

Bryant Mondor

Travis Maynard

June 30, 2014

Spotify, Pioneer of the Music Sharing World or World Class Imitator?

Music, from the beginning of time has brought people together, either through common interest or disagreements music has been a top tier subject throughout history. As technology has evolved into the digital world we live in today the word “friend” has brought on a whole new, and at times, a somewhat distant meaning. As these “friends” have become digital so has the music; unlimited music at the click of mouse is now available to almost anyone. It was this concept of online music streaming and “friends” that gave light to the idea of an app called Spotify. Daniel Elk, the founder of Spotify, with the help of his team at Spotify AB in Stockholm, Sweden, developed the revolutionary app in 2006. The Spotify app has continually gone through many improvements and updates to become the world-renowned music app it is today. As well as featuring a version that is compatible with many desktop and laptop platforms, thus allowing Spotify to be easily accessible.

Spotify features a premium or trial run version. Premium, for a monthly charge allows unlimited music, while the trial run version has music downloading and offline listening restraints. The premium version of Spotify contains the ability to follow other Spotify friends that are also your friends on Facebook and “follow” them. However, while you are not limited to just those potential “followers”, you are welcomed to follow artists as well as random users you may not have met before. A Radio option allows for the user to start a radio station based on either a specific song or artist. Messaging is also included in Spotify as you can message other fellow Spotify users and “followers” to send them playlists to check out or just to chat. The

Discover feature brings the user to a screen which portrays other songs your Spotify followers have recently listened to, as well as other artists and genres that the Spotify software recognizes as something the user might enjoy based on their past preference in what they have listened to or added to a playlist. The Top-List feature shows the top 100 songs in over 50 countries based on the most listened to songs in each location. On a whole, Spotify uses these features to create one of the most revolutionary and popular music broadcasting and social experiences the world has yet to experience.

Spotify Premium's monthly charge was not the first of its kind. Modeled after the Pandora company out of Oakland, California the company Pandora is an internet radio company that for a monthly charge allows you to have unlimited skips on songs. Pandora also offered the option to purchase available songs. If the user wished to buy the song it could be purchased through Apple iTunes or Amazon. This company's platform also featured the "thumbs up" or "thumbs down" option on each song, a feature that is all too familiar to current Spotify users who enjoy the radio feature. However this is where Spotify took Pandora's idea and went one step farther. While using the radio feature on Spotify, a Premium user can click the "thumbs up" button and Spotify will automatically add this song to a playlist titled "starred". The ability to plug an iPhone, iPod or Android into the computer and transfer music from this device to the users' Spotify library is also available. The idea behind this "syncing" of music can be traced back to iTunes, which allowed for users to do the same in order for all their music to be in one place. The iTunes library allowed users to "sync" hard copy CD's onto their digital iTunes library and then onto the mobile device. This method of transferring and syncing revolutionized the digital age of music and many roots of this groundbreaking platform can be traced back into Spotify.

The Library is an important one to any digital music platform, Spotify has used the playlist set up. Allowing users of both trial and premium to create playlist based on their interest and preferences. The option to follow personal Spotify playlist is also an option. Unlike iTunes where to create a playlist you must first add the music to the users library, Spotify gives the user the option to create a playlist without first adding it to the digital library. The option to add the music to the “songs” or “album” tab is available simply by clicking on the three-dot circle next to songs or by simply dragging a song or a number of songs into the either of the tabs.

A Digital Follower is an option that users have on Spotify; once they follow another user they can see whatever music the user has been listening to and made public. This perhaps fundamental idea is not to be credited to Spotify alone as the social media app Twitter was one of the first and most popular apps to introduce the Follow option. By Spotify using this platform, they were able to combine with another social media app called Facebook. The two apps, Spotify and Facebook, in 2009 teamed up to allow users to “follow” a “friend” from Facebook on Spotify, thus allowing this follower to see what music the other user has been listening to as well as a following certain playlist. By adding the feature Spotify became one of the first to intertwine music with social media. The option to now share no music with the public is also available; it is in this case that Spotify will recommend music to others solely based on other genres and artists which are similar to what the user has been listening to. This platform that Spotify features can be traced back to the “Genius” radio and the iTunes related categories that the company Apple had previously released on their music-downloading program iTunes. The “Genius” software would scan the users library and recent purchases as well as the top music on the time and present a convenient suggestion or “Genius” option off to the left of the iTunes page which showed what the software recognized as music that their user would find interest in.

Number 1, has always been one of the most sought after places for an artist to have their song. Spotify's "top list" feature takes data from their users and arranges a list of the top 100 songs in the nation of your choice. It allows users have access to what is currently popular around the world. A platform similar to that is the Billboard company's magazine that was first published November 1, 1894 out of Cincinnati. The magazine at first was a magazine for advertisers but soon after in 1920 the magazine began to cover the radio and its top songs. Throughout time Billboard has been releasing their Top 100 list of songs. They were not limited to the USA though; they released top songs for multiple other countries. Spotify today uses the same platform, as they list the Top 100 songs for other countries as well.

The Spotify feature of Messages allows users who follow each other and specific playlists to get notifications when the one has added music to a playlist that is being followed. When the user views this notification they have the option to reply and at this point a conversation can be started with this other user. The idea of this instant messaging between friends can be traced back to countless other social media websites such as Facebook, Twitter and even as far back as Instant Messenger, Email and Text Messages. Spotify, however, was one of the first to prompt a possible conversation just through the common interest of music.

The Discover feature on Spotify is perhaps one of the most extensive music recommending and friendly "search" features it has to offer. By Spotify using its software to scan your digital library they show all of the artists that the users' library contains and shows a prompt to the artist's personal Spotify channel. This feature is available to allow followers to listen to all of the artist's music as well as the ability to see every track the artist has been featured on in their career. Under the discover tab, recommendations are also made to those who might want to try something new. By using the "current location" Spotify also can access what

concerts will be coming to a location close to this user. This was made possible when Spotify teamed up with a similar music library-scanning app that showed upcoming concerts coming to a location close to the user. This app, Song Kick, teamed up with Spotify at the beginning of 2014.

Spotify, pioneer of the music sharing world, could not have made it to where it is today without the constant “remixing” of previous pioneers in the music sharing world, both digital and hard copy. It is because of these constant updates and similar platforms that Spotify has had the great success that the company is experiencing. Spotify founder Daniel Elk is now worth a plentiful \$400 million and his digital music platform is used all around the globe. If were not for companies such as Apple with iTunes, Pandora, IM, Amazon, Billboard, Facebook, Twitter and countless other music and social sites and companies then there is no telling where or what Spotify would be today. The word “remix” can have countless meanings, each one of us having their own “mix” on it. One thing however is certain, without help, inspiration, and guidance from the companies of the present and future, Spotify may never have ceased to exist. It is because of these other pioneers that we enjoy such technologically advanced interfaces such as Spotify. The world itself is a remix, each individual contributing something of their own. It is because of this that we have made such advances in every aspect of our existence.

Word Count: 1651

Works Cited

- "About Pandora Media." *About Pandora Media*. N.p., n.d. Web. 29 June 2014.
- Big Sound Artist Analytics Comments*. N.p., Jan. 2014. Web. 01 July 2014.
- "Charts." *Billboard*. N.p., n.d. Web. 01 July 2014.
- Buskirk, Eliot Van. "Evolver.fm." *Evolverfm Spotify Defends Facebook Requirement as Good and Simple Updated Comments*. The Echonest, 26 Sept. 2011. Web. 01 July 2014.
- Buskirk, Eliot V. "A Timeline of Spotify's Attempted Journey Toward Becoming the 'OS of Music'" *Billboard*. N.p., 22 Mar. 2012. Web. 01 July 2014.
- "Charts." *Billboard*. N.p., n.d. Web. 01 July 2014.
- Daniel Ek Net Worth." *RSS*. N.p., n.d. Web. 01 July 2014.
- Griggs, Brandon. "Spotify Founder: Future of Music Is Access, Not Ownership." *CNN*. Cable News Network, 21 July 2011. Web. 01 July 2014.
- Williamson, Mark. "Spotify & Next Big Sound Artist Analytics." *Spotify for Artists Spotify Next*