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*Song popularity as a contagious process*

How is it that a song becomes popular? How do certain songs become so much more popular than others? The rapidity with which some songs gain popularity often leads to them being described as 'contagious' or 'infectious'. Upon closer examination, the download time series for some of these songs do resemble epidemic curves derived from case report data for infectious diseases. This suggests that ideas from epidemiological modelling might be useful in investigating how such songs 'spread' through human populations, and that employing disease epidemic models might help to better understand the mechanisms underlying song popularity. Download data were obtained from Nokia based on daily song downloads through Nokia cell phones in 28 countries over a five year period. Songs were characterized by fitting standard epidemic models to song download time series and using these to estimate epidemiological parameter values, providing new insights about popularity of music.