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ROSETTA AND PHILAE: CAPTIVATING THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF A GLOBAL AUDIENCE

Abstract

In the final year leading up to Rosetta's approach to comet 67P/Churyumov–Gerasimenko and subsequent landing of Philae, an outreach campaign was initiated by the European Space Agency (ESA) using social media, participatory engagement and storytelling techniques as a means to reach out to the hearts and minds of a global audience. As a result, the comet-landing event received major global publicity unseen before for a space mission in recent time.

This paper analyzes how this outreach success was achieved by providing a historical analysis of Rosetta's key mission highlights over the 10-year journey. A comparative analysis showcases the differences and commonalities between the outreach campaign for ESA's Rosetta mission and NASA's Curiosity mission in 2012. NASA's campaign for the Curiosity mission served as inspiration for the outreach decisions adopted by ESA. A survey conducted for this paper looks in detail at what aspects of the outreach campaign were the key drivers for promoting the Rosetta mission. A breakdown of the outreach strategies implemented for the Rosetta mission demonstrates their individual effect.

Design & Data GmbH contributed extensively to the success of this outreach campaign by producing the key content elements. This paper is based on our first hand experience. It concludes with a series of recommendations and provides a blueprint on how to successfully conduct outreach campaigns for future space missions