

Days Of Double-Digit Growth In Social Network Users Are Over

Contributed by eMarketer

Reaching a saturation point in some age groups

Social networking now reaches most internet users in the US and has become an integral part of their lives. Thanks to the rapid growth of Facebook, updating status, posting comments and sharing links with friends have become routine activities for millions of people.

eMarketer estimates nearly 150 million US web users will use social networks via any device at least monthly this year, bringing the reach of such sites to 63.7% of the online population.

But the days of double-digit growth in users are over as social networking reaches a saturation point. By 2013, 164.2 million Americans will use social networks, or 67% of internet users.

“With fewer new users signing up, social network users will be more sophisticated and discerning about the people and brands they want to engage with,” said Debra Aho Williamson, eMarketer principal analyst and author of the new report, “US Social Network Usage: 2011 Demographic and Behavioral Trends”;

Even as the social network audience has broadened to include a significant number of people from the Generation X, boomer and senior age segments, the youngest age groups are still the most represented, active and engaged.

The enormous usage increases in some older age groups over the past two years will be less pronounced in the coming years.

Still, more than half of internet users ages 45 to 64 and over four out of five 12- to 34-year-old online users will be regular social network users in 2011.

The highest penetration level of all age groups will remain in the 18-to-24 age group, where 90% of internet users will use social networks this year.

“In 2011, social networks will need to cement their relationships with their users, particularly people ages 35 and older, in order to keep them engaged,” said Williamson. “Marketers and media companies can contribute to this effort by creating compelling user experiences that make people want to stay connected to social networks so they can gain access to experiences, deals or content they may not be able to find anywhere else.”

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