

Web 2.0 More than Social Networking

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Abstract

Over recent years, web 2.0 websites have emerged as a widely socially adopted technology in the United States and worldwide. The phenomenon of web 2.0 is commonly associated with social networking websites like MySpace, Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. Web 2.0 websites provide an immediacy of information along with an overflow of data. These sites allow users to produce and distribute their own information while connecting with other users. Web 2.0 websites have evolved into an entity used for more than just social networking. Examples of alternative uses of web 2.0 include promotion, advertising, and new source of news. Several concerns with the future of web 2.0 consist of its effect on communication, future of web neutrality, government censorship and threat to the livelihood of other of technologies.

Web 2.0 More than Social Networking

University of Texas at Arlington Communications Professor Dr. Chunke Su defines web 2.0 as “any website that focuses on user generated content and user generated participation” (personal communication, April 20, 2010). Dr. Su suggests that web 2.0 is simply a “buzz word” used to describe a website which centers on data from users versus web 1.0 websites which data is created by a web master (personal communication, April 20 2010). The term web 2.0 is commonly associated with popular social networking sites like Facebook, MySpace, YouTube and Twitter. Social networking websites were originally established for users to connect and stay in contact with other users. For example, Facebook creator Mark Zuckerberg originally started the social network site to stay in contact with classmates from Harvard University (Krivak, 2008). The use of web 2.0 websites has long expanded from its original purpose. Beyond social networking, these sites have been used by businesses for promotion and advertising. They have also been used as a new source of news providing immediacy of information.

Web 2.0 a tool for Promotion and Advertising

Web 2.0 websites have been used by members as a way of mass communication. Users can communicate with their entire group of followers via status updates on Facebook and MySpace, tweets on Twitter and posting bulletins on YouTube (Christofides, 2009). Generally these are short sentences typed in by users. These short updates are used to share facts on their everyday life, ask for advice, provide as a form of confession or a tool to vent frustrations of the day (Rand, 2009). Businesses use these updates as a tool to update and promote information in order to stay in connect with potential and current clients, workers, and associates (Christofides, 2009). Several businesses use web 2.0 websites as a form of promotion and advertisement.

Founder of music label Burnt Carbon Production Joseph Caviston uses Facebook to promote the bands on his label (Krivak, 2008). Caviston prefers using Facebook as a tool of promotion and advertisement over MySpace, because it is more user-friendly and can target the particular audience he is searching for (Krivak, 2008). Also many celebrities use these websites as a way to connect with fans and many fans use web 2.0 websites to support their favorite celebrities. Even religious organizations use Facebook as a tool to publicize the organization and events (Rand, 2009). Recently The People's Revolution, high fashion public relations firm located in New York, produced a small budget video for DKNY, an international multi-million dollar clothing company (Drieu, 2010). This video was used to promote the "cozy" sweater by DKNY on YouTube, Facebook, MySpace and Twitter (Drieu, 2010). This is an example of how large companies use social networking sites to promote their company and products to a mass group of people.

Web 2.0 websites rarely advertising itself and popularity of these sites travel through word of mouth primarily (Holzner, 2009). For example, Facebook has become a popular place for businesses to advertise. Advertisement on Facebook is easy and affordable way to produce an advertisement (O'Neill, 2009). The advertiser can attach social actions to their ad to increase relevance, and create demand for their product with the relevant ads. One can advertise their own web page or advertise something on Facebook, like a page or event. You can track your progress with real-time reporting, gain insight about who's clicking on your ad, and make modifications to your ad to maximize your results (O'Neill, 2009). The advertiser may also choose to precisely target by age, gender, location, and more. Another way advertisers benefit is if they have a broader presence on Facebook with Facebook Pages or Facebook Events plus ads (O'Neill,

2009). For instance, you can turn your advertising message into a trusted referral by including content from a user's friends who are already affiliated with your products (O'Neill, 2009).

Web 2.0 a tool for Activism and Politics

“The rise of online social networks that enable users to create content, maintain and build social ties, and engage in discussions on public issues has generated much hope, both in the mainstream media and academic circles, for reviving citizen participation in public affairs” (Langlois, 2009, p.2). An example of this occurred in the Burma monks' protest in 2007. A Facebook page was used as a global meeting point to organized support for the Burma monks (Langlois, 2009). Another example of the mass communication possibilities of Facebook is the 2008 Presidential elections. “With the 2008 presidential elections on the horizon, many political figures , most notably Barack Obama, Rudy Giuliani, and Ron Paul, set up Facebook pages to spark more interest in their bids for the White House” (Krivak, 2008, p.2). The Obama Facebook group has over 1.2 million supporters (Langlois, 2009). Currently, the Canadian political scene is beginning to using Facebook as a campaigning tool as well. From a mass communications perspective, Facebook is being used a tool by politicians to reach the masses. Also the public is able to use Facebook as a tool to discuss and receive information on political issues.

Web 2.0 a New Source of News

Web 2.0 websites have become a new medium for news, especially Twitter and YouTube. Many news companies have created Twitter and YouTube accounts to produce short news segments (personal communication, Dr. Chunke Su, April 27, 2010). For example AlJazeera, a news organization base in the middle east, created a YouTube channel known as AlJazeera English which posts video news segments on a daily bases. The Associate Press,

Ethiopia TV and CNN are just a few major news channels that use YouTube to distribute short news segments. Major news organizations also use twitter to produce short updates. Web 2.0 websites are also used to provide a firsthand look on events (personal communication, Dr. Chunke Su, April 27, 2010). An example of this is a videos posted by YouTube users showing the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake in Chile.

Web 2.0 Effects on Communication

The increasing number of users on web 2.0 websites has had a tremendous influence on popular culture and interpersonal communication over the past decades. Web 2.0 websites are replacing other media sources previously used like emailing, and chat rooms (Hammond, 2007). They are examples of the convergence of technologies. They offer multiple ways to communicate interpersonally with friends (i.e. commenting, chatting, status updates). Web 2.0 websites, specifically social networking websites like Facebook and MySpace are a one-stop source for communication, in which users can use multiple points of access. "...The ability to use multiple points of access – to approach media content form a variety of directions and derive from it many levels of meaning" (Baran, 2010, p.24). For example, a MySpace user may use MySpace to stay connect with a friend, discuss current issues, or find information on local event in the area. Users are more likely to use this site verses other internet communication technologies than emailing because of the variety of communication technologies on MySpace and the multiple points of access (Hammond, 2007).

Another way social networking websites are changing communication; is the possibility of Facebook replacing the yearbook. Facebook began as a "virtual year book" for college students (Christofides, 2009, p.1). "Challenged by the amount of time and energy today's

teenagers devote staying up to date on their friends' Facebook or MySpace ages and Twitter feeds, the traditional school yearbook is facing an identity crisis" (Miners, 2010, p.1). Some yearbook publishers see social networking sites as non-competitive; however the extent of that is unknown since they are relatively new media entities (Miners, 2010). Many yearbook staffers are trying to find ways to persuade students to continue to purchase yearbooks. Some high school students are trying to create a medium between the traditional year book and the social networking by creating a video year book (Miners, 2010).

An article from CNN states that Facebook has also been used for patients to stay in contact with their physicians (Luo, 2009). The user generated information on Facebook is playing a role in the current movement known as Healthcare 2.0 (Luo, 2009). Controversy occurs because professional boundaries are being blurred. "A patient states that communication with his physician via Facebook is easier and more efficient than continuing to repeatedly call the office" (Luo, 2009, p.20). Other social media sites, like "Hello Heath" (created by Dr. Jay Parkinson) , are being used so patients can have instant and accessible communication with their physicians (Hawn, 2009). Unlike Facebook, "Hello Heath" is strictly focused on the health needs of the patient (Hawn, 2009).

Social networking sites are changing the nature of social relationships as users stay in contact and communicate with one another it is (Muisse, 2009). Communication through websites like Facebook and MySpace has lead to several things (i.e. sparking love interest, connecting with an estranged family member, or meeting a new friend). Although these website were originally created as way to interact in communication; it does not necessarily mean that communication is in a healthy form or leads to a positive outcome. "While social network sites provide the opportunity to reunite with long-lost friends, they also allow people to make

information public within their circle of friends and to make their list of friends itself open to public scrutiny” (Muisse, 2009, p.1). Also, social networking websites has been linked to causing jealousy and suspicion in romantic relationships (Muisse, 2009). Some reports of harassment via these websites have occurred; however privacy elements and a block can be used to prevent harassment.

Conclusion

Over recent years, web 2.0 websites specifically social networking websites of Twitter, MySpace, Facebook and the video hosing website YouTube become extremely popular technologies used in the United States and worldwide. These sites allow users connect with other users worldwide, while producing and distributing their own information. Web 2.0 websites have come a long way from its original purpose of social networking. Now alternative uses of web 2.0 include promotion, advertising, firsthand look on events and a source of news. Several concerns with the future of web 2.0 consist of its effect on communication, future of web neutrality and government censorship.

Future Recommendations

“The data from a collective group of people tweeting about something can be sold as research to a particular company,” (personal communication, Chunke Su, April 27, 2010). Future recommendations I have for web 2.0 websites is creating new revenue by collecting data over a period of time from public users and selling the data as research of information to businesses. After conducting research over web 2.0, I have seen a merging of web 2.0 website in cell phones. This will be the future of web 2.0 websites. Further research should be dedicated to policies to protect web 2.0 users’ privacy, government censorship and web neutrality.

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