinction between users who have posted clips as individuals and those that have institutional Flickr accounts; the latter tend to be more committed contributors to the platform. However, there is a third way in which institutions are represented on Flickr (and other social media platforms). This refers to activity set up by the user community on behalf of the institution, often without permission. These self-organising participants in the activity of an institution are commonplace online and one of the challenges for institutions is to find a way of becoming part of that network, if they have not been quick enough to lead it. In any case, it is common for institutions to have their own Flickr pages, to which only they can post content, while also having a ‘group’ page, to which anyone can post photographs. This was evident for a range of Liverpool organisations, including FACT, the Liverpool Biennial and National Museums Liverpool.

²¹ The search term utilised was ‘MTV Awards Liverpool’, which generated approximately 180 clips and over 1,280,000 views in its top-ten clips.

²² Due to the ambiguous naming of this event, we searched using two additional terms: ‘Spider, La Princesse’, ‘“La Machine” + Liverpool’. From this data, between 181 and 495 video clips were found, and over 200,000 clip views on the top-ten of each is evident.

²³ This generated approximately 421 clips on YouTube, with its top ten generating over 254,000 views.

²⁴ The search term utilised was “Summer Pops” + Liverpool” and this generated around 290 YouTube clips and over 220,000 views in its top-ten clips.

²⁵ Recall that quoted matter looks for the precise phrase, whereas text without quotes looks broadly for the collection of words in no particular order. As such, the quoted matter provides a minimum estimation of impact.

Institutional Flickr presence: As Figure 2 indicates (% of social media utilisation across platforms), 62.5% of the selected major arts and cultural institutions in Liverpool use Flickr to distribute content. As indicated above, some institutions have more than one institutional account on Flickr along with public ‘groups’ to which its membership base can post content. Ideally, an institution should have both an individual and group page and this is true of most Liverpool arts and cultural institutions. Where they differ is in the amount of content they post and the activity they generate. In principle, the more content a Flickr user distributes – that is, the more active they are in sharing content – the bigger their impact will be. Additionally, the more they use ‘tagging’, the greater their chances of being picked up by search engines such as Google. From the data, it is apparent that the amount of content produced by arts and cultural institutions in Liverpool was not significant during 2008. This is immediately apparent when considering three indicators: a) number of contacts; b) number of photos from the user; and c) number of photos within the institutional group. Further measures are possible, such as the number of comments on images, which is indicative of community interest, although this did not form part of our analysis.

Thus, the arts and cultural institutional users tend to have less than 100 contacts²⁶ and approximately 300 photos on the group page. In comparison, the Liverpool Daily Post Flickr account had 453 contacts and 12,670 photos by November 2008, the majority of which were stimulated by active campaigns during the European Capital of Culture year. By far, this is the largest online institutional presence and the user-generated content in particular dwarfs the reach of all other monitored institutions in Liverpool. Their presence online is particularly helpful in demonstrating the value of linking online and offline media to build awareness and community through social media. Thus, during 2008, the Liverpool Daily Post ran a campaign that encouraged readers to submit photos to its Flickr account, which the newspaper might then decide to publish in their print publication. In this case, we can also identify this campaign as an impact from the 2008 year, which will have been an effective mechanism for encouraging new users, who previously were not using such platforms, to get online and share content.

Table 2: The top ten institutional contributors to Flickr

Flickr (by institutional group or user account)	Contacts	Photos
Liverpool Daily Post (group)	453	12670
GoSuperlambananas (group)	158	5552
National Museums Liverpool (user)	94	625
Liver08 (group)	18	567
Liverpool Biennial (group)	50	375
Liverpool Biennial (user)	173	283
The Culture Company (user)	5	226
FACT (Group)	20	224
Art in Liverpool (user)	26	215
Culturepool (user)	0	150

2008 major events presence: Information specific to European Capital of Culture events was gathered to establish the relative online impact of each. The comparison is based on the number of photos uploaded to Flickr. Information on the type of creative commons licensing used was also collected, in part to understand more about how much content online is subject to copyright. One of the major debates in this area is over ownership and it can be valuable to understand how much of the content is freely available for sharing and how much requires explicit permission. This is increasingly important as more publishers source images through such sites as Flickr. One might also claim that users employing a customised licence are more informed and

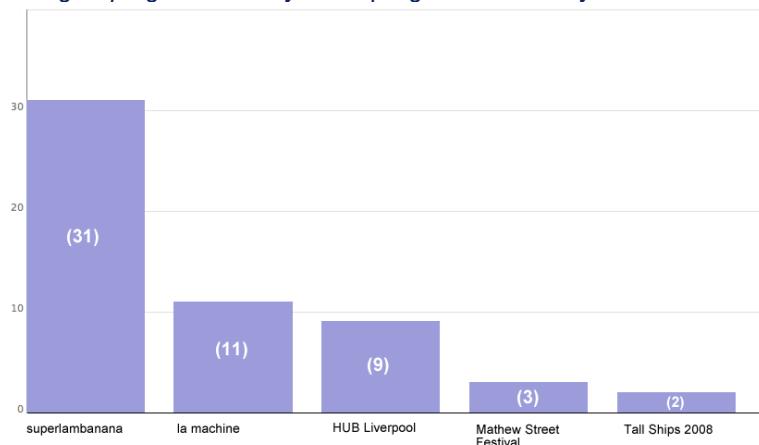
²⁶ A contact is an individual Flickr user who has actively decided to make the institution a contact in their network. While it is questionable what this signifies, it is reasonable to assume it conveys interest in the organisation and its work.

more knowledgeable of the rules and regulations in place and so are more critically engaged content generators. One might also suggest that public institutions who are budget constrained could find more value in seeking photographs from prolific amateur photographers in their community, rather than commissioning new photography.

As with the YouTube findings, there are some important clarifications that should precede our conclusions about Flickr. Primarily, it is necessary to recognise that different categories of events lend themselves to different degrees of content generation. For example, an indoor or enclosed concert where photographing and filming are not permitted will produce a much more limited amount of user-generated content compared to a public event. However, one can argue that this is one consideration that should inform marketing strategies, since it could be considered that a European Capital of Culture can benefit from having large number of events that allow content generation. Also, unlike the institutional Flickr accounts, there tend not to be institutional users for specific events. Rather, the events can be measured only by how much content its participants have uploaded individually. For example, the Mathew Street Festival generated 988 photographs, although none of these were created by the producers of the event.

The results show that two large outdoors free events, the Go Superlambanana parade and the “La Machine”+Liverpool’ were the most prominent 2008 event uploads on Flickr, with **7,970 and 5,258 photograph uploads respectively**. The Tall Ships event and the generic European Capital of Culture denomination are the next most prominent Flickr tags. A further measure of prominence is the number of user-generated Flickr groups that exist for an event. These emerge when a Flickr user decides to create a public group for sharing photographs about a specific event. Thus, they are related to the Liverpool ECoC programme, but are *not created by or managed by ECoC-related institutions or groups*. Here, the results show that the Superlambanana Parade and the ‘Spider, La Princesse’ also show the most user-generated groups (Figure 6). This further reveals these events’ importance and prominence as the overarching online successes of 2008.

Figure 6: Number of Flickr groups generated by 2008 programme activity



It is also useful to measure the overall total of image content uploaded across the events, which was approximately 25,543 photographs. The table below gives an indication of the top ten 2008 events in Flickr, based on number of photographs.

Table 3: Number of photos posted to Flickr

Superlambanana	7,970	Mathew Street Festival	988
"La Machine" Liverpool	5,258	MTV Awards Liverpool	851
"Tall Ships" 2008 Liverpool	2,305	"HUB" Liverpool	657
Spider, La Princesse	1,924	"Mathew Street festival"	635
European Capital of Culture 2008	1,798	"Summer Pops" Liverpool	474

Table 4 indicates the prominence within public groups of Liverpool ECoC content. It is important to bear in mind that the older the group, the greater are the chances of it having more content. In this context, it is clear that the Liverpool Daily Post group of 9,433 images and the Lambanana groups were particularly active in 2008.

Table 4: Most prominent Flickr groups that relate to Liverpool ECoC content

Flickr	Account since	Members	No. of photos
Liverpool	2004	1213	17843
Liverpool Daily Post – Liverpool ECoC site	2008	338	9433
Liverpool photos	2004	194	5793
Lambanana	2008	158	5516
Liverpool Meet-up Group	2006	167	4147
Go Superlambananas	2008	81	3697
Merseyside Past and Present	2006	129	3354
Superlambana	2008	70	2723
BBC Liverpool08	2008	164	2640
Lamachine	2008	52	1457

3.4. Liverpool ECoC on Facebook

3.4.1. The Liverpool network

Before 2008, there was no distinct Liverpool network on Facebook and members who lived in Liverpool were forced to join the nearest community, which was Manchester. However, during 2007, Facebook members from Liverpool campaigned for a distinct Liverpool network on Facebook. Network status is indicative of a critical mass of participation. By 4th August, there were over 8,000 members who had joined the campaign; by October 2008, 16,000 people had joined, and on 13 Feb 2008 - with over 30,000 petitions, 1,416 wall postings from members of the campaign, and support from the Liverpool Echo and Radio City - Facebook created a Liverpool network. The effects of this are significant since search results within Facebook are determined by one's geographical position. For example, if one is part of the Liverpool network and searches for FACT in the 'groups' section, the Liverpool cultural institution FACT can be found very quickly (although a different set of results will be obtained if one is part of a different network).

While all our sample of local media and cultural institutions (as well as national institutions) had a Facebook page, only 50% had taken a similar action. The largest Facebook group with the word 'Liverpool' in its name is clearly the Liverpool network (18,151 members as of November 2008) as well as one of the highest numbers of wall posts (650) and photos (413). However, this group is not directly related to any Liverpool ECoC event or institution, but rather has a geo-cultural connection with the Liverpool area.

Institutional Facebook pages: As Table 5 below shows, the most active arts and cultural institutions on Facebook during 2008 were GoSuperlambananas, which deserves special mention, since it far exceeds the membership numbers of other LIVERPOOL ECOC-related Facebook groups. With an astonishing member base of 3,833 users and almost 809 wall postings, the GoSuperlambanas group is by far the most active Facebook community, achieving considerable visibility. After this, there is a core of similarly sized groups, which includes some of the smaller Liverpool-based organisations, such as Culturepool.

Table 5: Top 10 institutional contributors to Facebook in terms of members and wall messages

Institution	Members	wall messages
GoSuperlambananas	3833	809
Visit Liverpool	962	809
Culturepool	865	55
Liverpool Biennial (institution maintained)	842	65
FACT (institution maintained)	834	100
Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse	664	46
City of Liverpool UK	539	31
Bluecoat	513	42
Tate Britain / Modern / Liverpool / St Ives (individual)	350	11
Liverpool Independents Biennial (Independents Biennial)	181	3

As is apparent in this table, we measured both number of members (which indicates interest in the event or organisation), along with number of wall postings. Wall postings are content-generated by the members and one can study this to develop an impression of how active the community is within the group. For example, in our data, it is apparent that Culturepool (865 members) has a similar number of members to FACT (842 members), while FACT has nearly double the number of wall messages, indicating either that it has a more active participatory community or that it is posting more content itself.

While we would not normally include one of the Liverpool ECoC events in a comparison of institutional pages, in this case GoSuperlambananas occupied Facebook as if it were an institution, with administrators in charge of coordinating content and so on. Other Facebook pages that related to events did not do this.

Major Events on Facebook: Table 6 below provides an overview of the size of Facebook communities that related to Liverpool ECoC events. It can be expected that the activity generated by these communities has a ‘short tail’, which means they have a high volume of activity around the event time, while once the event is over, activity tends to stop and the Facebook group becomes defunct. In comparison, the institutional Facebook pages listed in Table 5 are expected to have an ongoing role after 2008.

Table 6: Liverpool ECoC programme on Facebook by number of members

Event	Members	photos
La Machine in Liverpool 08	3018	480
Official 2008 MTV Networks Europe Music Awards	1604	173
The Superlambana Appreciation Society	1213	69
Liverpool, Probably the Best City in the World	830	33
City of Liverpool UK	556	37
Superlambana Urban Safari	454	73
The Great Superlambana Hunt	444	52
Mathew Street Fringe Festival	375	8
Adelphi the Musical	346	13
The Great Superlambana	196	11

We found that a single event was likely to have numerous groups within Facebook. For example, when searching for ‘La Machine’, there are two primary groups that emerged. One of them had over 3,000 members, while the other had less than 200. Yet, each is similarly visible in the search results and each is generated by individuals rather than organising institutions. In fact, there are four ‘La Machine’ groups related to the Liverpool event, including one with 89 members who were complaining about the disruption caused by La Machine. In addition, it is evident that groups have differing levels of activity. Thus, the individual who created the largest Facebook group for La Machine is part of an arts network in London. His creation of a network based around La

Machine indicates the challenge raised by social media, where it is increasingly important for institutions to develop a strategy to ensure they have some ownership of such spaces.

A further measure we employed to study Facebook involved analysing the overlap between memberships across the user community. As set up within our project objectives, we wanted to discover what kind of common ground exists across online activity to discern, for example, what kind of population exists online and whether they can be described as shared communities. For instance, we wanted to see whether members of the Facebook page for FACT or TATE Liverpool were also members of Bluecoat and so on. The number of members across these institutions does suggest a common ground, although to assess this further, we have also noted which were the most common groups joined by members of a given Facebook group. To explain further, when viewing a Facebook group, the page lists the other five most common groups joined by its members. We recorded this information to assess the frequency of common memberships across the eight major Liverpool-based arts and cultural institutions.

Figure 7 shows the results, indicating the prominence of common membership by the size of the lettering. So, in this image, the most common group joined by members across all the Facebook groups we studied was the Liverpool network. This indicates that a high proportion of Facebook users who were engaged by Liverpool ECoC content were part of the Liverpool community, rather than other regional or international communities. The second most common affiliation is with the Liverpool Biennial. As the size of the text decreases, so too does the prominence of the overlap, although all common group memberships are shown.

Figure 7: Frequency of common group membership across cultural institutions on Facebook



Alternatively, Figure 8 provides an overview of common group memberships based on the Liverpool ECoC event pages. Again, it reinforces the dominant Liverpool community as the target audience of ECoC content.

Figure 8: Frequency of common group membership of Liverpool ECoC event pages on Facebook



3.5. Liverpool ECoC search trends

In addition to researching the prominence of specific institutions or events, our findings also convey the general online presence of Liverpool ECoC. This research was primarily to address our third and fourth objectives, although findings additional to those objectives also emerged.

A number of search strings were used across a range of online environments to assess impact, the choice of which was determined by two factors. The first was to mirror the search system of the Impacts 08 broadcast and press content analysis projects, thus offering an opportunity for some direct comparisons. The second involved identifying common search strings²⁷, which would become apparent as the research progressed and as data emerged. The searches included:

- Liverpool capital of culture.
- Liverpool year of culture.
- Liverpool08.
- Liverpool 2008.
- Liverpool, European Capital of Culture.

The specific platforms we studied were – in keeping with the overall study – Facebook, YouTube, Flickr and Google.

3.5.1. Facebook searches

The search strings data for Facebook revealed what kinds of groups had been set up around Liverpool ECoC content. This is summarised by the following table:

Table 7: Facebook activity based on Liverpool ECoC search strings

Liverpool	175 pages/500+ groups/500+ events
"Liverpool 2008"	4 pages/500+ groups/464 events
Liverpool 08	2 pages/453 groups/ 120 events
Liverpool 2008	2 pages/500+ groups/422 events
Liverpool Capital of Culture	166 groups/56 events
"Liverpool, European Capital of Culture"	60 groups/13 events
Liverpool, European Capital of Culture	58 groups/13 events
Liverpool08	8 groups
"Liverpool 08"	5 groups

This table shows how much activity has been generated through Facebook, in addition to the data that is specific to the Facebook searches explained earlier. This shows overall levels of activity related to Liverpool ECoC content. It can be concluded that all of this activity was generated by ECoC, thus conveying a massive expansion of Facebook activity due to this event. One might also claim that the prominence of the ECoC programme in 2008 allowed Liverpool to reach a critical mass of participation within Facebook and was, thus, essential to its presence. As can be seen, the range of search data shows the various ways in which Facebook users were describing their groups, some including 'European Capital of Culture', while others used just 'Liverpool 2008'.

²⁷ A search string is a collection of words used to conduct a search - for example, 'capital of culture' or 'Liverpool 08'. When conducting the research, various decisions were made about which terms to use, based on prominence and functionality. For instance, we discerned that the most common 'tag' within Flickr was 'capital of culture', so searching for this generated more findings than using 'liverpool08'. Our findings are based on the most generous search result.

3.5.2. YouTube searches

The YouTube data conveys a similarly large expansion of content resulting from the ECoC year. As the table below shows, there was a vast growth of content throughout each of the search engines from 2007 to 2009, across the ECoC period. It is reasonable to conclude that ECoC related content dominated the Liverpool-produced YouTube footage. Even after 2008, there is evidence of growth of approximately 20%, demonstrating that ECoC-related content continues to grow online.

Table 8: YouTube search growth

Search Strings	16-Nov-2007	12-Nov-2008	5-Mar-2009	growth 2007-08	growth 2008-09
"Liverpool 08"	5	21,400	27,543	427,900%	29%
Liverpool + "year of culture"	1	1,320	1,540	131,900%	17%
Liverpool + "culture year"	1	1,320	1,540	131,900%	17%
Liverpool 08	22	21,400	27,000	97,173%	26%
Liverpool 2008	29	14,700	19,000	50,590%	29%
Liverpool, European Capital of Culture	2	951	976	47,450%	3%
"Liverpool 2008"	6	794	842	13,133%	6%
"Liverpool Capital of Culture"	2	251	951	12,450%	279%
Liverpool	1,170	114,000	102,000	9,644%	-11%
Liverpool Capital of Culture	9	819	1,012	9,000%	24%
Liverpool08	1	52	549	5,100%	956%
"Liverpool, European Capital of Culture"	1	47	56	4,600%	19%

3.5.3. Flickr searches

When conducting initial searches within Flickr, it became apparent that some search terms related to Liverpool ECoC were better than others. Moreover, some were completely ineffective. This shows that the user community of Flickr decided what would be the most appropriate terms through which to describe their ECoC content, regardless of what official branding was being used by the Culture Company. For instance, we discovered that the most prominent term that was used to characterise content in Flickr was '**capital of culture**' (or 'capitalofculture', since often tags function without spacing). In contrast, such phrases as 'year of culture' or 'Liverpool08' returned no significant results, indicating that these terms were not used by Flickr users to describe their ECoC photographs. Crucially, it mattered precisely how users tagged their content. So, whereas 'Liverpool08' did not yield meaningful findings, the tag 'Liverpool 08' revealed more content, as this would search for 'liverpool' and '08', even if they were not associated. This is why searching for material that is enclosed by quotation marks is more precise.

Table 9: Flickr search growth

Search string	group		Growth %	Full text		Growth %	Tag		Tag & growth
	Nov 2007	Mar-2009		2007-2009	Nov-2008		2008-2009	Nov-2008	
Liverpool	1457	1,674	15%	373,043	374,868	0%	266,017	267,045	0%
Liverpool 2008	611	704	15%	44,704	45,517	2%	19,759	19,719	0%
Liverpool 08	87	83	-5%	16,017	19,378	21%	5,895	6,018	2%
Liverpool Capital of Culture	45	44	-2%	13,540	14,507	7%	240	257	7%
Liverpool08	46	47	2%	5,392	5,520	2%	4,970	5,089	2%
Liverpool, European Capital of Culture	15	13	-13%	2,266	2,782	23%	1,344	1,369	2%
"Liverpool 2008"	8	11	38%	5,975	5,916	-1%	1,194	1,203	1%
"Liverpool Capital of Culture"	3	3	0%	884	872	-1%	400	404	1%

The above table provides a snapshot of the search results pertaining to each relevant search string in Flickr. It shows that by March 2009, 374,868 photographs on Flickr related to Liverpool in some way. Trying to ascertain how many of these photos were about Liverpool ECoC content, or can be described as an impact of ECoC, is difficult. However, a number of conclusions are possible to draw. First, it is important to note that the various search terms provide qualifiers to claims. So, the final two rows, which show quoted references, provide the most conservative estimate of the amount of activity. To this end, we can note that there were **38% more Flickr groups** specifically concerning ‘Liverpool 2008’ which were created between November 2007 and March 2009.

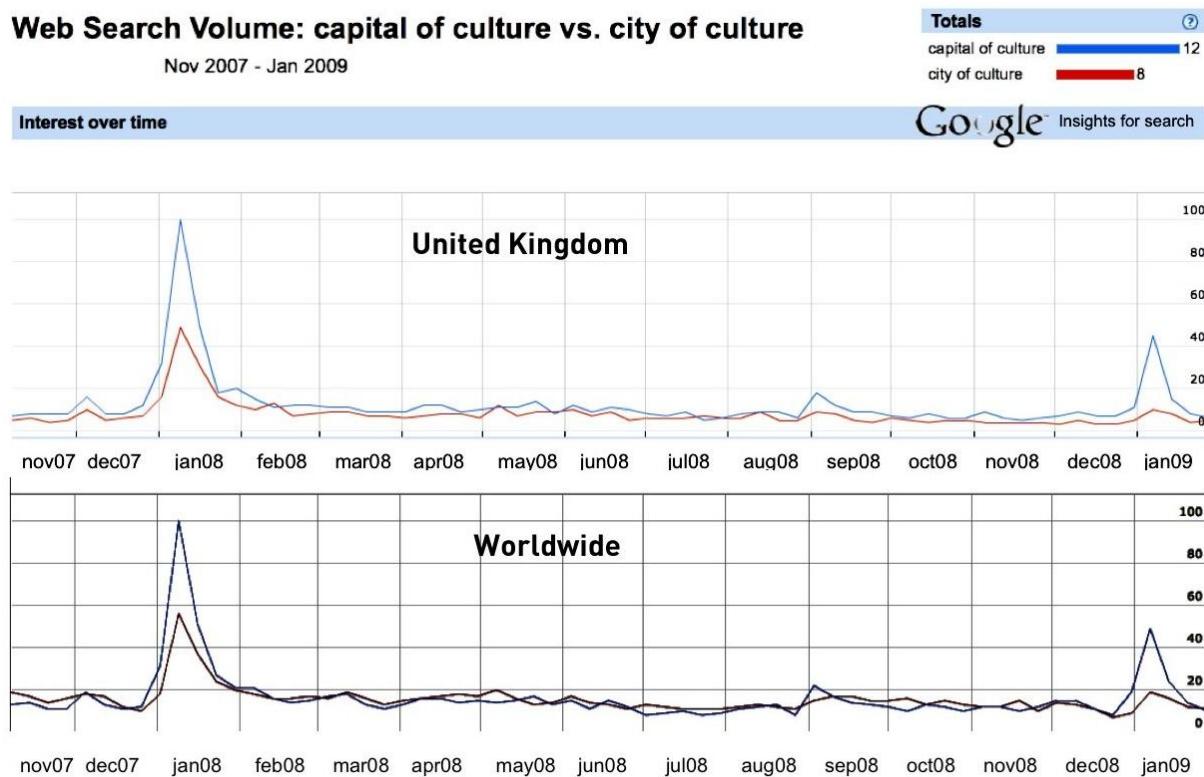
3.5.4. Google searches

In August 2008, the online trend analysis tool *Google Insights for Search* was launched, which allows users to track the prominence of Google searches, in order to make claims about the public’s interest in specific issues, locations or even websites. Google is only one search engine amongst many (such as Yahoo and MSN), and, while it has the largest market share, findings from this platform do not provide an entire representation of online activity. Insights for Search works on the basis of queries made by Google users and takes into account location and time range to filter the results based on similar criteria. The Insights results also offer information about *rising and related searches* – for instance, which search terms are gaining greater prominence at any moment. It can tell us, for example, what were the most prominent searches regarding Liverpool in August 2008. This information is particularly useful when trying to identify trends and place them in a wider context.

For this project, the search strings we identify above were tested on Google Insights for Search, and the results were filtered according to the geographical source of the searches (worldwide or UK) and according to a specific timeframe (November 2007 to January 2009).

Comparisons between each of the chosen search strings, such as ‘capital of culture’ and ‘city of culture’, Liverpool08, Liverpool 08 and Liverpool 2008, or between Liverpool 2008 and Stavanger 2008, were performed. The results show that *capital of culture* and *Liverpool 2008* were the most common/popular search strings, whereas Liverpool08 or Liverpool European Capital of Culture were less often used. The results also show that the highest search volume occurred in January 2008 and January 2009, the periods when the opening and closing events of Liverpool’s year as ECoC took place (see Figure 9). This result emphasises the importance of such events and the interest they incite, as audience events but also as media events. The search peaks also coincide with the ‘Go Superlambanana Parade’ period, the ‘Tall Ships’ and the ‘Spider, La Machine’ events. Also, there were more searches generated locally, emphasising greater appeal and awareness of ECoC at a local and national level rather than at an international one.

Figure 9: Google search volume: ‘Capital of Culture’ vs ‘city of culture’ (November 2007 to January 2009)



Data source: Google Insights for Search

We are also able to reveal which searches were growing in prominence throughout the year, using the ‘rising search’ facility. This tool reveals which were the highest searches emerging about Liverpool at any one point of the year. For example, the following table indicates worldwide and UK rising searches for January to February 2008, with the text in italics indicating ECoC-related content.

Table 10: Worldwide and UK rising searches within Google from January to February 2008

Worldwide - Jan-Feb	United Kingdom Jan-Feb
liverpool inter	+600%
inter	+600%
<i>liverpool 08</i>	+150%
<i>echo arena liverpool</i>	+140%
<i>liverpool 2008</i>	+120%
milan liverpool	+80%
milan	+80%
<i>liverpool arena</i>	+80%
liverpool jobs	+50%
flights to liverpool	+50%
	liverpool luton +300%
	<i>liverpool culture</i> +250%
	<i>liverpool 08</i> +130%
	<i>liverpool 2008</i> +120%
	<i>echo arena liverpool</i> +120%
	<i>echo arena</i> +120%
	<i>liverpool arena</i> +80%
	jobs in liverpool +50%
	ryanair +40%
	<i>liverpool echo</i> +40%

It shows that, of all search results achieved through Google in January and February, these reflect the most prominent growth in the number of searches. Importantly, it does not show relative numbers, so it is possible that the number of ‘liverpool inter’ searches far outstripped those of, say, ‘liverpool arena’. However, it does indicate meaningful trends and the impact of Liverpool ECoC on Google. Indeed, if one discounts the football results from these findings, it is apparent that the top four searches in January and February concerning Liverpool²⁸ related to the ECoC programme.

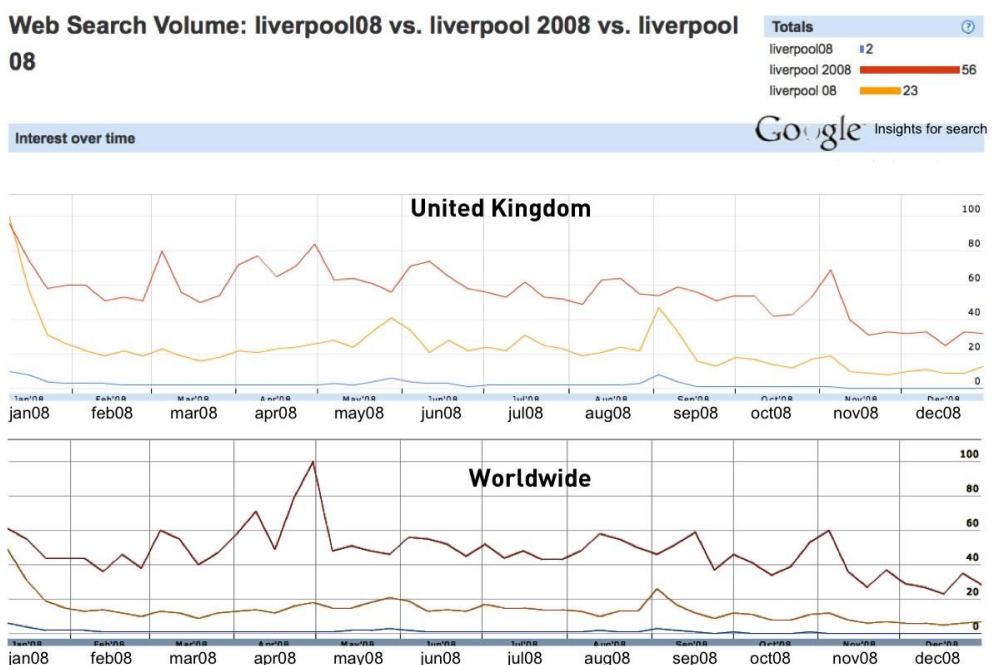
²⁸ After a period of trial and error, we learned that ‘Liverpool’ is the most suitable term, since any further specificity fails to return any results, e.g. Liverpool08 returns no data.

The results show that football plays a permanent role in the rising searches, which is to be expected. However, it also demonstrates which of the Liverpool ECoC content reaches the level of visibility to generate findings. For smaller events with less volume, there would be no data generated.

For the entire month by month list of rising searches see Appendix II. Where ‘breakout’ is listed instead of a percentage, this means that the ‘search term has experienced a change in growth greater than 5000%.²⁹ Over the 2008 period, key events interrupting the dominance of football within Google searches were the Liverpool Echo Arena, Liverpool One, Liverpool 2008, Liverpool Sound, the Tall Ships, the Klimt Exhibition, and the Spider (LaPrincesse).

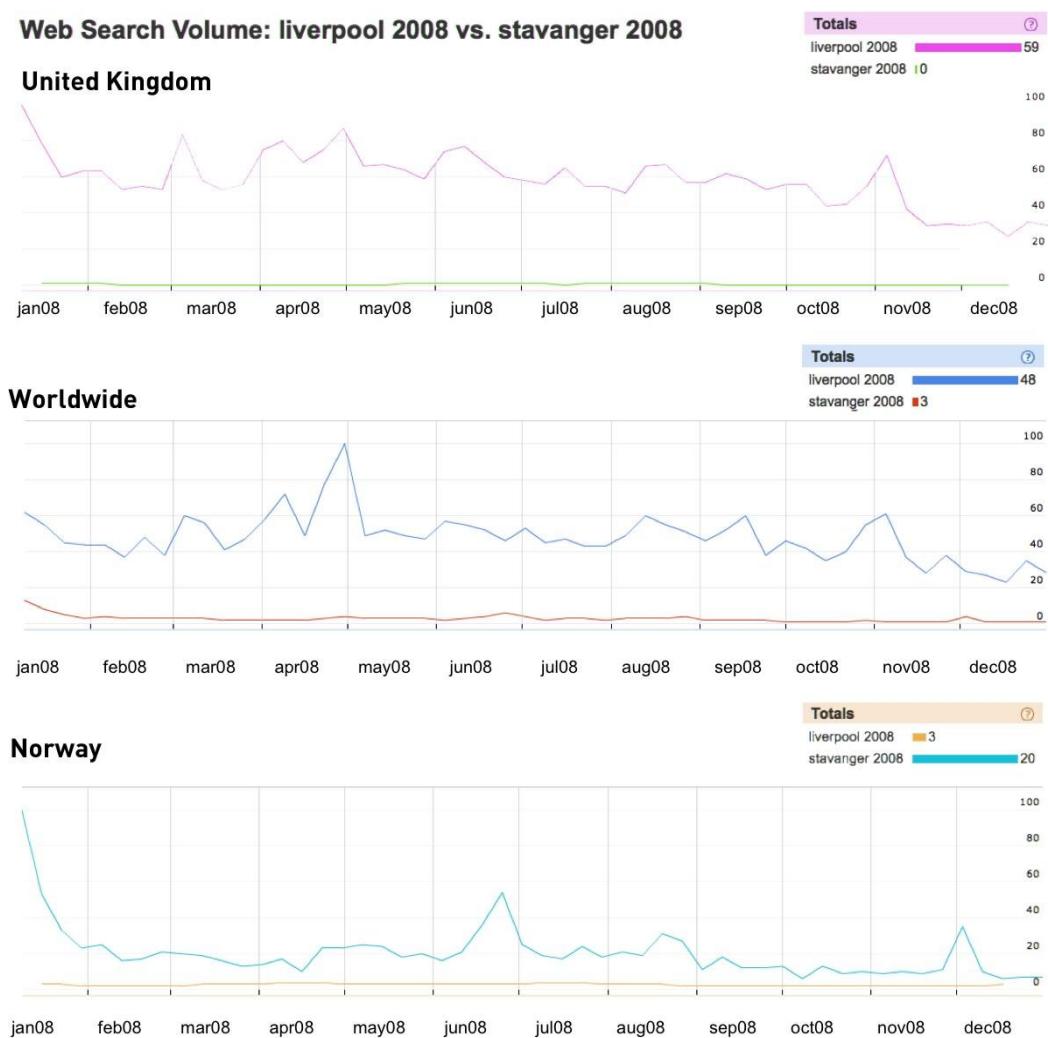
Finally, Google Insights for Search allowed us both to compare our findings with searches related to Stavanger 2008, and to identify peaks of searching throughout the year based on the most prominent search term for Liverpool ECoC, which was ‘capital of culture’. These findings are reflected in Figures 9, 10 and 11. As noted earlier, Figure 9 shows the major peaks of coverage based on the most effective search term. Figure 10 indicates the range of peaks and troughs in coverage throughout the year, also demonstrating that ‘Liverpool 2008’ was a stronger indicator than either ‘Liverpool08’ or ‘Liverpool 08’. Finally, Figure 11 indicates the comparative data between searches for ‘Stavanger 2008’ and ‘Liverpool 2008’. It reveals some important facts about how one should make sense of ECoC as either a local, national or international event. The first chart shows that searches for ‘Stavanger 2008’ within the UK did not attain any significance, and this is mirrored in Norway, with the final chart showing that Norwegian people did not search for ‘Liverpool 2008’. The worldwide chart shows that ‘Liverpool 2008’ dominated ‘Stavanger 2008’, although the reasons for this are unclear. It might relate to the larger size of the city of Liverpool or, indeed, to the prominence of Google in each country. Of course, it could also indicate that Liverpool had a larger internationally renowned programme that appealed to a global audience, compared to Stavanger 2008. However, this is a difficult claim to substantiate.

Figure 10: Google search trends of ‘Liverpool08’ vs ‘Liverpool 2008’ vs ‘Liverpool 08’



²⁹ Google Insights for Search <http://www.google.com/support/insights/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=94793>

Figure 11: Liverpool vs Stavanger, comparing searches from UK, Worldwide and Norway



Data source: Google Insights for Search

3.5.5. Liverpool ECoC in national online environments

The final measure of the online presence of Liverpool ECoC was to study its prominence in a range of national online spaces. We were interested to see whether the activity engaged a range of organisations and what form this took. This is reflected in the ‘national’ web platforms we evaluated – again restricting searches to online environments with social media functionality. The main platforms were thus: the DCMS, Arts Council England, Visit Britain, BBC and Granada/ITV. While the use of social media to promote Liverpool ECoC content through these organisations was limited, their own web presence did include a lot of content, much of which was linked to a range of Liverpool-based institutions (for example, see Figure 12). Moreover, since these organisations are hubs of information, the prominence of ECoC2008 was surely a significant benefit to the city. In particular, the BBC hosted two distinct urls to identify content. These were: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/liverpool08> and http://www.bbc.co.uk/liverpool/capital_of_culture. There were also local platform environments by BBC Merseyside.

Figure 12: Example of ECoC2008 content within BBC website

BBC Home Search Explore the BBC

1 June 2009 [Accessibility help](#)
[Text only](#)

BBC Liverpool

BBC Radio Merseyside 95.8FM: Listen live 

BBC Homepage England

Liverpool

- News
- Sport
- Weather
- Travel News

Entertainment

- Places
- People
- Faith
- History
- Nature
- BBC Introducing
- In Pictures

Grand National

- Hillsborough Disaster

School Report

Credit Crunch

BBC Radio Merseyside 95.8FM: Listen live

Capital of Culture

You are in: Liverpool > Capital of Culture



City to build on culture legacy

A programme of more than 100 free events are to be held to build on Capital of Culture success.

More on this
Features

Features
Capital of culture features in Liverpool.

La Machine
A giant mechanical spider brought the streets of Liverpool alive for five magical days.

Tall Ships
The magnificent Tall Ships visit Liverpool for the race start on the River Mersey in July.

Liverpool Transition Celebration
Photos from the People's Celebration as Liverpool hands over European culture title.

Events
Capital of culture events in Liverpool.

Free Thinking
BBC Radio Three brings a week of programming from Liverpool celebrating free thought.

Turner Prize 07
The Turner Prize at Tate Liverpool.

Culture Year. How was it for you?
We want to hear your favourite bits of Liverpool's year as Capital of Culture.

bbc.co.uk/liverpool08

Culture Websites

The BBC is not responsible for the content of external websites.

- Liverpool 08
- Art in Liverpool
- Liverpool Museums
- Tate Liverpool
- Liverpool Philharmonic
- Everyman Playhouse
- Unity Theatre
- FACT
- LIPA
- Bluecoat
- Liverpool Biennial
- A Foundation
- Open Eye Gallery
- World Heritage Site
- Culture Chat
- BBC Arts

BBC MERSEYSIDE

Listen live
Listen again

4. Conclusions

This report generates a wide range of data that sheds light on how the Liverpool ECoC was represented online. It provides information about the ways in which various institutions that are connected to ECoC2008 have used social media and how the average audience was engaged by the programmatic content via such media. In recent years, the Internet has changed from being a global portal, to a highly fragmented window for local activity. The implications of this transformation are profound, especially when trying to evaluate the impact of any single or prolonged online intervention.

Overall, our findings indicate an extremely high uptake of social media use throughout 2008 in Liverpool, with specific peaks across different programmes. They also indicate at which stage Liverpool-based institutions are with regard to the early adoption of social media. To this end, while there should be no expectation that all 08 stakeholders have a Facebook presence, any stakeholder that expect to undertake public engagement work would find value in utilising this space. However, like other social media environments, it does present new challenges for institutions. Specifically, public institutions must come to terms with what brand ownership means in an era of social media. While it is tempting to conclude that third-party environments compromise control of a brand, since it can often involve handing over the information mechanism to the community, our study shows that communities are likely to appropriate this brand regardless. Thus, institutions must negotiate with their community to find a meaningful delivery mechanism for building community ownership around a social media environment. For example, while an organisation might resist creating a Facebook page because it has the potential to be overtaken by the agenda of users rather than the organisation, the likelihood is that committed community members will set up such spaces regardless of institutional involvement.

Within this study, we focused on the major social media environments that grew to prominence around 2008. However, there are many other platforms we might also have studied, which would reveal additional information about the amount of online activity generated by Liverpool ECoC. Thus, what we found was only a fraction of the total user-generated content online, although by studying specific communities, we were able to develop an insight into trends. To this extent, our findings reveal conservative estimates of impact.

Since 2008, social media audiences continue to rise throughout the world. For example, Facebook's user community has doubled to 200 million within less than a year. In addition, the number of online environments has increased significantly. Even web applications like Twitter, which were not particularly well used in Liverpool during 2008, have become priority environments for many institutions, with 25% of Liverpool-based cultural organisations using them by the end of 2008. Yet, advanced use is still unclear. Also, there are many other online environments that contribute to Liverpool's art and cultural scene as sources of information, a good example of which is Art in Liverpool, one of our 'notable mentions' concerning other websites that assisted in the dissemination of ECoC content during 2008.

The work undertaken here provides tentative benchmarks for future research into the online presence of Liverpool ECoC programmes. It would be valuable to continue monitoring social media and, particularly, its early adoption within the arts and cultural sector to ensure organisations are seen as innovators in their field. This will greatly assist in building Liverpool's online presence in years to come and in ensuring a long legacy to the European Capital of Culture year. There is already evidence of such activity within the city.

5. Appendices

5.1. Appendix I: Target online environments

5.1.1. Key target online environments/platforms

Please note selection of these environments was based on their having social media content, which we expanded to any environment that permits substantial user-generated content.

Governance (key stakeholders behind Liverpool ECoC brand and communications)

The Liverpool Culture Company – Liverpool 08 website

The Mersey Partnership (TMP)

Visit Liverpool

North West Development Agency

Liverpool Vision

Open Culture

Major cultural institutions (Liverpool Arts Regeneration Consortium - LARC)

Bluecoat

FACT

Liverpool Biennial

National Museums Liverpool

Playhouse/Everyman,

RLPO

TATE Liverpool

Unity Theatre

Local media

IC Liverpool

Liverpool.com

Liverpool Daily Post

Liverpool Echo

Community-generated platforms

Art in Liverpool

Culturepool

Other notable mentions/online platforms

Independent Biennial

Liver08

Liverpool Community Network

BBC Liverpool page

Go Superlambananas

National organisations

Arts Council England

BBC

DCMS

Granada/ ITV

Visit Britain

5.1.2. Major events

These events were selected following the approach utilised for Impacts 08 press content analysis. The events below are those that were more often profiled within 08 promotional materials and/or attracted greater specific press coverage.

Highlight popular/mainstream ticketed events

- 08 Highlights in general
- Liverpool ECoC press launch events
- Opening ceremonies, 08
- McCartney concert/Liverpool Sound
- MTV awards
- World Firefighter Games
- Cilla Black pantomime

Highlight free/community event

- 800th anniversary
- People's Opening St George's Plateau
- Tall Ships
- Portrait of a Nation
- Superlambanana parade
- Spider, La Princesse
- Liverpool Pavillions
- Creative Communities
- Liverpool ECoC closing event (Jan 09)

Highlight arts events

- Turner Prize, 07
- Klimt exhibition and Vienna season
- Ben Johnson Liverpool Panorama
- Art in the age of steam
- Dreamthinkspeak
- Simon Rattle, Berlin Philharmoniker and Liverpool Philharmonic
- Adelphi the musical
- Eric's the Musical
- Le Corbusier, Stirling prize
- Human futures
- John Tavener Requiem
- Benjamin Britten
- Design Show
- King Lear

Mixed city events (established city events)

- Mathew Street festival
- Africa Oye
- Dadafest
- Arabic Festival
- Summer Pops
- HUB

5.1.3. Search platforms

Searches across global platforms

YouTube clips

Second Life

Facebook

Flickr

Other Notable Platforms (irrespective of geography)

Not searched apriori, but appearing as a major web presence through Flickr, Facebook or YouTube

BBC Liverpool page

Go Superlambananas

Independent Biennial

Liver08

Liverpool Community Network

5.2. Appendix II: Google insights for rising searches

Worldwide

Dec 2007-Jan	Jan-Feb
liverpool havant	Breakout
liverpool luton	+700%
<i>liverpool culture</i>	+190%
liverpool bolton	+130%
<i>liverpool echo arena</i>	+110%
<i>liverpool 2008</i>	+110%
<i>echo arena</i>	+110%
<i>liverpool 08</i>	+100%
<i>liverpool arena</i>	+80%
liverpool chelsea	+60%
	liverpool inter
	inter
	<i>liverpool 08</i>
	<i>echo arena liverpool</i>
	<i>liverpool 2008</i>
	milan liverpool
	milan
	<i>liverpool arena</i>
	liverpool jobs
	flights to liverpool
	+600%
	+600%
	+150%
	+140%
	+120%
	+80%
	+80%
	+80%
	+50%
	+50%

United Kingdom

Dec 2007-Jan	Jan-Feb
fa cup	+350%
<i>liverpool culture</i>	+250%
<i>liverpool 2008</i>	+120%
<i>echo arena liverpool</i>	+120%
<i>echo arena</i>	+120%
<i>man utd</i>	+110%
<i>liverpool 08</i>	+110%
<i>liverpool arena</i>	+60%
sky sports	+50%
Chelsea	+50%
	liverpool luton
	<i>liverpool culture</i>
	<i>liverpool 08</i>
	<i>liverpool 2008</i>
	<i>echo arena liverpool</i>
	<i>echo arena</i>
	<i>liverpool arena</i>
	jobs in liverpool
	ryanair
	<i>liverpool echo</i>
	+250%
	+130%
	+120%
	+120%
	+80%
	+50%
	+40%
	+40%

Worldwide

Feb-Mar	Mar-Apr
liverpool vs inter	+1850%
inter liverpool	+900%
inter	+900%
liverpool inter milan	+500%
inter milan	+500%
milan	+200%
liverpool milan	+200%
champions league	+110%
liverpool everton	+60%
<i>liverpool echo arena</i>	+60%
	liverpool vs arsenal
	chelsea vs liverpool
	liverpool champions league
	champions league
	liverpool chelsea
	chelsea
	arsenal liverpool
	arsenal
	liverpool match
	torres liverpool
	+1550%
	+700%
	+450%
	+450%
	+400%
	+400%
	+350%
	+350%
	+130%
	+120%

United Kingdom

Feb-Mar	Mar-Apr
liverpool v inter	+1100%
liverpool inter	+900%
liverpool inter milan	+700%
panoramic liverpool	+550%
liverpool champions league	+130%
champions league	+130%
share liverpool	+50%
passport office liverpool	+50%
liverpool west ham	+50%
<i>echo arena liverpool</i>	+50%
	liverpool v arsenal
	liverpool vs chelsea
	champions league
	liverpool v chelsea
	liverpool champions league
	chelsea liverpool
	chelsea
	arsenal liverpool
	arsenal
	liverpool kit
	+1450%
	+650%
	+650%
	+600%
	+600%
	+400%
	+400%
	+400%
	+400%
	+180%

Worldwide

Apr-May	May-Jun
liverpool vs chelsea	+850% liverpool transfer
liverpool v chelsea	+500% <i>liverpool sound</i>
liverpool vs arsenal	+450% <i>liverpool one</i>
chelsea liverpool	+450% liverpool weather
chelsea	+450% liverpool fc news
liverpool transfer	+250% trains to liverpool
liverpool kit	+250% new liverpool kit
arsenal liverpool	+200% liverpool street station
arsenal	+200% liverpool street
liverpool champions league	+110% liverpool news

United Kingdom

Apr-May	May-Jun
liverpool vs chelsea	+650% liverpool transfer
liverpool v chelsea	+650% <i>liverpool sound</i>
liverpool new kit	+600% liverpool transfer rumours
chelsea liverpool	+400% <i>liverpool one</i>
Chelsea	+400% bbc weather liverpool
liverpool kit	+250% liverpool weather
<i>liverpool sound</i>	+200% <i>liverpool 1</i>
arsenal liverpool	+200% national express
Arsenal	+200% liverpool shirt
champions league	+120% liverpool fc news

Worldwide

Jun-Jul	Jul-Aug
keane liverpool	+2850% liverpool standard liege
<i>liverpool tall ships</i>	+1300% standard liverpool
<i>tall ships</i>	+1250% <i>tall ships</i>
liverpool transfers	+130% <i>liverpool tall ships</i>
liverpool transfer	+80% aston villa
newsnow liverpool	+70% premier league
newsnow	+70% liverpool tv
liverpool fc news	+70% arsenal fc
real madrid	+50% liverpool tickets
<i>liverpool one</i>	+50% real madrid

United Kingdom

Jun-Jul	Jul-Aug
keane liverpool	Breakout <i>tall ships</i>
<i>tall ships liverpool</i>	+1000% setanta
<i>tall ships</i>	+1000% <i>liverpool tall ships</i>
<i>klimt liverpool</i>	+150% oasis
transfer news	+90% rangers liverpool
liverpool transfers	+90% aston villa
liverpool transfer news	+90% liverpool tv
<i>john lewis liverpool</i>	+70% liverpool fixtures
<i>liverpool one</i>	+50% sky sports
skysports	+40% liverpool tickets

Worldwide

Aug-Sept	Sept-Oct		
<i>liverpool spider</i>	+4800%	<i>Spider liverpool</i>	+3200%
standard liverpool	+2050%	Manchester city	+200%
marseille liverpool	+1400%	Liverpool everton	+80%
man utd	+150%	Everton	+80%
manchester city	+110%	Chelsea liverpool	+80%
everton	+110%	Chelsea	+80%
liverpool everton	+100%	Liverpool uni	+70%
premier league	+80%	<i>Liverpool one</i>	+70%
manchester united	+60%	<i>Liverpool 1</i>	+70%
liverpool tv	+60%	Premier league	+50%

United Kingdom

Aug-Sept	Sept-Oct		
<i>spider liverpool</i>	Breakout	<i>liverpool spider</i>	+4100%
<i>liverpool la machine</i>	Breakout	<i>la machine</i>	+900%
<i>la machine</i>	Breakout	chelsea	+150%
oasis	+250%	chelsea liverpool	+140%
liverpool tickets	+80%	liverpool uni	+90%
liverpool fixtures	+80%	<i>liverpool one</i>	+70%
everton	+80%	liverpool tickets	+50%
manchester united	+70%	liverpool hope	+50%
liverpool uni	+60%	<i>liverpool empire</i>	+50%
radio city liverpool	+50%	<i>liverpool 1</i>	+50%

Worldwide

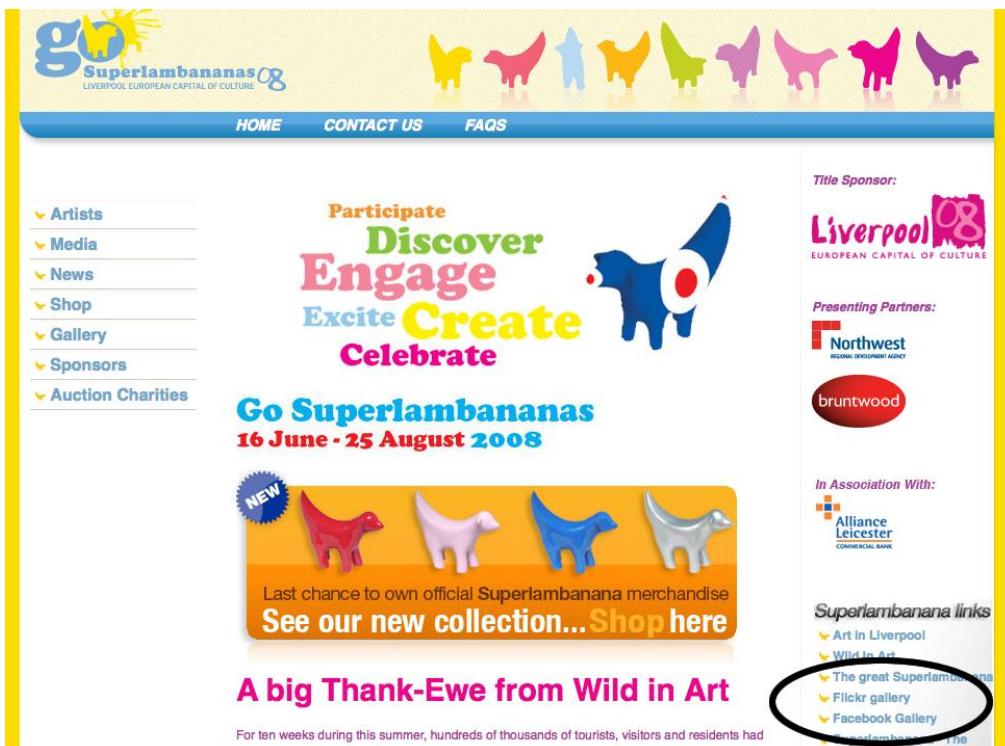
Oct-Nov	Nov-Dec	Dec-Jan			
liverpool atletico	+250%	Liverpool west ham	+400%	liverpool everton live	+4900%
tottenham liverpool	+200%	Arsenal vs liverpool	+400%	liverpool v everton	+1650%
tottenham	+200%	Tottenham liverpool	+250%	liverpool vs everton	+1350%
odeon liverpool	+110%	Tottenham	+250%	fa cup	+500%
liverpool one	+100%	Liverpool hull	+150%	liverpool everton	+350%
<i>liverpool chelsea</i>	+90%	Arsenal liverpool	+90%	everton	+350%
chelsea	+90%	Arsenal	+90%	real madrid	+160%
echo arena liverpool	+70%	Palacio de hierro	+60%	liverpool real madrid	+160%
echo arena	+70%	Real madrid	+50%	liverpool hull	+120%
liverpool arena	+60%	Liverpool mexico	+50%	arsenal liverpool	+90%

United Kingdom

Oct-Nov	Nov-Dec	Dec-Jan 2009			
<i>liverpool one odeon</i>	+1100%	liverpool west ham	+450%	liverpool vs everton	+1500%
liverpool chelsea	+160%	arsenal liverpool	+130%	liverpool v everton	+1400%
chelsea	+160%	arsenal	+130%	ross kemp liverpool	+500%
<i>mtv liverpool</i>	+110%	jbb	+90%	liverpool everton	+300%
<i>liverpool one</i>	+110%	john lewis liverpool	+60%	everton	+250%
<i>liverpool 1</i>	+80%	liverpool cathedral	+50%	steven gerrard	+80%
odeon	+70%	liverpool shop	+40%	arsenal	+70%
<i>liverpool odeon</i>	+70%	<i>liverpool empire</i>	+40%	sky sports news	+60%
<i>liverpool echo arena</i>	+60%	<i>empire</i>	+40%	sky news	+50%
<i>liverpool arena</i>	+60%	(ONLY 9 LISTED)		setanta	+50%

Appendix III: Examples of links to social media from websites

Example of a clear positive link to social media (various) on GoSuperlambananas website (link visible on the website's home page)



Example of a limited visibility link to social media (Flickr) in Liverpool Daily Post (link not visible on the website's home page)

About the authors

Professor Andy Miah is based in the Faculty of Business & Creative Industries, University of the West of Scotland. He has been resident in Liverpool since May 2006 and has written extensively about digital culture, most recently in his book titled *The Medicalization of Cyberspace* (2008, Routledge). He is also a Fellow at FACT, the Foundation for Art and Creative Technology in Liverpool and Editor of its 2008 text *Human Futures: Art in an Age of Uncertainty* (Liverpool University Press).

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