2015 Social Media Trends & Opportunities
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Welcome to SMK’s latest SMK Insight Report.

Hi there,

This SMK Insight Report has been put together by our team of researchers with the aim of helping businesses to better understand the current state of social media, and some important trends to consider over the next 12 months.

The report focuses on five of the most popular brand platforms in Australia and New Zealand: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram and YouTube.

As these platforms mature they need to start living up to the hype generated by their short, albeit meteoric, rises. To put this into context, in 2014 Citigroup valued four-year-old Instagram at $35 billion. For comparison Forbes place the value of 78-year-old Toyota brand at $31 billion.

Throughout this Insight Report you will find user data and trends for each feature platform. We have attempted to identify the key trends that can impact how businesses and organisations use, spend and target end users via these platforms. Trends which alter how, why and when you’ll use certain platforms and network marketing solutions.

Using social media for business is simplifying around four major pillars:

- Content marketing
- Precision targeted promotion/advertising
- Customer relationship management
- Market insights/research

Being aware of and understanding important upcoming trends will make your organisation much more effective in each of these areas.

As ever, I hope you find this report useful.

Sincerely,

James Fitzgerald

SMK – Social Media Knowledge
Executive Director of Programing
Over the past 12 months social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram and YouTube have continued to grow in importance when it comes to brands’ marketing spend. The networks are continually refining their models for advertising and paid boosting, improving click rates and giving marketers better reasons to get—and stay—in involved.

To kick off 2015, we’ve decided to take a look at the details. We’re going to get you up to speed with where social media is right now, before delving into the key emerging trends for the new year.

To get things rolling, let’s eyeball the key statistics for the Big Five.
KEY STATS: Facebook

- **1.4 billion monthly active users**
- **890 million daily active users**
- **3.84 billion Facebook’s Q4 2014 revenue**
- **740 million daily active mobile users**
- **46%** Facebook is where 46% of all social sharing related to brands takes place
- **7.75%** Facebook’s share of the global digital advertising market is 7.75%
- **$2.81** Facebook’s average revenue per user

Sources: Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Forbes, Mashable, Techcrunch, eMarketer, Google, Flurry Analytics, Nielsen, Experian, Alexa, eMarketer, Kenshoo, Quintly, AdcorpeMarketer, Experian, Simply Measured, Wall Street Journal, Frost & Sullivan, Buffer
KEY STATS: Twitter

- **288 million monthly active users**
- **500 million tweets are sent every day**
- **29% Promoted Tweets boost offline sales by 29%**

88% of Twitter’s revenue is from mobile

80% of Twitter active users are on mobile

71 and 100 characters are retweeted the most

Tweets with images work best:

- +150% retweets
- +89% favourites
- +18% clicks

1.4 billion Twitter’s revenue for 2014, up 111% from 2013

Sources: Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Forbes, Mashable, Techcrunch, eMarketer, Google, Flurry Analytics, Nielsen, Experian, Alexa, eMarketer, Kenshoo, Quintly, AdcorpeMarketer, Experian, Simply Measured, Wall Street Journal, Frost & Sullivan, Buffer
KEY STATS: LinkedIn

- 347 million users worldwide
- 643 million was the 2014 Q4 revenue, an increase of 44% on 2013
- There are over 39 million students and recent college graduates on LinkedIn. They are LinkedIn's fastest-growing demographic.
- More than 6 million in Australia and 1 million users in New Zealand
- 40% of users check LinkedIn daily
- 45% of B2B marketers have gained a customer through LinkedIn
- Insights: industry insights are the most in-demand content
- The most common adjective in LinkedIn profiles in 2013: Responsible

Sources: Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Forbes, Mashable, Techcrunch, eMarketer, Google, Flurry Analytics, Nielsen, Experian, Alexa, eMarketer, Kensho, Quintly, AdcorpeMarketer, Experian, Simply Measured, Wall Street Journal, Frost & Sullivan, Buffer
KEY STATS: YouTube

More than 1 billion active users

300 hours of video are uploaded to YouTube every minute

50% of TrueView in-stream ads are skippable

80%

More than 1 million advertisers are using Google ad platforms, the majority of which are small businesses

Mobile revenue on YouTube is up over 100% year on year

More than half of 16 to 24-year-olds admit they ‘love’ YouTube.

Half of YouTube views are on mobile devices

Sources: Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Forbes, Mashable, Techcrunch, eMarketer, Google, Flurry Analytics, Nielsen, Experian, Alexa, eMarketer, Kenshoo, Quintly, AdcorpeMarketer, Experian, Simply Measured, Wall Street Journal, Frost & Sullivan, Buffer
KEY STATS: Instagram

- 300 million monthly active users
- 2.3 billion Likes daily
- 70 million average photos per day
- 86% of the top 100 brands have Instagram accounts
- 73% post at least one photo or video per week
- 23% of teens consider Instagram their favourite social network
- Instagram is shown to deliver brands 58 times more engagement per follower than Facebook
- Instagram is shown to deliver brands 120 times more engagement per follower than Twitter
- The average caption is 138 characters in length

Sources: Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Forbes, Mashable, Techcrunch, eMarketer, Google, Flurry Analytics, Nielsen, Experian, Alexa, eMarketer, Kenshoo, Quintly, AdcorpeMarketer, Experian, Simply Measured, Wall Street Journal, Frost & Sullivan, Buffer
Social media evolves quickly. As the major networks grow and mature, we’ve seen a shift towards profit-oriented strategies. That means constant tweaks to network functionality, to the ways they target markets, and to the advertising opportunities they offer brands.

To get the most out of your social media marketing efforts, it’s important to stay on top of the ever-shifting social soils.

On the following pages are the important trends you should watch out for in 2015.
2015 TRENDS: Facebook

Facebook is changing. It may not be as cool with the kids as it once was, but its billion+ userbase continues to grow. Social media’s biggest beast has added 100 million new users in the last year and has increased advertising revenue by 64%.

Trend 1: Facebook will reach more older folks

Once considered a platform for teens and young adults, nowadays Facebook is staking a claim for the other end of the age spectrum. In just three years, Facebook has grown its 55+ audience by 80%.

Of course, existing users get older all the time, but that doesn’t explain the huge influx. It is a simple fact: older-folks are joining Facebook at accelerating rates.

Whether it’s a strategic move by Facebook, or just a quirky shift in the market, this could work in Facebook’s favour. Older generations are often less fickle when it comes to switching brands, and they’re generally slower to adopt newer technologies.

Compared to their younger counterparts, the 55+ audience are less likely to be lured away to trendy new social networks, which means they’re more likely to stick with Facebook in the long run.

Upshot: In 2015, marketing on Facebook to people aged 55 and over will become more effective than ever before. It will get even better over time.

Trend 2: You might buy on Facebook

If you’re on Facebook in 2015, you will likely be offered the opportunity to buy from a brand via the Facebook interface. It will be easy. You might even like it.

In fact, the Buy button has already been introduced. It gives brands a rock-solid way of predicting return on investment from Facebook campaigns.

Upshot: Combine this with Facebook’s rumoured expansion into service provision and transaction processing, and this could be a significant step towards the establishment of a new FB-economy. Speaking of which...

“...buy from a brand directly on the Facebook interface.”
Trend 3: You might buy *with* Facebook

Facebook’s Messenger app could be a cheeky Trojan horse for a digital wallet app.

In October 2014, as the number of app users ticked past the 200 million mark, a hacker from Stanford University pulled apart Messenger’s code to see how it worked. He discovered that it has a **digital wallet function hidden inside**.

The as-yet-inactive functionality can store credentials for debit card transactions, and send funds from one user to another.

**Upshot:** Facebook is yet to explicitly comment on their plans for the hidden feature, but the business angles are strong. Payment processing is a multi-billion dollar industry, with huge potential for data mining.

What evidence do we have that there are plans afoot? A few months ago, Facebook poached a new executive to take charge of Messenger. David Marcus, a former PayPal president with an extensive history of monetising web-based payment systems got the gig. Plus, Mark Zuckerberg has mentioned that Messenger may eventually overlap with a payments system.

Trend 4: Video, video and more video

In 2015, Facebookers will watch their News Feed more than they read it. Integrated online video content is growing, especially for advertisers.

According to the Forrester’s US Online Display Advertising Forecast Report, video advertising is expected to represent nearly **55% of all online display ad revenue by 2019**. Presently, a lot of the growth is coming from Facebook—as was the case with Sainsbury’s Christmas promo video that went viral in December 2014.

In fact, the growth of video advertising on Facebook has been so enormous that the head of Facebook Australia agency sales is now advising clients that Facebook is **video platform, not a social network**.

Considering the numbers, it’s easy to see why. According to Facebook, since 2014 the number of video posts per person has increased by 75%. Since June 2014, Facebook has averaged more than 1 billion video views every day. In Australia, Facebook claims that more than 50% of Aussie users who access the site daily watch at least one video per day.

**Upshot:** For marketers and advertisers, the potential of Facebook video advertising is enormous. Not only is Facebook a great place to showcase your video ads at scale, but it also allows for videos to be micro-targeted to niche audiences.
2015 TRENDS: Twitter

In November 2013, Twitter went to Wall Street with an IPO valuation of $18.3 Billion at $26 per share. Within a couple of months, the share price surged to almost $75. The sky-high price hasn’t been sustained, but the added capital and investor expectations have influenced Twitter’s current direction. Acquisitions, executive reshuffles and promises of new products are yet to prove their worth. Profit is up, but user growth is lower than expected. As investors question valuations and projections, many are wondering what Twitter can do in 2015 to reinvigorate growth and further increase returns.

Trend 1: Objective-based Twitter campaigns will soar

Twitter’s business platform is ever-expanding. With quiet launches of various functions designed to make the process smoother, paid promotions on Twitter are starting to look like good business. Towards the end of 2014, Twitter finally opened up advertising and post-boosting (previously only available to big brands and agencies) to anyone in Australia. This allows businesses to pay for objective-specific outcomes. For example, retweets, replies, mobile app installs, new followers, website clicks and conversions.

Upshot: 2015 will see an Australian explosion in paid Twitter campaigns.

Trend 2: New options and innovations for ads

Twitter has a whole host of new goodies in the pipeline for advertisers in 2015.

You can now create tailored audiences from your own lists of email addresses. For example, addresses from your CRM database can be securely matched to Twitter user accounts, allowing you to promote tweets selectively to matched users.

Want to build relationships with influencers in your field? Twitter now allows advertisers to target promotions based on information in a Twitter user’s public info (i.e. their bio, number of followers, or past tweets).

Twitter is also looking to better integrate video into its ad offerings. Rumour has it they’re considering introducing six second auto-play previews, much like Facebook. As an incentive to advertisers, Twitter may only charge for such a service if and when a user clicks to watch the full video.

Upshot: Look for a big upsurge in Twitter advertising as brands make the most of new targeting functionality. If cost-free impressions of video previews come to fruition, expect a lot of moving content in tweet feeds very soon.
2015 TRENDS: Twitter

Trend 3: Curated timelines for new users

For newcomers, signing up to Twitter can be a bit daunting. With so many people to follow, trending topics, and the constant flow of information, it can be hard to find conversations you’re interested in.

To streamline the initiation experience, plans are afoot to launch a new Curated Timeline feature. While details are scant at this point, we’re imagining this could work like the Pinterest starter system, where new users pick categories of interest, and are then shown relevant posts.

Upshot: Brands should be aiming to get on default follow lists for curated timelines.

Trend 4: Popular posts won’t get lost in the past

Until now, Twitter’s timeline has been a constant and ever-current feed of updates, quips and twitpics of someone else’s dinner. This is a definitive trait of Twitter: any changes risk distorting the Twitter brand; but maybe it’s due for reshaping.

Twitter has recognised that content marketing is trending; but content is only valuable if there’s a chance it’ll catch some eyeballs. So, Twitter is going to earmark certain posts that you may miss while you’re offline.

These posts will be attributed a certain stickiness, so you can see them even if you open Twitter sometime after that post would usually have faded into obscurity.

Upshot: Brands on Twitter will start tweeting with the objective of getting earmarked by the system. To be organically highlighted for your target audience could be as big as being re-tweeted by Katy Perry.
LinkedIn’s reputation as Facebook for Business is growing more apt by the day. With 300 million users and 2014 third quarter revenue of $568 million (up 45% year-on-year), LinkedIn continues to surpass expectations.

In 2015, LinkedIn will further challenge Facebook by innovating its way into new markets and becoming a dynamic hub for sharing industry insights and ideas.

**Trend 1: LinkedIn will surpass Facebook for B2B marketing**

For years now, LinkedIn has led the way for business-to-business social networking. In 2015, LinkedIn looks like stretching that lead even further.

According to a 2014 Social Media Examiner survey, LinkedIn was on par with Facebook when it comes to social platforms used by B2B marketers (88% to Facebook’s 89%). Both are just ahead of Twitter (86%).

With momentum in its favour, 2015 is looking like the year that LinkedIn becomes the online B2B marketing champ.

**Upshot:** If your brand relies on B2B channels, consider upping your LinkedIn marketing in 2015. If you’re not there yet, you should be.

**Trend 2: More Competition for Killer Content**

LinkedIn’s been making huge strides into the paid content marketing space, and has seen a boom in revenue from its efforts. Projections from Mark Mahaney, Managing Director – Internet at RBC Capital Markets, has LinkedIn’s ad revenue ($362 million in 2013) tripling over the next four years to top $1 billion.

Emblematic of the renewed focus on content marketing is the recent policy change for InMail, LinkedIn’s email service for contacting members without formal connection.

Previously users would be charged a credit only for InMails that generated a recipient response. Now, the reverse is true. Users are charged a credit if their InMail does not get a response, while those that do get a recipient response (including clicking the ‘not interested’ option) are free.

**Upshot:** LinkedIn is increasing rewards for great, engaging content. To make the most of LinkedIn’s potential in 2015, lift your B2B content marketing game.
2015 TRENDS: LinkedIn

Trend 3: LinkedIn will grow younger

In 2013, LinkedIn signalled its intentions to chase a younger crowd by lowering its minimum age to 13. For an example of how it can work, let’s have a look at YOUniversity. Prospective students can use YOUniversity to choose the right school for them with features like University Rankings, University Finder and a Decision Board. Current students are invited to join their school’s university page and create a student profile. Then, they’re presented with features to help them kick-start their career, including the Student Job Portal, which highlights positions aimed at students and recent graduates. An Employers sub-section on YOUniversity also lets businesses use the platform to target entry-level employees that suit their needs.

Upshot: In 2015, LinkedIn is likely to continue boosting its student-friendly offerings. As a result, the network is going to become a better place to connect with young people than ever before.

Trend 4: LinkedIn will be more engaging and interactive

Once commonly regarded as a repository for online CVs, LinkedIn’s been effectively changing its image to be more conversational. LinkedIn is increasingly a space for sharing, having taken significant steps towards becoming a fully-fledged content channel complete with discussions, rhetoric and recriminations. LinkedIn has become the place for industry thought leaders to take to the social soapbox. This influencers strategy seems to be keeping regular users (i.e. the influenced) on the site for longer periods. In 2013, 48% of users surveyed spent more than two hours a week on LinkedIn. In 2014, that number rose to 58%.

Upshot: Now more than ever, LinkedIn is a dynamically social space. More eyes are trained on LinkedIn, and for longer periods. If you still treat LinkedIn as a static space, you’re getting left behind.
YouTube is the undisputed king of online video. 2013’s launch of the One Channel design template gave brands customisation options for their YouTube channels, streamlining the branding experience for marketers.

By the end of 2014, video ad revenues on YouTube in the US were predicted to reach a whopping USD $1.13 billion. As brands look for new options and competitors court YouTube’s users, the Google-owned video giant still has a couple of tricks up its sleeve.

**Trend 1:**
**YouTube targets TV-size ad budgets**

Historically, TV advertising is where advertisers have directed the most cash. However, we are in the midst of a sea change. Forrester projects that online advertising will outstrip its traditional TV counterpart by 2016.

Google wants to lead this charge with aggressive efforts to bring TV dollars straight to YouTube. To do this, they’re making deals directly with big agencies and brands.

As a clear signal of their intent, Google put Susan Wojcicki in charge of YouTube in February 2014. One of her previous gigs? Running Google’s overall advertising business.

**Upshot:**
YouTube will give more power than ever before to advertising brands as they aim to cement a position at the top of the mainstream advertising totem pole.

**Trend 2:**
**Enhanced customisation for branded YouTube channels**

YouTube’s new customisation tool, Gadgets, lets big spenders eschew One Channel layouts and create a YouTube presence that is totally unique. The Gadgets offering is exclusively for brands that advertise on YouTube, and promises to allow innovative marketers the chance to engage their subscribers with fully customised experiences.

Early data indicates that One Channel’s cookie-cutter layouts may outperform their Gadget-enhanced counterparts, which may give marketing managers pause.

**Upshot:**
Despite comparative data, there will be a short-term surge in bespoke YouTube channels for big-brands. Why? Full control over viewer-experiences is too good for many marketers to resist.

In the mid-to-long term, return on investment will decide whether these pursuits are sustainable. In each case, ROI is likely to depend on the brand, the audience and the creative content.
“YouTube has facilitated the rise of a new breed of superstar.”

**Trend 3:**
**More wagons hitched to YouTube’s rising stars**

YouTube has facilitated the rise of a new breed of superstar. YouTubers like Smosh and PewDiePie produce low-budget humour videos, largely related to video games. Thanks largely to teen and tween audiences, they’ve attracted millions of YouTube followers and **literally billions of views**.

That translates into big advertising dollars and genuine celebrity status. In PewDiePie’s case, he pocketed a reported $4 million in annual YouTube AdSense revenues, and has guest-starred on Comedy’s Central’s animated TV show South Park.

The disruptive rising stars of YouTube are savvy and often very business-minded. Of course, marketers can reach their massive audiences by advertising via YouTube, but it doesn’t end there.

Sponsorship and product placements offer an even-more personal touch for brands looking to connect with specifically segmented and sometime hard-to-crack audiences. By establishing a direct connection with the video producers and stars, brands can use them as a conduit and borrow their cool cache.

**Upshot:** Youth-targeted brands are scrambling to make strategic connections and endorsement deals with YouTube’s popular lo-fi content producers. In 2015, more brand wagons will be hitching to these young YouTube stars.
2015 TRENDS: Instagram

Instagram is owned by Facebook, but three characteristics set it apart:

- It is the rising star among image-based social networks
- Organic reach is still high
- Engagement with brands seems to occur naturally, without inherent cynicism

These might not hold true forever, but they are good reasons to get on Instagram in 2015. Indeed, 42% of marketers want to increase their Instagram efforts to potentially reach its 300 Million active users.

Trend 1:
**Instagram brand engagement leads the pack**

In December 2014, Instagram overtook Twitter with its number of active users: 300 million versus 284 million. Even more significant for brands, however, are the record levels of per-post engagement on Instagram.

According to a Socialbakers study, the top 25 brands on Instagram have a per-post engagement nearly 50 times greater than the top 25 brands on Twitter. Facebook's purchase of the app for $1 billion in 2012 might have seemed eye-watering at the time, however a Citigroup analyst recently valued Instagram at $35 billion. Not a bad investment for Zuckerberg and co.

**Upshot:** Arguably the hot social media platform of 2015, brands simply can't afford to ignore Instagram.

Trend 2:
**For #hashtags, subtlety will come up trumps**

Every online brand, from retail through to activist movements, uses hashtags. And Instagram is reinvigorating hashtag strategy.

Smart brands have been establishing virtual ownership of subtly branded tags. Rather than #brandname, it’s more like #lifestylebenefit or #motivationalcatchphrase. Brands then get their community to tag their own photos with said hashtag, regardless of whether the underlying brand is actually featured in the image.

This sort of mutually beneficial marketing thrives on social media. The community is given a hook on which to hang its wares. That hook is owned by a brand. The popular hook attracts more potential customers who are, by definition, already invested in the brand’s social cache.

**Upshot:** Brands that create successful and subtle hashtags will get real-world returns for their Instagram efforts. Brands that highlight select user deployments of their hashtag will climb even higher: users love additional exposure that makes them a recognisable member of the community.
2015 TRENDS: Instagram

Trend 3: Growth of paid Instagram advertising

Last year saw Instagram launch paid advertising in Australia—a year after debuting in the US. So far, Instagram has taken things slow, making sure that paid content doesn’t negatively affect the experience. For Instagram in Australia, they’ve tested the waters by limiting the offer and ad space to a handful of big-spenders, with paid content starting to appear on Aussie accounts in October 2014.

Tourism Queensland were one of the early adopters of paid advertising on Instagram. They were one of the first brands to pay for exposure on Instagram Australia, and they’ve also partnered with QANTAS to run Instagram campaigns targeting other countries. Using the hashtag #thisisqueensland, the state tourism board has attracted over 100,000 Instagram followers already.

Late in 2014, Instagram launched video ads too. While initially criticised by some for seeming out-of-place on the platform, these concerns seem to have cooled. Of course, quality content has a propensity to win over consumers: when big brands like Disney, Banana Republic and Activision got on board straight away, there was always a good chance their videos would be well received.

At launch, targeting options were limited to the age, gender, and country, meaning it’s not yet possible to segment as effectively or hit precise marks. However, as Instagram refines its offering and chases wider monetisation, you can expect the advertising opportunities and targeting functionality to expand in a big way in 2015.

Upshot: Instagram could be the emerging space for online marketers targeting its predominantly young and affluent user base. Watch out for wider advertiser access and further in-feed integration of 15-second micro-video ads.
How can marketers boost engagement on social?

The timelines of a post is critical. For example, we know that people are more likely to engage with a post that drives to our eCommerce page on a Sunday than they are on a Tuesday.

Also, know your audience and target the right demographics! Getting the content right is key, but you also need to ensure that you are getting that content in front of the right people. This is why it’s important to know if your consumer is more likely to view a post on mobile or desktop.

Finally, there needs to be a change in the way we view “successful engagement” due to the change in the way that social companies want us to use their platforms from 2015. Reach results are much more important these days.

We also know that consumers’ behaviour in terms of post interaction has changed. Unless a post really hits home and is relatable on a very personal level, consumers are less likely to want to ‘share’ your content to their private space (their timeline/newsfeed).

What will be the biggest digital trends in 2015?

We’ve been hearing about ‘Big Data’ for a while now, but in 2015 we’ll really see everyone’s favourite buzzword come into its own. Customers are demanding an exceptional experience on whichever channel they’re choosing to use, and for us it’s about understanding the data we have to offer seamless, personalised interactions with our customers without it being creepy. Or too Big Brother.

Which is the most important social platform, from a work perspective?

Facebook remains the most important platform for now, due to the sheer number and variety of users. Most consumer groups are represented on Facebook, as opposed to a platform like Instagram, which may over represent some demographics. Also, the targeting options on.

Facebook allows you to have meaningful conversations with a specific audience instead of shooting blindly and hoping you’re speaking to someone who wants to hear your message.

What’s your advice for digital marketers to stay ahead of the game in 2015?

Be aware of your surroundings! Keep up to date with all things digital marketing, including reading developments that have the potential to be used in the future. Which means read industry articles – at least once a week.
What will be the biggest digital trends in 2015?

We see a lot of opportunity and growth around paid amplification on Facebook. We’re being smarter with our targeting of posts and are constantly learning from the analytics.

How can marketers boost engagement on social?

We try and make each post relevant and beneficial to our audience. When preparing a social content plan, it’s important to pick what you think will be the strongest performing posts and allocate some spend to boost these posts accordingly.

What’s your advice for digital marketers to stay ahead of the game in 2015?

Try and find ways of creating and re-creating content that will stimulate your audience. It can be challenging to continuously keep coming up with new content, but it can be made easier by keeping an eye out for what other brands are doing in the digital landscape and keeping abreast of digital news and trends.

Which is the most important social platform, from a work perspective?

For me personally it has to be Twitter. I use it as my gateway to a wide range of information including news, public opinion and events, and to follow people that I know I can trust to provide insights and resources that will enhance my knowledge and help me to do my job better.

What’s your advice for digital marketers to stay ahead of the game in 2015?

Focus your attention on the areas where you’re getting the best results. Rather than spreading your marketing efforts too thin, think strategically about where the audiences you want to engage with are and what’s going to attract their attention.

This can involve looking at your/your client’s key strengths and allocating the greatest share of your time towards these activities.
What will be the biggest digital trends in 2015?

There are a number of trends that we’ll see in 2015; there are two that I’m excited about:

**Wearable tech:** Without doubt 2014 was the year of wearable tech with the category booming and experiencing massive growth. What we’ll start to see over the next 12 months is consumers taking ownership of their data and applying it to multiple areas of their lives – for example working closely with other brands that touch their lives to maximise the results – discounts on products, brand collaborations, and the like.

**Niche communities within broader communities:** For awhile the focus for brands was building their online fan bases as large as possible. The challenge with that is it leads to increasingly generic content, which in turn leads to a decline in engagement. Over the next 12 months I believe we’ll see a rise in brands targeting small groups within their wider communities with custom content.

For example, rather than create one large, expensive TVC style piece of video content, they may create 10 shorter, cheaper pieces of content better targeted to niche sub-groups within their overall audience. Ultimately this promotes better engagement and builds a more intimate/personal relationship between brands and audiences.

Which is the most important social platform in your line of work?

It really depends quite heavily on the target audience. Facebook is still the dominant platform for the majority of brands targeting a broad audience.

However we’re also seeing Instagram continue to boom with millennials. And LinkedIn’s strategic play to be the definitive publishing platform for professionals is gathering significant traction with major global and local brands – SMBs in particular.

Do you think the Australian social scene differs from other countries/globally?

Short answer – no. Whilst Australian dedicated content tends to perform better than global content on the whole they are very similar.

What’s the secret of your social success?

Fail fast. The nature of social means you’re often the first to try something.

When that’s the case it’s important that you fail fast and learn from it. Make adjustments and re-launch as needed. The days of ‘safe plays’ are long gone.
In Summary

As you can see, there's a lot going on in social in 2015, and expect the pace to get even quicker. What's clear is that one approach or one platform is no longer enough when it comes to staying ahead in digital. Brands and marketers must be nimble to adapt to the changing trends and tastes of online audiences.

We hope the insights in the report will aid you in navigating your social strategy in the coming year. Stay tuned for more SMK Insight Reports, and happy Liking, posting, and tweeting.

About SMK

SMK is Australia's leading dedicated social media training and research business. A knowledge hub at heart, SMK exists to help businesses become more effective users of social media and digital channels.

With its industry leading training programs, SMK educates and coaches businesses on how to use social media more effectively and assists them in overcoming organisational challenges. SMK's tailored In-house training programs, and step-by-step approach, help businesses navigate the social media space in a carefully considered manner, creating a solid platform for success.

SMK has provided training for Australia's leading businesses and brands, including: Jetstar, NAB, Pfizer, Panasonic, News Magazines, Nivea, Tourism Australia, McDonalds, Transurban and Subaru, to name just a few.