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‘Not a Site, but a Concept’: Tapping the Power of Social Networking

Mini USA, the American branch of BMW’s Mini Cooper line, tracks everything being said about its brand everywhere on line—in blogs, discussion groups, forums, MySpace pages and much more—then uses what it learns to guide advertising campaigns.

At Hewlett-Packard, 50 executives log into their individual blogs each morning to join the ongoing online conversation about each of their product lines, immediately responding to customer problems and concerns.

Ernst & Young recruits many of the 3,500 college graduates it hires every year using a career group on Facebook, where it not only posts job information but also answers individual questions from prospective employees. And Del Monte Pet Foods uses a private online community to regularly “chat” with 400 pet lovers whose opinions help shape new products.

These are all examples of companies savvy enough to participate in the “groundswell,” according to Charlene Li, vice president and principal analyst at Forrester Research. “The groundswell is a social trend in which people use technologies to get the things they need from each other, rather than from traditional institutions like corporations.”

Li was a speaker at the recent Supernova conference, an annual technology event in San Francisco organized by Wharton legal studies and business ethics professor Kevin Werbach in collaboration with Wharton.

“The more you know and understand the individuals who make up the groundswell around your brand and your company, the more you can use the new social networking phenomenon to your advantage,” she said.

Such understanding comes from going well beyond traditional user surveys, however. According to Li and other speakers at the conference, too few companies study how people actually interact with the web and

utilize online collaborative tools, yet much of today’s Internet revolves around individual users, the content they create, the communities they form and the transactions they choose.

Failed Searches and Alpha Moms

To help companies target their Internet strategies, Li and Conference presenter Eszter Hargittai, have organized Forrester research into a “social technology ladder,” which classifies consumers based on their participation in various types of social networking. At the lowest rung of the ladder are the “inactives,” some 44% of all U.S. American adults who were online in 2007. Higher up are the “joiners,” the 25% who visit social networking sites like MySpace; collectors, an elite 15% who collect and aggregate information; and critics, those who post ratings and reviews as well as contribute to blogs and forums. Only 18% of all online Americans actually create content, publishing an article or a blog at least once a month, maintaining a web page or uploading content to sites like YouTube.

The power of such a classification lies in giving organizations a clear understanding of how consumers are behaving online, said Li. “Any successful strategy to tap into the groundswell has to begin with assessing customers’ social activities. Then you can decide what you want to accomplish, plan for how your relationship with your customers will change, and finally decide what social technology to use.”

The New Black

Google’s Joe Kraus agrees. Speaking at the Supernova conference, the director of product management for the search giant acknowledged that social networking is the latest fashion—“the new black,” as he called it. “But people have been endlessly fascinated by one another for a very long time. Social networking is not new; we just have new ways to do it.”

Continued on Page 3

12TH ANNUAL GALA DINNER TABLES ON SALE NOW!

A long-established tradition at the NBTA Foundation, the Annual Gala Dinner is the most prestigious gathering of business travel leaders from around the industry. The 2009 Gala Dinner will be held on Monday, March 30 at the Crowne Plaza Times Square Manhattan. You’ll have the opportunity to network with the most influence people in the business travel industry during the pre-dinner reception and dessert after party. Join us at the industry’s premier Gala as we celebrate our accomplishments and honor the Donor’s of the NBTA Foundation.

The sold-out 2008 gala dinner raised more than \$180,000 for corporate travel research and scholarships administered by the NBTA Foundation. Last year nearly 400 business travel professionals attended the prestigious black tie event, hosted by the Millennium Broadway Hotel.

The NBTA Foundation’s 12th Annual Gala Dinner is being held in conjunction with the Annual NBTA Business Travel Financial Forum—A Wall Street Look at the Business of Business Travel. This one-day forum will provide a high-level focus on critical issues in corporate travel management, including developments in the airline and hotel industries, travel taxes and fees, the future role of corporate travel, and an economic forecast of the travel industry at-large.

Tables for the 12th Annual Gala Dinner are limited, so reserve your company’s table today! For more information or to reserve a table, call Kerry Gaylor at 703-236-1169 or email at KGaylor@nbtafoundation.org.

New Study Details Hotel, Car Rental, and Meal Taxes in Top U.S. Markets

The NBTA Foundation released the findings of a comprehensive study of car rental, hotel and meal taxes in the top 50 U.S. travel destination cities (by number of air travelers).

The study provides several different views of travel taxes to help readers make informed choices. The top 50 markets are ranked by overall travel tax burden, including general sales tax and discriminatory travel taxes, and by discriminatory travel tax burden, excluding general sales taxes to count only taxes that target car rentals, hotel stays and meals. Separate data are offered for central city and airport locations, as the tax regimes are often distinct. In addition to combined data on car rental, hotel and meal taxes, separate data are provided for each of the three spend categories.

The research shows the U.S. cities where travelers incur the lowest total tax burden in central city locations, factoring in general sales taxes and discriminatory travel taxes for lodging, car rentals, and meals, are:

1. Honolulu, HI	\$21.45/day
2. Portland, OR	\$22.83/day
3. Fort Lauderdale, FL	\$23.35/day
4. Fort Myers, FL	\$23.35/day
5. West Palm Beach, FL	\$24.67/day

The cities that impose the highest total taxes on travelers are:

1. Chicago, IL	\$42.44/day
2. Nashville, TN	\$39.55/day
3. Charlotte, NC	\$38.80/day
4. Seattle, WA	\$38.70/day
5. Houston, TX	\$37.62/day

Discriminatory travel taxes are those imposed on specifically on travel services above and beyond general sales taxes. The U.S. cities with the lowest discriminatory travel tax rates for lodging, car rentals, and meals in central city locations are:

1. Oakland, CA	\$7.58/day
2. West Palm Beach, FL	\$7.62/day
3. Fort Lauderdale, FL	\$7.62/day
4. Fort Myers, FL	\$7.62/day
5. Orange county, CA	\$8.10/day

The cities that impose the highest discriminatory travel taxes on travelers for lodging, car rentals, and meals are:

1. Portland, OR	\$22.83/day
2. Seattle, WA	\$21.64/day
3. Atlanta, GA	\$19.82/day
4. Charlotte, NC	\$19.78/day
5. Chicago, IL	\$18.83/day

For the full report, please visit www.nbtafoundation.org

New Benchmarking Components Added to Tool

The NBTA Foundation released Version 4 of the Managed Travel Index® (MTI) & Benchmarking Tool in July during the 40th Annual NBTA International Convention & Exposition in Los Angeles.

Upgrades to the Managed Travel Index® (MTI) & Benchmarking Tool add car rental rate benchmarking and enhance hotel benchmarking, as well as provide the ability to assess the maturity of travel-related corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives. Users of the MTI & Benchmarking Tool can now benchmark their average hotel rates in top markets against the rates of other users, in addition to the previously available capability to compare to average room rates in top markets. Users will also be able to compare their average daily car rental rates to those of other users.

The new version of the MTI & Benchmarking Tool marks the latest of several upgrades made since the resource was first launched in 2005. The new CSR component of the tool helps travel managers measure the maturity of their companies' travel CSR initiatives. The user completes a self-assessment, answering 15 CSR questions measuring how their programs are structured to manage travel demand, procure sustainable travel services, offset travel-related emissions and incorporate duty of care initiatives. Based on the responses the tool assigns each program a CSR maturity level from zero (Non-existent) to 5 (Integrated). Users will then be linked to the recently-published 2008 NBTA CSR Toolkit for detailed information on advancing their CSR initiatives.

Future enhancements to the MTI and Benchmarking Tool will be created with the support of InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG).

Mike Fegley, IHG Vice President of Global Sales, The Americas said: "InterContinental Hotels Group realizes many important synergies achieved through partnering with the NBTA Foundation. We share in the Foundation's commitment to advancing the business travel industry through providing education and resources to travel industry professionals. We recognize that there is tremendous value for corporate travel managers to utilize technology such as the Foundation's Managed Travel Index and Benchmarking Tool. Therefore, IHG is pleased to announce our support of this dynamic tool and its development.

The Managed Travel Index® (MTI) & Benchmarking Tool is currently available to all NBTA Members.

For more information, visit the NBTA Foundation's Web site at www.nbtafoundation.org.

Save the Date!

The 3rd Annual NBTA Foundation Golf Classic will be held during the 41st Annual International Convention & Exposition

Sunday, August 23, 2009
San Diego, California

Course Information, Registration, and Sponsorship Information coming soon!

The NBTA Foundation would like to thank the sponsors of the 2nd Annual Golf Classic & Spa Day that took place July 27, 2008 in Los Angeles.

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StarCite Inc.
Travelocity Business
US Bank
Qatar Airways

To learn more about NBTA Foundation and events, please log onto our website at www.NBTAfoundation.org

5-Day GLP Session Offered at The Wharton School

The NBTA Foundation will offer the only 5-day GLP program for 2009, February 22–27 at the Wharton School in Philadelphia. Essentials of Management teaches the core concepts of business to individuals who need to broaden their managerial and strategic perspectives, enhance their business instincts and sharpen their ability to tackle management challenges. Past participants have nicknamed the program a “mini-MBA.”

This 5-day program, drawing on faculty and content from Wharton’s top-ranked MBA programs, introduces the essentials every successful manager needs in marketing, finance, operations, strategy and leadership.

The Wharton ROI: Return on Education

- Develop knowledge in core areas of business, including finance, marketing, management and strategy based on current research and best practices.
- Understand how operational and financial decisions impact strategic and marketing efforts.
- Develop a business vocabulary that will enable you to communicate and collaborate across organizational boundaries.
- Infuse best practices into your routine by immediately applying classroom knowledge to real-world situations.
- Know how to approach different managerial problems using value driven decision-making.
- Understand how organizational culture impacts strategy implementation.
- Learn how to manage change and conflict effectively.

Space is limited and offered on a first come, first served basis—so register today! For more information or to apply for this session, visit www.nbtafoundation.org and click on Education.

'Not a Site... *Continued from page 1*

That is not to diminish the power of social computing. In fact, Kraus already sees it as the force behind three major trends in the way people use the Internet.

First, “the process of information discovery is changing from a solitary activity to a communal activity,” said Kraus, citing as an example his own recent behavior in choosing an anniversary gift for his wife. He searched and found that candy is traditional for a sixth anniversary, then set up a message on his G-mail account, saying he needed ideas for a candy-based gift.

A friend emailed to tell him of an extraordinary baker who constructs specialty cakes and, thanks to her suggestion, his sixth anniversary gift became an elaborate cake in the shape of a colorful purse. So, said Kraus, he went from solitary information discovery to social information discovery—and a much better result than he could have achieved on his own.

Second, he said, how we exchange information is changing, from sharing information actively (emailing photos to friends) to sharing it passively (uploading those photos to Facebook and emailing notification to friends). “What’s happening is that we’re separating access from notification,” said Kraus.

This leads to more sharing because people don’t worry as much about interrupting others with emails, calling attention to themselves and appearing too self-important.

Third, and most important, Kraus sees the web eventually becoming entirely social. “Today, social computing is something you do at a specific site,” said Kraus. “But we’re realizing that being social is not a site. It’s a concept.”

We won’t get to that entirely social web, he added, until we find ways to allow users to do three things: establish a single identity to log on to many sites; share private resources such as photos or contact lists without handing out private credentials (such as an email account password); and distribute information across multiple social applications.

What all organizations need to prepare for, said Kraus, is a completely social web, where “your users will simply expect to be part of the conversation.”

Excerpted with permission from Knowledge@Wharton, a bi-weekly online resource that offers the latest business insights, information and research from a variety of sources. For the full text of this article and others, go to <http://knowledge@wharton.upenn.edu>.

Upcoming Calendar of Events

FEBRUARY 2009

22–27: Global Leadership Professional Program

Topic: Essentials of Management: Mastering Core Business Concepts
The Wharton School – Philadelphia

MARCH 2009

15–16: Global Leadership Professional Program

Topic: Critical Thinking
NBTA Canada Conference, Toronto

30: NBTA Foundation Board of Trustees Meeting

New York

30: NBTA Foundation 12th Annual Gala Dinner

New York

30: NBTA Business Travel Financial Forum: A Wall Street Look at the Business of Business Travel

New York

AUGUST 2009

22–23: Global Leadership Professional Program

Topic: Analyzing Complex Decisions
NBTA Annual Convention, San Diego

23: 3rd Annual NBTA Foundation Golf Classic

San Diego, California

23–26: NBTA International Convention and Exposition

San Diego, California