



A Raw & Complete Look into Social Media

By Jeff Toohey

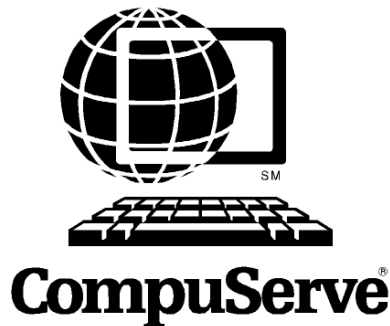
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The Start of Social Media Networking



Technology began to change very rapidly in the 20th Century. After the first super computers were created in the 1940s, scientists and engineers began to develop ways to create networks between those computers, and this would later lead to the birth of the Internet.

The earliest forms of the Internet, such as CompuServe, were developed in the 1960s. Primitive forms of email were also developed during this time. By the 70s, networking technology had improved, and 1979's UseNet allowed users to communicate through a virtual newsletter.

By the 1980s, home computers were becoming more common and social media was becoming more sophisticated. Internet relay chats, or IRCs, were first used in 1988 and continued to be popular well into the 1990's.

The first recognizable social media site, Six Degrees, was created in 1997. It enabled users to upload a profile and make friends with other users. In 1999, the first blogging sites became popular, creating a social media sensation that's still popular today.

SixDegrees.com was a social network service website that lasted from 1997 to 2001 and was based on the Web of Contacts model of social networking. It was named after the six degrees of separation concept and allowed users to list friends, family members and acquaintances both on the site and externally; external contacts were invited to join the site. Users could send messages and post bulletin board items to people in their first, second, and third degrees, and see their connection to any other user on the site. It was one of the first manifestations of social networking websites in the format now seen today. Six Degrees was followed by more successful social networking sites based on the "social-circles network model" such as Friendster, MySpace, LinkedIn, XING, and Facebook.

MacroView (later renamed to SixDegrees), the company that developed the site, was founded by CEO Andrew Weinreich and was based in New York City. At its height, SixDegrees had around 100 employees, and the site had around 3,500,000 fully registered members. The site was bought by YouthStream Media Networks in 1999 for \$125 million.

This first evolutionary step lasted pretty long, let's say from the beginning of the new century until 2007. In this phase many services evolved and started to woo users. It was during this period that many of the social sites appeared that later became huge, like :

- Friendster (started in 2002)
- MySpace (started in 2003)
- Netlog (started in 2003)
- Hi5 (started in 2003)
- Bebo (started in 2005)

Even Facebook was founded during that first period, though it was open only to students of Harvard University students in the beginning.

The first evolutionary step was characterized by so called "Walled Gardens", that means destinations which were totally separated from the outside web, with no interaction between the service and external websites. The competing sites aimed at getting as many registered users as possible to reach a critical mass. That was important to leverage "network effects", which are necessary to reach exponential growth.



Friendster was a social gaming site based in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. It was originally a social networking service website. Before Friendster was redesigned, the service allowed users to contact other members, maintain those contacts, and share online content and media with those contacts. The website was also used for dating and discovering new events, bands and hobbies. Users could share videos, photos, messages and comments with other members via profiles and networks. It is considered one of the original and even the "grandfather" of social networks.

We wouldn't be able to discuss the start of social media if we didn't discuss

MYSPACE



Myspace is a social networking website offering an interactive, user-submitted network of friends, personal profiles, blogs, groups, photos, music, and videos. Its headquartered in Beverly Hills, California.

From 2005 to 2008, Myspace was the largest social networking site in the world, and in June 2006 surpassed Google as the most visited website in the United States.

As of March 2017, Myspace was ranked 3,178 by total Web traffic, and 1,650 In the United States.

Myspace had a significant influence on pop culture and music and created a gaming platform that launched the successes of Zynga and RockYou, among others. Despite an overall decline, in 2015 Myspace still had 50.6 million unique monthly visitors and has a pool of nearly 1 billion active and inactive registered users.

In June 2009, Myspace employed approximately 1,600 employees.

In June 2011, Specific Media Group and Justin Timberlake jointly purchased the company for approximately \$35 million. On February 11, 2016 it was announced that MySpace and its parent company had been bought by Time Inc.

After all that what do we get? Pretty much just memories of this guy :



Tom from MySpace!

What killed Myspace you ask? Well according to Edward King, an old Myspace employee;

“I think the main problem was too much friction in the browsing experience on MySpace. The main source of this friction was the profile page, which gave user's more freedom of expression than Facebook's profile walls, but ultimately took far too long to load, crashed people's browsers and meant that the UI elements constantly changed from profile to profile.”

While Myspace was in steady decline there were two sites slowly making their way to center stage; Second Life and LinkedIn.

In late 2002, Reid recruits a team of old colleagues from SocialNet and PayPal to work on a new idea. Six months later, LinkedIn launches. Growth is slow at first—as few as 20 signups on some days—but, by the fall, it shows enough promise to attract an investment from Sequoia Capital.



Reid Hoffman, Co-Founder and CEO of LinkedIn.

The battle for social media supremacy continued until 2006 when the internet world was provided access to what was once only available to Harvard College students as an intranet.



No social media article would be complete without addressing Facebook, so let's do that now.

Facebook is a social networking service launched on February 4, 2004. It was founded by Mark Zuckerberg with his college roommates and fellow Harvard University student Eduardo Saverin. The website's membership was initially limited by the founders to Harvard students, but was expanded to other colleges in the Boston area, the Ivy League, and gradually most universities in Canada and the United States, corporations, and by September 2006, to everyone of age 13 and older with a valid email address.

But where did it all start you ask?

On October 23, 2003 a Harvard student named Mark Zuckerberg sat at his computer after a few drinks and began blogging. This is what happened:

"I'm a little intoxicated, not gonna lie. So what if it's not even 10 pm and it's a Tuesday night? What? The Kirkland dormitory facebook is open on my desktop and some of these people have pretty horrendious facebook pics. I almost want to put some of these faces next to pictures of some farm animals and have people vote on which is more attractive."

An hour later...

"Yea, it's on. I'm not exactly sure how the farm animals are going to fit into this whole thing (you can't really ever be sure with farm animals...), but I like the idea of comparing two people together."

And finally...

"Let the hacking begin."

AND FACEBOOK WAS BORN

How Social Media Changed the World

Before I cover the “Bad,” let’s start by appreciating the things social media has done to add to our lives. Here are some of the better things I’ve observed.

Immediate Access to Information

Given all the consolidation of media companies in the United States, it is pretty easy to question whether the news we get from the major media is the full story or not. After all, it’s not a rare occasion to hear more about the latest Kardashian scandal or celebrity death than a political uprising in Turkey or elsewhere in the world.

One of the things that attracted me personally to Twitter was the immediate access to other sources of information. Back when the government raided Osama Bin Laden’s fortress in Pakistan, there was a nearby citizen live tweeting his observations of the whole situation through the night. I was out at an event that evening, and learned of it pretty soon after news broke domestically, directly from my contacts on Twitter.

Social media is also very helpful for expanding our sources of content as a whole. With so much being blogged and written, then curated and shared proactively, the volume of content has grown exponentially. Now, there is no shortage of viewpoints and sources from which we can draw our own conclusions about what is really happening in the world. It’s less important to have a news team interpret it on our behalf.

Pervasive Connectivity To Others

I remember the days of phones with old style dials. We didn’t even have answering machines back then. If you called someone and they didn’t answer the phone, you had to call back and try to catch them in real time.

When a call came in, there was no caller ID. You just picked it up and said, “Hello.” It was sometimes hard to catch up to people, so you had to hand write and send a letter to communicate when you were both leading busy lives.

Today, if you can’t catch someone on the phone, you can leave a voice mail or send a text. Or even better, tweet, Facebook message, or touch base in some other means. You can see what others are doing within seconds of them doing it, assuming they share it on a social network of some sort. It’s not hard to catch up with someone if they want you to find them. Kids have no idea how convenient this is in our daily lives (privacy concerns aside).

Globalized Voices

Similar to the phone situation I just spelled out, it was extremely difficult to access a globally reaching platform where one could share their opinions or findings back a mere 25 years ago. I recall in the early 1990s where it was a huge deal to send in a letter to the editor to a local newspaper, and have them actually decide to include the letter in the paper.

Today, all we have to do is login to our platform of choice. We can rant, rave, kumbaya, tell jokes, share images, and generally mix and mingle to our heart's content. For those of us who can write, it takes only a couple of minutes to create a new blog and start putting our thoughts into words. And those thoughts could grow legs of their own once the social sphere grabs hold of them.

It is far easier to do something remarkable and noticeable, and have it reach people across the planet, than it has been at any time in our history. We now have truly globalized voices. What a privilege!

More Level Playing Field for Business

Some may argue this point, but by providing us with global reach for our voices, social networks enable businesses across the world to amplify their message in a way never thought possible only a decade or two ago.

In the old days, mass media ruled. A company had to pony up thousands or even millions of dollars to be heard in most cases. Very large companies with deep pockets ruled the roost. Only those businesses could afford to have wider reach.

Now, a small company can achieve global reach within days of launching their business when the cards fall right. Perhaps it's via an ingenious video, by sharing opinions that resonate and haven't been stated in the past, or creating new knowledge that spreads like wildfire. Maybe it's by simply sharing the business concept and bigger voices latching onto it. In any case, social media has provided a means to have a voice on par with the big dogs for everyone, including the smallest startups or "Mom & Pop" businesses.

It would be short-sighted to only highlight the good from social media if I want to stay grounded in reality. Now here are some of the things that make me want to close the browser window and move on.

Selfies

I know, it's been mocked and made fun of ad nauseum – the selfie. No matter whether it's because of a shirtless guy flexing in front of a mirror, girls making abominable duck faces, or people with bad judgment taking selfies in front of natural disasters or sunbathing with their grandmother's ashes, we're stuck with them.

I get why so many selfies make their way out onto the social networks. Phones come with high res cameras now. Computers have webcams where it's easy to take a snapshot. You don't even need anyone present to catch a picture from the top of Mount "Amazing-est View in the World."



But really, it's not hard to ask some friendly passer-by to take a picture if you really want one. Everyone can see right through your humble brag about the cool places you're visiting or the awesome people you are hanging out with. If you aim to post selfies, please, PLEASE take at least a moment to consider whether it will come across as narcissistic. In many cases, it will. And those are times to resist the urge. Especially if posting to a business page or Twitter account.

Political Tirades

I have to admit; this one managed to suck me into its tractor beam during the most recent presidential election. I found myself engaged in many a "debate." Looking back, that's something I don't plan to allow again.

When it comes to politics, religion, or any other very personal area of life, discussion gets contentious almost immediately. If you have a different belief system from someone else, you are both more likely to fight to defend it rather than cave to the other side of the argument. These

are very delicate topics, and it's too easy for the conversation to devolve into personal attacks and negative judgments of each others' characters.

I avoid them now. It's simply not worth losing a friend or colleague over what stacks up to be nothing more than a difference of opinion. Regardless of how those with the other opinion are depicted by the media. Social media is meant to be social, not a boxing rink. Everyone is happier when it stays that way.

Hiding Behind Anonymity

Although it is getting harder to shield your identity these days, anonymity has been a key piece of the internet since its early days. It's amazing to see how people behave when their true identity is masked.

Now we have everything from outright trolls to habitual pranksters. This is the kind of behavior that makes the whole internet, and particularly social media, less productive and enjoyable for all. If you want to say something and are afraid to have anyone know you said it, perhaps you should buck up and use common sense before putting it out there. Being offensive anonymously is not only cowardly, it shows a lack of character. We should all be better than that.

All Talk, No Action

In recent years, we've seen a ton of hashtag activists and similar behaviors across social media (most recently, the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge). It has become a trend to take a selfie (double whammy) holding a sign with a political or social message on it, and a new hashtag of course. Or take a video in the case of the Ice Bucket Challenge. The idea is to get likes and shares on the picture or video, or challenge others to take part, aiming to have a message spread.

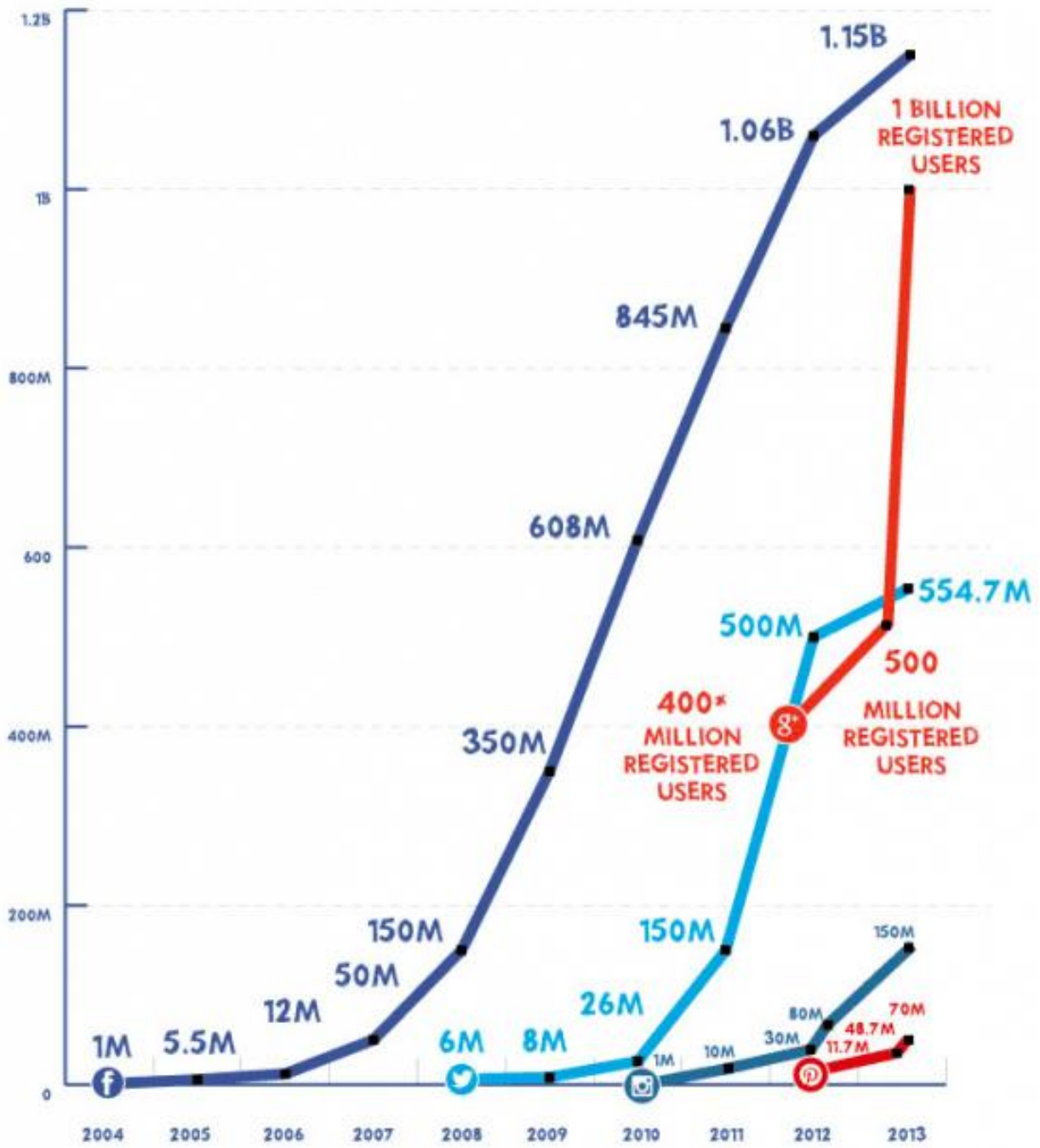
While that's fine in concept, hashtag activism is all talk. If an issue is important enough to take action, why not take real action? Facebook is crawling with people ready to go to social media war with anyone on a topic they care about, but what else are they doing to fix the problem? Venting on social media doesn't fix a thing; it just stirs the pot.

There are plenty of charities and volunteer opportunities available. Rather than get spun up on Facebook, go give back on the weekend, or make a donation without taking part in a random stunt. Not only will it make a real difference, but it will make you feel better inside. And in the end, isn't that part of the story anyway?

The Life and Growth of Social Media

SOCIAL MEDIA VISITOR GROWTH

REGISTERED USERS



FACEBOOK

TWITTER

GOOGLE+

PINTEREST

INSTAGRAM

* GMAIL USERS

BUSINESSES AND MARKETERS LOVE SOCIAL MEDIA!



93%

OF MARKETERS USE SOCIAL MEDIA FOR BUSINESS



70%

OF BRANDS HAVE A PRESENCE ON GOOGLE+
4% GROWTH FROM Q4 2012



70%

OF MARKETERS HAVE USED FACEBOOK TO SUCCESSFULLY GAIN NEW CUSTOMERS



34%

OF MARKETERS HAVE USED TWITTER TO SUCCESSFULLY GENERATE LEADS



FACEBOOK, TWITTER, AND GOOGLE+ ARE THE TOP 3 SOCIAL MEDIA SITES USED BY MARKETERS



TUMBLR

FLICKR

FLICKR, TUMBLR, AND STUMBLEUPON ARE THE LEAST POPULAR SITES USED BY MARKETERS

GROWTH AMONG THE TOP 3 SOCIAL NETWORKS

44%



TWITTER IS CURRENTLY THE FASTEST GROWING SOCIAL NETWORKING SERVICE WITH A 44% GROWTH FROM JUNE 2012 - MARCH 2013

33%



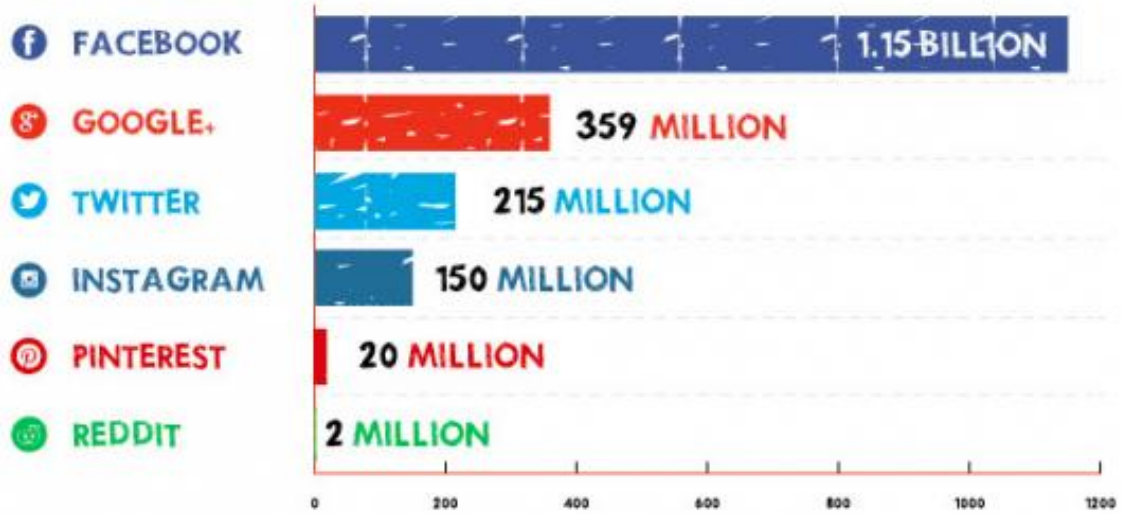
COMPARE THIS TO GOOGLE+, WHICH EXPERIENCED 33% GROWTH DURING THE SAME TIME PERIOD.

23%

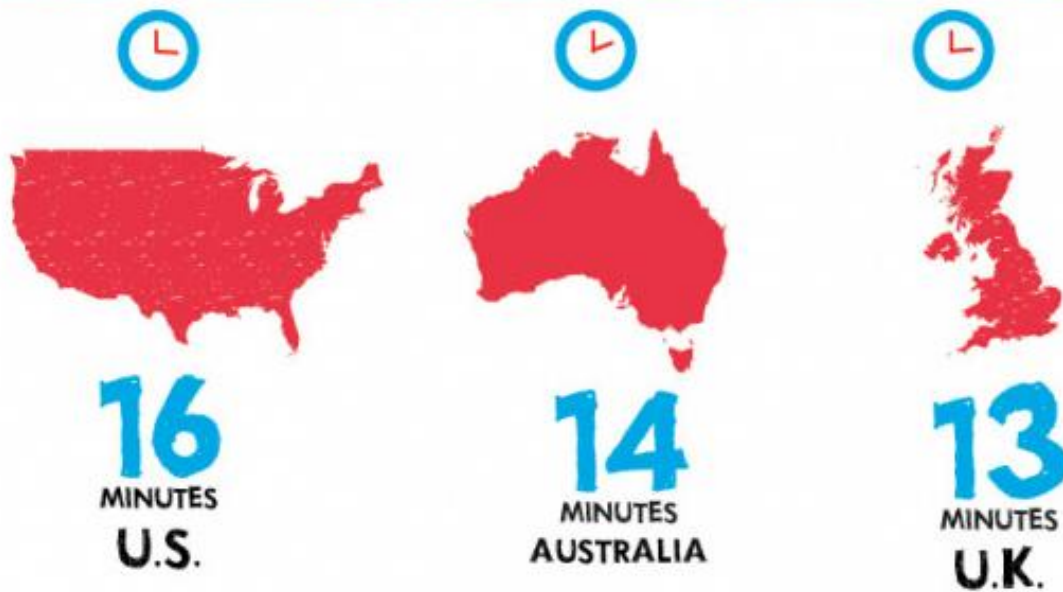


FROM 2012 TO 2013, FACEBOOK'S USER BASE ONLY INCREASED BY 23%.

MONTHLY ACTIVE USERS



TIME SPENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKS PER HOUR

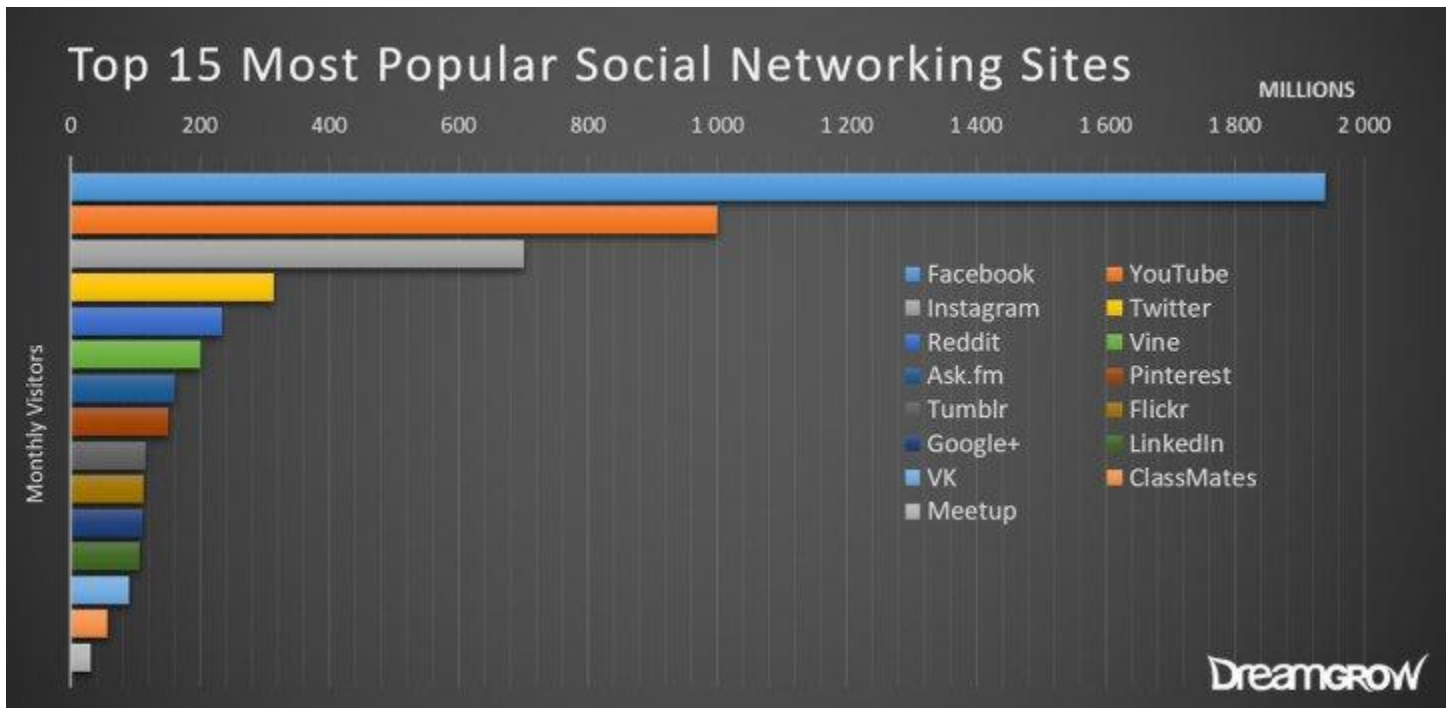


FASTEST GROWING SOCIAL SEGMENTS:

OLDER USERS



The Social Media Major Players



- Facebook
- Instagram
- Reddit
- Ask.fm
- Tumblr
- Google+
- VX
- Meetup
- YouTube
- Twitter
- Vine
- Pinterest
- Flickr
- LinkedIn
- ClassMates

What can you achieve with Social Media Networking

According to Jayson DeMers on Forbes.com there are 10 major benefits to using social media properly. They are as follows :

- **Increased Brand Recognition**

Every opportunity you have to syndicate your content and increase your visibility is valuable. Your social media networks are just new channels for your brand's voice and content. This is important because it simultaneously makes you easier and more accessible for new customers, and makes you more familiar and recognizable for existing customers. For example, a frequent Twitter user could hear about your company for the first time only after stumbling upon it in a newsfeed. Or, an otherwise apathetic customer might become better acquainted with your brand after seeing your presence on multiple networks.

- **Improved brand loyalty**

According to a report published by Texas Tech University, brands who engage on social media channels enjoy higher loyalty from their customers. The report concludes "Companies should take advantage of the tools social media gives them when it comes to connecting with their audience. A strategic and open social media plan could prove influential in morphing consumers into being brand loyal." Another study published by Convince & Convert found that 53% of Americans who follow brands in social are more loyal to those brands.

- **More Opportunities to Convert**

Every post you make on a social media platform is an opportunity for customers to convert. When you build a following, you'll simultaneously have access to new customers, recent customers, and old customers, and you'll be able to interact with all of them. Every blog post, image, video, or comment you share is a chance for someone to react, and every reaction could lead to a site visit, and eventually a conversion. Not every interaction with your brand results in a conversion, but every positive interaction increases the likelihood of an eventual conversion. Even if your click-through rates are low, the sheer number of opportunities you have on social media is significant.

- **Higher conversion rates**

Social media marketing results in higher conversion rates in a few distinct ways. Perhaps the most significant is its humanization element; the fact that brands become more humanized by interacting in social media channels. Social media is a place where brands can act like people do, and this is important because people like doing business with other people; not with companies.

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