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Enhancing Promotional Strategies through the Use of Web 2.0

We have witnessed a rising interest – by both academic and managerial field – in the marketing application of Web 2.0 techniques. Yet the effective impact and change it brings is still unclarified. The importance of Web 2.0 is constantly on the rise. We see consumers join social networks, using social tools in an ever greater number, therefore it gives companies a new and effective tool for marketing communication and other marketing-related activities. In our research, we first aim to clarify the definition and boundaries of Web 2.0. Then through a literature review we collect some of the most important areas of marketing to be affected by this seemingly technological change. We also have a brief overview of challenges and risks firms face in this new environment.

1. Introduction

Without jumping too deeply and too far ahead into our topic, we can state that in the last few years we have witnessed a rather quick expansion of Web 2.0 applications. These techniques and tools mean far more than a mere technological improvement of previous, so called “Web 1.0” techniques and tools. They require companies to adapt to a new business logic and put a never before seen emphasis on customers and relationship with customers. Although it is yet to be determined by academicians and business practitioners whether this means a whole new business paradigm - a lot of changes is taking place with new opportunities rising and old ways of doing business in extinction.

Parallel with this change we also witness a rising interest in Web 2.0-themed research on academic level. Moving away from the early-era questions such as definitions and laying out the boundaries of Web 2.0 (O’Reilly 2005, O’Reilly 2006; Kaplan&Haenlein 2010) research now focuses on a variety of marketing-related topics, including user motivation and gratification from use of applications (Lin et al.,2014, Sledgianowski&Kulviwat 2009, Barker 2009, Kim et al. 2010), privacy concerns (Bronstein 2014, Debatin 2011, Walther 2011, Papacharissi&Gibson 2011); corporate use of Web 2.0 (Thakur et al. 2013, Anderson et al. 2007, Barger&Labrecque 2013); efficiency and effectiveness of marketing actions in social media environment (Duan et al 2008, Stephen&Galak 2012).

Our research focuses on a narrow slice of this topic and aims to offer an overview of the various definition attempts that were made regarding Web 2.0. We give a brief literature overview on the role of the so called “new Web” in marketing. After defining the boundaries of this less than a decade old phenomenon, we also investigate possible typologies and marketing / corporate use of Web 2.0.

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2. So, what exactly is Web 2.0?

The definition of Web 2.0 has undergone significant changes since the phenomenon first emerged in the mid 2000's. The first widely accepted and used interpretation came from O'Reilly (2005) who defined the concept as compared to 'Web 1.0', with the conclusion that with Web 2.0 the focus is shifting on user generated content, network effect resulting in cooperation between various actors – rather than controlling (as opposed to Web 1.0). The same author came up with a new definition next year that focused more on social and business aspects of the phenomenon:

Web 2.0 is the business revolution in the computer industry caused by the move to the internet as platform, and an attempt to understand the rules for success on that new platform. Chief among those rules is this: Build applications that harness network effects to get better the more people use them. (This is what I've elsewhere called "harnessing collective intelligence.") (O'Reilly 2006)

Other scholars agree with O'Reilly in that Web 2.0 isn't a mere technological change or improvement, rather it is primarily a new approach to the consideration of the existing tools and the change of the utilization as a result (Kaplan-Haenlein 2010).

Defining the boundaries of Web 2.0 with complete clarity is another issue at hand. Are the user forums part of the Web 2.0? Although it fulfills all the definitions described below – they are characterized by user generated content (UGT), an inner community, and also offer the possibility to create a particular network – they aren't part of the Web 2.0 application according to the consensual agreement. Meanwhile, wikipedia.org is considered by many as the flagship of current "revolution" - still apart from UCG it is not comparable in any ways to other Web 2.0 applications.

From a managerial point of view the Web 2.0 is a complex entity of applications and technologies that help firms integrate customers directly into their value chain and also help individuals to organize themselves into networks (O'Reilly 2005, Bauer et al. 2007, Hass et al. 2008). Levy (2009) highlights three principals that define the Web 2.0:

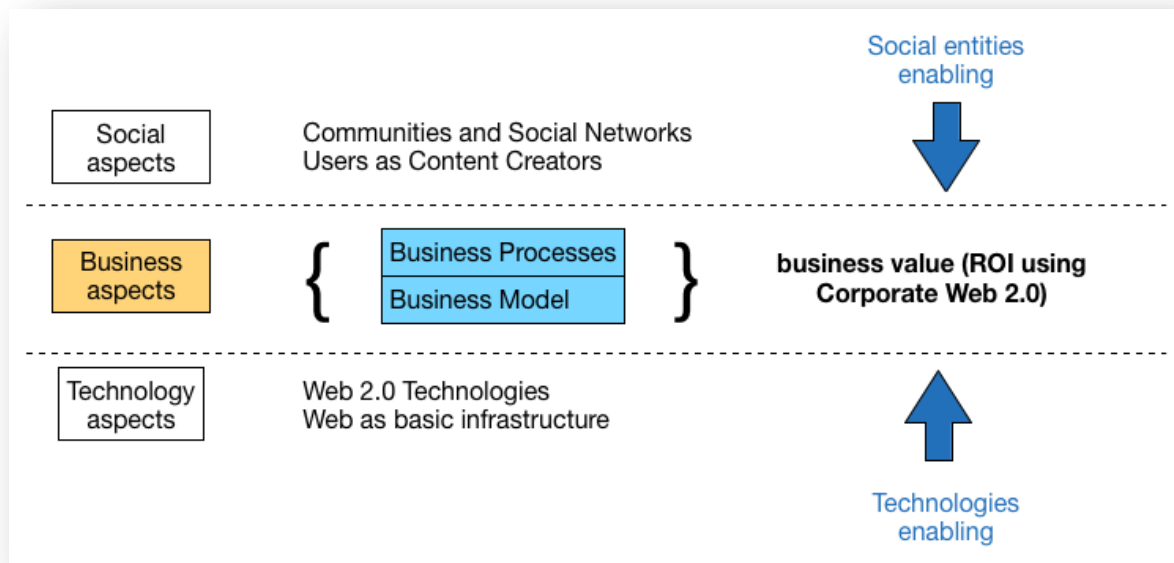
1. applications working on Web platforms that focus on,
2. the useability of provided services and not on the technological excellence of the applications and which
3. build on active user interaction (the cornerstone of the definition of the Web 2.0 is the UGC).

The 'active user interaction' in this context might be misleading term, since some Web applications combine sophisticated technical solutions with advanced statistical methods to gain valuable information from the users even when they are only 'passively' browsing their page. Amazon for example presents their recommendations for the users on the basis of the searching histories and purchases of other users with the similar profiles.

Stocker et al. (2007) investigates Web 2.0 from corporate perspective (Figure 1).

Figure 1

A Model for Corporate Web 2.0.



Source: Stocker et al., 2007, pp. 88.

This model incorporates both the social and technological changes that Web 2.0 means, and the authors define corporate Web 2.0 as

“transformation of the social and technological aspects of the new internet into business, leading to a redesign of existing business processes or even to an evolution of new business models” (Stocker et al. pg. 88).

To summarize the definitions found in our literature review, we can highlight some of the main characteristics of the transition from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 that could serve as our definition for the new Web:

- Although there are some technological changes in the background, the main differentiating feature is the way applications are used, not the way they are built. Web 2.0 is in essence a social and not a technological change.
- User Generated Content (UGC) enable actors to rely on and harness “collective intelligence”. The success of Web 2.0 projects and companies (such as Wikipedia, del.icio.us, Flickr) are dependent on the content submitted in, controlled by and even filtered by the large communities that sprung up around them
- Companies are no longer in control of the message – users are. The main communication paradigm shifted from controlling to cooperation, from one-way communication scheme to many-to-many.
- Network effect: only a small percentage of users contribute to online projects (see 1% rule¹) companies therefor need to set incentives to encourage active user engagement in their Web 2.0 projects.

¹ 1-9-90 rule (sometimes 90–9–1 principle or the 89:10:1 ratio), states that in a collaborative website such as a wiki, 90% of the participants of a community only view content, 9% of the participants edit content, and 1% of the participants actively create new content – wikipedia.org

3. Web 2.0 typologies

Web 2.0 is an umbrella term that can be divided into a number of sub-fields. At the beginning of the 'Web 2.0 fever' O'Reilly (2006) distinguished four hierarchical levels of the Web 2.0 applications along the offline – online dimensions depending on the extent of the “embeddedness” of application in the Internet as a medium.

Today, as the Web becomes more and more an integral part of our daily lives this approach seems to be outdated. Schneider, 2013 distinguish 17+1 (other) categories by functions of the Web2.0 applications starting with social writing platforms all the way through social networks and development applications. It cannot be called by any means a consensual position as we can find several other typologies in literature. A very basic classification system might be shown based on the content type that is utilized in Web 2.0 applications.

Figure 2

Classification of Web 2.0 applications based on their main content type

Content type	Example
Mainly text-based	Twitter, Wikipedia
Mainly pictures	Flickr, Instagram, tumblr
Mainly sound or music	Soundcloud, last.fm
Mainly video	Youtube, Vimeo
Mixed	blogs
Other file types	Prezi, Slideshare,
Focus on networking	Gacebook, Google+

We see this to be a scale not a yes/no type of question, as seen on Figure 2. The distinction of applications was based on industry standards and research with university students specializing in Web 2.0 marketing studies.

Based on the theoretical backgrounds of media researches and social trends Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) made six different types of categories of the social networks. The two main dimensions used for the differentiation of these were: 1) media richness of their UGC, 2) self-presentation of their users.

Figure 3

Classification of Social Media by social presence/media richness and self-presentation/self-disclosure

		Social presence / media richness		
		Low	Medium	High
Self-presentation/ self-disclosure	High	Blogs	Social networking sites	Virtual social worlds
	Low	Collaborative projects	Content communities	Virtual game worlds

Source: Kaplan&Haenlein (2010), pg. 62

Note, that dimensions utilized in this model - self-presentation and self-disclosure – are well established concepts in psychology. According to Journard (1971, pg. 19) self-disclosure is “*the act of making yourself manifest, showing yourself so others can perceive you*”.

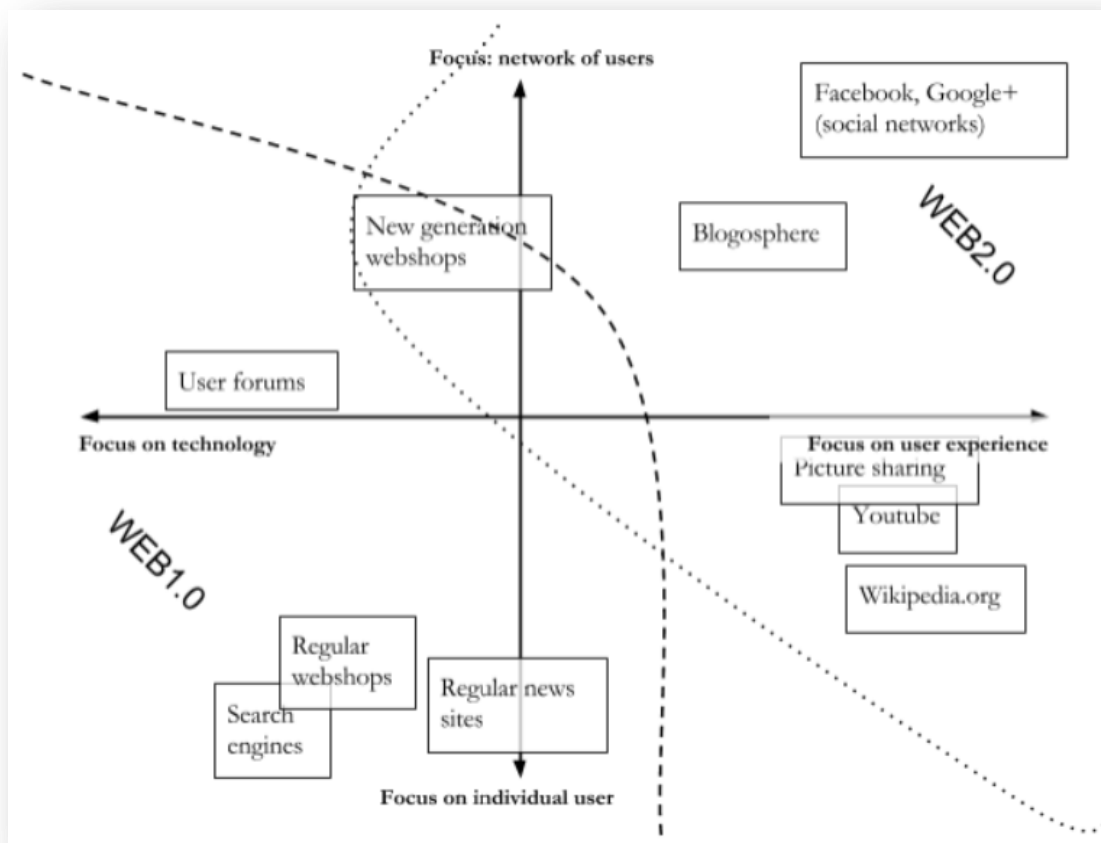
It is well-documented to play a major role in personal relationships: “two people cannot be said to be intimate with each other if they do not share some personal, relatively confidential information with one another” (Brehm et al. 2002, pg. 138). Many researchers suggest, that Web 2.0 applications and social networks in particular might serve as a forum for self-disclosure.

Another obvious reference point is to compare Web 2.0 applications to what we could refer to as “Web 1.0” application) although this term is by no means as wide-spread as Web 2.0 is. We can highlight two important differentiation points:

1. Focus of the application: whether it focuses on single users (as in Web 1.0), or rather on a network of users (as in Web 2.0).
2. Focus of development: in Web 1.0 we saw a focus on technological excellence, while Web 2.0 applications also set this as a priority, their main focal point shifted towards what is best described by the much used term “user experience” - that is the usability and attractive design of the application.

Figure 4

Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 applications



The first definition offered by O'Reilly (2005) also had a similar list of applications (Figure 5).

Figure 5

Web 1.0 vs. Web 2.0 concepts

Web 1.0 application/approach	Web 2.0 equivalent
DoubleClick	Google AdSense
Ofoto	Flickr
Akamai	BitTorrent
mp3.com	Napster
Britannica Online	Wikipedia
personal websites	blogging
evite	upcoming.org and EVDB
domain name speculation	search engine optimization
page views	cost per click
screen scraping	web services
publishing	participation
content management systems	wikis
directories (taxonomy)	tagging ("folksonomy")
stickiness	syndication

Source: O'Reilly, 2005, pg. 1.

4. What's in this for marketing and advertising?

We finish our literature review with trying to answer a practical question: what kind of impact did the Web 2.0 have on the marketing practices of the companies. To be able to handle this issue, we were forced to make an important restriction. Instead of reviewing the complete Web 2.0 scene, we restricted our focus only on the applications which are most commonly used and which appear to be the most relevant in field of marketing based on our findings in the literature.

Existing research information show there are three major types of application to be drawn to the middle of attention in both the academic research and in managerial applications:

1. the wikis (especially wikipedia.org),
2. blogs,
3. social networks.

With the literature review, we will focus on issues, advantages and aspects that are relevant to advertising strategy. In every case we will offer an overview on how widespread that particular application is, whom does the core audience consist of and what are the main marketing advantages of utilizing it.

Again, we would like to underline that while we limited our research to a rather narrow subset of Web 2.0 applications, the concept itself is much broader and we had to miss a great number of important sites from our research, including but not limited to Twitter, Vine, Coub, Snapchat, etc that are gaining popularity rapidly among young adults. In addition to shorting them by relevance, we also took into account how widespread they are in Hungary.

4.1 Wikipedia

The wiki, as an application, is *a software which allows collaborative modification of its content and structure directly from the web browser. In a typical wiki, text is written using a simplified markup language (known as "wiki markup"), and often edited with the help of a rich-text editor*². Although there are many wikisites available, this tool (or concept) has become widespread as a module of many Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system and document management system (DMS) as well like as in eGroupware, Microsoft SharePoint, etc.

In addition to all this, wikipedia.org has made its name well known as an online social encyclopedia, and has won an outstanding place among other Web2.0 applications. The site set a new record in November 2013 when the number of visitors exceeded 530 million. Its influence is significant based on the Alexa's measurement which shows a stable position among the 10 most popular Internet websites (currently occupying the 6th place). During our research, we also focused on wikipedia.org as a crucial factor in the Web2.0 world. The attendance of the site – apart from the seasonal wobble – shows a roughly constant growth worldwide and in Hungary as well. The number of monthly unique visitors are reported to be among 480-520 million by the company which places them on the 6-8th position of the world's most visited website according to the statistics of alexa.com. In Hungary, the most recent statistic comes from 2010 - Gemius reported the Hungarian version of the site attracted 1.5 – 1.6 million visitors a month.

From the marketing's point of view (Heinonen 2011), the importance of the site can be best observed in the phase of searching for information, within the consumer purchase decision, in the prepurchasing decision process. In this phase, the consumers prefer to gather factual information from reliable, unbiased sources. Consumers tend to trust other consumers and therefore Wikipedia bears with an utmost importance.

Although considering their popularity, they fall far behind others, still sue to their direct impact on consumer behavior sites following the wiki philosophy and are based on user-user kind of interaction, ask-answer sites (such as wikihow, wiki.answers.com, etc...) are worth mentioning, where the users in the purchase decision phase (too) can post relevant questions and answers.

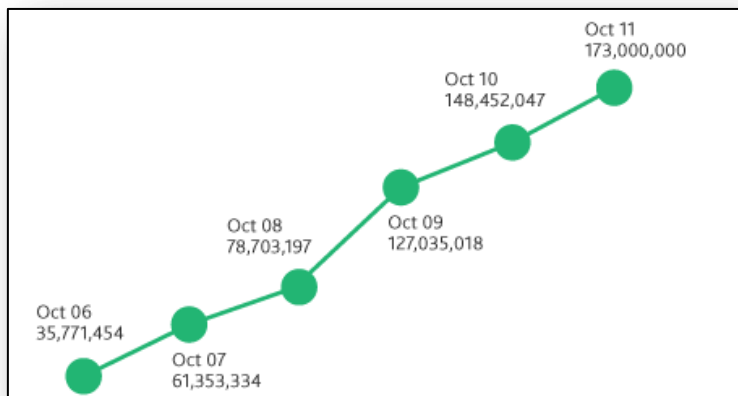
4.2 Blogs

The survey of Social Media Today (SMT) shows that today we live in the golden age of blogs. 77% of American Internet users follow blogs and there are 18.7 million people in the country who write blogs (McGrail, 2013). According to the Nielsen survey, by the end of 2011 the number of blogs exceeded 180 million (in 2003 there were none, in 2008 there were less than the half, 80 million blogs registered at Nielsen).

² Wikipedia's definition on wiki. Available: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wiki>

Figure 6

Number of blogs tracked by Nielsen/McKinsey from 2006-2011.



Source: Nielsen, 2012

For companies it's very a important information what the SMT data show. The blog writing small businesses generate 121 percent more leads than ones that stay away and the 37 percent of the marketing executives named blogs (not Facebook or YouTube, etc.) as the most important area of content marketing.

Thakur et al. (2013) defines blogs as a dominating media - not only in individual's but

also in corporate life. Nevertheless, there are very limited numbers of studies focusing on the relationship between the companies and blogs. There are mostly technology (Gordon 2006, Scoble&Israel 2006, Wright 2005), enterprise and content based analysis, however, according to Thakur and his co-authors the academy has avoided the possibility to research blogs as a form of communication between the company and client and explore the potential in it.

Blogs were analyzed as part of the purchase decision phase by Morimoto and Trimble (2012), and in their study nearly half (47%) of the adult citizens of the US was reported to use blogs to get new ideas and to get information about the latest trends. Consumers who already bought a product that was recommended to them on a blog, are even more in number (53%). According to the authors, this fact must inspire the companies to invest time, energy and money to the blog-based corporate communication.

At the same time, however, the authors (Morimoto&Trimble 2012) made a distinction between blogs made by consumers and corporate blogs. While the two types did not differ from each other considering the consumer's perception, in the case of corporate blogs a spectacularly lower propensity for purchase could be observed.

An even more interesting area in blog research is the mapping of post-purchase experiences, especially the consumer satisfaction measurement (Bányai 2012, Iyanna et al. 2012). Despite the expansion of social networks, blogs still have an important role in the eWOM researches, in the marketing researches of politics and in marketing structure analyses throughout other means of text mining but inputs originating from blogs can also be the foundations of consumer's segmentations (Feldman et al. 2010).

4.3 Social media

While in everyday language “social media” and “Web 2.0” are often used in an interchangeable manner, academic rigor requires us to make a clear distinction between the two concepts – as they are in deed different. According to the definition of Hausmann (2012) social networks are Web 2.0 applications which support:

1. the communication and
2. interaction between users
3. besides these they allow users to form relations among each other.

Among other traits, we argue that social media (SM) is one of the biggest winners and most heavy users of the contemporary mobile communication revolution. There are several SM applications that are exclusively available for smart-phones (Android, iPhone) only or the majority of their functions are available through mobile devices. Unlike in the previous model where mobile device appeared as only a complement to the primary desktop use (see Facebook, Twitter, Youtube) today we see this trend to be challenged by applications like Snapchat, Instagram and the others.

All available statistics confirm that we live in the era of Web 2.0, and of social media in particular. It is also worth a note that as of no forecast predicts any major changes in the existing trends although the number of users on certain pages converges to the theoretical (and practical) maximum.

The continuous and dynamic growth is generated by many factors:

- On one hand the wave-like migration experienced on some particular sites (a good example could be the rapid rise of MySpace and the even more spectacular downfall of it) which creates a continuous immersion for new participants on the market. Those users are already familiar with the technology and the use of such tools.
- The consecutively arriving new service providers tend to cover more and diversified needs of the consumers, by which they generate new ones as well – and by doing so, they get more and more layers of the society involved in this special 'market' (to name a few examples: academia.edu is the social network of scholars, IT Central Station is a social platform designed for IT professionals, Honest Buildings is a site that connects real estate professionals and building service providers, Doximity provides a social network for physicians, etc.)
- Internet penetration is constantly growing - especially in the economically lesser developed countries. But even so the untapped “spare men” can be measured in billions, which holds a number of new, potential users (example: the owner of Facebook, Mark Zuckerberg announced his new, ambitious project - internet.org – that aims to grant internet access for literally everybody around the globe.
- From a technological point of view 2 actual factors could be mentioned : the consecutive space gaining of cellphones with internet access and the spread of the non-stop online connections, such as the 3G/LTE or the cable modem internet (Musser & O'Reilly).

On the market of the social networks, hundreds of service provider companies are in race for users. According to the research of Duggan and Smith (2014), this race is getting more tense. 81% of the citizens of the US with Internet connection are using 2

or less social networks, only 2% are using 5 or more, while most of them -36%- use only one social network actively (Duggan&Smith 2014). This, of course does not exclude the possibility that they might be registered users of other sites as well. It will be clear, however, that the determinative indicator is always the number of the active users unlike the amount of the “passive” mass of users gathered over the years.

Consumer behavior seems to be the following. If one has already decided to use a specific network, then the user won't look for another (not even for supplementary purposes) until it satisfies his or her needs and the user can stay in touch with a big portion of his or her friends in a way that the “unwanted” or the avoided groups of people (like the parents for teenagers) will not be present.

According to Duggan and Smith (2014), the cross-usage of the largest sites can be depicted as in Figure 7.

Figure 7

Social media matrix

	Use Twitter	Use Instagram	Use Pinterest	Use LinkedIn	Use Facebook
% of Twitter users who...	N/A	53	34	39	90
% of Instagram users who...	53	N/A	37	30	93
% of Pinterest users who...	29	31	N/A	29	87
% of LinkedIn users who...	31	24	28	N/A	83
% of Facebook users who...	22	23	25	25	N/A

Source: Duggan and Smith (2014), pg. 11

According to the researches of Ellison et al. (2007), Facebook as a social network is being used for four major motives which are all formed around correspondence and “social observation” (this last phenomenon means when a user follows the opinion, believes, interests and activities of the people from his or her closer or wider environment in an either active or passive way). Joinson (2008) had the same conclusion, although the motives for using social media formed a group of 7 reasons, which could be described by the above mentioned two factors as well. Golder et al. (2007) mentions another intriguing fact. Facebook users send the majority of their messages (90.6%) to their friends from which 42% is addressed to people that are out of the boundaries of the local network (they live far away).

Looking at the problem from a marketing point of view, the social networks have achieved an important role at the company-consumer relationship. According to Barger and Labracque (2013), social media networks provide an opportunity to realize a significant increase in consumer satisfaction. The unsatisfied consumers can turn directly to the companies. If they get a quick and effective solution (a positive feedback) that will result in an increase in the consumer's satisfaction. The authors also mention, that social media can be the forum of product support as well.

There are detailed statistics available about the usage of social networks. The research of Duggan and Smith (2014) highlighted the following key variables regarding to the greatest general, and specialized social network profile.

Figure 8

Demographics of social media network users.

	Facebook	Twitter	Linkedin	Instagram	Pinterest
Men	66%	17%	24%	15%	8%
Women	76%	18%	19%	20%	33%
18-29	84%	31%	15%	37%	27%
30-49	79%	19%	27%	18%	24%
50-64	60%	9%	24%	6%	14%
65+	45%	5%	13%	1%	9%
High-school grad or less	71%	17%	12%	16%	17%
Some collage	75%	18%	16%	21%	20%
Collage+	68%	18%	38%	15%	25%

Source: Duggan&Smith (2014), pp.4-8

If we inspect the engagement of users, we see that general profile social networks tend to have higher level of engagement (Figure 9).

Figure 9

Frequency of social media site use

	Facebook	Twitter	Linkedin	Instagram	Pinterest
Daily	63%	46%	13%	57%	23%
Weekly	22%	21%	34%	20%	30%
Less often	14%	32%	52%	22%	45%

Source: Duggan&Smith (2014) pg. 9.

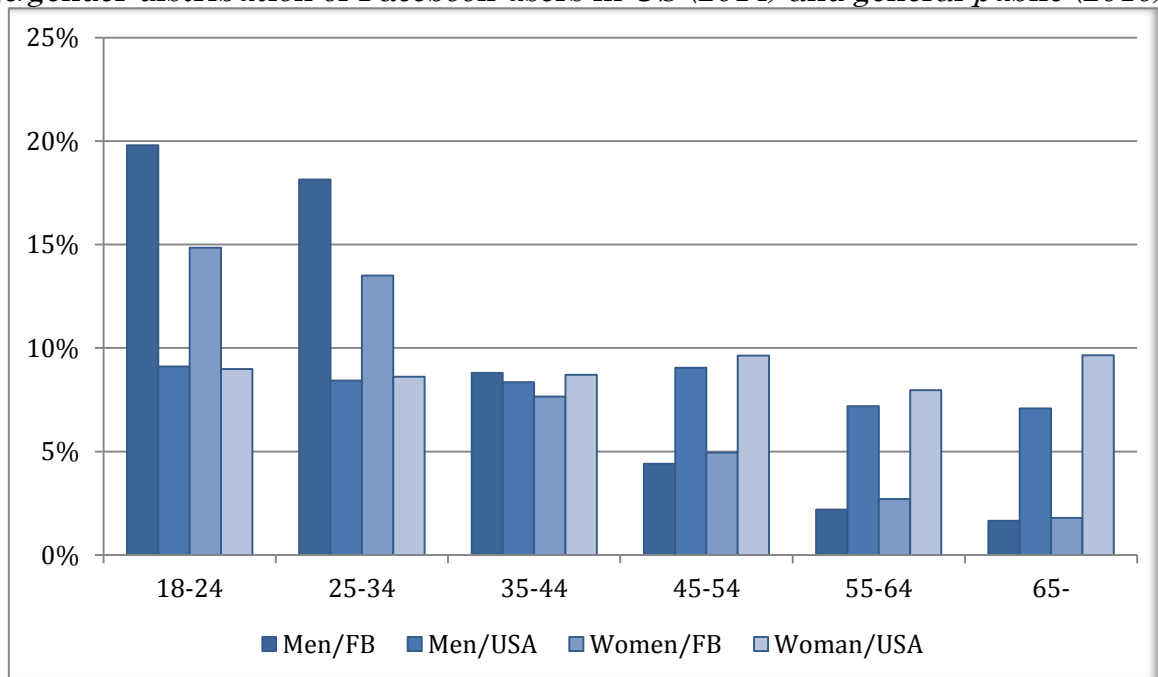
5. Conclusion

Web 2.0 is a turbulent environment for companies. Continuous expansion, fast-changing players, the threats posed by the new entrants and the fact that the industry-leading companies - Google, Apple, Facebook, etc – are investing huge amount of money into innovation all add to this turbulence. It is also a relatively new field for corporate marketing activities – looking back to a “history” of a mere decade. To understand how Web 2.0 fits into advertising strategy, we have to grasp the essence of the undergoing change of shifting from traditional media (Traditional Media Outlet -TMO) to social media (Social Media Outlet - SMO). SMO includes social networks and other Web 2.0 applications such as blogs, online communities, content sharing platforms, etc.

The first conclusion we must draw is that the demographics of Web 2.0 is different from that of general public – with a distortion that draws towards younger generations. Younger users tend to use more extensively social networks and applications, while older generations are far less reachable through Web 2.0 (and internet in general).

Figure 10

Age/gender distribution of Facebook users in US (2014) and general public (2010)



Source:

Another important conclusion is the well documented phenomenon (Andrew et al. 2012, Kornish et al. 2010) that SMO and TMO attracts different types of users, while SMO might have a greater impact on consumer purchasing decisions - as consumers with high involvement tend to be present here. SMO sites show high degree of interactivity (e.g.: customer networks, online brand communities, etc...). Compared to this, the TMO-s provide wider reach – also meaning they might be less effective in targeting. SMO as a whole might offer higher frequency, but that comes at a price of no possibility to exercise control and is characterized a “freestyle” ethos, not bounded by journalist's ethical norms.

All these put together to some of the most common dilemmas of the companies with a social media presence:

1. The consumer feedback, and the dialogues between them can be conducted without the possibility of corporate pressure or other ordinary control permissions – in public.
2. The “freemouth” masses (based on it's size) is “online 0-24”, which requires a quick reaction time.

As we could see Web 2.0 is turbulent, fast-changing environment, and due to the relatively low barriers to entry it also means an environment with consecutively renewing industrial members. Primarily because of the consumer's behavioral patterns, this turbulence has an effect on every corporation's life nowadays in some ways. What's more, it forces corporations to make some decisions - even if the decision is to stay away from social networks. A great amount of consumers started moving towards the new kind of communication network.

All these challenges can be traced back to an underlying communicational model shift in which the former one-to-many type of corporate communication has evolved into a many-to-many type. Consumers are empowered not only to interact with the firm but also with other consumers (Christodoulides 2009). The effect of this can be felt on numerous parts of a corporation's life.

6. Managerial implications

It's about time managers take a different look to social media. It is clear that highly motivated users are looking in an ever-greater numbers at blogs, corporate social media presence, search engines – and companies don't seem to be taking advantage of this situation.

Some calculations explicitly show that through the corporate use of social media higher than average profit can be reached with lower than average costs, making it an ideal advertising platform, as of now.

How to attract consumers to a Web 2.0 applications a company might have was not among the questions we investigated. There are some patterns that might be possible directions for further research, including factors like the amount of new posts, attractiveness of content, embeddedness in social (Web 2.0) environment may all be explanatory factors. Content analysis and sentiment analysis have both become a rather popular research direction / tool lately. It could however answer several questions regarding the popularity and effective impact of the blogs, Facebook pages and other Web 2.0 applications.

Finally exploring deeper into the connection between various social media sites. It is not clear what relationship exists in such a connection, what factors might influence that, or what kind of social media sites best serve as complement to (medical) blogs.

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