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The Death Of Portals › › › Brand Marketing

BY Martin Lindstrom | October 28, 1999

The portals we know today will probably not exist 12 months from now, thanks to the appearance of true Internet-based one-to-one communication.

Consumer infomediaries are a third party search engine collecting data about its users and acting on the user's behalf to gain benefits on the Internet. This technology can capture and handle the tons of data necessary to create true one-to-one communication.

The data an infomediary gathers creates both a solid platform for customization and a negotiating tool. As a negotiator, the infomediary can gain discounts for you by leveraging its store of consumer details about you.

PrivaSeek.com is one of the better known services. It will not only buy your next flight to LA, but also know, over time, what class you prefer, what hotel you normally use, the name of your favorite restaurant and pre-order your duty-free items before you even ask. It's called predictable modeling, a technology that will become key in all Internet-based communication very soon.

This new technology saves the consumer time and money. It also opens the door for advertisers to target messages in a way never possible before.

The Australian site FreeOnline.com.au, for example, offers free Internet access and advanced infomediary services. Access is free as long as users allow the infomediary to monitor their behavior.

Take the case of someone spending a lot of time on BMW's site. The system will automatically capture the data and inform BMW about the new potential customer, his/her interests and geographic location.

BMW can now customize an individual ad to the user, offering a special package on the particular model of interest.

The message doesn't appear as an email, but as an individual ad on the screen. If the user shows interest in the offer, his/her identity will be made available to BMW.

At no time will the user's identity become available unless previously authorized by the user.

Concepts like FreeOnline and PrivaSeek will not only totally change the type of banner ads presented, but will result in the death of portals as we know them today.

In the new millennium, portals will be forced to offer much more than individual stock quotes and horoscopes. They will become infomediaries, gigantic databases whose sole purpose is to collect and use consumer data in the most effective way to achieve true one-to-one communication between brands and consumers.

Little wonder Excite and Yahoo! have acquired some of the world's most respected data mining companies over the last six months.

Today's portals will have to become infomediaries to survive.