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Did you know?

Judith Kamalski Dr
Elsevier

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Section 6: Did You Know?

Dr Judith Kamalski

... that since November 2011 Jamie Hyneman and Adam Savage – presenters of the science entertainment show *Mythbusters* – have been the proud owners of honorary doctorates from the University of Twente in the Netherlands? Jamie and Adam have unique backgrounds in robotics, model-making and special effects, and in each episode of *Mythbusters* they confirm or ‘bust’ various theories by simply putting them to the test, usually with the aid of spectacular experimental set ups. Their approach has made science, technology, and investigative principles both fun and cool to millions of viewers worldwide.

The *Mythbusters*’ experiments are always dramatic, but some episodes really stand out. One of Jamie’s favorites is when they investigated whether a lead balloon could fly – so they built one of a thin sheet of metal, and filled it with helium (it did indeed fly)². Adam mentions the time they wanted to know whether a penny dropped from the Empire State Building can kill a person. The *Mythbusters* failed to produce any damage with a dropping penny, even when it was fired from a rifle. Visiting the Empire State Building, they realized that updrafts and roofs of lower floors would prevent the penny from ever reaching street level. “I came up with the idea of creating a wind tunnel with a different velocity at the bottom than at the top. A tumbling penny should move up and down in the wind tunnel, and it did. That is the kind of thing I really enjoy.”²

Can bibliometric information help us decide in a more objective way what the best topics on *Mythbusters* were? A Scopus search for *Mythbusters* in title, abstract or keywords returns 17 documents. Commonly used words in these article titles are: education, classroom and science. In the list of topics on the *Mythbusters*’ site, the commonly used words are, unsurprisingly, words such as ‘bust’, ‘test’, ‘know’, but also words such as ‘turkey’, ‘shark’, and ‘government’. If this has sparked your interest, find out more at [http://dsc.discovery.com/tv/mythbusters/!](http://dsc.discovery.com/tv/mythbusters/)

References:

1. <http://www.utwente.nl/organization/stories/honorary-doctorates/>
2. Aldous, P. (2009) Interview: the *Mythbusters*. *The New Scientist*. Vol. 203, 9 September, pp. 28–29.