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Film  
Forever



**INSIGHT REPORT**

# InRealLife

October 2013

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# SECTION ONE: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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- *InRealLife* was a documentary investigating the effects of the Internet on children
- It premiered at the Toronto Film Festival before a UK release on 20 September and was expected to be broadcast on Sky Atlantic at the end of the month
- A satellite Q&A event on Sunday 22 September was the focal point for the marketing campaign
- The campaign was targeted primarily at parents of teenage children, influencers on technology and social media issues (the 'IT crowd') and people with an interest in current affairs and the topic explored in the film
- Digital media was a key means of reaching that diverse audience (who were heavy users of digital technology) who wouldn't necessarily be reached efficiently through a traditional marketing campaign
- The social media and PR campaigns generated a significant amount of attention for the film but this didn't convert to a clear audience interest
- The display advertising performed particularly poorly with click-through rates of less than 1%
- Every audience group targeted failed to engage with the film's proposition – whatever their demographic
- The film performed poorly at the box office, grossing £18,000 (as of 23 October) – the majority of which was during the opening weekend
- The satellite Q&A had limited attendance (an occupancy rate of 29%) which hindered the film's subsequent performance
- The ultimate lack of comprehensive support from a key national broadcast/exhibition partner limited the power of the campaign

# SECTION TWO: PLANNING AND EXECUTION

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## 2.1 Overview

*InRealLife* asks what exactly is the Internet and what is it doing to our children? Taking us on a journey from the bedrooms of British teenagers to the world of Silicon Valley, filmmaker Beeban Kidron suggests that rather than the promise of free and open connectivity, young people are increasingly ensnared in a commercial world. Beguiling and glittering on the outside, it is alienating and addictive. Quietly building its case, *InRealLife* asks if we can afford to stand by while our children, trapped in their 24/7 connectivity, are being outsourced to the net?

Dogwoof acquired the global rights to the film and devised a UK release strategy to support the worldwide premiere at the Toronto Film Festival. The total UK P&A spend was £59,000. The BFI supported the film with a grant of £27,000 from the New Models fund. The release strategy drew on a number of innovative approaches to a theatrical release:

- Focusing the activity on a satellite Q&A event
- Developing the digital conversation around the film through social and web channels rather than favouring traditional P&A investment
- Working with third parties with established digital infrastructure (eg. NGOs) to support the release of the film
- Having the support of a UK broadcaster – Sky Atlantic

- Using realtime analytics to ensure the release was optimising its marketing channels, messages and audience outreach

However, this also placed a number of constraints on the release:

- There could be no major preview screenings before the Toronto screening, limiting the scope of word of mouth recommendation
- There could be no simultaneous online release (day and date) because of the conditions of the agreement with Sky Atlantic – meaning that online audiences would have to go offline to view the film
- The satellite event would need to be sufficiently successful for cinemas to continue screenings beyond the opening weekend and capitalise on the growing interest

## 2.2 Distribution strategy

*InRealLife* was released through:

- Global premiere: Toronto Film Festival – 9 September
- Theatrical release – 20 September, launched with a high profile Q&A event on Sunday 22nd September
- TV and VOD: November  
(Expected to be broadcast on Sky Atlantic w/b 30 September and available through Sky On Demand at that point)
- DVD / TVOD release – January 2014

**The plan was to have three key stages to the campaign:**

1. A focus on the satellite Q&A event to maximise audiences, reached through key influencers
2. Using initial audience reaction to build theatrical audiences and increase traction;
3. Harness the PR in support of the TV release to further generate theatrical audiences

It was believed that this combination would give the film the best chance of success:

- The film festival premiere would be the most effective way to reach professional critics
- The satellite event would focus UK audiences on an impactful event – generating a significant amount of interest to support the continuation of the theatrical release
- The TV release would be most effective at reaching the key audience of parents

However, the broadcaster partnership meant that the campaign could not adopt a 'day and date' release strategy. This constrained the interaction with target

audiences who, if they were not able to view the film at the cinema at the opening weekend, had no alternative channel to access the film until its UK TV premiere.

### 2.3 Audiences

There were four primary audiences for the film:

- Art-house cinema-goers with an interest in documentaries – audiences that regularly engage with Dogwoof releases
- News and current affairs enthusiasts – the film concerned some of the most relevant issues of the day which have become hotly debated in 2013 (privacy, data sharing, pornography)
- Parents, particularly those of pre-teen and teenage children
- The IT crowd – audiences who focus on technology / internet issues and are often vocal about abuse of privacy issues

The marketing also hoped to engage teenagers as a secondary audience.

Each of these audiences presented a number of opportunities and challenges:

|                        | Primary opportunities   | Primary challenges  |
|------------------------|---|---|
| Art-house cinema goers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dogwoof's strong network of documentary fans</li><li>• Support of leading independent cinemas</li></ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Documentary was not expected to receive critical acclaim</li></ul>  |
| News                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A number of national media stories which relate to issues in the film</li><li>• High profile interviewees in the film which are well-known to this audience (eg. Clay Shirky)</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stories about personal tragedy not well-suited to marketing</li><li>• Obviously connecting an issue with the film tough to do in 140 characters</li></ul>                       |
| Parents                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• These issues are front of mind</li><li>• Care passionately about the societal challenges facing their children</li></ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Not known as heavy cinema-goers</li><li>• Perception that active online audience is skewed towards parents with younger children (for whom the film is less relevant)</li></ul> |
| The IT crowd           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Heavy users of web tools reaching a large audiences</li><li>• Passionate, highly engaged with the issues discussed by the documentary</li></ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Considerable chance that they'd be antagonistic to a film that attacks their industry</li></ul>   |

The film industry commonly believes that parents and teenagers are particularly difficult audiences to attract to the cinema. Dogwoof focussed on doing everything possible to attract parents to the film:

- The satellite event was organised for a Sunday afternoon, making it easier to organise around childcare commitments (or bring children)
- A 'mummy blogger' preview screening was organised for a weekday afternoon to reach out to those audiences
- The tone of the digital content was designed to be objective and questioning rather than sensationalist

#### 2.4 Marketing channels

The campaign created Facebook, Twitter and Tumblr accounts dedicated to the film and produced an enhanced film website which integrated user-generated content, screening information and the detail surrounding the film.

In addition, it used Dogwoof's YouTube channel (with 1,400 subscribers) and the distributor's website – dogwoof.com

There were three methods of engaging the audiences on **digital channels**:

1. Dogwoof's own content – promoted through the distributor's social media accounts and those created specifically

for the film, providing a space for people to discuss the themes and issues emerging from the film ('in my real life')

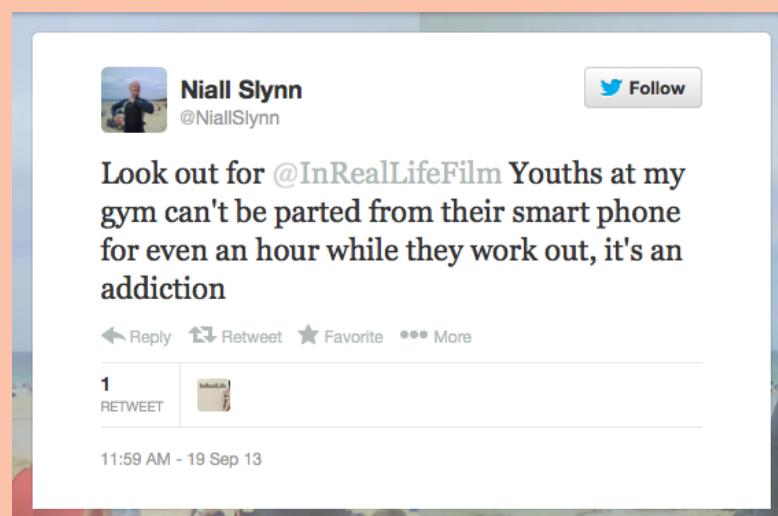
2. Working through 'influencers' – using people with credibility and large audiences to talk about the film. The limited UK theatrical release meant that it would be important to target audiences most likely to view the film

3. Intervening in current affairs debates – drawing attention to the film by becoming part of the conversation about topical issues which are part of the questions posed by the documentary

The (relatively) long time period available meant that the campaign could afford to take an agile approach to the marketing strategy, testing which content was most effective at engaging the audiences and iterating on a frequent basis.

There was an expectation that public relations – both in print and broadcast media – would play a significant role in amplifying awareness of the film. The public profile of the director, Beeban Kidron, and her strong personal networks provided a considerable opportunity to take the documentary into current affairs from Channel 4 News to the FT. This coverage, further amplified through social media, would provide validation to audiences.

**Exhibit 1: An example of the social media campaign tapping into current affairs debates**



## 2.5 Content opportunities

The marketing campaign used all of the traditional assets associated with a theatrical release which it promoted

through the digital channels (above). However, it also developed a number of additional assets for use throughout the campaign.



**Exhibit 2: Dogwoof shared relevant current affairs stories**



The particular creative hooks would be iterated according to the data but would include:

- Topical themes for the week (eg. game addiction, bullying and trolling)
- Relevant statistics shared through infographics
- An opinion survey to demonstrate public attitudes towards the Internet
- Quotes from the opinion leaders that appear in the film (encouraging them to share the content more widely)

## 2.6 Expectations

Dogwoof originally set a target of UK box office receipts of £80,000. This was considered achievable up until the fortnight prior to the release. The only major theatrical release on that weekend, *Diana*, was not expected to attract the same audience profile.

## 2.7 Tools

In the six weeks leading up to the theatrical release of the film the research agency used Brandwatch, a social media monitoring tool, to track all mentions of the film and its director, Beeban Kidron. Whilst the tool monitors blogs and chat forums it is particularly effective for tracking activity on Twitter.

This data was analysed on a weekly basis to determine what was being said about the film and by who. The data was encapsulated into a dashboard report focusing on three critical questions:

- Are we generating sufficient interest in the film?
- Are we reaching the right audiences?
- Is the buzz encouraging people to watch the film?

### Exhibit 3: An infographic mentioning Julian Assange was the most effective of its kind (measured by organic reach on Facebook)



Within this structure there was some flexibility to the reporting to ensure that the data points in each question were the most meaningful for that week's report. In response to that data, we developed a number of recommendations (typically 4-6 each week) which would enable the campaign to maximise the marketing opportunity by doing more (or less) of particular activities. These reports are provided as an appendix.

We used a combination of tools to identify social media users with a large number of followers (and an engaged audience) with a particular interest in the relevant topics. The tool which yielded the most relevant users was Traackr, a premium influence search engine.

Once identified, we reviewed each of the profiles to ensure that, if approached, the influencer could reasonably be expected to view the film objectively. We produced small lists for the outreach team to target and then honed the search criteria after understanding what (if any) reaction the previous group had to the film.

## 2.8 In-campaign findings

### The IT crowd failed to engage with the film

Dogwoof pitched the film to 3 different groups of influencers in technology, social media and public policy. Each of these had expressed an interest in one or more films in the last six months and the majority had some childcare responsibilities. However, few of those approached responded and those that did then chose not to watch or talk about the film.

This provided the distributor with some confidence that the film would not be subjected to significant early criticism from an influential audience. However, it also reduced the potential for the film to reach a much wider audience.

***It was hard to grab the attention of the current affairs audience***

The campaign tried a number of different tactics to get the attention of the current affairs audience with mixed success. The initial activity, using tweets and hashtags failed to generate the anticipated interest. In its place, the distributor developed a daily ‘newspaper’ – curating stories relevant to the film displayed attractively on a single web page. These also did not attract a significant amount of sharing.

***The film was particularly popular amongst younger women***

Facebook analytics examined a month before the release suggested that the film was particularly popular amongst women and girls aged 13-24. This was a surprise because it was thought particularly hard to engage this demographic in the film. The finding was supported by the demographics of people who watched the trailer.

This data was used subsequently to target advertising at this demographic – particularly on YouTube and Facebook which are the most popular websites for this audience. It also supported the development of infographics highlighting statistics relevant to the film as this form of content is particularly popular amongst that demographic.

***Increased word of mouth was not leading to a larger audience***

In each of the two weeks before the release there was a significant increase in social media comments relating to the film. However, there was not a corresponding increase in the proportion of comments expressed a specific intention to go and view the film.

As a result the research agency recommended that the final week of the campaign focus purely on promoting attendance at the satellite event or a subsequent screening, rather than the wider themes associated with the film.

# SECTION THREE: RESULTS

## 3.1 Financial results

The film performed significantly below expectations. It has currently grossed approximately £18,000 at the box office (as of 23 October). About 60% of this was achieved at the opening weekend and 70% of that was achieved thanks to the live event. This was a poor performance and it is unlikely to be improved significantly because it is showing in so few cinemas.

The satellite event was poorly attended, with an occupancy rate of just 29%. Ticket sales were so slow in advance of the event that some cinemas pulled out. The poor performance had an immediate effect on the number of cinemas that were prepared to support the film in the following weeks, further constraining the potential performance of the film.

With such poor financial performance it cannot be asserted that the campaign was good value for money. However, in financial terms some aspects helped the film get more exposure than others. Each of these elements is examined in turn.

## 3.2 Display advertising performance (20% of budget)

There was a significant divergence in the performance of display advertising. The adverts on websites of selected partners produced significantly lower returns than anticipated. This advertising also performed poorly in comparison to Google search advertising, although consistent with all the other forms of advertising.

| Website          | Impressions | Click through rate |
|------------------|-------------|--------------------|
| Guardian         | 86,597      | 0.19%              |
| Mumsnet          | 200,000     | 0.01%              |
| Netmums          | 110,870     | 0.15%              |
| Facebook         | 209,700     | 0.1%               |
| Google – display | 363,140     | 0.09%              |
| Google – search  | 90,257      | 4%                 |

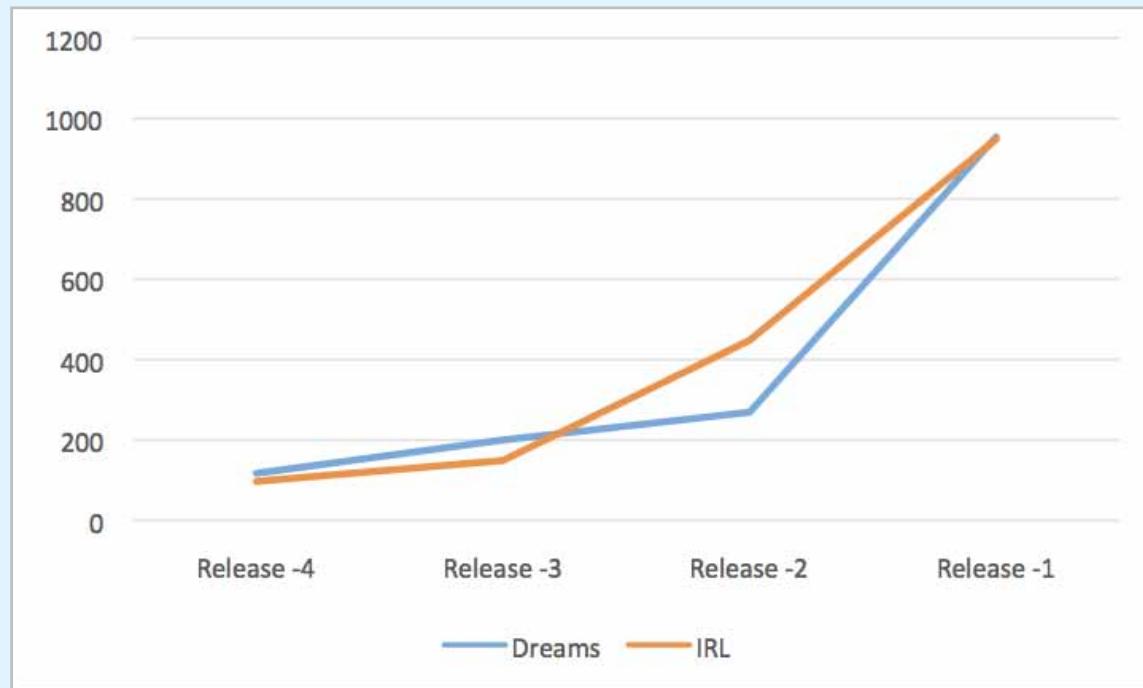
\* as of 3 October

### 3.3 Digital marketing (22% of budget)

The digital marketing campaign exceeded expectations of the volume of social media mentions of the film and the number of organic views of its audiovisual content (ie. views not generated by advertising).

The digital marketing campaign was benchmarked against *Dreams of a Life* a previously successful campaign by the same distributor. The two campaigns were not directly comparable: *Dreams* didn't face the same pressure to perform successfully on the opening weekend.

The chart below demonstrates that in the fortnight before the release *InRealLife* generated significantly more mentions than *Dreams* at the equivalent point before release—despite earlier having fallen behind.



Of the four core elements of the digital campaign (the website, Twitter and Facebook accounts, and YouTube trailer) the website received the most attention. The Twitter account reached proportionately more users than Facebook (because Facebook has an audience approximately five times larger than Twitter).

| Channel              | Audience*     |
|----------------------|---------------|
| InRealLifefilm.com   | 17,016        |
| Facebook.com/IRLfilm | 948 Likes     |
| @InRealLifeFilm      | 784 followers |
| YouTube trailer      | 10,846 views  |

\* as of 3 October

The social media campaign also contributed a higher proportion of visitors to the website than any other channel (excluding advertising).

| Rank | Referring site   | Number of click-throughs* |
|------|------------------|---------------------------|
| 1    | Google - display | 4522                      |
| 2    | Google - search  | 3122                      |
| 3    | Guardian         | 2819                      |
| 4    | Twitter          | 1241                      |
| 5    | Facebook         | 959                       |
| 6    | Facebook mobile  | 484                       |
| 7    | YouTube          | 188                       |
| 8    | Dogwoof          | 100                       |

\* as of 3 October

Despite having the largest direct audience, the website did not become the focal point for user-generated content as intended. There were just 578 visits to the discussion page, producing just six user comments. However, it did provide a valuable role in directing visitors towards relevant information. A quarter of all visitors opened the page with screening information (the most visited subpage on

the site) and nine per cent opened the page dedicated to the satellite event – the second most visited page. That information was also visible from the homepage, suggesting a much larger audience in practice.

The **influencer outreach campaign** was not a significant contributor to the success of the social media campaign. None of those online influencers selected individually to view a preview of the film did so and subsequently blogged or tweeted about it.

The event for ‘mummy bloggers’ had a similar occupancy rate to the other preview screenings for press (about 10%). This generated two blogposts about the film and 12 tweets in response to the posts. Whilst useful, these did not contribute much to the total level of interest in the film.

There were a number of high profile individuals who saw a preview of the film and then talked about it on their Twitter accounts. These included journalists, PRs and celebrities – most notably Stephen Fry and Jon Snow. Stephen Fry’s tweet provoked 75 re-tweets, 25 favourites and 7 @ replies. The best response from Jon Snow’s two tweets was 23 re-tweets, 5 favourites and 9 @ replies. Combined these contributed to almost 10% of the total volume of mentions of the film in the week before its release, although there is no evidence that it encouraged anyone to go to see it.

### 3.3 PR (25% of spend)

The PR campaign was highly effective at generating media coverage for the film and contributed to half of the social media conversation in the fortnight before release. There were almost 150 different pieces of coverage in total of which 20 were in national print outlets.

Whilst the film did not receive critical acclaim the reception was broadly positive. The film has a rating of 60% on Rotten Tomatoes and reviewers tended to award it three stars.

# SECTION FOUR: CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS

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The film performed poorly by every meaningful measure. However, that does not necessarily mean that the release campaign was unsuccessful.

## 4.1 What was most successful

The social media campaign achieved a significant amount of attention. It focused on the types of content which did most to promote discussion and sharing and did so whilst constantly growing the audience. The increased attention did not lead to any significant growth in the number of negative comments – contrary to the earlier fears. The social media accounts had a wider audience than those for several films that grossed significantly more at the box office. The total volume of social media mentions was comparable to Dreams of a Life which also grossed much more.

The wider digital campaign had some success. The website was a focal point for the campaign and well optimised for search in a short period of time. It attracted a significant number of unique visitors although it didn't provoke a significant discussion about the film.

The PR campaign generated a significant amount of interest and mentions of Beeban Kidron accounted for over half of the total buzz about the film in the fortnight before the release. With that insight, the team ensured that the director's name was more prominently used in references to the film

The influencer outreach – and particularly the 'mummy blogger' event made a good contribution to the buzz about the film in the last fortnight and at reasonably low resource (both in terms of cost and time).

The mums who saw the film received it positively and that received a strong level of engagement from their followers / readers. The reaction to the influencer tweets, particularly Stephen Fry and Jon Snow contributed to the volume of mentions.

## 4.2 What was least successful

Partnerships contributed much less than anticipated. The work with Mumsnet and Netmums had a negligible impact on the campaign. Other NGOs and campaigners did not generate significant levels of interest amongst their audiences. Independent cinemas registered as some of the most influential Twitter accounts to mention the film but didn't do so particularly frequently until the week before its release.

More significantly, Sky decided to put back the broadcast of the film until late October where InRealLife would be the third in a series of documentaries – rather than leading the theme. This meant there was no publicity from the broadcaster in the period around the theatrical release.

The display advertising performed poorly. Whilst it received a large number of impressions it stimulated a tiny proportion of activity. The click-through rate was small; there were no social media mentions.

The influencer engagement was unsuccessful, despite the achievements noted above. We were unable to identify a significant number of influencers in social policy or any in the IT crowd who engaged with the film. This did not change depending on the people who

were targeted. As we shifted our focus from the IT crowd to the ‘mummy blogger’ community and then people with an interest in social policy there was no obvious increase in the number of people who wanted to watch the film.

**The current affairs focus** on stories on the problems facing young people using the internet could not be translated into wider interest for the film. The change of tactics to compiling the daily list of relevant stories did not increase the amount of attention for the film, or prompt engagement with the social media accounts. There was no one who mentioned the film in the context of a current affairs story unprompted.

The themes for the week were abandoned early in the campaign. The social conversation was more fluid and much bigger than the film and so the distributor had no impact on the topics of conversation.

#### 4.3 Lessons learnt

**Independent distribution struggles without intensive support** from cinemas, both in terms of promotional support and exhibition support, or the prominent visibility provided by a partnership with a national broadcaster. After a disappointing opening weekend, there was nothing to give the film extra momentum.

**With limitations on access to films** through either traditional windows or broadcaster holdbacks, it’s harder to build an audience for certain independent films. Specifically, the audience which is reached and engaged through digital channels has to go offline to view the film – and has only a limited window in which to do that. There is a clear need for windows to be shortened between the different platforms.

**Display advertising** of this sort does not help build an audience. The creative may have played a part. Common with other documentaries, *InRealLife* lacked a compelling visual image and there was no powerful call to action.

**Strong social media performance** is no guarantee of success. There is little more that the social media campaign reasonably could have expected to achieve. It didn’t make more of an impact for two key reasons: lots of the content was sharing of PR which was at least one-step removed from the user deciding to see the film. And a small proportion of the audience appeared to engage with the film.

**The film didn’t engage audiences.** Despite the healthy impact of the marketing and the apparently topical issues discussed the proposition of the film didn’t engage audiences. Those targeted individually weren’t sufficiently enthused to watch it (without paying) and those that did were not mostly sufficiently motivated to give the film significant support.

Report compiled by  
Matthew Cain

**WITH LIMITATIONS ON ACCESS  
TO FILMS THROUGH EITHER  
TRADITIONAL WINDOWS OR  
BROADCASTER HOLDBACKS, IT IS  
HARDER TO BUILD AN AUDIENCE  
FOR CERTAIN INDEPENDENT FILMS.**

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