

Application for NBER Digitization Workshop

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Contact Information

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Education

Strategic Management PhD

Rotman School of Management, University of Toronto

Expected Graduation: June 2016

PhD Coursework:

Microeconomic Theory I, Microeconomic Theory II- Game Theory, Econometrics I-II, Industrial Organization I, Empirical Methods of Microeconomics, Strategy and Organizations, Models and Methods, Technology and Innovation, Strategy and Economics, Strategy Process and Practice

PhD Committee:

Mike Ryall (chair), Joshua Gans, Anne Bowers, Avi Goldfarb, Mitch Hoffman

Dissertation Topic Summary:

In my dissertation, I explore how firm strategy is impacted by the existence of category systems. Literature studying the relationship between category-spanning and organizational performance generally focuses on how buyers use established categories (e.g. SIC codes, movie genres, culinary classes) to interpret a product's identity, and how this in turn affects performance. The reliance on established categories relies on the assumption that the taxonomies that categories are based on reflect how individuals categorize products in their heads. This is because data on actual consumer preferences is often very difficult to obtain. My work departs from the existing literature in two ways. In the movie industry setting, I first propose a way to infer implicit categories based on observed consumer purchase behavior on Amazon Instant Video. The proliferation of electronic commerce and platforms such as Amazon that have recommendation algorithms for users based on their purchases presents a unique opportunity to observe consumer purchase behavior more directly and infer categories that form at the individual level. I make use of Amazon's recommendation system to infer categories of movies based on movies that consumers often purchase together. I argue that rather than relying on third-party movie genres, these implicit categories get closer to the way individuals categorize movies.

Second, whereas existing literature explores how buyers use category systems, I shift the focus to what organizations (movie studios) do regarding categories, since presumably, organizations also take into account the implications of category-spanning when developing their strategies. Thus, in the second part, I explore how the category-spanning levels of movies produced by different studios compare to each other. Results show that spanning multiple genres is associated with significantly lower Amazon user ratings, while spanning implicit categories is related with significantly lower box office revenues and Amazon user ratings. I also find significant heterogeneity between the category-spanning levels of movies produced by different studio types (majors, mini-majors, conglomerate-owned indies and true indies) as well as between movies produced by the same studio types.

Additional working paper (joint with Joshua Gans):

What contributes to the continued existence of online platforms based on user contributed content, such as Wikipedia or the science website Zooniverse? We develop a game theoretic model to show that websites that require smaller contributions from users, rather than large ones, get more entries and are more complete, although it takes longer to get to completion, compared to websites that require users to submit larger entries. With data from Zooniverse, we test these theoretical predictions empirically making use of an exogenous change to the amount of contribution required of users in order to submit an entry, from a small edit to a larger one. Although we are still in the process of gathering and analyzing this data, preliminary results provide support for our model's predictions, a lower number of users after this change takes place compared to projects that didn't undergo such a change.