

The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

Dept of Information Systems, Business Statistics
and Operations Management

Seminar Announcement

Popularity or Proximity: Characterizing the Nature of Social Influence in an Online Music Community

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Date : 14 January 2016 (Thursday)
Time : 10:30 am - 12:00 noon
Venue : ISOM Conference Room 4047, LSK Business Building



Abstract: We study social influence in an online music community. In this community users can listen to and “favorite” (or like) songs, and follow the favoriting behavior of their social network friends — and the community as a whole. From an individual user’s perspective, two types of peer consumption information are salient for each song: total number of favorites by the community as a whole, and favoriting by their social network friends. Correspondingly, we study two types of social influence: popularity influence, driven by the total number of favorites from the community as a whole, and proximity influence, due to the favoriting behavior of immediate social network friends. Our quasi-experimental research design applies a variety of empirical methods to highly granular music consumption data from an online music community. Our analysis finds robust evidence of both popularity and proximity influence. Further, popularity influence is more important for narrow-appeal music as compared to broad-appeal music. Finally, the two types of influence are substitutes for one another, and proximity influence, when available, dominates the effect of popularity influence. We discuss implications for design and marketing strategies for online communities, such as the one studied in this paper.

Bio: I am a doctoral candidate of Information Systems at the Paul Merage School of Business, University of California, Irvine. Previously, I received the MS in Management Information Systems (MIS) at University of Arizona, and BS in MIS at National Central University, Taiwan. In general, I am interested in the impacts of information technologies on consumer choice. Specially, my current research focuses on the areas of social media, mobile and location-based technologies in digital markets. I mainly apply econometric methods and game theory-based models along with social network analysis and business analytics tools. Prior to my academic career, I was an SAP R/3 integration consultant and technical vice manager at Meta Technology Corporation and Today’s Instrument Corporation in Taiwan.