The Importance of Being Social

A look at Social Media Marketing with a Comparison of the United States versus the European Union

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Table of Contents

<u>List of Illustrations</u>

<u>Figures</u>:

Introduction

As the internet and social media continue to expand and consumers continue to ingratiate both into their daily lives and purchasing activities it is paramount that marketers worldwide revise strategies and initiatives to incorporate social media into their campaigns. The younger consumer, ages 12-17 years old, have a substantial income and spending power that has made this demographic a primary target of marketers (Montgomery & Chester, 2009). This target segment, however, are no longer accessible via traditional advertising mediums such as television and radio. Thanks in large part to the invention and unyielding popularity of interactive digital products such as iPods and TiVo's commercial advertising through traditional mediums can be avoided entirely by the younger consumer. As such advertisers have to think outside the television set and spend advertising dollars more effectively and efficiently by investing in other more innovative and interactive media. Because consumers are spending more time connected to the internet, the outlet to further reach a target audience has shifted to social media. According to Michael Mendenhall (2009), "Web 2.0 has brought on a paradigm shift in the way people communicate, collaborate, and engage" (p. 254). Taking advantage of and acknowledging the shift to a technology based society will translate into becoming an innovative and exciting company, which will then convert into increased profit and sales. Young consumers are computer savvy, have short attention spans, and a huge influence on the spending habits of their families. It would be unwise and detrimental for any marketer to underestimate the power and importance of social media in successfully advertising to this particular market segment both in the United States and abroad.

The Internet began as a military communications tool which initially was used by scholars and scientists to exchange ideas and theories (Roberts, 2008). From this humble beginning grew a digital communication highway which essentially connects nearly every man woman and child to each other, the world and beyond. This vast international connectivity has

not only made long distance and local communication more easily accessible and more efficient but has also created a new avenue for the marketing and exchange of goods and services. The idea of being able to communicate with others that live thousands of miles away or to be able to purchase anything from t-shirts to cars all from the comfort of one's living room has lead to the rapid growth and intimidating power of the internet but more importantly the concept of social networking. Consumers shop online, pay bills online, order takeout food online, meet their spouses, make friends, and even get medical advice online. As such, social networking has given marketers and consumers a new global digital market place where the possibilities for commerce and consumer interaction are endless.

Although the possibilities associated with the connectivity and efficiency of utilizing the internet and social media marketing are vast. It is important that the cultural aspect associated with social media be taken into consideration. The impact of social networking and the effectiveness of social media marketing on consumers can vary from country to country and culture to culture. Global advertising or using the same message and format universally may not be as effective as tailoring the message to the consumer to reflect the local culture and tastes. Social media marketing is an excellent medium for targeting consumers based on identified interests and consumer behaviors and also provides an opportunity to discover how to best appeal culturally to a target segment. For example although the European Union and the United States are often compared and thought of as similar in many ways there are some significant differences in social networking and interactive marketing both in consumer attitudes as well as marketers approach and spending in advertising.

Social media marketing is becoming an integral component in successful global integrated marketing campaigns and marketers are beginning to see the ROI potential that can

come from investing revenue into this new form of communication. As consumer's use and reliance on social networking and interactive media continues to grow budget allocations towards this area of marketing will most likely continue to grow correspondingly.

It is this importance of the interactive component of social media marketing that is so vital for marketers to be successful in this growing digital age. It is through this medium as discussed earlier that a marketer can tap into the large buying power potential of younger consumers and hopefully establish brand loyalty that will carry on into adulthood. In order to reach this demographic successfully and to maintain a global competitive advantage, a large market share, and to see a positive ROI marketers need to incorporate interactive media advertising into an integrated marketing plan. Before undertaking this business endeavor it is important for marketers to have a clear understanding of what interactive marketing is and how it can be utilized in a marketing campaign. As well as to be aware of the different social media vehicles available to marketers and how to best utilize them in the marketing plan. To know some of the advantages and potential disadvantages that come with investment in social media marketing both in financial aspects as well as creating brand equity. Also, how social media and interactive marketing differs globally between the United States and the European Union and the best approach for tailoring global messages when targeting a younger demographic. Plus an overview of a few examples of successful social media marketing campaigns, why they were successful and how marketers can use these examples to launch a successful interactive marketing campaign that includes social media.

Interactive Marketing

Social media marketing is a component of a newer and innovative approach to business to consumer (B2C) marketing known as Interactive Marketing. Interactive marketing utilizes many different interactive mediums such as database management, Customer Relationship Management (CRM), Web 2.0, social media, e-mail marketing and search engine optimization. These new media tools are used to engage consumers inspire behavioral reaction and build brand recognition and loyalty. The goal of interactive marketing is to create a conversation with the consumer and establish a long term relationship with a focus on the benefits of a product or service to the consumer instead of the features or attributes (Axelrad, 2010). The focus is to make marketing more personalized and tailored to the individual being targeted to increase the likelihood of initial and possible repeat sales. Marketers utilize not only social networking sites and other forms of interactive media to make contact with consumers but also to gather data to determine motivations and interests. This is known as behavioral targeting and is a very important part of interactive marketing (Montgomery & Chester, 2009). This data provides marketers with the ammunition they need to engage consumers on a personal level and make a connection that before the current digital age was not possible to make. The ability for marketers to establish a personal tie in for consumers is what sets them apart in the minds of the consumers from the competition and starts to develop long term brand loyalty.

It is important, especially in the current economic climate, to break through the clutter and stand out in the mind of the consumer. In order to do so marketers have to target consumers in a relatable and interactive manner that gives the power to the consumer and not the marketer. This is especially true for the younger demographic consumer as according to Kathryn Montgomery and Jeff Chester (2009), "youth thrive on self directed, self programmed usage and technology

and media, actively seeking, choosing, and modifying products and services that suit their moods and desires" (pg. 20). Web 2.0 is the backbone for interactive and digital marketing on the internet. Web 2.0 not only makes behavioral targeting of a consumer possible with the data that can be collected of consumer online behavior, but Web 2.0's big draw is its ability to give the consumer some control and influence over content and how it is received. The key component of Web 2.0 that makes it so unique is the ability for users to edit content on the web, like Wikipedia. All of the social media such as social networking sites, blogs, and wikis, which are part of an interactive marketing strategy, are all made possible by Web 2.0 (Gardner, 2008).

According to a study conducted by Asle Fagerstrom and Gheorghita Ghinea Web 2.0 can be broken down into four categories of social media: content, personality, interest, and fantasy. Content media includes sites such as YouTube where web content can be viewed and exchanged; personality media includes social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn; interest media includes a community formed around a specific blog, and fantasy media includes virtual worlds such as Second Life or World of Warcraft. Marketers use all of these different offerings of Web 2.0 in segment targeting and interactive marketing (2010).

Kathryn Montgomery and Jeff Chester (2009) in their study titled The Digital Marketing Paradigm have identified six attributes of interactive or digital media that are the key foundations to interactive marketing and help to contribute to its success in reaching a target market and separating from the clutter. The first of these six attributes is *Ubiquitous Connectivity* which is the idea that online access is globally available, with a few exceptions. It is important to mention the digital divide which is a term used to describe the gap between those that have access to technology and those that do not (Roberts, 2008). For example in third world and underdeveloped countries internet access might be limited or people do not possess the necessary

skills to use the technology. Ubiquitous connectivity would argue that access is fairly evenly distributed and therefore everyone has access to worldwide communication and the ability to exchange goods and services globally with ease.

The second attribute of interactive media is *Personalization* as was previously discussed interactive marketing is founded on the idea of personalization of marketing messages in order to build a long lasting relationship with the consumer. Marketers gather information on behaviors and user preferences through internet usage and use the information to personalize the marketing message to the consumer. This is known as behavioral marketing and without which interactive marketing would not be possible. The most common place that marketers collect click stream data in order to build behavioral profiles of consumers are social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace (Roberts, 2008)

The third attribute Montgomery and Chester have termed *Peer-to-peer networking*, which means that with interactive marketing and the use of Web 2.0 the marketing message is one to one instead of one to many as is the case with traditional mass media such as television or radio. In addition, peer-to-peer communication refers to the ability of one person to influence others by "word of mouth" or "viral marketing" (pg. 21). Marketers seek out individuals that they believe have the ability to influence others through peer-to-peer networking and will use their influence to actively market products and services. This is true for an adult target segment as well as the youth or adolescent segment such as the 12-17 year range which has become such a focus for marketers. There are many different methods that marketers employ in order to take advantage of the influencers, one such example is Facebook's "social ad" system that would track relationships of Facebook users and suggest advertiser pages that users could befriend. Coca

Cola took advantage of this opportunity provided by Facebook with its "Sprite Sips" campaign (Montgomery & Chester, 2010).

The fourth feature of interactive marketing is *Engagement*. Interactive marketing is successful when a consumer is an active participant in the advertisement or message the marketer is portraying. This will make a longer lasting impression then to simply see an ad in passing or while listening to the radio. A marketer's goal is to insight an emotional or psychological reaction to an advertisement by a consumer and engagement is the key to creating this type of involvement. Marketing and psychology are very closely related as the ultimate goal of interactive marketing is to determine the deeper meaning and reasoning behind purchases. In their study Montgomery and Chester explain that engagement is, "the subtle, subconscious processes in which consumers begin to combine the ad's messages with their own associations, symbols and metaphors to make the brand more personally relevant" (pg. 22). As was previously discussed relevancy in advertising through interactive media is vitally important to achieve a positive reception of any marketing message and in turn to have that message processed and hopefully internalized which will promote an emotional attachment.

The fifth element and an important part of the process, is *Content Creation,* this enables a consumer to really get hands on with the message a marketer is sending. By interacting and creating content the consumer, especially younger consumers, will be fully engaged with the subject and will most likely form an emotional tie with the product or service that will in turn carry over into their purchasing habits. Examples of how this can be used effectively would be any contest where consumers are asked to design a new package for the product or to name a character or even send in their own videos and photos.

The final element of interactive marketing determined by Montgomery and Chester is *Immersion*, the idea that by immersing the products or advertisements using strategic product placement into activities such as online gaming and videos the consumer will develop a relationship with the products and in time brand loyalty. A good example of product influence emersion that was given in the article was Coca Cola having integrated virtual Coke vending machines in Second Life the online virtual reality game. The concept seems so simple, with product placement being done forever in movies and television, but with online gaming the consumer is highly involved in the activity and the level of attachment to the product marketers anticipate will me higher as well (2010).

All six elements are the foundation of interactive marketing and each one carries with it an important method for finding a personal connection with the consumer that is used to develop a lifetime relationship with a product or service. As the focus of marketing both domestically and globally is shifting away from a product oriented approach and focusing on the wants and desires of the consumer it is important to establish an emotional tie and these elements are the key to making that connection. Marketers should be utilize all six of the elements discussed above and realize their individual and combined role in the success of any interactive marketing campaign.

Social Media

Social media and the digital information highway have taken the globe by storm. With the growing popularity of social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace and LinkedIn, instant messaging sites like Twitter, the plethora of blogs, wikis and the ever popular YouTube, consumers literally have the entire world and nearly everyone in it at their fingertips. Consumers are connected and can access endless information through social media from almost anywhere,

anytime day or night and communicate with thousands of other users at the same time. This connectivity gives marketers the opportunity to use social media formats to advertise products and services, communicate and gain feedback from consumers and also to study and gather data on consumer buying behaviors. Social media opens up a global market that increases reach to segments that before the digital age could not be reached this easily.

Each social media format available varies in the type of communication it predominately offers as well as the advantages and disadvantages that each offers to marketers. It is important that each social media available be studied and examined by marketers to determine which category is the best fit for the message they are trying to portray as discussed earlier there are four types of social media; content, personality, interest, or fantasy. It is important for personalization and engagement of consumers that the media be selected be complimentary and enhances the marketing message. Marketers should remember according to Will Orr in his article titled, *Taking Social Media to the Next Level*, "Social Media is part of a marketing plan, not an end in itself, the question is not, what's our Facebook strategy? But, How can social media support our commercial or brand objectives?" (pg.13). It all comes back to transitioning from the old advertising methods of product focus with generic messages to a customer centric focus and a personalization of the marketing message. Each form of social media offers a unique approach and its own method for personalization and engagement.

Mr. Orr who attended the World Social Media Forum discusses several rules or revelations to live by when incorporating a social media strategy into an integrated marketing campaign. Selecting the right platform for a marketing message is important but also transparency and authenticity are necessary to gain consumer trust and to break through that buyer-seller barrier and begin to develop a sustaining relationship. Once a relationship is

established it takes constant data collection and monitoring of the exchange between the

consumers and marketers and this can be time consuming and expensive but necessary for

measuring the success of a campaign. The message has to be inventive, original, and carry some

weight, in other words there are a lot of messages that are out there in the digital world that are

pointless and simply waste consumers time. For example only 4% of Facebook pages have more

than 10,000 fans, and out of the 500,000 Facebook apps only 1,000 have more than 100,000

users (Orr, 2010). For marketers trying to establish a conversation with consumers that appeals to

the consumers personal wants and needs for products and services is a totally new approach and

can be a difficult and time consuming transition. However, marketers cannot ignore the social

media movement or risk obsolescence. Knowing what is available and how each will help a

marketer to accomplish starting that conversation with the consumer is the first step to a

successful social media campaign. The social media that are primarily used for marketing and

are discussed in detail are as follows:

- Social networking sites

- Wikis

- Blogs

- YouTube

Social Networking Sites

Social networking sites are platforms for users to share life experiences, meet new

people, and most importantly a place to exchange ideas and opinions on everything from politics

to a new pair of shoes. Social networking sites have ignited a new kind of word of mouth that is

extremely powerful and marketers can take advantage of this powerful marketing tool by
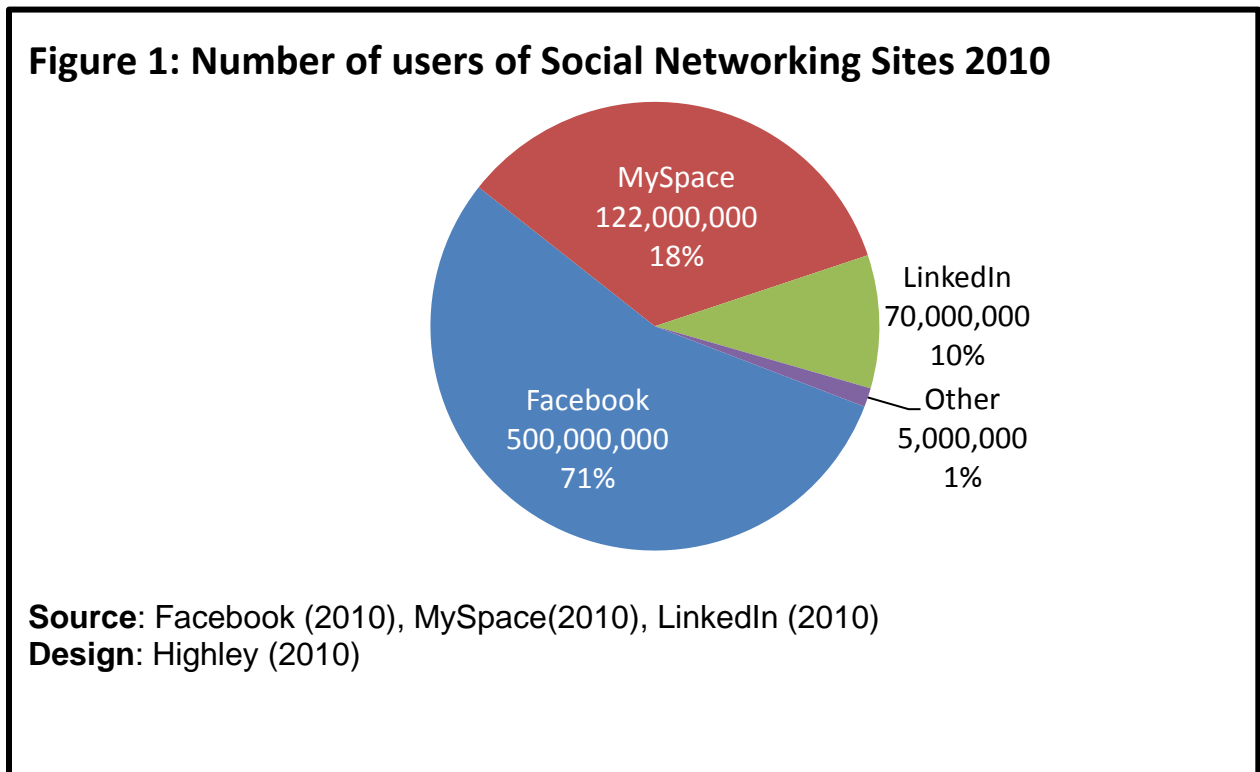
strategic and well thought out advertisement on social networking sites. According to K. Washington and Richard Miller social networking accounts for 11% of all time spent online in the US (2010). Below are the three major social networking sites that are the most popular among consumers and marketers:

- Facebook

- MySpace

- LinkedIn

Facebook in particular can be found in nearly every country and has found its way into the vernacular of almost every language. Facebook is many things to many people, a symbol of peace and understanding when there is a language barrier, a sense of belonging and acceptance when a friend request is received or accepted, a community with a support system, a sounding board, and even a political platform. Facebook is a great way to access the younger 12-17 year old demographic as 55% of teenagers in this age range have created a profile on a social networking site (Montgomery and Chester 2010). According to its website Facebook boasts over 500 million active users with people spending over 700 billion minutes per month on the social site from these staggering statistics it is easy to devise why two-thirds of comScore's U.S. Top 100 websites and half of comScore's Global Top 100 websites have integrated with Facebook (Facebook, 2010).

LinkedIn and My Space, just like Facebook, offer marketers a unique opportunity to target particular segments of the market in a format this is friendly, relevant and interactive with the consumer. LinkedIn is a professional social networking site and is used by numerous business professionals primarily as a business exchange of ideas and employment opportunities. LinkedIn users are typically older while Facebook and MySpace are more popular for a younger

demographic such as high school and college students. The world of social networking has grown exponentially from only a few sites to a vast complex web of networks and users linked to one another. The opportunities for personal attention and interactive marketing using social networking sites is extraordinarily large and will continue to grow as the number of users continue. The chart below visually illustrates how many users of Social Networking Sites there are in 2010:

Figure 1: Number of users of Social Networking Sites 2010

MySpace
122,000,000
18%

LinkedIn
70,000,000
10%

Facebook
500,000,000
71%

Other
5,000,000
1%

Source: Facebook (2010), MySpace(2010), LinkedIn (2010)
Design: Highley (2010)

Advantages of Social Networking Marketing

The heavy traffic and number of users on these sites make it a prime forum for interactive marketing ad campaigns. The main advantage of social networking sites include the ability to successfully target a particular audience and add more of a personal touch using personal detailed data available from the networking sites. This data includes personal demographics such as age and gender as well as interests, hobbies, political views and other personal

information about the user and is of great value to marketer. Another important advantage is the low cost, according to Stephen Arnold the cost of marketing on social network sites and social media in general is very low in comparison to traditional advertising methods (2010). In addition to being able to take a more personal approach and narrow the targeted audience for a particular ad marketers are able to address any negative press that may be posted about a product, service or the company. Close monitoring of the situation is a valuable benefit to marketers and allows them to keep up with trends through the feedback and postings of consumers. Marketing on social networking sites creates the potential for an increase in brand loyal product users, which leads to repeat sales and an increase in profits and will eventually lead to a larger market share overall.

Disadvantages of Social Networking Marketing

The one key disadvantage that can be detrimental to marketing campaigns is a lack of control over the feedback and content posted to social networking sites. Disgruntled customers can post derogatory posts or even pictures about products or companies and there is very little that a marketer can do to avoid this. This is not as prevalent of a problem as with blogs and wikis. There is an issue with consumer privacy as well, some may feel that advertising on social networking sites and tailoring the ad based on information gathered is intrusive and could cause anger and resentment in consumers. Overall the advantages to launching a social networking marketing campaign far outweigh the disadvantages.

Wikis

According to Colley and Collier, "Wikis are Web pages that can be created, linked, and edited by users. These features are unique to wikis in that blogs, microblogs, and social networks

generally limit the contribution of end-users to comments" (p.34). Everyone is familiar with Wikipedia but many may not realize the marketing potential behind web content that is generated and controlled by the consumer. Interactive marketing is meant to incite action from a targeted consumer by making the ad personalized or tailored to the consumer's needs and wants and in turn giving power to the consumer. Wikis gives the consumer the ultimate power to control content while still getting the marketing message across and in addition gathering useful information that can be used in product development and research (Colley & Collier, 2009). Colley and Collier also mention consumer trust and how some research has shown that consumers feel that wikis, due to the end-user driven content, are more trustworthy than blogs, direct correspondence from companies such as e-mail, and social networking company profiles (2009).   Wikipedia and eHow.com, boast large traffic to their sites each month, both with millions of memberships. Due to the extensive viewership and collaboration on these sights, there is great potential to market and create brand recognition to a large audience by utilizing this growing medium in an integrated marketing campaign.

Advantages of Wikis for Marketing

Dr. Kay Colley and Dr. Amy Collier (2009) explain how users' "empowerment can generate a sense of ownership, which can be instrumental in viral marketing" Being able to create brand loyalty is a huge benefit of wikis because "by creating a community of people who feel comfortable sharing their expertise, wiki's can foster a sense of belonging and purpose which can be tied to your brand" (pg. 35). Another benefit of wikis is the feeling of collaboration and confidence, making consumers "more likely to promote and market it through word-of-mouth and other social media tools" (Colley, et al., 2009, p.34). The community of wiki users

instills a bond and trust that will result in influencers, which means products, promotions, and feedback will be promoted and endorsed from one user to another. With word-of-mouth being an essential means of product promotion in the digital age wikis can be a powerful resource for marketers to incorporate into a social media marketing campaign.

Disadvantages for Wikis in Marketing

Due to the nature of wikis as an electronic communication channel, often times the tone can be misconstrued along with negative feedback given. Unlike social networking sites, however, since wikis are company sponsored negative feedback from consumers can be avoided by filtering the content before posting to ensure the content is appropriate and not damaging to the company.

Blogs

A blog is short for Web log, which contains self-written entries in reverse chronological order and for all purposes an online journal or diary (Roberts 2008). According to Van Rensselar (2009), there are two types of blogs: internal and external. Internal blogs are usually accessed via the company's intranet and can be viewed only by employees of the company. Internal blogs are useful for knowledge sharing, project management, and broad communication among teams and across sites. External blogs on the other hand are publicly available to everyone, including customers, business partners, employees and spokespeople. External blogs provide a stop for quick answers, a place to share opinions and to ask questions about a product or service. Many companies have begun launching internally managed external blogs which give consumers updates about new product lines and other marketing driven information. These types of blogs are not typically accessible for the consumer to post opinions and feed back on.

Another type of blogging is micro-blogging. Micro-blogging allows you to send short messages, deliver an instantaneous message, and subscribe to receive updates. A micro-blogging website that has increased its popularity in recent years is Twitter. Twitter allows you to post 140 characters to their website by either using the internet or your cell phone (Gardner, 2008). By being able to do this, Twitter provides a unique method to send updates quickly or messages to a target group (Gardner, 2008). A marketer's goal is to cut through the clutter and to stand out among the competition. Twitter can offer this to marketers to help target a particular market because of the data that it collects and also for the atmosphere that it creates. Twitter offers a conversation with the consumer which is the goal of interactive marketing. The consumer wants to have a voice and to be actively involved and Twitter gives them a platform to do exactly that. Twitter allows a consumer to be engaged with the content being exchanged and will help to foster brand loyalty by building a community where consumers feel included.

Advantages of Blogging

The advantages to blogging are similar to those of wikis with consumers are active participants and engage in conversations when using micro-blogging such as Twitter. Blogging is a cost effective and fairly simple means to communicate marketing and promotion messages via a company website. According to Van Renssler (2009) clear benefits of blogs include, "search engine optimization (SEO), maximum media and public relations attention, collaborative product development and improved customer assistance, the ability to conduct polls and receive feedback easily, and improved customer and prospect relations" (pg. 14).

Disadvantages of Blogging

Although blogs can provide all those great functions, according to Van Rensselar (2009), they do have a slight disadvantage. Creating blogs, posting and monitoring the content can be time consuming. Another disadvantage would be that blog posts are permanent. If an inaccurate, slanderous or incomplete blog was posted and contains confidential information, it will live on the internet forever. Blogs can actually send visitors away from a company's website because in order to be search engine friendly blogs need to include links to other sites. A goal of marketing is not to send visitors away from a website.

YouTube

YouTube is a website where users create a profile and upload videos that, with the right boxes ticked during the uploading process, anyone with an internet connection can view. YouTube was founded in 2005 (YouTube fact sheet, 2009) and contains hundreds of millions of videos. These videos range from a kid swinging a light saber, to puppets reenacting scenes from the Harry Potter movie, and from a person crying, "Leave Britney alone!" to a hearty baritone singing about chocolate rain. YouTube has a video to suit nearly every whimsy a viewer might have.

Besides videos that are just fun, a company can use YouTube for free ad space. The company tries to create an extraordinary video that people want to see. A common phrase used in the YouTube community is *viral video*. When a video is emailed, shared, and spread about like a virus, it is called *viral*. This is the goal most companies have when they post a video on YouTube. They want the video to be interesting or funny enough that millions of people email it to each other and, in the process, promote the company's product or brand.

According to the YouTube Fact Sheet (2009), YouTube is currently the most-used video-sharing site online. It was started in 2005 and has grown to dominate the online video market. On a given day, there are over 28,000 hours of video uploaded to the site. Similarly, over 50% of YouTube's users use the site at least once a week and more than half of 18 to 34 year-olds use YouTube regularly. Google, Inc. acquired YouTube in 2006 (YouTube fact sheet, 2009).

Advantages of YouTube

YouTube videos can be very inexpensive. A successful viral video requires virtually no expenses. If the person already owns a video camera and a computer with internet access, then they need nothing further to make a successful viral video. YouTube videos can reach a very large audience. If they strike the right chord with audiences, the video can become a sensation and propel the product or brand to web stardom, and in the process boost sales and recognition. Before YouTube, an audience this size was nearly inconceivable—especially for such a small cost.

Disadvantages of YouTube

According to YouTube (2010), there are hundreds of millions of videos on the site and over 20 hours of video are uploaded every minute on YouTube (YouTube fact sheet, 2010). With this much content constantly available to users, it might be difficult for a company or brand to create a video with enough gravity to attract a large number of viewers.

Video viewers can comment on the videos. For this reason, a company that posts viral videos as ads on YouTube must have an employee or team that monitors the comments and is ready to play the role of mediator if things go badly. A company cannot simply ignore or delete

the bad comments; they must counter them and work to improve on the issues raised. In addition to comments, users can post their own videos in response to the company's video or the company, in general. For example, Canadian musician Dave Carroll had a bad experience with United Airlines. He claims the airline mishandled his luggage, tossing and breaking one of his guitars, while the band members watched from inside the plane. Carroll was upset and set out to let the world know what had happened; so being part of a band, he did what bands do best, and wrote a song, created a music video, and posted it on YouTube. The video detailed how United Airlines had broken his guitar that was valued at $3500 (30 seconds on…complaining, 2009). According to *MarketingMagazine.co.uk* (2009), the video had over 3.5 million views within 10 days of posting (30 seconds on…complaining, 2009). As of November 2009, the video, entitled "United Breaks Guitars," had nearly 6 million views. United Airlines did not act quickly with the matter and it cost them. They offered Carroll "$1200 in flight vouchers as compensation" (30 seconds on…complaining, 2009) nine months after the incident, but the damage was already done through YouTube. Marketers have to realize the power of a medium like YouTube with its immediacy and user controlled content it can be a very dangerous weapon and extremely detrimental to a corporate image as United learned the hard way.

Marketing in the United States versus the European Union

When one travels abroad to the European Union (EU) for the first time encountering culture differences is commonplace and can be an enlightening or in some cases a shocking experience. What is important is that it is the cultural differences that make the travel more than just a trip but they make it an experience. How boring the world would be if when one traveled they always felt at home. Cultural differences can be seen in every facet of life such as art, language, relationships, business, government and the way people interact with each other and

respond to their environment. It is important for marketers to be aware of these cultural

differences and incorporate them into the marketing message. Interactive marketing and social

media marketing are especially personal and culturally driven and the marketer must tread lightly

and ensure the message is relevant and engaging to that particular target segment for a campaign

to be successful.

In addition to cultural differences there are different rules and regulations for how

advertising can be conducted in different countries. For example in the United States (US) the

use of nudity is very limited, a nipple for example cannot be shown on national television or in

national advertising, unless of course there is a wardrobe malfunction during Super bowl. All

joking aside, there are serious consequences and repercussions for advertisers who violate the

laws dictated by the censoring bureaus in the US. This is not the case in all cultures regarding

nudity. For example an Italian advertisement for breast care awareness and prevention which

depicted a female breast fully nude including the nipple was shown on national television in Italy

(Saatchi & Saatchi, personal communication, May 20, 2010). By Italian advertising standards

this was completely appropriate advertisement and would not cause any issue or result in any

regulatory intervention. On the other hand in Italy medical drugs cannot be marketed directly to

consumers through any media outlets, drug companies such as Eli Lily must rely on physicians

to prescribe drugs to patients and so they market to them instead (Eli Lily, personal

communication, May 24, 2010). In the United States all media vehicles are inundated with drug

companies advertising the latest and greatest breakthrough in prescription medication. These are

just a few examples to demonstrate cultural differences that are mandated through rules and

regulations and which a marketer must be familiar with when launching international marketing

campaigns. As was previously stated a global marketing approach of showing the exact same

advertisement and not tailoring it to the local tastes and customs would be a colossal mistake in most cases.

Social media marketing is the future and has grown by leaps in bounds in the past few years. The entire world is connected via social networking sites and micro-blogging through twitter and marketers have seen the potential of launching interactive campaigns through social media. The focus of marketers is the youth segment of the market, the reason being as Montgomery and Chester (2010) put it, "because of their avid use of new media and their increased spending power, adolescents have become primary targets of a new Media and Marketing Ecosystem" (pg. 18) This is true in both the US and the European Union. The digital age has evolved based on attitudes for immediate satisfaction of wants and desires in all areas of life. Americans suffer from short attention spans and little patience for the "old way" of doing things and how they interact with marketers and marketing initiatives is no exception. This is especially true for the youth of America and in order for marketers to connect with this powerful market segment social media and interactive marketing strategies are no longer and optional element in an integrated marketing plan in the US. Europeans on the other hand are more laid back, strategizing and taking time to ensure that everything falls into place no matter how long that process might take. Because of this there is not a huge sense of urgency to go after the social media market full throttle like the US, plus the EU has some unique issues that hinder interactive marketing initiatives.

According to Sawers and Arno (2008) 64% of European marketers intended to increase their use of search engine optimization with 70% of advertisers stating their intention to increase overall internet spend. Europe however, has a unique problem with launching social media and interactive marketing campaigns. The problem being that they are unable to determine the best

way to target domestic markets due to "a whole array of cultural and linguistic complexities" (pg. 43). In Europe there are over 200 indigenous languages, 23 of which are spoken in the 27 European Union member states. Some of the languages are spoken in more than one country. European marketers have to use a "multifaceted approach" for online marketing which includes a multilingual strategy (Sawers & Arno, 2008).

According to Washington and Miller, advertising spending on social networks in 2009 in the US was 1.21 billion, and is predicted to increase by about 7 % each year (2010). Attitudes in Europe regarding the use of Web 2.0 media and how the marketing mix is divided differ from country to country within the EU. Countries like Italy for example are very television oriented and as such spend a lot of money towards mass media marketing and little of their marketing budget on social media advertising. In England and the UK, social media marketing is a larger focus among marketers, according to McEleny in her article discussing how Facebook ads make up a third of the UK online display market she states that 30.4% of all display ads are on Facebook for the UK which is up 21.6% from a year ago (2010). Members of the European Union are definitely just as connected to social media offered by the Web 2.0 movement as the US, but are investing less in social media marketing. Charlotte McEleny (2008), stated in 2008 that "that [UK] ad figures are dwarfed by ad spend in the US. The ad spend on MySpace US alone is forecast to hit $755m….which is more than triple for all UK social networks" (pg. 9). Although according to predictions by eMarketer ad spend on social media in the UK is expected to increase by over £100m in 2012 (McEleny, 2008).

Although the cultural landscape is always changing the popularity of social media is not bound to disappear anytime soon whether you are in the EU, UK or Iran for that matter. As such no matter which international market is being targeted social media marketing is really not

optional. The traditional methods of international marketing are becoming background noise and eventually will fall on deaf ears completely. The message through mass media and the non interactive areas of marketing are being stifled by the demanding digital era and all of its "smart" technology. After looking at the research between the EU and the United States it appears that both has the same goals in mind and will be allocating more resources from the marketing budget towards social media. The US jumped on the bandwagon early and currently invests a lot more capital in social media marketing then the countries in the EU. As the world of social media and interactivity via digital technology continues to grow the future will most likely see that capital spending on social marketing initiatives will continue to grow and increase across the board internationally.

<u>**Social Media Marketing Examples**</u>

President Obama's Presidential Campaign

President Obama ran a campaign that focused on reaching into every corner of the country and he accomplished this by using Web 2.0 and the internet in general. His campaign did not consist of the traditional swing state stumps, but rather he enabled his supporters to voice their opinions online and give ideas and support in the same manner. His campaign did more than just have an online presence; they used the internet to enable the voters to be active in the campaign. President Obama's 2008 Presidential campaign used nearly every Web 2.0 technology that was available. The campaign had many strong points, as listed by *Advertising Age*. They are as follows (Learmonth, 2009):

- Campaign raised over $500 million online

- Facebook groups discussed core issues

- YouTube videos sparred for support

- Pres. Obama tweeted directly to constituency

The Obama campaign tapped into the wealth of a broad constituency by asking supporters for small donations. Most of these donations were accepted online. The donor could give right from home, allowing for ease of use. The $500 million dollars they received online came from about 3 million donors and most donations were for less than $100 (Learmonth, 2009). These low amounts were still helpful because of the massive scale of the online constituency. They reached so many people that it did not matter that most people gave less than $100. Facebook has over 300 million users (Facebook, 2009). The Obama campaign tapped into this large base and used the site as a forum for discussion and dispersion of ideas. This was invaluable to bringing together the ideas of young people as well as Facebook's ever-expanding middle-age population.

President Obama made use of YouTube heavily during his campaign. Nearly every ad released by the Obama campaign was available to view on their YouTube page. The campaign also benefited from celebrities making YouTube videos to support the campaign. The most prominent celebrity video from the campaign was from singer and musician Will.i.am. He created multiple videos using Obama's speeches and ideas to form songs and monologues. The videos received millions of views. President Obama also used Twitter during his campaign. With over 146,000 followers, he used Twitter to announce to his constituents who he chose as a running mate (Case, 2008). With this method, his supporters theoretically received the news at the same time as the national media. The campaign would also tweet about the issues, upcoming meetings, and other important things a voter might like to know.

When it came to the use of social networking and Web 2.0, in general, President Obama's campaign did not have very many weaknesses. The largest weakness of the campaign was the

flawed use of texting to inform the constituency of its decisions. According to Rhonda Wickham (2009) of *Wireless Week*, the texts sent by Obama did not always reach the receiver right away. Wickham tells how she signed up for the texts so that she would be among the first to learn the name of Obama's running mate. She states that she went to her aunt's house only to find out that Obama had chosen running mate hours earlier and she had not received the text within a reasonable amount of time. She was looking forward to knowing the information as soon as it was available, but ended up finding out from another person who had seen the announcement on the national news, which often lags behind Twitter, blogs, wikis, and texting by at least an hour (Wickham, 2009).

Procter and Gamble

Procter and Gamble is a very successful online advertiser. Dynamic Logic ranked them in the top 10 companies for online advertising in 2007 thanks to their product Olay Regenerist (Octlacan, 2008). Their strategy was to:

- Advertise through social networking sites

- Advertise to the appropriate target market

- Communicate properly with customers

Procter and Gamble chose to advertise through various social networking sites including Facebook, which were appropriate for their target market. They communicated very well with both current and prospective customers to ensure costumer happiness. Olay Regenerist was ranked within the top 10, because they were successful with reaching their target audience and communicating with them successfully. They achieved this by proper usage of relevant sites. They ensured that the proper online media users would see their ads and be intrigued to purchase

the product. Their weakness is that only one of their many products was ranked in Dynamic Logic's top 10. Procter and Gamble is continuing to improve their online advertising campaigns and advertising more products online.

Honda

Honda decided to experiment with advertising through social networking sites by creating a Facebook page. They orignially thought that if they could get million connections through Facebook, they would be happy. Little did they know it would turn out to be a huge success. They quietly launced their official Facebook page in August 2009 and it is themed "Everybody Knows Somebody Who Loves a Honda" (Halliday, 2009). They started off having very little advertisement on Facebook, then on October 19, 2009 they had a huge campaign boost. They had a one day targeted homepage takeover on high reach sites including ESPN.com, CNN.com, and SportsYahoo.com. This caused the number of fans to double to over 1.7 million. As of October 23, 2009 Honda has over 2 million connections through Facebook. Honda also has recently created a new website called lovehonda.com. This website has a link to their Facebook page and also has all three TV Spots, and interviews with over 20 Honda Owners in the commercials (Halliday, 2009). People who visit the website can see this information as well as get more information about specific Honda models.

Honda did an excellent job of advertising through Facebook and their website. They advertised through the social network as an experiment and it turned out to be a great success. They created a free fan page that is available to every Facebook user to view. They are able to look at the various ads that the company chose to put on the page. Honda's advertising strengths include:

- Aquired over 2 million connections

- Decreased advertising expenses

- Increased customer base

Within the first three months that Honda has had the fan page they have gotten over 2 million fans. These fans are connections to the company. They could be students considering purchasing their first car who view this page and see what current Honda owners think of their cars and what deals the company is offering. This can create loyal customers and increase their customer base. They could be loyal, current customers or people interested in Honda for the first time. Either way Honda is creating a great customer base through Facebook. Tom Peyton, senior manager-national advertising said the new internet advertising campaign is "Pretty viral, with only a little advertising" he also said that he can track which advertising media are generating spikes of Facebook logins (Halliday, 2009). They are also using traditional advertising techniques to gain attention to the new interactive media advertising. This new technique saved Honda 8.5% on advertising costing a total of about $565 million for the year.

Honda is doing an excellent job of advertising through their newly created Facebook fan page and lovehonda.com. They do not really have any weaknesses. They could draw more attention to the website and fan page to gain more connections. For now though, Honda is doing an excellent job of advertising through both Facebook and their websites.

Conclusion

My professor of technology once said that most of the students in his class were more connected digitally then he was and he held up his cell phone which did not have internet capabilities or GPS or a Facebook app, and it was a shocking moment for the class. It was difficult for the audience to understand how anyone could not have at least the internet on their cell phone but especially someone that lives, eats

and breaths technology. Here as a man who was teaching about technological advancements and encouraging students to embrace the digital age and all it has to offer, but he could not even send a simple an e-mail from his phone. The phone he held was just that a phone, he could make calls and that was about all this archaic piece of technology could perform. One would think that a professor of technology would be a prime candidate to market a smart phone but here he stood without one. Then I thought about my own phone, at this time I owned a Blackberry, and all the capabilities and connectivity I held in the palm of my hand at any given moment. This made me realize for the first time that the future of social media and interactive marketing is not targeting all consumers who have the need for smart phones and connectivity. The market for these expensive and highly capable phones is young consumers who for all purposes do not need the phone for any practical purpose but simply must have one. The key take away being that if companies want to reach the demographic that has a large purchasing power and influence over the purchasing power of their parents then the channel to which they are most accustomed and easiest to reach is social medical channels.

Marketing is not about need but want and interactive marketing is about taping into those wants and desires and appealing on a personal level to consumers. Social media which is part of an interactive marketing campaign is the best way to reach the younger generation. There are many options for social media marketing with the key sites being Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn, Twitter, and YouTube. All of these social networking and media sites can be downloaded as apps for Apples iPhone, or other smart phones with app capabilities. With Facebook currently having 500 million users and twitter 120 million users marketers the potential is just too large to be ignored (Facebook, 2010). Companies that do not employ interactive marketing specialists will find it difficult to compete with those that have realized the power of social media. There are numerous examples of success stories from companies and even presidents that have successfully used social media to market their products or themselves. Through interactive marketing using social media marketers have the potential to reach customers more frequently,

in real time and tailor the message to personally appeal to the consumer based on likes and purchasing

behavior.

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