



Social Media! The Game of Market Research is Changing — Again! Are You on Board?

By Tamara Kenworthy, PRC, Susan Saurage, PRC & Jewel Seperson

Technology is truly changing the world – and it’s moving at the speed of sound! At least, that’s what it feels like.

There are SO many articles and blog posts being written on all the “new” Social Media (SM) applications, and how they are being used for marketing/branding. But what about market research? With the ever-changing dynamics of SM applications, what an opportunity we have as market researchers to be progressive on behalf of our clients.

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Now don't get us wrong; we still have more questions than answers on how SM can/should really be used for market research purposes. We cringe when we hear folks say that Twitter or Facebook are the NEW focus groups. But is it really any different from when the Internet precipitated online surveys, focus groups and bulletin boards? Initially, our profession had many concerns about these new methodologies too. Now look at how we have embraced these online tools and utilize them for just the right projects. In fact, many researchers would say, they have benefited our clients greatly.

As the IMRO Technology Subcommittee studying Social Media and market research, we continue to do our own secondary research via seminars, Webcasts, blogs, articles, conversations with SM experts, etc. We are driven by two key beliefs:

- We believe it's important for MRA and its' members to be viewed as the thought leader on this topic.
- We believe we must educate our-

selves, our clients and the public at large to ensure the foundation of market research is maintained.

A Match Made in Heaven!?!

When we think about why we love market research, it all boils down to getting at the "voice of the customer" and integrating their attitudes, perceptions and insights into marketing analysis and recommendations that generate results for our clients. Bottom line for SM – it's about individuals having the opportunity to share their opinions, ideas and experiences via virtual conversations and videos that enhance both personal and professional relationships. A match made in heaven!?!

We all know what makes up Social Media. Gosh, the category list goes on and on: social networks, blogs, online communities and groups, online consumer reviews, instant messaging, viral media, Wikis, videos, podcasts, chat rooms, forums, virtual worlds (i.e. Second Life) and others.

Below are what we believe to be the

main positives AND concerns for these new tools.

Positives of Social Media in Market Research

- Democratization of content
- Focus on context of what people are saying
- Data leaves a trail
- Strong tool for qualitative research
- Integrates as another tool for hybrid research projects
- Opportunity to collect data very quickly – in real time
- Preferred communication channels for younger age groups (whom are getting harder to reach)
- Opportunity for market research to be more widely accepted and appreciated by the masses

Concerns of Social Media in Market Research

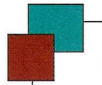
- How do we get started in using these new tools for research?
- SO much content – how do we manage the process to gather data and organize for analysis?
- Need for controls to ensure proper collection and analysis of data – especially for quantitative purposes.
- Sampling concerns – Who are the respondents? What are their demographics?
- How do we budget – how do we show value?
- Can it be used for B2B projects as easily as B2C?

These are some big questions of which we'll be able to answer through experimentation and exploration within the industry. Not to mention, the innovators who will develop and create technology tools to help us monitor and track the data we compile from social media.

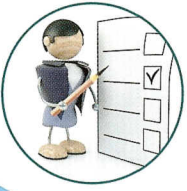

Case Studies

There are some great case studies developing within companies utilizing SM in market research. P&G has created a Social Media Lab in order to better understand how to engage with their consumers. It will be exciting to see how this consumer giant struts their innovative skills in a new way.

MTV's Allison O'Keefe Wright, VP-Consumer Insights, was one of the many presenters at the City University



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of New York's Business Development Institute and its' May 12 Seminar on Social Communications – The Case Studies. O'Keefe Wright said, "Innovation is the lifeblood of MTV." Focusing on the Millennial generation, MTV is using dynamic consumer communities with real-time feedback from engaged viewers in helping to reshape the way MTV develops new programs. With intense chatter, they can explore and observe conversations, as well as post surveys – using SM for both qualitative and quantitative needs. It has helped them assess existing programming, as well as dial up on future promotions. Most interestingly, she said it is shaping the context to get questions right for larger research projects.

The Big 3 Social Networks

As we continue to explore SM and market research, our IMRO group is going to initially focus on the top three Social Media applications: Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter.

Here's some demographics on WHY these three:

Facebook (6/1/09 Facebook Site)

- More than 200 million active users globally; 30% in the U.S.
- Over 53 million users ages 18+ in U.S.; of which 57% are female.
- More than 100 million users log on to Facebook at least once each day.

- Over 41 million members in over 200 countries and territories around the world.
- A new member joins LinkedIn approx. every second.
- User ages break out as follows: 27%

“Bottom line for SM – it’s about individuals having the opportunity to share their opinions, ideas and experiences via virtual conversations and videos that enhance both personal and professional relationships.”

- More than 2/3 of users are outside of college.
- The fastest growing demographic is those 35 years old and older.
- Facebook is available in 50 translations.
- 30 million active user groups exist on the site.
- More than 30 million active users access Facebook via their cell phone.

- 18 to 34 years, 46% 35-49 and 26% 50+.
- Over half of LinkedIn members are from the U.S.
- In the last year, 300,000+ User Groups were started.
- LinkedIn is available in four languages.
- LinkedIn currently offers polling and survey services.

LinkedIn (5/24/09 LinkedIn Site & Blog and Quantcast May 2009)

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Twitter (March 18, 2009 Nielsen Online)

- 7 million unique visitors in Feb. 2009.
- Approx. 3 million unique visitors (42%) were ages 35-49 in Feb. 2009.
- Approx. 1.4 million unique visitors (20%) were ages 25-34 in Feb. 2009.
- Avg. unique visitor went to Twitter 14 times during Jan. 2009, and spent an avg. of 7 minutes on the site.
- Fastest-growing site in member communities category for Feb. 2009.
- Approx. 812,000 unique users sent/received Twitter messages via their cell phones in the 4th Qtr 2008.
- 40% of users are retained. (Compete.com Feb. 2009)

We Want Your Input

Through the months, we hope you'll find our "research" enlightening and

informative as we chart this new frontier together.

We MUST embrace SM as part of our research arsenal and lead our clients by educating them when SM is appropriate for research and when traditional research must still be used. If we don't lead this initiative and educate the public, we may very easily lose control of what we know is so important – the foundation of market research.

Here's how you can help us with our secondary research:

- Share a case study where you've utilized SM in your research projects.
- Let us know of any existing tools that can help us monitor and analyze the SM conversations electronically.
- Share your thoughts, ideas, questions and successes with us on this topic.

Please send to tamara@on-pointstrategies.com, as a central point for

information.

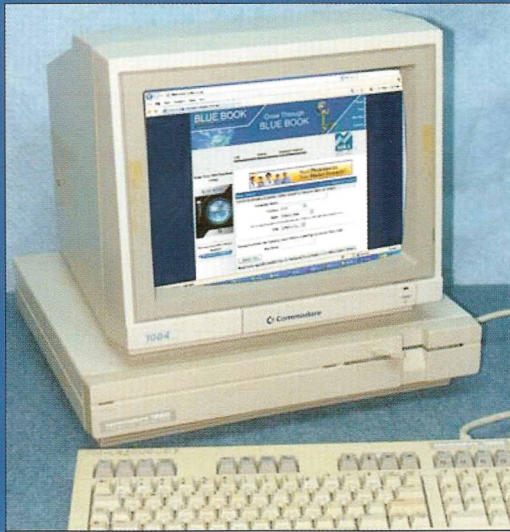
We'd like for you to share with us so we can all become more aware of how social media and marketing research are coming together.



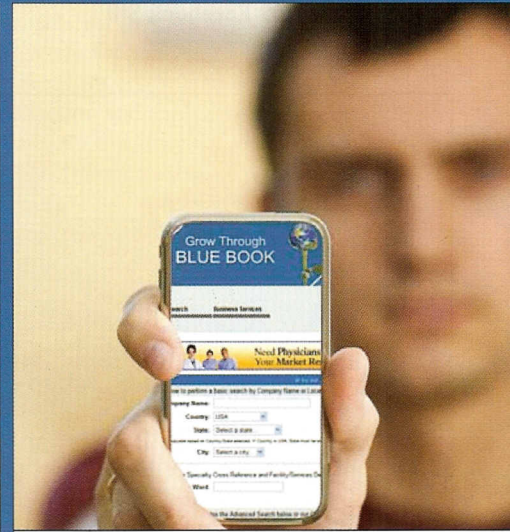
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