

# What's more powerful, word-of-mouth or following someone else's lead?

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Credit: INFORMS

Researchers from the University of Pittsburgh, UCLA and the University of Texas published new research in the INFORMS journal *Marketing Science* (Editor's note: The source of this research is INFORMS), that reveals the power of word-of-mouth in social learning, even when compared to the power of following the example of someone we trust or admire. The same research found, however, that both word-of-mouth and following someone else's lead are two of the most powerful dynamics in influencing others through social learning.

The study to be published in an upcoming edition of the INFORMS journal *Marketing Science* is titled "Word of Mouth, Observed Adoptions, and Anime-Watching Decisions: The Role of the Personal vs. the Community Network," and is authored by Mina Ameri of the University of Pittsburgh's Katz Graduate School of Business; Elisabeth Honka of the Anderson School of Management at UCLA; and Ying Xie of the University of Texas at Dallas.

For [empirical analysis](#), the researchers studied an online anime (Japanese cartoon) platform called MyAnimeList.net. This contained individual-level data on users' friendship networks, product adoptions, forum posts and ratings on anime series. The website serves as a gathering place for anime fans to share their enthusiasm and exchange opinions about anime series.

The researchers specifically explored how users responded to word-of-mouth dynamics and the anime watching decisions of other users based on observational data. They called the latter dynamic "observed adoptions." They further distinguish between these dynamics at two network levels: those from their own personal friends (personal network) and those from all other members of the community (community network).

They found that word-of-mouth referrals from the community network is the largest driver among the [social learning](#) forces they studied. And while word-of-mouth was more powerful than observed adoptions, both factors are significant in influencing social learning.

"While both word-of-mouth and observed adoptions are highly influential in affecting a person's social learning, our results show that each provide unique and different information that individuals use in their decision-making," said Ameri. "Ultimately, we found that a person's community [network](#) is the primary source of information

driving anime watching decisions and behaviors."

**More information:** Mina Ameri et al. Word of Mouth, Observed Adoptions, and Anime-Watching Decisions: The Role of the Personal vs. the Community Network, *Marketing Science* (2019). [DOI: 10.1287/mksc.2019.1155](https://doi.org/10.1287/mksc.2019.1155)

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