CultureCase

Why do music aficionados use online forums?

This research was conducted by **Terry O'Sullivan** at the **Open University, UK**

Summary

This paper reports the findings of eight in-depth telephone interviews designed to discover the various ways that people use web forums to discuss orchestral music. The research found that people behave in a variety of different ways online and invest their online personas with a multiplicity of different meanings. What brought people together in an online forum was simply their shared interest in a particular subject. But other than that they exhibited a wide variety of other interests, behaviors and attitudes. Therefore arts organisations looking to deploy social media in their audience development need to be conscious of this variety.

The interviewees were recruited through the online mailing list of a symphony orchestra

The research is especially useful since it also gathered data from people who were inactive members of online forums: they read material but they did not post any messages themselves. The recordings were analysed using a form of conversation analysis (which considered the silences, pitch and pacing of conversation, as well as the words).

They uncovered a mix of barriers and incentives to post in web forums

People who didn’t post online tended to frame their behavior as reflecting a lack of time or expertise, not wanting to provoke a bad reaction from other forum members. They were also fearful of a general sort of social risk associated with their lack of confidence and experience of engaging in online

conversations. Of those interviewed that did actively post in these forums, the motivations included the fulfillment of a certain kind of social and professional identity as a musician (however defined). Another is that online interactions allow a sort of low-stakes intimacy or association with experts, VIPs or simply other like-minded people (whilst at the same time being a place to gather practical or privileged knowledge about a subject).

Keywords

digital **music** **UK** **interview** **forums** **identity** **online**

Title	Dangling conversations: web-forum use by a symphony orchestra's audience members
Author(s)	O'Sullivan, T.
Publication date	2010
Source	Journal of Marketing Management, Vol 26, Iss 7-8, pp 656-670
Link	**http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2010.481866**
Open Access Link	**http://oro.open.ac.uk/25594/**
Author email	**terry.osullivan@open.ac.uk**

By **Culture.Case** | 14 April 2014 | **Insights into arts and culture** , **Developing new audiences in arts and culture** , **Live and digital engagement in arts and culture** |

King's Culture
© Copyright 2026
Designed, developed and maintained by **King's Digital Lab**
Originally built by **weheartdigital Ltd**
Accessibility Statement