

BEHAVIOUR OF THE CZECH INTERNET HEAVY USERS IN ONLINE SOCIAL MEDIA ENVIRONMENT¹

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Abstract. Online social media gain attention of both marketing specialists and academics. However, in the Czech Republic not much is known about the way that online social media are used. The study of 640 Czech heavy internet users analyses their behavior in the online social media environment. The activities explored include *inter alia* photo-sharing, video-sharing, music-sharing, participation in discussion forums and creating and updating profiles on social networking sites. The Czech heavy internet users are then segmented according to the level of their active participation in the online social media environment. Using the “Engagement Pyramid” of the Altimeter Group, the Czech heavy internet users are divided into five segments. They are the “Watching”, the “Sharing”, the “Commenting”, the “Producing” and the “Curating”.

JEL classification: M31

Key words: online social media, online sharing, heavy internet users, Engagement Pyramid.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: socialiniai tinklalapiai, dalijimasis informacija tinkle, nuolatiniai interneto vartotojai, įsitraukimo piramidė.

1. Introduction

Online social media, sometimes described as Web 2.0, are a central term of today's marketing. They gain attention of both marketing specialists and academics. However,

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because online social media are a relatively new phenomenon, there is not much research in this field.

With the exception of the “online WOM” which was investigated by some researchers (e.g. see Sen and Lerman, 2007; Brown *et al.*, 2007; Dwyer, 2007 or Kozinets *et al.*, 2010), online social media lack systematic academic research. This is even more relevant from the Czech perspective. Almost nothing is known about the behaviour of the Czech internet users in the environment of online social media.

Lack of systematic research is the main reason why there is even no general agreement on the definition of online social media. One of the most relevant definitions was suggested by Constantinides and Fountain. These researchers defined online social media as “a collection of open-source, interactive and user-controlled online applications expanding the experiences, knowledge and market power of the users as participants in business and social processes.” These applications “support the creation of informal users’ networks facilitating the flow of ideas and knowledge by allowing the efficient generation, dissemination, sharing and editing/refining of informational content” (Constantinides and Fountain, 2008).

Online social media take different forms. Probably most important of them are blogs, online social networks (such as Facebook or LinkedIn), content online communities (i.e. online platforms focused on particular content), online discussion forums (e. g. product reviews), entertainment online communities (where people share photos, videos, music, play games etc.) and others.

Recently the importance of online social media has increased radically and can no longer be ignored by the marketers. Companies and other institutions of any size can use online social media for many different marketing goals. This is even more important for institutions of small financial power like the ones in the cultural sector. For example, the Slovenian choir Perpetuum Jazzile became world famous after publishing its music on YouTube which was viewed by over 12 million people.

This study therefore analyses the behaviour of the Czech internet users in the online social media environment. Only the behaviour of heavy internet users was studied. They were people who used the internet several times a week and who we therefore found most relevant for the purposes of the study.

The following problems were addressed: What is the extent of photo-, video- and music-sharing in the online social media environment? Do the Czech heavy internet users play games in the online social media environment? How often do they visit discussion forums? Do they create or update profiles on social networking sites? However, the main goal of this study determined the level of active participation of the Czech heavy internet users in the online social media environment.

The survey was conducted during April and May 2010 on the sample of 640 Czech heavy internet users. The respondents were given an online questionnaire. The sample was relatively equal in terms of gender and relatively diverse in terms of age, education, income, size of the area and region (see Table 1).

Table 1. Sample Characteristics (in absolute numbers)

Gender	Men	314
	Women	326
Age	15-29	319
	30-44	174
	45-59	110
	60+	35
Education	Basic	37
	Basic plus	60
	High school	272
	University	272
Income in CZK	Up to 20.000	157
	20.001 - 30.000	136
	30.001 - 50.000	196
	More than 50 000	105
Size of the area	Less than 5.000 (village)	139
	5.001-19.999 (small town)	116
	20.000-99.999 (large town)	156
	100.000 and more (city)	230
Region	Prague (capital city)	113
	Bohemia	361
	Moravia	166

2. Findings

The study first focused on sharing in the online social media environment. The level of photo sharing, video-sharing and music-sharing was analysed.

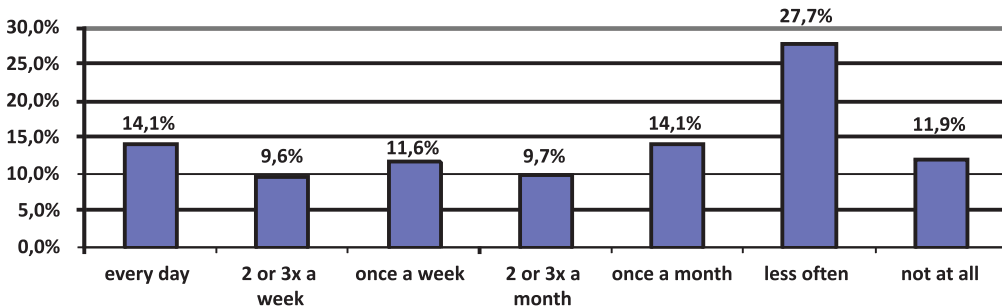
Almost half of the respondents stated that they shared photos. Such sites as “Picasa” and “Rajče” were used most often. “Flickr” was on the third place. The frequency of usage declined with older age. Photo-sharing was more often used by people living in cities, people with higher income and people with university education.

According to our study, video-sharing takes place predominantly on YouTube. More than 75% of the respondents stated that they used YouTube (at least sometimes). The frequency of YouTube usage was also relatively high. Almost half of the respondents reported that they used YouTube every week or even every day. The Czech video-sharing platform “Stream” was in the second position. Other media were of marginal importance only. Similar to photo sharing, the frequency of usage declined with age. However, contrary to photo-sharing, video-sharing was less often used by people living in cities, people with high income and people with university education.

According to our study, music sharing is not a regular activity. Only one fourth of the respondents shared music. Most common music sharing media were “BandZone” and “Last.fm”.

The study also analysed the frequency of playing games in the online-social media environment. Approximately 60% of the respondents reported that they played online games, such as “FarmVille” or “MafiaWars” (at least sometimes). However, the frequency of play strongly declined with age. Surprisingly, there was no difference between men and women.

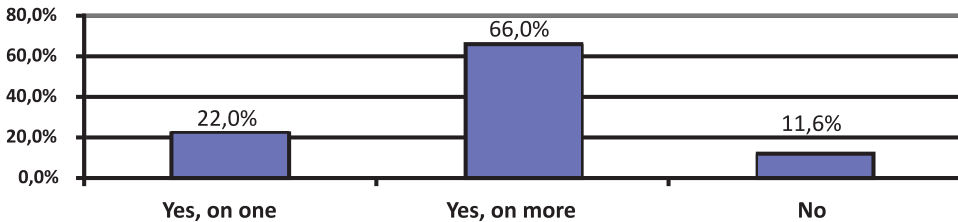
The study also focused on the frequency of visiting discussion forums by Czech heavy internet users. Almost half of the respondents reported that they visited discussion forums several times a month (see Figure 1). However, approximately 14% of the respondents reported that they visited discussion forums even on a daily basis. Men tended to visit discussion forums more often than women. Frequency of discussion forum visits lowered with age. Other differences were insignificant.



N = 640

Fig. 1. “How Often Do You Visit Discussion Forums?”

Most of the respondents reported that they created or updated their profiles on social networking sites. It is interesting to note that the majority of the Czech heavy internet users stated that they had profiles on several social networking sites (see Figure 2).



N = 640

Fig. 2. “Have You Ever Created Your Own Profile on a Social Networking Site?”

The main focus of the study was however on the level of active participation of the Czech heavy internet users in the online social media environment. For this reason, behavioural segmentation of the Czech heavy internet users according to the level of participation was obtained.

The existing research suggests that some individuals regularly participate in the online social media environment, whereas others do not participate there at all. The less active individuals are sometimes called “lurkers” (Bishop, 2006). It has been estimated that in general 90% of the online social media users are “lurkers”, another 9% contribute from time to time only and merely 1% is responsible for almost all of the contributions (Nielsen, 2006).

For the purposes of the study the “Engagement Pyramid” was used. This categorisation was invented by Altimeter Group (Altimeter Group, 2010). “Engagement Pyramid” works with five segments of online social media users according to their level of engagement (Solis, 2010). These segments are the “Watching”, the “Sharing”, the “Commenting”, the “Producing” and last but not least, the “Curating”.

The “Watching” are the users who simply consume the online content. They visit social networking sites, read blogs, online forums and product reviews, watch videos online etc.

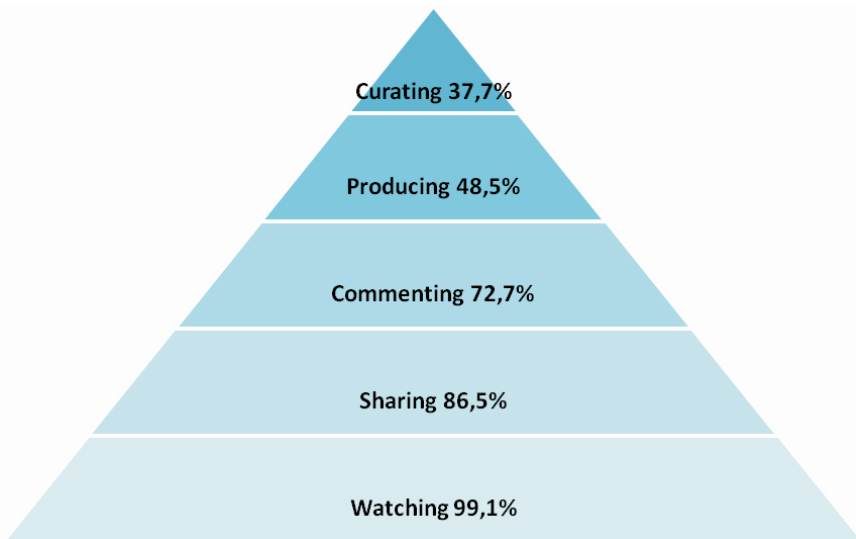
The “Sharing” not only consume the content but also share it with others. They upload pictures, videos and articles, forward those items to friends, “tag” pictures and websites etc.

The “Commenting” respond to the content of others. They comment on blogs, social networking sites and online discussions and forums.

The “Producing” create their own content. They update their personal blogs or personal websites, upload self-made pictures, videos and music, write online articles and reviews etc.

Finally, the “Curating” are the users most heavily engaged in the online social media environment. These users update blogs, profiles and websites of brands, institutions and interest groups and engage in many other activities.

Based on the study, 37.7% of the Czech heavy internet users could be described as “Curating”, 48.5% as “Producing”, 72.7% as “Commenting”, 86.5% as “Sharing” and 99.1% as “Watching” (see Figure 3).



N = 640

Fig. 3. The “Engagement Pyramid” Applied to the Czech Heavy Internet Users

Each of the five segments can be described in terms of demographics. Based on our study, the “Curating” are typically young and well educated people. They are mostly male.

The “Producing” (but not “Curating”) are typically people over 45. Similar to the previous group, the “Producing” are also mostly men. Users in this segment usually have university education and live in cities.

On the other hand, the “Commenting” (but not “Curating” or “Producing”) are a feminine group. Almost 70% of them are women. They are mostly young and educated.

The “Sharing” and the “Watching” (but not “Curating”, “Producing” or “Commenting”) groups were very diverse. The respondents were of all age groups, equal in terms of gender, with a relatively high proportion of workers (35%).

The percentage of respondents who have reported that during the last four weeks they were engaged in particular activities in the online social media environment can be seen from Table 2.

Table 2. Percentage of Respondents Engaged in Particular Activity (during the last four weeks)

Added a comment on community web	81,6%
Visited community web	78,1%
Watched a video on the web	76,1%
Shared something interesting with friends (video, photo, article etc.)	59,1%
Uploaded a photo, a video or music made by themselves	56,7%
Updated their personal profile	53,0%
Read a review or evaluation of a product/service	52,0%
Read an online forum	40,3%
Read a blog or microblog	34,8%
Updated a profile or a page of some group they liked/belonged to	32,4%
Commented on a blog	25,3%
Contributed to an online discussion	24,2%
Tagged a webpage or a photo on the web	20,0%
Updated a blog, microblog, or a webpage of some group they liked/belonged to	15,9%
Wrote a story or an article and published it on the web	14,9%
Updated their personal microblog	14,4%
Updated their personal webpage	12,6%
Updated their personal blog	11,6%
Listened to a podcast	10,4%
Voted for a webpage online	9,8%
Updated their blog/profile containing a recommendation of some group or brand they liked / belonged to	8,8%
Corrected / appended an article on Wiki	2,3%

N 640

3. Conclusions

This study analysed the activities of the Czech heavy internet users in the online social media environment. Such analysis is both necessary and absent. On the sample of 640 respondents the study investigated the extent of photo, video and music sharing in the online social media environment.

In the Czech Republic, photo sharing is dominated by the following platforms: “Picasa”, “Rajče” and “Flickr”. Video sharing is quite extensive and is dominated by YouTube. Music sharing is not a regular activity and is relatively limited.

The Czech heavy internet users visit discussion forums quite often. Almost half of the respondents visited discussion forums several times in a month. Approximately 14% of them reported that they visited discussion forums on a daily basis. Based on our study, men visit discussion forums more often than women.

The majority of the Czech heavy internet users create or update their profiles on social networking sites. Typically they have profiles on several social networking sites.

The most important part of this study is the segmentation of the Czech heavy internet users according to their active participation in the online social media environment. Using the “Engagement Pyramid” of the Altimeter Group, the Czech heavy internet users were classified into five groups.

Approximately half of the Czech heavy internet users can be described as the “Curating” or as the “Producing”. These people are the ones most engaged in the online social media environment. They tend to be well educated and are mostly male.

The “Commenting” as less active users are mostly young, educated and female. Approximately one quarter of our respondents belong to this segment.

The two least engaged groups, the “Sharing” and the “Watching”, are very diverse. These two segments lack homogeneity.

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ČEKIJOS NUOLATINIŲ INTERNETO VARTOTOJŲ ELGSENA SOCIALINIUOSE TINKLALAPIUOSE

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Santrauka. Socialiniai tinklalapiai sulaukia didelio marketingo specialistų ir akademinės bendruomenės narių dėmesio. Tačiau Čekijoje nedaug žinoma apie socialinių tinklalapių panaudojimą. Tyrimas paremtas 640 Čekijos nuolatinių interneto vartotojų elgesio socialiniuose tinklalapiuose analize. Tyrinėta veikla apima keitimąsi fotografijomis, vaizdo medžiaga, muzika, dalyvavimu forumuose, profilių kūrimu ir jų tobulinimu socialiniuose tinklalapiuose bei kitas veiklas. Tiriant elgseną, Čekijos nuolatiniai interneto vartotojai buvo išskaidyti į 5 segmentus pagal jų dalyvavimo socialiniuose tinklalapiuose aktyvumo lygį, pritaikius įsitraukimo piramidės principą: stebėtojai, besidalijantieji, komentuotojai, kūrėjai ir kuratoriai.

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