

Example Case Study for QUAL (qual.org.uk)

Red Note Ensemble (www.rednoteensemble.com)

Background

The Red Note Ensemble is a Scottish-based contemporary music ensemble. Formed in 2008 by the cellist Robert Irvine, the Red Note Ensemble has a reputation for developing new music, high quality performances using different performance formats.

What do you want to find out?

- To explore attitudes towards and the nature of relationships with Red Note amongst its different audiences identifying both shared and differentiating issues;
- To explore and understand Red Note's perceived positioning and the advantages/disadvantages this may have for its audiences;

Who do you want to talk to?

The three key audiences were:

- Red Note Ensemble's Attenders;
- Red Note Ensemble's Potential Attenders (i.e. those who had not attended a Red Note performance, but who had an interest in contemporary arts and music);
- Red Note Ensemble's key Stakeholders and Peers.

Choosing your approach

- In-depth face to face interviews with peers and stakeholders: recruited via email through CEO's contacts – all self-selecting
- Focus groups (6-8 people): recruited through advert on Red Note website and gig, in addition to researcher's own networks. In-depth interviews were also conducted for those who could not make focus group time (a reminder to be flexible in your approach, if need be)

- Focus group stimulus: You Tube footage of a Red Note Noisy Night, in addition to audio clips of the ensemble playing different contemporary classical pieces (this is a good way to introduce potential attenders to the work)
- Time: in-depth interviews were on mutually convenient dates and times; groups were held in the evening (for convenience)
- Duration: 45mins (in-depth interview) – 1 hour (focus groups)
- No incentive given to peers and stakeholders; a free concert ticket given to attenders and potential attenders

Example fieldwork schedule

4 x Attenders and 1 x Non- Attender	Attender A	Edinburgh
	Attender B	Edinburgh
	Attender C	Aberdeen
	Attender D	Aberdeen
	Non-Attender A	Edinburgh
9 x Peers and Stakeholders	Venue A	Edinburgh
	Venue B	Perth
	Peer A	Edinburgh
	Peer B	Edinburgh
	Conductor A	Glasgow
	Composer A	Glasgow
	Peer C	Edinburgh
	Peer D	Glasgow
	Peer E	Glasgow
	Peer F	Aberdeen

Topic Guides

Red Note Attenders and potential Attenders

Introduction: important to establishing a rapport

- Assurances of confidentiality and introduce the recording device to the group (if there are objections to recording, cannot proceed with recording, take notes only)
- Introduction of self and brief description of research i.e. activities in spare time

Warm up questions: important for context

- Explore perceptions of arts/music venues that are currently available in Edinburgh
- Discuss whether they feel their needs are met by current venues on offer in Edinburgh (explore why / why not) / do they have to go out with Edinburgh to fulfil their needs (if so where / how often etc)
- Ideally what types of arts / music performances would they like to see more of in Edinburgh?

Key questions to meeting your research aim

- Discuss associations that come to mind when they think of Red Note (why). Probe what type of performance / music they consider Red Note to be / what type of person (other than you) goes there and why etc.
- Explore what they perceive to be good / not good about Red Note - Discuss spontaneously and then prompt with stimulus (You Tube and audio clips)

- Discuss /brainstorm why they have gone to see Red Note - explore fully. Probe on repertoire / atmosphere / experience / particular musicians. (PRIORITISE)
- What other music performances do they attend – explore comparatively – probe for value placed on Red Note

Sum up

- Design your ‘ideal’ Red Note Spring tour, repertoire to attract more people – and think of ideas of how you would promote / market this tour, types of venues / locations etc (write up)
- Discuss ideas – probe strengths / weaknesses, attract you to go why/why not?
- Establish overall favourite ideas and any ways they could be made even better...
- Sum up by establishing key Red Note do’s and don’ts if they want to attract people ‘like them’

Topic Guide

Stakeholders / peers

Introduction: important to establishing a rapport

- Explore ‘career’ background i.e. how they got to present professional position / role
- Describe current professional role – EXPLORE FULLY in particular on,

- Key aspects
- Key relationships
- Priorities

Warm up questions: important for context

Perceptions of current contemporary Scottish arts /music 'market'

- Explore perceptions of current contemporary Scottish arts /music
- Explore perceived 'issues' [topics of debate] within the current Scottish contemporary music community. PROBE ON any perceived 'gap' in the 'market'

Key questions to meeting the research aim

- Explore attitudes towards and the nature of relationships with Red Note
- Explore perceived key strengths and weaknesses of the Red Note experience/performance from personal and audience perspective.
- Explore perceived areas of development for Red Note's repertoire /programme/venues /performers/audience/ experience.

Sum up

- Explore key thoughts on how Red Note might reach new audiences [marketing, repertoire, venues, performers] - Probe in particular possible means to encourage greater frequency of attendance and development.

Thank & close

Key findings

NB these represent headline findings only and are presented here to give a flavor of the insights that can be elicited from qualitative research. We also present illustrative quotations from the transcripts to support the findings.

Peers and Stakeholders

- ❖ Red Note highly respected: *“serious Scottish ensemble”* with European potential:

“They had got this amazing football team together of all the best players...a musical dream team...”

- ❖ Key Strengths: quality of musicianship; and [can do] *“sexy”* repertoire / theatrical performance:

“The people are right for the repertoire and the repertoire is varied...they ...get the right people because John knows everybody”

- ❖ Key Weaknesses: no clear Red Note identity relative to repertoire.

“Their challenge really is image...actually what is their sound, what music do they play”

- ❖ Key Opportunities: ‘sweeteners’ and cross genre experiences

“You need to hook people in and take them on a bit of a journey”

“Audiences are more willing to experiment when they trust the brand”

Attendees / Potential Attendees

- ❖ Key Strengths: Noisy Nights experience [actual and virtual – You Tube]: key strengths were that audience members were able to drink /eat / relax (no stage or set concert hall etiquette):

“Noisy night is free...it’s a pub gig essentially and I love it...”

- ❖ Key Weaknesses: The research explored the lack of cross-over of audiences / appeal of Red Note’s Noisy Nights and its ‘formal’ concert hall performances:

“If you are trying to widen the circles of people you are going to be pulling in you have got to have hooks”

- ❖ Key Opportunities:

“Something more accessible for everyone along with a few gambles.”

“You have to be a bit sneaky...you can’t just say this is contemporary music come and listen ...because they won’t.”