

Social media – key trends

How will social media and its related applications – geo-location targeting, tagging physical objects, etc. – evolve over the next couple of years?

- 1. Identity will become embedded in devices:** Our social media identities (Twitter username, Facebook profile, etc.) will be entered as part of the initial process of setting up our devices, and will be propagated into all applications. This will eliminate the need to enter your Twitter or Facebook credentials to access related functionality on mobile apps – instead, they will seamlessly access your profile.
- 2. Online sharing will become embedded in media life:** With social identity embedded into the devices we use daily, social sharing will become an integral part of the way we enjoy media on our regular TV's, DVD players and music players. These devices will evolve towards all being Internet enabled and allow us to share likes, links and personal commentary. Remote controls may include "like" buttons which autopost to Facebook, while music players will sync preferences to preferred identity.
- 3. Location will be embedded into all activities:** Location aware devices will employ pre-emptive use of location to alert the user to things or people nearby that may be of interest. Users won't have to check-in to a place to see if their friends are nearby, as their device will automatically alert them. This trend bears particular implications for marketers, who will have to be particularly careful to provide consumers with value in that message and offer – and not just another annoying discount offer that they will eventually tune out if it becomes an onslaught.
- 4. Smart devices and web apps will automatically check-in and post updates:** Identity aware devices, empowered by embeddable RFID tags, will allow this type of technology to spread beyond the mobile phone. A smart coffee thermos, for example, could enable auto-check ins and send coupons to your phone as you enter your favorite coffee shop.
- 5. Social networking will redefine how large organizations communicate:** Social media inspired design patterns applied to existing enterprise software and/or intranets increase opportunities for collaboration. Collaboration will no longer be limited to sharing documents and version control, but will expand to the ability to find colleagues by shared interest and collaborate seamlessly in a multi-channel environment.

These key trends have implications for brands looking to reach consumers where and when it is most contextually relevant – and should be carefully considered as brands strike the balance between engaging consumers with a truly valuable, differentiated and interesting proposition or suggestion – and not just with an onslaught of promotional offers they will subsequently tune out.
