



How Brooklyn Museum use Pulsar to make audience-first programming decisions

Case Study – Brooklyn Museum

How Brooklyn Museum use Pulsar to make audience-first programming decisions

Challenge

The Brooklyn Museum, located, unsurprisingly in Brooklyn, New York, is one of the city's most significant art institutions. We spoke to Alice Northover, Senior Director of Audience, Research, Data and Insights, who told us that the Brooklyn Museum “has a history of people being a little resistant to what everyone else is doing and going off and doing something else completely.” It makes sense then, that Alice was keen to embrace leading audience intelligence software. First using Pulsar as a brand monitoring tool, the Brooklyn Museum team learned more about how they could use Pulsar over time, eventually using Pulsar-led insights to make strategic decisions and evaluate brand partnerships. As a bold and often controversial institution, the Brooklyn Museum continues to challenge norms and push boundaries in the art community that end up turning into “more lines out the door and being known as a troublemaker and trailblazer.”

Two years ago, Alice joined the museum and “one of the first things that came up, given the importance of social media in the world today, was social listening.” As well as internal monitoring, the Brooklyn Museum works with a lot of corporate sponsors and major donors who are interested in knowing the impact of their contributions. Prior to using Pulsar, their approach was to manually monitor their social media using in-app insights. But simply “reporting that we wrote ten Instagram posts that reached this many people misses a huge context of the actual impact of an exhibition.” Alice decided that to “really communicate impact, we wanted to see outside what the museum was doing and what people were saying about the museum, their experience of the museum and what it has meant to them in their lives.”

Building community is hugely important to the institution – “seeing that the Brooklyn Museum is a source of creative inspiration, that’s a huge impact story for us.” Alice wanted to be able to link specific impact back to specific exhibitions, “to see

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This impacts our decision making in future for certain exhibitions and understand what a potential for an exhibition is ahead of time before investing a huge amount of time and money.”



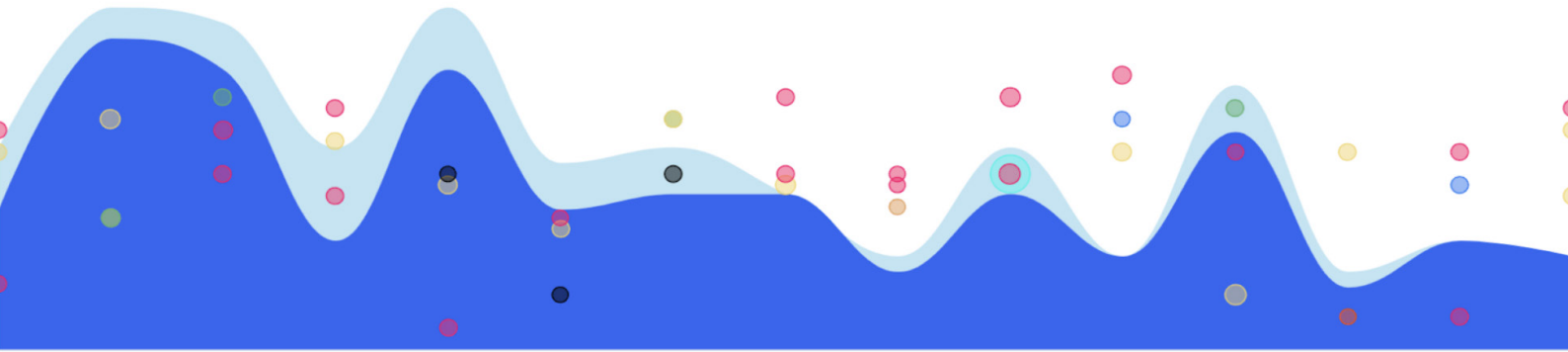
Alice Northover

Senior Director of Audience, Research, Data and Insights, Brooklyn Museum

how many people are talking about it, get out of what the museum sees very close to it and really look at a broader conversation.” Bringing Pulsar into their strategies means that the Brooklyn Museum can “see our impact in the world and not be directly tied to Brooklyn Museum channels, but to get a much broader view of what’s happening.”

Solution

The first step Alice took was to set up a brand monitoring search to capture all conversation about the Brooklyn Museum. Their second step came in setting up searches for currently running exhibitions such as Thierry Mugler’s ‘Couturissime’, which allowed Alice’s team to “see what

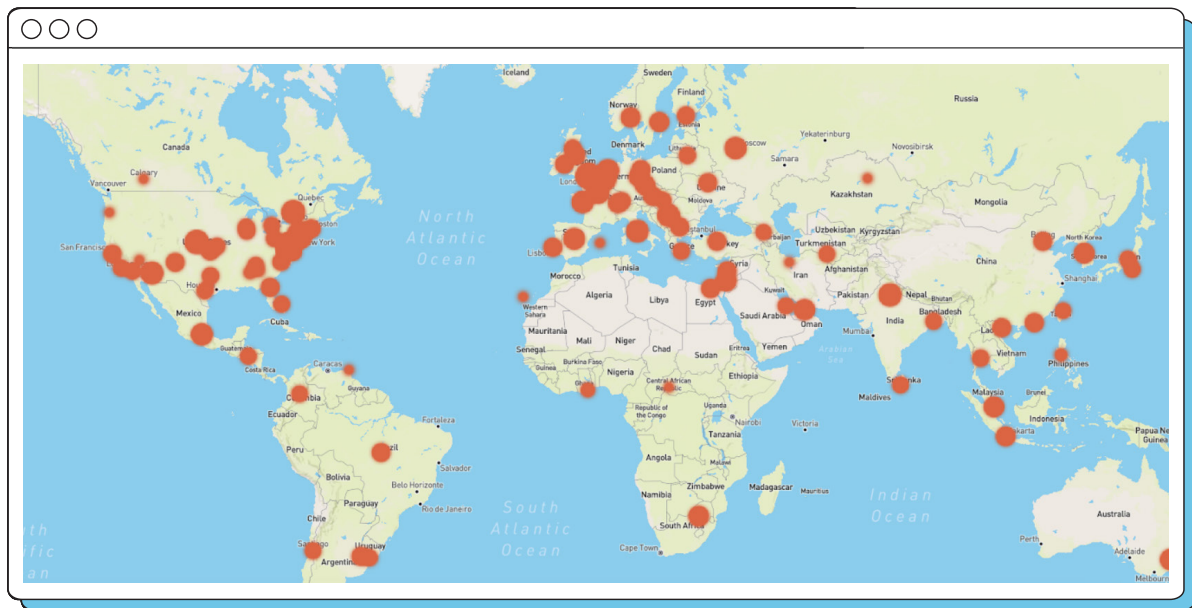


people were saying about our exhibitions and understand that in a broader view.” The team used Pulsar to monitor the impact of the exhibition. Alice tells us that initially, the team were “really just focusing on impact. How many people are talking about us? What are the impressions? What is the sentiment? Are there any specific things that are bubbling up to the top? Are there any particularly influential people?” But now the team has a handle on their ongoing impact, Alice says that “being able to plan ahead, we can look at things more differently.”

The team set up a search for their Elizabeth Catlett exhibition eight months in advance of opening to understand the conversation surrounding the pioneering and often overlooked revolutionary artist. “We were able to see what people were saying about Elizabeth Catlett, and that was really helpful to have an insight because about half of the online conversation about Elizabeth Catlett is in Spanish.” Alice tells us that it’s helpful to “have quantifiable data to show this is a need that we need to meet with our audience.” This

links back to Brooklyn Museum’s commitment to their community as “a significant proportion of the Brooklyn population speaks Spanish at home, many as their primary language.” Backed by quantifiable data, the team were able to make sure that Spanish language inclusion was “part of the exhibition, part of the marketing and everything else to make sure that we address that audience.” Pulsar searches like this allow Alice and her team to access “key learning,” that lets them make informed campaign decisions to “prepare in advance.”

Alice and her team make use of Pulsar’s geographic data for this. Of course, a high amount of their conversation comes from within New York, but Alice is interested in where a conversation is bubbling up elsewhere in the United States. She recalls an exhibition called ‘Copy Machine Manifestos: Artists Who Make Zines’ that was going to go on tour. The team looked at where people were talking about the exhibition outside of New York, with an opportunity arising to take the exhibition to Toronto. Similarly, for



their exhibition 'Giants: Art from the Dean Collection of Swizz Beatz and Alicia Keys', the team found that there were pockets in D.C., Atlanta, and Southern California. "That was really helpful – we were almost immediately in conversation with the High Museum of Art in Atlanta and they were interested to know that we had a lot of people from Atlanta talking about this exhibit and thought it would do well with their audience." The exhibition toured to the High Museum a few months later. Alice finds Pulsar a great way to scope opportunities to "have a larger impact as an institution."

Results

Brooklyn Museum is able to embed Pulsar into their mission "to bring art to the people" – visualizing "the impact it has on the general public is really important." Through using Pulsar, the Brooklyn Museum has "a really rich view" of the impact that the Elizabeth Catlett exhibition had – "we can see a huge jump in conversation around her as an artist. It's increased conversation and awareness of this important artist." For each exhibition, the team puts together a retrospective report to monitor performance as well as look at successes, challenges and new ideas that they can carry forward. Pulsar's analytics form part of these reports: "to be able to say we had this much impact on this conversation is really essential for reporting, and helps us understand how we did our work and how we can improve in future."

The team is using Pulsar to "get real perspective – this impacts our decision making in future for certain exhibitions

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and understand what a potential for an exhibition is ahead of time before investing a huge amount of time and money.” Alice tells us that their strategy has moved on from simply understanding the impact of an exhibition. Pulsar allows the team to “be able to expand and think differently” and understand how they can best present that exhibition – and analyze if a proposed exhibition is a good idea or not. Now their Pulsar-powered strategy is embedded into the during- and post-exhibition and advertising processes, Alice’s team are bringing Pulsar “even further ahead into the process now, when we’re thinking about exhibition consideration.”

The museum is currently considering brand partnerships and Alice’s team are using Pulsar to get an understanding of the volume and type of conversation around the brands – “because that can be indicative of their fan-base who would then come out and attend the exhibition.” Alice also uses Pulsar’s sentiment feature as an indication of brand partnership risk – “we are very protective of our own brand and would not want to risk the Brooklyn Museum being associated with a negative subject.”

When looking at one of two potential brand collaborators, Alice found a 40% negative sentiment associated with one brand that appeared as emotions of sadness, anger and disgust. This makes that brand seem like “a really high-risk partnership,” that makes the material benefits of a sponsor come second to “curatorial control.” When comparing the two brands, the other had metrics that were far less worrying to Alice: “this gives us a really good way to quantify some information and add that to what informs our decisions about what to pursue.” Alice appreciates Pulsar’s ability to “add another layer and depth to understanding what our options are,” rather than relying on desk research and self-reported brand statistics alone.



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