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An exploration of user engagement and communication strategies on Spotify: a uses and gratifications perspective

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This study investigated the communication gap between Spotify and its users, focusing on messaging consistency, user-specific experiences, and feedback mechanisms. By analyzing data from students at Umm Al Quwain University, the study revealed a potential disconnect between how Spotify communicates and how users expect to be addressed. This disconnect could negatively impact user engagement and satisfaction. Key findings highlighted the need for personalized communication tailored to user needs, improved channels for user feedback, and the active integration of this feedback into Spotify's communication strategies. Bridging this communication gap, Spotify can enhance user experience, solidify its user-centric approach, and potentially strengthen its position as a leader in the digital music landscape.

KEYWORDS

Spotify, communication, user experience, personalization, feedback, digital media, engagement, satisfaction

1 Introduction

The evolution and growing presence of digital technologies have forever changed how users interact with media platforms and how organizations adapt their lines of communication to maintain satisfaction and loyalty in competitive markets. Spotify, one of the world's largest music streaming services with over 345 million active users, is a prime example of this dynamic, facing obstacles in ensuring that its channels of communication reflect the changing needs of its users. This study aimed to analyze the effectiveness of the communication framework set by Spotify, focusing on some missing links that could impact user retention and engagement with the app. Using the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), which states that audiences actively select their media source to gratify certain wants (Nurfadila, 2024; Choi and Lim, 2023), the research examined users' interactions with Spotify's communication channels and concluded that users are looking for gratification through personalized content delivery, consistent themes, and an engaged feedback mechanism.

This study is guided by three core research questions:

1. How consistent is messaging across Spotify's communication channels?
2. How does Spotify personalize communication for individual user preferences?
3. What are the available user feedback mechanisms, and how do they impact satisfaction?

A qualitative case study methodology was employed, collecting data from surveys, interviews, and observational analysis of students enrolled in the Introduction to New Media course at Umm Al Quwain University. The findings revealed gaps in Spotify's communication practices, especially regarding personalization, consistency, and feedback integration.

Using the UGT, the research explored the reasons for user behaviors, providing a theoretical framework to interpret its findings. We proposed practical recommendations such as customizing the experience in a data-driven manner, optimizing channels that can trigger a larger impact through communication, and structuring a feedback loop. These strategies improve user-platform synergy, facilitating engagement and consolidating Spotify's position as a leader in the industry. This research can contribute to broader discussions on effective digital communication, highlighting the importance of user-centric implementations as mediated communication becomes a cornerstone for successful organizations.

2 Literature review

Research has highlighted that effective communication is crucial for user retention and satisfaction on digital media platforms. Studies have suggested that personalized messaging, automated feedback loops, and real-time customer support enhance user experience and loyalty (Zawadi, 2023). Past cases of Spotify's communication crises demonstrate the consequences of ineffective engagement strategies (Sixteen, 2022). In addition, research on digital platform engagement has underscored the importance of consistent cross-channel communication (Toastmasters International, n.d.).

The literature suggests that Spotify should adopt a coordinated approach, leveraging personalized notifications, chatbot support, and predictive analytics to enhance communication strategies.

According to a number of studies on digital platform engagement, consistent cross-channel communication over time is fundamental for building users' trust. Research has indicated that personalized messaging, automated feedback loops, and real-time customer support present in subscription-based services can improve user experience and lower churn rates (Zawadi, 2023). Furthermore, communication with diverse stakeholders necessitates an understanding of cultural nuances, the need for precise messaging, and the role of feedback loops (Toastmasters International, n.d.). The facilitation of user-generated content, active participation in social media, and prompt customer service have also been identified as crucial elements in reinforcing the relationship between users and digital platforms (Bhargava, 2023).

Takeaways from Spotify's communication challenges highlight the importance of rapid response strategies, structured internal communication, and better transparency in user interactions (Sixteen, 2022). According to research, platforms that include efficient feedback mechanisms (such as surveys, discussion forums, and AI-based recommendation systems) can increase engagement by showing consideration for the needs of users (Parker, 2021). Considering that cultural and linguistic differences can affect how a user perceives the quality and accessibility of communication sources (Joubert, 2023).

Spotify should take a coordinated approach to closing the gap by forming a working group to evaluate task force complaints and

refine its messaging, focusing on both internal communication mechanics and external messaging. Tactics including personalized notifications, chatbot support, and pre-listing outreach campaigns can help create a more user-friendly experience (Haran, 2023). Moreover, utilizing sophisticated analytics to anticipate user needs and provide tailor-made updates can increase satisfaction and loyalty immensely.

This study showed that the existing literature highlights best practices for digital communication and calls for further research on Spotify's digital communication strategy and its potential impact on user engagement. By integrating specific techniques to enhance personalized communication, as well as optimizing interaction channels and user feedback mechanisms, Spotify can significantly improve the overall effectiveness of its communication and sustain its competitive advantage in the highly saturated digital streaming market.

3 Methodology

A mixed-methods approach was used to explore user engagement and communication strategies on Spotify.

A total of 250 students (53% female, 47% male) from Umm Al Quwain University participated. Their ages ranged from 18 to 24 years (mean age: 20). The sample included Public Relations (37%) and New Media (63%) students.

The participants were recruited through a classroom advertisement on a voluntary basis, without compensation, and a convenience sample of students was obtained.

While this student sample provided convenient access to a population of digital natives familiar with streaming media services, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of generalizing these findings to all Spotify users. The age range and educational background of the sample may not fully reflect the diversity of Spotify's broader user base.

A sample size of 250 was chosen based on the practical constraints of the research setting and was deemed sufficient to provide preliminary insights into student attitudes toward Spotify's communication strategies. Future research with larger and more diverse samples is recommended to confirm and expand upon these findings.

3.1 Data collection

Quantitative: Online surveys were conducted using a Likert scale and closed-ended questions to quantify user experiences.

Qualitative: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 active Spotify users to explore communication preferences. All participants were selected according to their Spotify usage levels to ensure a wide representation of users.

3.2 Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the survey responses.

A thematic analysis was conducted on the qualitative data.

Correlation analysis assessed the relationship between user satisfaction and Spotify's communication strategies.

3.3 Statistical analysis

The data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics to assess trends and correlations while preventing the responses of non-users from biasing the overall results.

The combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches aided in establishing a multidimensional understanding of Spotify's communication and enabled relevant evidence-based recommendations for enhancements to be proposed.

3.4 Chi-square tests

Chi-square tests were performed to examine the statistical significance of the user responses regarding personalization, engagement, and feedback mechanisms.

3.5 Cross-referencing with Appendices

The results from the statistical analysis and the qualitative findings are detailed in [Appendix B](#).

4 Results

This study unveiled several key areas of Spotify's existing communication strategies that need improvement, highlighting a significant gap between user expectations and the platform's current communication framework.

Inconsistent messaging: The findings showed that many respondents were confused by inconsistent messaging from Spotify across different channels, such as email, in-app notifications, and push alerts. This kind of inconsistency adds to user confusion and makes successful engagement impossible.

Lack of Personalization: The study findings implied that there is an overwhelming number of Spotify users who feel that communication comes across as generic and fails to be adequately tailored to their listening patterns and preferences. A common area of concern is personalization—users want to experience a more unique interaction with the platform through personalized recommendations and customized messaging.

Lack of Effective Feedback Opportunities: Several respondents expressed dissatisfaction with Spotify's current feedback mechanisms, highlighting the need for more accessible and responsive channels for user input. Participants expressed the desire for real-time feedback systems and clearer signals that their concerns and suggestions would be heard and acted upon.

By applying the UGT theory, we concluded that users actively search for content that fulfills their needs and satisfies their expectations. The psychologists were able to track social, discovery, and customization interaction motivations, highlighting the

significance of a communication model that is suitable for motivating these user motivations.

4.1 Statistical insights

Inconsistent Messaging: The respondents noted discrepancies across communication channels (e.g., email, in-app notifications, push alerts) ([Appendix Table A1](#)).

Lack of Personalization: The users felt that Spotify's recommendations and messages were generic and did not align with their listening habits ([Appendix Table A2](#)).

Ineffective Feedback Mechanisms: Many users expressed frustration over the lack of direct and responsive feedback avenues ([Appendix Table A3](#)).

A total of 40% of the participants never use Spotify, requiring a separate interpretation of the data to avoid skewing the results. See [Appendix A: Survey Results Summary](#) ([Appendix Table A2](#)).

Spotify's interface and communication features led to usability challenges for 94% of the active users, a potential issue affecting overall engagement on the platform.

A total of 94% of the active users reported usability challenges with Spotify's interface ([Appendix Table A4](#)).

A total of 71% of the participants found Spotify's communication strategies less effective than those of competing platforms ([Appendix Table A5](#)).

Pearson correlation analysis confirmed a significant relationship between perceived communication effectiveness and user satisfaction ([Appendix B](#)).

The qualitative responses were analyzed thematically, leading to the identification of three common themes: (1) frustration with noise in notifications, (2) Spotify's communication strategy is unclear, and (3) a transparent and interactive feedback method is needed. The participants ranked Spotify's communication as less effectively aligned with their tastes compared to other communication "competitors," leading them to perceive the potential value of Spotify's engagement strategies as lower.

Spotify can build on the findings of this study to develop a more integrated approach to user engagement through enhanced messaging consistency, improved personalization, and more dynamic and responsive user feedback loops. Bridging these gaps will ensure a higher level of user experience on the platform, leading to higher levels of satisfaction and long-term loyalty.

Many participants expressed a desire for Spotify's communication to be more tailored to their tastes and listening habits. As one participant explained, "It's annoying when Spotify recommends trending songs that do not match my musical taste at all. I wish they'd pay attention to what I listen to and suggest things I'd like".

5 Discussion

This study employed the UGT to analyze Spotify user engagement, recognizing that users actively seek media to fulfill specific needs and desires. The findings highlighted the critical role of understanding

these needs in designing effective communication strategies and feedback mechanisms, which are fundamental to digital media engagement.

5.1 Identifying communication challenges

Conducted among students at Umm Al Quwain University, the study highlighted significant gaps between Spotify's messaging strategies and user expectations. The following three primary issues were identified:

- **Inconsistent messaging:** The users experienced discrepancies in Spotify's communication across different channels, creating confusion and reducing trust. The theme of inconsistent messaging directly impacts users' ability to find value and meet their needs through Spotify. The UGT suggests that users seek media that provides consistent and reliable information; inconsistent messaging undermines these gratifications and leads to user dissatisfaction.
- **Lack of personalization:** The users felt that Spotify's recommendations and messages were generic and did not align with their listening habits. The lack of personalization significantly hinders users' ability to receive tailored content and enjoy a unique listening experience, as emphasized by the UGT. Since users actively seek media that caters to their individual preferences, Spotify's generic communication fails to fulfill this gratification.
- **Limited feedback avenues:** The users expressed frustration over the lack of direct and responsive feedback mechanisms, feeling that their opinions are not considered in platform improvements. The limited feedback avenues theme suggests that Spotify may not be fully attuned to users' evolving needs and desires. The UGT highlights the importance of user agency and control over their media experiences; a lack of feedback mechanisms limits users' ability to shape the platform to better serve their gratifications.

These communication shortcomings hinder user satisfaction and loyalty, demonstrating the necessity for a more user-centric approach to engagement.

5.2 Enhancing user engagement: strategic recommendations

To address these gaps, this study proposed the following strategies:

1. **Targeted messaging:** Utilize data-driven insights to personalize communication, ensuring that recommendations, promotions, and updates align with user preferences.
2. **Optimized communication channels:** Expand and refine messaging through in-app notifications, emails, and social media, ensuring consistency and relevance.
3. **Proactive user feedback integration:** Implement real-time feedback tools, such as in-app surveys and discussion forums,

to collect and act upon user suggestions, fostering a sense of inclusion and responsiveness.

5.3 Future considerations for improving communication

Further research is needed to explore how communication improvements impact user retention and long-term engagement. Key areas for future investigation include the following:

- **The role of personalization:** Examining how hyper-personalized communication influences user satisfaction and interaction.
- **Channel optimization:** Analyzing which communication channels are most effective in reaching different segments of Spotify's user base.
- **User feedback loops:** Investigating the impact of direct user involvement in shaping platform developments and communication policies.

By refining its communication strategies through these approaches, Spotify can enhance user engagement, build brand loyalty, and maintain a competitive edge in the digital streaming landscape.

6 Conclusion

This study highlights the importance of clear communication in maintaining user engagement through digital medium, such as the Spotify platform. Personalization and better communication feedback loops can help address these types of gaps effectively.

6.1 Limitations and future research

This study is limited by its sample size, focusing on university students. While these participants represent an important digitally native demographic, their expectations and engagement behaviors may not reflect those of all Spotify users. Future research should explore diverse demographics and evaluate the long-term impact of enhanced communication strategies on user retention. A larger dataset and the inclusion of other age groups could provide a more comprehensive understanding of communication effectiveness.

Further discourse on how Spotify responds could inspire a new approach to the information technology engagement model.

Spotify can offer a customer-centric experience that fosters long-term loyalty and engagement through a better approach to messaging. By optimizing its messaging strategy, Spotify can cultivate a more experience-driven approach that prioritizes both long-term loyalty and engagement.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/[Supplementary material](#), further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Ethics statement

Ethical review and approval was not required for the study on human participants in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements. Written informed consent from the [patients/participants OR patients/participants legal guardian/next of kin] was not required to participate in this study in accordance with the national legislation and the institutional requirements.

Author contributions

EM: Methodology, Supervision, Validation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. HA: Investigation, Writing – original draft. MA: Formal Analysis, Writing – review & editing. SA-R: Data curation, Methodology, Writing – review & editing. AA: Supervision, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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Supplementary material

The Supplementary material for this article can be found online at: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fcomm.2025.1457754/full#supplementary-material>