

Social Networking - UK - November 2009

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What is this report about?

Despite widespread predictions of social networking fatigue as far back as February 2008, social networks – in particular Facebook – continue to dominate the average UK internet user's time online. The current market dominance of Facebook means that rival social networks are continuing to find their user bases squeezed, but is Facebook's position unassailable?

What have we found out?

- Despite the increasing range of extra activities that sites like Facebook offer, internet users are still mostly pre-occupied with one another, with research showing 66% visit to keep up with current friends compared with 10% of respondents that visit social networks for music, for example.
- Social networks depend mainly on advertising revenues. However many are looking to broaden into new areas to grow profits, such as e-commerce. Research for this report shows that few respondents would ever consider buying goods and services through a social network, even less for a virtual product.
- While Facebook is still the most popular social network according to Mintel research, it is not the fastest-growing – with newer sites Twitter and LinkedIn all making much larger gains in new subscribers over the last 12 months.
- According to Mintel research one in ten respondents use social networks on their mobile phone. But these are also the most valuable to networks, and are among their most enthusiastic users.
- While attention has shifted away from the Facebook versus MySpace debate, the smaller social network continues to innovate around its music credentials, which have remained core to the platform's values since it originally launched.
- According to Mintel research for this report 75% of respondents say that they keep personal information to a minimum. However, attitudes to security vary by gender (females being the most security conscious) and age (young being the least).

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