

Facebook reaches 29% usage in South Africa, 97% by brands

The SA Social Media Landscape 2018 study, conducted by brand intelligence organisation Ornico and high-tech market research consultancy World Wide Worx, notes that social media use has intensified among South Africans during the past year, with Facebook now being used by 29% of the population.



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The number of South Africans using Facebook has increased by 14% since 2016, from 14-million to 16-million. Of these, 14-million were accessing the social network on mobile devices.

Capitec at No 9

A big contributor to the increase was the growth in downloads of Facebook Lite, a low-intensity version of the Facebook app that some mobile operators allow to be used without data charges on their networks. The study showed that it was the fifth most downloaded app from the Google Play Store for Android phones in South Africa, with instant messaging apps WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger at number one and four respectively.

The Capitec app was a surprise entry into the list at number nine, making it the most downloaded banking app for Android.

“These are great examples of how tools geared towards the dynamics of a market can make a difference in uptake and penetration,” says Oresti Patricios, CEO of Ornico. “The staggering proportion of people accessing Facebook via mobile devices – no less than 87.5% - tells us that we can expect mobile to become the default home of social media.”

Slow grow Twitter

Twitter continues to grow at a slow rate in South Africa, in line with international trends, which have seen a small decline in the US, balanced by a small increase in users outside the network’s home market. 8-million South Africans now use it, up marginally from 7.7-million in 2016.

“Twitter remains the social platform of choice for engaging in public discourse,” says Arthur Goldstuck, MD of World Wide Worx. “It is exactly half the size of Facebook, but its users get access to more personalities, news sources and opinions – and can become opinion-makers themselves.”

Instagram loses its snap

There were two surprise trends in the survey: the previously fastest growing app in South Africa, photo-sharing network Instagram, has seen its growth slow down dramatically, while the professional network, LinkedIn, has maintained steady growth. 3.8-million South Africans now use the former, up from 3.5-million, while LinkedIn has increased from 5.5-million to 6.1-million.

Big brand usage

The study included a survey of social media use by South Africa's biggest brands, with 118 participants providing insights into their social media practices, strategies and results.

The survey found significant shifts in each of the platforms used by brands, mostly upward. Facebook is now almost pervasive, in use by 97% of brands, from 91% the year before. Twitter has increased marginally, from 88% to 90%, while LinkedIn and Instagram continued their relentless rises, now both standing at 72%. YouTube has fallen slightly behind them, despite a marginal rise to 68%. Declines were reported for Pinterest, Google+, WeChat, WhatsApp and Snapchat.

"The findings underline the lesson that widespread consumer take-up of a platform, as we have seen with WhatsApp in particular, does not lend itself readily to brands communicating with those consumers," says Patricios.

A similar picture emerged when brands were asked whether they advertised on social media. Facebook is by far the most popular for advertising, at 86% of brands, with Twitter and Instagram in distant second and third place at 45% and 40%. LinkedIn comes in fourth, on 35%.

"It is noteworthy that most advertisers believe they see a return on investment when they advertise on social media," says Goldstuck. "By far the most common benefit they see is brand awareness, followed by customer insights and brands."

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