Chapter 2
Media Evolution and the Advent of Web 2.0

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ABSTRACT

In today's marketplace, new technology innovations and the changing media environment offer endless opportunities to consumers: seemingly infinite amounts of information via the internet, a plethora of broadcast stations and channels, and higher functionality and control through such technologies as online content aggregators and digital video recorders. These technological changes have redefined the media landscape and thus the role of advertising in new media consumption. As interactive media markets become increasingly segmented, it is vital for advertisers to examine effective techniques for communicating with consumers via such customized and controlled channels. This chapter will examine how media has evolved over the last several decades and the impact Web 2.0 technologies are making within the interactive advertising space.

INTRODUCTION

In today's marketplace, new technology innovations and the changing media environment offer endless opportunities to consumers: seemingly infinite amounts of information via the internet, a plethora of broadcast stations and channels, and higher functionality and control through such technologies as online content aggregators and digital video recorders. These technological changes have redefined the media landscape and thus the role of advertising in new media consumption. As interactive media markets become increasingly segmented, it is vital for advertisers to examine effective techniques for communicating with consumers via such customized and controlled channels.

Media fragmentation, consumer interactivity, and greater ability to personalize content are all products of recent technology advancements leading to one outcome – the empowerment of the consumer. Shapiro (1999) claims that technology

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has brought with it a reduction of institutional control resulting in an increase of individual control, both in terms of program selection and advertising exposure. Further, Shapiro (1999) asserts that we live in an environment that fundamentally allows us a higher level of control; this is not the age of narrowcasting where someone else prepares packaged content for you, but you can prepare a whole media content package for yourself and limit your exposure to advertising accordingly.

To this end, the emergence of Web 2.0 technologies, including personalized content delivery services, has created an abundance of niche markets online, attracting more than 69 million users in 2006 and generating $450 million plus in advertising revenues in the same year (Verna, 2007). The personalized, or customized, media environments made available to consumers through such services have the potential to decrease information overload by tailoring content to the consumers specifications as well as provide a sense of perceived control to the consumer. The availability of these services has increased in recent years with personalization services at most major search engine sites, including Google and Yahoo as well as being available via desktop applications (i.e., NetNewsWire, RSS Bandit, Apple Mail RSS, etc.). As such, a customized online environment would be defined as any type of web-based content aggregation application that allows a user to customize his or her content per their specifications. The consumer benefits of customized online environments, coupled with their projected growth in popularity, make them a potentially rich advertising outlet within the interactive niche. (Godek & Yates, 2006; Liang, et al., 2006)

The availability of highly customized information spaces allows consumers to tailor their exposure to specific content needs and desires (Liang, et al., 2006). The tailoring of such exposure has been made possible by web-based applications that aggregate content per the consumer's specifications. This further allows media exposure to be more tailored or "consumer-centric" rather than "publisher-centric" (Morrissey, 2005). As the consumption, creation and distribution of web-based content continues to evolve, content aggregation tools and Web 2.0 applications that utilize Really Simple Syndication (RSS) technology will become more usable and accessible to consumers, helping to create manageable information spaces that are personalized, customized and relevant. These types of information spaces provide a conduit for exposing consumers to context relevant advertising in a less cluttered environment, thereby potentially leading to increased cognitive involvement and liking, or attitude. As the effectiveness of traditional interactive advertising continues to decline, customized online environments could provide an arena that allows advertisers to connect with consumers during moments of peak user satisfaction.

Although the creation and dissemination of media content has been a constant in our world for hundreds of years, the potential for an ordinary consumer to communicate with and influence a mass audience has just recently been achieved with the advent of Web 2.0 technologies. Examples of prominent Web 2.0 websites and web-based applications that support the creation, distribution and consumption of CGC include, but are not limited to, YouTube, MySpace, Facebook, Wikipedia, StupidVideos, Flickr, Blogger, and personal Web pages, among others. Amidst the plethora of both traditional and digital media choices today, the Internet has revealed itself to be an outlet where traditional forms of media entertainment can also converge and be offered to consumers in a time and place that is most convenient for them. While traditional media are nowhere near extinction, it is clear that trends are changing such that consumers are in more control of their media consumption than ever before in history and have the freedom because of technology to create quality media content. This media content creation sphere continues to shift towards a 'user-centric model' led by CGC and away from the past model that has been

characterized as 'publisher-centric' (Morrissey, 2005). Beginning in 2004 with the explosion of the Web 2.0 market, CGC has formed a plethora of niche markets within the media landscape generating more than $450 million in advertising revenues (Verna, 2007, p.2). As a result of this changing paradigm and expanding advertising channel, top television networks are integrating blogs, podcasts, and news feeds into their current media strategies, reflecting the importance of CGC in communicating with today's consumers. Certainly the exhilarated growth of this nascent area presents both significant problems and opportunities for marketing researchers to better understand consumer motivations, consumption, creation, and effectiveness of CGC.

The widespread consumption and creation of Web 2.0 technologies in recent years has confirmed the emergent trend of increased consumer control over media exposure. Consumers are beginning to rely less on media being pushed at them through traditional channels, and instead are focusing on creating a media environment that revolves around them. To compete in this environment, advertisers must learn how to both gain exposure via customized media environments as well as use these in an advantageous way to drive consumers to their websites. If used properly, advertisers can not only expose consumers to their brand in highly context relevant situations, but also prime consumers for further content and advertising interactions via their websites.

From a theoretical perspective, several approaches apply to the investigation of consumer response to customization in online environments. As identified by Liang, et al. (2006), information overload, uses and gratifications and user involvement are three frameworks typically applied when empirically investigating consumer response to personalization, or customization, in media environments. In this case, information overload theory implies an increase in user satisfaction as personalization increases, while the uses and gratifications theory provides the motivational underpinnings of media selection. Additionally, user involvement theory "implies that users prefer content recommended by a process in which they have explicit involvement" (Liang, et al., 2006, p. 2). It has been shown that uses and gratifications theory provides a bridge between the psychological characteristics of consumerism and mass media consumption. According to the expectancy-value approach to uses and gratifications (see Palmgreen, Wenner & Rayburn, 1980), consumers' compare between the gratifications sought and obtained. Based on past media experiences, they develop their future media exposure patterns in a never-ending circular process (Rubin, 2002, p.533). Past research linking general media use and various gratifications from the media is well established (e.g. Donohew et al. 1987; Palmgreen, Wenner & Rayburn, 1980). Accordingly, it is a logical approach to apply what is a well-known paradigm in traditional media to the use of customized online environments and their advertising related behaviors.

As content exposure through Web 2.0 technologies further penetrates the market, more research must be done to better understand how consumers are interacting in such environments, and thus what types of interactive advertising will be most beneficial to reach such consumers therein. The 'control revolution' (Shapiro, 1999) represents a vast population of new consumers, sometimes characterized as 'digital natives', whose ability to process information in media environments is 'fundamentally different than their predecessors' (Prensky, 2001, p.1). It is this fundamental difference that warrants further investigation with regard to how consumers respond to content within customized online environments depending on their desire for control.

For more than three decades, scholars have sought to understand why people use certain media content and its impact on their experience, the gratifications they obtained and how it impacts future behavior or consumption. As the delivery mechanisms for mass media continue to evolve,

it is vital to better understand how consumers are controlling their media environments and how they perceive advertising delivered through such outlets. Although the potential benefits of customized online environments are clear, they have not received due attention as an upcoming, niche interactive advertising vehicle. Currently, exposing consumers to advertising in the online environment via standard websites typically involves a combination of interactive banner advertising, sponsored search, rich media, email marketing and pop-up ads – all of which have staggeringly low response rates (Endicott, et al., 2007). As such, this study will provide insight into consumers perceptions of advertising within customized online environments as well as how the act of customization impacts their media enjoyment, attitude toward advertising, and behavioral intention for future use.

MEDIA EVOLUTION

Mainstream media, including television, radio, and print publications, have moved through an evolutionary lifecycle since their inception and are continuing to evolve into ever more fragmented media offerings. Similarly, the online media landscape has evolved into a robust information space that provides both marketers and consumers an outlet for efficient, timely communication as well as entertainment, information seeking and commerce. As increasing numbers of consumers direct their attention away from traditional media and instead toward interactive media, marketers are being challenged to integrate their offerings with those created by consumers themselves as well as make advertising offerings available through increasingly customized online environments. The last several decades have shown a continued decline in newspaper readership and magazine circulation, and, while it continues to show growth in overall viewership, the television market is plagued by a proliferation of program offerings leading to fragmented audiences and decreasing overall program ratings. This shift toward greater engagement with interactive media presents a promising new wave of advertising outlets for marketers to have at their disposal.

The Internet has shown itself to be an outlet where traditional forms of media entertainment can converge and be offered to consumers in a time and place that is most convenient for them (Tauder, 2006). With usage expanding on a yearly basis, the Internet has come to serve as a media outlet for an overwhelming majority of American adults (71%). Amongst these consumers, an increasing amount of online content is being made available via Web 2.0 applications, such as the customized new environments available via Google Reader (Verna, 2007). While traditional media are nowhere near extinction, it is clear that trends are changing such that consumers are more in control of their media consumption in both the interactive and traditional realms. Not only have media evolved to distribute a diverse collection of news and information, they have also enabled consumers with a greater capability to contribute their thoughts, opinions, and personal media through websites that support user-generated content and social networking (Daugherty, Eastin & Bright, 2007). This shift toward greater consumer control coupled with a dramatic increase in the amount of content available online as the potential to reward consumers with feelings of control while also causing information overload. It is this dichotomy that makes customized online environments fertile ground for experimentation regarding the effectiveness of content delivery and interactive advertising.

Never before throughout human history have we experienced the level of media evolution currently encompassing our daily lives. Mainstream media, including television, radio, and print publications, have moved through evolutionary lifecycles since their inception. Similarly, the online media landscape has evolved into a robust information space that provides both marketers and

consumers with an outlet for efficient, timely communication. As increasing numbers of consumers direct their attention away from traditional media and toward interactive media, marketers confront the challenge of integrating their offerings with those created by consumers themselves. The past several decades reveal a steady decline in newspaper readership and magazine circulation, and though the television market continues to grow in terms of overall viewership, it also suffers a proliferation of program offerings, leading to fragmented audiences and decreasing program ratings (Anderson, 2006).

Today, television, radio, newspapers, magazines, the Internet, movies, music, and more, represent an information society created by technology ultimately converging around the media audience. These technologies have redefined the media environment and thus media consumption as a seemingly infinite number of offerings are connecting and empowering audiences through communication channels. Media scholars acknowledge that traditional media models of communication may no longer adequately represent digital media, for which "convergence" may serve as an increasingly more accurate representation (Perry, 2002). As a result, the convergence of media through technology continues to shift power toward an audience centric model of media control and away from the past model that has been characterized as 'publisher-centric'. In other words, the advancements of technology have lead to one outcome–the empowerment of the consumer.

CUSTOMIZATION IN WEB 2.0 ENVIRONMENTS

Over time, the Internet has become a dynamic, highly personalized information space where consumers can tailor their media exposure to their specific needs and motivations (Liang et al., 2006). Tailoring of media exposure has become a reality for consumers as technologies have advanced in recent years, including the advent of such consumer control based technologies as the DVR, user-generated content websites (e.g., YouTube, Blogger, Flickr, etc.) and online content aggregation services (e.g., Google Reader). As consumers continue to desire greater control over media environments and advertising exposure, the use of such technologies will no doubt expand beyond the niche markets they now serve. Customized online environments make media exposure more consumer-centric rather than publisher-centric and thus provide a natural choice for consumers who have a high desire for control as these types of environments allow them to control their content stream (Morrisey, 2005).

For much of the 20th century, humans have consumed information and advertising through a standard set of media outlets, including television, newspapers, magazines and radio. Within these media, advertising is typically pushed toward the consumer in an effort to interrupt their media viewing experience and attract attention toward the product or service being advertised (Godin, 1999). As new media outlets, such as the Internet, have emerged, this tactic of interruption marketing via traditional channels has become ever more disruptive for consumers leading to increased levels of advertising annoyance and avoidance. To put this into an interactive context, the use of such push strategies online, such as banner ads and spam e-mail, are perceived by consumers as annoying, disruptive and intrusive (Li et al, 2002), while ads that are congruent with website content have been shown to generate more positive brand attitudes (Cho, 2003). Consumers, with their combined sense of increased media control and ad avoidance mechanisms, are extremely difficult to reach with traditional push marketing strategies. Thus, it is imperative for advertisers to devise new methods for interacting with consumers via customized media channels, such as those being investigated with this study.

Pull marketing strategies are a potentially effective way to communicate with online consum-

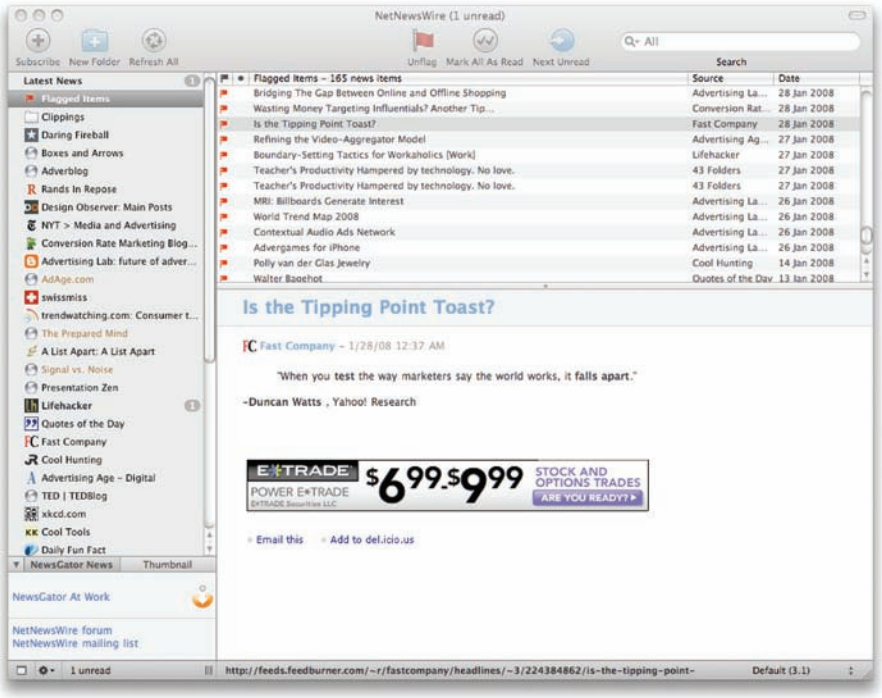
Figure 1. Examples of current Web 2.0 applications

ers as they are rooted first and foremost with the consumer, thereby allowing for a high perception of content and media control during exposure. The ability to push advertising content in the online environment has been possible since the inception of the Internet as such exposure mechanisms are inherent in the structure of this information space. Indeed, the ability for consumers to pull advertising content into their media landscape, such as opt-in email newsletters, has also been available since the inception of the Internet, however, Web 2.0 based content aggregation services have streamlined this process in such a way that consumers can pull relevant content into their lives with little effort beyond subscribing to an RSS feed on a given website. With such a vast amount of content available online, it is not uncommon for consumers to be overloaded with information; this overload severely limits one's capacity to process information (Lang, 2000). To combat this information fatigue, content customization applications allow consumers to pull desired content into a centralized location (e.g. a web-based or desktop application) where they can peruse the information at their leisure in a time and place that is most conducive to them (Garcia and Valdes, 2004).

Content customization applications, among them NewsFire, Feedster, Bloglines, NetNewsWire, RSS Bandit, and Google Reader, can be customized by the consumer to comb the web for specific content (i.e. keyword searches) or media content from websites that they visit regularly, such as blogs, newspapers, or photo feeds (See Figure 1). Once customized, the content aggregation tool will then automatically refresh media content per the consumer's specifications; similar to checking email, news feed applications typically check for new content several times a day. This continuous feeding of information to the consumer via customized online environments has the potential to provide benefit to both consumers and interactive advertisers. Consumers could potentially see a decrease in information overload and advertisers could have a new niche for interacting with traditionally hard to reach consumers. Figure 1 displays an example such an application (NetNewsWire)

Figure 2. Media evolution graphic (Source: http://www.methemedia.com)

Figure 3. Screenshot of a content aggregator with advertising present



that contains both media content and a traditional banner advertisement (480 x 60 pixels).

Content aggregation tools continue to gain standing in the online market and are becoming increasingly integrated into web browsing applications thereby expanding consumer access (Vickers, 2007). With this increase in accessibility to content, consumers are allowed to pull desired content into their media landscapes making for a more cohesive and manageable information exchange for those who publish online content as well as the advertisers that utilize such outlets to communicate a message. As a result, content aggregation applications are an important tool for both advertisers and media to be aware of because they facilitate the delivery of messages alongside

relevant, customized media content. In addition to web and personal computer based applications, content aggregators can also transfer to mobile devices such as Palm pilots or iPhones, thereby further increasing the availability of content.

Given that customized online environments are an emergent technology, little academic research has been completed to empirically investigate the effects of customization, or control, on this type of media experience. As the creation and distribution of content via Web 2.0 technologies continues to evolve, content aggregation tools will become more usable and accessible to consumers, helping to create a manageable information space that is customized and relevant. Moving forward, advertisers and marketing professionals must shift their thinking from a traditional push strategy to one that enables consumers with the desire to pull their content into self-defined media environments (Tauder, 2007).

News aggregation applications are an important tool for advertisers to be aware of because they facilitate the delivery of advertising messages to the desktop of the target's computer via relevant media content. As evidenced by the associative link theory, this is a positive way to deliver advertising content to consumers. In addition to personal computer based applications, news aggregators powered by RSS also run on mobile devices such as Palm pilots. This allows for endless possibilities for advertising exposure and context relevance both online and on the go. Put simply, 'RSS is the next wave of real estate the network (ad) builders are going to go after' (Morrissey 2005).

In essence, using content aggregation applications compatible with RSS technologies, consumers are enabled to pull relevant content into their media landscape, as opposed to having irrelevant messages pushed at them during their information seeking process. With this increase in perceived control over their content exposure, consumers could potentially have more cognitive capacity to process information as well as be exposed to advertising with increased relevance and personalization. Current forms of available advertising in RSS feeds include banner ads, keyword ads, sponsorships, and product placement. To compete in today's convergent media landscape, advertisers must adapt their communication strategies to customization and control parameters, such as 1) addressability, 2) interactivity, 3) time-shifting, and 4) interoperability (Tauder, 2006). Web 2.0 environments have the potential to help advertisers communicate within these new information parameters.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF CONSUMER CHOICE IN WEB 2.0 ENVIRONMENTS

At the most fundamental level, the advent of customizable technologies has given consumers a greater choice in their exposure to media and advertising content. While established control technologies allow consumers to record multiple television stations, skip advertising and time-shift programming to their needs, customized online environments provide a similar function in that they tailor news content to make it more addressable, customized and informative for consumers while saving them time, providing information value and ease of information overload (Tauder, 2006). To operationalize the construct of consumer choice as it applies to customized online environments, for the purposes of this research, consumers will be exposed to a stimulus that primes the customization category and sets expectations accordingly. Hence, it is imperative to better understand the impact of priming and choice on consumer psychology within the cognitive, affective and behavioral realms.

According to Herr (1986), an "individual's expectations indeed affect the nature of a behavioral interaction" – regardless of whether this expectation was set by the consumer or someone independent of the consumer, such as a lab

researcher (p. 1106). Empirical research has also confirmed that when consumers are primed with a given category, they are more likely to use that category as a reference when evaluating information (Higgins and King, 1981; Srull and Wyer, 1978). While Herr's (1986) work focuses primarily on the judgmental and behavioral consequences of priming in social interactions, his findings suggest that expectations have a considerable impact on behavioral intention. To further delineate the process that occurs when consumers are primed with categorical information, Higgins and King (1981) describe the process of priming, or framing of information, as an energy cell process whereby consumers will apply priming elements to the evaluation of new information (i.e. the experiment stimulus) so long as the stimulus is relative to the category. Alternatively, Srull and Wyer (1981) look at priming effects using a storage bin model. In their model, when consumers are primed with a given category, for example customization of media content, the category is placed atop the mental storage bin and used as the primary point of evaluation for subsequent incoming information. Thus, if the incoming information is congruent with the primed category, the preceding experience will be catalogued within the primed category for future use. It is important to note that both of these models are constructed on the tenet that the primed category, in this case 'customized online environments', will be invoked when evaluating incoming information. As such, affective dimensions, such as attitude and enjoyment, could be impacted depending upon how well the incoming information maps to the primed category (Herr, 1986).

According to Kardes (2002), the priming effect is a common tactic used in mass media to influence consumers across a variety of subjects and concepts – often times priming consumers with information that they rarely think about. Given the novelty of customization in the online environment, it is possible that consumers rarely consider their options concerning customization of news content; in fact it could present an ambiguous category target for some consumers. Based on data presented by Herr (1986), the ambiguity of the target has some impact on a consumers interaction with the stimulus, however most are unaware of the "subtle influence" that priming provides for a given experience (Kardes, 2002, p. 68).

CONSUMERS' DESIRE FOR CONTROL IN THE WEB 2.0 WORLD

Humans strive to be causal agents; the source of their behavior and their own environment (DeCharms, 1968). Shapiro (1999) notes "our interest in personal control is motivated as much by a survival instinct as by narcissism. It is key to our sense of self-esteem and confidence" (p. 23). Accordingly, recent studies suggest that our desirability of control emanates from biological determinants as well as social ones (Declerck, Boone, & De Brabander, 2006). Due to the natural prevalence of control in our lives, it has been studied in different forms, scales, and terminologies. For example, control has been examined in the literature as a desire for control (Burger and Cooper, 1979), a locus of control (Rotter, 1966), actual control (Cramer & Perreault, 2006), perceived control (Godek and Yates, 2005), behavioral control, cognitive control (Faranda, 2001), decisional control, and feeling in control (Declerck, Boone, & Brabander, 2006).

Desirability of control is defined as "a stable personality trait reflecting the extent to which individuals generally are motivated to control the events in their lives" (Burger 1985, p. 1520). According to Burger and Cooper (1979), desirability of control is a motivational trait, which measures how sought-after the personal control trait is for a person. Clearly there is a motivation in our nature to control life's events, however, as with other personality traits it ranges on a scale across different individuals. People vary and thus demonstrate different propensities toward

control, which could help explain our different behaviors. According to its operational definition, a person who exhibits a high desirability of control is a leader, assertive, active, decisive and manipulative in situations to create desired outcomes. Conversely, a person who exhibits low desirability of control is more influenced by others, nonassertive, uncertain, doubtful and passive (Burger & Cooper, 1979). Studies that have used the desirability of control construct demonstrate how differences in a consumer's desirability of control explain daily behaviors and decisions such as achievement-related behaviors (see Burger, 1985 and also Burger, 1992) and proneness to depression (see Burger 1984).

Directly related to the current research, past work has connected the control construct with media use (Schutz, 1966). For instance Schutz suggests, "three interpersonal needs - inclusion, affection, and control - influence all aspects of communication between people" (in Rubin, 1993, p.161). Further, Rubin (1993) has linked external control (related to the belief of fate and chance occurrence) with passive audiences and internal control (related to the belief of self-determinism) with active media audiences. Summarizing research into the latter construct, Rubin states that people with strong external control are fearful of society, indiscriminant or ritualistic media consumers, are not motivated by freedom to choose, and tend to be persuaded more easily by media content. Conversely, people with strong internal control demonstrate the opposite tendencies. In the field of interactive media, Wu (2006) demonstrated that control, as an individual/personality trait, is related to media use. Alpert et al. (2003) examined the environment of e-commerce and note that the issue of control is pivotal to consumers in the media experience: "the clearest result to emerge from our studies is users' fervent desire to be in control" (Alpert et al., 2003, p.385).

Althaus and Tewksbury (2000) probe the use of the Internet as a surveillance medium that helps gratify two needs while consuming political news contents: the need for information and the desirability of control. Their findings suggest that desirability of control is a strong predictor of news exposure — at least as strong as traditional political knowledge as a predictor. They also claim that the control construct is positively related to surveillance with the media. That is, the greater a person's desirability of control, the more they will expose themselves to the media. The literature provides evidence which links control and general media use (e.g. Althaus & Tewksbury, 2000; Auter & Ray, 1999; Rubin 1993). Moreover, research supports the notion that desirability of control is positively related to media use. Accordingly, it is expected that desire to control will positively predict the use of customized online environments as well as the interaction with advertising therein.

In marketing, an increase of perceived control was linked to pleasantness in service and consumption experiences (Faranda 2001). Rubin (1993) has further demonstrated a positive correlation between control and communication motivation for pleasure. Within the context of interactive media, Liu and Shrum (2002) have developed a theoretical model for interactivity and found that desirability of control is a key factor in obtaining satisfaction from the interactive process. They suggest that people who have a high desirability of control will be more satisfied with interactivity than people who have a low desirability of control.

Thus, it is anticipated that consumers with a high desire for control will experience greater media enjoyment when exposed to a customized online environment. Along with creating a perception of control, customized online environments also have the potential to increase consumer enjoyment by decreasing information overload. The following section will review information overload as an independent construct and how it can potentially impact a consumer's media experience.

INFORMATION OVERLOAD IN ONLINE ENVIRONMENTS

Despite existing for a mere 5,000 or so days, the commercial Internet contains an incredibly vast amount of information that can easily overwhelm even the most adept consumer of information (Kelly, 2007). As information loads become greater, the ability of a consumer to process cognitive stimuli in a reasonable manner becomes increasingly difficult. In many cases, this excessive stimulus can lead to consumers becoming overwhelmed and unable to focus on their target goal – be it related to entertainment, information seeking, or social motivations. With new technologies, such as content aggregators, the glut of information available online has become more manageable and palatable for consumers who elect to engage with such media experiences. Given the existing reciprocal linkage between information load and user satisfaction (Liang, et al., 2007), it is intuitive that consumers with high levels of perceived information overload may experience greater media enjoyment when given the capacity to customize, or tailor, their media exposure to topics of interest. As such, it is imperative to examine a consumer's perceived information overload as a potential factor during exposure to customized online environments.

Across all types of media, information overload can be caused by a variety of factors, including but not limited to information quantity, quality, format (Ho and Tang, 2001) as well as the number of ideas present, idea diversity, time constraints, and topic area (Grise and Gallupe, 2000). When compared to traditional media, online environments provide a level of interactivity and expanse of available information that creates an interesting paradox. Today's consumers have more information available to them than ever before, however due to the glut of information available as well as the variety of interactive formats it is available in, information overload is prevalent. Once overloaded with information, few if any consumers will be able to process auxiliary information, such as advertising, leading to a loss for both consumers and advertisers (Lang, 2000). Customized online environments could help compensate for this loss by creating a niche environment for advertisers to communicate with less overloaded, and more cognitive available, consumers.

Advertising abounds across all aspects of today's interactive marketplace and is often described as an impediment for consumers as they seek goal fulfillment online while undoubtedly contributing to feelings of information overload as well (Cho and Cheon 2004; Li, Edwards and Lee 2002). With this glut of information, consumers can be overwhelmed, given their limited capacity for processing information. In advertising and media effects research, the limited capacity model (LCM) of mediated message processing provides a framework for examining how consumers explicitly process media content delivered through various media vehicles (Lang, 2000). The LCM is rooted in the information processing aspects of cognitive psychology.

The LCM is based upon two primary tenets, 1) consumers are information processors by nature, and 2) consumers have relatively limited resources available to process information at any given time. As humans, one of the primary tasks that consumers do is process information, including media content and advertising. According to Lang (2000), the act of processing information can be divided into three sub-processes that are conceptually more tenable in a linear fashion, but whom occur in an iterative, continuous and oft times simultaneous way within a consumer's cognitive realm. The three sub-processes are, 1) encoding, 2) storage, and 3) retrieval. During the encoding phase of information processing, a consumer creates an "idiosyncratic representation of the message" based upon controlled and automatic selection processes (Lang, 2000, p49). While controlled selection processes are a reflection of a consumer's goals, motivations and expected outcomes, automatic selection is activated as a

stimulus presents information that is relevant to the consumer's goal fulfillment (i.e., ad relevance) or as the information environment encounters an unexpected change due to the presence of a stimulus (i.e., ad intrusiveness) (Graham, 1997; Ohman, 1997). The storage process begins after the initial encoding phase and involves transferring the information from short-term storage to long-term storage to become part of an associative memory network. The last phase, retrieval, involves searching the associative networks in long- term memory and reactivating information into working memory as needed (Lang, 2000).

As it relates to media content, the LCM provides explanatory power as to why certain messages may be encoded while others are not. Simply put, the information processing components of encoding, storage and retrieval typically work simultaneously; as such, if a consumer decides to allocate resources to a primary task (i.e. reading news through a content aggregator) thereby limiting the resources available to secondary tasks (i.e., processing advertising in such environments) the encoding of such secondary information will suffer. Thus, as the LCM dictates, processing resources can be increasingly allocated to a single sub-process, resulting in a failure of optimal performance amongst the remaining two sub-processes.

In sum, the LCM provides a framework for testing a consumer's ability to process information under a variety of cognitive loads. In a customized online environment, consumers encounter fewer advertisements and are instead exposed to articles and news items they have self-selected or personalized. While traditional news websites are typically cluttered with a plethora of advertising messages, RSS feeds offer advertisers a place to reach niche markets of consumers amongst far less advertising clutter. Consumers will ultimately carry their ability to avoid interactive advertising ("banner blindness") into customized media environments, however, these environments present an arena where highly customized and controlled content can be brought to consumers.

Based on current growth in Web 2.0 environments and online information in general, consumers will continue to deal with information overload as they navigate the various information spaces upon which they have come to rely (Verna, 2007). The LCM provides explanatory power for how customized online environments can help consumers deal with information overload – such environments could potentially aide consumers information processing by providing relevant and personalized content in an uncluttered interface. Similar to desire for control, a consumer's perceived information overload level will be considered as a potential factor in the relationship between customization and the cognitive, affective and behavioral components of a consumer's experience.

MEDIA ENJOYMENT AND WEB 2.0

The term *enjoyment* has been conceptualized in media studies to "indicate a general positive disposition toward and liking of media content" (Nabi and Kremar, 2004, p. 290). Several scholars have attributed an increase in information processing capabilities in interactive environments to states of media enjoyment within consumers (Sherry, 2004; Sicilia and Ruiz, 2007). In a recent study by Sicilia and Ruiz (2007), a state of enjoyment within a consumer was found to "enhance, rather than impede favorable information processing" when navigating a standard web environment, such as a corporate website. Additionally, Hoffman and Novak (1996) have found that an enjoyable experience will increase learning, provide a more positive subjective experience, and promote exploratory behavior. Finally, Huang (2003) notes that more intense enjoyment states within consumers indicate higher perceived performance of interactive environments, in terms of usefulness and pleasantness, while Webster, Trevino and Ryan (1993) confirm that the flow experience is directly related to expected future technology

use, or behavioral intention. As this relates to customized media environments, Sicilia and Ruiz (2007) show empirical evidence that interactive environments can be used by consumers to "aid in making decisions" and "enhance online processing and enjoyment" (Sicilia and Ruiz, 2007, p15).

It is well documented in the uses and gratifications research that consumers use media for enjoyment. As such, there are a variety of factors that will contribute to a consumer's sense of media enjoyment. As this relates to control, consumers who feel more in control of their media environment may receive more media enjoyment because they can customize a content package that is relevant to their needs thereby reducing the amount of time it takes to achieve their goals. Additionally, as documented by Liang, et al. (2007), decreases in information overload can increase user satisfaction with personalized media environments.

Feelings of enjoyment can easily be associated with those of satisfaction – for example, a consumer may be satisfied with and find enjoyment in a given media experience. As such, Palmgreen and Rayburn's (1985) discussion of media satisfaction offers an important perspective on the construct of media enjoyment. Although satisfaction is a key concept in other areas of social science, little attention as been paid to this concept in the area of media studies. As it pertains to this chapter, the concept of satisfaction has been defined as pleasure / displeasure, consumption experience (i.e. navigation experience in customized online environment), and evaluation of the benefits of consumption (Palmgreen and Rayburn, 1985). In addition to it's association with satisfaction, media enjoyment can also be linked with attraction, liking, and preference (Nabi and Kremar, 2004). However, the most poignant conceptualization of media enjoyment is as an attitude that allows researchers to "broaden our understanding not only of the precursors of enjoyment but its behavioral outcomes as well" (Nabi and Kremar, 2004, p. 292).

ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOR IN WEB 2.0 ENVIRONMENTS

A consumer's attitude can best be described as a positive or negative disposition toward a given object, person, or event. The study of attitude and attitude change has long been a vital component of advertising research as consumer attitudes are considered to be a direct pre-condition, or antecedent, to consumer behavior. Over the last century, the study of attitudes has evolved from the initial theories of Hovland, Festinger, Abelson, and Heider to a robust set of theories and models that predict attitude change based upon dual processes and multiple routes to persuasion (Petty and Cacioppo 1983; MacInnis and Jaworski, 1989). As such, attitudes are seen as derivatives of both personal (micro) and social (macro) factors that determine both how we react to persuasive messaging and integrate it into our lives.

A person's attitude represents a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular object and can serve various motivations (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993, p.479). Katz's (1960) seminal work on functional theory is considered by many essential for understanding the complex motivational underpinnings and functions of attitudes. Functional theory states that attitudes may serve various motivations depending on the purpose and that one's behavior is a function of their attitude toward that behavior (O'Keefe, 2002, p.29). The basis of this theory centralizes around the view that in order to impact behavior you must understand the motivational source of the attitude. For instance, a person's willingness to interact with customized online media environments using Web 2.0 technologies will be determined by his or her attitude toward such media exposure and level of perceived control. However, because people's motivations can vary greatly, consumers may decide to create and interact with customized media environments for different reasons.

Overall, functional theory has been widely accepted among theorists as a robust framework

for recognizing the diverse motivational patterns of attitudes (Abelson & Prentice, 1989; Herek, 1987; Locander and Spivey, 1978). In particular, Katz's (1960) typology posits that any given attitude held by any given individual will serve one or more of four distinct personality functions: a utilitarian function, a knowledge function, an ego-defensive function, and a value-expressive function. The utilitarian function acknowledges that people are motivated to gain rewards and avoid punishment from their environment. Specifically, this function represents attitudes based on self-interest. In terms of self-defined media environments, consumers served by this motivational function would create such environments for personal incentives. In contrast, the knowledge function recognizes that people are driven by the need to gain information in order to organize and understand one's environment. We are motivated by the need to understand and make sense out of our experiences. Users of customized media environments served by this function would engage in such behaviors because it helps them understand their environment, the topic at hand, and/or ultimately themselves because they feel a sense of intrinsic wisdom. Subsequently, the value-expressive function is served by attitudes that allow individuals to express or relate with their self-concepts and values. This function is perceived as enhancing one's image in the eyes of the world through matching their moral beliefs. Thus, consumers of customized media content motivated by this function would feel inherently gratified with self-esteem for creating content and being a member of an online community that shares the same principles they consider important. It validates and helps them feel good for who they are and what they believe about the world. Finally, the ego-defensive function represents motivations that are designed to protect people from internal insecurities or external threats. They serve the internal function of defending one's self-image. Consumers motivated by this function would participate in order to minimize their own self-doubts, to feel a sense of belonging, and possibly reduce guilty feelings of not contributing.

While these four functions remain the core constructs for understanding attitudinal motivations, contemporary researchers have continued to clarify and explore additional contributions. For instance, Smith (1973) proposed an extension of the value-expressive function focused on the motivation for social adjustment in expressing attitudes or behavior that are agreeable to others. The function has since evolved to include motivations concerning relationships with others and recognizes the distinction between internal beliefs and the desire for external relationships independent of moral values. In particular, this social function compels people to seek opportunities to be with friends or to participate in activities perceived favorably by important others (Clary, et. al. 1998). Within the realm of customized online media environments, the social function would be a strong motivator as the concepts of sharing and interacting socially are widespread. Creators of customized media environments would be motivated by this function because of how important reference groups would perceive their membership in such an online community. Even though each of the functional sources are capable of making independent motivational contributions to the formulation of one's attitude, the theoretical assertion remains that attitude is served by a multitude of origins and more than likely driven by a combination of sources (Katz, 1960).

In the domain of advertising, much focus has been devoted to the investigation of how consumers react to commonplace types of advertising on the Web, ranging from banner ads to sponsorships, and pop-up ads. While dynamic and interactive advertisements were found to be more effective than static ads in producing positive consumer responses (Coyle and Thorson, 2001), recent research suggests that consumers' overall response to advertising on the Web is increasingly negative as they become more savvy and sceptical about the values of such advertisements (Cho and Cheon,

2004; Coutler et al., 2001). In fact, the online landscape has become congested with advertising in its more intrusive forms and consumers strive to avoid advertising as much as possible because such advertising is likely to interfere with the tasks or interests they are pursuing online (Cho and Cheon, 2004; Li, Edwards and Lee, 2002). Moreover, it has been shown that while Web searchers consider sponsored search advertising as less relevant than organic search results, they are essentially equally relevant (Jansen and Resnick, 2006). Taken together, the literature suggests that interactive advertising features that enhance consumers' understanding of relevance without actually interfering with their intended tasks should be successful in eliciting their favorable attitudes. Advertising via RSS feeds is an advertising medium that fits this description, and due to its informative and (mostly) non-intrusive nature is not likely to be perceived as annoying or irrelevant by users of customized media environments.

Among the variety of factors influencing consumer response to advertising on the Web, congruity between the ad and the website content in which the ad is placed appears to be a significant factor in advertising perception (Cho, 2003; Moore, Stammerjohan and Coutler, 2005; Shamdasani, Stanaland and Tan, 2001). In Cho's (2003) study of banner ads, advertising content that was congruent with the editorial content was more effective as it was less likely to interrupt the consumer's primary task or focus. Similarly, the higher level of congruity between the product category advertised in a banner ad and the context of the website in which the ad was embedded resulted in more favorable consumer responses than low relevance between the ad and the website context (Moore, Stammerjohan and Coutler, 2005; Shamdasani, Stanaland and Tan, 2001). This bodes well for advertising via customized media environments because the ability to deliver highly customized and relevant content is inherent.

Alternatively, research by Li, et al. (2002) suggests that as online consumers become increasingly goal oriented, online advertising techniques that are interactive and non-congruent shall become substantially more intrusive because they will stand between consumers and their goal actualization. Their research identified three causes of ad irritation: (1) content, (2) execution, and (3) placement. Among these, ad placement online is considered to be the primary indicator as to whether an ad is considered intrusive or not. This focus on the location of an ad ties back to the previously discussed findings confirming that increased ad congruency in an online environment leads to a higher click through rate and more favorable consumer attitudes (Cho, 2003). Thus, content congruent advertising perceived as useful in this context should elicit less irritation amongst consumers upon exposure.

Taking the above findings into account, this chapter seeks to better understand how consumers react to customized online environments, and, in turn what impact that has on their media enjoyment, attitudes toward advertising and behavioral intention for using customized online environments. As technology advances continue to open niche markets for interacting with online consumers, it is imperative to gain a more robust perspective of how consumers are interacting with advertising in this arena. More so than ever before, consumer attention is illusive and advertisers must be always mindful of effective methods for communicating their marketing messages. Customized online environments could provide a potentially effective outlet for reaching such consumers.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

As media continue to adapt to the changing technology needs of today's consumers, it is imperative to gain insight into the effects of Web 2.0 technologies on media experiences. Current research

in this area has focused primarily on content personalization and recommendation systems as they relate to user satisfaction. To further expand this research into the realm of Web 2.0 technologies, future research should examine how consumers interact with Web 2.0 technologies in terms of their motivations and expected outcomes of such technology use. Recent online research involving Social Cognitive Theory (LaRose & Eastin, 2004; LaRose, et al., 2002; Eastin & LaRose, 2000) has emerged to offer explanatory power for consumer Internet use and could provide a better understanding of the Web 2.0 phenomenon.

In the last several years, Web 2.0 technologies have empowered consumers and enabled them to connect with one another in the broad online information space. In this regard, it is imperative for marketing researchers to begin to gain a better understanding of the impact of Web 2.0 technologies and the underlying reasons consumers use such applications to experience media content and connect with other consumers. To date though, little research has been undertaken on Web 2.0 and its perceptions amongst both the consumers and creators of this type of media content. Thus, this chapter has focused on how consumers interact with Web 2.0 technologies in terms of their media enjoyment, attitudes and behaviors in such online environments. Because consumer perceptions are capable of being influenced by media messages, the effective understanding of the expectations sought and the outcomes obtained from the use of Web 2.0 technologies are important to both academic scholars interested in theoretical research as well as marketing professionals focused on branding online.

As Web 2.0 technologies becomes more prevalent, understanding why consumers are drawn to consume content via such media vehicles becomes increasingly important, especially as the media industry moves toward a user-centric model of consumption. As a result, it is imperative to gain an understanding of how individuals behave according to expected outcomes for the use of Web 2.0 technologies in order to recognize how such content might benefit the media. While consumption of any new consumer technology requires a certain level of technical knowledge, we expect positive prior media experience and attitude effectively lead consumers toward consuming media content via Web 2.0 technologies. At the same time, desire of media control is another prerequisite for Web 2.0 technology use. Compared to other media, and primarily traditional media, Web 2.0 technologies, and beyond, enable consumers to be extremely flexible allowing for maximum control over media content.

Through the integration of desirability of control, attitude and the social cognitive construct of prior experience, this chapter advances current understanding of how and why people are using Web 2.0 technologies. As consumers adopt an active approach when experiencing media content, they strive toward self-expression by engaging in behaviors that provide them with a voice or showcase their individual thoughts (e.g., blogs, forums, personal Web sites). Future research should explore the impact of individual skill or self-efficacy on this process. For example, the creation of videos, production of music, and acquisition of necessary knowledge to post a wiki require more aptitude than simply using a computer keyboard (i.e., as required by an online discussion forum). Investigating the differences in different types of Web 2.0 activities could provide a more in-depth insight. Therefore, a thorough understanding of the psychological makeup of Web 2.0 consumers is even more critical because the consumption and delivery of communication messages might be refined for maximum impact. By providing consumers with a forum in which they may use Web 2.0 technologies, media technology professionals might enhance the value of information they present online by engaging consumers in an active media experience.

The Web 2.0 market likely will expand greatly during the next decade as more users migrate toward consuming media content through custom-

ized vehicles. Opportunities abound for media technology and marketing communication professionals in this burgeoning information space, as evidenced by the forecasted $4.3 billion in advertising revenues by 2011 (Verna 2007). Industries thus must seize this opportunity to communicate relevant content to audiences through this channel. As the digital information society continues to evolve, identifying key individual characteristics that lead to expected outcomes could help clarify media consumption online. While Web 2.0 technologies present a promising outlet for advertisers, they must also be used wisely when integrated with traditional media content in order to provide the most relevant and positive experience for online consumers.

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