BUAD 307   Marketing Fundamentals
Lars Perner, Ph.D., Instructor   Fall, 2017

STUDY GUIDE FOR

CONTAGIOUS: WHY THINGS CATCH ON

Jonah Berger (2016), *Contagious: Why Things Catch On*, Simon & Schuster*,* ISBN-13: 978-1451686586. One copy will be placed on reserve in the Crocker Library.

Exam questions on this book are likely to be based on the questions below. The wording may differ a bit, but the issues involved will come primarily from the content below. These issues also form part of the basis for our class discussion, although we can discuss any other issues that you found particularly interested. There is nothing sacred about this book! You are encouraged to express reasonable skepticism about the author's claims during class discussions.

Introduction: Why Things Catch On (for discussion on 9/12-14)
1. What are some challenges that exist for new restaurants? What did Howard Wein spread the word about the Barclay Prime Steakhouse?
2. What does the author say about the assertion that "social epidemics are driven 'by the efforts of a handful of exceptional people?'"
3. What are the two reasons why the author argues on p. 8 that word of mouth is more effective than traditional advertising?
4. What does the author mean when he says that "Facebook and Twitter are technologies, not strategies?" (p. 12)
5. What percentage of word of mouth communication has been found to take place online? What are some reasons for this result?
6. How did Blendtec get publicity for its product?

Chapter 1: Social Currency (for discussion on 9/19-21)
1. What is the strategy behind the Please Don't Tell Bar?
2. What was found in the brain scanning study on sharing information about oneself?
3. What were the results of the "Carla" game?
4. What was found by Snapple regarding bottle cap content?
5. What was found in the University of Illinois cooking study?
6. On p. 41, what is the author getting at in saying that "Often we're not even trying to exaggerate; we just can't recall all details of the story. Our memories aren't perfect records…?"
7. Why, does the author suggest, are frequent flier programs effective?
8. What did the Harvard study on choosing between two different jobs with different income levels find?
9. What did Rue La La and Please Don't Tell have in common? How do Disney and McDonald's use this idea?

Chapter 2: Triggers (for discussion on 9/26-28)
1. What is likely to get more word of mouth—Cheerios or Disney World? Why? (Note that the discussion of this issue is spread among different parts of the chapter).
2. In the BzzAgent study, what was found about the extent of word of mouth that more "interesting" products received relative to more "boring" ones?
3. What appears to have been the reason for the rise in sales of Mars bars in 1997?
4. What did the study on retail store music and alcoholic beverage sales find?
5. What did the study on healthy eating slogans find?
6. What did the study on voting poll locations find?
7. What was the apparent quality of the "Friday" song? How did it do? Why?
8. What does the author suggest about the GEICO "cave man" ads?
9. What did the study on the effects of positive and negative book reviews find?
10. What did the Budweiser "drinking buddies" ad involve?

11. How was the Kit Kat campaign intended to work?
12. What was the strategy behind the new Boston Market ads?
13. What does the author suggest concerning the anti-smoking ad spoofing the Marlboro Man?
14. How did the New York City Department of Health's anti-soda campaign work?

Chapter 3: Emotion (for discussion on 10/03-05)
1. What is the rationale given for why science articles tend to be among the most shared newspaper articles?
2. Why did the video with the seemingly incompetent woman on *Britain's Got Talent* take off virally?
3. What did the study on the effect of emotional negativity, anger, and anxiety on article sharing find?
4. What did Dave Carroll experience with his United Airlines Youtube video?
5. What did Anthony Cafaro see as a problem at Google, and what did he do to address it?
6. What was the strategy behind the BMW 's *The Hire* program?
7. What resulted from Motrin's "Babywearing" campaign?
8. What did the study on jogging and information sharing find? What explanation does the author offer?

Chapter 4: Public (for discussion on 10/24-26)
1. What did Apple decide to do with respect to the logo on its PowerBook laptop?
2. What does "social proof" involve?
3. What was observed concerning the New York City Halal Chicken and Gyros?
4. What appears to be the reason why so many donated kidneys are rejected by patients to whom they are offered?
5. What did the study of MBA students and their life plans find?
6. What was the experience at the University of Arizona on campaigns to reduce binge drinking among students? How does this idea apply to anti-drug advertising?
7. How does the campaign involving growing moustaches work?
8. What is the rationale given for the rapid growth of the Hotmail e-mail service?
9. What is the unique design feature of Christian Louboutin shoes? What is the impact of this?
10. What does the author suggest say (p. 149) on the likely relative effectiveness of giving out makeup bags, coffee mugs, and gym bags?

Chapter 5: Practical Value (for discussion on 10/31-11/2)
1. What does Prospect Theory predict? What are some practical applications of this?
2. What was found in the catalog sales study?
3. What are some methods used in infomercials to make the offer look more attractive? How do these work?
4. What does "diminishing sensitivity" involve?
5. What does the author suggest about quantity limits on deals?
6. What does the "Rule of 100" involve?
7. Why is it that information with a broader potential audience is not necessarily more likely to be shared?

Chapter 6: Stories (for discussion on 11/07-09)
1. What does the story of the Trojan Horse illustrate?
2. What is the idea behind the notion of "stories as vessels?"
3. Why does the author suggest that "People are less likely to argue against stories than against advertising claims?"
4. What does the Lands' End story illustrate?
5. What does the author suggest about the *Evolution* film sponsored by Dove?
6. How did the story of Jared's "Subway diet" have going for it, helping it spread?
7. Why was the Golden Palace Olympic stunt not effective?
8. What was found in the case of Evian's "Roller Babies" video? Why?
9. What is the reason suggested for the effectiveness of the Panda Cheese ads?
10. What did the Allport and Postman study on rumors find?

Epilogue (for discussion on 11/14-16)
1. Why are a high proportion of nail salons owned by Vietnamese Americans?
2. What have been some similar experiences by other ethnic and immigrant groups?
3. What is the STEPPS framework?
4. What are some issues that should be considered in evaluating a product or idea based on the STEPPS framework?