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## 5 Social media trends and strategies in 2015

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### Abstract

Going by the old adage, if the route to a man's heart was through his belly, then the route to mankind's heart in 2015 is through the social media! At the verge of its entry into the third quarter, 2015 has been one bolting charger in the social media derby. With the blue-white 'f' icon retaining its iconic status and the little 'twitty' bird 'hashtagging' and '@ing' its way from 'vine-to-vine', a host of fresh trends have emerged with a willingness to stay. At the outset, the 'ocean-of-motion' is swelling thick and high as social videos dominate the trends, ebbing and flowing over the more wordy modes of expression. We witness Facebook trump YouTube in video views, 'streaming' in a new revolution. We also witness the fated partnership of ecommerce with its social counterpart, the sCommerce. Social networks realise the convenience of online shopping and wish to integrate the same with themselves so that users shop while staying on the social network. The panacea in your pocket continues to gain sway in 2015. The growing affair between mobile phones and social apps continues to rake in influence and taller numbers this year. "...but then how is he your friend if you don't even know his name?" "Anonymity" has made itself "known" this year as the discreet child of the otherwise candid social media. On platforms like Whisper and Secret, you can be who you want to be with none being any the wiser! Finally, Facebook wants to be your personal shopper, taking care of your purchases and money transfers across platforms and websites. And with half of 2015 still unturned on the calendar, more interesting turns in the social arena seem by no means improbable before the current year hits senility!

**Keywords:** S-Commerce, Social Video, Snapchat, Vine, HootSuite, anonymity, whisper, secret, ello, e-wallet, trends, vloggers,

### 1. Introduction

With 2015 sauntering on the edge of its second quarter, social media managers get 'edgy' as trends in the social-networking space continue their volatility streak. The spoils ergo deservedly belong to those who can tap into and tame these trends and ride the dragon with the fiery end pointed away.

Ryan Holmes founded HootSuite conducted a survey recently which revealed engrossing insights into the growth of the social media platform as a global phenomenon. Apparently, a quarter of the world's population is active on social networks which translate to a staggering 1,730,000,000 users. And if you thought a minute's time was trivial matter, think again! 60 seconds in social media effectuate 4.7 million post uploads to Tumblr, 277,000 snap shares on Snapchat and YouTube video views in excess of 5 million! So in a way, for every second of your existence, someone out there is thinking a Facebook status! It's small wonder then that social media trends continue to evolve consistently and dramatically with the aim to reach the end user in an increasingly meaningful and memorable manner.

Below, we discuss 5 prevailing trends that have emerged as the pulse of the concurrent social media layout:

### 2. "Actions" speak louder than...well, e-commerce!

'e' makes way for 's' as *Scommerce* treads forward into more sophistication in 2015 with the CTA (call to action). As the driving force behind the social network-driven buying process, call-to-action, as a marketing stratagem, is being employed to induce an immediate response from prospective shoppers logged onto social sites. Case in point: the "Buy" button as pioneered by Twitter and Facebook serves as a purchase link between online vendors and a large centralized chunk of users logged into the two social-network giants. With just a click or two, users can make a purchase without ever leaving the network. Come to think of it,

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makes perfect sense! Reason would dictate that rather than an online merchant endeavoring financially and mentally to woo customers and traffic onto their website, much smarter to tap into an already receptive audience. You already have myriads of users happily chatting with friends, browsing the latest trends, sharing photos and videos on social networks. Introducing CTA buttons like “Buy”, “Call now” or “Know more” amidst them would be like bringing the ice-cream truck itself to the neighborhood. Rightly so, 2015 is seeing a growing nexus between e-commerce and social-networking. According to HootSuite CEO, Ryan Holmes, since Facebook and Twitter are real time media, they’re ideal for short term deals and offers that elicit immediate response due to their fleeting nature. Purchases become a matter of a tap or two, once the payment details are on file. You’ve got to hand it to real-time shopping for breaking the spell of obsessive comparison shopping, which is the hallmark of internet buying. The thing with the average online shopper is that they know they can get the best deal when there are a host of e-commerce sites competing fiercely for providing the best offer. So it is only natural to spend time a good deal surfing for best prices, swapping site with site before actually buying. On the other hand, real time deals are like “Listen pal, it’s now or never!”. The “pal” isn’t left with much choice than to ‘act’! Social media blogger Rebecca Booth names the same mechanism as “Disposable content”. The power of the FOMO (fear of missing out) form of advertisement entices or rather coerces the user to act ‘now’! If you miss the offer, it is disposed, never to be seen again! And then the marketer is like “let that be a lesson for you!” Finally, Scommerce comes as a breather for advertisers. Connecting individual posts and tweets with actual purchases seemed infallible up till now. If you would’ve noticed, towards the end of an online transaction, almost all major e-commerce sites provide the option of tweeting or posting about your most recent purchase. While it seems a legit devise for ‘auto-advertisement’, it has been no friend to those tracking company revenue based on it as more than half the buyers are like “Hey! I bought it, I don’t wanna tell the entire town about it!”. Therefore, more than 70% sales go unnoticed on social platforms because of the buyer choosing not to share socially what they just spent on. With Scommerce’s CTA advantage, each click on the “Buy” button is trackable by the boys crunching the numbers, making analytics a breeze for estimating sales revenue.

### 3. Setting things in ‘motion’; Video becomes the preferred content on social networks

The late stages of 2014 saw video spawning as the favourite social content, beating other forms of online expression. Blogs are giving way to *vlogs* (video blogs) as you find bloggers rechristening themselves with the *fresh to death* designation of *vloggers* and *micro-vloggers* (people posting short video clips). Instavid, Vine, Snapchat, Hyperlapse- social video platforms are no more in the dearth-range. Their mantra is simple- ‘what you can say in a blog, you can say better with a video.’ Not only more expressive, videos have the added plus of longer retention. Social-network users are increasingly exhibiting an inclination towards social video content. As it would justly follow, a comScore survey in the US in August 2014 showed Facebook surpassing videos viewed on desktop. A year-long collection of data ranging from June 2014 to August 2014 showed a receding YouTube trend culminating at 11.3 billion

views, while Facebook exhibited a steady upsurge climaxing at 12.3 billion views at the end of the survey period. Nonetheless, there’s a lot of skepticism against this data as Facebook’s lead is founded on unsolicited views of autoplay, silent videos, which play automatically on loading user-walls. Still, ignoring these trends on the latter plea would be a grave folly.

SocialBaker’s data also favours video as the dominating content in 2015. After analyzing over 180,000 Facebook video posts across 20,000 Facebook pages, here’s what SocialBaker has dug out. Since September 2014, video posting has moved away from YouTube to Facebook. While the numbers still award precedence to YouTube, the trend favours Facebook in the current year. It would not be altogether incredible if Facebook surpasses YouTube in videos posted towards the end of 2015. Another revelation by SocialBaker shows that Facebook videos receive significantly more shares than YouTube. This makes sense because sharing and engagement are at the heart of Facebook interactions. “It won’t be long before Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn start showing preferential treatment to video content that is hosted on their own platform” says Michael Steizner, founder and CEO of Social Media Examiner.

Apart from Facebook, Twitter’s Vine channel and Tumblr are fast becoming the favourite hosting spots for short videos and even shorter GIFs. Roger Katz, CEO and founder of Friend2Friend, a social media technology and solutions company, advises social marketers to take a page from Hp’s book. Hewlett Packard solicited video stars with great success to produce short-form Vine videos. Nothing feels better than when low cost videos hit the spot with the customer. Heidi Cohen, president of Riverside Marketing Strategies has a three-fold philosophy for social managers in the current year: Create your own regular video episodes, provide the five key types of content your target audience seeks and get your customers into the act. She further adds “Videos captured with a smartphone are much easier than writing a review. Make it easy for customers by setting up an area of your establishment to encourage them”.

Social media and content writer Rebecca Booth is also in favour of directly uploading videos to the social platform instead of embedding them from YouTube or Video. Rebecca says “Natively uploaded content received 40% higher engagement rates, and should always be supplemented with paid media.” Further, she adds that the same goes for video on Instagram and Twitter who are also becoming more relevant for video media.

### 4. The Mobile furore!

Eighty-eight years from the song’s first recording, the prophecy has come true! Today’s millennial has actually “got the whole world in his hands!”. In the world of mobile media, 2015 evinces to be the year of micro-moments. Years ago, when mobile internet penetration wasn’t as deep and data speeds weren’t 2015 slick, people didn’t mind suppressing their spur-of-the-moment inquiries for want of a credible answer source. Today, every “I want-to-know”, “I want-to-go”, and “I want-to-buy” moment is followed by an immediate fumble in the pocket or purse for the all-powerful Smartphone. Such curious moments are what we call “micro-moments”. In the context of social-networking, micro-moments are instances such as texting a friend, ‘whatsapping’ your spouse, checking the screen for social alerts and so on.

We are social, a global research agency has carried out an extensive survey on the worldwide growth of mobile social platforms, which includes stats from more than 240 countries around the world, and profiles of 30 of the world's biggest economies in detail. They proudly call this 376 pages detailed compendium *The Digital, Social and Mobile in 2015 report*. According to the report, as of January 2015, out of a global population of 7.210 billion, there are 1.685 billion active mobile social accounts which translates into a 23% penetration, which is impressive on every account, given the world's urbanisation to be 53%. Another very insightful stat offered by We are social is the 'Year on Year' growth which props the promise in favour of the mobile. Active mobile social accounts grew by 23% in the last twelve months compared to a 12% growth of social interactions via other digital platforms. Converting these percentages into absolutes, mobile stands at +313 million while social networking over stationary mediums took a leap by +222 million from 2014 numbers. The mobile rests smug with a convincing lead.

Coming to international comparisons, the Asia-Pacific dominates impressively with a whopping 879 million active mobile social accounts in January 2015. The enormity of this figure becomes evident when compared to other nations wherein The Americas stand at 399 million, Europe at 287 million and the Middle East at 35 million. However, a fairer comparison would construe of an inclusion of the population factor as well.

The hardware attributes of a mobile phone strongly favour its rising command over the social web space. The mobile camera would've never thought it'd see the day when it would enjoy the crown jewel status in the social networking legion. Fads like the 'selfie' combined with the mobility of Instagram have changed the human perception about images and portraits. Apparently there's no exciting element about a photo which has not its double uploaded on some social network but rests humbly in your phone's memory. Instagram has surpassed Twitter for the amount of daily active users rising to 300 million. Instagram has also tested sponsored posts within user's timelines, giving brands even more of a reason to establish a presence on their photo sharing social media platform. Global leader apple is known for maintaining its signature device properties without succumbing to the competition but iPhone 6 plus proved that even Apple has recognized that the future belongs to social media which calls for large screens and 'juice-packing' camera resolutions.

### **5. Anonymity-the discreet child of candid social-networking**

2015 is witnessing a surge in the more covert versions of networking sites. If you've heard of apps the likes of Whisper, Secret, Wut, Yik Yak, Confide and Sneaky, then we're very likely on the same page. If not, let's unveil some of that page's contents. Users of these apps can send anonymous messages, images or both to "friends" who are registered with the same platforms. The nature of messages over these mediums is somewhat unconventional as some "self-destruct" after delivery while others live on, unnamed. But the hallmark governing all these messages is that of anonymity. Not surprisingly, the position of these apps remains polemical as even industry veterans like Mark Zuckerberg and Eric Schmidt believe that identity is foundational to the social web. On the flip-side, Ryan

Holmes, CEO HootSuite expressed his take with the following written words "we gain trust and credibility online by being open and real. But that doesn't mean there shouldn't be a place for anonymity in the social web."

Opposers of anonymity discredit it on two counts: One: when there is no accountability for what people are saying, you can expect lies more often than not. And two: with no care of traceability, there would be no room of social inhibitions or propriety leading people into being malicious, hateful and libelous with their words. To counter such unfortunate instances, Facebook has in place a "Real name policy". "We fundamentally believe this leads to greater accountability and a safer and more trusted environment for people who use the service" a spokesperson told The Guardian. He continued saying, "This view point has been developed by our own research and in consultation with a number of safety and child protection experts."

Proponents of anonymity however assert their support in the foundational values of such platforms. The assumption underpinning the formation of Whisper and Secret is that anonymity imparts freedom to people to speak their mind, to let out what they really mean. The difference albeit between the two being that Whisper allows users to share messages with anyone while Secrets restricts the message transmission to friends. It's truly baffling though how anonymity and "friendship" can go hand-in-hand.

Despite the loom of dissenting clouds over hidden identities on social platforms, venture-capitalists appear undeterred and sanguine. Last year, both Whisper and Secret closed big funding rounds with Whisper raising \$30 million and Secret bringing in \$10 million.

For the moment, Anonymous networking seems to be more than trudging along with 'Ello' going strength-to-strength since its inception in March 2014. The 'about us' section on ello. coreads very convincingly as "Ello is a beautiful & ad-free social network where you can connect with friends, be inspired, and share what matters most...without the clutter you'll find on other ad-based social networks."

The promise of an ad-free interface seems promising enough on the surface, though only time will tell if the human threshold of handling "honesty" can withstand the test of candid anonymous networking!

### **6. E-wallet comes to social networking**

Hacks released a report last year which claimed Facebook's grafting a hidden payment feature deep inside Facebook's well-liked messenger app. Hacks also informed that the activation of such a feature would enable the app's massive base of 200 million users to send money to each other gratis by just using the debit card information. Earlier this year in March, the forthcoming activation of the very same feature was corroborated as Facebook admitted opening the gates to free money transfer to its invigorated base of 500 million messenger users in the upcoming months of 2015. This will make the Facebook messenger the latest platform to incorporate a payment service. All that the user will have to do is link their Visa or MasterCard debit card to their messenger's account which will enable them to send money to their friends with the tap of a dollar sign embedded within the chat box.

So if the voice inside your head is saying "as if Facebook already didn't have enough part in my life that it wants to "gain" into my wallet as well!" Well, gain it is indeed! Mobile payment space is apparently an unclaimed territory

(at least convincingly) at the moment with major players battling it out for supreme dominance. One prominent name amongst the big boys being that of Apple. Apple is taking its own stab at the bargain with the Apple Pay app. Other major players involved are Square and Stripe, not the mention payment veterans like PayPal. I know I haven't exactly answered the why behind this tech-skirmish. While the final design behind the struggle may not be clear but Facebook may eventually charge for its money transfer services. At the moment, Facebook claims that it has no plans of monetisation of the feature, but charging eventually for a hit feature to which people have grown accustomed isn't unheard of in the social-media space. Further yet, Facebook may even leverage customer purchasing data to attract more advertisers or even try to go one-on-one against card-payment giants like Visa and MasterCard. Facebook would definitely want a stab at the billions that Visa and MasterCard rake-in, in the name of fees. Banks and other financial institutions are also looking to harness the benefits of "I.M. money transfers" as they try to integrate their net-banking servers and card informations with popular platforms such as Whatsapp.

## 7. Conclusion

From its evolution the world of social media is changing and still this platform is full of more potential and innovation for the marketers and organizations. New changes which are created with social media always gained praised and change the outlook of everyone by the results which are generated by the use of these social media platforms. With a full half of 2015 still remaining, it would be interesting to see what the prolific and ever changing world of social media pulls out from under its sleeves. Until then, post a nice status, send out a tweet or two, instagram that awesome shot and 'be trendin'!

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