Practicum for Marketing Communications
MGT/B/P 442, Spring 2011

Instructor
Hema Yoganarasimhan
3204 Gallagher Hall
Email: hyoganarasimhan@ucdavis.edu
Office Hours: By appointment

Class Meetings:
Davis: Mondays 3 – 3.40 PM, 2310 Gallagher Hall
Sacramento: Mondays 9 – 9.40 PM, 2205 UCD Sac Ed. Ctr.
San Ramon: Even weekends Friday, 5 – 5:40 pm, 1502 BISRCH

Objective:
To identify influentials in the YouTube social network.

Co-requisite: This course is designed to accompany Marketing Communications. So you should be enrolled in MGT/B/P 242, if you intend to take this practicum.

Groups: Please form groups of two and work on the project. All the deliverables and the final project report are due to be turned in by the group (not individually).

Detailed Project Plan

1. **Weeks 1 and 2 – Background Readings**
   Before we try to identify ‘influentials’, we need to have a good understanding of – a) what makes someone influential, and b) how social influence operates. The following set of readings will give you some broad answers to these two questions. They should also bring you up to speed on the more recent findings and innovations in this area. Most importantly, they will provide you with a firm theoretical basis on which you can build the rest of the project, and will serve as a solid foundation for any similar project (in class or in field) that you might take up in the future.

   A note of caution – While it is tempting to skip these readings and jump into the project directly, I urge you to exercise patience and first finish these readings before getting your hands dirty.

   **Reading List**
   1b. Chapter 4 in Social Networks and Marketing. Van den Bulte and Wuyts. 2007.
Readings 1a and 1b are part of the text packet. The rest are posted on Smartsite.

These readings are designed to be introductory, not exhaustive. I urge you to explore aspects of social influence that fascinate you in further detail. At the end of the first two weeks, send me one paragraph (by email) describing some interesting aspect of social influence that is not covered in the set of readings listed above. This is due by 5 pm on April 8th.

2. **Week 3 – Understanding YouTube’s Video-sharing Community**

   Now that you understand who influentials are, and how social influence operates, you should shift your focus to our platform of interest – YouTube. The objective for this week is to gain good understanding of YouTube’s video-sharing feature, and the workings of the YouTube community.

   Your approach here should be two-pronged. By systematically exploring YouTube, you should be able to glean a lot of information on various aspects of YouTube and its users. However, since you do not have access to large-scale data-collection crawlers and software, you need to supplement this knowledge with additional information from in-depth studies of YouTube.

   **Step 2.1** – Manually explore YouTube’s website and its users. Almost all of YouTube’s videos are public, i.e., you can access them. Each video’s website is very informative – it give you information on the historic performance of the video through statistics such as number of views, number of comments, number of likes, the category of the video, etc. Also, just on top of the video, you will find the username of the person who uploaded the video and a link to her YouTube page or channel. This person is of significant interest to us because it is her social influence that carries the video in YouTube. If you go to her page, you find information on the videos that she uploaded in the past, her recent activity, her tenure at YouTube, age, her website (if she has one, maybe a blog or Myspace page) etc. Importantly, you will also find information on the number of friends she has, and the number of subscribers she has. So by exploring the YouTube channel of a person, you can garner a lot of information, which can be used to understand how influential she is.

   **Step 2.2** – Go through the following three studies on the YouTube community (posted in Smartsite).

   2a. Santos et. al. 2007. Characterizing the YouTube video-sharing community.
Steps 2.1 and 2.2 can be (and ideally should be) carried out concurrently. Start with some simple investigations of the YouTube website and community so that you understand the basic terminology used in this space (friends, subscribers, likes, comments, activity etc.). Next, go through the readings and then go back to exploring the YouTube community in detail. These later explorations should be more effective and focused because you are now informed by the articles that you read.

3. **Week 4 – Case Study: Ford Fiesta Movement**

Now you have all the theoretical knowledge that you need to design a YouTube-based social media campaign. However, before designing something on your own, it would be a good idea to pick an example of a successful YouTube based promotional campaign and study it in detail. While there are many such campaigns, the Ford Fiesta Movement is one of the most successful ones.

The best place to start is [http://www.fiestamovement2.com/](http://www.fiestamovement2.com/). Explore this website, and then go to the YouTube pages of different Fiesta agents. Try to see what they have in common and gauge how successful they are in promoting Fiesta. Apart from that, try to find relevant third-party information on the reasons behind the success of the Fiesta Movement. To help you start out, I have added a few articles on the Fiesta Movement in the Smartsite.

The objective is it to understand – 1) Was the success of the Fiesta Movement a stroke of luck? 2) If yes, why do you think it cannot be replicated, and if no, what do you think are some of the basic features of this campaign that can be imported to other YouTube-based social media campaigns?

Send me one or two paragraphs detailing your answers/thoughts on these questions. This is due by 5.00 pm April 22nd.

4. **Weeks 5-8 – Data Collection**

As you might recall from the readings, and as is probably clear from the Ford Fiesta Movement example, many factors can make someone influential – expertise and experience in the product category (people who know how to make videos or know a lot about cars), celebrity status (e.g., a famous blogger), and position in the social network (e.g., people with many friends or in central positions in the network). All these factors are also likely to be correlated – for example, someone who has expertise is more likely to be a famous blogger and have many friends or subscribers. So, when designing your data collection process, you have to be careful to include all these correlated pieces of information.

Here is general outline of how you data collection approach should look like. You may of course modify it to suit your specific interests.

- Choose a category that interests you, such as Comedy, Entertainment, etc.
- Pick a set of 20 newly posted videos, that is, they should be uploaded on the day in which you start the data collection process. A list of the most recently posted videos can be obtained from YouTube’s website by clicking on the category of
interest, and then choosing the tab Recent Videos on top of the page (the default is Most Viewed). For example, http://www.youtube.com/videos?s=mr&c=28 gives a list of the most recent videos in the category Science and Technology.

- Note down the characteristics of each video that remain invariant over time such as its length, quality (HD or not), etc. Also, note down details about the person who posted the video – what is her age, tenure on YouTube, does she have an external website, how many videos has she made in the past, how many friends does she have, how many subscribers, how many subscriptions does she have, where does she live, etc. Anything that you think might affect the popularity of her video should be considered. This is a one-time task – you will collect this data only once for each video and it will be on the day in which you start the data collection process. It will take some time for you to put everything together, so start this only when you have time on your hands.

- Next, also note down video statistics that will continue to grow over time such as, the number of views, the number of comments, likes, etc. You will have to note down these video statistics recurrently – once every week for four weeks. If you started your original data collection on a Saturday afternoon, your future data collections should also be on Saturdays, and ideally in the afternoon. Keep this in mind when you start the data collection – don’t pick a time/day that is likely to be inconvenient in the future. These numbers will give you a sense of how videos grow differently over time, and help you answer questions such as – does early popularity predicts future popularity, etc.

- You may also monitor the performance of the videos outside of YouTube. For example, you can see if any of your 20 videos are mentioned in Twitter, or other social media. Whatever you choose to include in the data, do so systematically.

In the Smartsite, I have posted a spreadsheet called Data Collection Format.xlsx. It gives you an idea of how to store your data. The columns in the file are examples, and far from being exhaustive.

5. **Week 9 – Data Analysis**

Now that you have the data, you can analyze it. To do so, you need to refresh some of the basic data analysis techniques that you learned in MGMT/B/P 203A. To help you along more, I am including the following reading in the text-packet. It is an excellent primer on regressions, in case you don’t access to your old notes from 203A.

Reading – Regression Analysis, HBS Product No. 191117-PDF-ENG.

I have also included a small tutorial on running regressions in Excel in Smartsite.

**Analysis**

- First, try to tabulate the data, run correlational analyses, and draw charts to see if you can detect any interesting underlying patterns.

- Second, regress the viewership at the end of Week 4 on the author’s friends, subscribers, activity, age, etc., and see which of these are significant.
Depending on the variables that you collected, you should see some interesting results here.

- You can run four separate regressions with different y variables – with y being the viewership at the ends of Week 1, 2, 3, and 4. This should help you understand how different factors affect the early and later growth of a video.
- After your analysis, see if you can answer the following question – what kind of authors (video uploaders) have popular videos? Is it those with many subscribers or is it those with many friends? Is it the young people, who are active on YouTube? Are they also avid social media enthusiasts outside of YouTube? If you were a manager and you had to pick some of these people to promote your product on YouTube, who would they be? And why?

6. **Week 10 – Project Report**

Write a final project report. Some specifics that you should pay attention to in your report:

- The report should ideally contain the following components – the objective or goal of the project, the data collection approach, a short description of the analysis, Tables of regressions or summary statistics (if any), a discussion of the findings, and a final couple of paragraphs describing what you learned from the project, and how you would take what you learned in this project into the field.
- The report should be no more than 5 pages long, including Appendix, Tables, and Figures. It should be formatted in single-spaced 12 point Times New Roman font. Don’t use a title page. Just write your name, student IDs, and program (Davis/Sacramento/Bay Area) on the top left corner of the first page.
- The report is due by 5.00 pm May 31st 2011. Send in your report by email to me. Do not hand over the report in/after class.
- Since we cannot have an in-class presentation, I will join/merge the reports of all the groups, make a big PDF document, and send it to all of you who have taken this course this year (MGMT/B/P 442). The idea is to maximize learning. This way you can see what your colleagues worked on and what their insights are.

Finally, remember that the project is designed to help you understand the concepts of social influence and give you some experience in designing social media based promotional campaigns. The small piece of data that you collect may not necessarily give you significant results or the exact results that you are looking for. If so, DO NOT panic – the objective here is learning, not finding. You will be graded on the effort that you put in and the understanding that you display. Of course, it would be great if you do find some interesting results, but do not worry if you don’t.

Good Luck!