What Do We Talk About When We Talk About Growth Hacking?

Ivan Župič  
Faculty of Economics, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

Extended Abstract

Internet companies have tremendous scaling possibilities for growth. Companies like Dropbox, Groupon, Instagram have been able to grow from zero to hundreds of millions of users in short time. Before the era of social media, marketers relied on mass media to reach tens of millions of customers. Today, social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter and others allow marketers to reach massive audience through programming APIs.

Growth hackers are a hybrid of marketers and programmers. This new breed of marketers are trying to gain customers for their products with emphasis on quantitative measurement, data-driven experiments, scenario modeling via spreadsheets, and other techniques (Chen, 2012; Needleman & Safdar, 2014). www.GrowthHackers.com was established as primary resource for people wanting to grow internet companies. The online community publishes user generated techniques, case studies and discussions on the topic of growth.

Firm growth is one of the most researched topics in strategy and entrepreneurship literature. I believe the approach used in this study offers a fresh methodological take on firm growth process. It aims to integrate demand-side perspective (Priem, Butler, & Li, 2013; Priem, Li, & Carr, 2012) with extant mostly supply-side research on firm growth (c.f. Davidsson, Achtenhagen, & Naldi, 2010).

The aim of this research is to analyze the topic structure of growth hacking discourse in www.GrowthHackers.com online community. Final goal is to derive a typology of main techniques growth hackers use to grow internet companies.

In first phase of research probabilistic topic modeling techniques (Blei, 2012) are used to derive topical structure of the discourse in www.GrowthHackers.com community. Topic models are machine learning algorithms for discovering main themes in large and unstructured collection of documents. I intend to use Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA). LDA views document as a mixture of related topics. LDA has been used to examine themes in software development communities (Barua, Thomas, & Hassan, 2012), transformation of literary genres (Goldstone & Underwood, 2014) and the dynamics of research topics (Yan, 2014). Data will be collected from www.GrowthHackers.com website with web scraping software. In the second phase the topic structure will be validated through in-depth interviews with community members.

References