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Best Use of Social Media

Checkout247

by Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Finland

On the eve of Finland's independence centenary in December 2017, the goal was to create a moment of togetherness - a low-threshold way for Finns to join in and tell the narrative of Finland. Most of the thousands of 'Finland 100' events were local, but the team also wanted to create something that would work simultaneously & globally. One of the biggest background factors was the desire to talk about everyday life, instead of all things glossy, shiny and festive.

Hugely topical in the summer of 2017 in Finland was a live broadcast from a grocery store conveyor belt which had gathered hundreds of thousands of Finns together, live-commentating the groceries passing by. The team decided to team up with the grocery store chain and do a global, unedited Facebook live broadcast on ThisisFinland for 12 hours, open to participation and comments from all over the world, revealing in the classic Nordic open manner the glorious tedium of Finnish everyday life and eating habits. In addition, what would be more nostalgic to all the Finns living abroad than food products they know and long for? The team hoped that Finns would engage, tell stories about Finland

and answer possible questions from foreigners about the products passing by - pop-up-community building at its best and funniest.

The live footage of #checkout247 was aired on ThisisFINLAND's Facebook page starting December 5th at 2 pm GMT, on the eve of Finland's 100th Independence Day, and ending at 2 am GMT

on Independence Day itself. Thousands of shoppers popped into the 24/7 supermarket for last-minute holiday treats. The camera was fixed on the conveyor belt of Prisma Kaari, a supermarket in Helsinki, revealing what shoppers had put in their baskets, but not showing the shoppers themselves. Viewers were able to take part in the Finnish shopping experience by commenting on Facebook and Twitter. Viewers of the live #checkout247 broadcast could also see a rolling feed of quirky facts about Finnish food and lifestyle, provided by, among others, the Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners. Messages were sent to suppliers of the grocery store that any attempts to advertise for their products on the belt would be frowned upon - it was fundamental to the project that the belt flow was real. Moderators were set up to follow the comments, in case for a need to intervene either through activating the discussion or through moderating heated debates but no moderation was needed. Finns engaged in incredible ways; through popping up at the supermarket to make unusual or comedic purchases or to create artsy installations of their purchases on the conveyor belt

The one-off livestream, with limited social media promotion, reached new young global target groups and created a moment of togetherness, as well as encouraging Finns to tell the story of Finland. During the 12 hr long stream there were c. 200,000 visitors and the news of #checkout247 reached over 1.5 million people on social media. The main target, however, was to see a discussion between Finns and foreigners and this goal was achieved with more than 5000 comments and questions. Not one troll had to be removed. One highlight was a spontaneous countdown to independence day, after which Finns received congratulations from friends of Finland and people who had randomly found themselves watching a livestream from a Finnish checkout belt with thousands of others! ●

