



KYSEN Social Media Update



Welcome to the Winter 2015 edition of our Social Media Update. This e-update aims to summarise the best of the last couple of months' press articles and online discussions about digital and social media as they apply to the professions to help you keep a watching brief.

Some of the topics discussed here are specific to the professions; some detail developments in other sectors, included because they have a particular relevance to the professions.

As always, we hope you find this summary helpful in keeping track of a fast-changing area of communications. As ever, we welcome your feedback.

Best regards,
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Press summary
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Social media are often blamed for a number of ills such as shrinking our communications to sentences of no more than 140 characters or reducing our appreciation capacity to 'like' or 'don't like'. Last month, however, social media showed it could be a force for good. Within minutes of the terror shootings in Paris, hundreds of local tweeters opened their doors to those fleeing the scenes of the various attacks [using the hashtag #PorteOuverte](#).

User engagement

It's the sort of spontaneous, large-scale user interaction that brings the virtual world into the real one, and one that social media sites need. Such dramatic events, however, are rare. So these sites, in their race to attract more users than their competitors, are constantly designing features that encourage engagement and keep users on their platform. Twitter, for instance, has just [replaced its 'favorite' button](#) with a 'heart', which it says is easier to relate to. The micro-blogging site has also just launched Moments, a news curation feature which allows users to access a selection of tweets around the main events of the day. Moments was rolled out in the US last month and has just been [released in the UK](#). Conversely, Facebook-owned WhatsApp has – perhaps unintentionally – [blocked links](#) to competitor chat app Telegram.

User engagement on social media sites can also be a challenge for organisations, especially when it turns abusive. Latterly, the Labour party has started [drawing up social media guidelines](#) in order to prevent a recurrence of the internal cyberbullying that took place in the run up to Jeremy Corbyn's election as leader.

But more users means more data being collected, raising concerns over privacy breaches.

Privacy concerns

In his on-going battle to stop Facebook from transferring EU users' personal data to the US, campaigner Max Schrems has now logged a further request with national regulators to [enforce a European Court ruling](#) that struck down the EU-US Safe Harbour Agreement.

Meanwhile, in the US, internet giant Google has also been accused of breaking the law by [collecting students' data](#) without permission.

Even insurers, lenders and tax authorities could be unlawfully [harvesting customers' online data](#) to set insurance premiums, vet loan applications, or uncover fraud.

Tech business

The collection of user data is a thorny issue for social media sites. Data protection regulators increasingly seek to enforce tough rules, while advertisers ask for more refined metrics. Chat app Snapchat, once keen not to collect or reveal too much about users, is now [changing its mind](#).

In addition to growing their advertising revenue, some networks are trying to turn users into shoppers by introducing a 'buy' button. Early results are [not entirely convincing](#).

Still, despite increasing competition from newcomers, the big beasts of social media are still valued in the billions. Take Mark Zuckerberg's own shares in Facebook, which are worth about \$45bn, as it emerged when he and his wife announced they were [giving most of it to a new foundation](#).

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Social media users play key role in Paris shootings reaction

Social media users have played a key role in the immediate aftermaths of the 13 November terror attacks in Paris, with hundreds of local Twitter users offering shelter to those fleeing the scenes of the various shootings, using the hashtag #PorteOuvrte (open door).

Within hours, other hashtags emerged to express sympathy for the French capital (#PrayForParis) or to offer assistance to those whose travel plans had been affected as a result of the events (#StrandedInTheUS and #StrandedInCanada).

Meanwhile, Facebook activated its Safety Check button, allowing users to click a 'I'm safe' button on their profile. It was the first time that the facility, added after the Nepal earthquake, was being deployed for a human-caused disaster.

Other commercial organisations, such as Eurostar and Air France, also used Twitter to relay condolences and post traffic updates.

Source: [Financial Times](#), 14 November 2015

USER ENGAGEMENT

Twitter replaces 'favorite' button with 'heart'

Twitter has dropped its 'favorite' star-shaped button and replaced it with a heart-shaped one, in the same vein as Facebook's 'like' function. The new button has also been rolled out to Twitter's video apps Periscope and Vine.

The move is the latest in the race with other social media platforms to win and retain users by making it easier to engage. It follows recommendations by investor Chris Sacca that 'favorite' was too strong a word for a reaction button.

The news came as Twitter announced better-than-expected third-quarter earnings, momentarily pushing share prices up. But slow user growth – 11 per cent, taking the number of monthly active users to 320 million in the past quarter – has disappointed investors.

Twitter's struggle to gain wide appeal appears more acute when compared with the success of other communication apps. WhatsApp has 900 million monthly active users, Instagram, 400 million, and Facebook 1.5 billion.

Source: [Forbes](#), 3 November 2015; [Forbes](#), 8 December 2015

Twitter rolls out 'Moments' to UK users

Moments, Twitter's new news curation service, which launched in the US in October, has been rolled out to the UK's 15 million users.

The new feature is accessed by clicking or tapping a lightning bolt between the notifications and messages buttons. Content consists of tweets, including videos and pictures, about significant events taking place at the time as relayed on Twitter. It is organised in categories including 'news', 'today', 'sports', and 'fun'.

Content selection is decided by Twitter's own curation team, with assistance from some traditional news outlets such as, in the UK, *Buzzfeed UK*, *Sky News*, *The Sun* and *Glamour Magazine*.

The new service is a further attempt at offering users an enhanced Twitter experience and at expanding the micro-blogging site's appeal. A look at the tweets that followed the announcement, however, shows users not entirely enamoured with the move.

Source: [The Independent](#), 15 December 2015; [Twitter Blog](#), 6 October 2015

WhatsApp bans links to competitor Telegram

WhatsApp appears to have disabled links to chat app Telegram, similarly the facility to copy links that include its competitor's address, although the links themselves still appear on users' screens.

The change took place when the Facebook-owned platform rolled out a silent update and seems limited to devices running on the Android operating system, but it also affects links to the unrelated Telegram.com newspaper site.

Facebook has blocked links before: to The Pirate Bay in 2010, and this year to competitor Tsu.co, a small invitation-only social media network. It would, however, be the first time WhatsApp has blocked any links.

Facebook has not commented on the news, according to *The Independent*, and it is not known whether the incident is deliberate or accidental.

Source: [The Independent](#), 1 December 2015

Labour to draw up social media guidelines

Labour has started drawing up a social media code of conduct for members and supporters following Jeremy Corbyn's election as leader this autumn. In the preceding months, the battle for party leadership saw debate descend into bitter personal attacks on candidates.

In his first conference speech as new Labour leader, Jeremy Corbyn told activists to "cut out the personal abuse, cut out the cyberbullying and especially the misogynistic abuse online and let's get on with bringing real values back into politics".

Corbyn opponents have expressed concern that the move would prevent dissenters from voicing disagreement about party leadership in social media. Members of Labour's national executive committee, which is working on the guidelines, said the aim was solely to tackle bullying and ensure everyone was treated with respect.

Source: [The Guardian](#), 23 November 2015

PRIVACY CONCERNS

Stop Facebook transferring EU data to US, campaigner asks

Austrian privacy campaigner Max Schrems has asked a number of European data protection authorities to prevent Facebook from transferring EU users' data to the US.

Schrems originally complained to the data protection commissioner in Ireland, where Facebook's European headquarters are located. This led to a referral to the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg.

The PhD student filed similar complaints with the Belgian and German regulators and he has a class action pending against the social network's privacy policy in Austria.

In a ruling in October, the EU court struck down the EU-US Safe Harbour agreement, under which US companies can self-certify that EU data would be dealt with in line with European standards (see [Kysen Social Media Update, Autumn 2015](#)).

Schrems now wants European privacy agencies to force Facebook – and other US tech companies with EU operations – to comply with the ruling. For the companies concerned, this would involve drafting specific contract clauses in their user terms and conditions.

Source: [The Guardian](#), 3 December 2015

Google accused of spying on students

American privacy rights organisation the Electronic Frontier Foundation has logged a complaint against Google with the Federal Trade Commission, claiming the search engine is deceptively spying on students.

According to the EFF, Google is collecting personal and browsing data from students using equipment supplied to schools under the search engine's Chromebook and Google Apps for Education programmes. The organisation said the sync function, enabled by default on the software supplied, allows the company, without permission, to track, mine and store students' web usage, including passwords.

Google said the tools provided with its services allowed students to keep their information private and secure, and complied both with the law and with its own student privacy pledge.

But EFF in-house lawyers argue that devices and computers used in schools must protect students' privacy "without compromise" and have called on the FTC to investigate Google's conduct and "stop the company from using student personal information for its own purposes".

Source: [The Guardian](#), 2 December 2015; [Electronic Frontier Foundation](#), 1 December 2015

Insurers, banks and government bodies snooping on social media users

The Financial Conduct Authority has opened an investigation looking into allegations that insurers are using customers' internet activity to set premiums in respect of insurance policies, including home, motor and travel policies.

The inquiry follows growing concern that financial services businesses could be unlawfully harvesting information about customers' online activity, including social media and phone apps, to assess risk and set prices. The FCA will report its findings in early January 2016.

Already, insurers systematically trawl social media platforms to uncover fraudulent claims. Aviva says it enabled it to unmask 14,000 bogus claims last year, totalling £95m.

Other businesses, such as banks and lenders, are also increasingly turning to social media and internet search engines to determine a borrower's risk profile. The practice has been criticised because it could be detrimental to customers without an online footprint, who may be unfairly deemed high risk.

Even HMRC checks taxpayers' Facebook and other social media posts when it detects unusually high levels of tax underpayments.

Source: [Telegraph](#), 25 November 2015; [Telegraph](#), 1 December 2015

TECH BUSINESS

Snapchat embraces targeted advertising and more refined metrics

Snapchat has developed a new set of advertising tools in response to growing criticism from the advertising community that the photo-sharing app's rates could no longer be justified without providing more refined metrics.

Earlier this year, Snapchat was reportedly asking advertisers for \$750,000 a day to advertise on the platform. The rate was set almost entirely on the basis of its reach among the 20-something community. While rates later came down, the app was still charging twice as much as most online video ad products.

The company, once keen not to collect detailed information on users, has now moved to address advertisers' concerns. It has introduced a number of options allowing advertisers to target users by gender, age, device, location and context.

The app has also improved measurement tools allowing advertisers to assess return on investment. In addition to reporting on views and reach, it now offers – via a partnership with a third party – other metrics such as completion rate and brand resonance.

The depth of measurement is still not as specific as rivals Google or Facebook, but investors appear more confident about the direction Snapchat is taking. Facebook reportedly offered \$3bn for it a few years ago; its value is now estimated at \$10bn.

Source: [Business Insider UK](#), 3 December 2015

Lukewarm results for 'buy' buttons on social media

More than a year after they have been launched on a several media platforms, 'buy' buttons are still to convince users and business partners.

Twitter started trialling 'buy' buttons about a year ago in the hope of turning users into shoppers, and, along the way, increase its user base ([see Kysen Social Media Update, Autumn 2014](#)). Facebook started shortly afterwards, as did Pinterest, which is seen as the social media platform most conducive to e-commerce.

But business partners and brands who got on board have reported disappointing results. One of Pinterest's mainstream partners – there are 10,000 altogether – is believed to record fewer than 10 purchases via the platform's Buyable Pins.

For these three main social media sites, the priority remains to grow users and increase advertising revenue. But one at least, Pinterest, appears to be putting more effort into the trading stream. It has created a 'shopping' category in its search options, and feedback from partners suggests the picture-sharing site is bringing in new customers.

Source: [ReCode](#), 30 November 2015

Zuckerberg to give away 99 per cent of his Facebook shares

Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg and his wife Priscilla Chan, a doctor, have announced that in the course of their lives they will give 99 per cent of their shares in the social network to good causes.

The donation, valued at \$45bn based on current share price, will be made through their newly set up foundation, the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative. Its stated aims include promoting equality, helping local communities and helping future generations reach their potential.

The two made the announcement on the birth of their daughter, Max, in a letter to her posted on Facebook. "Today your mother and I are committing to spend our lives doing our small part to help solve these challenges," the letter said.

Zuckerberg, who owns about four million Class A shares in Facebook and approximately 419 million supervoting shares, will retain his majority voting position for the years to come, a stockmarket filing says.

Sources: [Wall Street Journal](#), 1 December 2015; [Facebook](#), 1 December 2015

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