

# Why social media is critical for SA marketers in 2017

According to the 2017 edition of the SA Social Media Landscape, released this week by World Wide Worx and Ornico, the next year will see the use of as many as four social media platforms becoming pervasive marketing tools in South Africa. The study included a survey of 116 major South African brands, making for a representative sample of the country's major brands.



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Already, in 2016, 91% of these brands were using Facebook, 88% were active on Twitter, and 66% were on YouTube. LinkedIn slipped from 70% to 63%, as brands struggled to get to grips with its more serious nature. Meanwhile, Instagram increased sharply from 42% to 62% of brands making use of it,

When asked what additional platforms they would embrace in 2017, no less than 26% said they would use Instagram, while YouTube was set to attract a further 16%. This will see the image-sharing and video-sharing networks join the top table currently occupied by Facebook and Twitter.

“The message is clear for anyone wanting to communicate with the public, consumers or large groups of stakeholders,” says Oresti Patricios, CEO of Ornico. “If you’re not using social media, you’re not reaching your audience. If you’re not on social media, your stakeholders are.”

Ornico became a partner in the Social Media Landscape study after its 2015 acquisition of Fuseware, which has been conducting the research with World Wide Worx since 2011.

On a consumer level, growth for most networks has slowed down, but engagement by users has intensified. In 2016, no single social network has redefined the social landscape, in the way that Instagram and YouTube did in the previous two years.

Nevertheless, says World Wide Worx MD Arthur Goldstuck, social media is not waning: “The fact that Instagram continued to grow at a high rate – by 32% up to 3.5-million users – and that YouTube has seen a massive increase in engagement with brands, confirms that the social media is hardly stagnating. Rather, it is maturing into a more stable and measurable environment that can be leveraged more effectively by brands.”

Facebook is now used by 14-million South Africans, while YouTube has moved firmly into second place with 8.74-million users, well outpacing Twitter’s slower rise to 7.7-million. LinkedIn maintains its energetic rise, now standing at 5.5-million.

One of the most significant trends uncovered is that Facebook, with 14-million users, now has 10-million, or 85% of its users, using mobile devices. This is significantly up from 77 per cent the year before. While a significant number of these users are also accessing Facebook on computers and tablets, it is clear that the mobile phone has become the primary form of accessing social media.

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