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Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences
Course: Professional Research Internship



UNIVERSITEIT VAN AMSTERDAM

Professional Research Internship Report:

Nederlandse Publieke Omroep

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Position: trend researcher

Host Organization: NPO

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1. Introduction

Time Period: 4th of September - 2nd of February

Weekly: 4 days a week, 8 hours a day = 32 hours a week

Total: 640 hours

This report is a summary of the activities undertaken for the completion of the Professional Research Internship within the Communication Science Research Master's program at the University of Amsterdam. The research internship took place at the Nederlandse Publieke Omroep (NPO), which is an organization that is responsible for the programs on public radio and television channels, aiming to broadcast content suitable for diverse societal groups. According to the Media Act, the NPO must ensure a varied, high-quality media offering that caters to all audiences, including not only the general public, but also smaller groups such as art and culture enthusiasts and various demographic segments (Zaken, 2016).

The NPO responds to the rapidly changing media behavior of the audience by facilitating and encouraging change. Moreover, the organization explores new services, platforms, technologies, and approaches to engage the audience with their stories in different ways, thereby creating societal impact. This is not only for the benefit of the NPO, but also aligns with broader requirements, as mandated by the Media Act. In order to strengthen their position in the media sector, innovation serves as a vital instrument in the public broadcaster's strategy. To centrally drive and coordinate this effort, there exists a dedicated team within the NPO called NPO Innovation. This team initiates, assesses, and guides the implementation of numerous projects aimed at developing new narrative forms.

During my internship, I was stationed at NPO Innovation, which falls under the department of Strategy & Innovation. The Strategy & Innovation department conducts analyses, develops plans and proposals to assist the board in determining its strategic direction. The Concession Policy Plan, prepared every five years, and the annual budget are crucial components of this process. Post-implementation accountability for policy execution, as seen in retrospectives like the "Terugblik," is also part of their responsibilities (Openbare documenten, z.d.).

I was set to start with a first research project, which entailed researching interactive audio and video and a follow-up project on artificial intelligence. This entailed conducting interviews with internal and external experts and a deskresearch of all innovation projects conducted by NPO Innovation. Besides these encompassing projects, I had to attend administrative responsibilities and events regarding innovation and research, such as the Dutch Design Week, Media Week, Hackathons hosted by VPRO medialab and the monthly estafettes by the broadcasts.

As part of the requirements of the research internship, the following learning goals were formulated:

1. Develop my research and writing skills in order to produce inspiring articles for the public. This entails translating quantitative knowledge gained by practical research into text that is accessible for a general news consuming audience. Therefore, not containing academic vocabulary.

2. Explore novel practical research methods, such as trend research, within the professional field of the Dutch public broadcasting industry.

2. Academic Research and Professional Practices

In this section the academic and professional research practices are elaborated and reflected upon. Additionally, a review is made of communication practices at the NPO with an eye on the differences and similarities with academic practices.

2.1 Academic Research

The NPO implements different research practices in order to inform the general public. These practices entail surveys, interviews, focus groups, analysis of existing data and primary and secondary research. Therefore, the organization emphasizes the importance of having a mixed methods approach that incorporates qualitative as quantitative research methods. For instance, I was able to assist the NOS with research on the implementation of Augmented Reality (AR) in news presentations. This consisted of doing a survey study (n=100) and attending a focus group session. Upon completion, the findings had to be structured and delivered to the NOS.

The main topics of research I had to work on involved writing research reports on interactive audio and video and on how artificial intelligence is implemented. Additionally, I conducted in-depth research on current trends within the media landscape, translating these insights into specific opportunities for the public broadcaster. This consisted of two parts: a desk research and interviews. While the desk research consisted mainly of going through previous project reports on a qualitative level through the use of Atlas.ti, I was also able to create my own visualizations by working in raw data displayed in spreadsheets. In order to avoid biases from the public broadcasts, expert interviews were conducted in order to define trends and support claims discovered in the reports.

2.2 Professional Practices

During my research internship, I also engaged in diverse professional activities that enriched my experience and contributed significantly to the goals of the public broadcaster. One of my key responsibilities involved crafting the monthly internal newsletter by curating inspiring highlights from ongoing projects and innovative initiatives. Besides this task, a crucial aspect of my role was the establishment of a comprehensive trend database, facilitating easy access to relevant information on projects from NPO and outside. This was executed by using a content management system (CMS) and using open source design tools to visualize the findings.

Furthermore, I actively participated in trend activation through the implementation of various tools and workshops, fostering a dynamic and innovative environment within the organization. For example, I attended knowledge events such as the National Audio Day, Dutch Media Week and the Dutch Design Week, which I had to write reports on to contribute to the broader understanding of industry developments. By supporting research on diverse

current topics, I not only actively contributed to the organization's continuous pursuit of knowledge and adaptability, but it also allowed me to get in touch with important figures in the field of media.

2.3 Review of communication practices at the NPO

The NPO is regarded as an organization that conducts predominantly professional research, which overlaps with academia to some degree. Despite the fact that some methods used at the NPO align with those of academia, there is a notable difference in the tools they use, such as content management systems, open source design tools, spreadsheets, visualization software and their own database on research that is installed in the shared harddrive. Besides their own practices, they also tend to collaborate with external research organizations in order to publish research.

In contrast to the differences between professional organizations and academia, both rely on data-sources. However, the news organization is primarily concerned with the practical implications, rather than building on knowledge or making theory. Both fields gather and analyze data to support their stories on findings that closely relate to reality.

Nevertheless, the key difference between academic and professional research at the NPO is that academia tests the ideas using scientific guidelines. For example, academic research focuses on producing long-term knowledge produced in an ethical, transparent and trustworthy fashion, whereas the NPO produces short-term stories based on current events, trends or on their own database. Moreover, academic research tends to be more in-depth and critical with regard to the research produced by the broadcasts and news organizations. For example, the use of theory within the research project on the implementation of interactive audio and video would be regarded as a distraction rather than a pragmatic addition to the report.

Hence, the research methods employed by the news organization come with both advantages and limitations. The organization has access to a diverse range of data sources to enhance their storytelling, but there are constraints on the kinds of stories and projects that can be covered. Moreover, time limitations, data availability, and other factors play a role in these restrictions. There is always the question of how accurate and representative the data is overall, a concern shared across both professional and academic realms. For instance, it was crucial that I built upon the database according to the standards of the NPO, rather than adhering to academic guidelines of being open, transparent and accessible.

What is surprising is the contrast in the amount and type of data needed to draw conclusions. In academic settings, the usual approach involves collecting a substantial amount of data and conducting statistical tests to assess its representativeness. However, at NPO, it emphasized qualitative rather than quantitative relevance. The NPO prefers comprehensive portrayals and does not appreciate the approach of gathering a sample over time and making generalizations or relations towards academic theory. Oftentimes this could be frustrating, especially when some data sources lack protocols for this type of collection or there is potential to dive deeper in the research by applying theories.

3. Research Project

In this section, the research projects on interactive audio and video and artificial intelligence are elaborated. It contains a description of the contents of the projects as well as the procedures of the projects. Although the artificial intelligence project was not finished, I have added a considerable amount of time on the project and therefore I deem it as part of my internship experience.

3.1 Research Interactive Audio and Video

In September, I formulated a plan to conduct a market and opportunity scan focusing on interactive video and audio experiences. The objective was to explore the existing demand, particularly among generation Z and Alpha, and understand why successful concepts in this format are limited. From the NPO there was a need to define what constitutes interactive audio and video, since there is a huge overlap between different forms of interactive media. Subsequently, a comprehensive analysis of projects related to interactive audio and video within NPO and other broadcasting organizations was undertaken. This involved investigating initiatives such as the EO interactive podcast, NTR's interactive web series "Wadoeje," KRONCRV's interactive "Slimste mens" voice game, and others.

Furthermore, each project was scrutinized for its concepts, goals, target audiences, assumptions, learnings, and success levels. In order to examine these extensive bodies of text, I used Atlas.ti to structure my findings in order to draw conclusions from. To gain deeper insights, there was a plan formulated to interview experts in the field of interactive design, probing into reasons behind limited growth or success. This exploration encompassed factors such as target audience nuances, distinctions between audio and video projects, plans for new interactive endeavors, and awareness of inspiring projects from other sectors or countries.

An external analysis was also conducted in order to examine interactive content examples outside the public broadcaster. This entailed evaluating the success of projects from Netflix, Mediamonitor, visual novels, gaming, and other relevant areas. Moreover, the deskresearch allowed an elaborated understanding of the preferences and engagement levels of Generation Alpha and Generation Z with interactive content. The findings from a mini-research study on both generations were analyzed to identify potential themes, topics, gaps and touchpoints for interactive content.

The aim of this project was to formulate conclusions based on the gathered insights and propose strategies on how to effectively leverage interactive content. Weekly progress meetings were scheduled for Mondays and Fridays to discuss and guide the internship tasks, with the objective of delivering a comprehensive report with appropriate formatting, references, links, and proper source attribution by the end of the internship. This document would encapsulate the entire research process and provide actionable recommendations for the public broadcaster on their internal website.

3.2 Research Artificial Intelligence

For this research, I was responsible for conducting a meta-analysis on how artificial intelligence has been implemented at the NPO. The objective was to enhance the existing

research by incorporating the latest insights, visualizing the media chain, and providing an updated perspective on AI's implications for the public broadcaster. I had to build on current insights on AI technology and update the learnings section in order to reflect on the current landscape concerning an exploration of what AI may offer in terms of opportunities and threats for the NPO and identify areas where new experiments or follow-up research should be conducted in 2024. An additional aim of this project was to integrate NPO's AI policy and strategy into the report.

However, due to the time constraints and the amount of data I had to cover for the interactive audio and video project, I was not able to finish this research project. I managed to finish a considerable amount of deskresearch, but I was not able to draw conclusions to the answers NPO was seeking. Therefore, I am considering collaborating further with the NPO on this subject after this internship.

4. Supervisor Evaluations

In this section the contributions of the evaluations are presented from a supervisor of the NPO (Tialda Raaijmakers) and from ASCOR (Marcel H. van Egmond). It consists of the dates and the contents of the meetings that reflect on the professional internship. It indicates to what extent I have met the expectations of the internship, my experiences and where I could improve on.

4.1. 20 September 2023 - Marcel H. van Egmond

During the first meeting Marcel H. van Egmond played a fundamental role in providing advice on setting boundaries and commencing my internship on a positive note. His guidance emphasized the importance of clearly defining personal and professional limits to maintain a healthy work-life balance during the internship. Marcel's insights on effective communication in expressing expectations have been beneficial in establishing a constructive and collaborative environment. His emphasis on starting the internship with enthusiasm, proactiveness, and a clear understanding of objectives has not only boosted my confidence, but also set the foundation for a productive and fulfilling work experience.

Moreover, Marcel emphasized the importance of documenting my progress during the internship. He advised me to maintain detailed records to incorporate into my professional research report. Marcel's mentorship has proven to be an invaluable asset, offering practical wisdom that extends beyond the technical aspects of the internship to encompass the essential skills of professional growth and interpersonal effectiveness.

4.2. 6 November 2023 - Marcel H. van Egmond

This meeting marked as the mid-term meeting where Marcel H. van Egmond gave advice on how to set boundaries with regard to working outside office hours. I was experiencing a rather challenging period where the internship demanded more of me than that I was able to offer and by stating my limits and the agreement that was stated in the contract, I was able to take control of the situation in a formal and professional manner. Thanks to Marcel's previous advice, I was able to solve this matter in a professional fashion.

Consequently, I started on the project that entailed the influence of artificial intelligence on the NPO, but I was not able to finish this due to time constraints.

4.3. 23 January 2024 - Tialda Raaijmakers

“During his internship, Helge delivered a report summarizing the learnings from interactive audio and video experiments conducted by the Dutch Public Broadcaster. He executed this task with great care. One point of improvement lies in his ability to ask questions effectively to extract the right information. Helge's strength lies in networking and bringing (the right) people together. He easily establishes connections, and this quality makes others inclined to collaborate with him or provide input. This attribute proved beneficial in the creation of this report, for which input had to be gathered from various broadcasters and experts.”

5. Conclusions and Reflection

In this section, I reflect on the internship experience as well as the two learning goals I set for myself before the start of the internship. Looking back at my professional research internship as a trend researcher, it has been a rewarding and educational experience, where I had the opportunity to apply not only my knowledge and skills I have learned during the masters, but also work in a professional setting on projects and inform on the innovative developments in the field of technology in and outside the NPO. It was a privilege to be able to work at such a prestigious organization in such an interesting team. I was able to explore the possibilities to great extent at NPO and gain new knowledge of myself and my limits. Due to this internship, I was able to meet inspiring and interesting people in the field and understand the media landscape in Media Park.

When I first applied for the position of trend researcher, I was not aware of what it exactly entailed. However, I discovered that it is an emerging field that has been developing in the past few years and is becoming a recognized practice in the media. Trend analysis involves the identification and examination of patterns within data to anticipate forthcoming developments, encompassing aspects like consumer trends and business outcomes. Pattern recognition is a crucial aspect of this practice, since it entails identifying themes. Utilizing quantitative and qualitative approaches, analysts assess past data to discern various influencing factors, such as economic circumstances, demographic shifts, technological advancements, and marketing tactics, when assessing potential changes.

Furthermore, this novel practice grants a more pragmatic perspective than academic research. Due to the fact that the field is considerably new, it has its limitations. For example, there is not a precise methodology or guideline that is used in order to identify trends, which raises discussions on what can be regarded as a trend in the first place. Moreover, the field has not been grounded in academic theory, due to its pragmatic and multidisciplinary nature. This leaves the field of trend research to a certain degree shrouded in mystery. On the other hand, this makes the field more interesting to explore and I would love to delve deeper in this method and I see it as a challenge in order to define these guidelines in my future career.

During my professional research internship as a trend researcher, I was able to realize my primary learning goal to develop my writing skills in order to produce appealing research for the mass. By writing on different events, news and the monthly internal newsletter, I was able to not only improve my Dutch writing skills, but also work with a content management system (CMS). This task allowed me to showcase my ability to present complex information into accessible content while fostering effective communication within the organization. Additionally, the second learning goal, which involved researching and writing about current trends and translating them into specific opportunities for the public broadcaster, provided a comprehensive understanding of the intersection between technological trends and the broadcasting industry. This was also realized and required me to critically analyze emerging trends and assess their relevance to the NPO.

Building and maintaining this database proved to be a valuable resource for the team in order to improve decision-making processes. Working on this trend database forced me to change my perspective on technology and innovation in the field of media. This enabled me to organize and categorize valuable insights for future reference. In addition to researching these trends, I actively engaged in activating them through various tools and workshops. This hands-on involvement allowed me to witness the practical application of trend research in shaping strategies and decision-making within the organization.

In conclusion, my internship at the NPO was a valuable and enriching experience, aligning with and surpassing the goals I set for myself. I am grateful for the opportunities afforded to me, and I look forward to applying the skills and insights gained in my future endeavors. I have learned what it is like to work for the Dutch national broadcast and how media is being created behind the scenes. Since I enjoyed my experience and I was able to build relationships within the professional field, I am considering writing my thesis in collaboration with the NPO on the use of artificial intelligence in journalism at Nieuwsuur.

6. References

Openbare documenten. (z.d.). Over NPO. Geraadpleegd 23 januari 2024, van

<https://over.npo.nl/organisatie/openbare-documenten>

Zaken, M. van A. (2016). *Wat doet de Nederlandse Publieke Omroep (NPO)?* - *Rijksoverheid.nl*

[Onderwerp]. Ministerie van Algemene Zaken.

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<nderwerpen/media-en-publieke-omroep/vraag-en-antwoord/nederlandse-publieke-omroep>

7. Appendix

Appendix A: Mid-term evaluation professional research internship by external supervisor

Date: 10 November 2023

Name student: Helge Moes

Name supervisor: Simone Mutsaers

On completing their professional research internship, the student should have achieved the following learning objectives:

To what extent did the student show he/she is making progress towards achieving these learning outcomes	Not yet sufficient	Sufficient
· Students can apply their knowledge and skills with regards to communication research methodology, to conduct research within professional organizations.		X
· Students are able to contribute to a communication research-based product (e.g. a report or presentation) in line with the needs of the professional and its stakeholders.		X
· Students are able to critically review the communication research practices in professional organizations and formulate recommendations, also with an eye on professional organizations' aims.	X	

· Students can reflect critically on their own knowledge and practices, and on those of others.	X	
· Students can revise their opinions based on feedback from the professional field.		X
· Students have started to build a professional network in the field of communication and media research.		X
· The student has developed him/herself professionally. To this end the student formulated two concrete learning objectives with regards to his/her professional development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Enhance research and writing skills to create engaging articles for the general public by translating practical research findings into accessible content. o Explore innovative research methods like trend analysis in the Dutch public broadcasting industry. 		X

Additional remarks about the internship so far:

Helge is very eager to learn through networking and has an analytical view. I have noticed that he is open for feedback and applies it to subsequent projects.

Remaining activities that the student will undertake during final weeks of the internship either to remedy any issues where the internship thus far has not fully met the criteria, and/or to further optimize the student's learning experience:

In the coming months I would like Helge to focus on reflection on his own performance and deliverables, and of others the team: how can we have more impact?

Appendix B: Professional Internship Registration

[1: Description]

Dutch Public Broadcasting, more specifically the NPO Innovatie (<https://innovatie.npo.nl/>), wants to respond to the rapidly changing media behavior of the public and has therefore joined forces with the broadcasters to promote media innovation. Since 2019, the NPO Innovation Department has been established, which supports the innovation process of the broadcasters and internal departments. Among other things by conducting (trend) research, pooling research results and contact with audiences.

[2: starting date, end date]

04-09-2023, 02-02-2023

32 hour (4 days) a week, with 2 days on location

18 ECTS

[3: Name of the internship supervisor]

Simone Mutsaers, innovation researcher

Tialda Raaijmakers

email:

simone.mutsaers@npo.com

tialda.siebinga@npo.com

LinkedIn:

https://www.linkedin.com/in/simonemutsaers/?locale=nl_NL

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/tialdasiebinga/>

[4: List of activities]

Research Based (60%):

- Supporting research on various topical themes
- Activating trends with different tools and work forms
- Building a trend database through content analysis
- Interviewing sources on research topics

Besides this fact, I shall be working on a project with Simone Mutsaers and Tialda Siebinga on interactive audio & video projects and how artificial intelligence is being implemented within the media company. Many studies and experiments have already taken place at various broadcasters and departments on these both subjects. The idea is to do a meta-analysis on both projects. What are the key learnings? What opportunities and threats does it present for the PO? In what areas does follow-up research need to be done?

I shall be collecting qualitative as quantitative data and analyze these findings in order to formulate concrete solutions to the novel challenges that artificial intelligence and interactive audio & video presents. Additionally, my role shall be to assist Simone and Tialda on this.

We are going to organize an innovation talk around (online) communities. The NPO still has to decide on the exact format, but think of quantitative research, expert interviews, outside-in, collecting trend signals, etc. During the talk we will try to convey insights from all these different sources in one hour. Afterwards we will contribute to a report.

Additional tasks (40%):

- Providing the monthly, internal newsletter with interesting and inspiring spots
- Finding and writing about current trends, which you translate into specific opportunities for public broadcasting

[5: Two additional learning objectives]

- Develop my research and writing skills in order to produce inspiring articles for the public. This entails translating quantitative knowledge gained by practical research into text that is

accessible for a general news consuming audience. Therefore, not containing academic vocabulary.

- Explore novel practical research methods, such as trend research, within the professional field of the Dutch public broadcasting industry.

Appendix C: List Research Publications and Contributions

Research Report: Interactive Audio & Video Learnings

<https://innovaties.npo.nl/onderzoeken/interactieve-audio-video#content>

https://innovatie.npo.nl/storage/configurations/innovatiesnponl/files/learnings_npo_interactieve_audio_en_video-interne_publicatie.pdf

Research Report: Dutch Media Week

<https://innovatie.npo.nl/nieuws/terugblik-dutch-design-week-2023-1>

Research Report: Dutch Design Week

<https://innovatie.npo.nl/nieuws/dutch-media-week-2023>

Contribution: Publieke pioniers 2 - Virtuele virtuozen

<https://innovatie.npo.nl/nieuws/publieke-pioniers-2-virtuele-virtuozen>

Contribution: Publieke pioniers 3 - Keeping it real

<https://innovatie.npo.nl/nieuws/publieke-pioniers-3-keeping-it-real>