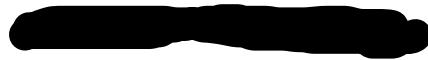


**Network Intervention: Bring Back Dabbing**



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COM 411: Communication & Social Networks

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December 11, 2024

## **Introduction**

Our network intervention focuses around bringing back the viral dance trend, “dab.” In 2015, the dance went viral on social media. Many people used the platform Musical.ly, which is now known as TikTok, to showcase their dabs. The goal for this intervention was to promote a campus wide sense of community and unity through social media posts of students dabbing. Our approach to these posts would focus on diffusion and complex contagion. The reason behind choosing social media posts for this network intervention is that many college students use social media. A study done in 2024, found that around 70% of college students use social media and are at least on it every day (Astleitner & Schlick). Especially since the dance move gained popularity through social media, the best option was to use social media to make it popular again. The social media sites that were used in this intervention were Instagram and TikTok. Although TikTok is banned on Purdue’s Wi-Fi, the social media app is still used by many students. A survey found that 47% of undergraduate students use the app daily (Donadel, 2024). Along with social media posts, a survey was sent out to students that asked their opinions on dabbing. Questions about if it should come back or if they like it were asked. Participants answered whether or not they knew about the dance move and gave written responses on how they felt about the viral dance move. Google Forms was used because of its accessibility. By posting the link on Purdue SnapChat stories and sharing the link with others, anyone can have access.

## **Network Theory**

The first theory that guided the network intervention was diffusion. Diffusion refers to the idea that a network will adopt the same idea when one or multiple members follow the idea. In this case, more people will start to dab again if they see other people in their social network

start dabbing. An article posted by the National Library of Medicine, says that many people in the marketing field use the idea of diffusion to gain more attention and get people to either agree or buy their idea (Al-Taie & Kadry, 2017). The social media posts about dabbing can be classified as a marketing tactic. By reposting trending videos, utilizing popular hashtags, and making content with prominent audios, we can boost our posts. Through social media, it is easier to reach a wider audience. The American Marketing Association says that hashtags increase visibility and engagement (2024). By using hashtags that involve the words, “purdue” or “boilerup”, the social media posts will more than likely be pushed to someone who is at Purdue.

The second theory involved in the network intervention was complex contagion. According to Centola and Macy, complex contagions require multiple sources of activation for an idea to spread to someone (2007). In a simple contagion, only one person needs to come into contact with another person to believe the idea. However, a complex contagion requires multiple interactions. For social media trends, simple contagions do not exist; It is hard to simply get every single person in the world who saw a video to believe that information. However, if the person sees similar ideas or their friends start sharing the idea, they are more likely to follow along with the idea. Many people no longer perform the dab dance move because their friends no longer do it. Based on the concept of complex contagions, if someone were to start dabbing again it is likely their friends or others with an interest in this niche idea will bring back the forgotten dance move as well.

### **Approach**

As stated earlier, the approach taken was through social media. Specifically through TikTok and Instagram. Both usernames for the accounts are @dab\_again2024. On TikTok, we created videos that followed the latest trends in terms of audios, hashtags, and content ideas. Our

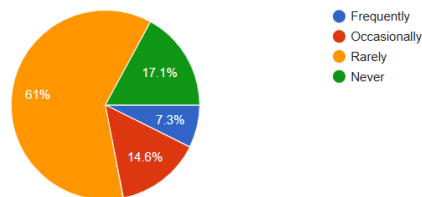
most popular post on our TikTok has received over 70,000 views, over 14,000 likes, 55 saves, and over 2,000 shares. The post features a photo of horses running in a field captioned, “How it feels when your friends are dancing and they dab” to the song “I’m Like a Bird” by Nelly Furtado. The trend that inspired this post generally showcases “honest thoughts” or things that can be seen as a thing that could bring people together. People could even associate the trend with doing something that makes them feel free and happy, like a horse running in an open field. The reason why this post is the most popular may be because while it campaigns for dabbing, it is really centered around friendship. This specific post also dove into the idea of nostalgia, suggesting that times were good when you and your friends would dab while dancing together. When it comes to complex contagion, people need to be exposed to an idea numerous times or by different people in order to then accept the idea. When applying this concept to the video, people won’t start dabbing again unless their friends do it. Videos that used words like “me” or “I” did not receive the same engagement as our friendship-focused post, giving us a gauge of what our viewers like. To further prove this idea, when people commented on our posts they tagged their friends which again shows that most people won’t start dabbing again unless their friends do it. On Instagram, our engagement was significantly lower. After posting on Instagram and only receiving two likes we decided that focusing more on TikTok would be the better approach to reach our target audience and beyond. On TikTok, videos get pushed to multiple peoples’ algorithms and run on a sort of “lottery” distribution where just one of your videos could go viral randomly as it did for us. On Instagram, your main feed is only people you follow while TikTok’s main feed is anyone. According to Rolling Stone, the engagement rate for TikTok is over 2% higher than other platforms (Holder, 2024).

### **Analysis**

The analysis of our dabbing intervention revealed valuable insights into the potential for reviving this once popular dance move. The survey conducted to gauge interest in dabbing indicated a significant portion of the surveyed population, 58%, believe dabbing should make a comeback despite scarcity; 61% of respondents indicated they rarely see dabbing today. This suggests a persistent fondness for the dance move and a potential for its resurgence. The survey also revealed that individuals primarily use dabbing as a form of celebration or to express nostalgia. This aligns with the notion that dabbing is associated with positive emotions and shared experiences, which can be leveraged to promote its revival. The figures below highlight our findings from the Google Form.

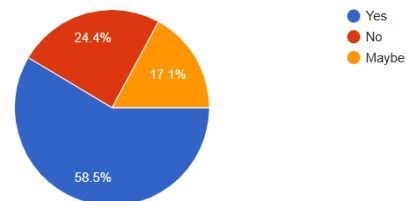
How often do you see people dabbing today?

41 responses



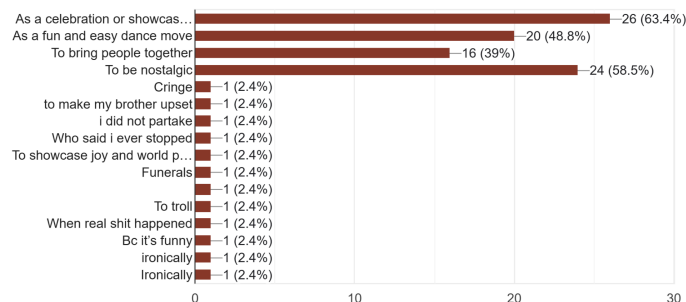
Do you think dabbing should make a comeback?

41 responses



How did you/ do you use the dab? (Select all that apply)

41 responses

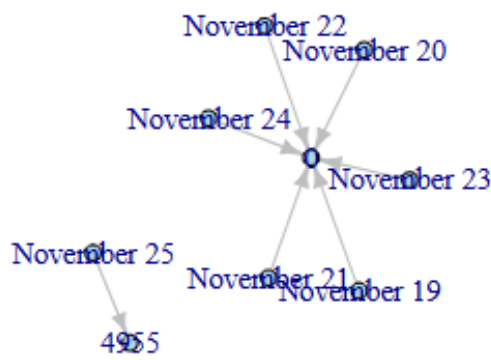


Our TikTok account has received 74,000 post views with 62.6% from the For You page, 34.9% from Personal Profile, 1.2%% from search, 1.2%% from sounds and 0.1% from our following. Our profile came up when people searched “dab 2024” (3%), “Dab en 2024”(3%),

“normailizeddabbingin2024”(1.5%), “normalizing dab in 2024”(1.5%), and “make dab great again.”(1.5%). In terms of viewer insights, 88% of our viewers are female, 10% are male and 2% are other. Our largest age portion of viewers were between ages 18-24 making up 78.3% of our total viewers; 25-34 year-olds followed with 16.3% of viewers falling into that age range. Almost all of our viewers were from the United States (99.4%) and a few portions were from Ireland (0.2%), Spain (0.2%), and Canada (0.2%). In less than one day, the account received about 311 profile views with 24,000 post views. The data below shows the increased engagement that occurred over two weeks.

Date	Video Views	Profile Views	Likes	Comments	Shares
<chr>	<chr>	<chr>	<chr>	<chr>	<chr>
<NA>	0	0	0	0	<NA>
November 24	0	0	0	0	0
November 25	4955	77	669	71	119
November 26	19167	234	3393	227	769
November 27	31365	480	7094	503	1436
November 28	9364	174	2018	175	432
November 29	2138	60	363	39	89
November 30	1631	37	276	28	72
December 1	1794	44	288	21	65
December 2	1323	31	207	11	35
December 3	1067	17	133	14	27
December 4	522	19	50	4	17
December 5	448	10	55	6	15
December 6	371	11	47	2	10
December 7	276	10	24	1	2
December 8	205	5	21	1	2
December 9	185	4	8	1	1
December 10	208	7	16	1	4

TikTok Network Visualization



## **Conclusion**

This network intervention aimed to revitalize dabbing through diffusion and complex contagions via social media campaigns. While our intervention achieved moderate success during the timeline of this project, specifically on TikTok, several key insights have arisen.

Firstly, our intervention has highlighted the crucial role of complex contagion in social trends. Leveraging TikTok's personalized algorithms and "lottery" delivery system, proved to be beneficial in attempting to revive a "dead dance move." Our most successful TikTok post, emphasizing friendship; collaborative participation; and nostalgia, showcased that individuals are more likely to adopt a trend when multiple sources within their own network engage with it. This finding aligns with Centola and Macy's (2007) assertion that multiple interactions are key for the spread of complex contagions.

Secondly, our intervention demonstrated the efficiency of social media, particularly TikTok, in facilitating diffusion. The rapid growth of views and engagement on our account illustrates this platform's ability to disseminate information quickly and broadly. TikTok's higher engagement rates compared to Instagram's further underscores the platform's effectiveness in reaching audiences aside from just Purdue students, possibly due to its algorithmic content delivery system. Based on our research, we can conclude that future interventions aiming to revive past trends should prioritize highly popular and inviting platforms like TikTok in order to maximize visibility and engagement.

Lastly, the survey data uncovered a lingering interest in dabbing. Participants indicated that celebrity or influencer endorsements, coupled with modern adaptations of the move, could help propel the dab's return to mainstream culture. Ultimately, these findings suggest that this once beloved worldwide dance trend could make a potential resurgence.

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