

# Understanding the rapid transformation of the social media landscape

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In the past few years, the landscape of social media has undergone a rapid transformation. From the days of poking, absence of Facebook walls, and the absence of emojis, we have now entered an era where a multitude of networking platforms flood the digital world, evolving at a pace as swift as the click of a "like" button.



Source: [www.unsplash.com](http://www.unsplash.com)

According to [Status Brew](#), by October 2023, almost five billion people were using social media. That's about 93% of everyone who uses the internet. Nine out of 10 people go on social media every month. Slightly more men use it than women, with the gender breakdown about 54% men and 46% women.

People spend a lot of time on social media – about two-and-a-half hours every day. Altogether, the world spends about 12bn hours, or about 1.3m years, on social media daily. There are now 15 different social media sites that each have more than 400m people using them.

## Let's dive into the vibrant world of X, shall we?

In 2023, we witnessed the transformation of Twitter from a social media giant to a platform we refer to as X. Elon Musk's influence hasn't just shifted the user base; it has added a unique flavour to the platform.

Remember the days when #BlackTwitter reigned supreme in South Africa, dominating conversations every Sunday from 6am to 10pm? Those were the times when a mere mention on Black Twitter meant golden tickets for brands. TV shows like *Our Perfect Wedding*, *Gomora*, *Date My Family*, *Rockville* and others found a second home on Twitter.

What was once a hive of excitement, bringing together individuals from various walks of life, may have undergone changes, but it's still a platform where memories are made. Though it may lack some of its original charm, X continues to be a space where connections are formed and conversations unfold.



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### To Thread or not to Thread

Threads attracted over 100 million new users in its first week in 2023, smashing social media uptake records. I've been using it for about six months, but I've only posted two threads so far, and I feel I need to catch up. It's cool that you can see Threads from Instagram and Facebook in one place, but it hasn't become a big deal for me yet.

One thing that bugs me is that you still can't use hashtags on Threads, so there are no trending topics like you see on X.

They've made some improvements, like letting you thread from your laptop and post directly to Instagram, but the frenzy with which it launched has died down somewhat. Brands might like it, but I'm not sure about its future. So, should you use Threads or not? Let's wait and see what happens.

### Social media engagement on Facebook and LinkedIn

There was a time when brands and organisations could woo people with significant follower numbers and little engagement.

We have subsequently seen engagement become a key measurable metric in campaigns and pages. One platform that loves and embraces engagement is LinkedIn. Like X, Facebook and TikTok, this platform has virality, meaning good content has the potential to go viral organically, without paid boosting. Good content shines on LinkedIn, meaning the more of it you post, and the more frequently you post, the better the results.

Originally a fairly cold and professional platform, LinkedIn built itself on being "the clever person's Facebook", with a more sophisticated audience. But now people and brands have also started posting more humanised and personal content on LinkedIn. A few years ago, this might have seemed a fringe network, but now for many brands and people, it's their primary one.

While it still isn't the size of Facebook in the world, or in South Africa, its select audience of professionals is seeing it becoming more and more powerful.

I think it's essential for us as marketers to look at the people who are winning on specific social media platforms, what they are doing when they post, and what responses they are getting, and to learn from that.

It's also essential to respect platforms generally and go out there with content specific to them. That is how we will achieve success. For example, what you post on Instagram, a highly visual platform, cannot be the same content that you share on LinkedIn, a platform that is mostly about careers and trends. As social media marketers and content creators, we must respect our followers and give them content specific to their platforms.



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## Cross-pollination across platforms

Is Facebook dying? I was on the fence about this one. There have been so many changes on the platform, but my work at Flow Communications with the [Good Work Foundation](#) has proven to me yet again that Facebook is still a giant.

This platform thrives on quality content, and when you have a bonded community that waits for your content, shares it and engages with it, then you have something magical.

Also, when it comes to media buying and boosting, the interface that Facebook uses remains the best, and Facebook is cheaper to boost than all the other platforms.

Short-form videos are 76% more effective in terms of impressions than long-form content, according to Meta, as noted in this trends article published by [workjoy.io](#) in December of 2023.

What brands and marketers can do is examine the performance of different platforms and consider if there are strategies to migrate followers from one platform to another. For instance, if a brand has a substantial following on LinkedIn, but its Facebook presence isn't as strong, it could be beneficial to create a post on LinkedIn informing followers that they can find different types of content on the brand's Facebook page.

This approach facilitates growth across multiple platforms, particularly when a brand aims to expand its reach organically.



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## The unifying power of TikTok's algorithm

I've always been nervous about venturing into TikTok, but perhaps that's just me. However, as it gained relevance in South Africa, it became clear to me that TikTok is one of those platforms that one must absolutely embrace. I love the versatility of TikTok.

I appreciate how individuals such as [Thandeka Mzobe](#), living in a two-bedroom house in rural KwaZulu-Natal, can reach audiences worldwide. Thandeka started her account last year and already has 306,000 followers.

TikTok's embrace of authenticity provides a space for everyone. Its algorithm is a dream; for instance, when you search for hashtags such as #BookTok, you get exactly that kind of content. This feature is fantastic for marketers, as we can tailor our content to fit the algorithm.

TikTok is all about being bold and creative. It grabs attention worldwide, tells stories in new ways, and helps brands build trust with their followers.

Social media is as ever, an unpredictable world. Here's to embracing new technologies and trends, and seeing how they shape our online interactions and experiences.

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