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Senior Capstone

A Podcast Ethnography Of The Crack Down

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Introduction

A Podcast Ethnography in its simplest form is understanding why, how, who, what and where the podcast is successful or unsuccessful. It allows a person to fully understand what makes the specific podcast in question so amazing and empowering for many people. In today's society, over hundreds of thousands of podcasts exist globally but not all are warranted enough to have a podcast ethnography conducted about it. The Crack Down in particular is a very special case. It does not even reach the top 100 podcasts in the U.S at all, yet thousands of people watch it every other week because it is just so amazing to watch. (Podcast Insights) Now why would someone out of thousands of podcasts choose The Crack Down hosted by I Will Dominate. Well that answer relies totally on perspective and because of relatability. I Will Dominate or Dom for short was a Professional League Of Legends player, and now hosts The Crack Down to discuss modern day League of Legends to thousands of people. Being able to podcast in today's society allowed Dom to feel empowered enough with his message on League of legends that many people want to go specifically to watch him. People take what Dom says to heart whether he is bashing on North American Teams or praising the Korean Super teams again, people take this wealth of knowledge and apply it to their everyday lives. "The social practices associated with podcast listening, and the paths through which the podcast, as understood by its creators, is integrated into the listener's everyday lives." (Sharon, Tzlil, and Nicholas A John) With so many people watching Dom and taking his opinion and trying to formulate a solution or an argument,

people are watching The Crack Down for that specific reason. This Podcast Ethnography is based off of the guidelines of Markus Lundström & Tomas Poletti Lundström because their three steps of foregoing a podcast ethnography are vital. The first step revolves around the idea of Exploring. When a person explores the podcast, they have to understand the numbers behind it first off. How many seasons has the podcast been going on for? How many episodes per season and how much time does each episode go on for. These are all vital questions to understanding how to break down the greatness in I Will Dominate's podcast. Not only must it have numbers behind it, but it must also have the opportunity to provide the podcast with not just primary speakers but also secondary speakers as well. What is meant is basically the Primary speakers are I Will Dominate and his Co-hosts who vary each new episode. Secondary speakers are critical to any podcast because it also increases the longevity of the podcast in question. Secondary speakers can consist of people calling in to talk directly to the host themselves or even tweeting at them using a specific hashtag. Think Of Joe Rogan's show where he has people tweet at him non stop over his opinions. (Joe Rogan Experience) It is all for entertainment and to increase focus onto the podcast.

The next step of the podcast ethnography consists of the Engage side of things. Are people actually engaging with The Crack Down or are they just having it on in the background as white noise because they want to do something else. This is critical for any podcast because the more people are involved, the more secondary speakers a podcast will have which leads to more engagement overall. Being able to learn the lingo of the podcast and even be able to decipher exactly what Dom and his co-hosts are saying creates a sense of engagement not only for Dom but for the people watching him at home or anywhere.

Finally the last step involving the podcast ethnography of The Crack Down is the Examine stage. This last step entails why people are so willing to watch Dom of all people talk about League of Legends and why not someone else that they know. Why is Dom the right guy to talk on this subject and how does he get so many people to flock towards his podcast rather than go watch Lost Shadows, Korean League of Legends Color Announcer talk about the LCK. In addition to all of this, this stage also examines the trends that are seen throughout the show. What does Dom and his Co-hosts talk about mainly? What sides will they take the majority of the time or why do they say something in particular that makes people question their sanity. These three steps are the key components to any Podcast Ethnography and are the basis for what makes a podcast good or not.

Literature Review

For starters, it is important to know what a Podcast Ethnography is in the first place. The process of an Ethnography is split into three separate sub sections. Explore, Engage and Examine. Basically in the explore phase it identifies why this podcast out of every other podcast that exists is significant and worth exploring. Why would someone choose to watch, “The Crack Down” over something in a more professional setting or on a different topic like the Joe Rogan show. Exploring the variety of podcasts and comparing them to others is key to find why a podcast has a significant impact. Within the engage portion of an Ethnography, it entails how much attention must be paid to the podcast itself. What is meant is can someone just leave it on in the background for them to listen or does the person have to actually sit down and commit a large sum of time in order to truly understand what is going on and the issue at hand. Some podcasts are different and allow a person to just run it and listen while doing dishes. Finally for the last stage of an Ethnography, Examining the podcast just means simply, “How has this

podcast lasted this long?” What is the comedy or the likable attributes to the podcast as a whole? All of these questions can only be answered after watching and listening to the podcast for an extensive amount of time. (Markus Lundström)

The Crack Down is one of those podcasts out there that is not as professional but it sure is informative. It draws in fans that may be looking for different things but end up at the same place since Christian Rivera aka I Will Dominate relays information in a truly refreshing way. The Crack Down is not the most polite podcast out there, but it is known for its humor, in depth analysis, and insight to the pro scene of League of Legends. (The Crack Down)

On the flip side as mentioned earlier, The Joe Rogan Show is extremely popular and presents itself to a number of people that constantly come back for more. In comparison to the I Will Dominate podcast, it is more professionally done and hits topics more related to real world scenarios. It's important to understand that a Podcast Ethnography can be done for most podcasts that have been created but for each podcast the analysis will be different depending on topic, target audience, host, co-hosts, etc. A lot of factors are taken into account when examining a podcast. (Joe Rogan Show)

It is also important to note, when did the term “Podcasting” become a thing? When was it coined, why was it called podcasting and how was the first podcast recorded? Podcasting started back in 2004 through a service created by Apple that was able to extract audio files from an Aggregator System. Continuing on, the word Podcast won the Word of the Year Award back in 2005 cementing the medium to come about in modern times. From using MP3 wav files, to an aggregator system now to modern streaming services and recording bots, it is amazing to see how far podcasting has come starting from a basic hobby to a full blown medium. (The Voices Blog)

Moving along, history is important to anything in general but another concept is why do people listen to podcasts more and more now from back in the day. “The reasons behind this may be a combination of factors, in which technologies, brands, social sharing, and engaging content all play a part.” (Berry, Richard) Basically over the course of the years, technology has improved significantly from 2004 with the introduction of Smartphones, tablets and faster internet networks. Everyone has a computer around them at all times, brands are utilizing podcasts more and more to present themselves in a good way using Hosts of podcasts as a messenger. Social media has risen and the majority of the population use Social media on a daily basis. Podcasting introduces people to engaging content which makes people tune in more and more because people are able to choose what they want to listen to in the first place. Podcasting has grown so much from being a service only provided by Apple, into a medium that has evolved onto multiple streaming platforms such as Twitch, Youtube, Spotify and even Major News Outlets utilize podcasting as a medium.

Through These platforms, people like I Will Dominate are able to create these amazing ideas as content and create them for people across the world. “The new possibilities for self-expression heralded by podcasting technology seem to have been particularly empowering.”(Andrew.J Salvati) Christian Rivera feels empowered when he is able to create content covering the pro scene of League of Legends because if he did not enjoy it, he would not be creating the content in the first place. Two seasons with about 24 episodes each is a substantial amount of times Dom is looking to get his point across because he is so passionate and able to create his content through the use of podcasting on Twitch.

Mentioned earlier, The Crack Down has numerous podcasts and videos to be watched. Each of the episodes relate back to the topic of the pro scene for League of Legends. Each of the podcasts talk about different things such as G2 Esports and then maybe the next day talk about

Mad Lions and the LCK. Either way the variety of the podcast allows it to be more engaging for Dom's audience. (The Crack Down)

Another idea people say is well, "Podcasting may be cool and all but do people really pay attention or do they just keep it on as background noise?" Well, "The social practices associated with podcast listening, and the paths through which the podcast, as understood by its creators, is integrated into listener's everyday lives."(Sharon, Tzlil, and Nicholas A John) Sometimes when people listen to podcasts, they do indeed have it on as background noise while they go and work on something else. Whether it is on in the background or people are listening to it thoroughly, people are still integrating what they are learning into their daily lives. As for the Crack Down, people are taking Dom's opinions into account and creating their own. They are ENGAGING with the podcast as per the Podcast Ethnography.

Obviously the Joe Rogan show and The Crack Down are not the only podcasts that exist. They did not even crack within the top 100 of the most popular podcasts in the U.S. Even though The Crack Down is not a top 100 podcast, people are still willing to watch it due to the engaging content and the quality of it. Also because I Will Dominate has some interesting opinions on the LCS people can't find elsewhere. (Podcast Insights)

Moving back into the history, it is good to compare the first ever podcast to The Crack Down as a reference. It would be quite difficult to do a podcast ethnography on the first podcast since not many people saw it, not many people know of it, whereas The Crack Down has hundreds of thousands of people watching it per episode. The first podcast was recorded on an MP3 unlike The Crack Down where it is streamed live at Twitch.tv/ I Will Dominate and then uploaded to YouTube. (Locke, C.)

Analysis

Podcasting as a medium has only recently come into the mainstream media as a gateway for content creators. The term, “podcasting” came around in the year of 2004 when Adam Curry and Dave Winer wanted to create a service that allowed them to download radio broadcasts from the internet. (Voices Blog) They came up with an aggregator system that allowed them to extract audio files and put them onto the Ipod. With this essential concept, podcasting was born because podcasting as a medium needed this crucial step in order to coexist alongside other mainstream mediums such as Television and Radio. There never really was the “First Podcast” but mainly people downloading audio files onto their MP3 or their Ipod at the time. Dave Winer, one of the early adopters of the word Podcasting said, “My goal then was to upgrade the blogosphere. At that point, it was a clubby social thing, and it was way focused on Silicon Valley and the tech industry. Syndication and RSS hadn’t been done on the web—my idea was that we could do blogging with our voice, but I needed a flow of MP3s that people would find compelling. (C.Locke) Moving a bit ahead into time, Podcasting was mentioned by Ben Hammersley in the Guardian Newspaper. This allowed the word to eventually gain some traction and in 2005, Podcast won word of the year which solidified its position as an actual medium. What came next for podcasting as an up and coming medium was back in 2007 where George W. Bush became the first U.S President to have his weekly address delivered as a podcast. At this point not only was podcasting gaining more and more traction but it was going above and beyond the original thought. To have the U.S President use the medium for his messages was a huge step for podcasting. Nowadays, podcasts can be heard on all kinds of social media such as Spotify, YouTube, Twitch and many more, but the first modern day site to really introduce a podcasting service on their platform was Yahoo. Yahoo made it where people can listen and subscribe to their favorite podcasts. It was not until 2019 where Spotify and other sites we know of today

really adopted the service. Podcasting has had some bumps in the road with royalties being involved over the word, “podcasting” but even then, people still find a way to creatively talk about their favorite topics. (InternationalPodcastingToday)

Over time, the word podcast has grown not only as a medium but as a business as well. The thing is, how did Podcasting that started back in 2004 grow so quickly and why is it so prominent today? Well Berry Richard summarizes podcasting’s growth as a whole by stating, “The reasons behind this may be a combination of factors, in which technologies, brands, social sharing, and engaging content all play a part.” Basically, in 2004 their Iphones, At home computers and Smartphones as a whole were just not accessible or exist. Technology has progressed very quickly over the past couple of years and continues to grow. Brands are starting to podcast more and more in order to get themselves out there as another form of advertisement just like I Will Dominate and Team Liquid. The social sharing aspect is continuing to grow as social media in general becomes more and more necessary. Majority of companies nowadays have social media accounts run by experts and are paid full time to manage these accounts. When podcasting is thrown into the mix, businesses pay the hosts to talk about their company and their latest product as ads thrown in while the hosts talk about whatever they want to talk about. In the case of I Will Dominate and The Crack Down, the engaging content falls hand in hand with his podcast. Not many Ex pro players from League of legends, like to talk about the modern day pro scene. Because of this, more people are willing to flock to Dom in order to hear his opinions on the matter which comes off as engaging for his audience. Sullivan, John L explains it clearly when he states, “Podcasting is expanding rapidly as a popular cultural phenomenon, connecting listeners to audio content created by professionals, radio stations, and amateur hobbyists.” Dom may be a professional streamer and Ex professional League of

Legends player, but that does not mean he is a professional podcaster. Even if he is an amateur hobbyist who does not podcast full time, people are still willing to listen to him because of who he is and how he is known in his respective community. Dom is in a position of power whenever he conducts his podcast and it allows him to empower his voice and be heard by hundreds and thousands of people at a time. When Salvati, Andrew J states, “The new possibilities for self-expression heralded by podcasting technology seem to have been particularly empowering.” Podcasting has opened up so many avenues for people whether it is professional players, amateur hobbyists or even an average work life person, podcasting empowers and enables people just like I Will Dominate to be themselves and share their opinions to many others.

Moving into the Podcast Ethnography of I Will Dominate’s The Crack Down, it starts off with the first stage called Explore. The Crack Down has been going on for multiple months and has two seasons as of this moment with 38 episodes in the first season and 12 in the second season so far. The episodes range from 45minutes to about an hour and 30 minutes. The podcast itself has been shown to be influential because of three reasons. First, the podcast’s length signifies that it is popular among people or else Dom would have stopped creating the content long ago. Secondly, the podcast averages to about 100k viewers per episode on YouTube. Lastly, people are leaving comments agreeing or disagreeing with Dom on his opinions and having overall discussions in the comment section. Now that the podcast has been shown to be able to be explored, it also must meet a certain criteria. Does the podcast allow itself to not only have primary speakers such as Dom and his co hosts for the day but does it allow itself to have secondary speakers such as the audience come on to create a counter argument? The answer to this is yes, because before Dom posts the Podcast on YouTube, he streams it live on Twitch to thousands of people watching him at the time. During this time, Dom leaves open Twitch chat

and gathers the opinions of all the people inside of his chat. He may not acknowledge them directly, but he still looks over to read and understand what the response is in chat. Whether a counter argument arises from Twitch chat or a simple KEKW, secondary speakers are present during the time of the podcast being recorded. (Markus Lundström & Tomas Poletti Lundström)

The second stage of the Podcast Ethnography involving the podcast, The Crack Down is Engage. Most people turn on podcasts and just have them running in the background as white noise and others choose to sit and directly listen to what the host says and thinks about their own opinion as the host creates their own. It is also important for the person conducting the Ethnography to be involved with it and be an avid listener to truly understand it. The Crack Down is for sure one of those podcasts that in the beginning unless you know of the League of Legends Scene or the pro scene in general, a lot of terms will be thrown into the consumer's face that they may not understand. Some examples of that are "Perks is inting 2 minutes before Baron creating an unwinnable 4v5 scenario for G2. A lot of people that are watching for the first time will understand terms like 4v5 and unwinnable but who is Perks, what is Baron and why is it so important that it needs to be mentioned and G2 is that the team name or the organization's name. Over time however or if a person is accustomed to listening to podcasts involving League of Legends, everyone will know exactly what the situation is and can openly share their opinion on the play. Aside from using terms related with League of Legends, listeners may also have an issue with understanding when I Will Dominate and twitch chat spam things such as "Pepega" or "KEKW" Most people if they have never watched a Twitch stream will be extremely confused on the terms because they are memes that originated on the platform, but everyone uses them whenever something funny or idiotic is said. For example, a KEKW moment would be along the lines of, "This professional support player is out there looking like a Diamond animal in my solo

queue games, flashing for crab and dying for it.” With combining both League of Legends terms and Twitch emotes and phrases, the podcast can be quite hard to get into. Once however the consumer listens to the podcast more and more, they will start to understand the phrases and the concepts Dom and his hosts are talking about. To start watching this podcast, the consumer has to sit down and thoroughly watch in order to get a feel for what is being said and to understand. If a consumer is experienced in League of Legends but not in Twitch phrases, they will still be able to have the podcast on in the background as white noise but will not understand what all of the emotes and KEKW spam is for. As for the consumers that are well acquainted in both League of Legends and Twitch chat, they will receive the full experience of The Crack Down and find themselves having an enjoyable time listening to I Will Dominate discuss the bonfire LCS is.

(Markus Lundström & Tomas Poletti Lundström)

Lastly for the Podcast Ethnography on The Crack Down, is the Examine stage. The Crack Down has different co-hosts each week, but Dom is always in the center of everything. Some weeks it will be a former LCS coach or another week will be one of the announcers from the LCS like Captain Flowers. Either way, the way Dom interacts with not only his audience, but his co-hosts it feels more like a conversation than anything. Obviously it is set in a semi professional area, but Dom is not afraid to use curse words or just laugh when he thinks someone is wrong but counters the argument in a professional manner. Dom works very well with his co-hosts and makes it a learning environment for the viewers but also brings his own charm in his sarcastic attitude. Dom’s sarcastic attitude really shows when people in his Twitch chat right how NA will win worlds one day but makes a smart remake saying along the lines of, “We cant even make it to groups, you want us to beat the Koreans, no way.” Some themes that appear throughout the show involve how NA as a region in League of Legends is so bad and that they cannot compare

to other regions such as Korea or China. Korea is historically known as the strongest region in the pro scene and Dom every podcast will bash on NA for being one of the weakest and at times appear as a joke to the professional scene. This mainly stems from statistics but it also goes back to when I Will Dominate actually competed on Team Dignitas for NA, made it to finals and lost miserably. Expectations are always seen as sky high for NA just to plummet to rock bottom as per Dom. It is also important to note why The Crack Down is being produced over the course of so many months and how it keeps a steady stream of viewership. Half of that lies because I Will Dominate as a content creator is seen as crazy but professional at the same time. Dom being eccentric and not being afraid to voice his opinion even when other people may think it's wrong is one of the things that makes Dom so appealing to watch. People want to see Dom and they want to support him, they are also watching the podcast because of his amazing insight on the pro scene. Remember, I Will Dominate played for Team Dignitas for multiple seasons and eventually retired. That wealth of knowledge, being in those player's shoes is not something everyone can say they have done. Between Dom being himself and the insight on the pro scene, The Crack Down continues to be produced for many viewers every other week.

Conclusion

The podcast ethnography conducted on The Crack Down only leads to positive things that should be said about this podcast as a whole. It has a great audience behind it that can be open to new or veteran League of Legends players. It features a host that is entertaining but serious when he needs to be. The Co-hosts that Dom brings on are people that work extremely well with him and also bring in their own dynamics to bounce off of Dom's energy. The longevity of the podcast currently knows no bounds because League of legends as a game has been around for more than a decade. Until the game dies down or becomes unpopular, Dom will

always have the game to talk about and his target audience being League of legends players will come to watch him every time. The trends I Will Dominate was able to bring to life are trends that are talked about commonly in the League of Legends community. The Korean super teams are always kicking everyone to the curb with their incredible macro and game sense, meanwhile North America can't seem to get anything done right. These trends are talked about so much that even Twitch chat themselves are starting to create emotes about how bad NA is in comparison to Korea. The podcast itself has a nice look to it being a panel consisting of Dom and his ever changing Co-hosts but the look is refreshing and easy to read. Most people generally will watch this podcast if they are interested in learning about League of legends but if someone that played Overwatch heard these kinds of comments, it would not give the same effect. This happens for every podcast but because League Of Legends is such a niche game that this would be one of the few downfalls is not being able to grow the fanbase besides bringing in more League players to watch the podcast. Also for this podcast ethnography, it would have been good to compare this podcast to some of I Will Dominates other works. He appears very often on other league streamer's podcasts and even if he is not for say recording an episode of The Crack Down, Dom still likes to talk about the LCS, LCK and League of Legends in general. He also still plays the game so his YouTube and Twitch are flooded with content revolving around League of Legends. He also has another podcast he works on called FaceCheck and also has another project he is starting up called Fixing NA. It would be interesting to do another Podcast Ethnography on FaceCheck because does it have the same success or more than The Crack Down? What makes the two podcasts so different that he started another series? These are all vital questions that hopefully someone can explore before the League of Legends community dies. These podcasts

are for sure on a time limit but all good things must come to an end. Dom will probably just start a new podcast again who knows.

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[The Crack Down S02E05 ft. IMT Revenge - "I Was Told My Spot In The Team Wasn't Secured" - YouTube](#)

[The Joe Rogan Experience | Podcast on Spotify](#)

[\(2\) The Crack Down S02E04 ft. Perkz - "G2 Was The Best Thing That Happened To Me" - YouTube](#)