

Sample discussion essay

Explanatory note

This is by no means an example of “the perfect discussion essay”. It is merely an indication of how a discussion essay might be structured using source materials, expert opinions (including your own), and other evidence. It also attempts to draw your attention to the distinctive style features (some examples in bold) of discussion essays explained in the presentation. The referencing style used in this essay is APA.

Structure	Discuss the significance of the ipod on the music retail industry and on music consumption.	Style features
Introduction: Background/ context	[1] The era of digital music has arrived. [2] According to a recent report (Forrester, 2007), half of all music sold in the U.S. is expected to be digital in 2011 and sales of downloaded music will surpass CD sales in 2012. [3] By 2007, over 100 million iPods had been sold - a milestone for a product that has been on the market for just five years. [4]The iPod has become an integral part of modern society, affecting the lives of even people who do not actually own one. [5]This essay examines the reasons for its success, Apple’s dominance in the digital market, and the phenomenal impact on the music retail industry and music consumption.	Description Interpretation Description
First point:	To some people, the iPod is a cultural icon. That is debatable, but there is no doubt about its popularity and success, which stemmed not from any particularly ground-breaking technology, but its emphasis on ease of use and, as Bull (2007) calls it, “downright coolness” (p.5). There have been other digitalmedia players in the last few years, but the iPod uses a “scroll wheel” (instead of skip buttons), which the user could spin to scroll through menus and lists of songs. It was also one of the first digital music players to use a hard disk to store songs instead of a flash memory. However, the most revolutionary aspects that have made the iPod into what some people are calling a “lifestyle” product are its massive storage capacity, its portability (fits into a shirt pocket), and its ability to carry all forms of media. Due to its storage capacity, the iPod is also uniquely positioned for podcasts. A thirty-minute podcast can mean a 20 megabyte download, using as much storage as about 10 songs (Bankhofer, 2005).	Discussion Evidence Assessment Discussion Evidence

Second point:	<p>Clearly, the success of the iPod is also largely due to some astute marketing by Apple, which has established quite a stranglehold on the digital music industry. It produces the hardware, software, and sells songs at low prices to put in the hardware it sold. The release of the iTunes music software in 2001 would be the key to the iPod's success. Apple now leads the portable digital music player market, with a 31% market share for iPod and the iTunes Music Store hosting 70% of all legal music downloads (Teather 2005). Apple is also at the front of the pack for the portable media players. It is continually updating its product-there is now an iPod Photo, iPod Mini and iPod Shuffle – the only flash-media based iPod.</p>	<p>Interpretation</p> <p>Description</p> <p>Evidence</p>
Third point:	<p>As far as the music retail industry is concerned, one of the key impacts of the iPod is in the increase in illegal downloading of music, resulting in great financial loss for the original artists. The setup of the iTunes music store by Apple to protect the artists has not had much impact, and ironically, the sale of iTunes has not increased at the same rate as iPod sales. According to Michael Bull, a lecturer in Media and Culture at the University of Sussex, the reason could be that the iPod has become an "artifact", and iPod users are spending their money buying the latest models, instead of on the music. Bull predicts that the market is moving toward the artifact (the aesthetic) and away from the music to fill it. He points to the collapse of Tower Records in New York, once known as the world's largest music store, as a sign of the "end of the music industry as we know it." (2007, p. 7).</p>	<p>Assessment</p> <p>Discussion</p> <p>Evidence</p>
Fourth point:	<p>In addition to reshaping the music retail market, iPods and iTunes have started a revolution in the way music is consumed. Without a doubt, the iPod has made it much easier for people to carry with them thousands of tracks and artists in the size of something smaller than that of a CD. In other words, the iPod has brought control back to the user- control over exactly what gets listened to at what point, control over their own space, and control over distraction in some cases. Bull believes that the iPod has also brought a new music-sharing realm. According to Bull, this concept has further developed into iParties, where music is provided by iPods instead of traditional music media. Young people come together and use their diverse musical tastes to select two tracks for the party from a huge repertoire. Bull says that users are drawn to the participatory aspect of iParties.</p>	<p>Logical appeal</p> <p>Discussion</p> <p>Evidence</p>

Conclusion:

[1] The popularity of the iPod has suggested to many other companies that there is a market out there for the taking, if only they can track what makes the iPod so popular – simplicity, good looks and the cool factor. [2] Although Apple was not the first to innovate, it packaged the iPod in a neat, minimalist style with a simple and effective userinterface. [3] This is the root of iPod’s success. Combined with iTunes (and later iPod “ancillaries” like Apple TV and the iPod Hi-Fi) it offered an integrated home entertainment system. [4] Whether people buy the product or not is no longer the issue; the fact remains that the iPod has changed the modern media landscape and the way people listen to, purchase, and store their music. (860 words approx..)

References

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