

THE UNIVERSITY MARKETPLACE

THE RISE AND EFFECT OF PEER TO PEER MARKETS

An Undergraduate Thesis Portfolio
Presented to the Faculty of the
School of Engineering and Applied Science
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree
Bachelor of Science in Computer Science

By

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April 28, 2020

SOCIOTECHNICAL SYNTHESIS

Technological advancements over the course of the past few decades have made everyday life easier but in several cases have caused people to lose many of the social interactions that they would have previously had. Overtime, continual reduction of social interactions in this manner leads to increased alienation in society. The rise of peer to peer markets and services has provided a way to combat this increased alienation, by providing platforms that bring communities together to provide goods and services for one another. The STS research paper provides the grounds to support the claim that peer to peer markets are capable of fighting alienation, while the technical report discusses how the technical team worked to create a peer to peer market for The University. The technical team used research done for the STS portion in order to understand the necessary components to creating a successful peer to peer market.

The motivation for the technical portion of the project started during a discussion of college waste. Students will frequently leave behind perfectly usable home goods at the end of each academic year because they do not have a good way to sell or recycle them. The technical team saw this as a problem but also an opportunity. The team proposed to build “The University Marketplace,” a Craigslist style marketplace for The University. The goal was to provide students a safe and easy way to sell or give away used goods to other students in an effort to reduce the amount of waste seen at the end of each academic year.

In order to make the marketplace something students would actually want to use, a couple of careful considerations had to be made. When surveying students at The University, those who answered no to the question of “Have you ever used a service such as Craigslist to buy

and sell used goods,” said that the primary reason for not doing so was distrust. This was the primary factor that The University Marketplace was able to solve by limiting entry into the site to only NetBadge logins. This way, students feel safe knowing that the person they are going to meet is another member of The University and they will not have to worry about meeting a stranger in the surrounding area. In addition, the team implemented a rating system to require buyers to rate a seller after a purchase. This way if sellers are providing poor service over time, they will be flagged and buyers will stop engaging with them. With these features, The University Marketplace stands to be a viable solution for students to buy and sell used goods.

The STS research paper posed the question of whether or not peer to peer markets could provide a solution to increased alienation in society. The paper works to prove this theory primarily through a discussion of an excerpt from Leo Marx’s *Does Improved Technology Mean Progress*. Marx poses the question of “What do we want beyond such immediate, limited goals as achieving efficiencies, decreasing financial costs, and eliminating the troubling human element from our workplaces,” which the paper then turns around to argue that peer to peer markets can lead to decreased financial costs, more efficiencies, all while increasing the human element in the workspace. A powerful argument is then drawn from a PWC market research report, in which high percentages of respondents agreed that peer to peer markets make their lives more efficient, affordable, and content, while at the same time stating that they were more fun and engaging than traditional companies. These arguments together are used to show how peer to peer markets exist as a viable solution to increasing social interaction and integration, all while providing the same benefits seen in other technological advancements.

As peer to peer markets become increasingly prevalent in society, they will work to bring communities together in ways that were not previously possible. If these markets can keep

themselves safe and trustworthy, just like The University Marketplace, members of society will turn to these services more and more and communities will begin to halt the current pattern of increasing alienation in society.

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PROSPECTUS

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