

Shakespeare Lives in English

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1 Executive Summary

This report examines the conversation in English around the Shakespeare Lives programme on social media throughout 2016. It explores how Shakespeare Lives was promoted both by the British Council and by partner organisations (such as the BBC) and prominent ambassadors (such as Sir Ian McKellen), and how audiences engaged with and responded to different Shakespeare Lives events and campaigns on Twitter and Facebook. This includes analysis of the extent to which audiences perceived elements of the Shakespeare Lives programme as valuable, and associated the programme, Shakespeare, the British Council and/or Britain with the values which the British Council sought to promote through the programme. We begin by giving a summary of findings from our English-language research of Shakespeare Lives on Twitter and Facebook, before giving recommendations on how social media can be used to promote, and promote engagement with, ambitious international cultural programmes such as Shakespeare Lives.

The analysis for this report, which we will then set out along with information on how we conducted our research, focuses on the events which drove the four greatest ‘peaks’ in discussion of Shakespeare Lives (using #ShakespeareLives) in English on Twitter across 2016. In our first phase of research, in common with our reports on Shakespeare Lives in Arabic, Mandarin, Russian, Spanish, and on Instagram, we focused on the weekend around Shakespeare Day (23 April, the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare’s death). This most notably included [Shakespeare Day Live](#), a day of live Shakespeare Lives broadcasts streamed around the world through a digital pop-up channel co-curated by the BBC and the British Council. Highlights of Shakespeare Lives were also made freely available through the BBC iPlayer. Analysis of the British Council’s posts about Shakespeare Lives and engagement with them covered the period from Shakespeare Day to Midsummer. In our second phase of research, we focused on Shakespeare Lives events and content around between June 20-22, around the Summer Solstice (June 20) and close to Midsummer’s Day (June 24). These included a ‘[Midsummer marathon](#)’ of Shakespeare quotes on Twitter, the first ever production (of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*) to be [livestreamed across the world](#) from The Globe Theatre, and the release of the first [Mix the Play](#), which allowed users to ‘direct’ their own versions of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. We will then discuss the [second version of the Mix the Play](#) application, released on November 7th, which allowed users to ‘direct’ their own version of Romeo and Juliet in collaboration with Indian theatre director Roysten Abel. In this final phase of our research, we also focused on the #ShakespeareLives contest run by Visit Britain India on Facebook and Twitter in December. It asked followers to answer Shakespeare-related questions and tag their friends for the chance to win ‘[Shakespeare goodies](#)’. This drove a final, smaller peak in use of #ShakespeareLives on Twitter on December 20. We also continued to study British Council Facebook pages for the rest of 2016, broadening this analysis to include the accounts of partner organisations and ambassadors who played a key role in promoting and mediating the Shakespeare Lives programme.

Selected Time Period

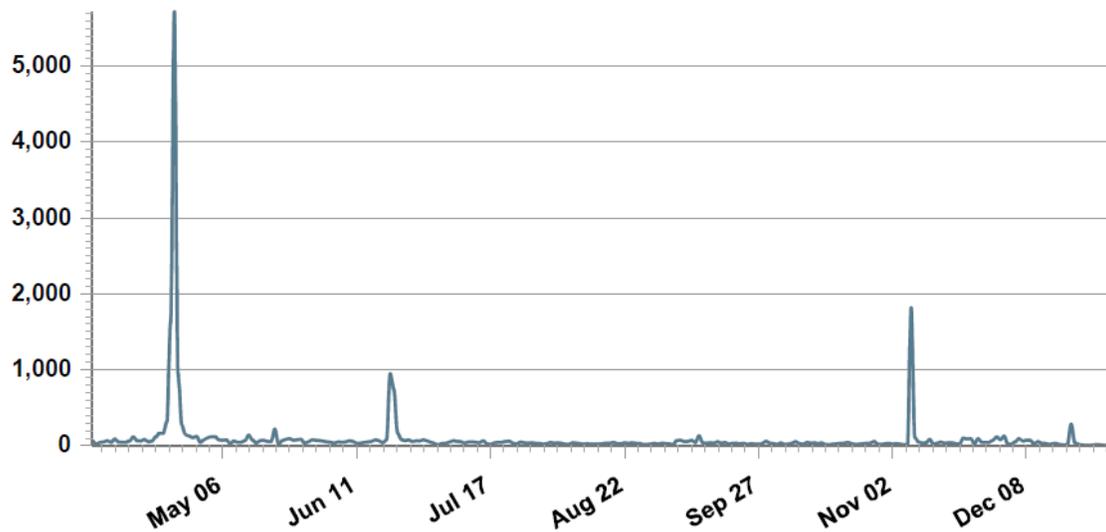


Figure 1: Sysomos MAP popularity graph showing use of #ShakespeareLives April – December 2016 (excluding retweets)

1.1 Summary of Findings: Twitter and Facebook

- In the first phase of our Twitter analysis around Shakespeare Day, more than 50% of the 1,000 tweets analysed either *promoted or provided information* about the Shakespeare Lives programme or Shakespeare himself. 20% of tweets that provided information about Shakespeare Lives came from the British Council’s own Twitter feed. Of 1,000 tweets analysed for the second phase covering June 20-22, half of them (50%) promoted or provided information about events in Midsummer or the [Midsummer Marathon](#). Informing others about the Midsummer events was reinforced by using Sir Ian McKellen, as well as the British Council, other cultural relations actors, and the UK’s Foreign and Commonwealth Office @GREATBritain who were a major funder of Shakespeare Lives.
- Offering an opinion about Shakespeare Lives was the second most popular type of engagement with the programme. Between 20% and 30% of tweets across our sample offered an opinion about Shakespeare Lives plays or actors, or technological applications.
- **Technological innovation and creativity promote engagement.** Twitter users comment positively on technological and creative innovation. They expressed their appreciation of the Shakespeare emoji used to accompany #ShakespeareLives on Twitter, the BBC iPlayer, the use of Periscope to livestream Shakespeare Lives events, and the Mix the Play application which allowed users the opportunity to ‘direct’ their own versions of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *Romeo and Juliet*.

- **Quoting Shakespeare was a popular and enjoyable form of engagement.** 15% of tweets analysed in our first phase of research contained quotes from Shakespeare plays. Twitter accounts from the British Council and Penguin Books (a partner of Shakespeare Lives) fostered this trend by asking users to post their favourite quote or expression coined by the Bard. This was a good strategy.
- **Mix the Play was an attractive, enjoyable application.** Our final phase of Twitter analysis focused on the *Romeo and Juliet* version of the Mix the Play application. We coded 500 tweets focusing solely on this app. 96% of the tweets coded about the Mix the Play application praised its innovative qualities, 50% judged the Mix the Play to be creative, and 13% also stated how pleasurable and enjoyable they found this new version of the Mix the Play application. The application was praised for being unique and visually appealing.
- **The sentiment expressed was mainly neutral.** The majority of the tweets (more than 50% from April 22-25 and 80% from June 20-22) provided information or promoted Shakespeare Lives events and they had a neutral tone. More than 35% of the tweets expressed positive sentiments from April 22-25 and 20% from June 20-22. 177 out of 500 tweets about Mix the Play application denoted a positive tone. We found no significant number of negative tweets.
- Twitter users mostly expressed their ‘enjoyment’ (12%) or appreciated the ‘quality’ (13%) of performances when discussing the Shakespeare adaptations broadcast during the Shakespeare weekend in April. In contrast, comments on the live performances of plays were rare during the Midsummer events in June, where members of the public tended to praise the actors cast in plays and interact with them. Quality and enjoyment were therefore mostly attributed to the actors rather than Shakespeare Lives events more broadly.
- **Celebrities are key talking points** for both Twitter and Facebook users. Hamlet received attention from the public in April due to the involvement of several prominent actors, as well as Prince Charles. Twitter users in Russia welcomed the visit of Sir Ian McKellen to their country in June, and the global tour of the actor created a buzz on both Twitter and Facebook.
- **Twitter users rarely mentioned the British Council. However, the following social media engagement strategies worked well and enhanced interactions:** directing questions to the public; motivating Twitter users to share photos and quotes; interacting with other cultural relations institutions, partners and government accounts.
- **Cultural intermediaries, competitions and controversy drive traffic:** Prince Charles was key in motivating users to engage with Shakespeare Lives and comment on it. Competitions and posts with controversial messages also created a buzz on both

Facebook and Twitter. Twitter users enjoyed explaining why a particular play or actor was their favourite, and trying to convince others.

1.2 Recommendations

1. **Respond and react.** There was often low, slow, or no response from the British Council and actors involved in Shakespeare Lives events to the comments directed to them on Twitter and Facebook, even after questions were posed directly to audiences. While it may not be possible to respond to every query, directly engaging with the public's questions drives traffic and engagement. By asking direct questions to Twitter and Facebook users regarding Shakespeare Lives events, perhaps scheduling a Question and Answer session, the actors involved in plays and events staged by cultural programmes could further engage with audiences and create greater engagement. Inviting responses and offering no reply is not a good strategy.
2. **Share photos or videos about Shakespeare Lives events on Facebook, particularly from actors, audiences to drive engagement.** Sir Ian McKellen used this tactic successfully in his global tours and one of his photos in front of the Great Wall in China went viral.
3. **The British Council could have made more use of Shakespeare performances and performers from around the world alongside British actors.** This would help create more buzz among overseas publics and enhance perceptions of mutuality.
4. **Personalise across platforms.** British Council tactics on Facebook, such as engaging with the personal stories of people who joined the charity programmes, might be useful to boost the popularity of, and engagement with, British Council accounts on Twitter.
5. **Create strong partnerships.** Partnerships, such as with Penguin books, could be further exploited. Penguin could, for example, be associated with a favourite quote, actor, or type of event. The benefits would then accrue if the themes of such events were well chosen.

Phase One: Shakespeare Day

This section of the Shakespeare Lives in English report sets out our analysis of conversation in English around the Shakespeare Lives programme on Twitter during 22-25 April 2016, the weekend around Shakespeare Day. This case was selected for analysis as celebrations of Shakespeare Day drove a peak in discussion of Shakespeare across our languages of interest and, in English, saw the greatest peak in people including #ShakespeareLives in their tweets. This section of our report also studies how the British Council used Facebook to promote Shakespeare Lives from this period until Midsummer, and how members of the public engaged both with these posts.

This analysis finds that during the period around Shakespeare Day, audiences reacted with excitement to celebrity engagement with Shakespeare Lives. This was particularly true for appearances from public figures the audience did not expect to see, such as Prince Charles' turn as Hamlet during [Shakespeare Live!](#) On BBC2, or President Obama's visit to The Globe Theatre. Twitter users enjoyed the Shakespeare emoji which appeared when using #ShakespeareLives, and also enjoyed sharing Shakespeare quotes, something the British Council in conjunction with Sir Patrick Stewart and Penguin Books encouraged. They also appreciated the ability to view Shakespeare Lives content through BBC iPlayer and Periscope, with Twitter users also able to share content of their own when participating in events such as the Shakespeare walks.

2 Methods

2.1 Twitter

Using Sysomos MAP, we obtained tweets over the period of four consecutive days (22–25 April 2016) around Shakespeare Day, the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare’s death. The search for tweets in the English language used

#shakespearelives AND NOT RT

Of 5,000 tweets returned by the query, 1,000 were randomly selected for interpretative coding and analysis. An English-speaking researcher then individually analysed the sample according to the project’s coding framework (see the Summary of Methodology document for more information on our approach and full coding frameworks).

2.2 Facebook

As the vast majority of data on Facebook is private, we only focused on the pages of the British Council. We conducted an ethnographic analysis of Shakespeare Lives content posted by the British Council, describing the themes of these posts and the extent to which members of the public engaged with them. Facebook data was manually collected from the British Council, British Council USA, British Council New Zealand, British Council Canada and British Council Australia pages. These pages were chosen with the aim of observing how the public engaged with British Council accounts in English-speaking countries. All the Facebook posts of these accounts between the dates April 22nd and June 25th 2016 were analysed.

2.3 Notes on Coding for Values, Cultural Value, and Tone

Values: our coding framework allowed researchers to code tweets (including the URLs shared in tweets) for whether Britain, the British Council, Shakespeare and/or Shakespeare Lives were seen as creative, welcoming, diverse, innovative, or embodying mutuality, the values which the British Council sought to promote through Shakespeare Lives.

Diversity: Tweets that describe the Shakespeare Live programme as a collaborative project of different institutions were identified as reflecting the diversity of the programme. Tweets that referred to different ideas, sources or characters with different sex, race, sexuality within Shakespeare plays or Shakespeare Live programmes were also coded as reflecting the value of diversity. When the Shakespeare plays were considered as meaning something to a different generation, they were also coded as reflecting the value of diversity. For example:

#ShakespeareLives And what a collabo on the night!! @akalamusic @OCTOPIZZO

@muthoniDQ @ke_British @tonyreilly5 <https://t.co/kBRIY2zqyJ>.

@BritishCouncil His plays are 'a rich source ripe for cinematic picking' as shown @IFI_Dub #ShakespeareLives season! <https://t.co/Utvbzj5X1R>

@Deebzi What do you think this is about? Shakespeare means something to every generation! <https://t.co/3G2wJ2o6Gf> #ShakespeareLives

Innovative: Tweets that talk about a technological tool and/or reflect appreciation or admiration for a technological tool or emoji were coded as “innovative”. For example:

@oldvictheatre what a very clever platform for budding directors! #whatfun #loveit #ShakespeareLives <https://t.co/krOeJBS3w0>

Welcoming: During Twitter conversation, when an actor explicitly welcomes the tweet of another user, I coded this tweet as reflecting the value of “welcoming”. In the same way as when an actor welcomes the Shakespeare Lives programme, Shakespeare or Britain itself, the tweet was coded with the value “welcoming”. For example:

@BritishCouncil Thank U so much 4 letting me know it & releasing so many good materials about Shakespeare on online! 🤔👏#shakespearelives)

It was so great! Like dream come true thanks to @IanMcKellen ! #ShakespeareLives <https://t.co/YzEjovg4WL>

Thanks to @inBritish for this awesome chance to direct own Romeo Juliet story. #MixThePlay #ShakespeareLives <https://t.co/TpLnh8f0rG>

I feel like a great director just like Shakespeare thanks to @inBritish Click here: <https://t.co/u7h91xXQfE> & #MixThePlay #ShakespeareLives

Creative: A tweet was only indicated as creative if the user explicitly described a piece of art, play or literature as creative. For example:

“For #Shakespeare400 here is Will's silent film HAMLET from 2009 <https://t.co/QAwWRcUwTn> Be warned it's very art studenty #ShakespeareLives” and “#ShakespeareLives – today we celebrate Britain’s greatest cultural export. Follow @BritishCouncil for updates. <https://t.co/FqMGNYw8de>”

@BritishCouncil #ShakespeareLives Shakespeare's language is so evocative and rich that it can create a fiction without needing a set.

Mutuality: When actors note some aspect of the Shakespeare Lives programme, Shakespeare’s plays or sonnets being an international phenomenon, I used the code “mutuality” for these tweets. The sharing of a feeling, action, or relationship between two or more nations was also coded as reflecting the value of mutuality. For example:

Place to learn for the children of #Nepal Celebrate Shakespeare support #education #PlayYourPart #ShakespeareLives <https://t.co/J4nNJ1ItT5>

Cultural Value: We also coded for the ways in which audiences perceived the Shakespeare Lives programme to be valuable, by providing events or content which was perceived as quality, enjoyable, and/or useful/relevant.

Usefulness/Relevance: When a tweet contained the word “relevant” or useful” about Shakespeare or Shakespeare Lives or when it cited that Shakespeare or his plays are still pertinent in our day, the sentence was coded useful and relevant. For example:

“Ian McKellan beautifully reciting a passage so relevant to us today which speaks of exactly why #ShakespeareLives #RSCLive”; Absolutely loved the Hamlet debacle on #RSCLive. Timeless... #ShakespeareLives #Shakespeare400

Sir @IanMcKellen on why there is nothing old-fashioned about #Shakespeare <https://t.co/YOpzOuEoKU> #ShakespeareLives <https://t.co/CVgXZ1HhWm>

Quality: The value “quality” was only coded when an actor explicitly praised Shakespeare or the Shakespeare Lives programme or mentions that she/he likes it. For example:

“#shakespearelives because this maker of worlds taught us how to make worlds too. #shakespeare400”; “Came across this @anebrun track via #ShakespeareLives @BBCiPlayer it is frankly SUBLIME #Shakespeare400 #poetry <https://t.co/UqwYJA8tHS>”

Beautiful lines like this from a Midsummer Night's Dream make my heart pound. #ShakespeareLives <https://t.co/xBMPZ1Hncj>

Enjoyable: When Twitter users explicitly or implicitly mentioned the programme was enjoyable, sublime, worth watching and/or that they like or favourite it, the post was coded ‘enjoyable’. For example:

There’s a Magnum in my freezer but I can’t leave the sofa! #RSCLive An ice cream by any other name would taste as sweet.. #ShakespeareLives

Oh for a horse with wings!" (my favorite line while waiting for public transport) #ShakespeareLives #Shakespeare

Tone: We also coded the sentiment of tweets, categorising them as being positive, neutral, or negative in tone, making judgements based on expressions of sentiment or emotion, and the use of emojis or specific words (such as like, enjoy, opportunity, great, fabulous, etc.)

Each time a user mentioned that she/he liked/enjoyed a Shakespeare play, quote, a Shakespeare Lives event, or praised the quality of the play, the sentence was coded as positive. For example:

This chance meant to enjoy whole life. Make scene from great love story #MixThePlay today at <https://t.co/Ns6SdaubmL> #ShakespeareLives

Did you create your own Romeo and Juliet? I did and it’s pretty amazing #MixThePlay at <https://t.co/b3bzQQZZqc> #ShakespeareLives @inBritish

Can't believe that i can be director and can create my own Romeo and Juliet #MixThePlay #ShakespeareLives <https://t.co/9B16bCegGu> @inBritish

Don't miss this excellent opportunity to create your own Romeo and Juliet.
#MixThePlay at <https://t.co/12VIErJyim> #ShakespeareLives

When a post embodied criticism towards Shakespeare Lives applications, plays, events or actors, it was coded as negative. For example:

Shakespeare plays are like Christmas movies. Every year you're forced to put up with them as everyone pretends they care about it, as another amazing writer gets ignored. I mean how many times can you watch Reruns

Only two women auditioning for the part?! There were more kangaroos in da Vinci's Last Supper!

3 Findings and Analysis

3.1 Twitter

3.1.1 Sharing Shakespeare Quotations

A large amount of Twitter users in the English-language data engaged with the programme by sharing quotes from Shakespeare. What reinforced this engagement was a video shared by Sir Patrick Stewart on Twitter as well as the tweets of Penguin Books and the British Council. Stewart shares his video and encourages Twitter users to recite their favourite passages of the Bard's prose and poetry.



Image 1: Patrick Stewart quoting Shakespeare, shared on Twitter

The Twitter accounts of the British Council and Penguin Books also encouraged this trend by asking users their favourite phrase or expression coined by Shakespeare. This opened space for engagement: users directly replied to the tweets of British Council with their favourite quotes. Sharing quotes was also a popular way to engage with Shakespeare Lives events. As the heat map below shows, members of the public were the actor group that most shared appropriation of Shakespeare phrases.

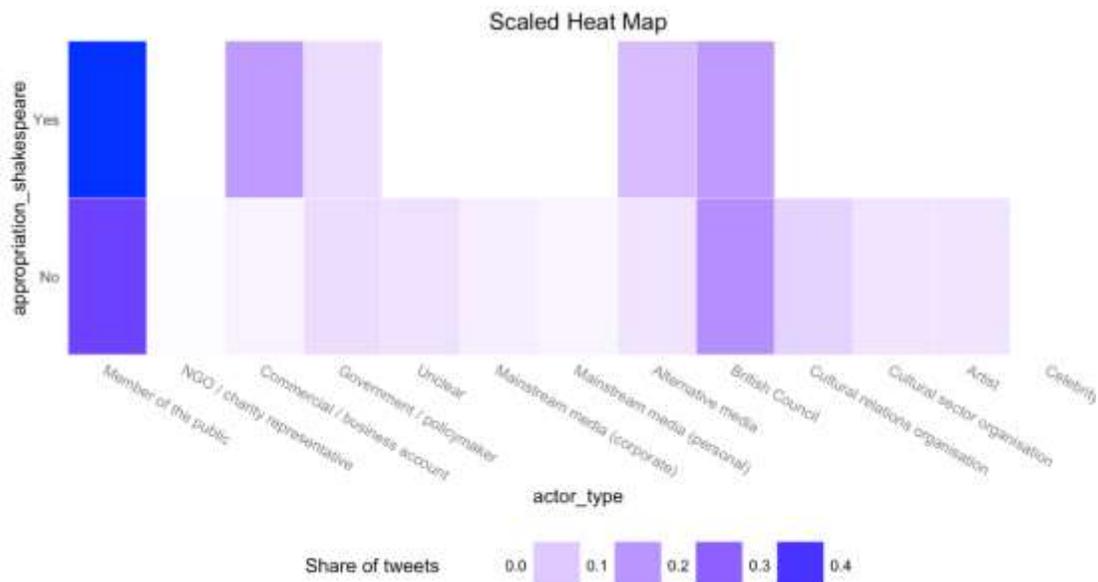


Figure 2: Heat map showing which actors tweeted Shakespeare phrases

For instance, when the news on C|Net appropriated Shakespeare’s phrase “to be or not to be” and changed it to “to tweet or not to tweet”, many members of the public shared this news and added the response, “the answer is always to tweet”. By using humour or appropriation of Shakespeare phrases in its questions, the British Council could produce tactics to engage with the public by encouraging such wordplay.

3.1.2 Technology

Several members of public mentioned their affection for Shakespeare emoji, for instance tweeting, “#ShakespeareLives I want the emoji!”; “Could you be the most beautiful emoji in the world?? @emmahopkins #ShakespeareLives.”; and “As an emoji addict & English Lit grad officially my fave ever Twitter emoji #ShakespeareLives - these are such things as dreams are made of”.

On Facebook, the British Council updated the public about the launch of a new game application that features sonnets, comedies, tragedies, histories and other works of Shakespeare and different playwrights with emojis.



Image 2: British Council Facebook post promotes Shakespeare emoji app

These emojis could have been made applicable to Twitter as well. By creating different emojis for popular plays of Shakespeare on Twitter, engagement among the public could be further fostered, enforcing the positive aspect of the programme.

The use of BBC iPlayer and Periscope to share Shakespeare Lives events were other technological tools that drew attention from the public. Members of the public informed others about the live programmes showed on iPlayer and Periscope: “grassrootsLON on #Periscope: Now performing *Romeo and Juliet* at Middle Temple Hall with #GoPro #ShakespeareLives ... <https://t.co/EpxbhqatyM>”. Technology news are cited among the most trending topics in Twittersphere, with 12% of Twitter content associated with technological news (Cheong, 2009). The British Council could use more technology news in its tweets. Figure 3 below shows a heat map which shows that members of the public were most likely to express appreciation or admiration for the technological tools in their tweets, forming 30% of tweets analysed during this phase.

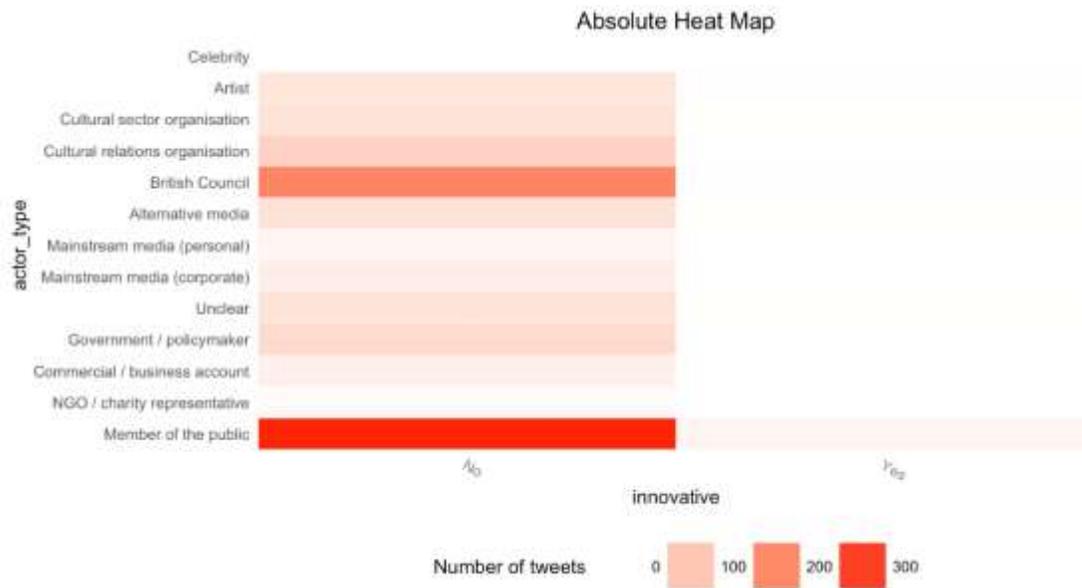


Figure 3: Heat map showing actors who mentioned technological innovation

3.1.3 Unexpected Celebrities

A common finding was that Twitter users, in particular celebrities' fan groups, were pleased to see celebrities such as Sir Patrick Stewart, David Tennant, Timothy Dalton, Sir Ian McKellen, Glynis Barber and Christain Borle in Shakespeare sketches. Contrary to our findings in the 'Tweeting the Olympics' study (Gillespie and O'Loughlin, 2015), users did not directly get in touch with these celebrities during this phase. Rather, they find the presence of celebrities in the sketches as newsworthy and prefer to share this news with others. Celebrities thus help to foster the prominence of the event and add value to the sketches. What was particularly interesting to observe in our data was the excitement of Twitter users seeing an unexpected celebrity in a sketch. For instance, when Prince Charles showed up in a *Hamlet* sketch on BBC2, Twitter users expressed their surprise. One user from Wales tweeted: "Anyone watching #ShakespeareLives from the RSC because fair play to Prince Charles that was brilliant - I did not expect that?!" A Shakespeare-loving user tweeted: "CHARLES I CAN'T BELIEVE #ShakespeareLives". Another tweeted, "Prince Charles rocked at RSC #ShakespeareLives".

Similarly, US President Barak Obama visited the Globe theatre for a performance of various scenes from the famous tragedy *Hamlet*. The members of the public spread this news. A marketing expert among the public tweeted, "#ShakespeareLives across the globe. And Obama's at the Globe! <https://t.co/XMwxdajq6g>". A typical post from a user in London stated, "Obama watches *Hamlet* at Shakespeare's Globe theatre – video <https://t.co/ngnUOG9UK1> #Shakespeare400 #ShakespeareLives".

President Obama and Prince Charles are not typical celebrities. Each is part of their nation and state. Obama as the first black president of the United States and Charles as next in line to the British throne, each is inseparable from their nation’s soft power (Nye, 2004). The status of President Obama and Prince Charles made them subject to ubiquitous popular exposure and imbued both with influence and visibility, as faces of their nations – albeit not Charles to the same extent. Hence, as these two figures became part of the Shakespeare Lives programme, the Shakespeare Lives programme became part of the projection of US and UK power and identity. Public users were not put off by this. Users commenting on the Shakespeare Lives programme were more likely to express values such as quality and enjoyability. Of the 722 tweets directed at the Shakespeare Lives programme, 17% mentioned it as enjoyable and 12% praised its quality:

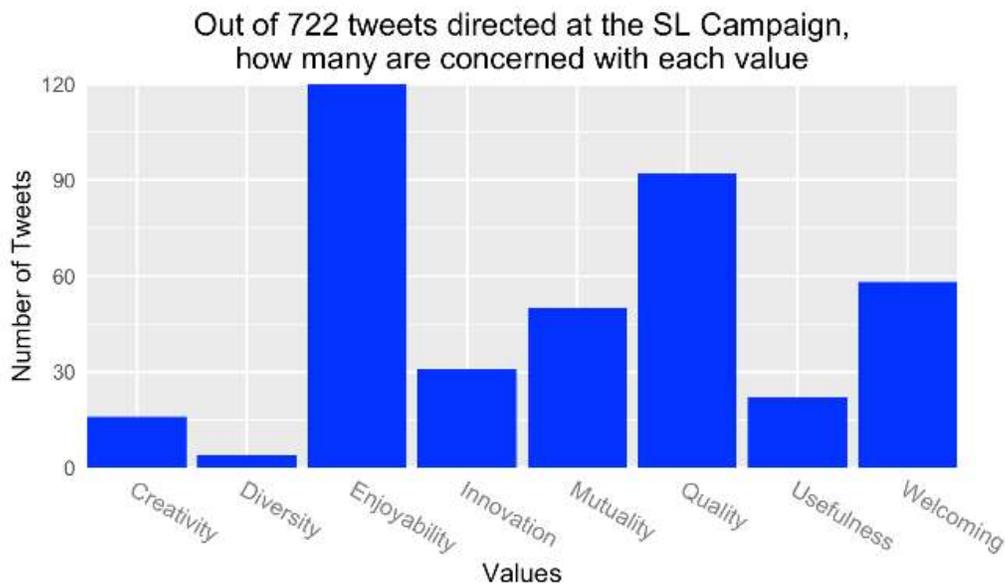


Figure 4: Number of tweets referencing a value promoted by, or the value of, Shakespeare Lives

3.1.4 Events in London and Stratford Upon Avon

The walks created a buzz even before the tours started. Some users who would join the walks the next morning shared their excitement in Twitter. Others informed Twitter users of their plans to join the walks. As the walks started, users began to provide situational updates with photos. The tweets mostly reflect their enjoyment being part of the tour. One tweeted, for instance, “*Enjoyed exploring @The_Globe's #TheCompleteWalk this afternoon :) #Shakespeare400 #ShakespeareLives*”. Both the complete walk in London and the day tour at Stratford-Upon-Avon led to spike in the number of English-language tweets. Those who attended the walks took selfies in the area and shared them on Instagram and Twitter. Some also posted photos of the Globe Theatre or London Bridge. Those who participated in Stratford-Upon-Avon shared photos

of Shakespeare’s house. The British Council could have engaged with those on the walking tours and ask them location-related questions to create dialogue on Twitter and enhance public engagement across online and offline spheres.

3.1.5 The continuing relevance of Shakespeare

The hashtag chosen for the event, #ShakespeareLives, was used by users to both engage with the program and emphasise the continuing relevance of Shakespeare 400 years after his death. While many users celebrated his birthday, they also reflected publicly on the significance of Shakespeare for them and its continuing influence on their life, for example, “*Happy Birthday Shakespeare! I owe so much to you and your words. I can't even explain how grateful I am that you existed. #ShakespeareLives*”. As can be seen from Figure 5 below, of the 240 tweets about Shakespeare, 17% highlighted the quality of Shakespeare and his works, 15% mentioned usefulness/relevance, and 10% expressed the values of mutuality.

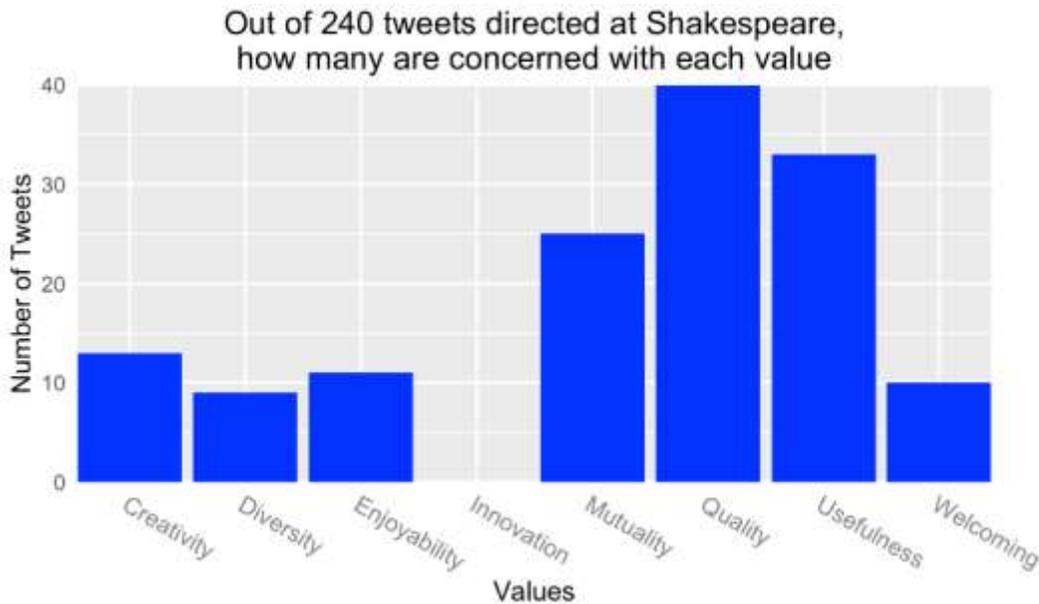


Figure 5: Number of tweets referencing a value associated with, or the value of, Shakespeare

3.2 Facebook

3.2.1 Popularity

The British Council's posts on Shakespeare received a large number of likes from the public. For instance, the British Council posted: *"Shakespeare Day is here! We've just kicked off a huge 32-hour marathon of #ShakespeareLives content. Celebrate a global icon with us"* This post received 829 likes and 111 shares:



Image 3: British Council Facebook post, 23 April 2016

In particular, the posts that inform about Shakespeare events around the world received record numbers of likes: *"#ShakespeareLives is still being celebrated around the world. See some of our highlights for the year so far, in Brazil, Croatia, Ghana and Dubai, with some familiar faces getting involved"* This post received 1,400 likes and 45 shares:



Image 4: British Council Facebook post, 24 April 2016

The popularity of this post was equal to posts by the British Council on education, which received the most likes and shares on the British Council’s Facebook account. Comments on the British Council’s posts are rare, however. Facebook users prefer to use Facebook’s sharing function rather than the comment function. We found few comments about Shakespeare events.

Of those few, one user commented on how UK musicians interpret Shakespeare’s Twelfth Night by posting: *“fantastic stories”*. Another commented on Miranda’s letter, *“As a mother, I was just about to cry. It is so sensitive. I like it a lot”*. The film, Shakespeare’s Julius Caesar, received six comments on Facebook, with members of the public showing their appreciation for the film with comments such as: *“I like it”*, *“Excellent ideas”*, *“Intriguing”*, *“This is interesting”*, *“It is really enchanting”*. As can be seen, all comments on the film have a positive tone.

Interestingly, some of the comments that were posted on the British Council’s Facebook page are no longer available. This might be a technological problem related to Facebook. For instance, following the EU referendum results, one user wrote under the British Council’s Facebook post that Britain is imperialist and colonial and that it should not be in the European Union. The post is no longer available on the British Council’s Facebook page.

3.2.2 Interactivity

The British Council is interactive and actively communicates to some users through their English-language accounts. Users were pleased by this act and mostly replied back. For instance, Image 5 below shows a conversation between the British Council and a member of the public:



Image 5: The British Council responding to a user comment on Facebook

Again, while such exchanges were rare we found no negative sentiment when they did occur.

3.2.3 British Council accounts abroad

Shakespeare Lives posts from the British Council USA, Australia, Canada and New Zealand pages received a low amount of likes (five likes for a post on average). This may be related to the vast difference in the number of followers that these accounts and the British Council has. For instance, while British Council USA had 100,138 likes, the British Council received 1,776,513 likes.

Of the four accounts analysed, the British Council USA, British Council New Zealand and British Council Canada frequently shared information about Shakespeare events while the posts of British Council Australia on Shakespeare Lives programme were fewest.

Posts about celebrities in Shakespeare films were most likely to get likes on Facebook. For instance, the post of the British Council USA capturing Alan Cumming while playing Macbeth received 26 likes, compared to the five an average post receives. The British Council Canada's posts on celebrities such as Vick McClure (42 likes) and Laura Carmichael (52 likes) received the highest number of likes as well.

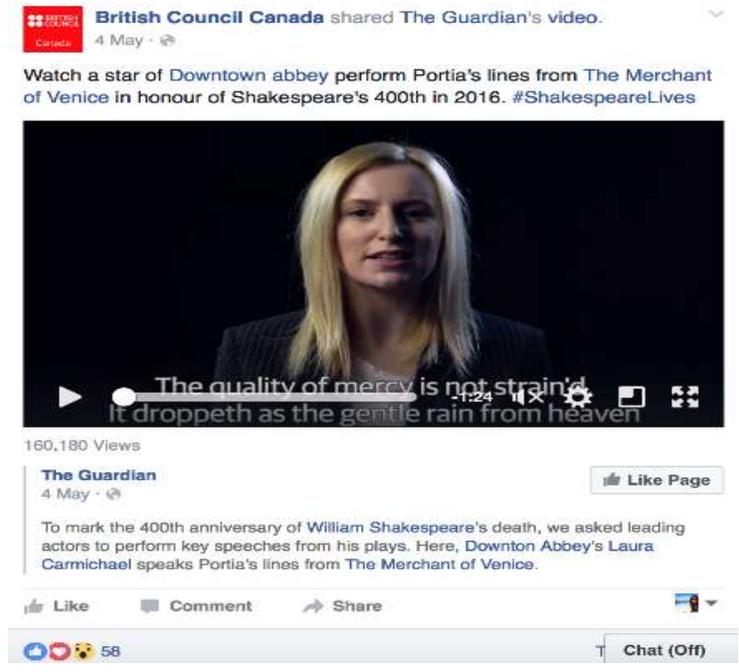


Image 6: British Council Canada Facebook post, 4 May 2016. Downton Abbey star recites Shakespeare lines.

British Council New Zealand's post on [Regan Taylor](#) (25 likes) was also more popular than the account's other posts on Shakespeare Lives events, which usually get one like.

Finally, the British Council Canada shared an interesting series of posts from the Symposium Shakespeare+Canada at the University of Ottawa Arts:



Image 7: British Council Facebook post, 23 April 2016, sharing a lecture

In these posts, we can see lecturers and students from Ottawa Arts sharing some of their personal favourite quotes from Shakespeare. The posts were relatively successful, receiving 45 likes on average.

4 Conclusion of Phase One

Studying the promotion of and engagement with the Shakespeare Lives programme in the periods around the Shakespeare Day celebrations, we found that sharing a quote from Shakespeare was the most popular method to engage with the Shakespeare Lives. Members of the public also enjoy the adaptation of Shakespeare quotes, and re-use them in their tweets. Celebrities, particularly unexpected appearances from world leaders, enhance the prominence of an event and add value to the sketches. The use of technological tools such as the Shakespeare emoji, Periscope and BBC iPlayer drew considerable interest to the Shakespeare Lives programme. The values of usefulness and mutuality were mostly attributed to Shakespeare and his works, while Shakespeare and the Shakespeare Lives programme were more likely to be seen as providing quality and, in the latter case, enjoyability. On Facebook, the British Council has the highest number of followers compared to its other English-speaking accounts such as British Council USA, British Council Australia, British Council Canada or British Council New Zealand. Consequently, the British Council's Shakespeare posts received the highest number of likes and shares. The post series of British Council Canada which captured lecturers and students sharing quotes of Shakespeare generated public attention. Other British Council accounts could consider sharing similar content to promote cultural programmes.

Phases Two and Three: Midsummer and Mix the Play

This section of the Shakespeare Lives in English report sets out our analysis over the second and third phases of our research. The second phase coded tweets about Shakespeare Lives between June 20 and June 22, around Midsummer. The third phase covers the release of Mix the Play *Romeo and Juliet* on 7 November, and also describes the use of Twitter to promote and run the [#ShakespeareLives contest](#) by Visit Britain India. This competition and engagement with it was also studied in our Facebook analysis, as it was also run through the Love GREAT Britain India Facebook page. Our analysis of Shakespeare Lives on Facebook during phases two and three also continued to study the content of British Council posts from accounts in English-speaking countries and engagement with them. We also broadened our analysis to include the promotion of Shakespeare Lives by key partners and collaborators, such as the British Film Institute (BFI) and Sir Ian McKellen, and how audiences engaged with Shakespeare Lives through these pages.

This analysis finds that while the majority of the tweets were coded as being neutral in tone, approximately 20% expressed positive sentiment during the Midsummer period. Twitter users welcomed the global tour of Shakespeare Lives actors and showed appreciation that they visited their countries. The tour also helped to foster a growing conversation about the Shakespeare Lives programme on Twitter. Comments on the plays staged were rare during the Midsummer period, but a small number of members of the public praised the actors chosen for Shakespeare Lives plays and enjoyed interacting with them (7% of tweets). Tactics that were particularly useful in generating buzz on Twitter included: directing questions to the public; motivating Twitter users to share photos and quotes; interacting with other councils and government accounts. Twitter users continued to enjoy technological innovation; they liked the Mix the Play application and created their own Shakespeare plays. The second version of Mix the Play, which covers the balcony scene in *Romeo and Juliet* and is set in India, was particularly well received. Indian users mostly engaged with the application by promoting or providing information about the application. While the majority of tweets about this were neutral (63%), positive tweets (35%) praised the Mix the Play application and defined it as an opportunity. The use of Facebook Live to livestream Shakespeare Lives events attracted attention and appreciation from members of the public. These videos elicited only a few comments from the public abroad. The [#ShakespeareLives](#) contest launched in December by Visit Britain India elicited an average of 48 comments for each post on Facebook and an average of 60 comments for each post on Twitter. Celebrities continued to attract the most attention to Shakespeare Lives, and increase the engagement of the public with Shakespeare Lives events.

5 Methods

5.1 Twitter:

5.2 Phase Two, Midsummer (June 20-22)

For this report, we used the search queries:

#ShakespeareLives AND NOT RT

The aim was to identify tweets in Sysomos between 1 May and 1 August, 2016. The search returned 7,045 tweets. Looking at the popularity graph, the team noticed two clear peaks in the use of this hashtag in tweets in English around Midsummer, June 20 and June 21 (951 tweets and 738 tweets, respectively). To mark the Summer Solstice and longest day of Shakespeare's 400th anniversary year, the BBC livestreamed a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* from the Globe Theatre. The British Council, BBC, RSC, Globe, BFI, Royal Opera House and Hay Festival posted time-sensitive Shakespeare quotations over 24 hours on social media in a 'Midsummer Marathon'. As the tweets peaked and the Shakespeare Lives *Tempest* and *Miranda's Letter* films were uploaded to YouTube on June 20, we also analysed the tweets on this day. Finally, we included June 22 in our analysis with the aim of eliciting the opinion of the public on the Midsummer night programmes. Between June 20-22 our search for the query #ShakespeareLives AND NOT RT, returned 1,767 tweets in total. We then selected a random collection of 1,000 of these tweets.

Amendments to the coding workbook:

After coding 700 of the 1,000 randomly selected tweets, it was clear that the majority of these came from British Council accounts. As the aim of the research is to analyse public responses to the Shakespeare Lives programme, we decided to amend the last portion of the coding workbook to reduce the number of tweets from organisational accounts, particularly British Council accounts. The last 300 tweets from the original coding workbook were therefore removed.

Tweets from the following accounts were removed from the original randomised data set of 1,767 tweets, excluding the first 700 tweets which had already been coded:

- All British Council accounts
- All British Embassy accounts
- Tweets by the Britain is GREAT campaign
- Tweets by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and the Department of Culture, Media and Sport.
- Tweets by the Globe Theatre
- Tweets by BBC Shakespeare.

- Tweets by the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC)

This left 1,119 tweets in the data set overall, down from a previous total of 1,767. Tweets 701-1,001 were then added to the coding workbook to form a full set of 1,000 again.

5.3 Phase Three, Mix the Play and the #ShakespeareLives Contest

In order to cover the period after June 22, the team performed a second evaluation. To identify the tweets in Sysomos between June 23 and December 31, we again used the search query:

#ShakespeareLives AND NOT RT

This search returned 10,193 tweets. The team noticed a significant peak in activity (1,859 tweets) on November 7. The majority of these tweets concerned a new version of the Mix the Play application whereby people could ‘direct’ their own version of the balcony scene in Romeo and Juliet, set in India. In order to focus on the public responses to this new version of the Mix the Play application, we randomised these and removed tweets from British Council accounts from our original data. This left 1,835 tweets in total and we coded the first 500 from this data. This time, unlike the June 20-22 period, the tweets mainly focused on the Mix the Play application (96%), and we could thus demonstrate how the public perceived the application and what values of it were perceived by the public.

A second, smaller Twitter peak in this period was caused by the #ShakespeareLives contest run through the Visit Britain account on December 20 and the GREAT Britain campaign’s India page on Facebook between December 11-20. The posts received many replies from the public on Twitter (60 comments on average), and on Facebook. We conducted an ethnographic study and analysed the comments of the members of the public on these posts on both Twitter and Facebook.

5.4 Facebook

In addition to studying engagement with the #ShakespeareLives content on Facebook, we continued to conduct ethnographic analysis of the extent to which members of the public engaged with British Council posts about Shakespeare Lives between between June 20 and December 31. Facebook data was manually collected from the British Council, British Council USA, British Council New Zealand, British Council Canada and British Council Australia. These pages were chosen with the aim of observing how the public engaged with the available British Council accounts in English-speaking countries. We also broadened the scope of our Facebook analysis to consider promotion of Shakespeare Lives by partner organisations and

ambassadors on Facebook, and how people engaged with the programme through these pages, between April 22 and December 31.

6 Findings and Analysis

6.1 Twitter (Phase Two: Midsummer)

In the first phase of research focusing on the weekend around Shakespeare Day (23 April), we found that members of the public mostly engaged with Shakespeare Lives events by promoting/providing information about events and sharing quotes of Shakespeare. Of 1,000 tweets analysed for this second phase of research (20-22 June), approximately 30% were posted by members of the public. As can be seen in the figure 6 below, more than half of them promoted or provided information about Shakespeare Lives events, whereas around 50 tweets offered an opinion.

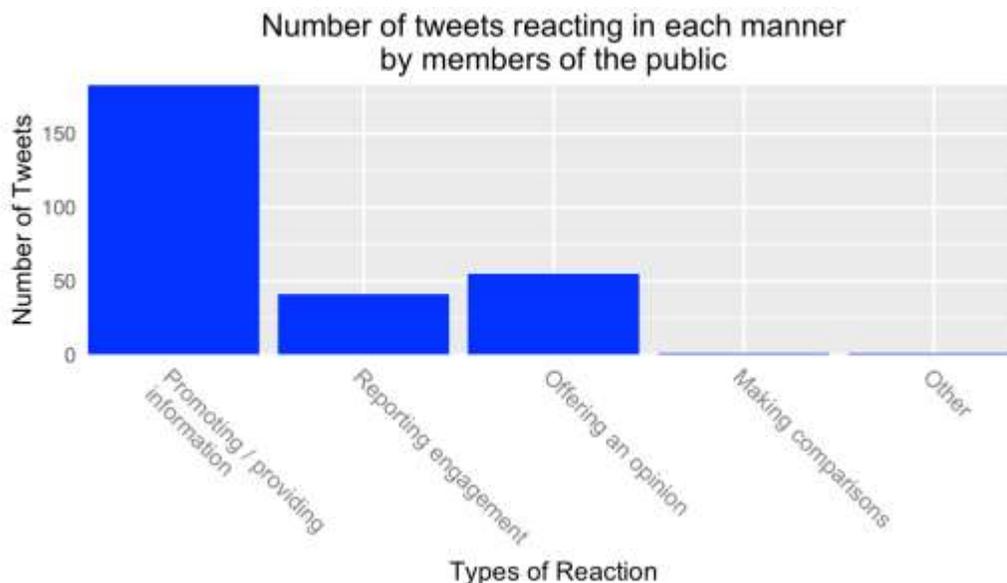


Figure 6: Types of reaction from members of the public during the Midsummer period

The majority of those who promoted the event shared the tweet below and informed others about the Shakespeare Lives programme that would take place around Midsummer. This trend to inform others about Midsummer events was reinforced by Sir Ian McKellen, the British Council and other councils and @GREATBritain.



Image 8: Tweet by Sir Ian McKellen promoting Shakespeare Lives

Every time a user shared a quote of Shakespeare's, this tweet was also coded as promoting/providing information. It can be seen from Figure 7 below that members of the public continued to share quotes of Shakespeare during the [Midsummer Marathon](#), as the British Council and partner organisations shared time-related Shakespeare quotes around the clock. Hence, another reason for the high number of tweets promoting/providing information was that the public continued to share quotes of Shakespeare.

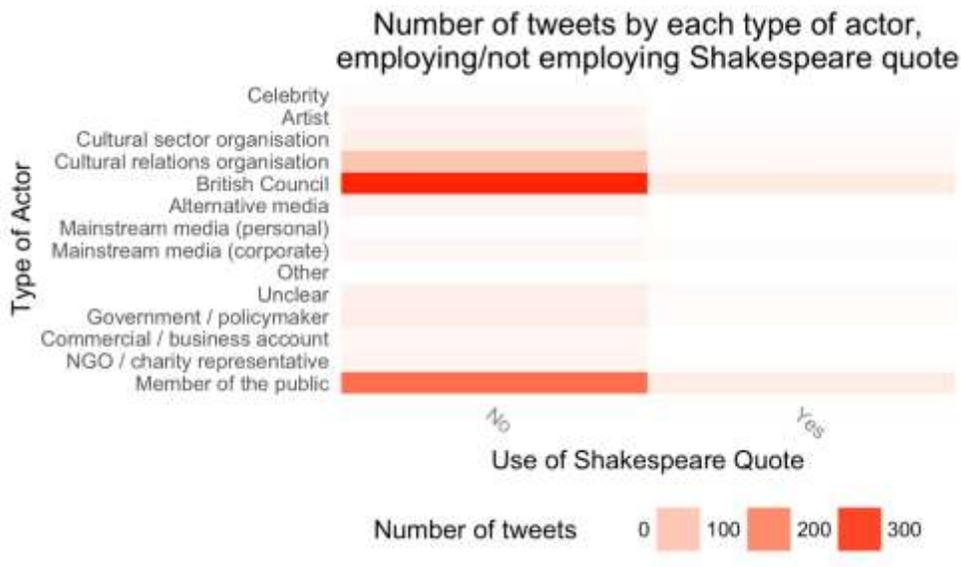


Figure 7: Heat map of the types of actor which tweeted Shakespeare quotes

Finally, every time the auto message of the Mix the Play application “I directed A Midsummer Night’s Dream” appeared in a tweet, the tweet was coded as reporting engagement since it showed that the user engaged with the Mix the Play Application. Of the 300 tweets posted by members of the public, approximately 50 reported engagement with Shakespeare Lives.

6.1.1 What worked well about the Shakespeare Lives programme on Twitter around Midsummer?

6.1.1.1 *The global tour of Shakespeare Lives actors*

In 2016, the British Film Institute’s ambassador for ‘Shakespeare Lives on Film’, Sir Ian McKellen, made a global tour and visited countries including India, China and Russia. During the period of analysis for this second phase of research, Sir Ian went to Moscow to join the Festivities to mark the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death and opened its Midsummer Night’s Festival in the capital. Users from Russia welcomed the actor, also informing others about his visit to Russia and expressing their positive emotions regarding this visit:

It was so great! Like dream come true thanks to @IanMcKellen !
#ShakespeareLives <https://t.co/YzEjovg4WL>

This was absolutely MARVELLOUS! Thank you sir @IanMcKellen !
#ShakespeareLives #gogolcentre #гогольцентр

I say we need to get that man a horse. Thanks for coming out to play
@IanMcKellen sir! #ShakespeareLives #FancyScarvesAndPoetry

God bless Ian McKellen's translator!!! #ShakespeareLives
#чтожвысукиделаетесмоейпьесой

Please watch! Thank you @IanMcKellen #ShakespeareLives
<https://t.co/CXG6yfa5nV>

Thanks to the global tour of actors, museums, journals and editors from the visited countries also involved in the campaign, this indicates a growing level of what we might call ‘global conversation’ about Shakespeare Lives on Twitter.

Sir @IanMcKellen in Moscow. #ShakespeareLives #ИэнМакКеллен @TheRealLukevans <https://t.co/D7bmAJmKQ0>

Looks like someone very cool is in Moscow! Sir @IanMcKellen thank you for an ace interview today! #ShakespeareLives <https://t.co/XIWavzztgZ>

Ian McKellen is in Russia! :) #ShakespeareLives <https://t.co/YcPWETfZ21>
<https://t.co/j2uRUea3BU>

Kremlin Museum: The representative of the #ShakespeareLives famous British actor @IanMcKellen visited #kremlinmuseums <https://t.co/V3Cqn4fFt0>

6.1.1.2 The actors chosen for Shakespeare Lives plays

The performances of actors appearing in Shakespeare Lives plays received positive comments from users in June – Richard Madden as Romeo, Helen Mirren as Prospera and Anthony Andrews as Mercutio were praised for their performances. We also found that users liked to compare Shakespeare Lives actors with other actors:

Who needs Emma Thompson or Miriam Margoyles when we have Dame Helen Mirren! @DavidQuarrey #ShakespeareLives #Israel <https://t.co/yi1pTFAia8>

High camp glorious Anthony Andrews as Mercutio in a 1968 #RomeoandJuliet <https://t.co/Rdj9rDRy9u> #ShakespeareLives

and here's the FABULOUS @PaapaEssiedu on "To be or not to be" - <https://t.co/nI4CFOkVe3> #ShakespeareLives <https://t.co/wQpHISogYv>

@BritishCouncil #ShakespeareLives Lots. Love Luhrmann's R&J and am looking forward to @MargaretAtwood's take on the Tempest #hagseed

@_richardmadden You blew us away as Romeo. Congratulations and flat-o

As a result, judgements of value such as quality and enjoyability were mostly ascribed to Shakespeare actors between 20-22 June on Twitter. Figure 8 below shows that of 272 tweets posted by members of the public, 6.6% referred to the quality of Shakespeare Lives and 4.4% referred to its enjoyability.

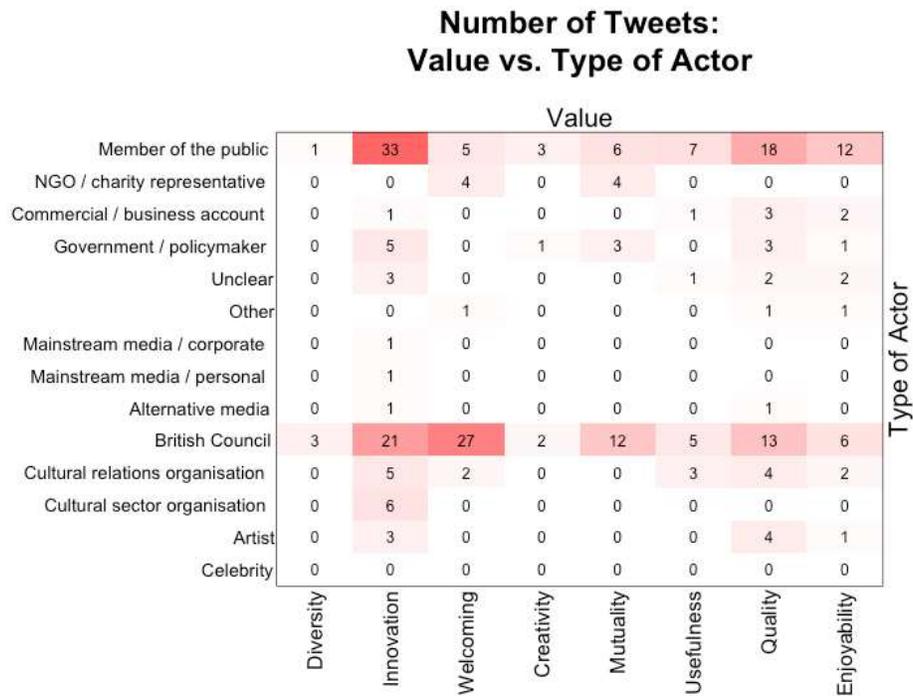


Figure 8: Values associated with, and the value of, Shakespeare Lives during Midsummer

The analysis also showed that tweeters directly interacted with actors such as Sir Ian McKellen and Richard Madden:

@IanMcKellen @BFI I don't saw the first two but if it's a Shakespeare movie it must be good. #ShakespeareLives #dadjokes

@IanMcKellen Any chance I get to be immersed in Shakespeare's work makes me very happy! Loving this! #ShakespeareLives

@_richardmadden You blew us away as Romeo. Congratulations and flat-o

The post from Richard Madden, below, shows that Twitter posts from actors received a greater number of likes and shares on Twitter compared to those of the British Council.



Image 9: Richard Madden tweet, July 7 2016

However, actors rarely reply to user comments directed to them on Twitter. It might be useful for the British Council to contact actors and encourage them to directly engage with the public's questions. By asking direct questions to Twitter users regarding Shakespeare Lives events, the actors could further engage users and create greater buzz around the programme.

6.1.1.3 Active Twitter strategies used by the British Council

When engaging with Shakespeare Lives, users were more likely to also engage with or mention the British Council in June than in April (around the anniversary of Shakespeare's death). In their increasing of the interaction with Twitter users, the Twitter strategies of the British Council merit a great deal of praise. Beneficial strategies include directing questions to the public to encourage engagement, motivating users to share photos and Shakespeare quotes, and attempting to attract the attention of other councils, cultural organisations, fan groups and columnists to Shakespeare Lives events. Examples of each of these strategies can be seen below.

The British Council engaged with members of the public who tweeted about Shakespeare lives events by asking them direct questions:



Image 10: The British Council interacts with another Twitter user, June 20 2016

This direct communication strategy of the British Council worked well on Twitter. Every time a user referred to the British Council, or referred to one of their tweets, his/her tweet was coded as being focused on the British Council. Of 1,000 tweets analysed, 10% of users directly interacted with the British Council. In our first phase of research, the number of tweets showing interaction with the British Council was only 1%. The number of tweets that focused on the British Council between 20-22 June can be seen in Figure 9 below. Given the vastness of Twitter, to interact with 10% of your public is good and is a clear improvement.

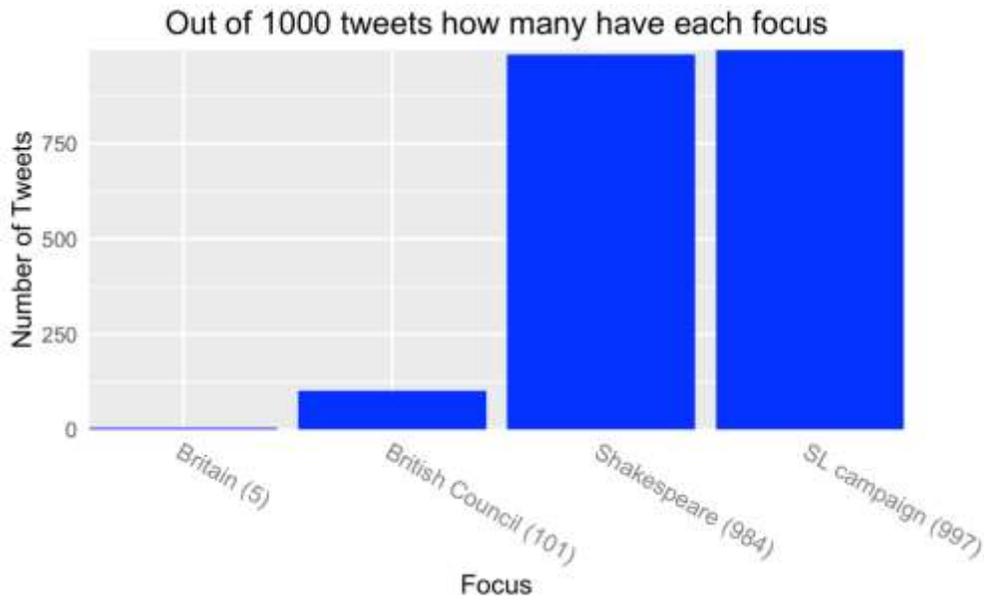


Figure 9: The focus of tweets during Midsummer

The British Council also asked users to share photos of sunset on the longest day of the year:

Our last UK sunset during our 48-hour Midsummer marathon. Two hours to go. Share your sunset. #ShakespeareLives <https://t.co/uhQMRjmnrf>

Our first phase of research demonstrated that Twitter users like sharing photos on Twitter. In April, the British Council organised walks across Stratford Upon Avon and London, where audiences discovered Shakespeare performances in churches, pubs, squares and shops. We observed that those participating in these walks took selfies in the area and shared them on both Instagram and Twitter. There was no walk in the Midsummer programme in June, but the British Council did encourage users to share Summer Solstice photos from their location, which motivated them to engage with the programme. Below you can see some of the sunset photos shared by Twitter users:

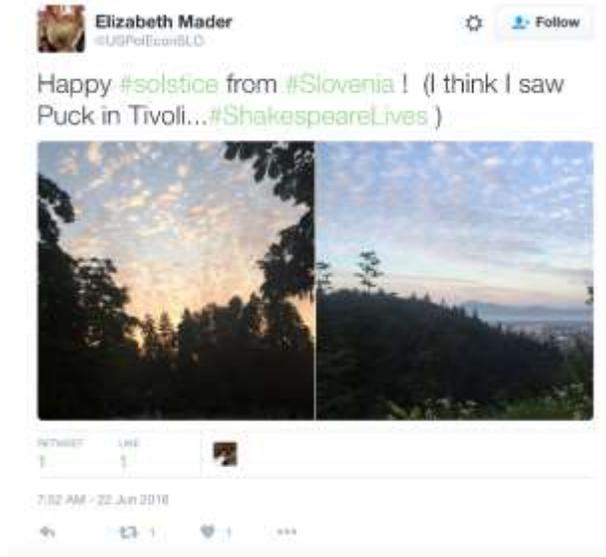


Image 11: A Twitter user shares their Summer Solstice photo



Image 12: A Twitter user shares their Summer Solstice photo

The public also liked sharing their favourite quotes. 12% of tweets coming from members of the public shared a quote. The tweet below from the British Council shows how they actively encouraged this trend.



Image 13: Tweet by the British Council encouraging followers to share quotes during Midsummer

31 users directly replied to this post. Many also shared a Midsummer Night's Dream quote without using reply tab "@BritishCouncil".

The British Council attempted to attract the attention of other councils, cultural organisations, fan groups and columnists to Shakespeare Lives events by getting in touch with them:



Image 14: The British Council interacts with the Emirates Airline Festival of Literature account on Twitter

@trBritish @Orchestra_Swan @iksv_istanbul you can find out more about Shakespeare and music #ShakespeareLives <https://t.co/La9fhPwh8R>

@EmmaTfansite what's your top #EmmaThompson Shakespeare performance? Try directing your own play! <https://t.co/4VOEjDdHyy> #ShakespeareLives

Fascinating that she wishes she played Juliet! What did the audience think @nypl @usaBritish? #ShakespeareLives

@catblaikie @The_Globe Have you seen our round the clock Shakespeare content? Try this one: <https://t.co/7rD3R0GdW2> #ShakespeareLives

These attempts to activate different actors worked well, as can be seen in the Figure 10 below which shows that 15% of the tweets we analysed about the Shakespeare Lives programme during this period were posted by cultural organisations or cultural sector organisations. Government accounts were the fourth most active tweeters.

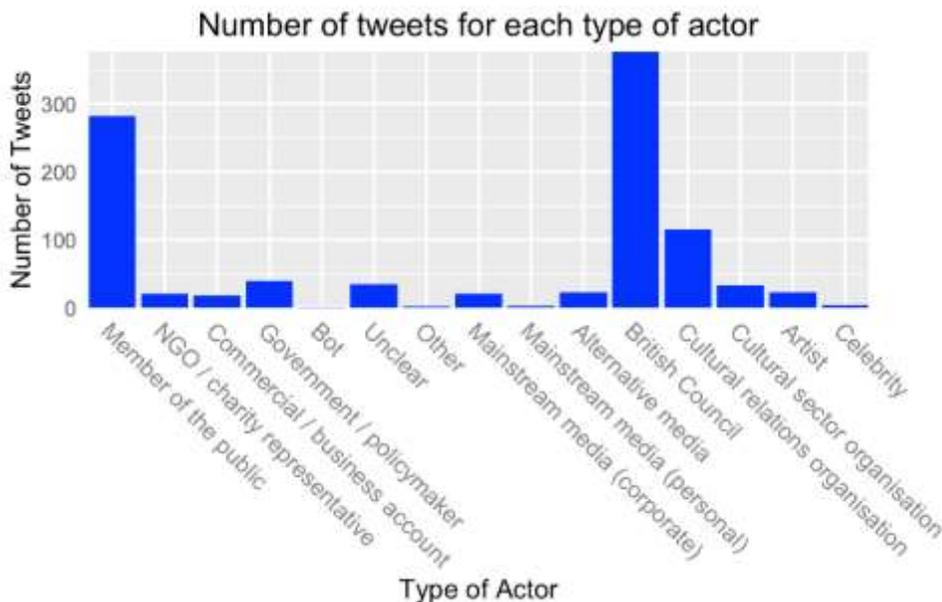


Figure 10: Number of tweets by each type of actor

6.1.1.4 *Twitter users liked to engage with Mix the Play application*

On June 21, the British Council launched an interactive video programme called Mix the Play. Our first phase of research showed that Twitter users liked technological innovations. The Mix the Play programme reinforced this finding; Twitter users welcomed the application and used it to create their own Shakespeare plays. The majority of application users shared the automatic message of the programme:

I directed A Midsummer Night's Dream at the Old Vic Theatre in London. Watch my scene: <https://t.co/RC2MIACZqX> #ShakespeareLives

They thus informed other users that they had ‘directed’ a Shakespeare play. However, there was also a high number of Twitter users that praised the application in their tweets. Each time a tweet referred to the Mix the Play application and/or praised it, the tweet was coded as associated with the value “innovation”. Of 272 tweets posted by members of the public, 12% referred to the Mix the Play application. The following examples show the appreciation of public for Mix the Play application:

Direct Shakespeare - this is the best thing ever made. Watch my scene: <https://t.co/XEPFymSKd3> #ShakespeareLives

This is so cool! I directed A Midsummer Night's Dream <https://t.co/R0j7oUp3Rf> #ShakespeareLives

Have a go at this why don't you: <https://t.co/zFGh0aRkWM> I had such fun filming! #ShakespeareLives @oldvictheatre @BritishCouncil #mixtheplay

@oldvictheatre what a very clever platform for budding directors! #whatfun #loveit #ShakespeareLives <https://t.co/krOeJBS3w0>

Mix the play seems like a great idea... worth trying out with students! <https://t.co/gDs87mMbND> #ShakespeareLives

Ha! That was fun! 😊 I directed A Midsummer Night's Dream at the Old Vic Theatre in London. Watch: <https://t.co/gbacwAD2YE> #ShakespeareLives

Brilliant piece of digital engagement - direct your own #ShakespeareLives play <https://t.co/qhN8SDP9YJ>

This is brilliant! <https://t.co/PEdMvJWINi> #ShakespeareLives (via @joelukemurphy1)

Mix the play seems like a great idea... worth trying out with students! <https://t.co/gDs87mMbND> #ShakespeareLives

6.1.2 What did not work well in the Shakespeare Lives programme on Twitter around Midsummer?

The British Council, as well as its official charity partner for the Shakespeare Lives programme, the Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO), launched a programme to support thousands of children around the world in improving their education. The British Council actively informed Twitter users about this charity programme by posting the following tweet:

See how #ShakespeareLives charity IS helping 1,000s of children worldwide #socialchange #charity #STXFG <https://t.co/FFxeyyra6i>

UK embassies, government accounts and the VSO often tweeted about this charity programme, but these posts did not receive any interaction from members of the public. The Facebook section of this report will show that the charity campaigns got large numbers of likes and shares from the public. There are clear lessons to be learned from the differences in the British Council's strategies on the two platforms. For instance, the British Council's Facebook page engaged with the personal stories of people who joined the social enterprise programmes launched by the British Council in developing countries.



Image 15: British Council Facebook post, 27 September 2016

By making Facebook users wonder what happened to these people who joined the programmes, the British Council attracted attention to the content of these posts. It drew in Facebook users to further engage with the content of the post beyond its title. Similar tactics might be useful on Twitter for spreading news amongst members of the public and making them engage with the campaign.

6.2 Twitter (Phase Three, Mix the Play)

After Midsummer, peaks in the use of #ShakespeareLives on Twitter were caused by the new version of the Mix the Play application in November and the #ShakespeareLives contest in December. For the Mix the Play section, an additional 500 tweets focusing only on the new version of the application was analysed. For the Shakespeare Lives contest, we conducted an ethnographic study and analysed the comments of the members of the public on these posts on both Twitter and Facebook. We will first discuss public engagement with Shakespeare Lives through the Romeo of Juliet version of Mix the Play.

On November 7th, the British Council collaborated with the Old Vic Theatre and acclaimed Indian director Roysten Abel to launch the new production of the Mix the Play application. In this new production, social media users could ‘mix’ the balcony scene in *Romeo and Juliet*, filmed in India with a Bollywood feel. As the data from British Council accounts was removed from the second dataset, the majority of the tweets (80%) discussing this new version were

generated by members of the public. Figure 11 also demonstrates that 6% of the 500 tweets were generated by alternative media users.

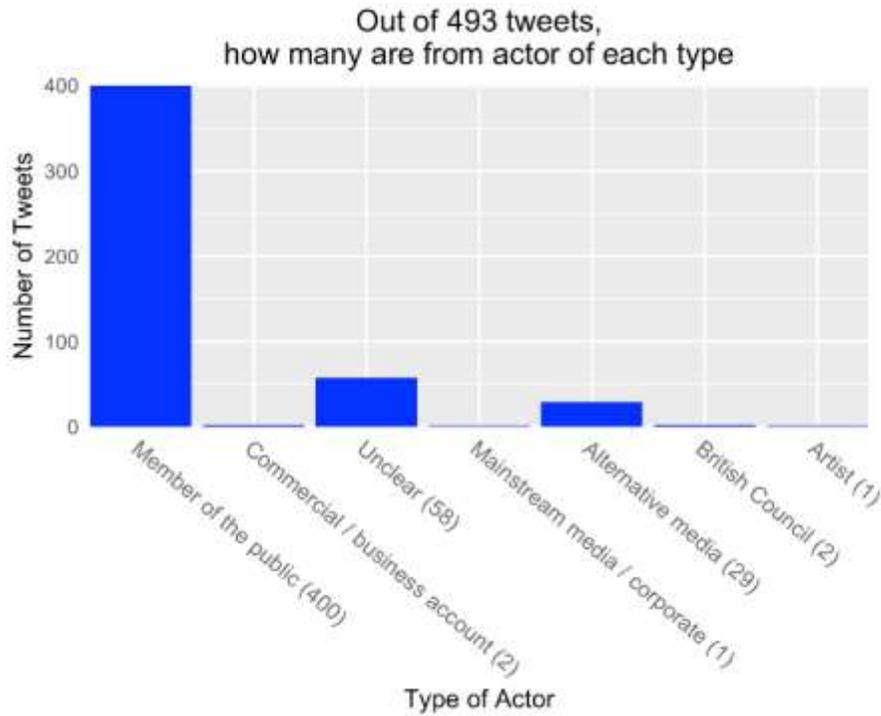


Figure 11: Tweets about Mix the Play (November) by actor type

Figure 12 shows that 81% of the users were based in South Asia. Tweets coming from India constituted 100% of these. Out of 500 tweets, only three users were from the US, one from Europe and one from Other Asia (Singapore).

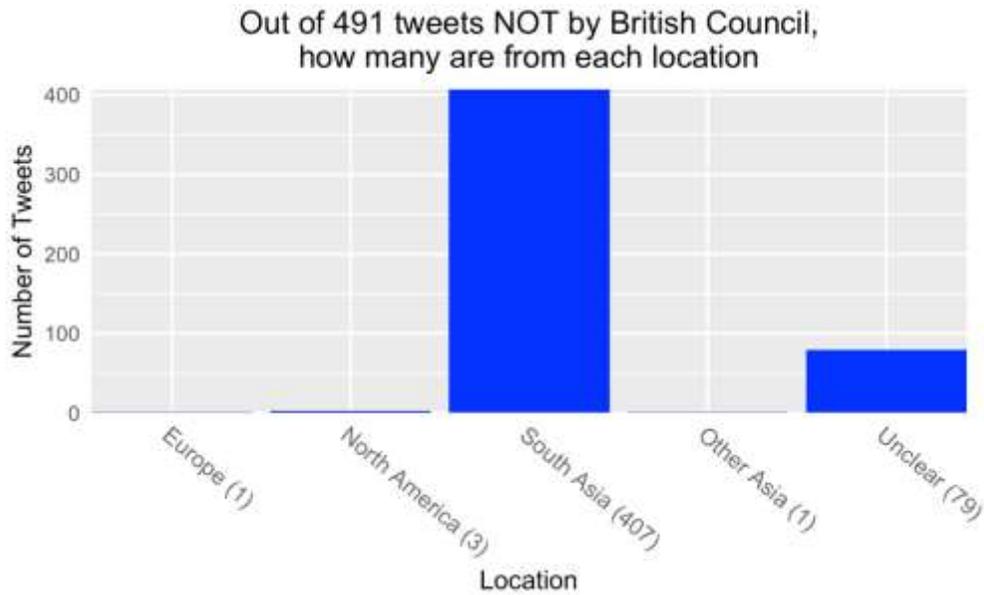


Figure 12: Tweets about Mix the Play (November) by location

Like the tweets we analysed during the first version of Mix the Play released during the Midsummer period, the majority (71%) of users informed others about the application and encouraged them to try it.

Create your own love story. <https://t.co/S3EBWIIYTM> now! #ShakespeareLives #MixThePlay

Folks go do it yourself! <https://t.co/4SWFhg2wa8> #MixThePlay #ShakespeareLives @inBritish

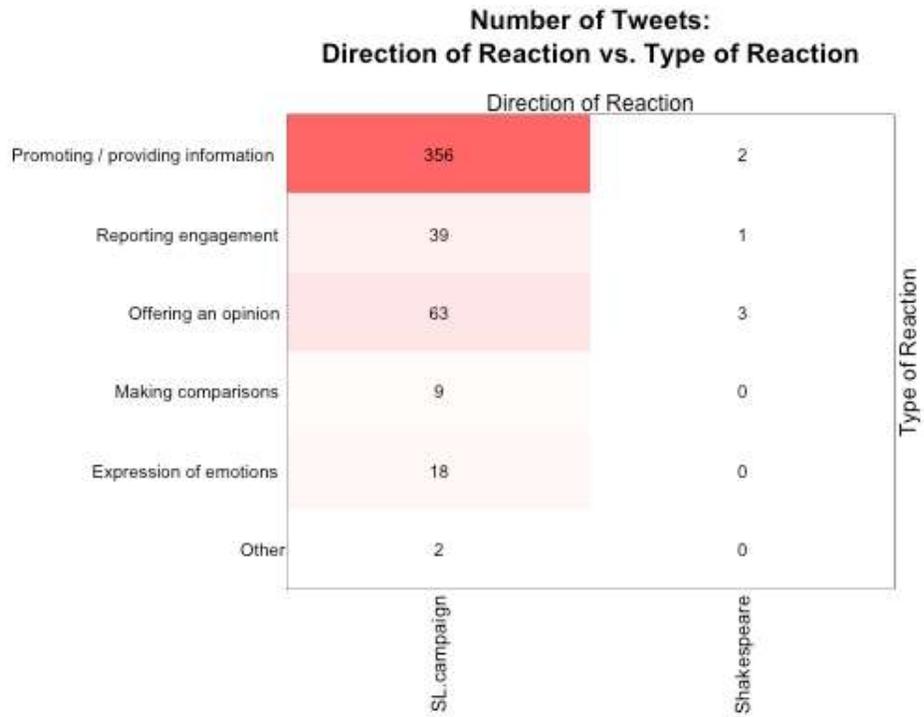


Figure 13: Types of tweet posted about Mix the Play (November)

Figure 13 also indicates that of 500 tweets, 13% of users offered an opinion about it and 8% indicated that they also used the application.

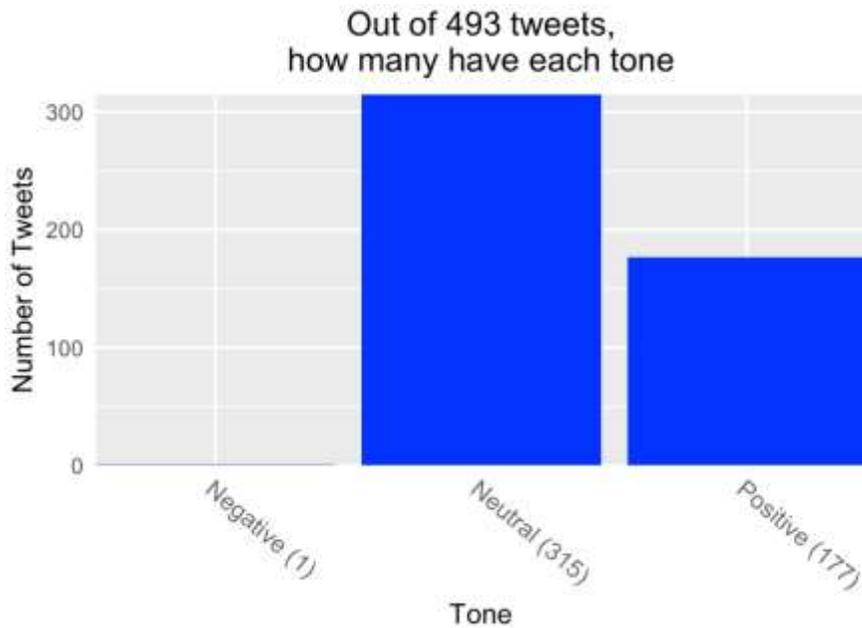


Figure 14: Tone of tweets about Mix the Play (November)

Despite the fact that the majority of these tweets (63%) tended to be neutral in tone, Figure 14 above shows that there were also a significant number of positive tweets (35%) that mostly praised the quality and enjoyability of the application.

This chance meant to enjoy whole life Make scene from great love story
 #MixThePlay today at <https://t.co/Ns6SdaubmL> #ShakespeareLives

Did you create your own Romeo and Juliet? I did and it's pretty amazing
 #MixThePlay at <https://t.co/b3bzQQZZqc> #ShakespeareLives @inBritish

Don't miss this amazing chance to create your own love story #MixThePlay today
 at <https://t.co/zUIQkepMSt> #ShakespeareLives

Figure 15 below shows how the public associated values such as creativity, innovative, pleasurable/enjoyable and welcoming with British Council India and/or the Mix the Play. As all the tweets that referred to the Mix the Play application were coded with the value “innovation”, this was reflected in 96% of tweets analysed (see Figure 11).

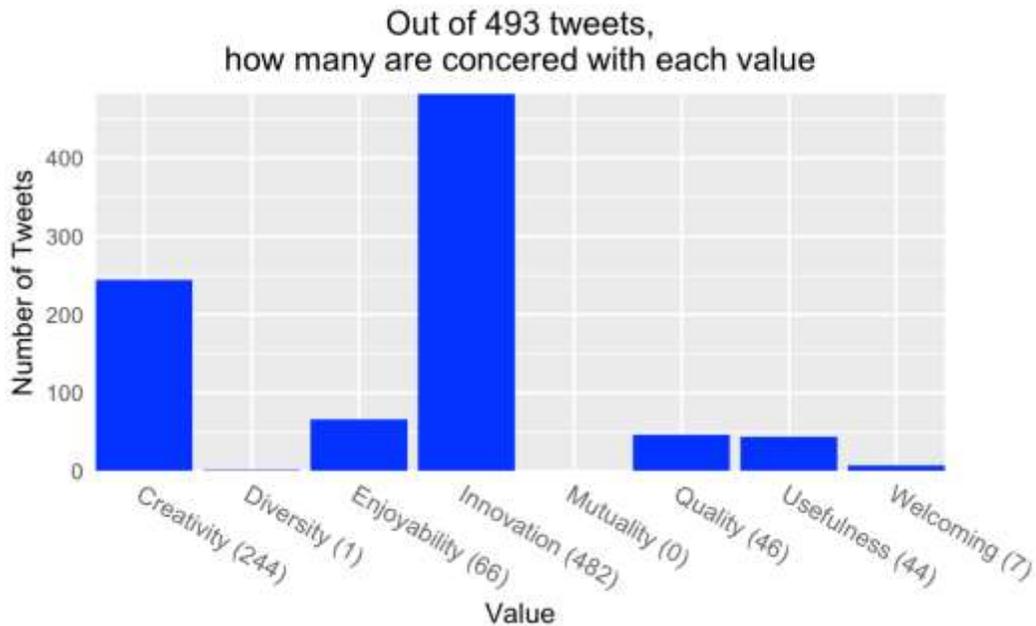


Figure 15: The values associated with, and perceived value of, Mix the Play (November)

Figure 15 also shows that almost 50% of the Twitter users perceived the application as being creative:

@divyasaika @malishkagujral Display your creative skills as you #MixThePlay with #ShakespeareLives @inBritish at <https://t.co/JBxSqNkYfg>

its time to tell how u make story by #MixThePlay of any #ShakespeareLives & recreate your own tale <https://t.co/2HsNqSCPsn>

Can't believe that I can be director and can create my own Romeo and Juliet #MixThePlay #ShakespeareLives <https://t.co/9B16bCegGu> @inBritish

I am very excited about recreating the plot R&J love story #MixThePlay #ShakespeareLives @inBritishPrimary <https://t.co/pTJ4YRtKjS>

13% of Twitter users reported how pleasurable and enjoyable they found their experience with this new version of the Mix the Play application.:

@divyasaika super excited to create my version of the epic love story #MixThePlay <https://t.co/8JtBuVIgjH> #ShakespeareLives @inBritish

Loving it. Did u #MixThePlay Go to <https://t.co/kvnKosSr43> now!

Feel awesome by creating your own version of love story #MixThePlay #ShakespeareLives <https://t.co/vUi85ylDwr> @inBritish

I love with #MixThePlay. You can Create your version of the greatest love story. Here <https://t.co/JBxSqNkYfg> #ShakespeareLives @inBritish

This is so awesome ! Check it out guys: #MixThePlay at <https://t.co/wJiC6ZdZ7h> #ShakespeareLives @inBritish

9% also praised the quality of the application. They described it as fabulous, unique and pretty:

fabulous ! #ShakespeareLives is now Trending fast at #4 in India :
<https://t.co/C1b1raUitq> <https://t.co/9K1O4hLHPy>

The concept looks simply unique #MixThePlay #ShakespeareLives
<https://t.co/zHYqFqdvGF> @inBritish

This is so awesome ! Check it out guys: #MixThePlay at <https://t.co/wJiC6ZdZ7h>
#ShakespeareLives @inBritish

Pretty create ur own love story #MixThePlay #ShakespeareLives
<https://t.co/PGbKxKFKph> @inBritish

Each time a user mentioned that he/she found the experience unique and/or as something new, we coded this tweet with the value useful/relevant. 9% of users described the application as an opportunity.

I was waiting for such chance from so long it's here now. @saraf_silky @inBritish
#MixThePlay #ShakespeareLives <https://t.co/frFcZ69Faw>

Don't miss this excellent opportunity to create your own Romeo and Juliet.
#MixThePlay at <https://t.co/l2VIErJyim> #ShakespeareLives

I was waiting for such chance from so long it's here now. @saraf_silky @inBritish
#MixThePlay #ShakespeareLives <https://t.co/frFcZ69Faw>

Finally I can live up my Directorial dream with #MixThePlay you too can at
<https://t.co/6Dd89udgtf> #ShakespeareLives @inBritish <https://t.co/ndrKRJ1vuN>

The value “useful/relevant” was also reflected in the tweets that mention Shakespeare, his plays, characters or words that are still perceived as being pertinent today:

Read almost all novels by william 400 yrs completed and he still like a forever in hearts #ShakespeareLives

Finally, the values of welcoming and diversity were rarely present in our set of data, while the value of mutuality was completely absent from the 500 tweets analysed. Unlike other language reports, in the English language report there is little evidence of reciprocal exchange.

6.3 Twitter (Phase Three, #ShakespeareLives contest)

Between 12 and 23 December, Visit Britain India and Love Great Britain launched a national competition in India called the [#ShakespeareLives contest](#) and offered the winners 'Shakespeare goodies'. On Twitter, the competition took place on 20 December. On Twitter, followers were asked to answer four Shakespeare related questions, sharing their [favourite quote](#), their [favourite Bollywood adaptation](#) of a Shakespeare play, answering a question about [words invented by Shakespeare](#), and finally to share an example of a [commonly used phrase](#) which comes from a Shakespeare play. Participants were encouraged to tag their friends in their responses by including their Twitter handles. In their first post, Visit Britain India informed its followers about the new competition. This created a buzz on Twitter. The post received 28 likes, 45 retweets and 12 comments. Four of these 12 commenters provided information to others about the contest, while seven shared their excitement and emphasised that they were totally ready. Seven out of 12 comments had a positive tone.

On the same day, Visit Britain India shared the first question of the competition and asked users to share quotes of Shakespeare by tagging their friends. The tactic helped increase public engagement with the competition. The post received 94 comments, 34 also retweeted it and 25 liked it. Users answered the question by sharing their favourite quote and tagging their friends. As they did not express an opinion on the quotes, all the comments were neutral in tone.

In their second question, Visit Britain India asked the public to share their favourite Bollywood adaptation of the Shakespeare play. The post received a smaller amount of comments (62) and a similar level of likes and shares (29 shares, 18 likes) compared to the number of comments on the first question. As it is requested in the question, the users shared their favourite Bollywood adaptation in their comments. Despite the preponderant neutral tone in the tweets, one could notice an increase in the number of positive comments (35% of 62 comments were positive)

[@VisitBritainIN](#) A2. "Maqbool" based on Macbeth is my favourite loves this So much [#ShakespeareLives](#)

@VisitBritainIN A2: Romeo And Juliet , Written in 1597, the tragedy play has inspired many Bollywood movies till date.

@VisitBritainIN A2. "Maqbool" based on Macbeth is my favourite so far...so beautiful & understated #ShakespeareLives

In their third question, Visit Britain India asked Twitter users which of several words (accommodation, swagger, more) were not invented by Shakespeare. The post received 55 comments, 25 retweets and 16 likes. The majority of comments (98%) denoted a neutral tone and mentioned that the word “most” was not invented by Shakespeare. Only one comment adopted a humorous tone and referred to Britain, a user questioning the perceived low value of the prize on offer for their participation.

@VisitBritainIN just goodies?? Send me to london 😂😂

The final question of the competition was about Shakespeare’s phrases. The public is asked which of the Shakespeare phrases they heard, read or used. 66 people commented on the post, while 22 liked and 18 shared it. As with the answers to question 3, the answers to question 4 denoted a neutral tone, with all the comments directly answering the question and mentioning the Shakespeare phrases they knew.

The last post was a thank you from Visit Britain India to its Twitter followers for their interest in the competition: *“Thank you all for participating in the #ShakespeareLives Contest. The winners will be announced soon. :)”* The post received 16 retweets, 14 likes and 11 comments, six mentioning that they truly enjoyed the competition while four were neutral and stated that they desired to win the competition.

Our analysis of the #ShakespeareLives contest on Twitter shows that the competition increased the engagement of the public with the Shakespeare Lives campaign. Although the majority of comments denoted a neutral tone, asking users about their favourite Shakespeare plays increased the number of positive comments. This was related to the fact that the Twitter users liked to explain why this particular play was their favourite amongst the others and convince other users to this end.

7 Facebook

7.1 British Council posts

7.1.1 Popularity

The British Council's posts on Shakespeare Lives events received high levels of likes after June 20th (100 to 300 likes per post). But the level of popularity of Shakespeare Lives posts in June and after never reached the same level of popularity they had during the weekend around Shakespeare Day in April. In June, the British Council posted on the Midsummer Night's Dream which was one of the eight short films in a series of new Shakespeare interpretations. The posts on this film generally received 200-250 likes. On June 21, the British Council introduced the Mix the Play application and invited Facebook users to direct A Midsummer Night's Dream. The post was shared 38 times and only received 168 likes.

Of Shakespeare Lives-related posts, the posts on social media enterprises received the most likes (34,000) and shares on the British Council's Facebook account. These posts focused on personal stories of people whose lives were changed after joining these programmes. Posts on education were also amongst those that received the highest number of likes (200 likes on average).



Image 16: British Council Facebook post

The British Council’s charity event in Nepal also received more attention on Facebook (352 likes and 23 shares) than Twitter. Information was shared under the title: “Not everyone has access to the internet. Find out some of the reasons, and what can be done about it”. Catchy phrases like this could motivate the public to find out what the post was about. This could also work well on Twitter and increase reach.

Live video attracted attention and elicited appreciation from the public. As part of the Shakespeare Lives programme, the final performance of Emma Rice's Bollywood-infused *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was streamed live around the world on 11th of September. Before the start of the show, the British Council shared a series of special broadcasts on its Facebook account. It showed BBC presenter Lindsey Chapman speaking to the cast and crew about the show in the Globe. The last two live videos, which were streamed just before the show started, received the highest number of likes (655) and comments (77).

The live videos relating to Shakespeare Lives at the Edinburgh film festival also received the highest number of likes, amongst others (587), 44 shares and 17 comments. Comments were again positive and praised the quality of the programme.

7.1.2 Comments

Comments on Shakespeare Lives events are rare, but are always positive, as in the following post (Image 17) on the short film inspired by *Othello*.



Image 17: British Council Facebook post and comments

Live videos were also useful for creating engagement. The last two live videos of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* streamed from the Globe on the 11th of September, just before the show started, received the highest number comments (77). The users welcomed the show in their comments. They were generally referring to the quality, relevance and enjoyability of the programme in these comments.



Image 18: Comments on a British Council Facebook post/livestream

The live shows were also effective for attracting the attention of the public abroad. In particular, the last video, which was streamed just before the show started, received several comments from the public abroad and created a global buzz on September 11. Spectators mostly wanted to inform others that they could watch the show from their respective countries.

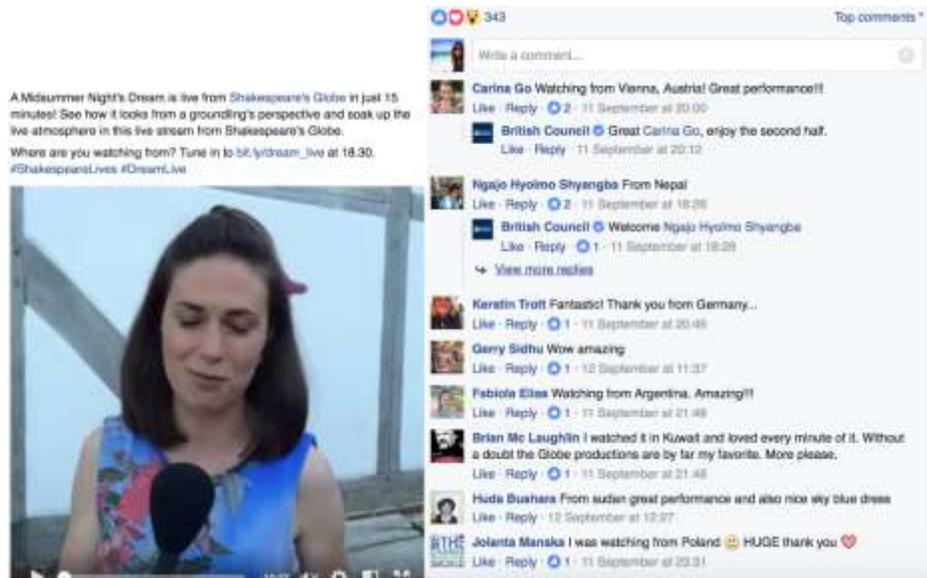


Image 19: British Council livestream post and comments, including British Council replies

7.1.3 Interactivity:

As on Twitter, the British Council was very active on Facebook. The direct communication of the British Council with its followers seems to have been useful, as the followers were pleased by this act and mostly replied back. Below we see a conversation between the British Council and members of the public:

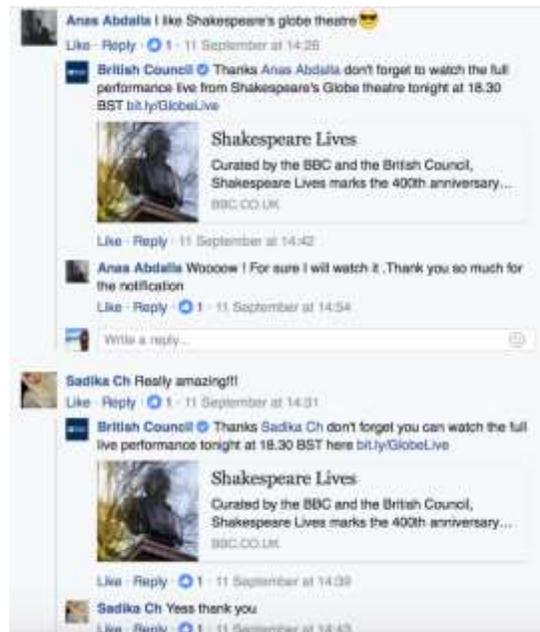


Image 20: Comments on a British Council Facebook post, with British Council replies

NEED SOME LINE HERE ANALYSING THAT IMAGE. E.g.:

Here we see the page's administrators not only acknowledging the users' feelings but nudging them towards further engagement. In both cases the users affirm they are grateful for this, suggesting a strengthened relationship with the users even through brief, low effort interactions.

7.1.4 British Council accounts abroad

Shakespeare Lives posts of the British Council USA, Australia, and New Zealand averaged only five likes per post. In comparison to these, the British Council Canada's Facebook account received 20 likes per post on average. None of these reached the same level of popularity of the British Council (UK), which has a vastly larger number of followers. However, some of the strategies that the British Council UK uses on Facebook such as posting livestream videos from the Midsummer programmes might be useful to increase the popularity of the non-UK accounts too.

7.2 #ShakespeareLives contest

On December 12, the Love GREAT Britain India page posed the same questions as Visit Britain India on Twitter (discussed in section 6.3 of this report) and introduced the [#ShakespeareLives contest on Facebook](#). Their first post, informing the public about the contest, received 25 likes and four positive comments on December 12:

- T&C 
- Thanks
- Loving the post
- Such a great fanpage

The questions posed by Love Great Britain on Facebook were in the same order as those of the Visit Britain India on Twitter. In their first question, the Facebook users were asked to share Shakespeare quotes. The average number of likes for this post were more on Facebook (71 likes) than Twitter (25 likes). However, the Facebook post received slightly fewer comments (63) and shares (14) than the Twitter post, which received 94 comments and 24 re-tweets. The majority of the Facebook comments (60 out of 63) only shared their favourite Shakespeare quote, while three mentioned that they enjoyed the contest.

- Stuff like this are why I love your page

- Who else? 
- Absolutely love anything related to voyage

In Question 2, the users were asked which of several words (accommodation, swagger and more) had not been invented by Shakespeare. Once more, the post received a higher number of likes (74), but fewer comments (40) and shares (17) on Facebook compared to Twitter. The comments denoted a neutral tone and, similarly to the Twitter users, Facebook users directly replied to the question and suggested that the word “more” had not been invented by Shakespeare.

In Question 3, the Facebook users were asked which Bollywood adaptation was their favourite. The post received more likes (63 on Facebook compared to 16 on Twitter), fewer comments (46 to 55) and fewer shares (16 to 25) than the Twitter post asking the same question. Users expressed their opinion and sentiments towards Shakespeare and his plays while citing their favourite. More than half of the comments (25 out of 46) denoted a positive tone. Like the Twitter users, Facebook users mentioned why they particularly liked this play more than the others.



Image 21: Comments on a #ShakespeareLives contest post

In Question 4, Facebook users were asked to cite the Shakespeare phrases that they had heard, read or used the most. The post received 77 likes (the same post received 22 likes on Twitter), 14

shares (the post received 18 shares on Twitter) and 51 comments (the post received 66 comments on Twitter). In their comments, the Indian users cited the Shakespearean phrases that they used in their daily life. This showed the close interaction of Indian and British culture, thus reflecting the value “mutuality”. The users denoted a neutral tone while explaining how they used the Shakespearean phrases:

All these phrases are known to me and I have used them at some point or other. But I guess the phrases "It's Greek to me" and "All that glitters isn't gold" are the ones which are always on my lips. I so often use them when conversing with people around.

The phrase I have used the most in my life is "All that glitters isn't gold" which is very much true and I have found this phrase real magical in my life of 28 years.

The results showed that the Facebook posts of the Shakespeare Lives contest received a higher number of likes than those of Twitter. On the other hand, people reacted and commented more on the Twitter posts compared to Facebook.

7.3 Partner Organisations and Ambassadors

Between the months April 2016 and February 2017, I analysed the Shakespeare Lives posts of five partner organisations, namely the BBC Shakespeare, the British Film Institute, the National Theatre, the Royal Shakespeare Company and the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, as well as the posts of celebrity Sir Ian McKellen. Amongst them, Ian McKellen’s Shakespeare Lives posts received the highest number of likes, shares and comments.

7.3.1 Sir Ian McKellen’s Facebook account

Sir Ian McKellen mostly commented on his Shakespeare Lives plays, talks and visits in his Shakespeare Lives posts. The two most popular posts of him were both posted in April during the Shakespeare Lives weekend. One of them was The Telegraph news on Hamlet which received 19,000 likes and 4,109 shares. During the play, McKellen shared the stage with other prominent British actors, such as Paapa Essiedu, Tim Minchin, Benedict Cumberbatch, Dame Harriet Walter, David Tennant, Rory Kinnear and Dame Judi Dench, as well as Prince Charles.



Image 22: Sir Ian McKellen shares a Telegraph piece about Shakespeare Live! on Facebook

Out of 401 comments focusing on the *Telegraph* article (see Image 22 above), almost half (200 comments) embodied a positive tone, 19 a negative tone and five a humorous one.

The large number of comments on this Facebook post (401) reveals that celebrities motivated the public to engage with the play and create a buzz. The public generally stated that they liked the play (144 out of 401 comments). In the majority of the comments (71 out of 401), they also praised the talent of the actors.



Image 23: Comments on Sir Ian McKellen's Facebook post about Shakespeare Live!

3% of the comments also reflected the value of welcoming, as Facebook users thanked McKellen and others for their performance.

- magnificent as always , THANK YOU ALL!!!!
- You're so amazing all, thanks for that! You make me all laugh ^^
- This is priceless! Thanks for sharing, Sir Ian.
- Thank you for sharing this, Sir Ian! I love it!

The comments also showed that the involvement of celebrities like Prince Charles created some controversy. While 6% of comments praised the performance of Charles specifically and expressed their surprise to see him on the scene, 3% voiced their discontent at seeing him in the play and expressed their dislike of him:

- Fabulous show overall, but sickened that Prince Charles shared the stage with so many talented actors who had actually 'earned' their place there. X

- I never could understand why this guy wasn't happy with such a beautiful lady as Diana and because of how he treated her I've never cared for him whatsoever.
- pfff prince Charles . . . thinks he is better than me because he is a prince . . . damn royal people :)))
- It was brilliant until the Prince showed up ☹
- Prince Charles? No. Just no.
- Well, the Prince of Wales is still a putz in my book. That is the Answer...

The appearance of Charles also helped to increase the global conversation on Facebook, with Facebook users from different countries exchanging their thoughts on the Prince and Britain:

- A Romanian user Corina Zaides Petcu posted: “Gosh, what a treat! Love you, your Highness!”
- A German user, Bastian Bernschutz mentioned: Why the hell did they cut Tennants contribution? Otherwise the most English thing I have seen in a while
- A user from Denmark, Britta Birkholm texted: Funny...but no we don't want him... ;)
- A French user: So british, but we love you ! still laughing, you're great ! And some have great skills in such characters , for sure. Excellent and funny

McKellen’s posts during the Midsummer period also focused public attention. These posts received an average of 1,000 likes and 25 comments. The comments generally praised the quality of Ian McKellen as an actor. The posts that capture the photos of McKellen from his talks in Shanghai (9,200 likes) and Russia (4,800 likes, 54 shares, 34 comments) were the most popular.



Image 24: Sir Ian McKellen Facebook post on the Midsummer Nights Festival in Moscow

The users generally welcomed McKellen's visit to their countries in their comments:



Image 25: Comments on a Facebook post by Sir Ian McKellen

Analysis of McKellen's posts between April 2016 and December 2017 in particular revealed that Facebook users like to see casual photos of celebrities in their city. For instance, McKellen's photo from Moscow was the most popular post in our dataset.

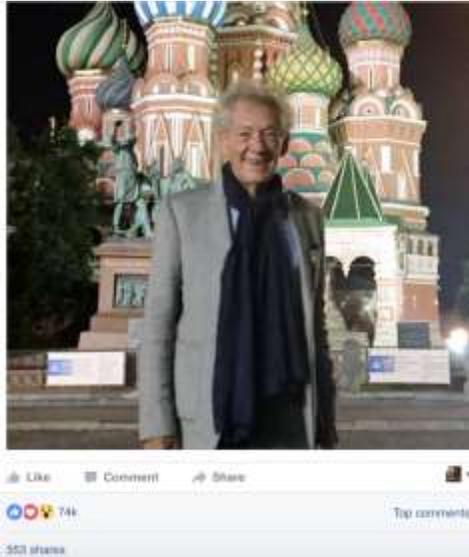


Image 26: Facebook post by Sir Ian McKellen showing him in Moscow

The actor generated much attention for the Shakespeare Lives campaign and led users to engaged with Shakespeare Lives events by sharing his casual photos with the symbols of Shakespeare Lives events on Facebook. The post of McKellen below is a good example of this:



Image 27: Facebook post by Sir Ian McKellen showing him at the Great Wall of China

Despite the fact that the commenters mostly referred to the Great Wall and China in their comments, we could notice references to Shakespeare as well:

- Of all the great stuff Mr. Shakespeare wrote, I do think this is the most important. Very fine picture, sir. 😊
- Especially when all the world's a stage. 😊

By sharing photos and live video from the countries they visit, Shakespeare Lives actors could further draw the attention of users to Shakespeare Lives events.

7.3.2 British Film Institute (BFI)

The BFI has an active account on Facebook that has 274,294 likes. Its posts receive varying numbers of likes (between 56 and 3,200). In 2016 the Institute informed the public about Shakespeare adaptations like Henry V and Macbeth being made available on the BFI player. Sharing the news about Shakespearian actors such as McKellen and Laurence Olivier has

characterised the second type of its Shakespeare Lives post. BFI particularly emphasised McKellen's Shakespeare Lives tours around the world and his talks on Shakespeare. Amongst these posts, a video of McKellen discussing the relevance of Shakespeare's works received the highest number of likes amongst the Shakespeare Lives posts (487). However, only four people commented on the post.



Image 28: A BFI Facebook post

The posts on the adaptations of Shakespeare also received high numbers of likes (18 to 349). For instance, the post below received 349 likes, but again few people commented on the post (eight users). Hence, although BFI helped to promote Shakespeare Lives events and received the appreciation of its followers, it did not greatly increase the engagement of the public with Shakespeare Lives events.



Image 29A BFI Facebook post

7.3.3 The National Theatre

In April the National Theatre actively informed the public about the Shakespeare plays at the National theatre and Shakespeare Globe during the Shakespeare 400 weekend. The Shakespeare Lives posts of the theatre received between 200 and 1,000 likes. Amongst the most popular was a video in which prominent actors, such as British stand-up comedian Sir Lenny Henry, talk about Shakespeare. Despite the popularity of the post (1,000 likes), only 14 people commented on it and in general, these did so in recognition of Shakespeare's birthday. The post thus gained public attention but did not generate Facebook discussion.



Image 30: A National Theatre Facebook post

The website stopped posting on Shakespeare Lives events after April but the few posted by the National Theatre received a higher number of likes than the British Council's posts. This might be due to the fact that the followers of the National Theatre in London are theatre lovers and very interested in Shakespeare.

7.3.4 BBC Shakespeare

The BBC Shakespeare Facebook account was an active partner organisation of the British Council on Facebook, with 23,151 likes. The posts of the account were mainly articles about Shakespeare's plays and sonnets. Unlike the other partner organisations, BBC Shakespeare often referred to those other partner organisations in its posts and informed Facebook users about their Shakespeare Lives works. The platform not only posted about Shakespeare plays broadcast on BBC, but also about the Globe's programme, such as the complete walk with 37 short films, and the productions of the National Theatre London. The exchange between Facebook users and the BBC was not extensive. BBC Shakespeare posts received on average 100-200 likes and a mere five comments per post. The comments were in general related to the quality of the plays. The post below showed that controversial statements were useful for increasing public engagement with Shakespeare Lives posts. When the BBC shared the five finest Shakespearean actors list of Nottingham University, it created controversy on Facebook and pushed users to express their opinion on the Shakespearean actors.



Image 31: A BBC Shakespeare Facebook post

Of 28 users, 20 commented on this post with a neutral tone and expressed who their favourite actor was. On the other hand, eight commenters criticized the list, mentioning their favourite with a negative tone.

- A couple of good ideas but hardly a definitive list. Far too limited.
- Absolutely don't agree - and Shakespeare might have something to say about omitting Burgage, Armin and a few others.
- Rubbish. They should get out more!

On the other hand, what received the most likes was a post from the BBC that informed the public that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* from Shakespeare's Globe became available to watch live worldwide. The post received a large number of likes (4,600) and comments (26).



Image 32: A BBC Shakespeare Facebook post

The majority of comments conveyed a positive tone (15 out of 28). This was mostly because the Facebook users liked the show that was live. Ten out of 28 commenters praised that the show was live-screened:

- It was fantastic i played Helena when I was 19 to see the role turn to helenus brilliant. The great thing about Shakespeare you can do anything and if you get it right it really really works. Please BBC more live screenings
- Don't miss it! Saw it yesterday LIVE and it's just amazing!
- Watched it live. Spicy, musical and energetic.
- What an incredible production, I'll definitely be watching it again!

We can also notice the value of welcoming in five of the comments. These comments praised the live show and the quality of the play:

- Thank you sooooo much, from Italy 
- Thank you, I want to see this again so bad 

- Graciaas

7.3.5 Shakespeare Birthplace Trust

The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Facebook page has a large number of followers (47,717), but in general the account does not promote Shakespeare Lives events. Rather, it informs the public on Shakespeare, his birthplace of Stratford-Upon-Avon, or activities in the Shakespearean houses. Its posts have received differing level of likes, numbering between ten and 400. The only three posts promoting Shakespeare Lives events on the page between April and November 2016 concerned Shakespeare courses at the British Council (received 28 likes), A Midsummer Night's Dream played in Stratford-Upon-Avon (49 likes) and the interview of McKellen on Shakespeare and Sexuality (78 likes).

What fostered public engagement with this account's posts and increased the number of comments was often a competition. For instance, 423 people commented on the post below:



Another competition at Shakespeare's Gardens asked users to comment on the planting scheme used in the gardens. The post also received a high number of likes (641), shares (30) and comments (108).

7.3.6 Royal Shakespeare Company

The Royal Shakespeare Company is the most active page amongst those that promote Shakespeare Lives events. The posts generally promote the plays produced by the Company or Shakespearean exhibitions. The page has 130,242 followers and its posts generally receive between 20 and 200 likes. However, Facebook users only occasionally comment on these posts (two comments on average). The RSC posts disseminate information, not cultivate dialogue.

Once again, what gained the most likes was celebrities. In December, a post from Dame Judi Dench, for instance, received a record number of likes, with 1,400, 165 shares and 44 comments. 26 of the comments were positive, while 17 of them praised Dench as an actor; others wished her a happy birthday or praised the quality of the play, “Macbeth”:

- Broughton Manning: Many many more Birthdays m'Lady... thanks for living the dream. And being an effortless inspiration-you are!!! Here's a Birthday hug! Chookers for the next year. XOXO
- Bernadette Goodroe: She's a national treasure!!!! (Tracey Ullman)
- Larry Burn: Juicy Dench is one of my favourite actresses of all time. I note that she is still working and working so well.
- Deborah Clarke: I saw this brilliant production of Macbeth at the Young Vic - and it remains my benchmark production for that play..never seen it bettered, for strength and depth in the casting and verse speaking, and it's only rarely been equalled. Feel very very lucky to have seen it.

Happy Birthday to Judi Dench!

Judi's debut season with the RSC in Stratford was in 1962, taking on the roles of Isabella in 'Measure for Measure' and Titania in 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'. Judi has performed numerous roles at the RSC including Lady Macbeth where she played opposite Ian McKellen in 1976. Most recently Judi was reunited with McKellen and other 'Hamlets' onstage for 'Shakespeare Live! From The RSC' to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death, earl... [See more](#)



Image 33: A Royal Shakespeare Company Facebook post

Similarly, the post on the birthday of the Artistic Director of RSC, Gregory Doran, also received a large number of likes (721), shares (43) and comments (34) on Facebook. Aside from the posts on celebrities, the posts on the Shakespeare play, “the Tempest”, received much attention from the followers of the page (100-900 likes).

In summary, our analysis of posts about Shakespeare Lives by its partners showed that Facebook users were most interested in the posts related to the Shakespearean actors, as well as the opportunity to participate in competitions. These two kinds of posts received the highest number of likes. On the other hand, what prompted the engagement of the public in terms of comments were posts with controversial messages. Users liked to mention their favourite Shakespearean play or actor and challenge the opinions of others. What was striking in our findings was that neither McKellen nor other partner organisations engaged with the commenters on their Facebook page. Their responses to followers could create a further engagement on Facebook and help Shakespeare Lives events come to be associated with values such as “welcoming” and “mutuality”.

8 Conclusions

Our research shows that more than half of the tweets coming from members of the public promoted or provided information about Shakespeare Lives events. The public generally provided information about Shakespeare by sharing quotes from his plays. What was promoted the most during the Midsummer marathon was the livestream of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by the BBC. Russian Twitter users welcomed Sir Ian McKellen to Moscow during the Midsummer Nights festival; the visit helped foster global conversation on Twitter. Most of the comments were about the actors cast in Shakespeare plays rather than the plays themselves. The perceived values of “quality” and “enjoyability” were generally attributed to Shakespeare actors. These posts conveyed a positive tone and praised the actors’ performances. Some users also directly interacted with the actors on Twitter. By directly engaging with the public’s questions the actors could create greater buzz around Shakespeare Lives.

The British Council played the most active role in publishing Midsummer-related posts. Its active Twitter strategies fostered the conversation around Shakespeare Lives programmes on Twitter. The technological tool Mix the Play application drew interest to the Shakespeare Lives programme, and was seen as innovative. The *Romeo and Juliet* version of the application, released in November, was mostly praised for its quality and enjoyability (35.4%), with the majority of discussion coming from users in India who were pleased to see the scene directed by an Indian director.

The charity programmes promoted by the British Council and VSO on Twitter received much lower levels of attention than other Shakespeare Lives related tweets. The British Council’s tactics on Facebook such as engaging with the personal stories of people, who joined the charity programmes, might be useful to increase the popularity of charity programmes in Twitter too.

Analysis of the reaction of the social media users to the #ShakespeareLives contest, which took place in Facebook and Twitter in December shows that while Facebook offered the British Council the chance to reach a larger audience through its partners, Twitter was useful for creating a global conversation around the Shakespeare Lives contest. Our findings also revealed that amongst the Facebook posts of the partner organisations, Ian McKellen’s Shakespeare Lives posts received the highest number of likes, shares and comments. The partner organisations helped to promote Shakespeare Lives events but they did not greatly increase the engagement of the public with Shakespeare Lives events. What increased the number of Facebook comments were the Shakespearean competitions as well as the Shakespearean actors.

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