

Users And Marketers Warm To Niche Social Networks

Contributed by eMarketer
 Tuesday, 28 February 2012
 Last Updated Wednesday, 29 February 2012

Pinterest, Tumblr show fast growth and increased potential for marketers

While Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn have been at the top of the social media heap in the US for several years now, new services and relaunched versions of older ones are rapidly gaining popularity among consumers and marketers.

“Many internet users are turning to social networks that offer a more focused experience than Facebook, even as that site positions itself as the social destination for sharing, curation and consumption of content,” said eMarketer’s Kimberly Maul, author of the new report, “Beyond Facebook and Twitter: Visually Focused Social Sites See Growing Interest.” In the case of several popular or up-and-coming sites, this means giving users the ability to express themselves and often to become tastemakers using photos and other visually oriented material.

One such site is Pinterest, where users and marketers alike can create online “pinboards” that showcase their taste and creativity. Just as users can curate their own online image on such a site, so too can brands, making boards that present a brand identity and positioning themselves in a clear, visual way to the target audience.

According to comScore, Pinterest usage in the US shot up from less than half a million unique visitors in May 2011 to nearly 12 million in January 2012.

Usage of blogging platform Tumblr has also seen increases, though of a relatively more modest nature. In January, comScore reported the site’s US traffic rose from less than 7 million unique visitors in late 2010 to more than twice as many a year later.

While content on Pinterest is limited to images, Tumblr has more options again, for both users and marketers alike. And as users take advantage of the simple, customizable, and highly visual Tumblr blogging interface, brands with a visual message are getting involved too.

“The platform works especially well for media companies, which can post their own content as well as supplemental photos and quotes,” said Maul. “This has attracted brands such as The Atlantic, Rolling Stone and The Huffington Post. And fashion brands, including Oscar de la Renta and J.Crew, are leveraging the easy photo-sharing opportunities to include images of products, shots from fashion shows and more.”

The full report, “Beyond Facebook and Twitter: Visually Focused Social Sites See Growing Interest,” also answers these key questions:

- What social media sites are consumers and marketers using beyond Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn?
- What does the photo-sharing and visual imagery trend mean for social media marketers?
- How do these second-tier social platforms fit into the overall social media landscape?

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