



## Where do you belong? | The Xpragmatic View



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 by [Marc Buyens \(@mbuyens\)](#), Xpragma  
[marc.buyens@xpragma.com](mailto:marc.buyens@xpragma.com)  
 url: <http://www.xpragma.com/view83.php>

Social bookmarking, tagging, folksonomy... they are all attempts to leverage the wisdom of crowds. However, do we get any wiser or just more confused?

A couple of weeks ago, I read a blog post where a marketing person stated that, while segmenting a group of people, there are essentially seven categories to take into account:

- Profession or industry (finance, healthcare, government...)
- Age (teenagers, 25-35 year old, seniors...)
- Location (country, state, city, neighbourhood...)
- Religion (atheist, Catholics...)
- Interests (sports, gardening, travel...)
- Sex or sexual preference (male, female, gay, lesbian)
- Culture or race

At first sight, it seems quite reasonable. When taking all the possible combinations of these categories, you certainly get to an extremely segmented population. Niche markets. However, it is also a bit frightening.

Just do the exercise.

You live in a certain neighbourhood. Half of the population has the same sex (for the sake of simplicity, we forget about the preferences). Of course, there is only a percentage of the group that has your age (plus or minus 5 years), but it still leaves a fair amount of people. Race and religion, in general, will be the same. By definition, location also. So, the only differences you have with your neighbour are your work and your interests.

What if they are the same? You both work in the financial sector and you both love gardening. Are you twins?

You certainly hope not. Very nice guy, this neighbour. But not me.

It is only a small example of the dangers marketing people are facing while segmenting their target markets. Categories are useful, but not enough.

In general, categories are used because they are available. Most of this information can be obtained, one way or another, from various sources. However, do they tell you something useful?

Very likely, your real target group is a very complex cross-section of multiple categories. But you don't have a clue.

When participating in social networks, you will find clusters of people who are all discussing the same subject. For some reason, they are all interested in that specific subject. However, do they

have anything in common? Don't see it. At first sight, they are all quite different, without any common category. Still, they are all interested in that same specific subject.

Tag them.

The future generation of the [Technorati](#)'s and the [Del.icio.us](#)' of this world will show you what other people have been tagged in the same way.

Very likely, they have nothing in common.

Better keep it so...

## About the author



Marc Buyens is analyst, management consultant and owner of Xpragma. Marc started Xpragma in 1999 after a 20+ years career in the IT sector. Today, he provides advice, training and mentoring services focusing on the intersection of technological evolution, organisational change and business strategy: a messy world of unfulfilled promises.



<http://www.facebook.com/marcb254>



<http://www.linkedin.com/in/marcbuyens>



<http://www.twitter.com/mbuyens>

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Xpragma bvba - Mechelsesteenweg 254 - 2820 Bonheiden - Belgium

Tel. +32-(0)15-340 845 - [info@xpragma.com](mailto:info@xpragma.com) - [www.xpragma.com](http://www.xpragma.com)



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