

Social Groups and Music Capital - Applying Theory and Research in Design

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A study of music listening behavior provided findings on social music sharing that led to design implications currently being tested in the field.

Studying music use

Purpose: Explore effects of context on music use for new product ideation

Qualitative ethnographic-style research:

- 13 frequent music listeners
 - Diverse in age, ethnicity, gender and occupation
 - City and suburban dwellers
 - Multiple formats in music collections
- Semi-structured interviews
 - Descriptions of recent experiences alone and with others
 - Home tours with explanations of music organization and music use in different areas of the house

- Task-based interviews
 - Participants asked to select music from their home collections based on a number of different scenarios
 - True-to-life scenarios created based on information collected during phone interviews prior to the home visit
- Affinity analysis and model building
 - Cross-functional team-based analysis
 - Used for subsequent brainstorming

Findings:

Social sharing demonstrates unique music expertise

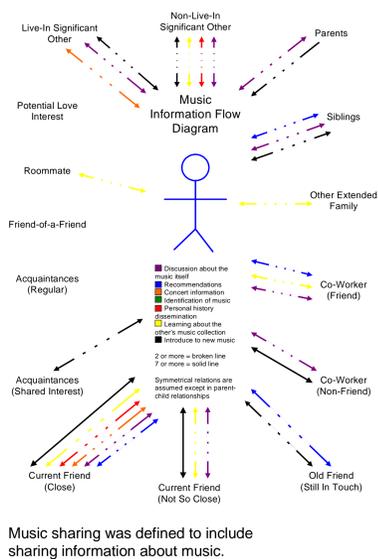
Music sharing includes sharing knowledge about music and artists, and playing music for others, as well as giving and lending songs or CDs.

People talk about and select music when with others in order to:

- Introduce others to new music
- Influence what others purchase and play
- Acquire respect for their expertise in music
- Tell stories and reminisce

Participants exchanged music and music knowledge primarily with people in their immediate social circle; very little importance was placed on introducing strangers or acquaintances to new music.

Participants in our study actively tried to demonstrate unique musical tastes that they hoped friends and family would adopt and respect.



Music sharing was defined to include sharing information about music.



Owning a large music collection indicates to others a "serious" interest



Music is used to share stories and reminisce



Displaying artifacts exhibits musical tastes and knowledge

Conclusions: Unique and respected music expertise accumulates capital

The more people share music that others enjoy and have not heard before, the more respect they receive from others in their social circle.

Social exchange theory helps us understand and predict the reciprocal give-and-take of music sharing.

- People respond to the consequences of past music-sharing choices.
- Knowing who values music sharing increases future sharing.
- People "value the act of reciprocity, per se, over and above the instrumental benefits of exchange," (Molm 2003).

Those who garner respect become music "sources" for their social circle.

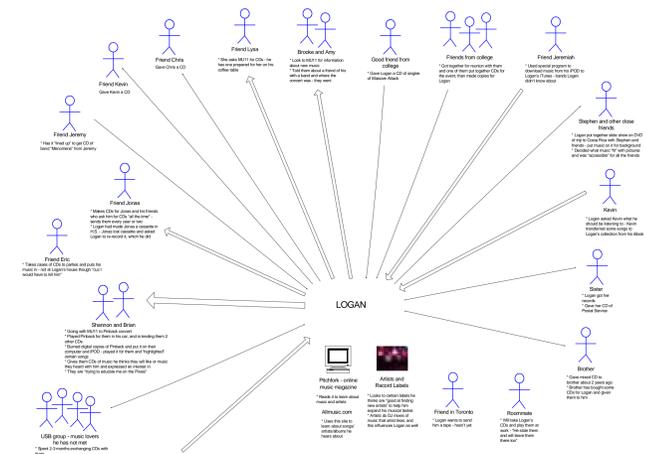
"Sources" are looked to for:

- Unique music
- Music information
- Expertly mixed music
- Music selection at parties



Music "sources" are expected to produce well thought out mixes for others

"Friends ask me for music all the time..."



Some people become "sources" - respected for their music choices.

Others look to their sources - people whose music taste they respect.

Implications:

For product design

Develop applications that help people in already established social circles:

- Increase their music capital
- Utilize their "sources"
- Demonstrate their music knowledge and taste to others in their social circle
- Discover new music by seeing what their friends are playing
- Know if their friends are playing music they introduced them to
- Decide who values their musical choices
- Reminisce and share stories

Prototypes:

Leveraging our understanding

The first iteration of a mobile music presence application, embodying our understanding of music sharing was created and tested with a single group of friends.

The second iteration of the prototype is currently being tested in the field.

- Three groups of friends
- Two week period of use
- Quantitative as well as qualitative data being collected

Prototype Features	
1 st iteration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designed for established social groups • Shows who is playing music • Provides artist, song and album being played • Updates automatically each time a new song is played
2 nd iteration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides all of the above functionality • Enables users to send "thumbs-up," "thumbs-down," and "shout-outs" • Enables users to send SMS messages • Allows users to play clips of songs played by their "buddies"



First iteration of the prototype



Current prototype being tested in the field