CLICK CLICK SALE

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1. Conversion of site visitors into paying customers — the desired outcome of marketing efforts.

While the term "marketing" and the multidisciplinary approach it encompasses has become a deeply ingrained, understood, and almost imperceptibly implied part of (post)modern western society (Hirschman, 1986), rarely has it been directly associated with art in the role of its subject. Instead, being neither art nor science, it is often met with apprehension and derision, seen as a form of the ever threatening wizard behind the curtain of capitalist and consumerist mechanisms. Amidst timid attempts at subverting marketing to make use of genuine artistic values for its purposes (Brown and Patterson, 2000) and cynical attacks at its basic values and effects on society, there exists a lack of endeavors that would try to establish whether art can arise or is contained in marketing principles *talis qualis*.

With that in mind, the idea behind our audiovisual piece "Click Click Sale" is to explore the obscure phenomenology of marketing together with its reliance on people, needs, dynamisms, and communication patterns that have come to symbolize something entirely inhuman, manipulative, and belligerent. To show that a valid system of aesthetics can be extrapolated even from the most unlikely of marketing sources, we took the data collected by an online advertising system and produced a sensory display of otherwise abstract information in two domains—the aural and visual. The data set consisted of clicks on ads and subsequent conversions[1] tracked during the period one day in all campaigns of a selected advertiser. The software system used to collect such data also automatically enriched each click and each conversion with various properties relevant for understanding and optimizing marketing performance. These properties include the users' geographic location, device information, tracking parameters, and different identifiers. Displayed in the visual and aural domains, users' clicks and conversions flourish into new manifestations, revealing masked, uncanny connections on a locational and behavioral level. As a side effect, our project once again

shows that similarly intimidating buzzwords such as "big data" and "market metrics" that are today, more than ever, associated with the dehumanization and privacy invasion of users, can be, if willing, interpreted in an innocuous or even artistic manner.

Besides considering the aesthetical aspects, the piece also strives towards precise representation of abstract data in their full substantiality. By representing the information collected from the software directly and without significant interventions, we have avoided tainting the data with our personal interpretations and any contextualization. As the auditory and visual displays have been modelled after consciously formed rules, contextualization is apparent, but only at the lowest possible epistemic level—that of an individual datum. Because of that, our work does not attempt to analyze associations and connections in the data, does not generate or search for meanings, does not come to judgments or conclusions about the data, and it also forgoes the use of any external sources of knowledge. Everything that is projected from our work is sourced from the pristine data itself. It's the adherence to this principle that enabled us to demonstrate the diversity that is idiomatically attached with big data, with the added significance stemming from the actions and nature of actors in this system: individuals, real people who have interacted, clicked, and converted.

The aesthetic consequences rely on the data's inherent and authentic diversity without any additional factors of randomness or manipulations. Part of the onus of interpretation, thus, falls on the observer and the observer's ability to feel and understand the scope of the exposed variety. Consequently, the piece is not the result of coincidence or aleatoric principles; each choice is the cogent and contemplated result of a compositional, creative process. To disclose all the grandiosity and impressiveness of a large data set, the sonification process relied on the mapping of each data record into a grain of sound whose timbral characteristics, i.e. the amplitude envelope, dynamic changes, spatialization, duration, and amplitude level, were directly derived from attributes of the sonified click or conversion. Instead of driving a typical granular synthesizer, the resulting soundscape is synthesized by summing all particular elements in the microsound time scale. In the same manner as users collectively shape market demand, small and individually inaudible grains blend together in a rich and astonishing cloud of sounds. A chronological order of clicks and conversions is maintained showing that collective online activity results with a lifelike constant evolution.

The visual part of the piece was implemented as a dynamic representation of conversions and clicks. The direction and modes of progression of the visualization depend on the data

associated with users' actions. In other words, conversions and clicks that share similar values such as geographic location or that are completed using the same type of electronic devices tend to group together and push towards similar areas. The program that implements this aspect reads static data extracted from the marketing system and creates ephemeral imagery. As a result of their increased frequency, clicks are represented as more dynamic, frenzied abstract shapes and are, in part, statistically processed. The employed statistical method results with minimal impact and avoids injecting any new meanings, implying any links based on causality, interpreting or justifying the data.

In the end, similarly to the system that we are observing and projecting, the value of "Click Click Sale" will be determined by our own observers and "consumers" and the discussions it spurs. Data collected from a system for online advertising pose meaning, indications, and commercial value, but only once they have been systematically analyzed within a given context. In the same manner, our audiovisual piece, its aesthetics, concept, and form, become complete only when faced with the observer's expectations, prejudices, and personal aesthetics. Whether or not it will reveal some novel aspects of material which is usually abstract and distant, remains to be seen.

Artwork (Video): http://tiny.cc/ClickClickSale

REFERENCES

Brown, Stephen and Patterson, Anthony. *Imagining Marketing: Art, Aesthetics and the Avant-Garde.* London, England: Routledge, 2000.

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