

# The usage of Connectivity in Music platform :Based on the analysis of Spotify and YouTube Music

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## Abstract

**Spotify and YouTube Music are two important online music platforms in worldwide, but the strategies that they utilise to attract customers seem different. In this research, qualitative methods were adopted to explore the difference between these two online music platforms when they attempt to attract customers and maintain the connectivity. According to the qualitative analysis, it can be concluded that Spotify spends more resources to protect music copyright and customer service while YouTube Music considers more about how to utilize their resources and its brand influence and connect these resource with YouTube Music to make it grow better.**

## Keywords

**Connectivity; Spotify; YouTube Music; Mass media logic; Social media logic.**

## 1. Introduction

The notion of connectivity developed with the introduction of Web 1.0 and later on Web 2.0 and along with the proliferation of access and speed, has led to new forms of interaction, collaboration, and knowledge sharing which many organizations have made use of and benefited from mainly for marketing purposes. However, besides its advertising aspect, social media provides ample opportunities such as helping to provide better services for the current customer base and bringing in new customers.

Spotify is one of the most successful streaming music platform in the world and it makes a huge influence on the whole music industry especially for those other music streaming platforms. On the other hand, YouTube as the biggest name in streaming video launched its subscription streaming service (22 May 2018): YouTube Music. The connectivity element of social media logic was chosen as the theoretical concept in comparing these two streaming music platforms in some aspects which is related to the connectivity, such as management and marketing. The aim of this research is to analyze and figure out how Spotify and YouTube Music use the connectivity of social media logic by outlining some of the important factors which may contribute to the success of these two platforms and consecutively, these factors may help those other streaming music platforms to accomplish a successful and efficient way of attracting new users and improving the ways in which they manage and interact with their customer base.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. The logic of Mass Media and Social Media

Focusing on media related changes in the institutional order (news, politics, religion, sport) and the involvement of people in those institutions, Altheide and Snow define media logic as “a form of communication and the process through which media transmit and communicate information”. [1] Drawing attention to the assumptions and processes for constructing messages within a particular medium they seek to identify the underlying logic that drives this mediated activity from the viewpoints of both message producers and the audience members.

Altheide states that one of the main principles of media logic is that events, actions and actor's performances reflect the information technologies including rhythm, grammar and format that govern communication and through which the audience members recognize and explicitly and implicitly understand the association between a medium and its own code of interpretation. In other words, placing the approach of the broad theoretical construct of media logic within a symbolic interaction encapsulates the process of communication from message formulation and action between audience members and media.[2]

In light of what has been identified as mass media logic, Dijck and Poell's theoretical framework introduces new elements to the already existing mechanisms by outlining four main aspects of social media logic.[3] Deriving from the original formulation of media logic, the theory of social media logic signifies paramount importance in contextualising the relationship between how social interaction is mediated in organizations and within a networked society. Keeping in mind that the dynamic interactions and the complex interdependencies between these two logics are entangled, it should be noted that their differences must also be acknowledged in terms of their varying strategies and tactics based on their technological and economic lineage.

Theorizing social media logic they emphasize that the aforementioned grounding principles and strategies of programmability, popularity, connectivity, and datafication are gradually invading all areas of public life from news and broadcasting to law and order and social activism. In addition, Dijck and Powell state that "the underlying principles, tactics, and strategies probably relatively simple to identify, but it is much harder to map the complex connections between platforms that distribute this logic: users that employ them, technologies that drive them, economic structures that scaffold them, and institutional bodies that incorporate them". Thus, for this research study online music platforms of Spotify and YouTube Music have been chosen so as to exemplify how contemporary organizations associate the element of 'connectivity' to channel their communicative activities with the aim of relating to their environments as they innovatively transform the music listening experience in the 21st century.

## 2.2. Explanation of Connectivity

As Dijck & Poell highlight all of the four elements of social media logic are highly connected and interdependent. However, in this paper, we have decided to focus more on the principle of connectivity and examining the existing literature which will enable us to gain a better understanding of this concept. To begin with, the element of connectivity is introduced as one of the grounding elements of social media logic by Dijck & Poell. It is described as the ability and social-technical affordance of networked platforms to connect content to users, users to users and users to advertisers and according to the authors, connectivity is a way of deep and automated personalization and customization that gives users the opportunity to choose based on their interests.

The majority of networked platforms are constantly aiming to not only connect their content to user activities but also to create their content based on the customer's preferences and expectations. Various actors connected to online platforms, such as the users and advertisers, are building a connective space for communication and information. Many types of research have examined the focus of online platforms on customer-driven data and the multiple automated algorithms and invisible business models that are used to attract new clients. For example, Jenkins also describes the emergence of the "participatory culture" which is also connected to the aspect of connectivity. The participants and users of social media platforms play a decisive role in the communication processes according to Falkheimer, J., & Heide, M. and they are not only seen as recipients of messages and services.[4]

Moreover, in Dijck's book "The Culture of Connectivity", the author argues that connectivity has evolved into a valuable resource as "engineers found ways to code information into algorithms that helped brand a particular form of online sociality and make it profitable in online markets-

...serving a global market of social networking and user-generated content.”[5] Bennett & Segerberg in the paper “The logic of connective action: Digital media and the personalization of contentious politics” also touch upon the element of connectivity. They mention the logic of connective action based on personalized content sharing across media network and they argued that the communication process itself often involves further personalization through the spreading of digital connections among friends and trusted others.[6]

Therefore, it could be argued that both Spotify and Youtube Music base their operations and functions on that element and I will go in-depth to this argument in the further analysis.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Selection of methods

This qualitative research will be conducted by using documents and texts as sources of data such as organizational documents, articles in the business press, mass media outputs and visual documents.[7] In this paper, I focused on material provided in visual documents such as YouTube videos and interviews of organizational members as well as articles in official sites of Spotify and YouTube Music. Since both of them are online streaming platforms, a lot of material and information are provided in a visual form. Using this method of data selection and collection helped us understand how the two platforms are operating and how they are using all four elements of social media logic.

I choose to proceed with content analysis as a coding process and I identify from the gathered material that existing common themes while comparing the use of connectivity element from Spotify and YouTube Music. Since there is a vast amount of texts and content provided online and in order to overcome issues such as authenticity, credibility and representativeness I intend to examine multiple sources and select the ones that were considered to be genuine and relevant to this topic.

In order to identify the similarities and differences in the use of connectivity by Spotify and YouTube Music, Chug Abramowitz’s, Spotify’s Vice President for Marketing Strategy and Operations, interview titled “Marketing Case insight”, and the published article “YouTube Music vs. Spotify: Which is the better streaming music service?” by Ara Wagoner are selected as main sources and for the analysis of their use of social media. In the latter, the author compares YouTube Music and Spotify services in many different aspects however, instead of merely relying on the services provided I put main focus on the resources and algorithms used by these streaming platforms as I find that these factors are related to the element of connectivity in social media logic and also these factors are more relevant to be compared. By comparing these elements in these two different streaming music platforms it can be argued that they are both very influential and that it is not difficult to find out the differences and similarities between them. In addition, these outlined differences could be an important reference for other developing streaming music platforms as they might get inspired from this comparison study.

#### 3.2. Comparison between Spotify and YouTube Music

As Spotify’s Vice President of Marketing Strategy and Operations, Chug Abramowitz mentions in “Marketing Case insight”, social media play a decisive and double role in Spotify. They are used for customers services where advisors monitor Twitter & Facebook as well as dealing with customer complaints and also marketing purposes where all channels (Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Youtube, Instagram) are used for 75-80% of the marketing in the company. As the top post on Spotify’s Instagram page displays “Music for every moment. Play, discover and share for free”. This quote reflects the ideology of Spotify and for some customers, the core ideology of a company is very important, since usually the style of the company can be figured

out from their core ideology. On the other hand, “For free” is also influential for those users who are unwilling to pay for listening, although it is more of an advertisement strategy on Instagram. Another aspect of marketing and as a tool to attract the users are the production lines, content, and the website which are very significant for the social marketing of Spotify since great social media equals great targeting content, as Mr. Chug described in the interview video. When the production lines become better, the product will eventually become better, then when the users see the advertisements, they will regard the advertisements as products instead of simple advertisements. Comparing with Spotify, YouTube’s brand power and history are setting YouTube Music as a challenger and a strong competitor for Spotify. YouTube’s experience in the music industry provides a strong competitive advantage for the online platform as users already feel connected to it and exert considerable influence over the contribution of content. Regarding the marketing aspect, firstly, since YouTube platform has already attracted a lot of users, as YouTube Music develops, it could be said that it won’t be a challenging task for them to transfer the customers from YouTube to YouTube Music. This is hard for Spotify to achieve despite the fact that the platform is operating longer and has already established a considerable amount of audiences. Secondly, YouTube Music pays more attention on the MV part (music video part) and the visual aspect. When someone uses YouTube Music, they may find that when you play some certain songs, which are also equipped with MVs, simultaneous listening and watching may offer a more rewarding overall experience for the users. Before the MV starts, there are always advertisements just as it is for YouTube platform and if the user is a ‘premium’ customer, they also benefit from skipping the distractive and time consuming ads. This is how YouTube Music connects users with advertisers as well as connecting YouTube Music to the users.

For the customer services point of view, it is a reactive platform according to the speaker and social media are used in order to connect with the users. Spotify is also paying close attention to data and considers them as essential for a music streaming service in order to perform well. Furthermore, Spotify company has used the tool “CRM” (Customer Relationship Management) to capture the information when people are talking about Spotify including negative and positive things. To be more specific, CRM is a system that enables companies to keep customer’s contact details up to data, track every interaction they have with the business, and manage their accounts. It is designed to improve customer relationships, and in turn, customer lifetime value. So when Spotify search for the certain key terms that they know usually means there is a customer support issue they solve those issues as quickly as they can. That is another kind of connectivity between Spotify and its users which is conducted on social platforms by collecting users’ data.

When YouTube Music handles the customer service problems, they also use CRM system and the social platforms, in this aspect, they are similar, however, for the personalization aspect, these two platforms also show differences in some ways.

The Spotify system follows users’ listening recordings and then creates a preference list in which most of the songs are similar to the user’s recently played songs such as ‘Discover Weekly’ and usually, some songs on the customized playlists are from those singers who have some cooperation with Spotify to be in these official suggestions where these kind of songs will be put into different kind of list such as ‘Release Radar’ and also could be included in the personal preference lists by being updated everyday.

When YouTube Music conduct such an issue, they can use those users’ history of watching in YouTube platform to acquire information on what these users prefer to listen to or watch, so that they can utilize such a channel to collect data from those regular customers in YouTube. Compared to Spotify in this regard, YouTube Music has more resources to deploy since YouTube is a unique video platform that the main content is provided and created by the users.

So when all the fans contribute to the creation of content for the platform, the resource is abundant enough for itself to attract more customers. At the same time, YouTube can also transfer and share the resources with YouTube Music. Hence, in comparison, it is still laborious for Spotify to compete with YouTube Music, although one of Spotify's advantages is that it has an immense music library, but it is still hard to compare it with YouTube Music.

There is also a challenge in the way its content works for Spotify, and "against targeting" is one of the serious problems, because good targeting makes the customers obtain what they demand. Moreover, it is not an easy task for Spotify to make a suitable song playlists for each and every customer as it is more efficient to create playlists that can make most of the customers satisfied with them.

YouTube Music's content is mainly from music labels, artists, music aggregators and other music content providers as accordingly, their official website includes "user-generated song content". Moreover, YouTube Music is also focusing on views on downloaded videos which are recorded and incorporated just like online views the next time a user logs in back online. This aspect is closely related to the element of connectivity and to the fact that content is customer-data-driven.

At the same time, some of the fan-uploaded content is illegal, because they should have obeyed the DMCA (Digital Millennium Copyright Act) requests. DMCA criminalizes production and dissemination of technology, devices, or services intended to circumvent measures that control access to copyrighted works. It also criminalizes the act of circumventing an access control, whether or not there is actual infringement of copyright itself. Although YouTube pulls that content, it is still difficult to completely eradicate all the fan-uploaded content which is illegal, because it takes much time and resources. The fan-uploaded content is also a kind of social media connectivity between the platform and the customers, even though sometimes the content is illegal. Spotify has more official songs whereas YouTube has far more music and videos which are actually available to access.

## 4. Analysis & Results & Discussion

### 4.1. Data Analysis

Based on the data and the material that I collected and coded, I had identified the following 4 themes while comparing the use of connectivity as an element of social media logic by the two online platforms. Following I will analyze the existing differences and similarities on the use of connectivity by the two competitive music streaming platforms.

#### 4.1.1. Algorithms

The use of algorithms is a common theme that I identified in the two examined platforms as they both use these mechanisms for personalizing music suggestions, connecting with the users and attracting new users. On the one hand Spotify is known for the use of algorithms which enable the platform to predict the users' preferences and use them for creating content and promoting artists or songs. These algorithms are based both on a collective and individual level as they search for similarities between the streams and the different playlist makers and rely on their choices. Moreover, these mechanisms have the ability to spot and filter out what the user listens to and predict their preferences. On the other hand, YouTube Music services and features are also based on Google's search algorithms and machine learning. These Google's search algorithms that are used in YouTube music, enable the platform to provide users suggestions based on their location, listening habits, moods and time. At this point I can argue that both services have found new ways to code information into algorithms and eventually provide user-generated content.

### 4.1.2. Customization & Automated Personalization

The second common theme that we identified in our coding process is the customization and automated personalization. Both music streaming platforms view the users not only as recipients of messages and services but also as co-creators of content with influential power. As we mentioned above Spotify is focusing on improving CRM (Customer Relationship Management) and interacting and connecting with the users in case of complains. Even though Spotify does not have an “onboarding experience to better know you” as YouTube Music has, Spotify provides the “discover weekly section” based upon customized listening habits and activities. Moreover in this platform the users’ taste profile is created based on preferences and individual playlists. As for the personalization aspect, Spotify according to their official website is using “affinity” which is a measure of the expected preference a user has for a particular track or artist. This mechanism is based on user behavior, it is updated accordingly by generating a full affinity data set and is used to connect to user activities. On the other hand customization & automated personalization is also seen in YouTube Music where the users provide initially information regarding their preferred artists, songs. These data are used in order to “get to know the user” and predict its preferences. The creation of customized playlist is also available by YouTube Music for the users which indicates the significance of customization for the platform as a part of their connectivity with the users. Moreover, YouTube Music also analyzes how you use the app and how often you look at videos in order to adjust the user’s main homepage based on actual usage.

### 4.2. System of Suggestions

I had also identified in my analysis that both services are using “suggestions” based on assumptions of user’s interest and activity. Spotify constantly creates new suggested playlist or else “discover weekly playlists” and also suggests different artists based on users’ preferences and listening habits. YouTube music is focusing more on letting the users to find new artists to listen to by giving them suggestions or providing them with playlists that have been created for them as well based on the content that they like. In this platform subscribing provides more opportunities for suggested videos and it is also connected to YouTube and enables access to “trending” content on YouTube.

### 4.3. Social Feature

The last common theme I identified is the social feature. Features such as suggested friends and songs and posts trending are found in both music streaming services. Shared playlist is one of the most essential feature of Spotify as it enables users to connect with other users and provides them with this social aspect feature. Spotify on the other hand is constantly modifying “discover weekly playlists” and allows users to share them with other friends or users even through Facebook. The element of connectivity is also seen while users link their Spotify account with their Facebook account. As I mentioned in the literature review the element of connectivity does not only refer to the ability of networked platforms to connect with the users but also the ability to connect users with other users and the shared playlists are an example of connectivity. YouTube Music is also providing the social feature since users have influential power in creating the content based on the liking system. Since YouTube Music is connected to YouTube platform, the liking system gives access to users and it is an example of the customer-data-driven concept that refers to connectivity. Both networked platforms are connected to other social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram and give the opportunity to users to show and share their listening activity with other users.

### 4.4. Discussion

By comparing these two music platforms, I find that the management of the company is important for attracting the users including the core ideology of the company. Spotify use their

customer service and their superb production lines to win the market and attract the fans, but YouTube Music depend more on their resource to attract more users. From those connection between users, platforms and advertisers, it is clearly that these factors are related to the connectivity of social media logic.

From the point of connectivity in social media logic, compared with YouTube Music, it has become apparent that Spotify spends more resources to protect music copyright and customer service. It concentrates more on music and the content itself, and they do it efficiently when compared with other streaming music platforms. On the other hand, YouTube Music considers more about how to utilize their other resources and its brand influence and connect these resource with YouTube Music to make it grow better and reach a wider audience.

However, as far as navigation tools within the apps are concerned, focusing on the content itself seem to be more important for a streaming music platform since when those customers choose the music platform to use, most of them may prioritise more on the quality of the music or whether the platform is convenient to be used which if the platform lacks these tools it would be difficult to attract new clients and keep the already acquired customer base for a long time. It is desired for a platform to have more resources to be available for the customers, that can help the platform to keep the fans of the apps or the already established customers.

## 5. Conclusion

Even though Spotify has been a leader in the music streaming industry and Youtube Music is still in the growing stage of its development, I find that they both focus and are concerned regarding the element of connectivity. Throughout my analysis, I have identified that both services are customer-data driven in a connective ecosystem of social media. Users and potential clients are not seen by Spotify or YouTube Music only as customers or recipients of services, but as co-creators of content which have a considerable influence over the contribution of content. Moreover, the use of automated algorithms is also seen in both platforms where new ways of coding information have been found and also the learning machine plays a decisive role for the operation of these two streaming platforms. The social feature is also highlighted in this paper as a common theme in Spotify and YouTube Music since users are connected to other users through shared playlists.

Based on my analysis, I think despite the differences in their pricing policies both YouTube Music and Spotify provide add-on benefits to users like YouTube Premium and Spotify Premium. These premium accounts enable users to participate more in the creation of content since there are more benefits and access on more content, however in this paper, I have decided to focus on examining the use of connectivity in the original version of the platforms. It could be argued that these four common themes: algorithms, customization & automated personalization, suggestions and social feature can also be interrelated to the rest grounding principles of social media logic: datafication, popularity and programmability therefore it will be interesting to examine these connections in further studies.

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