

How Social Are You?

Written by Cheryl Pearson McNeil
Wednesday, 02 January 2013 00:00



Channel surfing over the weekend, I stopped on a favorite old romantic comedy that was centered on a relationship that blossomed over emails. The movie isn't even all that old, yet its premise now seems almost ancient. Because as we all know, in today's world, there is a plethora of ways other than email to connect socially. Social media has exploded over the last 20 years.

There is simply no way to avoid it; no matter how bah-humbug you may be over all this "new-fangled" connecting. (Mmm-hmm. You know who you are, Mr. and Ms. "You Can Call Me if You Want to Talk to Me"). According to Nielsen's latest Social Media Report, the total time spent on social media in the U.S. on both personal computers (PCs) and mobile devices (smart phones and tablets) jumped 37 percent between July 2011 and July 2012, from 88 billion minutes to 121 billion minutes.

As you know from reading this column regularly (right?), we love our mobile devices. Smartphones saturate more than 50 percent of the total mobile phone market. African-Americans account for 62 percent of smartphone owners; and tablets are owned by 20 percent of American households. It makes sense that our increased connectivity through the penetration of mobile devices has fueled the explosion of social media.

Overall, more and more people are connecting to the internet and are connecting for longer periods of time. During the same time period, time spent on PCs and smartphones was up 21 percent. Of our time on the Internet, the report shows that we spend more time on social networks than on any other sites, with computers still our device of choice. However, it also

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reports that app usage has seen the biggest growth in accessing social content. Accessing mobile apps now accounts for more than one-third of social networking time across PCs and mobile devices. That is a 76 percent increase in social app time over last year.

And, where do we like to visit? Facebook is the reigning champ of time spent on social media whether people are getting there via their PCs, mobile web browsers or a mobile app. This is how the top social networks rank in the analysis of unique PC visitors in the U.S. over the last year:

Facebook	< 1.5 billion
Blogger	58,518,000
Twitter	37,033,000
WordPress	30,945,000
LinkedIn	28,113,000
Pinterest	27,223,000
Google+	26,201,000
Tumblr	25,634,000
Myspace	19,680,000

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Pinterest has to be crowned the breakout star among the social networks. Even though it ranks sixth, its year over year change is up a whopping 1,047 percent. And, who is doing all of this picture and image pinning/bookmarking on the virtual pinboard site? Women – 70 percent, 84 percent and 72 percent via PC, mobile app and mobile Internet, respectively. They are mostly White – 86 percent via PC, 79 percent via mobile app and 74 percent through mobile Internet.

The Social Media Report shows that minority women, including African-Americans, have yet to warm up to Pinterest, with audience composition in the single digits; with the exception of mobile Internet access, which we penetrate at 10 percent.

The report's data reiterates what I have shared in previous columns: Americans are multi-taskers. Having a mobile device on-hand while watching TV is almost a requisite activity. Forty-one percent of tablet owners and 38 percent of smartphone owners use their device daily while watching the TV. While shopping and looking up program or product information, people are also chatting with their connections via their social networks, often about the show they are watching on TV. This is especially true on Twitter, which has emerged as a key driver of social TV interaction. During June 2012, more than a third of active Twitter users tweeted about TV-related content, which is an increase of 27 percent from the beginning of the year. Chances are, you're one of them, as all of the research shows that Black consumers are 30 percent more likely to visit Twitter than the average demographic and that we watch 40 percent more TV than other groups.

This behavior is so prevalent Nielsen and Twitter announced this week a new measurement service available at the start of the Fall 2013 TV season called "Nielsen Twitter TV Rating." The service will be a syndicated-standard metric around the reach of the TV conversation on Twitter.

How many of you have tweeted during your favorite show's season finale or during an extraordinary moment on a reality show? You know what all of this means, don't you? We consumers are better informed and more connected every day. Because of the exponential growth of social word-of-mouth and social engagement, this means we hold even more power than before.

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