

Using social media to advertise

The use of social media to promote businesses and products has burgeoned in the last decade and is only set to grow more if the experts are to be believed.

However, this is intimidating to the small business owner who is new to the online world and only familiar with traditional means of advertising.

The advantages of using social media platforms for advertising include the following:

- A large, active audience;
- Large amounts of personal data and habits that aid in targeting advertising to people genuinely interested in your product;
- Advertising that can be localised according to your demographic; and
- A greater opportunity to interact with your consumers.

It is important to remember, however, that social media advertising should be used as a supplement to marketing basics such as direct marketing, flyers, or online advertising.

There are three major social media platforms which you can make use of for advertising, and they all have different options – you will have to decide what you would like to get out of your marketing to make a decision.

1. Twitter



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Twitter users in South Africa are currently [around 7.4 million](#). This platform allows you to target your advertising according to interest categories, hashtags, promoted accounts, promoted tweets, and promoted trends.

Promoted accounts allows you to build followers by giving your business more exposure. This can build up your account ahead of a big event or capitalise on a particular trend. Promoted tweets give a particular tweet more exposure and are best for building brand awareness, sharing your best content, and offering deals. Promoted trends are paid-for topics or hashtags that will appear on the top of the trending topics list and are excellent for building awareness for product launches or events or building your brand name by association.

Advertisers will be able to view how their campaign is progressing via analytics that include insights into your followers, impressions for the different options, conversions and traffic measurements.

Paying for Twitter advertising is dependent on your own budget.

2. Facebook



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Globally, more than 1.59 billion users log into Facebook on a regular basis, making this platform the largest in the world. In South Africa, as many as 12 million users log into the platform monthly. Africa is also one of the fastest growing user bases.

This means Facebook is likely to give your business the greatest exposure. Adverts can also be targeted to specific locations, genders, interests, workplaces, education, and relationship statuses. The platform can also test the effectiveness of different advert variations and uses the one that performs best. Although its metrics are not as detailed as other platforms, it is a pretty cost-effective and effective advertising option if you get it right.

3. Instagram



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Instagram is the [fastest-growing social network](#) in South Africa, with a user growth of 133% between 2015 and 2016. Forty-two percent of major brands are already using it. Advertising on this platform was only [recently rolled out](#) in South Africa, meaning that brands and businesses can engage with their consumers and potential customers in photo and video formats. The company - through its parent, Facebook - has the capability to target adverts very specifically.

Currently the network allows advertising in the form of 15 second videos, photo-link advertisements with built-in calls to action, sequenced advertising campaign images, and marquees for mass awareness and fast results.

A word of warning for those thinking about using this network: it is considered a very authentic manner of communicating and thus requires a lot of work to match the brand's behaviour while also creating quality content. Because of this, Instagram is more suited to niche brands.

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