

## TECH3022-17 Advanced Media Production

### Workshop Seventeen: Evaluating Spreadable Media

#### Is There a Master Metric for Evaluating Public Media?

Embracing Digital: A Review of Public Media Efforts Across the United States, a report by Gupta Consulting, gives us an idea of the scope of the challenge: Very few [radio] stations define success with concrete metrics. Most examples are anecdotal. (“I just have a sense.”) What they consider to be “successful” is very subjective. Those that do have an idea of what success means to them include metrics such as page views, unique users, and calls into station when online offerings fail to work. This lack of clarity is compounded by the fact that Public Media 2.0 projects cross a range of communities of media production practice, from journalism to documentary film to user-generated content to videogames. The various projects that now engage publics around issues are marked by distinct goals and assumptions, sometimes based on the capacities of the platform, and sometimes on the intentions of the makers. <http://mediashift.org/2010/02/is-there-a-master-metric-for-evaluating-public-media047/>

#### Spreadable Media – Recap

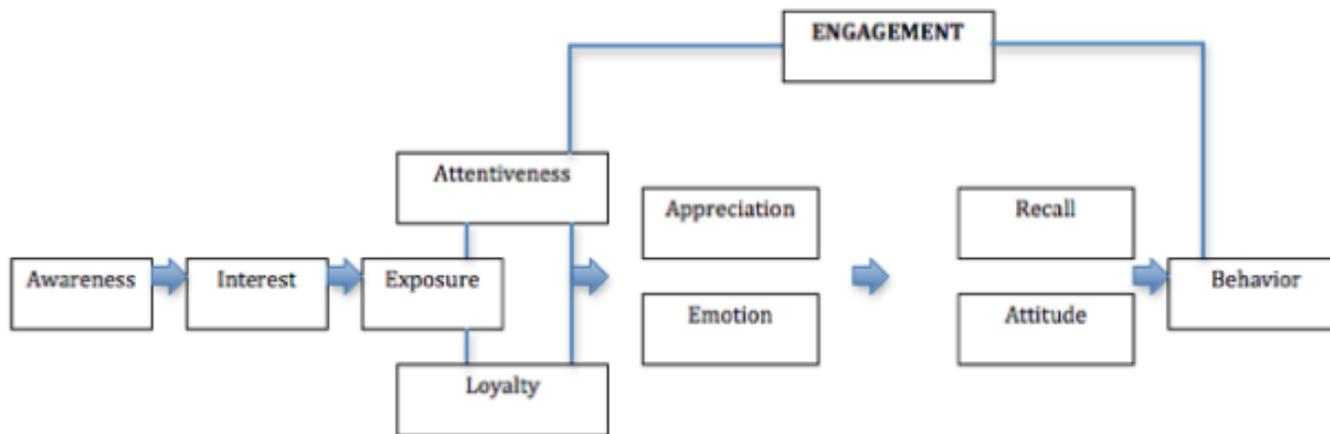
Spreadable Media is an important read for media scholars and members of participatory cultures alike because it shakes up assumptions about media audiences and asks all readers to envision the future of our media cultures. Although it is unclear what new system will develop once the broadcast model finally dies, Spreadable Media is an appeal to those who currently hold the most power to rework the commodity logic that structures the ways they create and distribute media content in the hopes of creating a more democratic system. If we agree that "the spreading of media texts helps us articulate who we are, bolster our personal and professional relationships, strengthen our relationships with one another, and build community and awareness around the subjects we care about" (304), then loosening media producers' tight grips on media content could have profound impacts on our cultural lives. For this reason, Spreadable Media is a valuable tool for all who wish to influence our media environment. I hope its message spreads far! <http://journal.transformativeworks.org/index.php/twc/article/view/525/410>

#### What is the best way to measure meaningful content?

Authors Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green dug into this idea with their notion of “spreadable media,” from their book of the same name. They took issue with the label “viral,” which removes the human component from the action of sharing. Their definition:

*“Spreadability” refers to the technical resources that make it easier to circulate some kinds of content than others, the economic structures that support or restrict circulation, the attributes of a media text that might appeal to a community’s motivation for sharing material, and the social networks that link people through the exchange of meaningful bytes.*

Our use of “spreadability” is perhaps most effective as a corrective to the ways in which the concept of “stickiness” has developed over time to measure success in online commerce. Another important distinction the authors made: Sharing doesn’t necessarily mean engaging. Perhaps users shared content to reveal something of themselves. Maybe it’s the headline that led them to post the article on their Facebook pages or in their Twitter feeds, and they did not truly engage with the content.



**Audience dimensions**

*from Napoli (2011), p. 91*

<https://grovesprof.wordpress.com/tag/spreadable-media/>

**Fans and Economic Value—Direct and Indirect Sources**

Many of the activities within the broad spectrum of fan behaviors that contribute economic value fit into four categories:

1. Watching, listening, or attending
2. Purchasing primary and secondary products
3. Endorsing
4. Sharing and recommending...

The bottom line then, is that the relationship between strength and numbers can vary. A media property could draw strength from a small number of fans who are heavily engaged in creating value of all kinds or from a larger number of less engaged viewers. For most media properties, however, the balance will likely shift over time, from one end of the spectrum to the other, and back again.

[http://spreadablemedia.org/essays/stribling/#.WJhBl\\_n\\_iM4Q](http://spreadablemedia.org/essays/stribling/#.WJhBl_n_iM4Q)

## The Importance of Time

Every media property vies for the attention, loyalty, endorsement, and money of a pool of fans. While direct and indirect sources of value focus on behaviors that add economic value, they do not address another crucial element: time. Too often, we see a statistic such as the number of Facebook fans or Twitter followers of a media property and an assertion that this number represents value. However, these data do not indicate what those fans do once they've friended or followed in order to participate in, promote, or support the media property. They also do not take into account how these numbers change over time—a gradual ramping up of participating fans, friends, or followers is probably a better argument for future value than a sudden surge of individuals who never engage with the property again.

There are three ways in which time affects the intensity and scope of fan activity:

1. **Relativity:** the amount of time spent with a media property compared to others
2. **Repetition:** how frequently fans interact with or around a media property
3. **Progression:** changes in how fans interact with or around a media property over time

How this model is applied would depend on the resources and information available to the creators, producers, advertisers, or fans. For instance, while it might make a lot of sense for a sports team or television show to gather and analyse a lot of data on a regular basis, it may not make sense for an independent band or a small community theatre.

## Establishing Value

The most basic analysis of a fan community's economic value would involve establishing some key parameters before collecting any data:

1. **Choosing a meaningful level for assessing value:** In some cases, estimating a lifetime value per fan might make more sense than valuing the community as a whole, or vice versa. Evaluating relevant comparisons—establishing how to benchmark one property's fans against another's—also is very important in making a meaningful assessment.
2. **Deciding on the most meaningful behaviours to include:** Some activities may generate more value than others, depending on the media property in question. Any analysis should include at least one of each of the four types listed earlier. Endorsing and recommending are long-term drivers of economic value, but fans also generate economic value through direct sources which sustain the media property itself in the shorter term.
3. **Identifying a time frame to study:** Looking at activity over a period of more than a year is probably ideal to identify any cyclical factors behind fan activity, as well as trends or patterns around major changes (e.g., a winning streak, celebrity guests, new releases, sharing news with fans via a social network site).

Fans have always gone beyond the consumption behaviours that advertisers and producers have used as the predicator of the ultimate value of the audience. However, by broadening the framework and digging deeper into how people actually show their affinity for a media property and what drives them to do so, we can gain a more thorough understanding of which communities are fast and fleeting and which are here to stay.

**Spreadable Media Evaluation**

Criteria:	Examples:	Comparisons:	Benchmark:
<b>Meaningful Value:</b> Individual Relativity			
<b>Meaningful Value:</b> Individual Repetition			
<b>Meaningful Value:</b> Individual Progression			
<b>Meaningful Value:</b> Community Relativity			
<b>Meaningful Value:</b> Community Repetition			
<b>Meaningful Value:</b> Community Progression			

<b>Meaningful Behaviours:</b> Individual Relativity			
<b>Meaningful Behaviours:</b> Individual Repetition			
<b>Meaningful Behaviours:</b> Individual Progression			
<b>Meaningful Behaviours:</b> Collective Relativity			
<b>Meaningful Behaviours:</b> Collective Repetition			
<b>Meaningful Behaviours:</b> Collective Progression			

<b>Meaningful Behaviours:</b> Individual Endorsements & Recommendations			
<b>Meaningful Behaviours:</b> Collective Endorsements & Recommendations			
<b>Activity Time-Frame:</b>			
<b>Activity Cycle &amp; Changes:</b>			
<b>Activity Trends:</b>			
<b>Activity Patterns:</b>			
<b>Activity Changes:</b>			