

Social Nets and Blogs More Popular Than E-Mail

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Outlook not so good?

Aside from searching for information, e-mail has long been the most popular activity online. But no more.

According to [Nielsen Online](#), more people in the US and other leading digital countries worldwide are using social networks and blogs than e-mail.

Top Five Online Sectors Worldwide*, Ranked by Active Reach, December 2007 & December 2008

	December 2007	December 2008
1. Search	84.0%	85.9%
2. General interest—portals & communities	83.4%	85.2%
3. Software manufacturers	72.0%	73.4%
4. Member communities (e.g., social networks and blogs)	61.4%	66.8%
5. E-mail	62.5%	65.1%

Note: *Australia, Brazil, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, the US and the UK

Source: Nielsen Online, "Global Faces and Networked Places: A Nielsen report on Social Networking's New Global Footprint," March 2009

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While search and destination sites remain the most popular online activities, social network and blog use exceeded that of e-mail, increasing their reach by 5.4%.

In addition, time spent on social networks and blogging sites is growing at over three times the rate of overall Internet growth.

Regardless, marketers should use caution before abandoning simpler media such as e-mail or search for social network advertising.

A 2008 study performed by [IDC](#) found that 43% of social network users *never* clicked on ads, and only 11% of those who did actually purchased anything. Compare that to nonusers, 80% of whom clicked on ads at least once per year; 23% of those who did click bought something.

Online retailers surveyed in an [Econsultancy](#) and [R.O.EYE](#) study found e-mail marketing to be very cost-effective in terms of customer acquisition, with affiliate marketing and paid search not far behind.

Online Marketing Channels that Are Cost-Effective for Driving Customer Acquisition According to Online Retailers Worldwide*, July-August 2008 (% of respondents)

	Very cost-effective	Quite cost-effective	Not cost-effective
E-mail marketing	51%	33%	17%
Affiliate marketing	46%	48%	6%
Paid search	40%	49%	11%
Mobile marketing	7%	17%	75%
Online display advertising	7%	44%	50%

Note: n=164 merchants; *includes UK, non-UK Europe, North America and other

Source: Econsultancy and R.O.EYE, "Affiliate Marketing Survey Report 2008," provided to eMarketer, September 2, 2008

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There is a lot of untapped potential in the social media space. But in a recession, when expenditures are shrinking, e-mail budgets are relatively safe. Shrewd marketers will not stop doing the things that are proven to make their clients money.

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