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**AVIS**

We try  
harder.

Tips, News and Conversations

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## Harnessing Consumer Empowerment

### An **Avis Rent a Car** Case Study

David Shiell: Managing Director, Web Liquid Group



# Introduction

- By 2010, 60%+ of fortune 1000 companies will have some form of online community (*Gartner Research 2007*)
- *“A sense of entitlement has blossomed into a sense of omnipotence. Consumers are more me-focused than ever, and they’re not afraid to talk about it.” (Seth Godin 2007)*

The screenshot shows a Facebook group page for 'Stop the Great HSBC Graduate Rip-Off!!!'. The page includes a search bar, navigation tabs (Profile, Friends, Networks, Inbox), and a sidebar with applications like Photos, Groups, Events, and Marketplace. The main content area features the group's name, a description, and several posts. The posts include information about the group's purpose, a link to a joint NUS/HSBC press release, and a BBC News article. The group's officers and administrators are listed on the right side of the page.

**facebook** Profile edit Friends + Networks + Inbox + Home account privacy logout

Search +

Applications edit

- Photos
- Groups
- Events
- Marketplace
- My Questions
- Like

WIN £500 FREE shopping money! Yours to spend at claire's H&M M&S

**Stop the Great HSBC Graduate Rip-Off!!!** Global

**Information**

**Group Info**

Name: Stop the Great HSBC Graduate Rip-Off!!!

Type: Student Groups - Political Groups

Description: UPDATE, UPDATE, UPDATE, UPDATE

HSBC have contacted NUS to discuss this campaign. Following our discussions and negotiations, HSBC have decided to freeze interest on 2007 graduate overdrafts up to £1,500, with future policy subject to review. All those recent graduates who have been subject to additional interest charges this August will be eligible for a refund.

Following this development, we will suspend the planned action on 4 September at HSBC HQ. We will send out a further communication later today.

Please see the joint NUS/HSBC press release here: <http://www.officeronline.co.uk/news/274602.aspx>

Please see the NUS Press release here: <http://www.officeronline.co.uk/news/274606.aspx>

This story is BBC News' most read story of the day! <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/6970570.stm>

NUS would like to thank you all for your involvement in this campaign. The commitment, time and energy shown by the members of this group has precipitated real change. Despite all those who suggested that our concerns would not be listened to, our voice has been heard. HSBC have agreed to continue a dialogue with NUS, and we remain committed to expressing the concerns of students and graduates in our future.

**HSBC**  
Students' Rip-Off Local Bank

View Discussion Board  
Join this Group

Share +

**Officers**

- Anna Uzomakun  
Vice-President (London), National Union of Students
- Wes Streeting (Cambridge)  
Vice-President (Education), National Union of Students

**Group Type**

This is an open group. Anyone can join and invite others to join.

**Admins**

- Wes Streeting (Cambridge) (creator)
- Anna Uzomakun
- Alastair McLeod (University of Bristol)
- Marin Farr (Northumbria)
- Alex Jones

## "Stop the Great HSBC Graduate Rip-Off"

- No longer offering interest-free overdrafts
- Modern day student protest on Facebook
- Members call for boycott of the bank.
- In 2 months HSBC announced it was *"not too big to listen to the needs of customers"* and reversed its decision



# Personalisation Revolution

- Content now *pulled* and not *pushed* by audiences



**20<sup>th</sup> Century**



**21<sup>st</sup> Century**

- Consumer in Control
  - ‘My way’
  - Self Reliance
  - Transparency
  - Relationship



## 2.0

2006 was “a story about community and collaboration on a scale never seen before”, declaring that “**TIME's Person of the Year for 2006 is you**”

– *TIME magazine*

The statistics...

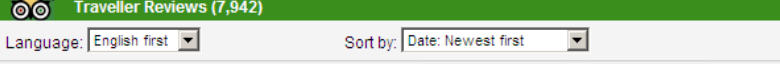
- **70,000,000** blogs – *Technorati, Apr'07*
- **1.5 million** posts per day – *Technorati, Apr'07*
- **114 million** unique MySpace visitors – *e-consultancy, Jun'07*
- **Facebook grew 541%** since December 06 – *NMA, Sep'07*
- **72 million** unique users a month on YouTube – *NMA, Jun'07*

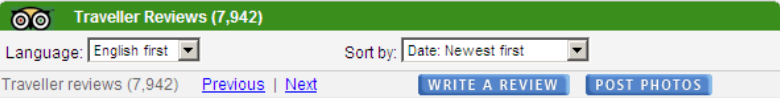



# New Age Business Imperative

## User generated influence

- Undeniable influence on consumer behaviour
- Essential need to listen to online consumer sentiment

•  incorporate



**Traveller rating:**  **1.0**

**Edinburgh: "Beware of car rental problems at Edinburgh Airport!"**  
✉ *A TripAdvisor Member*, Virginia Beach, VA 16 Aug 2004

We had a car rental reservation with Thrifty for 9 days, the rental office is just off the t Airport. Our flight was delayed from London and we arrived in Edinburgh approx. 2 h When we got to the Thrifty rental office our car had been given away, and there were available! The rental agent said although they take your credit card info, you are not c up the car, therefore we were marked as a "no show" after 2 hours! I said giving you secure the booking and he said "It's like booking a table when you go out for dinner give your table away" I answered him that they don't ask for credit card numbers to b would not use this Thrifty again, if you are going to Edinburgh stick with the "big guys"

[Save this review](#)

*This review is the subjective opinion of a TripAdvisor member and not of TripAdvisor*

[Compliment this member](#)

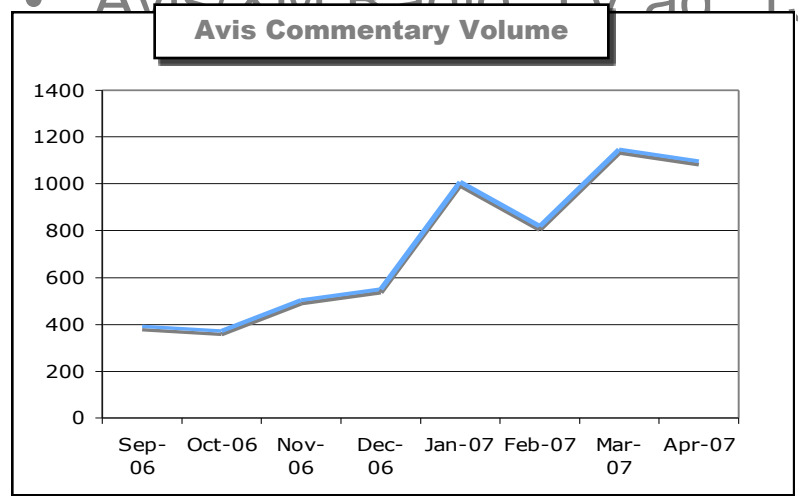
Helpful votes: 3/3. Did you find this review helpful? [Yes](#) [No](#)



# Identifying the Web 2.0 Opportunity

## Trawling the blogosphere

- Partnered with 'Market Sentinel' technology
- More comments about Avis than any other car hire company
- 540% rise in Avis comments; Dec vs. Jan 2006
- 8,000+ posts about Avis on Flvertalk.com
- 'Avis/XM Radio' TV ad: 135,000 views



The screenshot shows a YouTube search results page for the query "avis xm". The search bar contains "avis xm". Below the search bar, there are tabs for "Videos", "Categories", and "Channels". The search results are sorted by "Relevance". The first result is a video titled "new Avis / XM commercial" with a 5-star rating. The video description reads: "this is the new Avis / XM commercial (funny!!) supported by XM Satellite Radio...XM Avis commercial ad Tv spot funny rap". The video has 139,357 views and was added 1 year ago. The video player shows a man in a car. The video duration is 00:31. There is a "More in Entertainment" link.

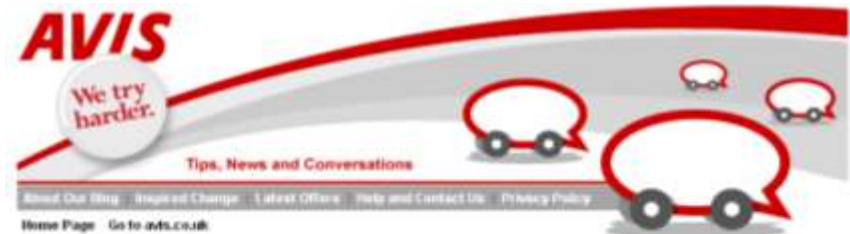




## Blog

Innovative customer management

- channel
- Launched in March 07
- Seek out Innovation in CRM
- An honest, matter-of-fact resource
- Organic growth
- Consistent measurement approach to Net Promoter™
- A customer service guarantee



### Tips for Renting a Car on Holiday – Part 1

Posted by Elizabeth Payne on June 14th, 2007 in Our services and products, Booking and hiring your car, Car hire tips, Location

I talk to people all the time who've rented cars abroad in the past and have found it to be quite a traumatic experience. The first thing I always suggest? Make sure you rent with a reputable company! Preferably Avis of course. (i) If you deal with a company that has a global presence then you've got someone to turn to in your home country if something goes wrong. At Avis you can always deal with someone in the HQ of the county you live in and you don't have to worry about language barriers and time differences if there's something you want to talk about after the event.

But it's peace of mind in advance that most people want and the most common issue that people raise after the event are "extras charges", something that car rental has a bit of a reputation for. (ii) Also, people want to be on their way as quickly as possible when they finally reach their holiday destination, and don't like hanging around waiting in queues or trying to make decisions about "extras" when they're there.

I've put together some top tips for having a hassle free holiday rental. Now I have a few so I've decided to write this in two parts. Come back next week to check out Part 2!

1. Book with a reputable company, preferably Avis. (i)
2. Read my tips to Return your car with less stress.
3. Always make sure that you know what is included in the rate that you've booked. For example, most rates will include mandatory charges and cover for 3rd party damage and damage to or theft of the Avis car. But there is usually an excess, so check this before you travel, and find out how much you would have to pay to reduce your excess liability. You can then decide whether you want to take the chance and travel with an excess risk, or pay a little more to reduce it.
4. Remember to allow for any additional costs for any extras you may need that cannot be booked in advance e.g. satellite navigation, additional driver, etc. (we are working on the advance booking bit)
5. Have all your documents ready in advance, your drivers licence, credit card etc, that will speed up the process for you. Even better, join our Avis Preferred membership, so you can just show your licence collect your keys and go at most locations.
6. Decide in advance if you want to pay in sterling or local currency. You'll automatically be billed in sterling if you're a UK resident unless you specify

SEARCH

Subscribe

**ABOUT OUR BLOG**

We're excited to be the first car rental company to start a blog. We want to be able to tell you about our plans, let you know what we have on offer (such as new cars in our fleet) and pass on useful information for your holidays and business travel. We'd also like you to use this blog to share your experiences, tips for other travellers, feedback and questions. We've been reading some of the things you have to say about car hire on other sites, and know you have a lot to say! More.

- About the authors of this blog
- Privacy Policy
- Terms & Conditions of use

**TOPICS**

- Our services and products
- We try harder
- Choice of car
- Business travel
- Driving tips and safety
- Avis and the environment
- Booking and hiring your car
- Travelling with children
- Awards events
- Car hire tips
- Location



# Making a start...

The practicalities of setting up:

Convince  
Stakeholders



The Right  
Resource?



Limit Initial  
Activity



Set the tone of  
the channel



# Stewardship

## Internal: Dealing with Cowboys

- ID & Train participating employees
- Define and enforce rules
- Writing content not necessarily the issue ; Responding to comments is!



## External: Managing Customer Participation

- Establish expectations ;
- Define & enforce rules
- Provide value to participants
- Keep power users engaged



## Networks

### Proactive customer service

- Answering customer queries on review websites
- Bring expertise to discussions
- Establishing self as a trusted member of the community
- Demonstrate “We Try Harder” values

2. [lupton](#) on 14th Jan 2006

Right, an update. Apparently Paradise Promotions who I hired the car through are not authorised licencees for AVIS and therefore making a killing by just sending people to AVIS or ANY OTHER CAR HIRE company taking a nice tidy deposit for doing really nothing more than making a telephone call.

I have been contated by AVIS who have offered me a considerable compensation for my experience and have choosen to resolve the matter quickly, fairly and firmly.

With this respect I can now say that the initial anger directed at avis was misplaced because all of the facts of what was actually happening were not available.

I am fully satisfied with the offer Avis have given me and realise this is not the kind of service they wish to promote.

In fairness to AVIS in the UK they have done what they can to resolve the issues I have had in St Lucia and I thank them for the effort and work they are putting into this.

The experience I had is obviously not part of the norm when hiring an Avis Car or Jeep.

Ian Upton  
Bolton




# Future Challenges

- Resource:
  - Finding new resource to manage growth
  - Develop ‘champions’ of departments.
- Internal Motivation:
  - When will the blog team lose drive?
- Opening the throttle:
  - When?
  - How?

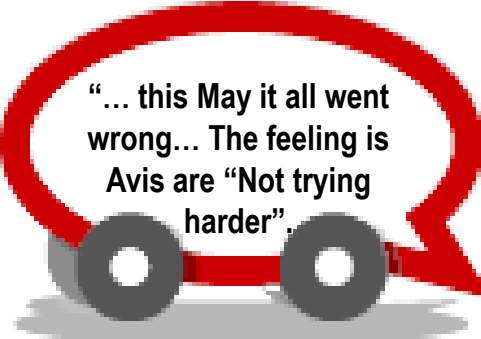


# The Results so Far...

With over 400 comments, customers are engaging and recognising the value and providing us with constructive criticism




**"Excellent Customer Service. Nice flashy reception area compared to the competition. After initial problem, went away very happy. Staff very helpful"**




**"... this May it all went wrong... The feeling is Avis are "Not trying harder"."**




**"Glad to hear the new C class will be around in Sep, and even happier to hear about the 2.0TDI Passat's"**



**"Thank you Robert for your comprehensive reply... now resolved the situation to my satisfaction"**



**"Shows how powerful your blog can be for listening to issues and turning those people into good customer evangelists..."**



**"...It's good to see Avis leading the way as the first car rental company to have one."**



# The Results so Far...

And the blog has even withstood the critics...

## **Bloggers**

- *"So there you have it, Avis UK really does want your feedback. Not only that they seem to act on it too."*

<http://www.thecooler.info/travel/457.html>

## **Travel Agents**

- *"As a travel agent you can feel safe about sending your customers to [www.wetryharder.co.uk](http://www.wetryharder.co.uk)"*

<http://www.websailingdesigns.com/blogs/avis-rent-a-car/17/>

## **Publishers/Press**

- *"If a travel company needs an example of a good commercial blog then they should look here."*

<http://travolution.blogspot.com/2007/06/avis-and-its-blogging-strategy.html>



# The Rewards

- “*The SOCAP Award for Innovation in Customer Service*”
  - UK National Customer Service Awards 2007



- Blog was short listed for the “*Best Use of Social Media*”
  - 2007 Travolution Awards

**Travolution**



# We Try Harder 2.0

This is still uncharted territory but...

- Its likely the next generation of measuring customer loyalty/brand
- Customer involvement that drives product/service development
- Companies will be able to engage with customers this way



**EMBRACE THE  
REVOLUTION!**



# Thank You

David Shiell

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For more information on this topic visit

[webliquidgroup.com](http://webliquidgroup.com)

*Consumer Generated Insights*

