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### ***The Future - Continued Growth Penetration?***

An understanding of the stability of the marketing platform is imperative to businesses for their marketing development and expenditure (Porter 1980). As social media platforms grow in importance, similarities to the dot-com era are beginning to materialise. The dot-com crash of the early millennium was a consequence of massive spending of investors' money "regardless of underlying profits" (Dot-com Bubble 2008), driving the price "beyond any accurate reflection of its actual worth" (Investopedia 2008).

In comparison, the prospect of being able to build vast databases of people and to target relevant advertising has generated significant interest, and potentially unsustainable valuations given that the ability to make money from these platforms is still yet to be proven. Google purchased the loss making YouTube for \$1.65 billion in stock (Google 2006), Facebook has recently been valued at \$15 billion by Microsoft (Gigaom 2007), whilst Yahoo has been valued at \$44.6 billion, also by Microsoft (Microsoft 2008).

In an attempt to justify its valuation, Facebook has taken increasingly aggressive steps to increase advertising income with its targeted advertising venture, Beacon <[www.facebook.com/business/?beacon](http://www.facebook.com/business/?beacon)>, a system that enables "marketers [to] deliver adverts to individual Facebook users based on the details they share with friends on the site" (Holahan 2007). However, due to the nature of OSN being consumer controlled, they were forced to retreat against "howls of protest from [their] users" (India PR 2008), angry at the intrusions of privacy that the system was deemed to have introduced.

The aforementioned social software tools that define 'Web 2.0' will continue to grow and provide users with new and more innovative ways to explore the rapidly changing social and media environment (Cooke & Buckley 2008, p270). However, whether these levels of growth are sustainable or not remains an important question. As competition from niche networks and social media intensifies it may become harder to justify these valuations. With the opportunities to gain profits through advertising becoming more difficult, the possibility of using social media to build relationships and generate word-of-mouth interaction becomes more important.

***Bibliography available on request. info@animanx.com***