

Reflection Paper

Disrupt, Disintermediate, Disseminate: Twitter and the Music Industry

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Summary of Work

"just setting up my twttr. 9:50 PM March 21, 2006"

- @Jack Dorsey, Twitter Co-Founder¹

The aforementioned quotation may soon feature the most defining characters representing the grand narrative of a generation. Since its "tipping point" at the entertainment conference South by Southwest Interactive in early 2007, the micro-blogging service of 140-character fame has become increasingly synonymous with daily life.² This has been complimented by the global trend towards mobile technology, perpetuated by unparalleled levels of accessibility. Twitter has propelled itself into the forefront of social, political and economic change. Twitter's user-generated content has been adopted by both the private and public sectors. Today, Twitter acts as a global medium of communication for the masses.³

This work will take an analytical and critical approach in evaluating the theoretical concepts and applicability of the third party application Twitter and its use within the music industry.

To this end, it is evident that Twitter is a significant player within both the global and cultural sphere. Adding to this effect is the trend of the global adoption by way of mobile technology, as characterized by its high levels of accessibility.⁴ Although Twitter

¹ Douglas, N. "Twitter blows up at SXSW Conference." *Gawker*, 2007.

² Douglas, N. "Twitter blows up at SXSW Conference." *Gawker*, 2007. and Gladwell, M. *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*. New York, New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2006.

³ Diriöz, A O. "Twitter and the Middle East." *Center for Middle Eastern Strategic Studies* 5(1) (2013): 67-75.

⁴ Diriöz, A O. "Twitter and the Middle East." *Center for Middle Eastern Strategic*. 67-75.

initially emerged through the realm of entertainment, it has seen wide scale growth and public embracement, as is evident through the development of Jeremy Bentham's "Panopticon" as a tool of autonomy.⁵ It is through this development as a disruptive technology and growth into a social imperative that the entertainment industry has begun utilizing the data collected by Twitter users to disintermediate the artist discovery process. As such, data is now becoming a complimentary tool within this process, as expressed through the Twitter and 300 Entertainment partnership as well as the implementation of real-time socially influenced music charts.⁶ In order to create a better standing for success, it is important that this process is complimented with an education of the public and artist community to accurately and truly benefit listeners, the artist and repertoire portfolio and emerging music content creators.

The Process

The process of completing the assignment was relatively straight-forward. However, one of the major challenges faced was arriving at a finite topic for the culminating experience. Originally, the project was going to be centralized around a more hands on approach, dedicated on the marketing and design of music content. This was to be focused on a project that another student was also working on, which would have complimented both of our efforts quite well.

⁵ Bentham, J. *The Panopticon Writings*. London, United Kingdom: Verso, 1995.

⁶ Smirke, R. "Lyor Cohen Unveils 300 Partnership With Twitter During Midem Keynote." *Billboardbiz*, February 02, 2014. And Billboard "Billboard Twitter Real-Time Charts FAQ" Billboard. http://www.economywatch.com/world_economy/japan/export-import.html (accessed June 13, 2014).

Unfortunately, this did not come to fruition and my interest then shifted towards the possibility of working with Berklee ICE through its' partnership with 300 Entertainment and Twitter Music. Do to unforeseen circumstances, the project was pushed back in the academic schedule to begin this coming September. This area was of great interest and as such, I was able to apply certain aspects of the proposed project into the development of my current culminating experience. Additionally, I drew upon some of the resources mentioned in previous interviews and meetings, like the works of Malcom Gladwell and design inspirations of Alex Cornell. It was the adaption of these efforts that led me to my current research project; *Disrupt, Disintermediate , Disseminate: Twitter and the Music Industry*.

The current project was able to draw on a considerable amount of social theory as well as a more applied approach by building off of the concepts explored Gladwell's *Tipping Point*. This was accomplished through the creation of my own infographic using inspirational elements of designer Alex Cornell.

In terms of the development of the final project, I was able to better time manage my efforts by creating a timeline that accounted for research, writing, peer editing and design.

Overall, I felt as though the process went relatively smoothly once a final topic was decided upon. Although, it is also important to note that the previous attempts at alternate topics also played a significant role in arriving at this conclusion. These items functioned almost like building blocks or it's own mini 'tipping point' arriving at the summation of an idea (the research topic).

The Next Step

The next step is expanding upon the ‘Future Research’ section of my paper (accompanied by the infographic I created) as a framework to help discover and develop the idea of a new category of influencers. Therefore, the concept of ‘scalability’ will play a pivotal role in taking the next step forward in this process. This will most likely require the assistance of outside help, as my skill set is limited in terms of creating a scalable algorithm (even though the theoretical and basic mathematical principles are there). I will therefore have to determine if this project is something that I wish to remain in the academic sphere or a step towards to creating something that has the potential to be monetized and thus enter into the commerce space. If this commercial action were to proceed, it would prove beneficial to find a support system both in terms of capital and knowledge based systems.

However, from a purely design perspective, the concept of creating high impact visuals will continue to be a vehicle in which I will continue to explore. I find that visuals create better engagement, build resonance and evoke greater retention from audiences. Thus, developing these skills will prove very complimentary towards professional development and future efforts.

Results: How did this align with the student’s expectations?

I believe the work aligned nicely with my expectations with the project. Unfortunately, a possible partnership with Ayasdi (a topographic analytic firm) did not work out in time for the project, which could have addressed the concerns of scalability for future development.

Contribution to the Discipline and Professional Development

I believe this work contributes to the recent trends towards more analytical based processes within the music industry. However, I feel the major contribution of this work is not solely focused on the representation of trends and data, but explaining ‘why’ these action may occur and ‘what’ these social transactions mean within a larger social sphere..

In terms of professional development, the process of researching, collecting data and drawing meaningful conclusions always presents a direct correlation between academic and non-academic efforts. It is a skill that will constantly require effort to improve and build upon. Additionally, the nature of this paper by being both social and technology oriented, required constant attentiveness to an evolving landscape with the introduction of new information in order to ensure greater levels of accuracy and holism within the work.

Furthermore, this work also enabled me to explore relationships with individuals within the industry relating to the topic. Over the course of the process, I was able to speak with Panos Panay of Berklee ICE’s program, who suggested I take a look at Gladwell’s work, Ayadsi Incorporated a topical data analysis firm and Alex Cornell, former Creative Director of FireSpotter Labs (Google Ventures).

Impact on the Student Completing the Work

I feel as though completing this work has had a positive impact. The technology portion of the work, created a habit of staying up to date on blog, trade publications and new research articles. While the social theory portion allowed me to revisit some of my previous efforts acting as a content re-familiarization, but also allowed me to look at the work through a different lens. By being removed from the discipline for over a year, it allowed me to better aggregate and streamline the content in terms of applicability, but also enabled a more free flow of ideas instead of being constrained by the nuances and limitations of some of the social theories used (in terms of in-depth analysis). Overall, I felt as though this work acted as a capstone to my academic experience. Although learning is an ongoing effort, I felt like the work drew upon both my undergraduate and graduate specializations and complimented the process well.

Other

One of the largest benefits of the Culminating Experience was the opportunity to collaborate with other students final projects. I played a variety of roles varying from web design, motion graphics (VFX), the creation of band merchandise, photoshoots and videography (examples of these items can be found in the Appendix section of the work). I feel as though the collaboration with other students allowed me to address other skill sets that did not necessarily fit within the parameters of my project. As a result, I was able to create a greater learning experience for myself , as well as the satisfaction of developing, creating new ideas and watching them evolve through the work of others.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Manuel Delgado - Two Web Designs, Third-Party Graphics and Merchandise Examples





Appendix B: Alex Morancy - Videography, VFX and Motion Graphics Example



Appendix C: Jeremy Carrion – Photoshoot and Graphic Design Example



Appendix D: Dan Omphroy - Live Photoshoot Example



