

WhatsApp with Facebook?

By Christopher Smith

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In February, Facebook announced the buy-out of WhatsApp, the popular instant messaging service, for US\$19-billion. The instant messenger has over 450-million active users. People have been asking why Facebook spent so much on the instant messenger. Is it that Facebook wants to have dominance in the mobile market or are more people moving away from Facebook?

Facebook has been labelled as the next MySpace and perhaps this label scares them? MySpace slowly petered out and despite efforts to revive the social network, it was never revived.

Advertising space

Already Facebook says it will be selling advertising space on Instagram, which it purchased for US\$1 billion less than a year ago. Will it be doing the same with WhatsApp? What revenue prospects does WhatsApp have?

As a professional in the social media industry, where do you focus your marketing?

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Facebook is a very busy social media platform, it has a lot of everything. From advertising, text, images, video and events to a plethora of other apps. It is hard to keep up with everything happening on Facebook. Brands on Facebook can often slip away unnoticed.

On your mobile phone's home screen, most users will have four apps owned by Facebook: Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger. So the question arises: does Facebook have the same clout that it used to?

Demographics

Facebook is mainly used by women between the ages of 18-29. In ten years time, will Facebook be seen as an older person's social network? Over three years Facebook has shown a negative user sign-up rate of under 18s, down 25%. Over the same period, the 55+ age group has exploded by +80.4% growth in the last three years. It must be noted that this is off a very small base with the increase being almost negligible in real terms.

Where are under 17s going instead? Not surprisingly, they are moving to mobile chat services like WeChat, and photo-sharing apps like Instagram and Snapchat.

What's interesting is how quickly teenagers globally are taking up other services instead of Facebook.

Conclusion

In reaching teenagers under 17 and people over this age, your brand must have a strong mobile presence, whether it be app-based or a mobi-friendly website. One key point is that your brand must be interactive.

In South Africa, Facebook still has an active user base and is still essential for your brand, it is however important to be associated with other platforms which your future target market is active on and using. Why? Because under 17s indicate the direction of trends.



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