

Chapter 39

Comparing Web 2.0 Applications as Marketing Tools

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to evaluate and compare the Web 2.0 applications as marketing tools. In this context, blogs, micro-blogs, collaborative projects (wikis and social bookmarking), content communities, social networking sites, and virtual worlds have been examined. Eventually, it can be expected that blogs will provide more transparent feedback; micro-blogs will provide instant feedback; wikis will make the co-operative efforts of product development easier; social bookmarking will enable search-engine marketing; content communities will enable easy product training; social networking sites will create brand communities; and virtual worlds will provide new places to interact more effectively. All of these tools can come into prominence in the context of marketing.

INTRODUCTION¹

A decade ago, the Web was thought to be the future of the new digital era. The phenomenon of the Internet was to establish Web pages, publishing popular content for people to surf. Nowadays, the Internet, which helps people meet their needs and where users can create their own virtual communities to share common interests, has become the main communication platform. With the help of Web technology, the personal-focus has transformed to community-focus, which means a shift

from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 in terms of fundamental concept (Lee & Lan, 2007).

While Web 1.0, also originally called Websites, included only one-way communication through static Web pages with publishers communicating with users as if lecturing, today's Web 2.0 includes sharing, linking, collaborating, and user-generated content. Thus, Internet users participate collectively in conversations, which lead to collective intelligence. Thanks to Web 2.0 applications, users can both produce and distribute the information (Thackeray et al., 2008); while Web 1.0 has a

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-7357-1.ch039

wide “read-only” base, Web 2.0 has “read-write-participate” base (Hardey, 2008).

The term Web 2.0 stands for an updated and improved version of the Web and has been widely used since 2004. The term has become popular and attempts to generate variations have arisen, such as Marketing 2.0, PR 2.0, etc. (Hardey, 2008).

Constantinides and Fountain (2008) mentioned that, Web 2.0 is a new step in the marketing environment as well as in the development process of the Internet. These authors have expressed that, as a new marketing environment, Web 2.0 makes the traditional purchasing process more complex.

The stimuli-response model, expressed by Kotler and Keller (2006) as the starting point in understanding customer behavior, refers to customer behavior in traditional terms (decision-making process in purchasing and purchasing behavior). According to them, in this model, marketing stimuli and environmental stimuli find their way into the customer’s consciousness. A set of psychological processes combine with specific customer characteristics that result in the decision-making process and purchasing process. Constantinides (2004) has added Web experience as online controllable marketing factors to this model. In this way, Constantinides presents the Web as a new input that affects the behavior of the customer. Besides this, next to Web experience in the framework of today’s digital focused marketing, Constantinides and Fountain (2008) have added a new input, Web 2.0 experience, to this model as an online, uncontrollable marketing factor. They define online uncontrollable marketing factors as applications such as blogs, wikis, social networks, tagging, forums, and others.

Each of the online, uncontrollable marketing factors that contain Web 2.0 applications can be considered as a marketing environment and/or a tool having different features. It then becomes necessary for the marketers to use these Web 2.0 applications more effectively, which makes the

decision-making process and purchasing behavior of the customer more complex. Because of this, it is useful to compare Web 2.0 applications as marketing tools. This study contributes to the literature with this dimension. Additionally, it is thought that this study will be beneficial for the marketers in choosing the right Web 2.0 applications and/or using the chosen Web 2.0 applications more effectively.

While many businesses are trying to integrate various types of social media applications into their marketing strategies, very few academic studies have explored the appropriateness and importance of these applications as a strategic marketing tool (Constantinides et al., 2008).

Tredinnick (2006, p. 229) did note “the application of Web 2.0 technologies to business intranets, and their potential use in managing and developing business information and knowledge assets.” Anderson (2007) acknowledged the “well-known and commonly used Web 2.0 services/applications with a view to providing a common grounding for educational and institutional issues.” Kaplan and Haenlein (2010, p. 59) provided “a classification of Social Media which groups applications currently subsumed under the generalized term into more specific categories by characteristic: collaborative projects, blogs, content communities, social networking sites, virtual game worlds, and virtual social worlds.” Constantinides et al. (2008, p. 1) also explained “what the new face of the Internet, widely referred to as Web 2.0 or Social Media, is, identifying its importance as a strategic marketing tool and proposing a number of alternative strategies for retailers.”

In this study, the importance and use of Web 2.0 applications as marketing tools are highlighted, as well as their strengths and weaknesses as such tools.

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