social spaces on the internet: social (signals + media)

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Syllabus, Communication

• http://social.cs.uiuc.edu/class/cs598kgk/
• Message channel?
• Compass Page
Outline

- Course Overview
- Topic
- Syllabus
- Logistics
- Signals and Cues
- Example
- Assignment for Thursday
- Questions
Social Signals

• Signaling Theory
  • The Theory of the Leisure Class (Veblen 1899)
“Throughout the entire evolution of conspicuous expenditure, whether of goods or of services or human life, runs the obvious implication that in order to effectually mend the consumers good fame, it must be an expenditure of superfluities. In order to be reputable, it must be wasteful.”
Social Signals

- Signaling Theory
- The Theory of the Leisure Class (Veblen 1899)
- Biology
• Peacock’s feather - heavy and attracts predators

• Costly

• To survive despite this, signals a high quality

• “Handicap Principle” - for signals to be reliable, they must be costly in the domain of the quality being signaled. (Zahavi 1975)
Social Signals

• Signaling Theory
  • The Theory of the Leisure Class (Veblen 1899)
• Biology
• Game Theory
• Information Economics (Spence 1973)
• Design
Michael Spence asked under what conditions the better informed agents in the market can truthfully and credibly transmit, or "signal", their information to the less informed. For such "signaling" to function, sellers of high quality items must take observable measures that are too costly for low quality sellers to undertake. In Spence's own example, the "sellers" are job applicants in a market where employers cannot observe the job candidates' ability directly, only indirectly via their educational record. If the less able need to spend more effort and time than the more able to obtain any given level of education, then the latter can signal their ability by undertaking an education which the less able do not find worthwhile, given the prevailing wage difference. Under such circumstances, signaling removes the curse of adverse selection, albeit at a cost - the more able have to educate themselves beyond the less able, even if education has no effect on their productivity. Spence pointed out the existence of a variety of equilibria and how these may entail different returns to education for men and women or blacks and whites, even if the absence of innate productivity differences between these groups. Other examples of market signals are costly advertisements, guarantees, highly taxed dividends paid to shareholders, and a range of other observed phenomena.

Assessment Signals

- Handicap or Costly Signal: expensive to produce
  ex. throwing a lavish party

- Indices: not as costly; require quality. Possessing the quality is a prerequisite for producing the signal. ex. playing tennis well.
Conventional Signals

- Wearing a cross to signify religion
- Saying, “I like your sweater.”

Not entirely reliable.
Fashion Signals

- Form changes, while quality remains the same.
- Knowledge to distinguish good information from bad.
Humans can find ways to fake many signals.
Signals and Cues

- Signals: “act or structure which alters the behavior of other organisms, which evolved because of that effect, and which is effective because the receiver’s response has also evolved.” (Maynard Smith and Harper, 2005)

- Cues: any feature of the world, animate or inanimate, that can be used by an animal in future action.
• But if a signal is to be effective in eliciting the appropriate response, it must be honest most of the time, ...

• Zahavi suggests that signals are honest because they are costly.
Costs

- **Efficacy cost**: cost needed to transmit the information unambiguously, and must be paid even when the signaler has no temptation to lie.

- **Strategic cost**: additional cost needed to maintain the honesty of a signaling system.

Examples in Interfaces

• When Things Fall Apart

David Tames and 1 other
wtf, now Facebook is filling in the happy birthday text field for you with a default "Happy Birthday, Name!" I'm surprised it's not just an option to automatically wish everyone happy birthday on their birthday (surely that's coming soon...)
Your connections Mark, Phil and 14 others have endorsed you for new skills and expertise!

- Modern Dance
- Artificial Intelligence
- Software Design
- Robotics
- Programming
- Computer Architecture
- Midwifery
- Digital Image Processing
- C++
Electric Postcard

By Donath, 1994

What was at the core?

When I built the Postcard server, I thought that the fact that the message contents can be hypertext would be a big appeal. Images and sounds can be interspersed with the text and one can send, along with one's words, links to anything within the Web's vast store of information and arcana. Yet it turns out that relatively few people use this capacity, perhaps 1 in 15-20 cards has some HTML embedded in the message. The appeal appears to be more social.

... The most significant function of the postcard, and the reason, I believe, for the great popularity of The Electric Postcard, is that they allow people to keep in touch without having to actually say anything. A notable thing about postcards is how trite the messages often are: "The weather is great. Wish you were here." A letter like that would be ludicrous, even rude. Yet the main point of a postcard is its subtext: I'm thinking of you, just checking in, making the rounds remotely. The picture on the card takes the place of the message. It lets the sender express a bit of his or her taste (for humor or for the macabre or, most popularly, for Impressionist prints), like sending a little gift.
- turn-taking
- interruptions
- time-span
- moments of silence
- conversational dominance
- mimicry
- rhythm and flow
• Conversational Dominance
• Silence
• Agreement
• Aural Back-channels
Design Projects
Academic Integrity

- [http://studentcode.illinois.edu/article1_part4_1-402.html](http://studentcode.illinois.edu/article1_part4_1-402.html)
Class Communication

• Preferences?
• If you are not registered, please let me know asap.
Thursday Assignment

Questions ?