  
COMMUNICATION STUDIES

*Influencers & Product Seeding*

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Marketing Communication

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Overview

- Seeding trials
- Identifying influencers
- Activity: Create Your Own Seeding Trial

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Seeding Trials

- Create goodwill, ownership, loyalty, and advocacy by putting the product or service in their hands *and* giving them a say in how it is marketed...
- ...all in the name of "research." (Marsden, p. 4)

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### Why Seeding Trials Work

- Hawthorne effect
- Opinion leaders

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### Methods to Identify Opinion Leaders

- Self-designation
- Professional activity
- Digital trace
- Key informants
- Sociometry
- Observation

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### Screening for Opinion Leaders

- Miled & Louarn (1994)
  - How often do you talk about it?
  - How many people do you tell?
  - How much information can you give?
  - How likely can you convince them?
- Also used in Where's Debbie? study by MediaLab.



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### Opinion Leadership Scale

- In general I like to talk to my friends and neighbors about Category \_\_\_\_\_
  - Very often to Never
- Compared with my circle of friends I am \_\_\_\_\_ to be asked about Category.
  - Not Very Likely to Very Likely
- When I talk to my friends about Category I...
  - (Don't) give a lot of information
- During the past six months I have told \_\_\_\_ about Category
  - No one to a lot of people
- In discussions about Category:
  - My friends tell me to I tell my friends
- Overall in my discussions with friends and neighbors about Category I am...
  - Often a source of advice to not often a source

From Godes & Mayzlin (2004)

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### Market Mavens

- Diffusers of marketplace information.
- Individuals with information about many kinds of products, places to shop, sales, etc.
- People who initiate discussions and responsive to inquiries from others.

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### Market Maven Scale

- I like introducing new brands and products to my friends.
- I like helping people by providing them with information about many kinds of products.
- People ask me for information about products, places to shop, or sales.
- If someone asked me where to get the best buy on several types of products, I could tell him or her where to shop.
- My friends think of me as a good source of information when it comes to new products or sales.
- Think about a person who has information about a variety of products and likes to share this information with others. This person knows about new products, sales, stores, and so on, but does not necessarily feel he or she is an expert on one particular product. How well would you say that this description fits you?

From Feick & Price (1987)

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### P&G's "Formula" For Seeding Trials



- Get it first
- Inside scoop
- VIP vote

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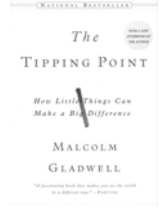
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### The Tipping Point



- Author: Malcolm Gladwell
- Focus:
  - Articulates three principles to explain social epidemics – how ideas and products spread rapidly throughout society.
  - The Law of the Few
  - The Stickiness Factor
  - The Power of Context

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### The Law of the Few

- Refers to "Participants":
  - Connectors
    - "Masters of the weak tie"
    - Spreaders of messages
    - Defined by network centrality and early adopter profile (think Rosen's "network hubs" and ACTIVE profile)
  - Mavens
    - "One who accumulates knowledge"
    - "Data banks" providing the message
  - Salesman
    - Persuade when we're not convinced what we're hearing.

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**Activity: Create Your Own  
Seeding Trial**

- I invented a special spoon for French onion soup.
- I come to your group asking you to market this for me and I specifically want to run a seeding trial.
- Run through Marsden's 10-point checklist in creating an organized program (pp. 16-19)

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