

Visual platforms, owned by competing giants of social media, grow fastest in SA

South Africa's fastest rising social networks are visual platforms owned by competing giants of social media. Fuseware and World Wide Worx released these and other findings of the SA Social Media Landscape 2015 study at a conference in Johannesburg yesterday, 16 September 2014.



The number of YouTube and Instagram users in South Africa increased, respectively, by 53% and 65% over the past year. By August 2014, Google's YouTube had reached an active user base of 7.2 million South Africans, making it second only to Facebook's 11.8 million in social network use in South Africa. Facebook property Instagram grew from 680,000 active users in 2013 to 1.1 million in 2014.

"We're seeing the beginning of the visual revolution in online usage in South Africa," says Arthur Goldstuck, MD of technology market researchers World Wide Worx. "The global rise of video is now making itself felt here. Once the cost of mobile data comes down for the emerging smartphone market, video will become a dominant medium, strongly supported by other visual media."

Twitter's previously dramatic rise has slowed down, although still growing healthily by 20% in the past year - to 6.6-million users. The professional network LinkedIn has leaped by 40%, to 3.8-million users in South Africa.

Two networks fall in numbers

Two networks have seen their numbers fall, most notably the homegrown Mxit, which has fallen from 6.5-million active users a year ago to 4.9-million in August 2014. However, it has among the most engaged users of any social network in South Africa, with the average user signing in five times a day, and spending 105 minutes a day on the network.

Pinterest, the "pinning" network, saw growth flatten globally in the past year and dropping in South Africa, from 910,000 active users a year ago, to 840,000 in August 2014. However, the most popular South African user of the platform has more than 800,000 followers globally, compared to no South African having more than 20,000 followers a year ago.



Engagement is critical

"Every social network has its own dynamics," says Mike Wronski, CEO of data analytics company Fuseware. "The secret for companies trying to leverage social networks lies not only in numbers of users, but also in how heavily those users engage in these networks. Twitter has more intensive engagement than Facebook, despite having substantially fewer users."

A survey of 65 of South Africa's biggest brands was included in the study. It revealed that most of the major brands are using Twitter and Facebook - respectively 95% and 92% - while YouTube and Instagram are likely to see the biggest first-time users.

by brands in 2015.

Just over half of these brands - 51% - intend increasing their social media budgets in 2015. The biggest focus of social spend will be on content marketing (73% of brands), followed by multimedia content (60%).

"Content marketing and influencer marketing are two big trends corporates are embracing as the market matures," says Wronski. "For the brands, this makes social media more challenging than ever before, but it is going to enhance the consumer experience of social networks."

For more information, go to www.worldwideworx.com and www.fuseware.net.

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