

## Digital Insights at SXSW



Every spring, the otherwise quiet Austin is turned upside down for a few days and becomes the scene of South-by-South-West (SXSW), one of the largest digital conferences in the world. Fabian Seger (Management Trainee Hubert Burda Media) was there this year and talks about some of the many impressions he gathered during his visit in Texas.

### **Handling New Technologies Critically**

While in recent years the major players of the tech scene have filled the conference halls of the SXSW, this year, against the background of the 30th anniversary of the World Wide Web, the focus was on the rather critical basic question of how much new media and communication technologies are now having a negative impact on our everyday lives and in what form this in turn affects media companies and the creative industries in general.

### **Regulation of Platforms**

The primary elections of the Democratic Party also cast their shadows on the SXSW and so, in addition to Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, the young hope of the party's left wing, presidential candidates Elizabeth Warren and Beto O'Rourke were also among the guests.

A day after the publication of her demand to break up the big American tech giants, Elizabeth Warren made a flaming plea at the SXSW for more competition in the digital economy. Margrethe Vestager, EU Commissioner for Competition, also appealed to the responsibility of large internet companies.

### **Redefining Natural User Interaction & Computational Design**

The presentations by Chinese tech companies were more technical, however. Paul Fu, Director UX Design of Alibaba Group, impressively demonstrated how Alibaba tries to make interaction with digital devices more natural by capturing our sensory perceptions.

### **Conversational Commerce**

There was also plenty of food for thought regarding the future of e-commerce. Alex Spinelli, CTO Liveperson and former head of the Alexa development team at Amazon, claimed that chats and language assistants could make websites superfluous in the future.

### **Automation of News Reports**

New possibilities for content automation are not only relevant to e-commerce providers, but also news agencies. This became clear above all in various panel discussions with representatives of Bloomberg, Reuters and the American Associated Press, which for some years increasingly rely on AI applications to quickly process the flood of news in the area of corporate and financial reports as well as sports.

However, loss of trust caused by fake news and manipulated video or image content poses challenges to news portals worldwide. The media representatives agreed that this does not have to contradict the automation of news content, because the use of AI will never be able to replace journalistic work itself, but instead create freedom for journalists to focus more on the quality of their content.

### **Profitable Online Journalism**

The monetisation of journalistic content on the net does not always succeed, but it should not prevent media companies from using these formats. They are still useful for strategic purposes in order to make their brands accessible to users in a variety of ways, says Christa Carone, CEO Group Nine Media.

In addition to other revenue streams such as affiliate marketing, brand licensing or the creation of white label content, Vox Media CEO Jim Bankoff believes that successful paywalls will become increasingly more likely, as the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal have recently shown.

### **Beyond the Stages**

In addition to the endless variety of presentations at the SXSW, there were also lots of exciting new products and some curious gadgets to discover - beyond the conference stages. In addition to the endless variety of presentations at the SXSW, there were also lots of exciting new products and some curious gadgets to discover - beyond the conference stages. The latest innovations were presented, ranging from smart surfboards, cuddly toys and yoga cushions to robot baristas and keyboard playing robots from Kuka.

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