

s
Social media
and it's subjective
data as a backbone for
creating human centered products

I am data,
I am a profile,
I am on the internet,
So therefore I am a person.
Listen to me, because I will buy your products

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A look at the current situation

Because of web2.0 applications, the consumer took over the way we buy products. People on social networks are talking about complex to every day problems. They judge governments, companies, services, people, products and even themselves. Because of their contribution on the web and the availability of product information, the consumer gets smarter.

With the arriving of the financial crisis, everyone is spending less money. People return to a more quality and meaningful life. I believe that people got so capable, that they can do and be more than before. They are independent and requiring more like customizing their own products and services to match their needs in a meaningful way.

My breakthrough

Some time ago, my team were designing a multimedia product at university. We presented a concept where you can listen to music through your mood.

A couple tough questions were asked by the client. "How can you obtain this subjective information? And how do you know it won't be too different for everybody?"

Those questions remained for some time in my mind.

I knew that we needed a more sophisticated and intelligent design to make something meaningful for consumers. This requires a lot of research in many areas.

Research costs a lot of time and money. Next to money, the pitfall of this method is that it's often only valid in the area where you research it, and only for a set amount of time. People are changing, therefore you cannot use the same results as you used a few years ago.

So we needed to fix this without having money or a lot of time to research.

And suddenly it struck me. While brainstorming with the team, connecting boxes, I figured to just connect social networking services together.

As an experiment I chose to pick the place, music and mood. I programmed a crawler that saved data from the LiveJournal blog and Flickr photoservice. When I obtained enough to work with, I started to build an algorithm. This resulted a list of songs, colors and images. With this list, I had regularly changing but related information based on local trends.

What can it do for the world?

A lot of the data on social networks is impulsive, irrational, emotional and without common sense. This subjective data on the net has become very valuable. Not just for measuring your company's products and service, but also as a backbone for creating new human centered products. I hope that my article will inspire more people to use it and create more meaningful products.