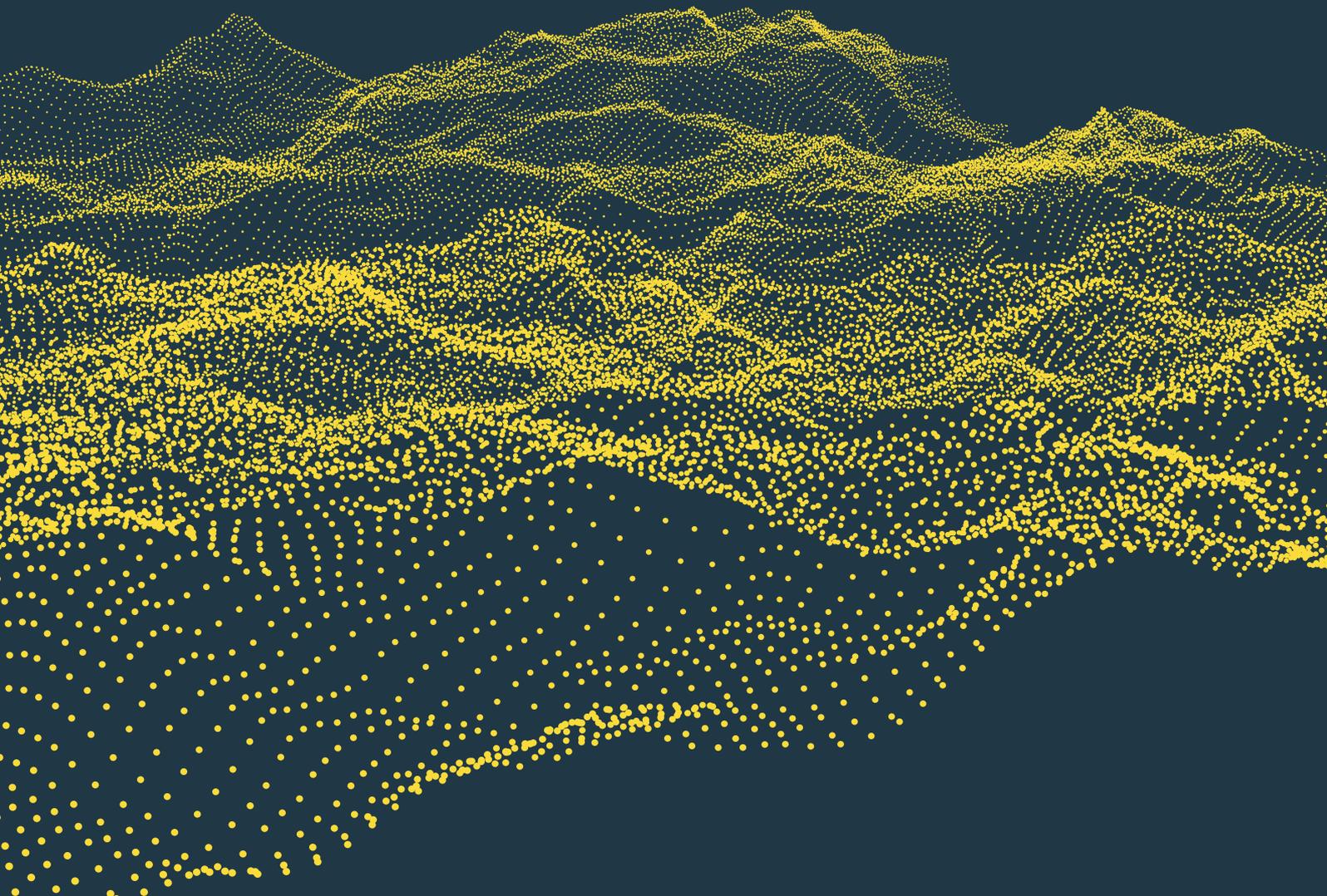


iCONIC
MEDIA

SOCIAL ALGORITHMS

UNDERSTAND THE ALGORITHMS &
WIN THE PLATFORMS IN SOUTH AFRICA





UNDERSTAND THE SOCIAL MEDIA ALGORITHMS

& SAVE ON ADVERTISING COSTS



pay
TO
play

As most of you have likely heard, Facebook is now a “pay to play” space for brands, but the good news is that some social media algorithms still allow brand content to rank alongside peer to peer meaningful content organically (unpaid) in feeds.

In January of this year, Facebook’s Mark Zuckerberg announced a major overhaul of Facebook’s News Feed algorithm that would prioritize “meaningful social interactions” over “relevant content” and pledged to “make sure that time spent on Facebook is time well spent”. Shortly thereafter the social media platform de-prioritized videos, photos, and posts shared by businesses and media outlets, which Zuckerberg dubbed “public content”, in favour of content produced by a user’s friends and family.

In this article we’ll look at the South African social media landscape as well as the current Facebook, Twitter and Instagram algorithms because understanding the algorithms enables brands to produce content that they’ll deem worthy of organic placement in timelines.

If marketers can get content to rank organically, the requirement for large media budgets is reduced; thereby saving brands money.

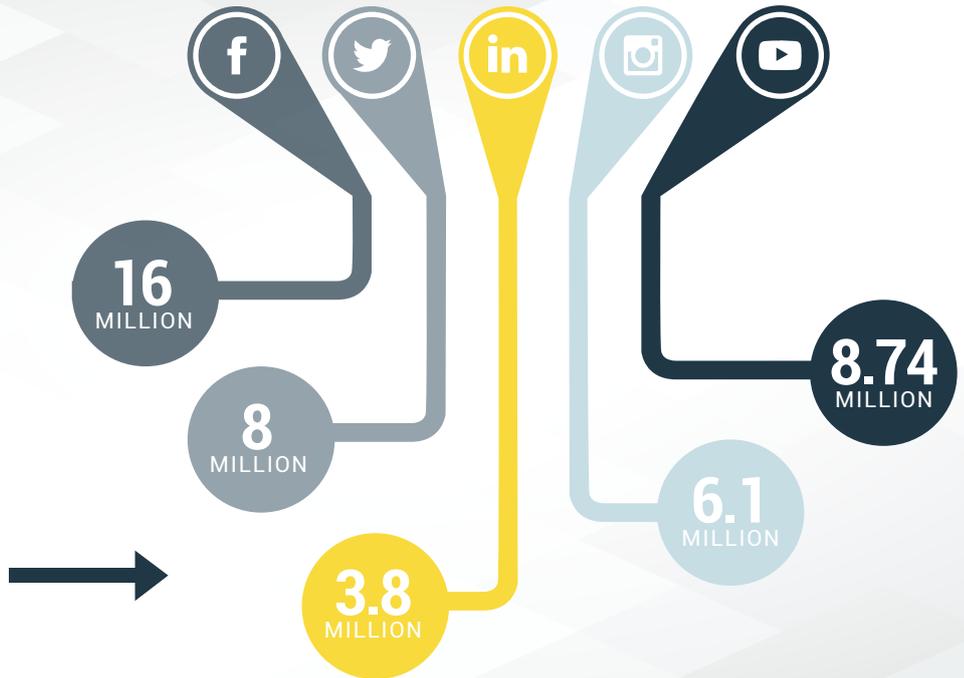
THE LANDSCAPE .

As South Africans, we're unique. What's relevant to the rest of the world, in terms of social media trends, may not be relevant to us.

Largely due to the fact that we play by a very different set of rules, thanks to a variety of factors, such as:

- Being an emerging market
- Limited data access
- Data costs
- Political motivators

Let's take a look at an infographic that shows which social channels South Africans are using the most.



Facebook is THE HERO, now being used by 1/3 of adults in SA & is the official rival to TV & radio.



YouTube follows 2nd behind Facebook when it comes to the number of users. This indicates that users rely on YouTube for the MASS OF VIDEO available.
* Brands need to look at crafting more video content into their marketing plans.



Twitter is the RISING STAR - with its user base falling globally it is growing moderately in popularity in SA. This can be partially attributed to it being the platform of choice when engaging in public discourse (SA news, debates and celebrity spats).



Instagram gets the prize for PARTICIATION and continues to grow in SA from 5.5M to 6.5M users- that's an 18% increase within 1 year!



Facebook Messenger is the INNOVATOR, it's Facebook's very own attempt at an all-encompassing messenger app. Uptake has been successful due to a massive marketing efforts from Facebook. Facebook has incorporated some very smart functionalities including ads and chat Bot services.



SnapChat primarily used by users who are 18-24, is the KID WHO WON'T TURN UP. Despite widespread take-up, there has been a decline in usage in South Africa.

OTHER

EXISTING FACEBOOK INNOVATIONS



Live Video

Facebook Live is a way for people to broadcast to the world in real time from their mobile devices. It can be run by someone from your brand or your community manager or via an influencer.



Live Streamed Sport

Major League Baseball now live streams on Facebook Watch. It is the winning move pushing Facebook towards the future and leaving conventional TV Networks a step back.



Vacation Inspiration

Trip consideration helps travel advertisers reach people who have expressed intent to travel but have not yet decided where to go. With trip consideration, you can showcase deals and popular destinations to encourage people to book their next vacation at a specific destination.



Helping Job Seekers & Recruiters

Facebook have built new features for businesses like the ability to create job posts on mobile, manage applications, and schedule interviews. Job-seekers can also set up job alerts for the type of roles they're interested in.



Free to Use Music

Facebook have partnered with Warner Music Group. The deal paves the way for fans to create, upload and share videos with licensed music from their favourite artists and songwriters.



Press & Hold

Facebook Press and Hold is a super cool function to make your Facebook videos or images come alive on the newsfeed with real time interaction with your users. The Press and Hold function allows a user to physically press an image post to "reveal" either video or an image slideshow.



3D Posts

3D Posts bring the interaction with digital objects to the next level, leveraging users engagement.



Facebook Lite

Facebook Lite - SA's 5th most downloaded App. It's a low-intensity version of the Facebook app. Never heard of it? That's not surprising as it is mainly downloaded by low income individuals.



Brand Stories

Retailers and brands can now share 'Stories' content to their followers.



IGTV

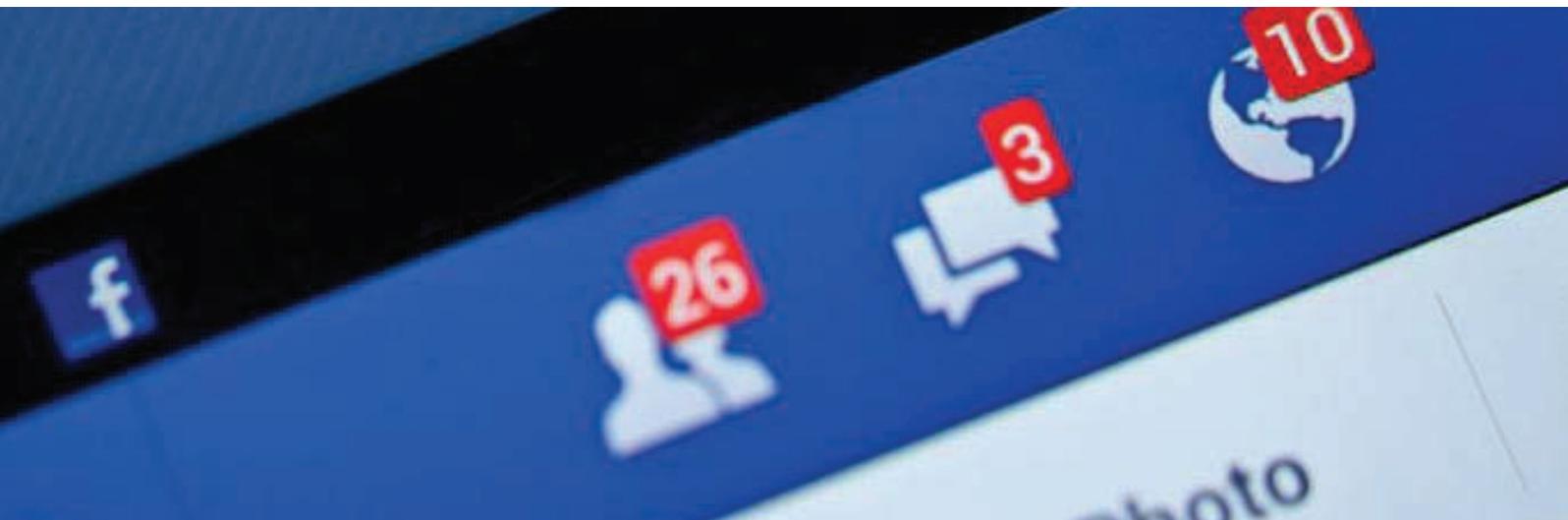
A home for longer-form video, Instagram now offers a dedicated space featuring scripted shows, music, videos and more.

ALGORITHMS

Now that you've got a solid understanding of the social media landscape, let's take a look at the algorithms.

facebook

EARLIER THIS YEAR THE SOCIAL NETWORK ANNOUNCED THAT THEIR ALGORITHM CHANGE WILL FOCUS ON "MEANINGFUL INTERACTIONS." WHAT THIS MEANT IS THAT FEWER POSTS RELEASED DIRECTLY BY BRANDS WILL BE SEEN IN PEOPLE'S FACEBOOK FEEDS UNLESS THOSE POSTS HAVE SPARKED MEANINGFUL EXCHANGES.



What makes something meaningful?

- Links to content shared via Facebook messenger
- Commenting and liking
- Multiple replies in a conversation thread

How to combat?

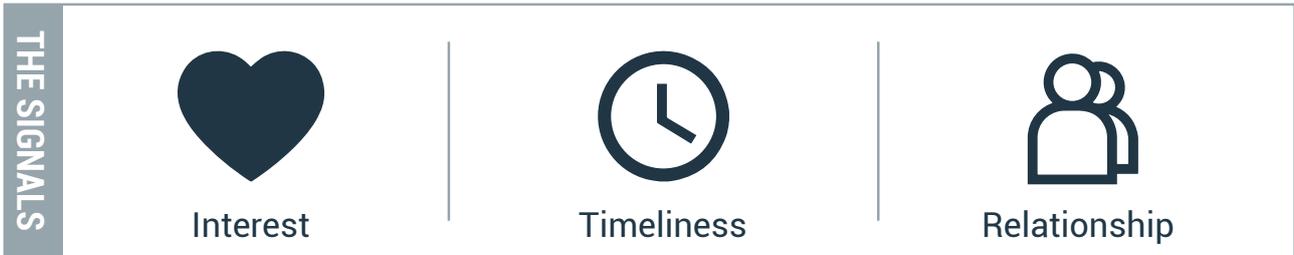
1. Create great content: Create real, meaningful content that people will click on because they want to read about it.
2. Give people a reason to share: Credible authors, posts that solve a problem, conduct interviews, specific, timely content.
3. Stay engaged with the audience – they are more likely to comment on posts this way.
4. Create a group: if someone from the brand is connected to people who use the product, create a Facebook interest group and cross share relevant content there.

ALGORITHMS

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Instagram

HOW THE SYSTEM GOES ABOUT SORTING CONTENT:



- **Interest** – it will factor in how much you've engaged with similar content (images or videos) in the past and it will also assess the actual visual content of posts, facilitated by image recognition tools.
- **Timeliness** – Instagram also factors in when the post was published. Users complained that they've been seeing too much older content in their feeds so the platform worked to fix this.
- **Relationship** – your relationship with the post creator, based on how much you've engaged with them and other factors used in this calculation could include: comments, likes, tags on each other's posts & direct messages.

SOME GOOD NEWS!

- There's no reach penalty for posting too often, though it may see some of your posts interspersed with updates from other users to avoid people seeing streams of your content.
- Unlike the Facebook algorithm, the Instagram algorithm gives no preference to personal or business accounts! YAY! – they are all ranked equally.



ALGORITHMS

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twitter

EVERY TIME YOU OPEN TWITTER, THE ALGORITHM WILL STUDY ALL THE TWEETS FROM ACCOUNTS YOU FOLLOW AND GIVE EACH OF THEM A RELEVANCE SCORE BASED ON SEVERAL FACTORS:

- The tweet itself: its recency, presence of media cards (image or video), and overall engagement.
- The tweet's author: your past interactions with this author, the strength of your connection to them.
- You: tweets you found engaging in the past, how often and how heavily you use Twitter

Then, Twitter will put the tweets that it thinks would be engaging to you in the first two sections — ranked tweets and then “In case you missed it” followed by everything else.

THE TWITTER TIMELINE ALGORITHM

1. Ranked Tweets
2. “In case you missed it”
3. Remaining tweets in reverse-chronological order



What does this mean for social media marketers?

- Brand content needs to be recent (lots of tweets) and many with images or video
- Brands need to have tweets that people engage with
- The support team (if there is one) or the social media manager needs to engage with people asking questions, queries and should not hesitate to strike up a Twitter conversation with individuals engaged with their content

RECOMMENDATION: TWITTER VIDEOS

“Videos are slowly becoming the top content type. According to HubSpot’s research, videos are one of the top content types that people want to see more of in the future.”

Source: blog.bufferapp.com

ALGORITHMS

SUMMARY

facebook

Facebook is less effective at generating organic reach and engagements than it was before the algorithm that demotes brand content came into effect. Saying that, organic reach can be earned by brands if their content is shareworthy enough that it earns link shares and conversation. Regardless of this, brands can get reach and engagements on Facebook but they'll have to invest in social media ads.

Instagram is outperforming Facebook when it comes to organic reach and engagements earned vs audience size.

Recommendation: For brands with a tight media budget, efforts should be made to grow the Instagram following in order to optimize on the organic reach levels it currently offers.

TIP: If you're Instagram following is minimal, consider using offline Instagram awareness posters to drive followership. E.g. Utilise kiosk presence to grow Instagram and Twitter followings by way of table talkers or kiosk driven social media competitions.

Instagram

twitter

Don't forget about **Twitter!** Brands should have a Twitter presence and leverage topical discussions related to them.
Recommendation: ensure tweets are engaging, frequent and contain video content.

TIP: Polls are a great way to gain consumer insight and Twitter is a great place to run them. If you have an existing following go ahead and run one. If you don't yet have a substantial following, try boosting your Poll to your target market with a Twitter engagement ad. Doing so will help you gain valuable insights and your following will increase too.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Julia Rhodes is a Senior Content Strategist at Iconic Media who has been producing effective digital content for over 8 years. Some of her previous clients include The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Al Jazeera English, Standard Bank, Lipton and adidas.

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