Sesame Workshop Television Research



Sesame Workshop creates iconic kid's brands that currently range from television, video games, apps, and curriculum lessons for schools. The Knowledge & Content team is the foundation for all the research that the creative aspects for this offerings. As an intern, and later a freelance research specialist, I was a part of the field research team conducting qualitative and quantitative research with parents, teachers, and children to develop the Sesame Workshop products and IP.



The Electric Company was a popular show in the 1970s and Sesame Workshop conducted several research studies in order to bring it back in 2009. This show focused on teaching kids ages 6-9 the basics of reading and our research informed the developers how to make this version more engaging for children in this media landscape. Through our formative research we found that the increased use of various media platforms for our research population made it necessary to create a complete experience, one that expanded from only a TV show.

Research Questions

How do children use television, print, broadband media for entertainment and learning What communities and regions do we need to target for release? What challenges do families face in teaching children to read? What core learning areas are important to include in developing reading and literacy skills? Dragon Tales was developed to help children 2 - 6 years old learn how to solve problems and meet challenges in their own lives. This included: developing and maintaining relationships, coping with fears, and physical challenges like learning new skills (e.g., learning to ride a bicycle. The characters demonstrated ways to solve problems that were relevant to young kid's lives. The main characters, Max & Emmy, existed in a magical world where dragons are their friends and they help them solve daily problems and challenges they face. In an effort to explore and teach social development and relationship building the show introduced a storyline with a character that was in a wheelchair. Sesame Workshop was interested in understanding what young children already understood about physical disabilities and how Dragon Tales could contribute to teaching this.



Research Questions

Do children understand what it means to have a physical disability? At what age do physical limitations become apparent for children? Can lessons of empathy, social skills, and collaboration be taught through watching Dragon Tales?

Research Methods (for all IPs)

Field research to test animations, characters, songs, games Usability testing with children, parents, community leaders Develop sample prototypes of show so participants can view current themes Coding behavior from viewing sessions Consult and create summary reports on next phases in research

My Role (for all Sesame Workshop projects) Usability testing Coding of behavior after video-watching sessions Child interviews Survey Development Data analysis