

Social media attracts the 30-somethings

MWEB commissioned TNS Research Surveys to conduct The Friendship 2.0 survey towards the end of 2009 among local web users aged 16 years and older to identify which social networking platforms are popular among South Africans and to establish what they are doing on the various sites.



The results, out now, bust the myth that only youngsters do social networking. On average, adult social networkers in South Africa are in their 30s, employed full-time and describe themselves as sociable and outgoing.

Facebook remains the dominant social networking platform with a massive 82% using the service. Behind Facebook comes YouTube (32%), then MXit (29%) and Twitter 28%. The majority of people are using these services to communicate real life activities such as sharing personal news, gossiping and arranging to meet socially.

Carolyn Holgate, GM of MWEB Connect, says, "Social networks have really become the garden fence of the 21st century, and are used for very much the same purposes as community meeting places. We are at the end of the early adoption phase, which was dominated by young people, and social networking is now a mainstream activity enjoyed and used by all age groups, particularly those in their thirties."

Users in South Africa

The survey revealed that the average age of Facebook users in South Africa is 33; MySpace is 32; Twitter and YouTube come in at 31; and the youngest in the survey is MXit with an average age of 27. These findings dispel perceptions that social networking is for teenagers only.

Multiple presences

Many online South Africans are also taking up multiple presences using a combination of Facebook, Twitter and MXit accounts. To facilitate integration between these multiple platforms, these users link their various accounts to each other enabling visitors to their Facebook pages to view their Twitter updates and click through to their MySpace profile.

On certain social platforms, it's more a matter of viewing than doing. For example, 75% of MySpace users are only 'viewers', moving from one profile to the next. Similarly, 72% of Twitter users are "lurkers", reading what others post. This may be because Twitter is still relatively 'new' and users do not have the option of accepting people who would like to follow them. Users could also be more concerned about what their followers may think of their comments.

Facebook and LinkedIn are the most balanced, with 60% of their users classed as "viewers", who just view other people's pages, and 40% actively posting their own information regularly.

Facebook chat

The addition of Facebook's chat facility/instant messenger tool has seen 56% of South African Facebook users 'chatting' to their friends on the site. "When we looked at who they are chatting to, friends and family were tops. Clients, partners and suppliers were the lowest, possibly because most Facebook users prefer not to befriend people they deal with professionally."

Internet connectivity

The way South African's are accessing the Internet revealed that ADSL is the connection of choice. "Some 48% of the participants are connecting via ADSL, followed very closely by 3G/HSDPA at 42%, and 35% via their cell phones using 3G," added Holgate.

Online personality types

The survey results categorised respondents into five different online personality types. These personality types, vary from those who are reluctant to use the Internet and do not have an understanding of what can be done online, through to users who are comfortable using the Internet and indulge in potentially "edgy" behaviour, such as using a pseudonym online or using the Internet to find out what a past partner is doing.

Other findings

- 74% of South Africans go online specifically to visit social networking platforms
- 16% of Facebook users are on Facebook all day, an additional 58% visit the site once a day or more - therefore 74% are accessing Facebook at least once a day
- Computer desktop remains the most popular way to access Facebook (55%), but 35% are using a combination of their cellphone and computer
- 62% of Facebook users are updating their status, and 61% are uploading videos or photographs, and searching for someone on the site
- 16% of participants are using social platforms to promote their business - MWEB believes this figure will grow as more small businesses are seeing the value in promoting their businesses online
- 94% of the participants are using the Internet to access their email
- 81% using the Internet for work related activities
- Social networking (74%) rated six on the list of online activities after reading the news (76%), searching for information (76%) and online banking (75%)
- 50% of Facebook users classified themselves as English, 58% are male and 25% have parents on the social platforms
- A quarter of the survey participants have met more friends online than they have in real life
- 24% have gone on a face-to-face date with someone they have met online
- 36% have used a pseudonym online
- 36% have used the Internet to find out what a past partner is doing
- 37% believe they spend too much time online and need to cut back - indicating that these platforms are viewed as addictive

- Just under half feel vulnerable to abuse by sharing their personal details online
- 21% have experienced a breach of their privacy on the Internet.

For more information about this survey, indicative profiles of the five online personality types identified during this survey, and to see how you compare to the average South African using social networking platforms, go to

www.mweb.co.za/services/friendship/.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>