

Community beats blogging for most consumers

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Community beats blogging for most consumers, by Euromonitor International

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Blogs seem to be developing more strongly as business and political tools than as consumer media (apart from in Japan which accounts for more than a third of all blogs) with community sites taking the lead in p2p

Key Trends

- Non English blogs increase share
- Blogosphere net growth slackens
- Web 2.0 "MySpace, YouTube, Facebook etc"

Commercial Opportunities

- Business blogs and employee communication podcasts
- Political blogs
- Live web concept

SUMMARY

The Internet is a highly consumer driven medium and, as such, many predictions made have fallen victim to the essential unpredictability of consumers en masse (see also article Googling me Googling you - personalization and commerce). One example of this unpredictability was the recent finding that US consumers are spending more online dollars on clothes than on computers, another is that, despite the forecasts of the blogosphere taking the web by storm, this is not proving the case.

This is not to say that blogging is not a popular consumer activity but growth rates are not what was predicted and neither is the blogosphere. For instance, the blogosphere is more popular with non English speakers. It is also true that despite being hailed as the ultimate in consumer enfranchisement a key feature of blogosphere's current development is the high level of blog usage growth among companies and also its new found popularity with political parties and politicians.

BACKGROUND

Blog growth slows

According to a recent survey by Technorati, the growth of blogging is slowing. The number of weblogs has risen to 70m compared with 35m some 320 days ago, but this is nothing like the growth that was generally predicted and only a third are English-language blogs while the Japanese account for more than a third (37%) of all blogs.

The current number of English-language blogs represents a comparatively small proportion of the population of the US (around 300m) and Europe (well over 700m). Also, since Technorati's figures include consumers with multiple blogs, the number of individual bloggers is even lower.

Although there is no doubting the importance of blogs and the existence of many that are influential, it now appears that consumers, and particularly English speaking consumers, have not taken up the medium in the kind of numbers which most analysts originally expected.

Blogs are not a new phenomenon: it is a decade since the first weblog was introduced and seven years since easy-to-use blogs were pioneered by blogger.com.

Community sites v blogs

The conclusion is that other aspects of web 2.0 have been taken up by consumers with more enthusiasm and alacrity. For example blog usage is dwarfed by the 65,000-plus videos uploaded to YouTube every day and MySpace, launched in 2003, claims 170m mainly English-language members "more than double the global number of bloggers and seven times the number of English speaking bloggers.

It is true that probably more consumers participate in the blogosphere than actually write their own blogs through posting comments, but this means that blogging has evolved into a more reactive than proactive medium.

The reason for the relatively low growth in bloggers is probably largely due to the huge success of social networking. The difference is that communication is more direct and one to one when members of MySpace, Facebook, Bebo, LinkedIn (the site for business professionals etc) communicate and consumers seem to prefer this aspect.

Business blogging

Having at first feared the potential negative publicity, blogging has been taken up by the business world as a brand building medium. Business blogs, generally offering readers something of value, aim to interact with customers and receive valuable feedback. Podcasting is regarded as a way forward for businesses looking to connect with their employees.

Political blogging

At a recent California convention a table was set up especially for bloggers inside the hall where candidates spoke and one of the blogging groups, Calitics.com, had a bigger contingent (nine journalists) than any of the regional newspapers. Major US political blogs include The Daily Kos and the Huffington Post.

Blogging is also being embraced by most of the US Democratic and Republican candidates, being regarded as a means of engaging with the young voters of the future. According to a study by the Indiana University School of Informatics, only 2% of campaign web sites had blogs or 'visitors' comments' in 2002, whereas, in 2007 it is 74%. As an example, the Democratic candidate Barack Obama's has a MySpace style site where users can sign up and create their own blogs.

OUTLOOK

Why do most consumers prefer reading blogs to writing them? One reason could be the difficulty of getting readers in view of the fact that some 120,000 new blogs are created every day around the world (most of which quickly become inactive) despite the slowdown in the rate of growth, which makes it more difficult to gain an audience. For most consumers, the alternative, being part of a peer group in a social networking community, where shared interests will guarantee a hearing, is far more attractive.

Perhaps in response, Technorati, decided this year to rename its monitoring exercise the state of the 'live web' rather than the state of the blogosphere.

For further detail about this article and other related findings, please visit [Euromonitor International](#) by clicking here.