

PSYCHO-SEGMENTATION IN PLACE-BASED CULTURAL STRATEGY

Understanding Participation,
Behaviour and Community Engagement
Beyond Demographics



Researched and written by

Disconnected Bodies

Audience Intelligence • Behavioural Insight • Cultural Strategy

PSYCHO-SEGMENTATION IN PLACE-BASED CULTURAL STRATEGY

Understanding Participation, Behaviour and Community Engagement Beyond Demographics

A practical framework for local authorities, cultural partnerships and place-based organisations



FROM INSIGHT TO IMPACT



Based on findings from:
UK Local Authority Cultural Strategy Review 2026
and
London Borough Cultural Strategy Review 2026

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MESSAGE FROM PABLO COLELLA

The cultural sector has become highly skilled at describing communities, but remains less effective at understanding behaviour.

Across our reviews of UK councils and London boroughs, participation was one of the most common strategic ambitions. Yet evidence of behavioural segmentation, audience retention analysis and motivational profiling remained comparatively rare.

This document explores how psycho-segmentation can help councils move beyond attendance targets and demographic assumptions towards a deeper understanding of why people engage, why they don't, and how participation can be sustained over time.



PABLO COLELLA

Founder & Lead Researcher

Disconnected Bodies

OUR PURPOSE

We believe that better audience understanding leads to stronger cultural strategies, more inclusive experiences and greater public value.



BETTER UNDERSTANDING

See communities as complex, diverse and motivated by more than demographics.



BETTER STRATEGY

Design programmes and services that respond to real motivations and behaviours.



BETTER ENGAGEMENT

Create experiences that resonate, build loyalty and strengthen cultural participation.



BETTER IMPACT

Deliver measurable social, economic and civic outcomes for our places.



STRONGER STRATEGIES START WITH DEEPER UNDERSTANDING.

When we understand motivations, barriers and behaviours, we can design culture that connects, includes and endures.

THE AUDIENCE INTELLIGENCE PROBLEM

Strategy without a deep understanding of behaviour leads to assumptions, misaligned investment and missed opportunities for participation.



WHAT COUNCILS OFTEN KNOW



Age



Ethnicity



Postcode



Deprivation



Disability



Household composition



WHAT COUNCILS OFTEN DON'T KNOW



Motivation



Cultural confidence



Participation barriers



Loyalty



Willingness to pay



Social influence



Behavioural triggers

WHY THIS MATTERS



PROBLEM

Attendance remains stagnant despite marketing spend.



PSYCHO-SEGMENTATION REVEALS

The issue is not awareness.
The issue is relevance.



PROBLEM

Young people attend once but never return.



PSYCHO-SEGMENTATION REVEALS

Different motivations exist within the same age group.



PROBLEM

Underrepresented communities remain underrepresented.



PSYCHO-SEGMENTATION REVEALS

Barriers are behavioural, emotional and social—not merely geographic.



Understanding behaviour, motivations and barriers enables councils to design cultural strategies that connect, convert and keep people engaged.

FIVE STRATEGIC CHALLENGES PSYCHO-SEGMENTATION CAN SOLVE

Across UK councils and London boroughs, the same strategic challenges appear again and again. Psycho-segmentation turns these challenges into opportunities for **growth, relevance and impact**.

STRATEGIC CHALLENGE

PSYCHO-SEGMENTATION CONTRIBUTION



**WEAK
PARTICIPATION
GROWTH**



**IDENTIFIES
BEHAVIOURAL BARRIERS**

Reveals what prevents people from taking part—and how to remove those barriers.



**POOR
REPEAT
ATTENDANCE**



**REVEALS
LOYALTY DRIVERS**

Identifies what encourages return visits, advocacy and long-term engagement.



**GENERIC
PROGRAMMING**



**ALIGNS OFFERS
TO MOTIVATIONS**

Ensures programmes and experiences resonate with the motivations that matter to different audience groups.



**WEAK
CONSULTATION
OUTCOMES**



**SEGMENTS COMMUNITIES
BY BEHAVIOUR**

Moves beyond one-size-fits-all consultation to understand the distinct needs and perspectives within communities.



**LIMITED
EVALUATION**



**TRACKS BEHAVIOURAL
CHANGE OVER TIME**

Measures shifts in participation, attitudes and behaviours—not just outputs and attendance.



When you understand behaviour, you can remove the right barriers, invest in the right offers, and create lasting cultural impact.

APPLYING PSYCHO-SEGMENTATION IN LOCAL CULTURAL STRATEGY

A complete operational cycle for deeper understanding,
better decisions and stronger cultural impact.

1

COMMUNITY DISCOVERY & CONSULTATION

Move beyond
demographic consultation.

Gather:

- motivations for participation
- barriers to attendance
- cultural confidence
- place attachment
- perceptions of local venues
- attitudes towards heritage assets
- willingness to travel
- trust in cultural institutions
- preferred communication channels

Engage through:

-  libraries
-  community centres
-  cultural venues
-  faith organisations
-  schools
-  local festivals
-  town-centre events



Bring delivery partners and funders into the process early where appropriate.

2

AUDIENCE PROFILING & PSYCHO-SEGMENTATION

Identify behavioural
audience groups.

For example:



Community Connectors

Participate to build belonging and social connection.



Heritage Guardians

Motivated by local history, identity and civic pride.



Cultural Explorers

Seek novelty, creativity and new experiences.



Family Builders

Prioritise affordable shared experiences.



Passive Supporters

Value culture but rarely engage.



Disengaged Residents

Experience confidence, relevance or accessibility barriers.

This creates a behavioural map of the borough rather than a demographic map alone.

3

STRATEGY & PROGRAMME DESIGN

Use segmentation to inform:

- cultural strategy priorities
- heritage interpretation
- visitor economy activity
- town-centre activation
- youth engagement programmes
- library services
- festivals and events
- public realm interventions



Design different experiences for different motivations.

Not:
One programme for everybody.

But:
Different pathways for different audiences.

4

PILOT ACTIVITY & SOFT LAUNCH

Test interventions through:

- heritage venues
- libraries
- community hubs
- meanwhile spaces
- cultural districts
- festivals
- public programmes

Measure:

- participation
- conversion
- repeat attendance
- advocacy
- satisfaction
- audience movement between segments



Generate evidence before large-scale investment.

5

FUNDING, PARTNERSHIPS & COMMUNICATIONS

Use audience insight to strengthen:

- Arts Council applications
- National Lottery Heritage Fund bids
- regeneration business cases
- sponsorship conversations
- partnership agreements

Create stronger narratives for:

- local press
- stakeholders
- elected members
- funders



Evidence evidence becomes an asset rather than simply a consultation output.

6

DELIVERY & MONITORING FRAMEWORK

Embed audience intelligence within:

- delivery plans
- action plans
- KPIs
- evaluation frameworks
- annual reviews

Track:

- participation growth
- behavioural change
- loyalty
- place attachment
- volunteer progression
- community confidence

Move from:



CONSULTATION



PSYCHO-SEGMENTATION



STRATEGY DESIGN



PILOT DELIVERY



FUNDING & PARTNERSHIPS



LIVE AUDIENCE INTELLIGENCE

THE NEXT GENERATION OF CULTURAL STRATEGY

TRADITIONAL MODEL



BEHAVIOURAL MODEL



The strongest future-facing cultural strategies may not be those with the largest budgets or the most ambitious rhetoric. They may be those that **best understand the people they serve**.



As cultural policy increasingly intersects with regeneration, wellbeing, economic development, youth opportunity and civic identity, audience intelligence becomes more than a research function.



It becomes **strategic infrastructure**.



Disconnected Bodies specialises in psycho-segmentation, audience profiling and behavioural insight for cultural organisations, local authorities and place-based partnerships.