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DRILLING DOWN

Tipping Point for Apps on Facebook

By ALEX MINDLIN
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Users of [Facebook](#) can download free applications, which allow them, for example, to play poker with friends or compare each other's taste in movies.

55
Average number of daily installations required for a Facebook application to go viral

12 million
Number of users who had installed Top Friends, the most popular application, in 2007



The most popular of these applications is very popular indeed. In 2007, one application, [Top Friends](#), commanded the loyalty of a quarter of Facebook's users. Users in 2007 learned about applications from each other (they received an e-mail when a friend installed an application) or from a master "best-seller" list.

That year, two researchers, Jukka-Pekka Onnela of [Harvard](#) and Felix Reed-Tsochas of Oxford, started [analyzing](#) the way that Facebook applications grew in popularity, using data about how quickly each application was adopted.

They [found](#) that applications were either extremely influential, persuading many friends of adopters to adopt, or else not influential at all; there were no gradations. The turning point was after an application got roughly 55 installations a day, although some other factor (as yet unknown) was also required.

"We thought there would be a weak social influence and a stronger social influence," Mr. Reed-Tsochas said. "We didn't expect to find this on-off behavior." **ALEX MINDLIN**

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