

The BBC has project which explores tailored viewing

December 6 2015, by Nancy Owano

The image shows a mobile app interface for a personality quiz. The title is 'Tell us about yourself'. Below the title, it says 'Before we start the analysis, we'd like to get to know you a bit better.' and 'Do you consider yourself:'. There are five horizontal sliders, each with a blue dot indicating a selection. The sliders are labeled as follows:

- Uncreative (left) to Creative (right): The blue dot is positioned towards the 'Uncreative' side.
- Lazy (left) to Hardworking (right): The blue dot is positioned towards the 'Hardworking' side.
- Shy (left) to Outgoing (right): The blue dot is positioned towards the 'Outgoing' side.
- Headstrong (left) to Gentle (right): The blue dot is positioned towards the 'Gentle' side.
- Nervous (left) to At ease (right): The blue dot is positioned towards the 'At ease' side.

At the bottom of the screen, there are two buttons: 'BACK' on the left and 'MY RESULTS' on the right.

Why would a certain show grab you to the point where you let the coffee grow cold and rivet your attention to the screen from start to finish? It may not be just because the writers are brilliant or direction is smashing. It might just be a BBC product of the future, personalized video.

Behind the magic of this curious concept of viewing experience are technology and techniques intended to make narrative, [background music](#), and even color grading to be shaped realtime to suit your personality.

This is called the Visual Perceptive Media project. BBC is now working it out at [their lab](#) in MediaCityUK.

"Broadcasting over IP enables us to create all kinds of new content experiences that would not be possible or scalable on 'traditional' TV or radio. Among the new content experiences we're researching is personalized video, tailored to many individual users. We're investigating how to create personalized media which feels natural to the audience and exciting for the storyteller as it scales for millions of individual audience members."

This is film that changes based on the person watching the video. What does it know about the viewer and how? Profiled data from a [phone application](#) is used for building a profile, as it digests the viewer's preferences gleaned out of the user's [music collection](#) and personality questions.

It all starts with a dedicated mobile app. "What does your taste in music say about your personality?" You are asked to choose one of two options—scan the music library or input your favorites. Music listening history shapes the film score.

Personality questions include asking if you consider yourself lazy or hardworking, shy or outgoing.

Answers shape the narrative flow as well as aspects such as age and gender. Some scenes may be missing entirely. Action may favor one character over another; there may be male or female character bias.

The data is generated by the [mobile app](#). In the future, according to the team, the data could be generated by any number of services. The same film could even be shaped by a viewer's location, time or mood.

BBC's R&D team conducted their initial research with a small group; they wanted to assess their viewing experience. Did viewer participants buy into the concept of the film as a coherent whole? Or did they take it as a film made up of media objects that were being delivered on the fly?

The work continues, in BBC's quest to explore viewer experiences.

"We're building a public prototype to test our ideas with a wider audience. The project will also test the client side video capabilities of the browser as a platform. Watch this space!" said the BBC project page.

Ian Forrester, BBC senior producer, represents an interesting media industry focus on the future. Forrester's BBC page talked about "spotting the crossover opportunities of open technologies and business models. By watching what hackers and early adopters are doing to scratch their own itches now."

Could the Perceptive Media project signify new broadcasting methods?

Jamie Rigg, reviews editor, *Engadget UK*, posed this question.

"Personalization to this degree is certainly an interesting concept, but we do have one slight reservation. How are we supposed to natter about the latest episode of our favorite show when we all [watched](#) something different?"

Connor Duncan, CEO and editor in chief, wTVPC, wondered: "How will viewers talk about the show the next day?...*Hey, did you catch the Liverpool-oriented, [male](#) biased, introverted and analytical version of Dr.*

Who last night? Anyone?"

More information: www.bbc.co.uk/rd/projects/visual-perceptive-media

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