Social Sites Get People Talking, But Marketers Must Earn Trust

Contributed by eMarketer
Monday, 23 August 2010

Word-of-mouth may not translate to loyalty

Social media is a hot topic in marketing circles, but many consumers are also discussing the trend, which accounts for nearly 23% of time spent online in the US, according to Nielsen.
An April 2010 survey conducted by Harris Interactive for the Online Publishers Association (OPA) found that social media sites were the most talked-about on the web, ahead of portals and top media sites that are members of the OPA in discussions on a wide variety of channels.

All those conversations, whether in person, via email, on the phone or elsewhere on the web, however, donâ€™t make social site visitors loyalâ€”internet users expressed the least loyalty for such properties, compared with portals or OPA member sites.

They were also most likely to say social sites were not a very good fit for their information and entertainment needs.

The OPAâ€™s findings are in line with the annual customer satisfaction report from ForeSee Results that found Facebook among the most disliked sites on the web after its many disagreements with its own user community and several privacy debacles.

According to the OPA, negative feelings about social sites may also apply to the brands that advertise there. Only 8% of internet users felt social media site advertisers were reputable, compared with a 21% average for content sites.
They also felt advertising on social sites was less relevant and the companies that did so were less respected.

The answer for brands is to continue a greater focus on non-advertising marketing activities, engaging on the social media userâ€™s terms.

And marketers should remember that while loyalty to individual social properties may be low and site users dissatisfied, the activities that have come to define social mediaâ€” connecting with friends and family and sharing information and content with a trusted groupâ€”will remain important in the lives of millions of internet users and continue to provide avenues for brand engagement.

6 August 2010