Social Media Tool Analysis

1. Orkut

Introduction

Orkut is a social networking website that allows a user to maintain existing relationships, while also providing a platform to form new relationships. The site is open to anyone over the age of 13, with no obvious bent toward one group, but is primarily used in Brazil and India, and dominated by the 18-25 demographic. Users can set up a profile, add friends, post status updates, share pictures and video, and comment on their friend's profiles in "scraps."

Seven Building Blocks

- *Identity* – Users of Orkut start by establishing a user profile, which is used to identify themselves to other users.
- *Conversations* – Orkut users can start conversations with each other in a number of way, including an integrated instant messaging functionality and through "scraps," which allows users to post on each other's "scrapbooks" – pages tied to the user profile.
- *Sharing* – Users can share pictures, videos, and status updates with other users, who can share feedback through commenting and/or "liking" a user's post.
- *Presence* – Presence on Orkut is limited to time-stamping of posts, providing other users an idea of how frequently a user is posting.
- *Relationships* – Orkut's main emphasis is on relationships, allowing users to friend each other as well as providing a number of methods for communication between users.
- *Reputation* – Reputation on Orkut is limited to tracking the number of friends a user has, providing other users an idea of how connected that user is.
- *Groups* – Users of Orkut can form "communities" where they can discuss and comment on shared interests with other users.

In addition to maintaining personal relationships, which accounts for over 40% of the site's users, 13% of the site's users employ Orkut for business networking, and over 14% use it for dating.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Orkut is very similar to the better-known Facebook in terms of its functionality and intended audience, which is a platform for maintaining relationships with personal contacts. The bulk of its user base is in India and particularly Brazil, so its utility for organizations would likely be limited to reaching audiences in those countries. For the same reason, it has limited personal utility for those with no contacts in those areas. Note that this site appears to have been largely absorbed into Google+.

2. Skyrock

Introduction

Skyrock is a social networking website that provides a blogging platform with integrated profiles and a messaging system between users. Skyrock is provided in English (for the International site) and French for France and other French-speaking areas, and is primarily used by French-speaking people in the 18-24 demographic. The site also has a section geared toward musicians that provides a platform for them to share their compositions online.

Seven Building Blocks

- *Identity* – Users of Skyrock establish their identity by setting up a user profile, which is used to identify themselves to other users.
- *Conversations* – Users can start conversations with other users through the integrated messaging feature, as well as commenting on other user's blog posts and responding to comments on their own.
- *Sharing* – Users can share a variety of information through their blogs, including pictures and video.
- *Presence* – Presence on SkyRock is limited to time-stamping of blog posts, which allows users to determine how often a user is posting.
- *Relationships* – Users of SkyRock can establish relationships with other users by "friending" them, and can also establish a preference for other users by sending them "hearts".
- *Reputation* – Reputation is emphasized on SkyRock through a number of methods, including overall number of friends and the accruement of awards for achieving certain milestones, such as 500 friends or 100 hearts.
- *Groups* – SkyRock does not emphasize the usage of groups or communities.

In addition to the standard social networking features, the site has a heavy bent toward dating, and there is a specific section of the site dedicated to musicians who want to share their musical compositions.

Conclusion

Skyrock is most easily thought of as the French-language version of MySpace, as it has very similar orientation, functionality, and goals – personal profiles with a lighter emphasis on sharing music. As with Orkut, it's penetration into specific language markets (in this case, mostly French-speaking areas) somewhat limits its utility in both a professional and personal sense. However, if an organization is trying to reach a younger demographic in these areas, Skyrock is an option that bears further investigation.

3. Xing

<u>Introduction</u>

Xing is a social networking website primarily geared toward working professionals, with an eye toward fostering and maintaining business relationships. The site has users in over 200 countries, but is chiefly centered in Western Europe and Germany in particular, which accounts for 70% of the total page views of the site. Most of the users are working adults between 35 and 54.

<u>Seven Building Blocks</u>

- *Identity* – Users of Xing establish their identity by filling out a profile with their personal information, jobs, and professional experience, somewhat like an online resume or business card.
- *Conversations* – Xing does not have an emphasis on conversations between users, at least not integrated to the site. It does facilitate conversations by through the use of user communities, which is discussed in the Groups section.
- *Sharing* – Users can announce professional events that other users might be interested in, as well as share job opportunities for freelance workers and reviews of potential employers.
- *Presence* – Xing does not have an emphasis on presence.
- *Relationships* – Xing allows users to add other users as contacts for the purposes of establishing a business-oriented relationship.
- *Reputation* – When searching for new contacts, users are notified whether or not a potential contact already has a relationship with an existing contact – users that are connected with many contacts would have a greater reputation.
- *Groups* – Xing supports the use of communities, where like-minded professional can converse with each other regarding topics of shared interest.

In addition to the typical social networking features, one unique feature of Xing is the projects area, where project managers looking for freelance workers can advertise positions for potential employees.

<u>Conclusions</u>

Xing is very similar to LinkedIn in terms of purpose and functionality – a platform geared entirely toward working professional looking to establish and maintain business contacts – but the main difference is that LinkedIn is a more universal platform whereas 90% of Xing's users are in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. Utility of the site on a personal basis would be ideal for anyone looking to build relationships in these countries, and the project feature would be best used by an organization looking for freelance workers in these areas.

4. Sonico

Introduction

Sonico is a social networking platform geared toward the Latin American audience, with the intent of establishing and maintaining personal and professional relationships. Users have a multitude of ways to share content and interact with other users, including 6 multi-player games. Users can establish three profiles – personal, public, and professional, all of which are separate from each other for added privacy. The site is mostly used by adults over the age of 45.

Seven Building Blocks

- *Identity* – Users of Sonico establish three separate profiles – a private, public, and professional profile – which are used to establish their identity to the appropriate groups (the user, the user's friends and acquaintances, and the user's professional contacts, respectively).
- *Conversations* – Sonico allows users to start conversations with each other via integrated messaging features, including an instant messaging program.
- *Sharing* – Users of Sonico can share a variety of content on each other's "boards," including pictures, videos, and verbal communication.
- *Presence* – Sonico has a limited emphasis on presence through the time-stamping of posts, which allows users to tell how often other users post.
- *Relationships* – Sonico's primary emphasis is on relationships, allowing users to "friend" other users, and unlike other social networking sites, allows management of contacts from both the user's personal and professional worlds.
- *Reputation* – Reputation on Sonico is limited to a count of how many contacts a user as on their profile(s).
- *Groups* – Sonico supports the use of user groups, where users can find other users with similar interests, or who live in the same geographic region, to converse with about a variety of topics.

Unlike most other social networking sites, Sonico users have three separate profiles, two of which establish identities: a private profile for just the user, a public profile for the purposes of identifying the user to friends, and a professional profile for establishing business contacts. These profiles are not linked in any way, allowing users to keep their personal and professional lives separate.

Recommendations

Sonico is most easily thought of as the Spanish-language version of Facebook, blended with elements from LinkedIn and other business networking platforms, in that it is intended as a tool to maintain relationships, both personal and professional, among Latin American users. As its user base is entirely composed of Spanish and Portuguese-speaking individuals residing in those countries, utility from a personal and professional standpoint is limited to those languages and areas. For an organization looking to extend its reach into these areas, however, use of Sonico may be invaluable.

5. StudiVZ

Introduction

StudiVZ is a German social networking site oriented toward students in German-speaking countries. StudiVZ is short for *Studentenverzeichnis*, which is German for "student's directory". Users can create profiles with their personal information, topics of study, interests, courses, and groups within StudiVZ to which they belong, which are used to establish relationships with other students in German-speaking areas. Most of its users are between 25 and 34.

Seven Building Blocks

- *Identity* – Users establish identity on StudiVZ via creation of a personal page with their information and interests.
- *Conversations* – Users can start conversation with other users via integrated private messaging, as well as through user group discussion forums.
- *Sharing* – Users can share a variety of content on their personal pages, such as pictures, video, and status updates.
- *Presence* – StudiVZ has little emphasis on presence.
- *Relationships* – Users can establish relationships with other users in their school or geographic areas by "friending" them.
- *Reputation* – StudiVZ has a limited emphasis on reputation through the tracking of the number of friends a user has.
- *Groups* – Users can form groups with like-minded students, which feature discussion forms where they can converse on a variety of topics.

Conclusions

StudiVZ was once the most popular social network in Germany among students looking to build relationships with other students, but has seen a sharp decline in usage since 2009. The site's usage demographics indicate current students have shifted their interest to other sites, and as such most of the site's users have already graduated from school and use the site mainly to keep in touch with old classmates. As such, it has very limited utility to organization looking to market to students in German-speaking areas.

6. Food.com (previously RecipeZaar)

Introduction

Food.com is a social media platform geared toward cooks and recipes. Primarily used by adult females in the United States, Food.com users can create limited profiles, through which they can share recipes they've developed, along with photos of those recipes. Food.com also offers a rigorous internal search for finding recipes based on a particular cuisine or ingredient.

Seven Building Blocks

- *Identity* – Food.com has a limited emphasis on identity, as users can set up pages with limited personal information.
- *Conversations* – Food.com has a limited emphasis on conversations, mostly achieved through the use of discussion forums on a variety of cooking-related topics.
- *Sharing* – Sharing, in the form of recipes, is the main emphasis of Food.com. Users can both share recipes they've found or created, or search for new recipes through a variety of search options, including the Recipe Sifter. The site is also integrated with other popular social media sites like Facebook and Pinterest, to further facilitate the sharing of recipes.
- *Presence* – Food.com does not emphasize presence in any way.
- *Relationships* – Food.com does not facilitate relationships in any way.
- *Reputation* – Food.com has a limited emphasis on reputation, achieved by tracking the number of recipes a user has submitted as well as a rating system for those recipes – users can develop a "better" reputation by sharing large numbers of original, highly-regarded recipes.
- *Groups* – Food.com does not support the forming of user groups in any way.

The most notable feature of Food.com is the Recipe Sifter, whereby users can search for recipes based solely on available ingredients and equipment, and attributes such as desired cuisine and level of difficulty.

Conclusions

As a social media platform with a rigorously defined purpose (recipes) and user base (home cooks), Food.com has limited potential for organizations looking to reach people. One possibility would be food companies looking to promote their products to home cooks, but since interacting on the site is limited beyond sharing the recipes, this would be difficult to accomplish. Personal utility of the site is very high, particularly if you are a home cook.

7. GoodReads

Introduction

GoodReads is a social media platform oriented toward readers who want to share what books they've read and find new books to read. Users can input all of the books they have read, are currently reading and intend to read, offer reviews and commentary on the books, and get recommendations on new books from the site. GoodReads is primarily used by young women in the United States.

Seven Building Blocks

- *Identity* – GoodReads has a limited emphasis on identity, allowing users to create very limited profiles in terms of the amount of information provided.
- *Conversations* – GoodReads does not really emphasize conversations. It does allow users to comment on other users' book reviews, which is a method of conversing.
- *Sharing* – The main emphasis of GoodReads is sharing, achieved through lists of books users have read, are reading, or intend to read, as well as reviews of those books. Users can further organize this content into "shelves," where books are grouped into a variety of categories including by genre or by author.
- *Presence* – GoodReads does not have an emphasis on presence.
- *Relationships* – GoodReads has a limited emphasis on relationships, allowing users to "friend" each other.
- *Reputation* – The main area where GoodReads emphasizes reputation is through the special verified Author accounts, where actual book authors can provide their reviews and book lists with other users.
- *Groups* – GoodReads does not have an emphasis on forming user groups.

GoodReads will also parse a user's read books, and run the book data through an algorithm to provide recommendations on other books the user might enjoy.

Conclusions

GoodReads is another social media platform with a rigorously defined purpose that somewhat limits its utility – in this case, the sharing of books with other readers. Organizations outside of the publishing industry, or agencies that represent authors, would have no use for this platform. Personal users who are avid readers would find this platform very useful.

8. Hi5

Introduction

Hi5 is a social networking platform with a heavy emphasis on social gaming. Users have the standard social network options – profiles, friend networks, photo and other content sharing, and groups – but the site also features a variety of gaming options. The site is most popular in India and the United States, among men from 45 to 54.

Seven Building Blocks

- *Identity* – Users of Hi5 establish an identity through the creation of a personal profile, which can be used to identify themselves to other users.
- *Conversations* – Hi5 supports conversations both via an integrated instant messaging feature, both inside and outside of the game environments.
- *Sharing* – Users can share content such as photos and status updates on their personal profile pages.
- *Presence* – Hi5 has a limited emphasis on presence through the time-stamping of posts, which allows users to verify how often other users post.
- *Relationships* – Users can establish relationships with other users by "friending" them.
- *Reputation* – Hi5 has a limited emphasis on reputation through the tracking of how many friends a user has.
- *Groups* – Hi5 used to have user groups, but this functionality was removed when Tagged.com acquired the platform.

Conclusions

Hi5 emphasis on social networking via social gaming would provide a unique opportunity for organizations to reach people, but the user base is primarily older men, which is not the demographic typically associated with online gaming. Tagged.com only uses in-house developed games on the site, so there is no opportunity for gaming companies (other than Tagged) to get feedback from users. As such, the organizational utility of this platform is severely limited. Individuals who enjoy social gaming may have an interest in this site.

9. LiveJournal

Introduction

LiveJournal is a blogging service that is very popular with Russians from the ages of 18 to 34. Users can establish personal blogs, connect with other users and read their blogs, and form communities with like-minded bloggers.

Seven Building Blocks

- *Identity* – In addition to the user blog, LiveJournal supports the creation of limited user profiles, by which users can identify each other.
- *Conversations* – LiveJournal does not emphasize conversations beyond users commenting on each other's blogs.
- *Sharing* – The main purpose of LiveJournal is sharing information, primarily blog posts but also pictures, through the user blogs.
- *Presence* – LiveJournal has a limited emphasis on presence through the time-stamping of blog entries, which allows users to determine how often a user is posting to their blog.
- *Relationships* – LiveJournal does not have a strong emphasis on relationships.
- *Reputation* – LiveJournal allows users to follow other blogs; as such, a blog could establish a bigger reputation by having a large number of followers.
- *Groups* – LiveJournal supports the establishment of communities, which are shared blogs where like-minded users can post and comment on items of shared interest.

Conclusions

As a blogging service primarily used in Russia, LiveJournal has limited organizational utility. Organizations looking to establish a presence in Russia might find some utility with the service, possibly through forming a community to discuss the organization and interface with users about the organization. Utility for individuals is limited to personal blogging.

10. SoundCloud

Introduction

SoundCloud is a social media platform aimed toward musicians. SoundCloud allows musicians around the world to share their compositions with each other, find potential collaborators, and form groups with similar musicians. SoundCloud is primarily used by young men, and has a presence worldwide with a slight emphasis in the United States.

Seven Building Blocks

- *Identity* – SoundCloud supports the creation of very limited user profiles.
- *Conversations* – SoundCloud facilitates conversation through the user groups, where users can converse with each other about topics of shared interest, usually music-related.
- *Sharing* – Sharing is the main emphasis of SoundCloud, as it allows artists to share and download a variety of musical compositions on their user profiles.
- *Presence* – SoundCloud does not emphasize presence in any way.
- *Relationships* – SoundCloud does not emphasize relationships in any way.
- *Reputation* – SoundCloud has a "follow" functionality, where users can subscribe to the posts of other users. Users with a large number of followers would have a summarily bigger reputation.
- *Groups* – SoundCloud supports the development of user groups, where users can discuss different genres of music or set up collaborations with each other.

Conclusions

As a social media platform for sharing music, SoundCloud has a more targeted utility for organizations and individuals. Organizations in the music industry could use SoundCloud to promote artists and find new artists, particular if they are searching for younger male artists. Individuals could utilize the website to share their music with others.