Title: App Economics: On mobile marketing and user acquisition

Bio: Dr. David B. Nieborg is a postdoc fellow at the University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands, and is currently affiliated with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA (D.B.Nieborg@uva.nl / http://www.gamespace.nl).

Abstract

The advent of smartphones radically changed the production, circulation and usage of mobile games. Games have become "apps" and in a matter of years new market entrants such as Apple, Google, Amazon and Samsung are dominating a multibillion-euro market segment. Compared to developing games for "traditional" mobile game platforms operated by Sony and Nintendo, the new online marketplaces for apps (or "app stores") are relatively open to new entrants, signalling the democratization of cultural production. With minimal financial investments, game developers are able to quickly develop and publish a mobile game, resulting in the availability of hundreds of thousands of games. As a result, for game developers the discoverability of mobile games has become a significant barrier to generate revenue. In addition, over the last three years the dominant revenue model for game apps has shifted from a paid-for or "premium" model towards free-to-play model. Over 90% of mobile games in app stores can be downloaded free of charge; revenue is derived from in-app-purchases and advertising.

Drawing on political economic theory this presentation focuses on mobile games played on Apple's "iDevices" (i.e. the iPhone, iPod and iPad) and discusses how developers grapple with the issue of discoverability and increasingly rely on social networks and mobile marketing platforms to aggregate users. It is argued that mobile marketing practices associated with the industry practice of "user acquisition" tie in neatly in with a social media logic that is constituted of the elements of programmability, popularity, connectivity and datafication (Van Dijck & Poell, 2013). This contribution aims to offer a deeper insight in how both mobile platforms and social media platforms affect the operations and economics of mobile game production and how power relations among industry actors are reconfigured. Drawing on interview data collected from over 30 companies from the Netherlands, Finland, and the United States, specific attention is paid to the new role of mobile game marketing platforms such as as Chartboost, AppLift, and Glispa. Contrasting traditional mass media marketing campaigns raising brand awareness for premium games, mobile advertisers offer developers a set of tools to "acquire users" for their free-to-play titles. That is to say, mobile

game advertising has become an elaborate and quite complex process of targeting users via mobile apps (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, mobile browsers and games).

Title: Virtually Taking Public Space to the Bank: Banking-App Design and Making a Market out of Everyday Social Spaces

Bio: Dr. Matthew Tiessen is an Assistant Professor in the School of Professional Communication in the Faculty of Communication and Design at Ryerson University, Toronto, Canada. Research Associate at The Infoscape Research Lab: Centre for the Study of Social Media (mtiessen@gmail.com).

Abstract

Banking's going mobile and becoming social. Today your smartphone is your own personal and portable bank vault, allowing you to access, deposit, and transfer the ever-morphing debt instruments we refer to as money with a light caress of your screen and a deliberate tap on an imaginary digital button. Our devices are allowing money and debt to achieve what money's always "desired" (Tiessen, 2014) – ubiquity, immateriality, infinite accessibility, and instantaneity. Connecting banks with customers' mobile devices allow the social relationship between banks and their creditors and debtors to become more granular. This is primarily a one way street defined more by the banks' access to user-generated content than by customers' desires. Through mobile devices and social networking, the pre-existing power asymmetries between banks and their customers are further extended in the bank's favour. By providing customers with the appearance of access and interactivity, app-based banking allows the financial system to extend its ability to track, surveil, influence, and control credit-seeking populations.

Today in Canada, 70% of Canadian smartphone owners have banking apps on their devices. I will examine the design and operation of smartphone-based banking apps offered by Canadian banking institutions to objectify the ways these mobile and virtual credit portals moderate consumers' relationship to their online accounts. My objective is to figure app-based banking as the recent manifestation of the dematerialization of debt and credit, of the financialization of everyday life, and of the integration of capital with an individual's everyday social lives. Moreover, as banking apps function as mobile surveillance and data-mining aids for the banking industry we can imagine a future wherein banking apps figure as digital portals to a networked environment of credit-driven competition wherein banking and paying debt itself becomes "gamified," giving rise to a more perfect integration of banking, digital labour, credit production, and desire-fulfillment.

Since borrowing money, receiving credit, and manufacturing debt are all synonymous with the ex nihilo manufacturing of money, I will argue that the extension of banking services onto smartphones manufactures yet another market – a mobile market – that enables the banking system to colonize social spaces in between more conventional points of exchange. Banking and money's flows, then, are accelerating, filling in the gaps that till now have remained free of financial transaction. Public space, in other words, is increasingly becoming banking space and our social lives, in turn, are literally becoming something we have begun to bank upon.

Title: Integrating social networks in a lobbying campaign: the case study of Intermarché, a supermarket chain

Bio : Olivier Arifon is Professor in Information and Communication sciences, Université libre de Bruxelles, Belgium (olivier.arifon@ulb.ac.be).

Nicolas Vanderbiest is PhD candidate, Université Libre de Bruxelles, Re*SIC* unit research, Belgium (nico_vdbb7@hotmail.com).

Abstract

On December 10, 2013 the European Parliament voted against a ban on bottom deep sea trawling. What appears to be a victory for the fishing industry, and in particular for Intermarché group through Scapêche, the fishing division, almost turned into a defeat after a social media campaign launched by the NGO Bloom. Everything begins on Nov. 4, 2013, when the NGO Bloom learns that the vote on the deep-sea fishing is scheduled on December 9 at the European parliament. The NGO distributed flyers at the European Parliament in Strasbourg and purchased billboards in a Paris's station. Intermarché focuses its action on politics by elaborating newsletters through the lobbying firm « G Plus Europe ».

On Nov. 18, 2013, a French illustrator, Pénélope Bagieu, published a comic explaining the deep sea trawling technique on her blog[1] and point directly the finger at Intermarché. This campaign quickly becomes viral and transforms the Intermarché lobbying campaign into an image one. The company had secured the politicians support, according to opinions expressed such as the French Minister of Fisheries, Frederic Cuvilier, who said at a conference: "We are not in a comic book, but in an economic reality with jobs involved."[2] Bloom has successfully managed to mobilize people to such an extent that the decision of Parliament will lead more comments on social networks than the cartoon.

The petition launched with the comic, gathered 827,000 signatures and forces Intermarché to reach out to NGOs since the company decided to stop deep-sea bottom trawling below 800 meters by early 2015. This case raises the question of how NGO Bloom came to this result considering the fact that Intermarché has so far, through its lobbying, a favorable situation.

---

[1] http://www.penelope-jolicoeur.com/2013/11/take-5-minutes-and-sign-this.html
[2] https://twitter.com/jerome_n/status/406405427380097024, traduction by the author.

To answer this question, we analyzed the 44,226 tweets talking about Intermarché and deep sea trawling with the intelligence software Visibrain. We also analyzed newspaper articles and the communication of the different actors, Scapêche, Intermarché, Greenpeace and Bloom.

Intermarché failed to communicate with the public, leaving scope to the NGO Bloom. In addition, the company probably did not have a strategic monitoring process enabling it to detect such a crisis. By doing so, it has won on field of lobbying, but lost on the public opinion field. This is a clear case of an absence of social media strategy in a lobbying campaign.

Title: Sponsored stories as an invasion of the lifeworld. A focus group approach to the attitudes and awareness of Facebook users

Bio: Rob Heyman is a Reseacher at iMinds-SMIT, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium (roheyman@vub.ac.be).

Jo Pierson is Researcher and Senior Researcher at iMinds-SMIT, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium (Jo.pierson@vub.ac.be).

Abstract

Advertising products and advertising revenue have increased in social media platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter after their IPO filing. Ad revenue increased with 50% for Facebook, but it doubled for Twitter and LinkedIn if we compare their revenue streams with the year prior to their IPO. We theoretically frame this advertising increase as a colonization of the lifeworld of social media users. We research the expansion of the system world in the form of increased personalization, amount of advertising and use of personal data in persuasive content. We approach Facebook as a case and research how users experience this colonization.

The focus of our research is to understand how 18 year olds engage with Facebook and what their attitudes about privacy and advertising are to understand if and how users experience colonization in everyday life. The data collection consists of a series of six focus group sessions (May 2013), with a total of 78 respondents and on average 13 participants per session (lasted one hour), and the audio recordings were transcribed and analyzed with Nvivo. Since the topic is technically complicated and prone to misconception, we created a different ex ante situation for four focus groups to test if awareness changed their attitude. They received an introductory course about advertising on Facebook. Prior to the course/interview, users were asked to identify advertisements on a screenshot of Facebook's News Feed in order to measure their awareness of ad units on this medium.

Preliminary results: Facebook was primarily used to keep up to date with news, hobbies, friends, schoolwork and instantaneous communication and agenda setting. It is an all-in-one medium that respondents find hard to do without because everybody else is on it. Respondents were able to recognize advertising without understanding the process in all focus groups. Awareness of the process did not change their attitudes towards advertising, which was seen as a necessary nuisance that could be ignored or blocked with applications.

Conclusion: The increase of advertising and use of their personal information and UGC does not influence users' Facebook experience. The invasion of the system world is not felt as such or at least not yet for as long as this process does not interfere with the lifeworld in any tangible way. This raises questions for future research; have 18 year olds already taken this colonization for granted or is it too hard to understand the consequences thereof?