

Health Promotion Practice

<http://hpp.sagepub.com>

Enhancing Promotional Strategies Within Social Marketing Programs: Use of Web 2.0 Social Media

Rosemary Thackeray, Brad L. Neiger, Carl L. Hanson and James F. McKenzie

Health Promot Pract 2008; 9; 338

DOI: 10.1177/1524839908325335

The online version of this article can be found at:
<http://hpp.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/9/4/338>

Published by:



<http://www.sagepublications.com>

On behalf of:



<http://www.sphed.org>
Society for Public Health Education

Additional services and information for *Health Promotion Practice* can be found at:

Email Alerts: <http://hpp.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts>

Subscriptions: <http://hpp.sagepub.com/subscriptions>

Reprints: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav>

Permissions: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>

Citations <http://hpp.sagepub.com/cgi/content/refs/9/4/338>



Social Marketing and Health Communication

Enhancing Promotional Strategies Within Social Marketing Programs: Use of Web 2.0 Social Media

Rosemary Thackeray, PhD, MPH
Brad L. Neiger, PhD, CHES
Carl L. Hanson, PhD, CHES
James F. McKenzie, PhD, MPH, CHES

The second generation of Internet-based applications (i.e., Web 2.0), in which users control communication, holds promise to significantly enhance promotional efforts within social marketing campaigns. Web 2.0 applications can directly engage consumers in the creative process by both producing and distributing information through collaborative writing, content sharing, social networking, social bookmarking, and syndication. Web 2.0 can also enhance the power of viral marketing by increasing the speed at which consumers share experiences and opinions with progressively larger audiences. Because of the novelty and potential effectiveness of Web 2.0, social marketers may be enticed to prematurely incorporate related applications into promotional plans. However, as strategic issues such as priority audience preferences, selection of appropriate applications, tracking and evaluation, and related costs are carefully considered, Web 2.0 will expand to allow health promotion practitioners more direct

access to consumers with less dependency on traditional communication channels.

Keywords: social marketing; Web 2.0; promotion; social media; strategy

When people hear the term marketing what often comes to mind are images of advertisements on billboards, commercials on television, a 30-sec radio spot, or a myriad of other promotional tactics. However, promotion is just one part, albeit a critical one, of an overall social marketing strategy (Thackeray, Neiger, & Hanson, 2007). Once planners make strategic

decisions about the marketing mix (4Ps), including the *product*, its cost (*price*) to the customer, and where it will be *placed*, then choices about how to *promote* the product are considered.

Marketers use various tools to promote their products, including advertising, direct marketing, Internet or interactive marketing, sales promotion, personal selling, and publicity or public relations (Belch & Belch, 2007). With the advent of advanced technology and the subsequent emergence of Web 2.0 (second generation of Internet-based applications), there is an increased potential for social marketers to use the Internet for promotion. These new options are a result of the defining feature of Web 2.0, in which users are in control

Associate Editors, Social Marketing and Health Communication Department

Rosemary Thackeray, PhD, MPH, is an associate professor at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah.



Kelli R. McCormack Brown, PhD, CHES, FASHA, FAAHE, is a professor at the University of Florida, College of Health & Human Performance.

Health Promotion Practice

October 2008 Vol. 9, No. 4, 338-343

DOI: 10.1177/1524839908325335

©2008 Society for Public Health Education

The Authors

Rosemary Thackeray, PhD, MPH, is an Associate Professor in the Department of Health Science at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah.

Brad L. Neiger, PhD, CHES, is a Professor and Chair of the Department of Health Science, Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah.

Carl L. Hanson, PhD, CHES, is an Associate Professor in the Department of Health Science at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah.

James F. McKenzie, PhD, MPH, CHES, is a Professor in the Department of Physiology and Health Science at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana.

(O'Reilly, 2005). The consumer is in control of how information is generated, created, organized, and shared. In the case of social marketing promotion, this information is about products such as behaviors (physical activity), ideas (recycling), tangible items (bicycle helmets), services (mammography screening), or causes (energy conservation) (McKenzie, Neiger & Thackeray, 2009).

Social marketers may use Web 2.0 social media in a variety of ways in an overall social marketing plan. The purpose of this article is to provide an overview of how to incorporate Web 2.0 social media into one specific aspect of the plan, the promotional strategy.

► **THE WEB 2.0 SOCIAL MEDIA LANDSCAPE**

Web 2.0 is a term made popular following the collapse of the dot-com companies (O'Reilly, 2005). Original Internet Web sites (Web 1.0) allowed

only one-way communication through static Web pages. In a sense, Web site publishers communicated with users as if lecturing. In contrast, today's Web 2.0 allows for sharing, linking, collaborating, and inclusion of user-generated content. So users, rather than receiving a lecture through static Web pages, are engaged collectively in a conversation that leads to the generation of online content—collective intelligence. That is, nobody knows everything, but everybody knows something, and what is known can be immediately shared or distributed through Web 2.0 social media applications.

The Web 2.0 social media applications provide users with the technology to both produce and distribute information. These technologies allow for collaborative writing (e.g., wikis), content sharing (e.g., text, video, and images), social networking (e.g., Facebook), social bookmarking (e.g., ratings, tagging), and syndication (e.g., RSS feeds) (Dawson, 2007; O'Reilly, 2005; Smart, 2006). There are numerous applications for each purpose (see www.futureexploration.net for a diagram of the Web 2.0 landscape). For example, on Blogger.com users create Web logs (i.e., blogs) to share personal information or ideas. YouTube.com provides a forum to share videos and video blogs (i.e., vlogs). Google Reader provides users with immediate Web content updates tailored to the user's interest, whereas other applications such as Digg.com display popular Web content based on user ratings.

► **WEB 2.0 SOCIAL MEDIA APPLICATIONS AND PROMOTION**

There are three primary purposes for promotion: (a) to increase product

awareness, (b) to persuade people to purchase the product, or (c) to remind people that the product exists (Kotler & Keller, 2007). The choice of which promotional tools (e.g., advertising, direct marketing) to use to accomplish these purposes depends on several factors including marketing goals and objectives, consumer preferences, and resources (e.g., budgets, expertise, staff capacity).

Marketers have long used Internet or interactive marketing as a promotional tool. Internet marketing tactics include banner advertising, sponsorships, pop-ups or -unders, links, paid searches, and so forth (Belch & Belch, 2007). The degree to which Web 2.0 social media applications will transform marketing promotion and expand tactics is unknown. Organizations and businesses are just beginning to recognize and utilize the power of Web 2.0 social media. The second annual "Face of the New Marketer" survey reported that while many companies view Web 2.0 social media as a way to gain a competitive advantage, their budgets and time allocations reflect other priorities ("Survey reveals disconnect," 2007).

Reports on Web 2.0 social media trends indicate increased use among the general population, but particularly among younger people. For example, from 2006 to 2007 there was a 45% increase in the number of people who said they visited a video-sharing site (Rainie, 2007). Technorati reports that 120,000 new blogs are created each day (Sifry, 2007). One national study reported that although overall 51% of respondents were watching or reading content that had been created by other people, the majority of users of new technology, games, user-generated content, and other communication

tools were younger populations ages 12 to 24 (Deloitte, 2007). From 2004 to 2006, the number of teens who reported blogging rose from 19% to 28% (Lenhart, Madden, Macgill, & Smith, 2007). In 2006, 38% of teens reported reading blogs while about one quarter (27%) of adults did the same (Lenhart & Fox, 2006). As acceptance, availability, and use of Web 2.0 social media increases, its potential to transform social marketing promotion may increase proportionately.

There are several reasons why Web 2.0 social media holds such potential. First, Web 2.0 social media allows social marketers to directly engage their consumers in the creative process. In this paradigm, customers become creators or co-creators with the agency or organization. The customers are an active participant instead of a passive recipient. The customer is always at the heart of the social marketing process (Hastings & Haywood, 1991) and Web 2.0 social media allows them to be at the heart of a very specific aspect—the promotional strategy.

Encouraging the customer to be part of the creative process has advantages. First, it can increase buy-in and loyalty to the program. In this regard, customers who are invested are more likely to “purchase” the product, including engaging in the desired behavior (McKenzie et al., 2009). In addition, they may be more likely to talk to their friends and associates about the product, something that is discussed later in this article. Customer-developed promotional tactics may also be more cost-effective to produce. Finally, a promotional strategy developed by the customer has the potential to resonate with the priority audience.

Although formative research, including primary data gathered from customer segments, should be the foundation of all social marketing decisions, customer-generated promotion may be more successful because it is in essence “created for the people by the people” or “by the users for the users.”

Examples of customer-generated content include commercials developed in response to a sponsored contest. One of the most well-known customer-generated advertisements came during the 2007 Super Bowl (XLI). A 30-second spot for Doritos, produced in just a few days for less than \$13 was an instant hit (Gillin, 2007). During the 2008 Oscars, *Dove* showed five customer-generated ads about their product and viewers voted for their favorite. The winning entry was produced by a college-age student from a small rural town in northern Utah (Larsen, 2008). In the health promotion field, tobacco-free kids organizations have held contests where teens develop commercials to promote smoking cessation. The winning entry is selected by the health department and an advertising agency to be produced and aired on television.

Second, Web 2.0 social media facilitates increased viral marketing, also called word-of-mouth or buzz marketing. Viral or word-of-mouth marketing “facilitates and encourages people to pass along a marketing message” or share “information about a product” (American Marketing Association, n.d.). The power of viral marketing is illustrated by the success of Georgetown Cupcake. After being open for approximately 2 weeks, the business was selling 800 cupcakes a day at \$2.75 each, during which time the owners did no advertising.

Customers reported that they heard about the cupcakes on blogs and other Web sites (Nicholls, 2008).

A fundamental component of viral marketing is “providing tools to make it easier to share information” (Word of Mouth Marketing Association, 2007, p. 2). Web 2.0 social media technology enables marketers to develop interactive Web sites that make it virtually effortless for users to engage in viral marketing by encouraging the user to share feedback, provide comments, rate products, provide reviews, and download items for sharing with friends. For health promotion, viral marketing using Web 2.0 social media may be used to convey health information broadly or in a targeted way as with family and friends, which, after professional advisors, are the most common source of information for people who need to address problems (Wells, 2008). Viral social media may also be used to have friends encourage friends to participate in a wide array of health-promotion interventions (i.e., the product) including health fairs, screenings, new behavior, wellness classes and activities, and health observances. These personal recommendations can be more powerful than agency-based advertising.

For example, the Powerful Bones Powerful Girls Web site (www.cdc.gov/powerfulbones/) has instant messaging icons related to physical activity, calcium, and the campaign that teen girls can download. The American Public Health Association (APHA) has created a Facebook page for its membership (“APHA’s new Facebook page,” 2008). The purpose of the site is to bring new members to APHA and also to share information. On the “Mom2Mom” page located on

TABLE 1
Strategic Questions to Consider Before Using Web 2.0 Social Media in a Promotional Strategy

Priority population preferences	Can the needs of the priority population best be met by using Web 2.0 social media? What are the media habits or behaviors of those in the priority population? Can the priority population be segmented by their Web 2.0 social media behavior (e.g. bloggers, podcast users)? For whom is Web 2.0 social media best suited? Are those individuals a part of your priority population? Do those in the priority population have access to the Web 2.0 social media? Do those in the priority population feel comfortable using the Web 2.0 social media? Do they have the knowledge and skills to use it? Are there social costs (e.g., lack of social support) for using or not using the social media? Is the social media accepted in the environment of the customers?
Resources	What are the costs associated with the media versus the benefits? Can providers afford the financial costs (e.g., expertise to create, ability to distribute) associated with Web 2.0 social media? How difficult will it be to implement?
Goals and objectives	Does it enhance the intervention strategy or is it just the thing to do or make the strategy more difficult to implement? Is it the right time to introduce Web 2.0 social media to the priority population? Do the Web 2.0 social media help to meet the needs of the priority population? Can the Web 2.0 social media help to reduce the costs/barriers for the customers? Is it possible to evaluate the effect of the Web 2.0 social media?

the Fruit and Veggies More Matter Web site (www.fruitandveggiesmorematter.org) women can post questions and share ideas for incorporating more fruits and vegetables into their family's diet.

Web 2.0 social media technologies enhance the power of viral marketing by increasing the speed at which consumers share experiences and opinions with progressively larger audiences. With the click of a button, a picture, video, or message can become viral as it is sent to 10, 50, a 100, or a thousand people. For example, the Jade Ribbon Campaign hosted a video on YouTube about the prevalence and preventable nature of Hepatitis B. The video has been viewed more than 170,000 times (Anonymous, 2007). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

has developed electronic greeting cards (e-cards) around topics such as pregnancy, healthy lifestyles, and the flu. These e-cards are accessed on the CDC Web site (www2a.cdc.gov/ecards/) and can be personalized before sending to a recipient.

► **INCORPORATING WEB 2.0 SOCIAL MEDIA INTO SOCIAL MARKETING PROMOTIONAL PLANS**

Because of Web 2.0 social media's novelty and potential effectiveness, social marketers may be enticed to prematurely incorporate Web 2.0 social media into the promotional plan. Before launching a Web 2.0 social media promotional strategy, social marketers should consider

several key questions (see Table 1). In particular, attention should be paid to priority audience preferences and Web 2.0 social media-related costs.

Health promotion practitioners who use or organize the use of Web 2.0 social media must determine how to effectively implement it with the identified priority populations. To do so requires knowing who uses various Web 2.0 social media. One of the complexities associated with the use of Web 2.0 social media is that although applications are controlled by users and thereby implemented horizontally as opposed to traditional top-down media outlets (television, radio, newspapers, etc.), trend data are not yet conclusive with respect to who is generating and accessing information. For example, according to data from the

PEW Internet and American Life Project (2007a), approximately 75% of adults in the United States use the Internet, with more than 90% of users in the 18 to 29 age range. Among all Internet users, 39% read someone else's online journal, Web log or blog; 30% post a comment or review online about a product or service they received; 22% comment to a news group, Web site, blog, or photo site; and 19% create content for the Internet (PEW, 2007b). So although many people may access the Internet, significantly fewer are engaged with using Web 2.0 social media.

If health promotion practitioners are to effectively use Web 2.0 social media they must be able to segment their priority populations, that is, be able to identify, isolate, and know the degree to which these populations use and access Web 2.0 social media. Typically, health promotion interventions are not associated with sophisticated segmentation strategies (Grier & Bryant, 2005). If segmenting with basic segmentation variables (e.g., demographics, including age, race, ethnicity, and gender), practitioners must be particularly careful. For example, Whites (71%) access the Internet more often than Blacks (60%) and Latinos (56%; Fox & Livingston, 2007). This assumes that actual use of Web 2.0 social media may be even less frequent among Blacks and Latinos compared with Whites. What may be more useful is a segmentation strategy that incorporates psychographics, lifestyle, and motivations to use social media.

Costs of Web 2.0 social media campaigns can be considered from either an agency or individual perspective. From an agency perspective, health promotion budgets often have limited

dedicated funds for advertising or promotional efforts in general. Depending on the scope of the promotional strategy, these expenses, with the exception of those associated with traditional mass media campaigns, are usually modest in nature. In the private sector, budgets and expenditures can range from hundreds to millions of dollars. In summary, costs of Web 2.0 social media campaigns can vary widely. Still, according to McNeill (2008), when engaging in Web 2.0 social media, agencies must consider the scope of the program in terms of: timeframe; reach, or the percent of the priority population involved; type of objectives being considered (process, impact, outcome); type of Web 2.0 social media applications to be used; and internal resources available (e.g., hardware, software, professional expertise, allotment of FTEs). In addition, consideration should be given to resources required for market research and segmentation. Collectively, these factors will determine the agency's budget for Web 2.0 social media.

Conversely, from the individual perspective, assuming that members of the priority population are creating and receiving messages (as in the case of viral marketing), the financial costs of Web 2.0 social media can be comparatively minimal. A larger cost to the individual is the time and effort required to participate in generating content or sharing information. However, if social marketing programs can position use of Web 2.0 social media altruistically as community service or volunteerism that can enhance health and quality of life, perceived costs among participants related to time, money, and energy may be viewed as less problematic.

► CONCLUSION

There are a number of ways to incorporate Web 2.0 social media into a social marketing promotional plan. As technology continues to advance, Web 2.0 social media applications will expand to allow health promotion practitioners more direct access to clients with less dependency on traditional communication channels. Program planners need to be creative in their promotion efforts and consider how Web 2.0 social media can be incorporated to better market their products to the intended priority population.

REFERENCES

- American Marketing Association (n.d.). Dictionary of marketing terms. Retrieved April 17, 2008, from <http://www.marketingpower.com>
- Anonymous. (2007, March 22). End of the world: Hepatitis B Remix [Video file]. Video posted to <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FTX2rHTvW-E>
- APHA's new Facebook page ready for membership. (2008, February). *The Nation's Health*, p. 10.
- Belch, G. E., & Belch, M. A. (2007). *Advertising and promotion. An integrated marketing communications perspective*. New York: McGraw-Hill Irwin.
- Dawson, R. (2007). Launching the Web 2.0 framework. Retrieved January 28, 2008, from http://www.rossdawsonblog.com/weblog/archives/technology_trends/
- Deloitte. (2007). *Are you ready for the future of media? Highlights from Deloitte's 2007 State of the Media Democracy survey*. Retrieved August 26, 2008, from http://www.deloitte.com/dtt/cda/doc/content/us_tmt_MediaDemocracy_0607opt.pdf
- Fox, S., & Livingston, G. (2007). *Latinos online*. Retrieved August 26, 2008, from http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/Latinos_Online_March_14_2007.pdf
- Gillin, P. (2007). Podcasting, blogs cause major boost. *B to B.*, 92, 5, 32-33.

- Grier, S., & Bryant, C. A. (2005). Social marketing in public health. *Annual Review of Public Health, 26*, 319-339.
- Hastings, G., & Haywood, A. (1991). Social marketing and communication in health promotion. *Health Promotion International, 6*(2), 135-145.
- Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L. (2007). *A framework for marketing management*. (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall.
- Larsen, A. (2008, February 25). Utah woman wins national commercial competition during Oscars. *ABC4 News*. Retrieved March 18, 2008, from <http://www.abc4.com>
- Lenhart, A., & Fox, S. (2006). *Bloggers: A portrait of the Internet's new storytellers*. Retrieved August 26, 2008, from <http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP%20Bloggers%20Report%20July%2019%202006.pdf>
- Lenhart, A., Madden, M., Macgill, A. R., & Smith, A. (2007). *Teens and social media*. Retrieved August 26, 2008, from http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_Teens_Social_Media_Final.pdf
- McKenzie, J. F., Neiger, B. L., & Thackeray, R. (2009). *Planning, implementing, and evaluating health promotion programs* (5th ed.). San Francisco: Benjamin Cummings.
- McNeill, L. (2008, February 29). *What is the budget for a social media campaign?* Message posted to SmallBusinessNewz. Retrieved March 14, 2008, from <http://www.smallbusinessnewz.com/expertarticles/2008/02/29/what-is-the-budget-for-a-social-media-campaign>
- Nicholls, W. (2008, February 27). For two sisters, little cakes are a big hit. *Washington Post*, F01. Retrieved February 28, 2008, from <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/02/26/AR2008022600703.html>
- O'Reilly, T. (2005). *What is Web 2.0. Design patterns and business models for the next generation of software*. Retrieved March 6, 2008, from <http://www.oreilly.com/lpt/a/6228>
- PEW Internet and American Life Project. (2007a). Demographics of Internet users: October-December survey. PEW Internet & American Life Project Website. Retrieved March 14, 2008, from <http://www.pewinternet.org/>
- PEW Internet and American Life Project. (2007b). Internet activities: December survey. PEW Internet & American Life Project Web site. Retrieved March 14, 2008, from <http://www.pewinternet.org/>
- Rainie, L. (2007). Increased use of video sharing sites. Retrieved March 18, 2008, from http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/232/report_display.asp
- Sifry, D. (2007). The state of the live Web, April 2007. Retrieved March 18, 2008, from <http://www.sirfry.com/alerts/archives/00493.html>
- Smart, D. (2006). Smart Internet 2010 – social networks. Retrieved March 12, 2008, from <http://www.smartinternet.com.au/ArticleDocuments/121/Social-Networks-2010.pdf.aspx>
- Survey reveals disconnect in social media marketing programs; research highlights trend toward social marketing tools, though budget allocation does not correlate with objectives. (2007, October 30). *PR News Wire*. Retrieved February 14, 2008, from ProQuest database.
- Thackeray, R., Neiger, B. L., & Hanson, C. L. (2007). Developing a promotional strategy: Important questions for social marketing. *Health Promotion Practice, 8*(4), 332-336.
- Wells, A. T. (2008). A portrait of early Internet adopters: Why people first went online—and why they stayed. PEW Internet & American Life Project Web site. Retrieved March 14, 2008, from http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_Early_Adopters.pdf
- Word of Mouth Marketing Association. (2007). *Word of Mouth 101. An introduction to word of mouth marketing. A WOMMA white paper*. Retrieved August 26, 2008, from http://www.womma.org/content/womma_wom101.pdf