

Social media: The top five trends of 2013

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Last year saw businesses stop experimenting with social and seriously integrate it into their operations – from embracing social business to the adoption of social media monitoring tools and early experimentation with social customer service.

This year, social proved that it was serious about its relationship with business. Nearly all of the major networks attempted to make themselves more attractive with the introduction of analytics tools or more sophisticated advertising models, and 2013 saw yet another highly-anticipated IPO as Twitter made its debut on the stock market.

Additionally, this was the year that brands became more adept at social media customer service and subsequently fewer social media #fails and video emerged as a major battleground for the major networks.

With this in mind, MyCustomer.com takes a look back at some of the news and stories that we've covered in the past 12 months, and considers what we've learned about engaging with customers across social channels this year.

The social analytics race heated up

Facebook has long been at the forefront of providing users with an analytics service and this year saw nearly all of the other major social networks follow suit. After kicking off the year with **its first ever acquisition**, Pinterest introduced **new analytics capabilities for verified business accounts** in March, enabling managers to measure pin views, clickthroughs and re-pin rates.

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Twitter first began its foray into analytics in February when it further cemented its relationship with TV in [the acquisition of social TV analytics firm Bluefin Labs](#). The micro-blogging site said the move would build on its existing partnership with Nielsen to develop the Nielsen Twitter TV Rating.

Twitter's major analytics news came in June when it launched its own free tool for users of its [ad service](#). The service provides a graph showing you a month's worth of follows, unfollows and mentions, as well as how your post performed in terms of retweets, replied and how many times it was favoured.

[LinkedIn](#) was the next major network to join the analytics race, after a series of updates brought a new suite of analytics tools. Available for business pages, the new capabilities enable insight into a number of metrics including impressions, clicks and interactions, as well as follower numbers and engagement levels.

Advertising became more sophisticated

In the same round of updates, the professional networking site also used the opportunity to unveil a new Sponsored Pages feature. Now, rather than just target those that subscribe to the brand, businesses on LinkedIn can pay to have their content posted to users' newsfeeds in a similar vein to Facebook's Page Sponsored Posts.

The feature was just one of the many events to occur in the social network advertising space this year as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram all made concerted efforts to make themselves more attractive to business. In March, analyst firm [Forrester forecast that advertising on social media will reach €3.2bn](#) by 2017 as companies spend more to engage with consumers on social media platforms for marketing and sales initiatives and shift away from traditional media spend.

Twitter had a momentous year in 2013, and not just for its IPO (more on that later). Needing to quickly turn its revenue potential into reality, [the micro-blogging site struck a deal with Adobe and Salesforce.com](#) in February to launch a new API that enabled marketers to buy and manage ads via third party applications.

Michael Lazerow, CMO of Salesforce Marketing Cloud, said in a statement: "When we can show our clients that these are the tweets you should buy as promoted tweets and we take the guesswork out of it, you have a significant increase in the results,

The new Ads API capability was considered a move to help to help reach its \$1bn revenue target in 2014, ahead of its eventual IPO in June, which, unlike Facebook, was a resounding success. Shares closed at \$40 per share on the first day – nearly double their \$17 initial price – and its current market value is estimated somewhere around the \$22 billion mark.

In the same month, Twitter extended its self-service advertising platform to small businesses in the UK after opening the service to small firms in the US earlier in the year. [As reported on our sister site BusinessZone.co.uk](#), all firms need to use the service is a Twitter account and a credit card.

Facebook's advertising announcements, however, were met less favourably this year. [In March, the networking giant began trailing the expansion of Exchange](#), the advertising system that enables marketers to tailor messages to users based on their browsing history – from the graphical display ads on the side of the user's page to the ads in its news feed. [But many wanted that it was too aggressive and likely to turn-off users](#), a sentiment that was echoed when Facebook was rumoured to be bringing 15 second video ads to users' feeds, and [ramping up mobile ads](#).

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Facebook-owned Instagram also announced this year that it would begin rolling out advertisements. COO Emily White, who joined the company from Facebook, told the Wall Street Journal that the photo-sharing network would start rolling out advertising within the next year: “We want to make money in the long term, but we don't have any short-term pressure,” she said, adding that the challenge for Instagram would be to integrate marketing without jeopardising the network’s ‘cool factor’.

Social videos came to the fore

And this year a new wave of cool emerged as networks rushed to capitalise on consumers’ ever-growing video consumption. Facebook and Twitter went head to head after Twitter chief executive Dick Costolo launched Vine with a video on how to make steak tartare in six seconds. Initially dubbed as ‘Instagram for video’ and generating much positive buzz, it wasn’t long before Facebook retaliated.

In June, Facebook’s Instagram announced that its users can now record and share clips of up to 15 seconds with Instagram’s trademark filters, enabling users to customise the look of the footage. Both services quickly took off and became a hit for both brands and consumers –Instagram users uploaded more than 5 million videos during the first 24 hours of its launch and last month the company announced that it has now reached 150m active users, whilst Vine recently reported that it has gained 27 million users since June. However, despite the growing popularity of both, figures from Social Bakers showed that YouTube still records the highest rate of engagement and, subsequently, still marketers’ favourite tool.

This year we also saw a new network flourish and join the video race. Mobile app Snapchat allows users to send pictures and videos that are deleted after being displayed for anywhere between one and 10 seconds. Although the service launched back in 2011, this year saw user numbers skyrocket with a reported 400 million snaps sent each day and, similarly to Vine and Instagram Video, brands were quick to start experimenting with the service. The app’s phenomenal growth is clearly concerning Facebook, who offered to buy the app for a \$3bn cash deal that was spurned by Snapchat. Rumours are flying about who will buy the service, and all is likely to be revealed early next year.

Social service matured

If 2012 saw brands become more confident with social media and embark on their social media customer service strategies, 2013 was the year that brands became confident and better at doing so. Early in the year, research from Simply Measured revealed that 30% of the Interbrand Top 100 brands now have dedicated customer service handles with response rates becoming quicker. According to August figures from eDigitalResearch, consumers now regard social media as the fastest and most reliable channel for customer service.

Studies can always be dispute, though, and Conversocial’s first Social Customer Service Benchmark report, which analysed over 140,000 social conversations over a three month period across Facebook and Twitter, found that only a minority of businesses are providing fast and satisfactory responses. According to the figures, just 3% of conversations regarding urgent and immediate issues were positive whilst 12% were negative whilst communication regarding customers’ experience with a product or service were more negative (27%) than positive (23%).

This year there seemed to be far less social media #fails as brands learnt from the horror experiences of Femfresh and Chick-fil-A in 2012. Of course, there were still some to entertain us, most famously the HMV staff firing debacle, Pizza Express’ misjudged humour, Burger King’s

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Twitter [hijack](#), and most recently the [Kellogg's Give a Child a Breakfast Twitter campaign furore](#) and [#AskBG Twitter campaign](#) from British Gas.

All of this of course does nothing to help boost the confidence of brands that are not yet au fait with social. A number of studies showed that [financial services and their customers are still shying away](#) from using Facebook or Twitter to engage with each.

Social commerce still fizzled rather than sizzled

A lesser trend, and one that was expected to flourish more than it did this year, was social commerce. [An early deal between Twitter and AmEx in February](#), which enabled users to pay for real or virtual items via the micro-blogging service, set expectations for the dawn of social commerce.

Net-A-Porter followed suit with the launch of [new mobile app The Netbook](#), which gives customers a social identity and shows purchases made.

Inexplicably tied to social commerce is the question of mobile payment and how ecommerce retailers will handle purchases coming from mobile devices – more of which we shall see next year, I'm sure.

So that's it for the major social CRM trends this year. There were, of course, many other events that happened, such as [the launch of Facebook Home](#), [Prince's Twitter copyright complaint](#) and [Yahoo!'s acquisition of Tumblr](#) but forgive us, we couldn't quite fit everything in.

Link: <http://www.mycustomer.com/feature/social-crm/five-social-media-trends-2013/166051>