



**Taboo
platforms**

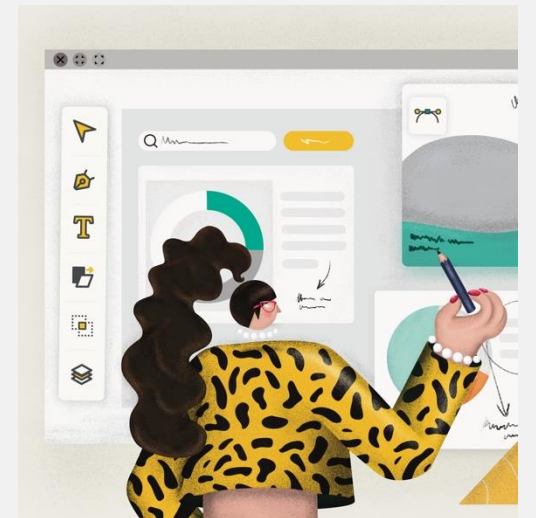
Agenda

TABOO PLATFORMS

- Change creators Napster and OnlyFans
- Other potential taboo platforms

POSTER PRESENTATIONS

- Develop your own poster
- Presentations
- Feedback



What made Napster taboo?

- It facilitated widespread copyright infringement on an unprecedented scale
- Users could download virtually any song for free without compensating artists or record labels
- The platform democratized access to music but violated intellectual property laws
- At its peak, it had over 80 million registered users sharing copyrighted content



The Legal Battle and Shutdown

- The music industry, and artists like Metallica and Dr. Dre, sued Napster for copyright infringement.
- The central legal question was whether Napster was responsible for its users' actions.
- In 2001, courts ruled against Napster and forced it to shut down its file-sharing service.
- This represented a pivotal moment in digital copyright law and platform responsibility.

Napster permanently changed consumer expectations and behaviour:

- Demonstrated demand for digital music access over physical ownership
- Proved the internet could be a music distribution platform.
- Exposed the recording industry's outdated business model
- Created a generation that expected music to be instantly accessible



Creative destruction

Consumers wanted Napster's convenience but the industry needed a legal framework. This led to several transitional phases:

- **iTunes Store (2003):** Apple created a legal download marketplace, but users still had to pay per song
- **Streaming experiments:** Services like Pandora explored legal streaming with ads
- **Spotify's breakthrough (2008):** Founded by Daniel Ek and Martin Lorentzon, Spotify offered the Napster experience - instant access to millions of songs - but with a legal, sustainable business model



Outlaw and Innovator

Napster exemplifies how taboo platforms can drive innovation:

- **Creative destruction:** Napster disrupted the old music industry and transformed how music was consumed.
- **Regulatory adaptation:** Legal frameworks eventually evolve to accommodate new technologies
- **Business model innovation:** The failure of taboo platforms often births legal alternatives that incorporate their best features
- Illegal services often expose market inefficiencies and unmet consumer needs.



OnlyFans – destigmatising sex work

- Launched in 2016 as a novel online platform.
- Experienced a surge in popularity during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.
- Currently boasts 130 million users.
- Taboo platform because of the explicit content and the stigma related to sex and sex work and porn
- Audience pays monthly subscription fees
- Content creators retain 80% of the earnings
- OnlyFans take 20% cut from the creators' revenues



Source for individual and social change?

- OnlyFans has been hailed as a revolutionary platform within the porn industry by shifting power away from industry moguls and relocating control to the workers themselves
- OnlyFans has empowered sex workers by enabling them to engage in their profession without relying on exploitative intermediaries. In the past, such intermediaries enjoyed considerable authority over the nature of the work conducted, as well as exercising control over the workers.
- Sex workers now have the means to operate independently, allowing for greater autonomy and agency within their profession .
- By becoming self-employed through OnlyFans, women have gained the ability to address problematic issues openly within the industry without fear of losing their livelihoods or damaging their careers.
- Newly found voices have sparked a social movement focused on sex workers' rights and challenged taboos associated with their work, thereby leading to important discussions about the safety and well-being of workers.
- Consent and the value of workers in this field have become central themes in these discussions

Implications of Taboo and Stigma

- Content creators can't advertise their accounts as platforms and social media sites want to disassociate from sexual content.
- OnlyFans does not advertise content creators who do explicit content but happily enjoy the revenues that they generate for it.
- Visa and Mastercard refused partner with OnlyFans if they advertise sexual content
- Apple App Store (2021) classifies 'overly sexual or pornographic material' as objectionable content, preventing OnlyFans from having its own app.

Potential Taboo Characteristics



Labor and Supply Chain Concerns:

- Allegations of exploitative labour practices in manufacturing
- Questions about forced labour in supply chains, particularly regarding Xinjiang cotton
- Extreme price points that raise questions about how such low costs are achieved

Intellectual Property Issues:

- Frequent accusations of selling counterfeit goods and knockoffs
- Design theft from small businesses and independent creators
- Weak enforcement of trademark and copyright protections

Data Privacy and Security:

- Concerns about extensive data collection practices
- Questions about data sharing with Chinese government
- Invasive app permissions that exceed typical e-commerce needs

Regulatory Arbitrage:

- Exploits "de minimis" exemption (packages under \$800) to avoid US customs duties
- Operates in regulatory gray zones between countries
- Circumvents consumer protection standards applied to domestic retailers

Potential Taboo Characteristics



Content Moderation

- Dramatic reduction in content moderation staff (80%+ layoffs)
- Reinstatement of previously banned accounts, including extremists
- Reduced enforcement against harassment, misinformation, and hate speech
- "Freedom of speech" positioning that critics argue enables harmful content

Misinformation and Manipulation:

- Reduced fact-checking mechanisms
- Blue check verification now pay-to-play, removing credibility signals
- Algorithmic changes that critics claim amplify divisive content
- State-affiliated accounts operating with less transparency

Advertising and Brand Safety:

- Major advertisers fleeing due to content concerns
- Ads appearing alongside extremist content
- Owner's political statements affecting platform perception

Financial Viability Questions:

- Massive debt load from acquisition
- Declining user engagement and advertiser revenue
- Questions about long-term sustainability

Democratic Concerns:

- Platform owner's political activities and statements
- Concerns about election integrity and manipulation
- Use of platform to advance personal political agenda



Potential Taboo Characteristics



TikTok: The Geopolitical Taboo

- National security concerns about Chinese ownership
- Data localization and privacy issues
- Potential for foreign influence and propaganda
- Several countries have banned it from government devices
- US has considered full ban multiple times

Telegram: The Moderation-Light Platform

- Minimal content moderation
- Haven for criminal activity, from drug markets to sexual abuse
- Encrypted messaging used by both activists and terrorists
- Founder's libertarian stance on regulation

Taboo spectrum

1. Legal but Unethical

- Platforms operating within law but violating social norms
- Temu's labor practices, Shein's environmental impact

2. Regulatory Arbitrage

- Exploiting gaps between jurisdictions or slow regulation
- Temu's customs exploitation, crypto platforms

3. Geopolitical Taboo

- Concerns about national security or foreign influence
- TikTok, concerns about X under certain ownership scenarios

4. Content Moderation Philosophy

- "Free speech absolutism" vs. platform responsibility
- X under Musk, Telegram, Parler/Truth Social

5. Social/Moral Taboo

- Legal services that face social stigma
- OnlyFans, online gambling platforms

6. Emerging Taboo (AI era)

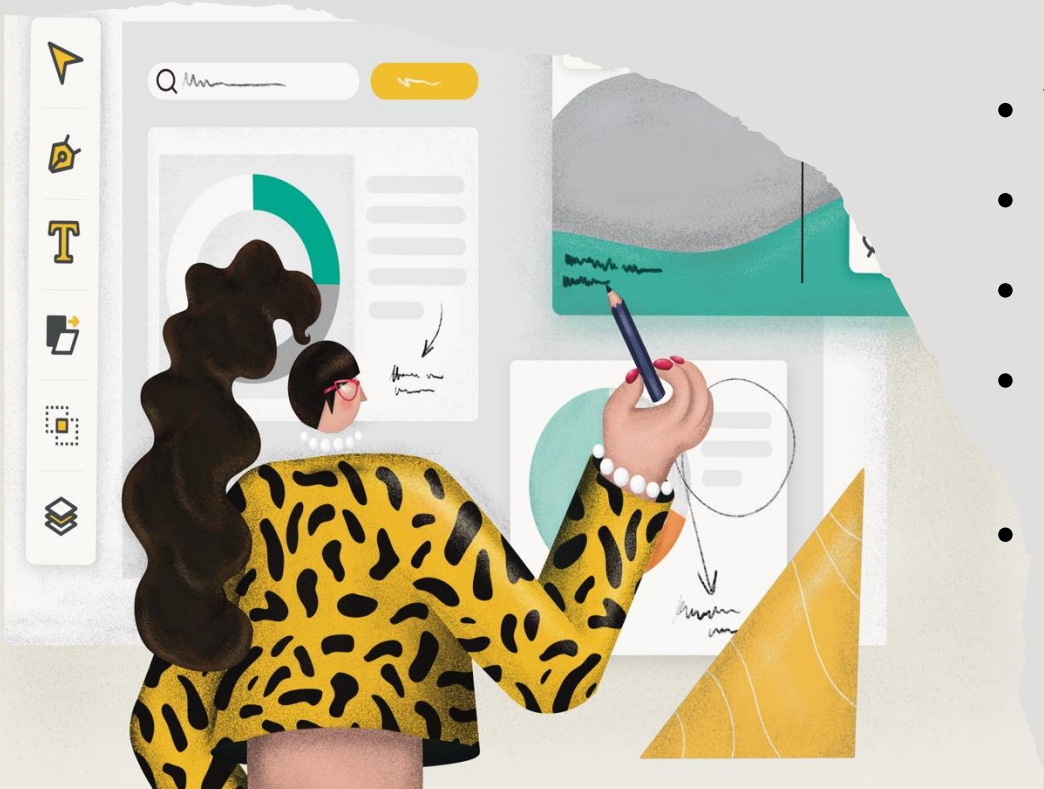
- Deepfake platforms
- AI companions with no safety rails
- Unregulated AI tools

Poster presentations

Your poster should include information about:

What is this platform about, purpose or a problem it solves

- What is the core exchange
- User groups
 - Indicate any subsidising
 - Penguin problem
- Value propositions
- Network effects
- How does it generate revenue (monetizing)
- Ethical considerations (eg. labour, data, environment, equality, inclusion)
- Give your platform a name and maybe a catchy slogan



Poster presentations

Give feedback

Your group should give feedback to as many groups as possible.

- at least 2 positive points
- at least 1 concern/question/problem

Write them on a sticky note and leave on the poster

