Chapter 8
Enlisting Online Communicators in Web 2.0

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ABSTRACT

The Web 2.0 has changed the basic marketing communication paradigm in that it forces companies to acknowledge that Internet-based consumer-to-consumer communication can be a powerful success driver. Information dissemination, which can enhance the success of on-line and off-line products, is increasingly outside the realm of influence of companies because in many markets on-line communicators can play a central role in influencing others' purchase decisions. e-Mavens are recognized as a consumer type that engage in on-line communication. Using a sample of more than 2,500 consumers, the authors profile e-Mavens using demographic and psychographic characteristics as well as explore their motives for visiting music web sites. In addition, changes in e-Mavens' music-related consumption behavior are investigated. Next, using cluster analysis, the authors develop a typology of e-Mavens. Implications for both managerial practice and Web 2.0 research are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

The way people are enabled to participate in creating the Internet has undergone a radical change during the last few years. While in the past users were passive consumers of content, they have become active producers of what they consume today. Web 2.0 applications restructured the architecture of the Internet in a way that turned users into "prosumers". In contrast to traditional Web 1.0 websites where content could only be modified by the owner and where visitors were limited to viewing, websites in the times of Web 2.0 are characterized by user participation and communication. Most Web 2.0 applications can be described as tools for sharing information and communicating with organizations and other end users (Walsh, Hass, & Kilian, 2010). Especially social networks and weblogs are grow-

ing fast in numbers and traffic – there are almost 190 million weblogs and four of the top 10 US entertainment sites are weblogs (Bernoff, 2009a; technorati.com, 2008). According to a recent Nielson Online (Bausch, & McGiboney, 2009) study, member communities including social networking websites and weblogs are the fourth most popular online activity. There is little doubt amongst experts regarding the word-of-mouth power of social networking websites, blogs or the Internet in general (Brown, Broderick, & Lee, 2007; Duan, Gu, & Whinston, 2008; Muñiz, & O'Guinn, 2001; Sassenberg, & Scholl, 2009; Wenger, 2008).

A growing number of companies is using the enormous potential of electronic word-of-mouth for marketing campaigns. So-called viral market-ing strategies are effective ways of promoting new products or services and firms are increas-ingly approaching influential bloggers to promote products and disseminate product information. For example, when Ford became aware that the well-known blogger Jessica Smith (www.jes-sicaknows.com) said she planned to buy a new car, Ford offered her to use the Ford Flex free of charge for a week. Jessica Smith wrote a blog post on her experience and uploaded a video and subsequently, Ford offered her the car for a whole year (Bernoff, 2009b).

There is evidence that consumer-to-consumer communication is particularly common, and effec-tive in terms of product dissemination and sales, in an electronic media environment. We can use three examples to exemplify this point.

In the field of politics Barack Obama's cam-paign for the White House can be seen as an example of the powerful impact of electronic word-of-mouth. Experts argue that without the Internet Barack Obama would still be the junior senator from Illinois. Obama's two-year campaign for the White House largely relied on electronic communications to achieve several goals: organiz-ing volunteers and staff, finding new supporters

and putting them to work, turning out voters on election day and raising large funds – all giving him a crucial edge in the primaries and general election. On the social network site MyBarackObama.com, or MyBO, two million profiles were created. In addition, 200,000 off-line events were planned, about 400,000 blog posts were written and more than 35,000 volunteer groups were created – at least 1,000 of them on February 10, 2007, the day Obama announced his candidacy. Some three million calls were made in the final four days of the 2008 campaign using MyBO's virtual phone-banking platform. On their own MyBO fundraising pages, 70,000 people raised $30 million (Bernoff, 2009a; 2009b; Delany, 2009).

Another vivid example of effective Web 2.0 marketing is the 20th Century Fox movie *Borat*. While it is common practice in the US Film industry to use 50% of the production budget for marketing the movie, 20th Century Fox in promoting *Borat* relied on stimulating word-of-mouth via social media. For example, the studio posted trailers on Youtube to create buzz and used MySpace as their viral marketing hub – members of MySpace were encouraged to add a picture of *Borat* to their list of "8 best friends". Compared to a relatively small production budget of $18m the return of $260m within 6 months after release shows that in times of the Web 2.0 it is possible to attract a big audience without spending mil-lions of dollars.

Another case in point is the British band *Arctic Monkeys*. Because no record label was interested in their music, the young band from Sheffield sold its songs through their website and on Myspace which led to a considerable fan base. After signing a contract with the DIY Record label Domino the band's first single "I Bet you Look good on the Dancefloor", was released on 17 October 2005 and made #1 in the UK single charts. Their debut album "Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not" sold more copies on its first day alone (118,501) than the rest of the

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