

Where in your body? Digital platforms and playful questions in online audience research

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Abstract

www.wherinyourbody.com is an online audience research survey that asks spectators just one question:

This might seem like an odd question, and we know it can be difficult to select just one answer, but we are interested in how it makes you consider your experience of dance. Maybe you felt it in your brain, your heart, your toes or somewhere else?

Having selected a body area from a graphic interface, spectators are asked to explain the reasons for their choice and are then directed to a results screen displaying the responses to other participants in the survey. To date the survey has been used by Scottish Ballet, the Rosie Day Dance Company and the Royal Danish Theatre – with somewhere approaching 2000 responses gathered to date.

This presentation will examine the development of the project in relation to four key aspects. Firstly, its use of a consciously playful question that invites spectators to pause and enter into a reflective dialogue with themselves about their experience. Secondly, the kinds of languages used by spectators in their responses, which include metaphorical, embodied, literal and critical/analytical frames. Thirdly, the use of online platforms to reach larger number of participants and the potential this offers to combine qualitative and quantitative approaches. Potential quantitative uses include the ability to use forms of linguistic analysis on increasing large bodies of text and opportunities to contrast responses across different art forms or genres. Finally, the paper will explore the diverse and open ways in which the project provides access to the data, including to participants themselves, and how through the use of data visualisations the approach enables the results to be 'shown' rather than 'told'.

Where in your body? is a low intensity, low cost but potentially highly engaging and highly effective tool of audience research. It doesn't set out to replace alternative methodologies, but rather utilizes the potential of mobile and digital technology in an innovative and impactful manner.

