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THE OLD… AND THE NEW:
THE GREAT BRITISH ROYAL WEDDING

technology

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This paper describes a multi-modal research study carried out by Ipsos MORI and Techneos during the run-up to, and over the weekend of, The Royal wedding. We show how the findings from combining traditional opinion polling, online social listening and mobile application research helped us get closer to a "360 degree view" as to what was happening during the last two weeks of April 2011. We reflect on our experience of "putting respondents to work" using a mobile app, and its place within the context of other research methods.

Finally, we reflect on the lessons learned, and set out some thoughts as to how these approaches could be developed and applied in different settings.

THE EVENT IN QUESTION…

For a brief moment, the wedding of Prince William and Catherine Middleton on 29th April was THE news event. It attracted a worldwide TV audience of more than 2 billion people, including 72 million viewers streaming it on YouTube, and many worldwide newspapers and magazines giving unprecedented profile to the event. The experience in the UK – where the public was granted an official holiday - was of course more intense. In addition, tens of thousands of people flocked to London to catch a glimpse of the show, while approximately 30 million people watched the event on TV, the highest figure since the funeral of Princess Diana in 1997.

This was not a "surprise" event. The date had been known for many months, and this meant that we were able to plan the research we carried out ahead of time. At Ipsos MORI, for example, we ran a special set of questions on the wedding and on attitudes towards the monarchy on the regular monthly poll we conduct on behalf of our clients at Reuters.

It quickly became apparent that no single method would give us a rounded sense of what people thought about the wedding. An opinion poll, for example, can give us insights into underlying values. It can track attitudes over time. And it can give us instant "opinions" on the stories of the day. But surveys like these do not get us close to the respondent – for example to find out more about how people really feel, and how they behave.

Conventional focus groups are of course one way to start to get deeper. In the case of an event like the Royal Wedding, we could organise a focus group in advance and ask people to project ahead to the weekend. Or we might run some groups reasonably soon afterwards, and elicit post-hoc assessments. Both have their merits, but for this event, we wanted to get a little closer.

In particular, we wanted to explore what happened once the day got going, and the coverage started in earnest. How did people feel at particular points of the weekend? Happy? Sad? Bored? Some in the media reported polls and voxpops saying "people weren't interested". Were they right?

Traditionally we might have measured sentiment before and after the wedding, to help us test some hypotheses, but the emergence of mobile qualitative research has given researchers the unprecedented ability to see how attitudes, opinions and sentiment evolve throughout the duration of an event.

This paper shows how we took advantage of the latest in survey technology. Through the use of a research app, we set our respondents the task of reporting back on what they were seeing and how they were feeling over a three-day period. This method gave us the opportunity to collect data of many different types, both qualitative and quantitative, and obtain in-the-moment perspectives.

But we had questions. Could we meaningfully aggregate all the data? How could we present it at the speed required for newsworthiness? Would we learn anything more by combining all these modes, or would "keeping it simple" have been better?

"CLASSIC" RESEARCH

Opinion poll

In the run-up to the event, we conducted a classic opinion poll for Reuters which gave us the baseline of where public attitudes to the monarchy stood in April 2011. Since we had been running some of the questions for 20 years, we were able to see how attitudes had changed over time.

This survey is grounded in the principles of good quantitative research, first developed in the 1930s and 1940s:

• *We interview, at random, a representative sample of people across Great Britain.*

• *We ask them a series of carefully constructed questions.*

• *We include questions that had been asked in previous surveys, thereby putting the results in context.*

The intention is to have a robust and representative picture of what the British public are feeling, at a particular point in time.

For example, we find that anyone coming up with assertions or headlines along the lines of *"the British public have had enough of the monarchy"* is wide of the mark – and have been for many, many years.

We also find the public are divided in their views as to whether Prince Charles should give up his right to the throne in favour of Prince William.
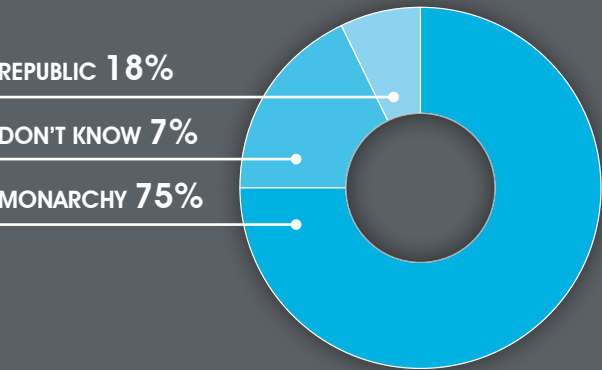
But we also noted, ahead of the royal wedding, a certain apathy toward the event itself, something which was particularly evident among younger people. This was picked up widely by the media.

Twelve days before the wedding, only one Briton in two said they were interested in the event. This raised the question: would this less-than-excited picture be replicated on the day, or would a different pattern emerge as the event unfolded?
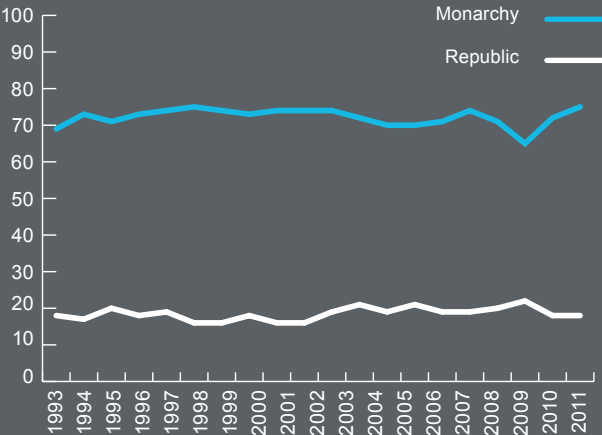
Britain should remain a monarchy? It's been like this for twenty years!

Would you favour Britain becoming a republic or remaining a monarchy?[1]
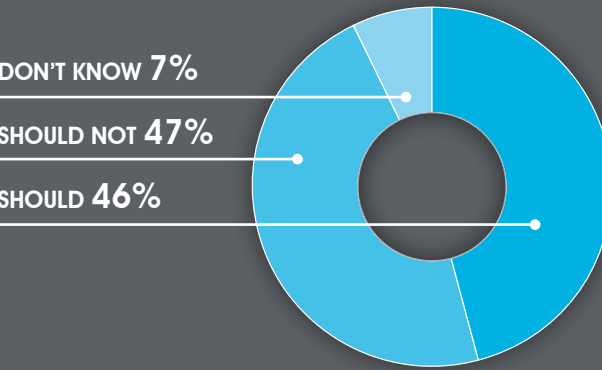
APRIL 2011:

REPUBLIC **18%**

DON'T KNOW **7%**

MONARCHY **75%**

APRIL 1993 - APRIL 2011

Monarchy
Republic

(Y-axis: 0, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90, 100)
(X-axis: 1993 1994 1995 1996 1997 1998 1999 2000 2001 2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011)
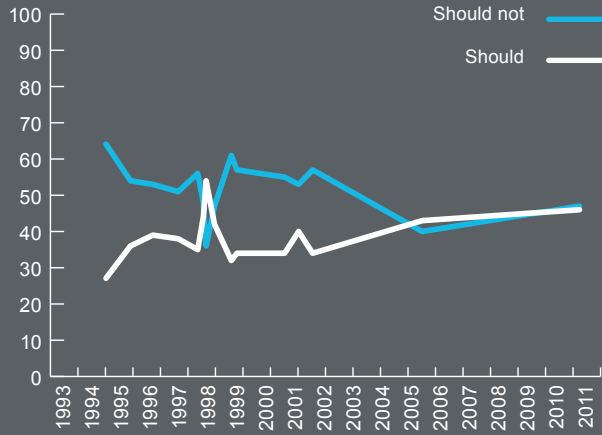
Should Charles give up in favour of William? It ebbs and flows...

Do you think that Prince Charles should or should not give up his right to be the next monarch in favour of his eldest son, Prince William?[2]

APRIL 2011:

DON'T KNOW **7%**

SHOULD NOT **47%**

SHOULD **46%**

TRENDS: APRIL 1993 - APRIL 2011

Should not
Should

(Y-axis: 0, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90, 100)
(X-axis: 1993 1994 1995 1996 1997 1998 1999 2000 2001 2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011)

12 days before, half said they were interested.

How interested, if at all, are you in the wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton?[3]
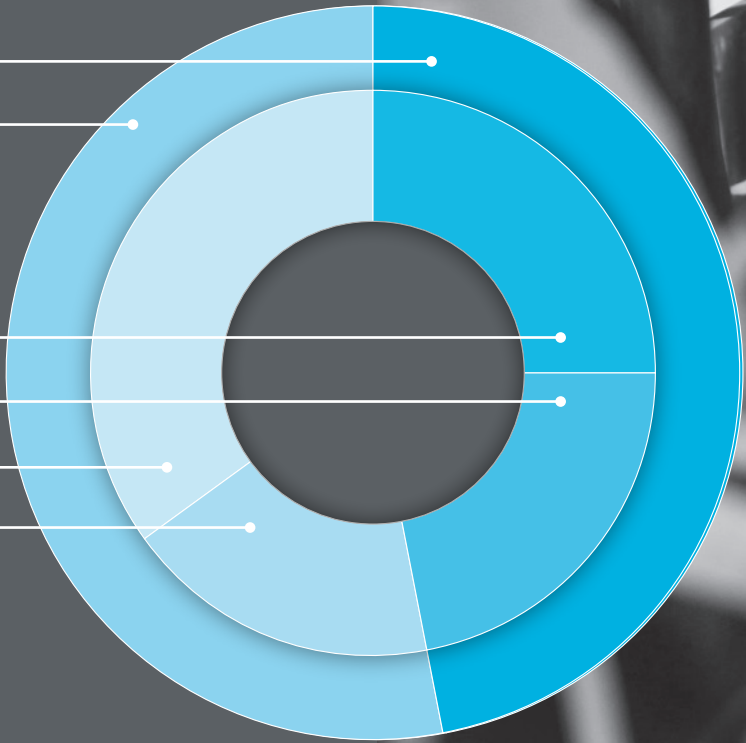
NOT INTERESTED 47%

INTERESTED 53%

NOT AT ALL INTERESTED **25%**

NOT VERY INTERESTED **22%**

FAIRLY INTERESTED **35%**
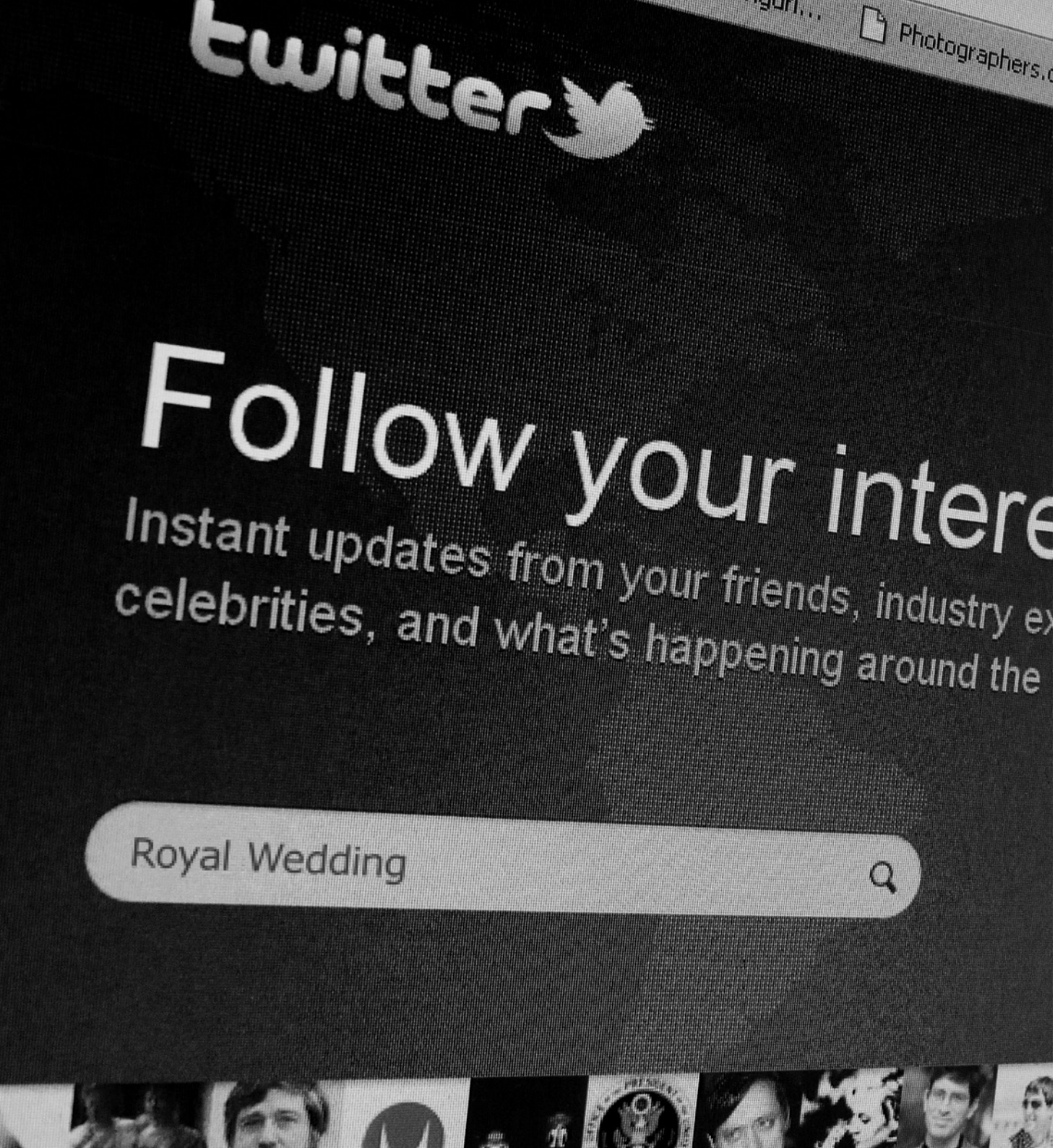
VERY INTERESTED **18%**

1. Base: 1,000 British adults 18+, 15th - 17th April 2011. In the trend data, in some cases the question wording included: "If there were a referendum on the issue ...", in others, the wording was: "Do you favour Britain electing its Head of State or do you favour Britain retaining the monarchy?". Source: Reuters/ Ipsos MORI.

2. Base: 1,000 British adults 18+, 15th-17th April 2011. Source: Reuters/ Ipsos MORI.

3. Base: 1,000 British adults 18+, 15th-17th April 2011. Source: Reuters/ Ipsos MORI.

Online listening

There are some parallels here with elections, where pollsters grapple with voting intention surveys conducted some days before polling day. How would people actually behave on the day itself?

One clue here was in what we heard when we listened in to what was happening online. It was clear that interest was increasing. While we found that *Prince William* and *Kate Middleton* where the most common words being used in the UK (and to a lesser extent in the USA), we also learned that *'Royal Wedding Street Party'* was being used in high volumes. We deduced that this could be as a result of preparation and planning for how people would spend the day.
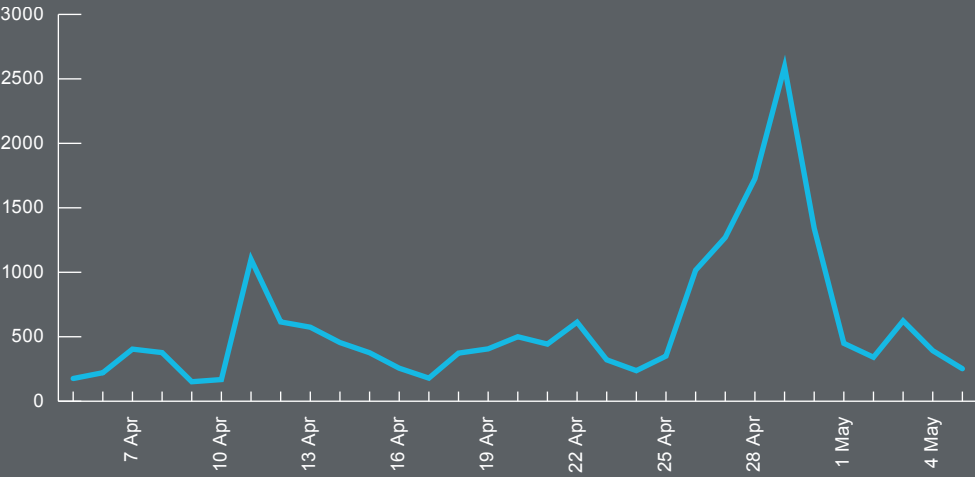
We measured what was being said, by whom and on which sites. This "social listening" painted a vivid picture of how activity built up over time, peaked, and then died away.

It puts our opinion poll in some further context. Our fieldwork dates of 15-17 April can be firmly placed in the relatively quiet "pre-wedding" period.
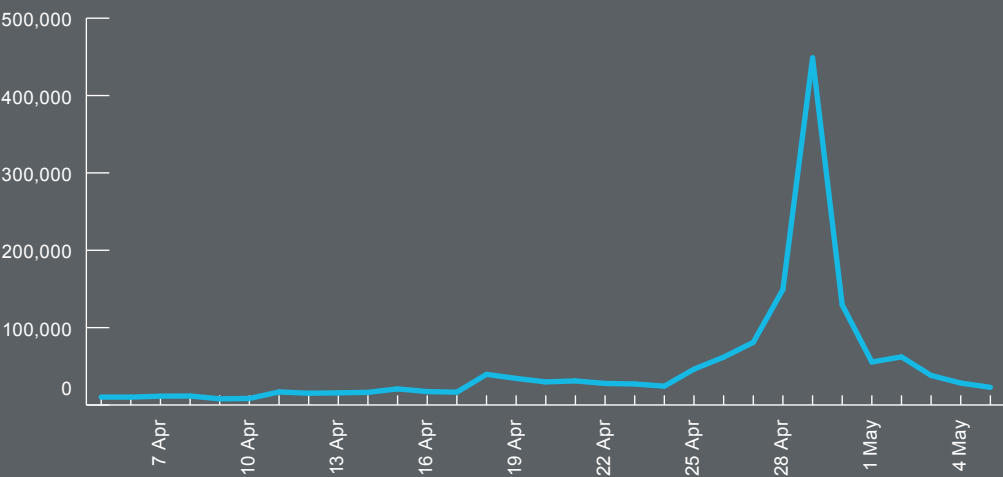
The chart (right) illustrates mentions of the more general 'Royal Wedding' which predictably increased in the final week, peaked on the day and fell away once the nation was back at work.

This poses the question, of course, as to whether we could get closer to what was happening during this peak in activity over the weekend itself. Of critical importance is the potential for opinions to change *en masse* in such a focussed time frame, and so we wanted to know if we could get closer to the experience, thoughts and attitudes of the public. To do this, we needed to have a "bottom-up" approach, and get ourselves connected first-hand to what people were doing.

Mentions of "Royal Wedding Street Party"

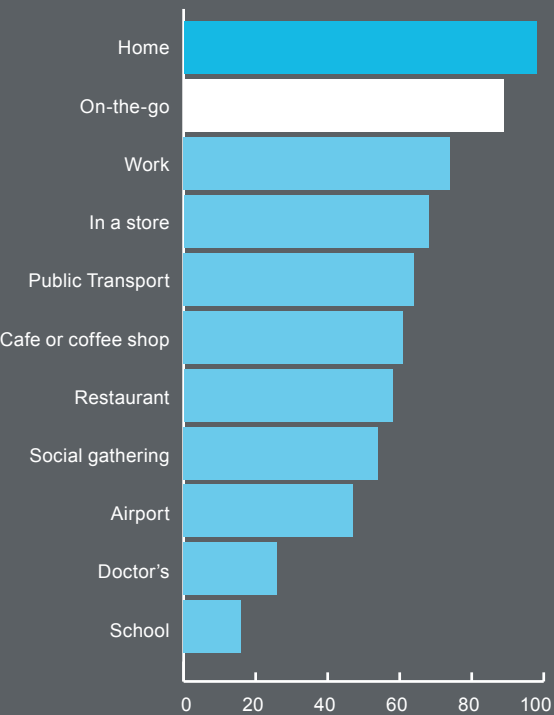## "Royal Wedding" online mentions: sharp peak on 29th April…

A consumer's always-on companion

Where do you use your smartphone?

98% - home
89% - on-the-go

	0	20	40	60	80	100
Home						
On-the-go						
Work						
In a store						
Public Transport						
Cafe or coffee shop						
Restaurant						
Social gathering						
Airport						
Doctor's						
School						

Source: Ipsos MediaCT / Google

THE RESEARCH APP

Mobile apps now offer researchers the ability to capture "in the moment" stories, changing sentiment and trends in experiences of larger groups. Two things helped us build on the findings of the opinion poll and the social listening.

First, the increasing prevalence of smartphones, now owned by around 30% of the UK population, meant that we could reach a large audience of people who were away from their computers or fixed-line phones.
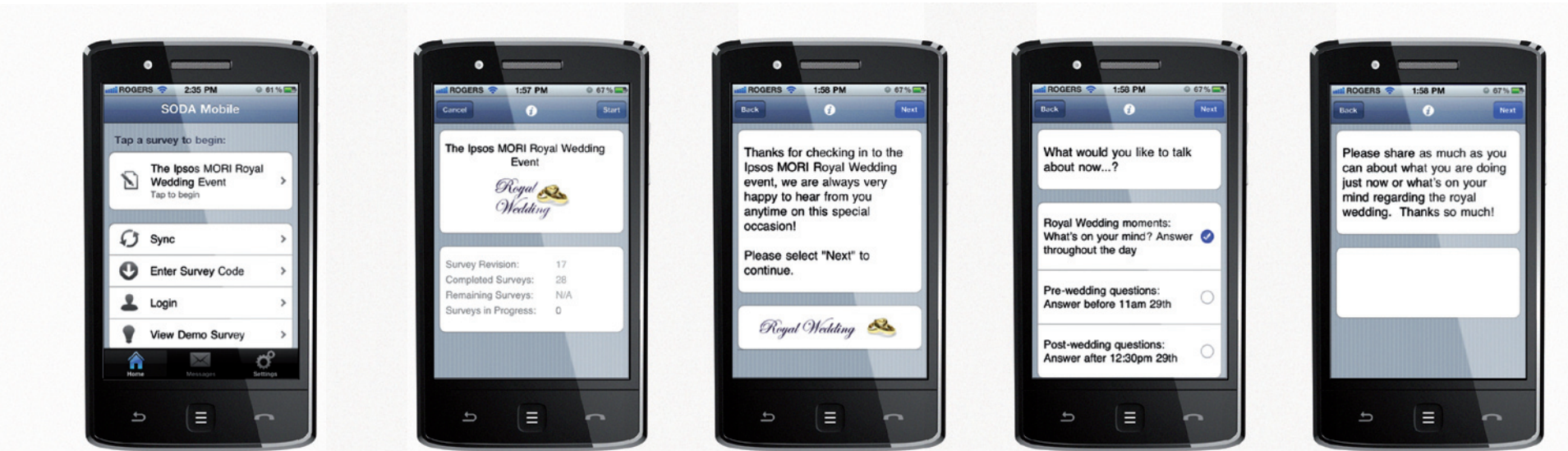
We know that people report using their smartphones between one and 10 times an hour so we knew there would be potential for apps as a powerful channel for accessing public opinion.

Knowing that people who use Facebook on their mobile devices are twice as active as non-mobile users illustrates that people are enthusiastic about using their phones to provide updates on their experiences in real time. This has compelling promise for research, and so we wanted to emulate this method of communication for our project over the Royal Wedding weekend.

Recruitment

We knew that the app was not something that needed to be restricted to a small group of, say, 15-20 people. At the same time, recruiting from scratch a group of hundreds (or thousands) of respondents to help us would have been prohibitively expensive. We needed to find a balance between statistically relevant information and a manageable amount of data that would be efficient and valuable. The app was designed to run on iPhone, Android, Nokia, BlackBerry and Windows mobile devices in order to allow for as many people as possible to participate.

An existing Ipsos panel consisting of more than 400,000 members in the UK, who we approach for much of our quantitative research work, was the source for our pool of mobile participants. They had previously been pre-screened and asked about their device ownership as well as their technology usage. Thus, we were able to send out a targeted invitation. The email was sent to around 15,000 people and they were asked to complete a short questionnaire with some further questions about the specific handsets they used.

Our recruitment process yielded 754 panel members who said they would take part. They formed our base sample for the research over the weekend.

Research Design

The app gave us the opportunity to gather information from the respondents in a range of different formats, and so we built these into the research design. The feedback mechanisms included a structured survey which was completed after the wedding. We could then compare these results with the findings of the pre-survey and perform a classic "pre versus post" measurement.

Other features included:

• Short "point in time" surveys to capture how people were feeling or what they doing – participants could complete these as many times as they liked.

• A form to complete their "Royal Wedding Moments" – enabling us to collect more qualitative data. Again, respondents could submit as many times as they liked.

• The ability to capture photos of what was happening and send them back to us. These photos were then uploaded onto the website of our media partner at Sky News, creating a form of citizen journalism, and formed the basis of a TV interview with Ipsos MORI's Sarah Castell on the evening of Friday 29th.

• An opportunity for respondents to (with their consent) share their location with us via GPS information, thereby enabling us to track the location of our respondents over the weekend.

Respondent experience

We asked quantitative questions, (sliding scale and open ended) including photo and location requests. We made all questions optional and let respondents tell us on their terms what they were thinking and doing.
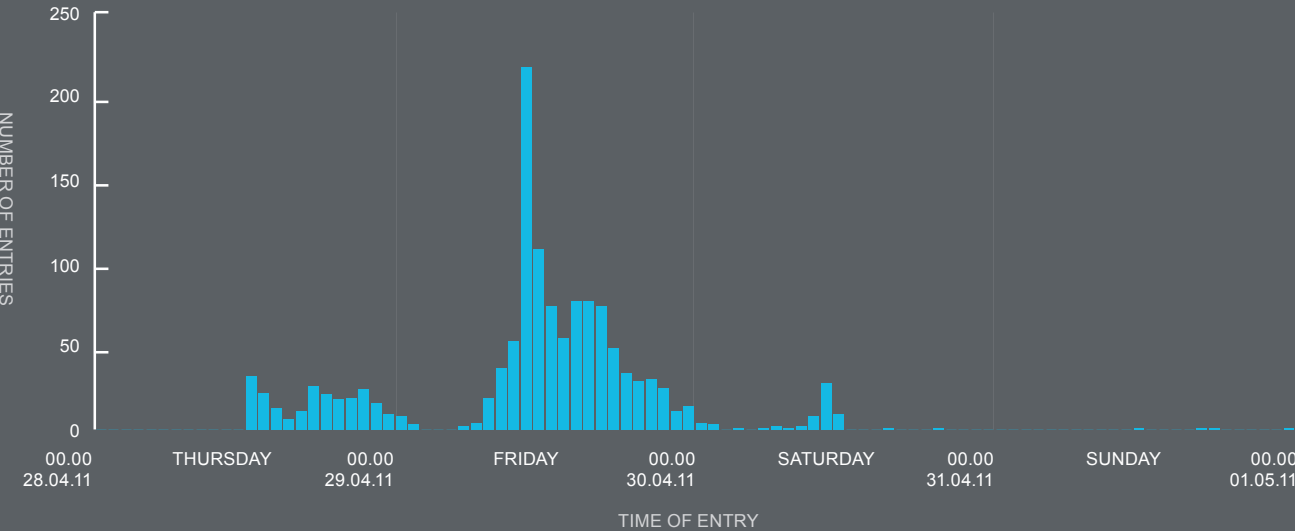
Observations

Predictably there was a peak in feedback received on the day itself;

Activity peaked in the immediate run-up to the wedding, in the moments of anticipation between 10 and 11am when guests were arriving at Westminster Abbey. When the event itself was happening, numbers dropped away - presumably because respondents were either experiencing it, talking with the people they were with or engaging with their usual social media channels to discuss what was happening. We had consistent activity for the following six hours, as we kept in touch with people through the weekend – for example reminding them to send us their "Royal Wedding Moments" and, later in the weekend, to complete the post-wedding questionnaire. But we didn't "push them" to continue participating after Saturday lunchtime. It was clear that the event was certainly over by Monday morning, at least in the eyes of the public!
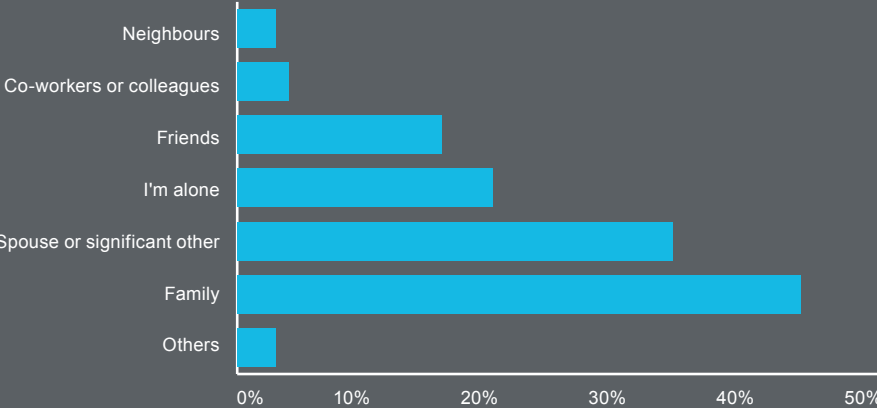
One of the things the research app provides us with is real-time information on what people are doing. Or, as in the case right, who they are with…
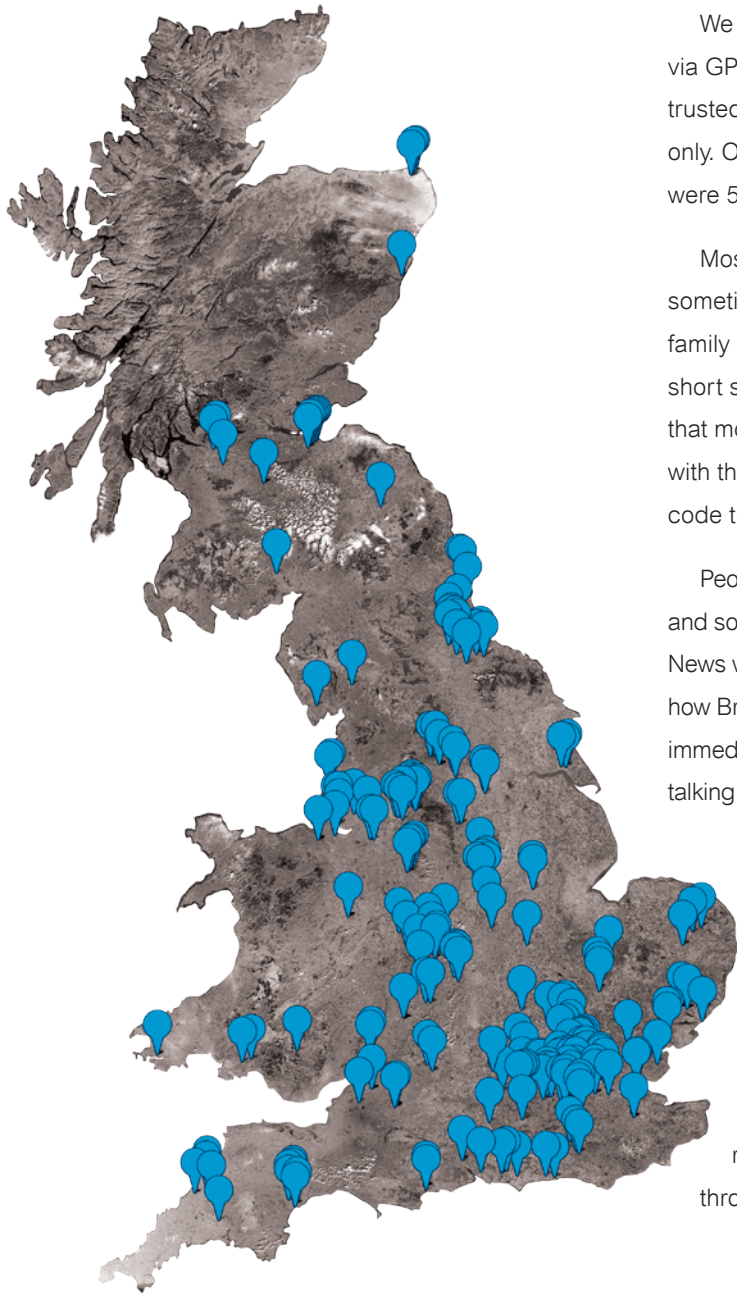
Activity: Peaks and Troughs

Real-time information
Please specify the other people you are with…

Privacy

We noticed that, once people shared their location with us via GPS, they shared it multiple times, indicating that people trusted we were using the information for research purposes only. Of 783 wedding moments voluntarily submitted, there were 505 GPS readings.

Most people were enthusiastic about sharing photographs, sometimes of their television, other times of their friends, family or themselves. We gathered 218 photographs within the short survey which included questions about how they felt at that moment and who they were with. Combining the photo with the qualitative photographic data helped to more easily code the content of the images.

People gave permission for their photos to be used publicly and so those submitted were immediately forwarded to Sky News who uploaded them to its website, painting a picture of how British people were experiencing the Royal Wedding. The immediacy of this data was very powerful and was a strong talking point in Sarah Castell's interview on Sky News that evening. Rather than online listening, these photographs were gathered alongside structured survey questions to give a coded, validated perspective in real time.

Geolocation data is a relatively new option in the researcher's toolkit. In aggregate, it helps to illustrate the geographic balance of a research sample. For example, this map shows the wide range of locations where participants were to be found throughout the day.

In addition, geolocation data also has power at the individual level; it can be utilised to tell a rich, geospatial story of the respondent experience. While latitude & longitude coordinates are described in numeric integers, we prefer to think of GPS data as qualitative data. It cannot be cross-tabulated to reveal significance, but it can help to tell a powerful story.

The table (right) follows a user's "pre-wedding" mobile questions, through to a collection of their wedding day moments, and concludes with the mobile post-wedding mobile input. This participant in particular shows how emotions, attitudes and opinions can shift throughout the course of events of major cultural significance, even over a period of time as short as a day.

Initially, our participant appears to have no plans or expectations for the day. However, the decision to attend a community gathering combined with events of the day result in an expression of national pride.

In contrast, our other participant planned their day around community interaction and making an event of the day. The individual sought out a location of historical significance, where we see people sharing in the events of the day, and even folks dressed in what seems to be their "Sunday best".

Whether seeking out like-minded individuals, or ambivalently joining a gathering, a common thread of the sense of importance of community emerges, and we can see how creating a destination plays a part in the collective experience amongst the population of such a major cultural event.

Pre-wedding questions

Do you have any plans for the day? Who are you spending the day with? *"No-one for the wedding, will watch on TV. There's a party in the village later in the day"*

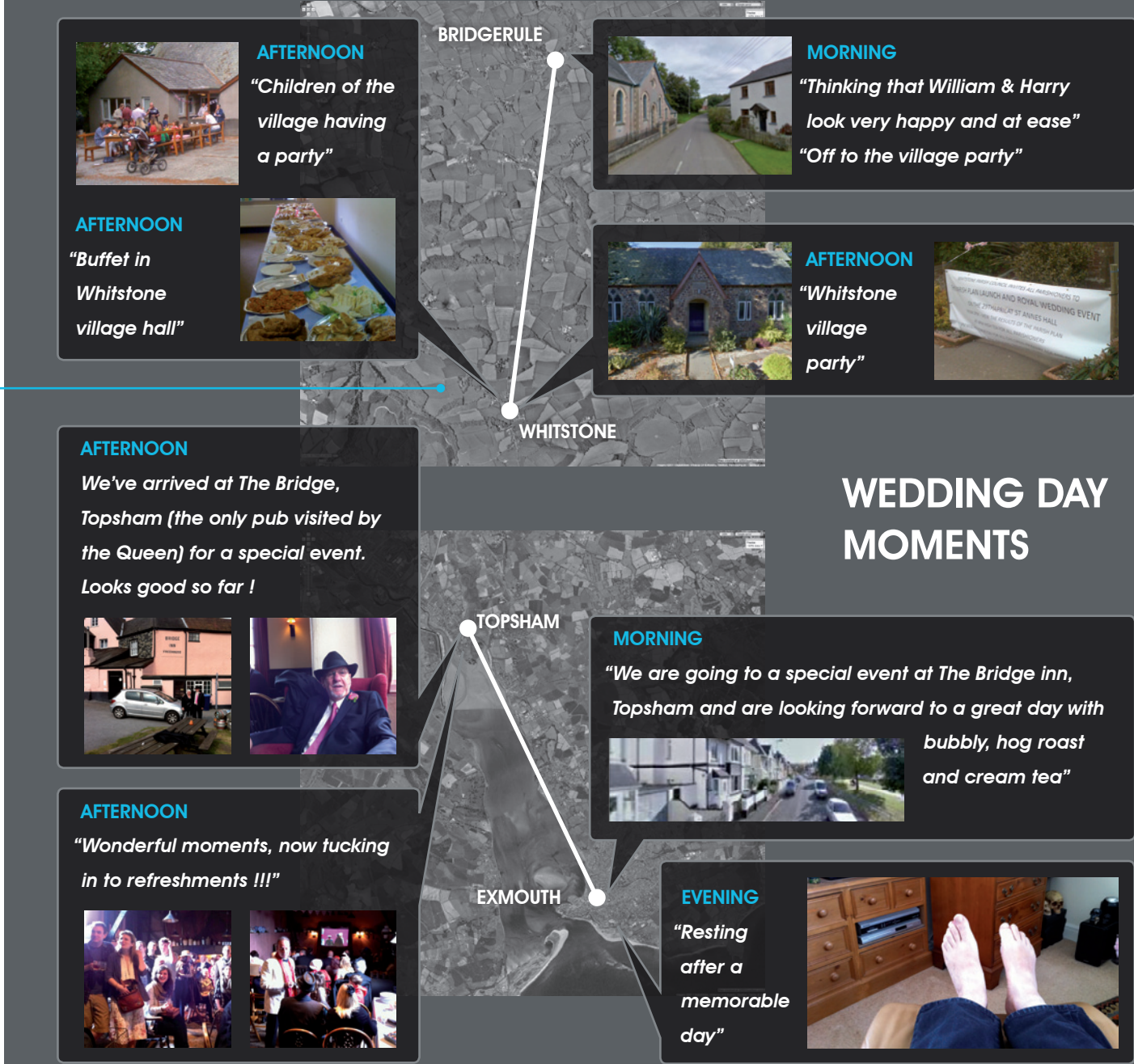What are you most looking forward to? *"Nothing in particular"*

Post-wedding questions

How did the Royal Wedding make you feel? *"Proud to be British"*

What aspect of the day did you enjoy the most? *"The whole day was very enjoyable"*

The importance of having people explicitly opt-in to such an exercise cannot be overstated. While the lines are still blurred about exactly what constitutes "public information" that can be used in for research purposes (for example with opinions and photographs uploaded to open social networking sites), this method of collecting data allows researchers to be certain that the content generated can be used for market research purposes.

Moreover, the combination of self-initiated reports with directed surveys allows researchers to (a) capture the unclouded respondent experience from their perspective (something which is quite valuable in social media listening techniques), while (b) keeping open the possibility of issuing direct tasks and surveys to help answer the specific business questions that need answers.

WEDDING DAY MOMENTS

BRIDGERULE

AFTERNOON
"Children of the village having a party"

MORNING
"Thinking that William & Harry look very happy and at ease"
"Off to the village party"

AFTERNOON
"Buffet in Whitstone village hall"

AFTERNOON
"Whitstone village party"

WHITSTONE

AFTERNOON
We've arrived at The Bridge, Topsham (the only pub visited by the Queen) for a special event. Looks good so far !

TOPSHAM

MORNING
"We are going to a special event at The Bridge inn, Topsham and are looking forward to a great day with bubbly, hog roast and cream tea"

AFTERNOON
"Wonderful moments, now tucking in to refreshments !!!"

EXMOUTH

EVENING
"Resting after a memorable day"

WEDDING DAY MOMENTS AS THEY HAPPENED....

The streets empty, as the nation settles down in front of the TV...

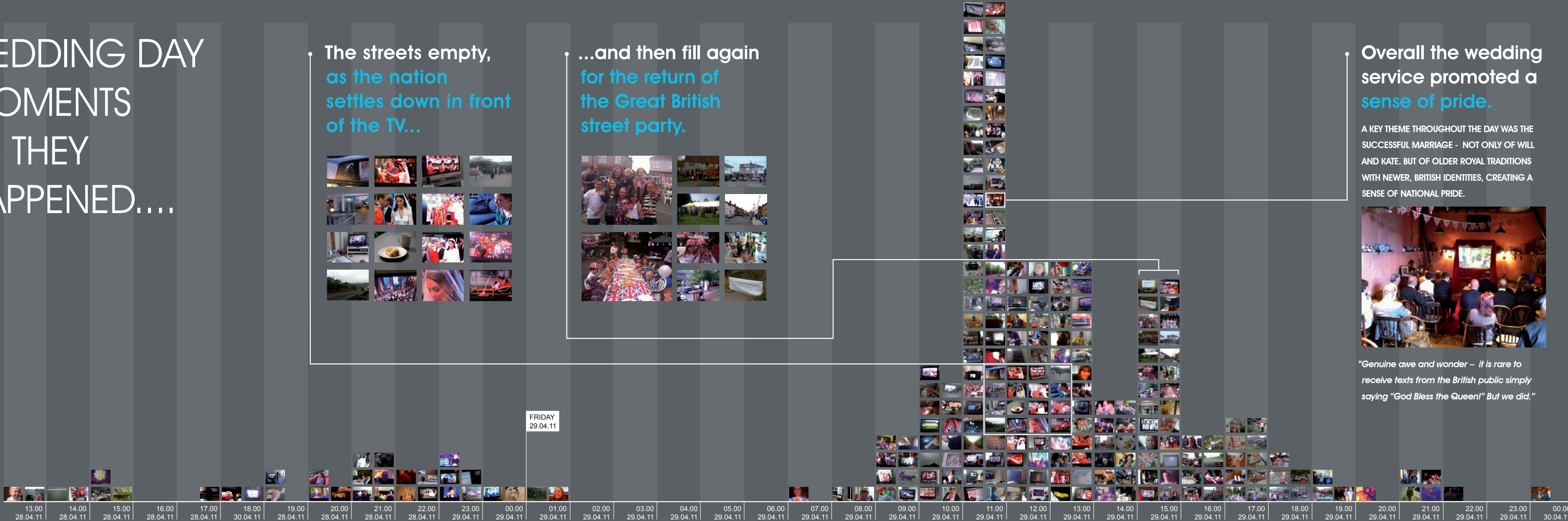**...and then fill again** for the return of the Great British street party.

Overall the wedding service promoted a sense of pride.

A KEY THEME THROUGHOUT THE DAY WAS THE SUCCESSFUL MARRIAGE - NOT ONLY OF WILL AND KATE. BUT OF OLDER ROYAL TRADITIONS WITH NEWER, BRITISH IDENTITIES, CREATING A SENSE OF NATIONAL PRIDE.

"Genuine awe and wonder – it is rare to receive texts from the British public simply saying "God Bless the Queen!" But we did."

FRIDAY
29.04.11

13.00 28.04.11	14.00 28.04.11	15.00 28.04.11	16.00 28.04.11	17.00 28.04.11	18.00 30.04.11	19.00 28.04.11	20.00 28.04.11	21.00 28.04.11	22.00 28.04.11	23.00 29.04.11	00.00 29.04.11	01.00 29.04.11	02.00 29.04.11	03.00 29.04.11	04.00 29.04.11	05.00 29.04.11	06.00 29.04.11	07.00 29.04.11	08.00 29.04.11	09.00 29.04.11	10.00 29.04.11	11.00 29.04.11	12.00 29.04.11	13.00 29.04.11	14.00 29.04.11	15.00 29.04.11	16.00 29.04.11	17.00 29.04.11	18.00 29.04.11	19.00 29.04.11	20.00 29.04.11	21.00 29.04.11	22.00 29.04.11	23.00 29.04.11	00.00 30.04.11

Timing

Something which comes through very clearly – and which would be good to test in other contexts – are the peaks and troughs of how people feel during an event such as this.

It also appears that, the more people feel something (positive or negative), the more they are likely to share it – as we see by the number of responses we started to get describing how they were feeling. This is something which many of us will have seen in our own lives through Twitter and Facebook, and it appears to translate to researching people using the approach we adopted here.

Findings

Media coverage ahead of the event ranged from the excitable ("a nation awaits") to the gloomy ("no one is interested in the wedding"). We were looking for, and found insights on, a few key questions:

- *Are the British public less pro-monarchy than they were? (answer: No);*

- *Were they disinterested in events? (answer: They pretended not to be, or didn't think they would be, but got drawn in);*

- *Did they feel a sense of pride? (answer: Yes, on balance).*

No single research method would have sufficed in this project, because people experienced different emotions and thoughts over time, from prior to the wedding, to planning how they would spend the day, to how individual moments impacted their mood and finally, how the experience affected them the day after – with potential implications for long term sentiment toward the monarchy.
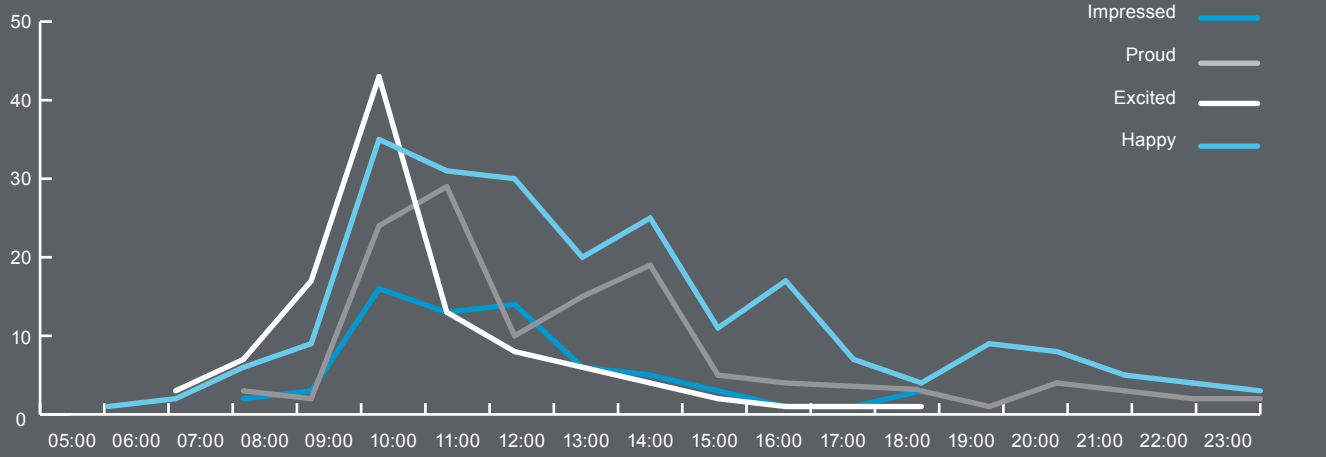
We have some compelling evidence that people enjoyed the wedding more than they had anticipated.

Since responses tailed away very quickly after Saturday lunchtime, it's not clear whether, had we not conducted this research, we would have captured this sense of "closeness" to the event. We would instead have had to rely on post-wedding surveys and/or anecdotal evidence and/or what journalists decreed to be the case.

By carrying out a multi-modal study we were able to cover the build-up, peak and aftermath, and reach people at different times throughout the course of their response to the event.

One final observation on our respondents. Through comparing our pre-wedding survey with the findings of the opinion poll, it was clear that our group was more pro-monarchy going into the weekend than the public at large. And the event itself only served to make them even more convinced that the monarchy is here to stay.
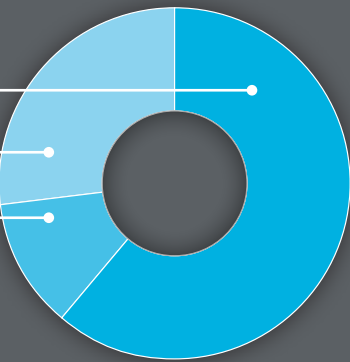
A peak in feeling excited, but happiness and pride were more sustained, especially after the balcony scene.

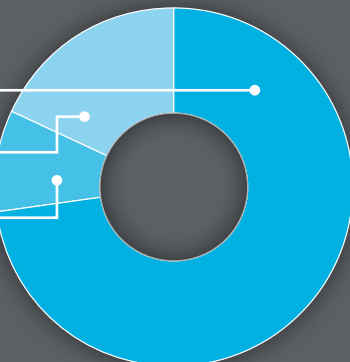## Will Britain have a monarchy in 50 years' time? More convinced post-wedding!

PRE-WEDDING:

WILL **62%**
DON'T KNOW **27%**
WILL NOT **12%**

POST-WEDDING:

WILL **73%**
DON'T KNOW **18%**
WILL NOT **9%**

LESSONS FOR RESEARCHERS AT LARGE

We wanted to finish with some observations on the lessons learned from the experience, particularly in relation to the use of the mobile app in context of a mixed mode research.

Using an app to complement an opinion poll can certainly be applied elsewhere, for example in elections, awards ceremonies and sports matches.

It can also be used in longitudinal work - for example in understanding over time, the experiences of particular segments such as young people.

And there are potential uses in helping better understand the innovation process (testing out people's reaction to a new service or product), or experience (to better understand the customer journey, for example).

Here are some questions we have been asking ourselves:

1. Can we engage "regular respondents" in mobile research? The answer is a qualified "yes". Our participants were drawn from across the country, including 25% from working-class backgrounds. However, the response rate, even from an access panel of people who are comfortable with the idea of taking part in surveys, is not particularly high. The need to really "sell" what you are doing, and why is paramount. It is also critical to keep a conversation going with respondents. In some instances, this might be described as a "dialogue". In others, it is likely to be a matter of sending out reminders in order to achieve the required sample size.

2. Is this interesting? We found that, once people had downloaded the app and got going, they took part on multiple occasions. For example, we received 1,297 "surveys" from 287 people. The key issue is translating the initial interest into downloading the app and getting people comfortable with using the tool. In short, the support structures need to be in place – something that will be more important as smartphone ownership expands into sections of the population who are perhaps less comfortable with the technology.

3. Can people multi-task? Yes – we had 260 pre-weding survey responses, 244 afterwards, 783 wedding moments, 218 photos and 505 GPS readings!

4. Did we get closer to a 360 degree view? Here we would give an unequivocal "yes". The real-time information genuinely took us closer to what was happening. Coupled with the opinion poll and the social listening, it felt like we were playing different research techniques "in the right position", each tailored to the "task in hand". This is not to say that there weren't gaps in the process. In an ideal world we would certainly have wanted to have built in some work with our "app" respondents during the week after the wedding, and to have done a follow-up, nationally representative opinion poll.

In conclusion, we hope that this experience helps researchers to build on lessons we have learned already from other case studies, for example in the world of mobile ethnography and product usage. From our perspective, we have come out of the study with a stronger sense of the place of mobile in research today, and in particular how it can augment traditional techniques/methods and capture previously elusive insights.

Please do contact us if you would like to see a more detailed report on the findings. *Ipsos MORI Research Team:* **Simon Atkinson, Simon Gallagher, Sarah Castell and Gideon Skinner.**

For more information on the technical details of the mobile research technology used, contact Sean Conry at Techneos.

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