

Mapping communities in large virtual social networks

Using Twitter data to find the Indie Mac community

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Outline

- Background on Indies and their (online) social networks
- Research goals and methods
- Research findings
- Implications for ethics and marketing

Indies

- “Independent” Macintosh (and iPhone) software companies
- Virtual cluster/community of practice
- Early Twitter adopters
- Culture/ethos on “quality,” “proper” behavior, competition and information sharing
- Informally bounded, no formal organization

Use of Social Software

- Identification and socialization
- Satisfaction of information needs:
“Virtual watercooler”
- Marketing

Research Goals

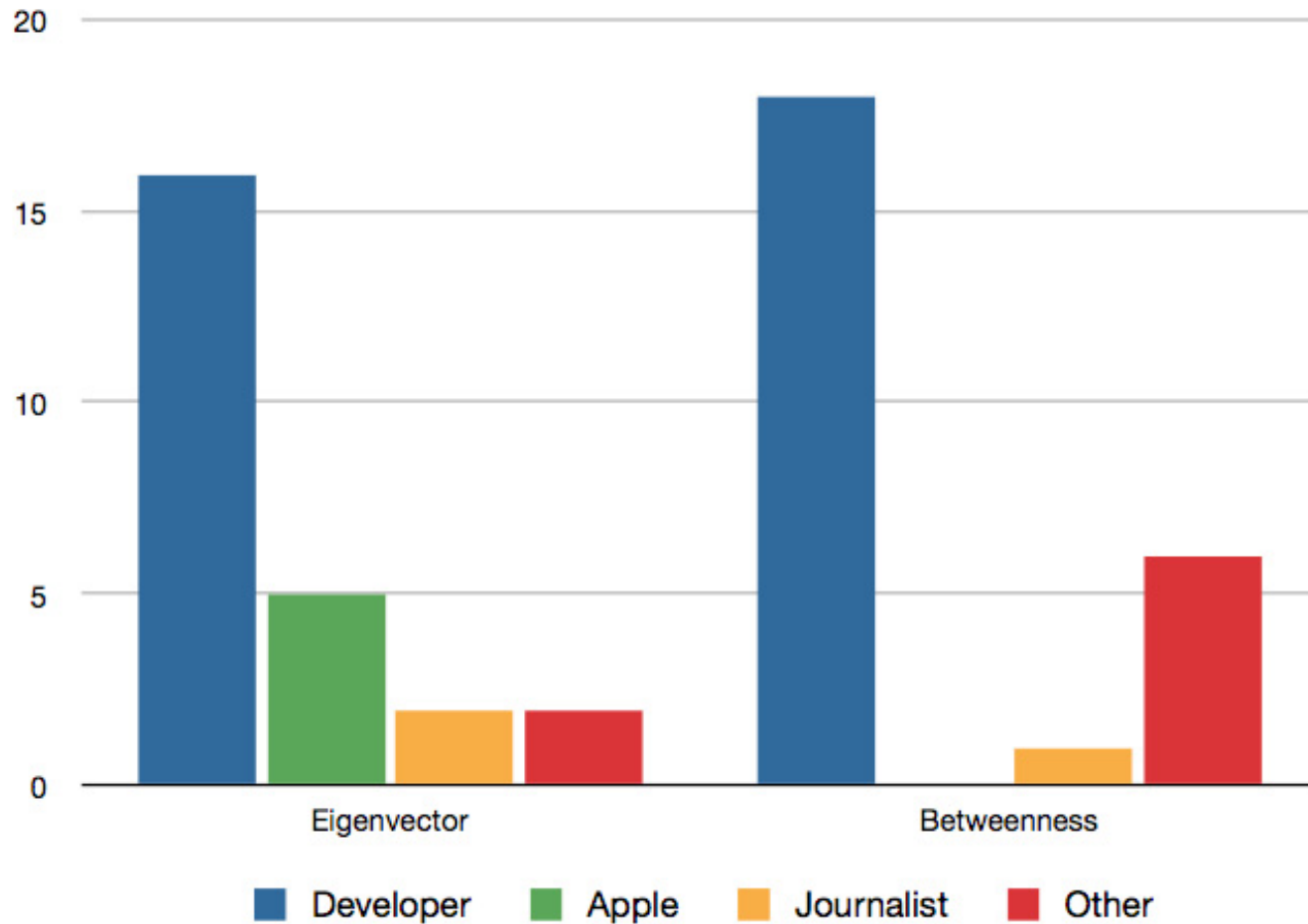
- “Map” the virtual social network of the Indie community starting from an acknowledged “tastemaker” in the community
- Explore the possibilities of research on large and noisy Twitter datasets
- Analyze the importance of social position for the diffusion of products within the network (in progress)

John Gruber

- Professional independent tech blogger (www.daringfireball.net)
- Widely respected in the Indie community
- 150,000 RSS feed subscribers
- 1.3 million page-views a week
- On Twitter: Following 244, Followed by 32,718 (Sept 20, 2009)

Findings II:

Frequencies of occupations of 25 highest ranking nodes in the Indie subcommunity



Utility for marketing

- Defining subcommunities form finely grained target audiences
 - Market research tool
 - Niche (direct) advertising tool

Potential ethical issues

- Finds out characteristics of people which they do not necessarily know about themselves and which they did not publicly disclose
- When refined these methods could potentially jeopardize (political) activism using Twitter as a medium (e.g. Iran elections)

Conclusions

- Analyzing large and noisy Twitter data results in clear, delineated subcommunities
- Network structure of subcommunities relevant for “tastemaking”
- Opens marketing possibilities and moral hazards

More information

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