

BEA presentation

Social media: The engaged audience

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Last year I participated in a panel discussion of social media much like this one, but the influence of social networking has grown considerably since, MySpace, Facebook and LinkedIn are the three major sites, with huge numbers of users. MySpace's membership has grown from 20 million people in 2005 to 225 million today, an average annual growth rate of 513 percent. Facebook grew at 550 percent a year during the same period. LinkedIn's rate was 182 percent.

Some of you who are not already on a social networking site may have the misimpression that it's mostly your students, but some research surface in the past three weeks that shows tremendous growth among wealthy people. According to the Luxury Institute, participation of wealthy online consumers in social networks dramatically increased to 60% in 2008, from 27% in 2007. Participation levels of online wealthy consumers in leading social networks are 16% for MySpace, 13% for LinkedIn, and 11% for Facebook. A national sample of 805 wealthy American consumers, with an average income of \$287K and average net worth of \$2.1 million, was surveyed online. According to the report, the wealthy average membership in 2.8 social networks, with an average of 110 connections. Nielsen Online said last year that nearly 30% of Facebook's users came from households with at least \$100,000 in annual income. Comparatively, 22% of MySpace users were from similarly-affluent households, although MySpace is much larger.

According to recent story in *Wired*, social networking sites do not have a corresponding growth in advertising rates. For example, 13 cents per thousand display ad servings on Facebook compares with 13 dollar CPMs for display ads on Yahoo. Video ads achieve higher CPMs: MySpace gets just \$25 per thousand showings; while CBS charges \$50 on affiliated sites, NBC as high as \$75. Another source puts roll-in ads closer to an average \$10 CPM. Target social networking sites like LinkedIn do better than Facebook and MySpace because most users are professional. The same article in *Wired* puts their CPM at \$75.

YouTube also connects users through video and the comments they share. This year I can report that my ten-year-old son posts homemade videos on YouTube with no assistance from me. He doesn't use a camera. He uses a screen capture of a role-playing social media site called Runescape. A month ago he started using my

Nero Vision program to put titles into his videos. I began to notice that he and his twin brother spend a lot less time with ordinary television. Instead they compete with kids in the neighborhood who are also connecting and communicating through online games. It's not quite World of Warcraft, but these two boys are definitely part of the engaged audience.

It's not all games, either. Instead of channel surfing for TV to watch, they search comedy videos and old football games on YouTube. They don't have computers in their rooms, so I see what they're doing in a common space. It doesn't seem to involve much advertising. But it makes me wonder how much social media are taking over the mediated lives of people in my own home.

In my classroom, I know that social media has influenced how engaged my students are. They freely admit that they spend a lot of time on Facebook. A year ago, they were simply disclosing their personal information and posting pictures and comments on each other's "wall." This year they're a little more protective of their privacy. They are spending more time downloading applications and starting groups and playing a version of Scrabble called Scrabulous. My research methods class has conducted some surveys that are revealing.

Participants in one of these group-project studies were Facebook users between the ages of 18 and 22. A total of 19 males and 15 females were surveyed, so I was leery that any gender differences they sought would generate statistical power. Participants were selected from one of the researchers friend lists on Facebook and asked to participate in a survey. Of the 100 who were asked to participate, 34 responded to the online questionnaire. This was done via the creation of a Facebook group which participants were asked to join. The page for the group provided a link to a website (esurveyspro.com) which contained the online survey. The survey contained 27 questions relating to Facebook usage based on a comprehensive review of the literature. When 3 days had elapsed and all those selected to participate had either responded or declined, the survey was closed on the website. Over the next few days the results from this survey were quantified and analyzed using the esurveyspro.com website and the programs Excel and SPSS.

A number of differences were found indicating higher usage of the website by females. The number of times people reported logging onto Facebook daily was higher for females ($M=7.71$, $SD=7.80$) than for males ($M=2.42$, $SD=2.29$) with women about three times higher ($t=-2.41$, $df=14.67$, $p<.05$). The number of minutes people reported spending on Facebook per day was higher for females ($M=45.36$, $SD=21.61$) than for males ($M=17.16$, $SD=16.88$) with women spending almost a half an hour more per day on the website ($t=-4.06$, $df=23.84$, $p<.05$). The number of pictures people reported having been tagged in was higher for females ($M=409.27$, $SD=276.88$) than for males ($M=195.72$, $SD=226.08$) with women having over double the number of pictures men had. The number of pictures people reported uploading to Facebook was higher for females ($M=598.92$, $SD=507.80$) than for males ($M=26.50$, $SD=70.22$) with women having uploaded nearly 23 times as many pictures as men ($t=-3.88$, $df=11.28$, $p<.05$).

They asked questions about frequency of use with the values assigned to the following frequencies: 1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Every few days, 4=Daily, 5=Multiple times daily. The frequency of sending or receiving wall posts was higher for females ($M=4.07$, $SD=.88$) than for males ($M=2.89$, $SD=.66$) with women reporting a daily frequency and men reporting a frequency just under every few days ($t=-4.28$, $df=30.81$, $p<.05$). The frequency of sending and receiving Facebook messages was higher for females ($M=3.06$, $SD=.96$) than for males ($M=2.42$, $SD=.61$) with women reporting a frequency of every few days and men reporting a frequency closer to rarely ($t=-2.27$, $df=22.47$, $p<.05$). The frequency of posting pictures was higher for females ($M=2.27$, $SD=.46$) than for males ($M=1.44$, $SD=.51$) with women reporting a frequency greater than rarely and men between rarely and never ($t=-4.87$, $df=30.81$, $p<.05$). The frequency of adding or sending requests for Facebook applications was higher for females ($M=2.13$, $SD=.99$) than for males ($M=1.53$, $SD=.612$) with women reporting a frequency close to rarely and men reporting a frequency between rarely and never ($t=-2.08$, $df=22.14$, $p<.05$). The frequency of looking at friends' profiles was higher for females ($M=4.00$, $SD=1.00$) than for males ($M=3.22$, $SD=1.11$) with women reporting a frequency of daily and men reporting a frequency closer to every few days ($t=-2.11$, $df=30.80$, $p<.05$). The frequency of looking a friends' walls was higher for females ($M=3.33$, $SD=1.11$) than for males ($M=2.05$, $SD=.78$) with women reporting a frequency of between every few days and daily and men reporting a frequency of rarely ($t=-3.78$, $df=24.14$, $p<.05$). The frequency of looking at friends' pictures was higher for females ($M=3.53$, $SD=1.06$) than for males ($M=2.68$, $SD=.83$) with women reporting a frequency of between every few days to daily and men reporting a frequency between rarely and every few days ($t=-2.56$, $df=25.86$, $p<.05$).

Questions were also asked about agreement with various statements regarding the website with values assigned to the following levels of agreement: 1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Agree, 4=Strongly agree. Agreement with the statement: "Facebook is useful for staying in touch with people from class, lab, or school activities," was higher for females ($M=3.4$, $SD=.51$) than for males ($M=3.00$, $SD=.47$) with women between agreement and strong agreement with the statement and men in agreement with it ($t=-2.34$, $df=29.09$, $p<.05$).

Questions also asked respondents to pick between two statements regarding their use of Facebook. Keeping in touch with friends directly (through wall posts, messages, etc.) was compared to keeping in touch with friends indirectly, as a motivator for having Facebook. The choice of keeping in touch directly was higher for females (.93) than for males (.47).

There were also questions in the survey which did not find any significant differences between genders. These questions asked about the length of time one has had a Facebook account, number of Facebook friends one has, the frequency of being tagged in pictures, utilizing the Facebook marketplace, looking at the profiles of non-friends, how much information one has posted on their profile, the number of wall posts that have been written on one's wall, the number of applications one has added, and whether respondents usually send or receive friend requests. There were also no

significant differences in agreement with the following statements relating to motivations for having a Facebook account: It is a good way to stay in touch with old friends/friends at other schools, it is a good way of building and maintaining new relationships, it seems like everyone has it.

The results of this study seem to clearly indicate that there are differences between males and females in regards to their use of Facebook. The most significant findings seem to be that females use the website much more frequently than men. This is represented not only by the time they spend on the site but also in the frequencies that they use various aspects and features. Another interesting finding was the fact that females responded nearly exclusively that they use the site for direct communication; whereas males surveyed were split (nearly evenly) in their use of the site for direct and indirect communication.

This study of 34 respondents will not be appearing in the pages of JOBEM, but it makes an interesting pilot study. The same group presented their qualitative follow-up to me this week and examined the social rules and norms of Facebook use. One rule of etiquette is the expectation that posting a message onto someone's wall will result in a reciprocating message on the sender's wall. Informants admitted that only 10 percent of their so-called friends were truly friends. The main motivation was social maintenance, keeping up with old friends by checking their profile and wall but not necessarily making contact (which they characterized as indirect versus direct use). When contact is made, the expectation is a same-day response, which creates the feeling that daily use is the norm. Another finding was that the range of information close and casual friends divulge is getting greater. Informants were uneasy about the fine line between daily use and stalking behavior, especially with regard to casual friends who were neither close friends nor peripheral friends. I think the qualitative findings hold much more potential for study. I imagine their are dissertations and theses being finished as we speak about this phenomenon.

I had an idea while preparing this, which addresses the problem with MySpace's size (230 million this morning). It's inflated, clearly, and presumably by multiple accounts, spammers, and even people's pets (according to my students). It's possible using a proportional-to-population name search, which worked well in an iPod study that Clark Greer and I presented here last year, to draw a national random sample of MySpace users and then soliciting surveys from the users with profiles against users without profiles to estimate the number of dead accounts: If the response rate from known users is far higher than the response rate from suspect users, one could argue that a percentage of the total 230 million simply should be discounted.