

Brands Get Social

According to the first annual **Community and Social Media Study**, from *The e-tailing Group*, five out of ten social media tools have been adopted by more than 50% percent of US brands and retailers, with the Facebook Fan Page leading the way at 86%. In addition, the study found three-fourths of the survey respondents feel brands have accelerated their use of, and commitment to, community and social media in the past six months.

The study found that the penetration of social media tools within brand and retailer organizations is extremely high, given the length of time these tools have been around.

CONCERNS

The top three concerns of marketers and merchandisers related to social media:

- **Brand degradation fear** - "people can trash my products in front of large audiences"
 - **Competence fear** - "I am using outdated marketing/merchandising techniques"?
 - **Competitive fear** - "customer's inclination to leave their site to find a more socially-engaging site"
- These motivators, which drove the last wave of social media adoption, will also be driving the next wave in the coming year, says the study.

Community and Social Networking Tools Employed and Planned

Network or Tool	(% of Respondents)		Anticipated Timing	
	Today	Next 12 Months	Beyond 1 Year	No Plans to Employ
Facebook fan page	86%	10	3	1
Twitter	65	19	7	9
Customer reviews	55	26	13	6
Blogs	55	25	12	8
Viral videos	50	22	13	15
Facebook connect	43	31	10	16
Social listening	36	31	19	14
Q & A	29	20	25	26
Community forums	27	18	23	32
Product suggestion box	19	26	20	35

Over the next 12 months, study respondents say they plan to adopt:

- Facebook Connect (31%)
- Social Listening Tools (31%)
- Customer Reviews (26%)
- Product Suggestions (26%)

The study also found the primary goal for adopting social media was:

- Customer engagement (39%)
- Mobilizing advocates for "word of mouth" (30%)
- Increasing brand loyalty (21%)

Regarding advocacy and word of mouth (the #2 goal of using social media tools), the study found that Facebook is considered by brands and merchants to be the "single most effective tactic in mobilizing brand advocates and influencers to spread the word about products/services."

However, when it comes to driving sales and customer engagement, customer reviews came out on top by a wide margin, with 78% of those polled listing customer reviews as the #1 social media tool for generating sales and 61% listing customer reviews #1 in driving customer engagement.

Source: *The e-Tailing Group via The Center for Media Research*, September 2009