

Contagious: How Products, Ideas, and Behaviors Catch On

MKTG 768 751

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Why do some products catch on and become popular while others fail? Why do apps and services take off while others languish? And why do certain ads, messages, or ideas stick in memory while others disappear the minute you hear them?

Diffusion, social media, word of mouth, and viral marketing have become important topics for companies, brands, and organizations. Marketers want their product to be popular, organizations want their social change initiative to catch on, and entrepreneurs want their ideas to stick. This course investigates these and other topics as it explains how things catch on and become popular.

Along the way, the course will touch on four main aspects:

- Characteristics of products, ideas, and behaviors that lead them to be successful
- Psychological process of attention, memory, and motivation
- How social influence shapes behavior
- How social networks impact the spread of information and influence

Class Material

- Readings:
 - Course Packet
 - *Contagious: Why Things Catch On*
- More information on course site in Canvas

Assessment

- **Class participation and Exercises (40%):** Come to class prepared to actively discuss and work with the concepts in the readings. Your goal is to make comments that significantly advance the class discussion. Quality is more important than quantity but some quantity is necessary to judge quality.
 - There are also four exercises we will use to foster class discussion. Instructions will be available online. Turn them in online before class on the day they are due.
- **Application Papers (60%):** A large portion of your grade will be based on two short application papers. This is a chance to apply what we've learned in class to some real-world examples. Many of you may be working on start-ups you want to catch on or ideas you want to make diffuse and this is a chance to apply the principles we discuss in the course to your situations or to others you see in the world. You may work individually or in groups of 2-3.
 - The Stickiness paper (due 10/18) will focus on making a message/idea stick, or memorable. The Sharing paper (due 11/1) will focus on increasing diffusion of a product, idea, or behavior.
 - More detail will be provided later in the course, but each 2 page paper (single spaced) should (1) analyze your example based on one of the frameworks we have discussed in class, and (2) make improvements to help it stick or spread.

The starred readings must be read prior to the session. Other articles are optional and provide deeper insight into the main concepts

<u>Block</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Readings</u>	<u>Exercise Due</u>
Friday, September 25			
930-10:30	Introduction	* <i>Contagious</i> – Introduction <i>Science</i> . Friendship as a Health Factor	Start Twitter Exercise
10:45-12:30	Exposure, Perception, and Memory	*Influence of Beer Brand Identification on Taste Memory WSJ. As VW tries to sell pricier cars...	
5:15-6:45	Triggers	* <i>Contagious</i> – Triggers Chapter How Habits Work	
6:45-8:15	Stickiness	* <i>Diffusion of Innovations</i> . Introduction <i>Diffusion of Innovations</i> . Chapter 6	Speech Exercise
Friday, October 9			
9:30-11:00	How to Make Ideas Stick	* <i>Made to Stick</i> . Introduction	
11-12:30	Applying Stickiness	Why misquotes drive out real quotes	Buzz Exercise
5:15-7:15	Imitation & Divergence	*Asch. Opinions and social pressure *Identity-Signaling, Social Inf., & Social Contagion Can a Commercial be Too Sexy...	
Saturday, October 10			
730-9	Word-of-Mouth	* Value of Word of Mouth	
	Social Networks	* Leveraging Customer Networks * <i>Psych. Today</i> . The Small-World Problem Strength of weak ties	
Friday, October 23			
4:15-5:45	What Drives Word of Mouth?	* <i>Contagious</i> – Emotion and Public Chapters * Where have we been and where are we going	Twitter Exercise due

5:45-7:15	Crafting Contagious	<i>Contagious</i> – Social Currency Chapter	
Saturday, October 24			
7:30-9	Influentials	* Are Influentials...Influential?	Influentials Exercise
	Review and Synthesis	* Predicting the Present with Google Trends	