

famous on YouTube.

Rajesh, Blogworks: Vanity coverage someone said to me the other day...

Rajesh, Blogworks: Media today is about reach in a large part and they are making, half hearted attempts to embrace UGC maybe because they many just aren't aware of how to go about doing it.

Alok Mittal, Canaan Partners: ...and then you look at the Internet savvy demographics, and that is a very valuable set, and Internet is beating traditional media hollow within in- and advertisers know that...

Prerna Gupta, Yaari.com: Agreed and that's of course what all the Web 2.0 entrepreneurs are banking on...

Amit Ranjan, Slideshare.net: I think traditional media has always been powerful but there is clearly a shift happening; Consider my own example – my reading habits have changed so drastically; I spend 50% less time than I earlier did on reading newspapers and books; instead I spend that time reading blogs, online magazines etc.

So if it's happening to me, it's happening to others as well; currently my own example may be a slightly skewed one, but this will spread

Rajesh, Blogworks: Prerna, in your opinion, how much are these communities, UGC impacting purchase decisions that the customer is making today? In India?

Prerna Gupta, Yaari.com: In the US, I'm sure communities like Facebook are having a meaningful impact on consumer purchases. Some of the leading sites have done an excellent job integrating ads into their networks...

...and, given that kids are spending hours a day looking at these sites, I'm sure the ads are effective.

I can myself recall ads on Facebook, like the Victoria's Secret ad, which have caught my attention and most likely had some subconscious impact on my purchasing decisions.

In India, however, I don't think community sites are having much impact on purchasing decisions, because the sites being used by most Indians are not Indian sites.

A Victoria's Secret ad on Facebook isn't really pertinent for an 18 year old guy in Delhi (although I'm sure he enjoys looking at the ad)...

Rajesh, Blogworks: Smile

Prerna Gupta, Yaari.com: ...this is why I believe that when an Indian social networking site does gain prominence in India, it will offer a very attractive platform for advertisers.

Rajesh, Blogworks: But they are being used for research (let me extend that to social media)

Alok Mittal, Canaan Partners: Some yes, but there is significant lag on part of marketers

Rajesh, Blogworks: Agree, it's totally missing and most aren't even tracking, leave alone participate. We created a model recently – layers of influence in purchase-

http://www.blogworks.in/blog/blogworks/there_was_an_article_that.php#more

Alok Mittal, Canaan Partners: That's another reason why specific purpose networks might happen sooner - employers understand referral based hiring and are willing to pay today.

Rajesh, Blogworks: But on the other hand some have invested into communities of their own. Communities take investment and time, bar the initial successes, do you think they will be able to sustain and justify ROI?

Prerna Gupta, Yaari.com: No! I think it is silly. Informational sites I can see (e.g., hair tips from Sunsilk), but the community aspect really doesn't make sense to me

Alok Mittal, Canaan Partners: I don't know if brands have the skills to be media owners over period of time... they have the skills to use media for engagement and outreach

Amit Ranjan, Slideshare.net: No, I don't think this will justify ROI; and my background in marketing tells me that there is more to it why these sites are created.

Alok Mittal, Canaan Partners: Ouch! Amit, hold on – don't spill the beans here now (winks)

Rajesh, Blogworks: Lol, go on, go on

Amit Ranjan, Slideshare.net: I think these sites are being pushed

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**Amit Ranjan,
Slideshare.net**

“Our plans, on a broad scale, are what they've always been -- to build a mobile-enabled community site for Indian youth. Our focus right now is to grow our user-base and improve our existing product based on feedback.”

**Prerna Gupta,
Yaari.com**

by the ad agencies rather than the brand teams themselves; you see, there is the relationship between the corporate brand teams and their advertising agencies, and the typical dynamics that exists between them; sometimes the agencies push for things that showcase their own skills in newer areas (online media & interactive design, in this case). That's my hunch, though I may be wrong.

Rajesh, Blogworks: I think starting out is an easy, fairly painless process but disengagement can have serious fallout and I think many will be forced to rethink... soon.

Rajesh, Blogworks: You know we found great value for a marketer participating in a neutral community instead - all brands get discussed on a community - there is intelligence to be gathered there.

Rajesh, Blogworks: Once the owner has created a platform, what's the role? How do they guide the growth and success of that community?

Prerna Gupta, Yaari.com: The role of the creator never ends, while the site is driven by user-generated content, the site's creator must ensure that the content is displayed in an effective, clear and usable manner.

Also, as usage grows, it becomes increasingly challenging to keep the site fast, which is critically important and of course you have to stay engaged with your users to make sure someone else doesn't come in and steal them away...

Amit Ranjan, Slideshare.net: Prerna is right. The creator has a never ending role...

Rajesh, Blogworks: So what are the makings of a successful community? Those key ingredients - bullet points if you like:

Prerna Gupta, Yaari.com:

1. Understand your user
2. Offer a simple, targeted product

Amit Ranjan, Slideshare.net:

1. Solve a problem that the user is facing
2. Blend the solution with the socializing in a seamless way.

Rajesh, Blogworks: This one is from my friend Toby - how do these marketers intend to track CMG? Will they monitor the conversations and how?

Amit Ranjan, Slideshare.net: That's a tough one; one could create discussions and forums and see the conversations going on there; but as the community scales this will be tough

Rajesh, Blogworks: It is crucial though.

Rajesh, Blogworks: Amit and Prerna - What are your plans, going forward?

Amit Ranjan, Slideshare.net: We don't have India specific plans per se; in general we have a particular kind on content (slideshows, presentations) we are looking to extend multimedia capabilities so as to engage and involve the user more

Prerna Gupta, Yaari.com: Our plans, on a broad scale, are what they've always been -- to build a mobile-enabled community site for Indian youth. Our focus right now is to grow our user-base and improve our existing product based on feedback

Rajesh, Blogworks: Alok, to finish off, am sure our readers would be interested in knowing, which models do you see likely getting funding, going forward (smiles)

Alok Mittal, Canaan Partners: There is a media side of the whole thing, where reach and engagement levels are the key. Then there is the transactional business model which takes it to a new level. I see scope for both...

Again, platforms are more valuable, but it's hard to build good platforms that can compete with specific purpose deep sites.

Rajesh, Blogworks: So with that tip from Alok, we seed Blog the Talk – Edition 2 for our readers to take forward. The conversation has just begun and we hope the readers will take it forward with their inputs and insights...

Alok, Prerna, Amit, let me say thanks to all of you once again for starting this. Cheers.

End of Edition 2- Part 2
Readers can participate and carry this conversation forward at
<http://blogworks.in/blog>.