

Academic Council Special Session 4.1 Key Learnings and Research Opportunities From the MPlanet Event: Focus on “The New Customer Reality” and “Morphing Media”

Session Chair:

Kay Lemon, Boston College

Panelists:

Kay Lemon, Boston College

V. Kumar, University of Connecticut

Dana VanDen Heuvel, Founder of Blog Savant

S. Adam Brasel, Boston College

Session Summary Writer:

Kate Loveland, Arizona State University

Presentations in this session focused on the manner in which new technologies interact with traditional and emerging marketing strategies. In general, media channels are becoming more interactive, so while technology is driving these changes, it through the interaction of users that real value is added. Examples of these new media channels include blogs, Web 2.0, and wikis. As a group, these new media channels are referred to as “social media” which is defined on Wikipedia as “the online tools and platforms that people use to share opinions, insights, experiences, and perspectives with each other” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_media).

As the use of social media has grown, consumer-generated media (CGM), in which consumers communicate directly with each other about product experiences, has become increasingly influential leading some companies to attempt direct participation in the CGM process.

In examining the growth of social media several questions begin to emerge including: How do we measure and define the effects of social media? How could businesses benefit from CGM? How can marketers mine the datasphere for insights about their products and how they are consumed? How is CGM different from more traditional constructs such as word of mouth?

Another question that arises is how users process advertisements that are imbedded in interactive media. Video-games are particularly attractive to advertisers because they are highly targeted, and because most gamers will play the same game many times, they have a strong potential for repeat impressions. Consequently, in-game advertising is the fastest growing media segment in advertising representing \$56 million in expenditure in 2005. However, the question remains, are these in-game ads sinking in?

By using eye-tracking data it was found that gamers experience “tunnel vision” in which the gaze point is focused on the central lower part of the screen which contains the majority of diagnostic information, while most ads are located at the top and periphery of

the screen. Consequently, recognition of advertised brands is very low, even for experts who have more “free-time” to focus on non-diagnostic information. Comparatively, observers, who instead of playing the game watch recording of earlier games, have wider ranging vision and many more fixations on non-diagnostic elements, and consequently higher ad recognition.