

# Social media not the marketing 'gold standard'

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New media technologies like social media have not lived up to the promise of brand engagement, says a local expert.

As marketers increasingly look for better ways to engage consumers, SMS and email remain primary tools, even as social media platforms grow exponentially.

"One would argue that SMS should have been replaced by email. It hasn't. Email will not be replaced by social media either, in fact research from McKinsey shows that email is 40 times more effective as a marketing tool than social media," [Scott Cundill](#) told Fin24.

Cundill is founder of integrated communication solutions provider Majestic3.com and author of *How NOT to Start and Run Your Own Business* and *7 Ways to Double Your Sales*, among others.

According to research data from World Wide Worx, there are 11.8 million Facebook users in SA with 8.8 million accessing the social network on mobile phones.

But even as companies race to engage this huge audience, results don't always match the investment.



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"A 2014 research study from Forrester indicates that individuals are not interacting all that much with branded social content anymore. This research indicates that 'on six of the seven social networks, the brands we studied achieved an engagement rate of less than 0.1%'," Cundill said.

But that doesn't mean that companies should abandon social networks and focus exclusively on older technologies such as SMS and email.

"Guaranteed messages to a phone can only happen via SMS which makes it powerful. As more and more people access email on their cellphones, and apps become more prolific, SMS will be phased out over time," Cundill argued.

Fast food brand KFC has this year had an educating experience on the pitfalls and power of social media.

Workers at a KFC restaurant were recently filmed washing chicken that the company insisted was meant to be discarded. Meanwhile, an incident where KFC workers are alleged to have sharpened kitchen knives on a pavement has also resulted in the brand taking a knock online.

Both incidents were widely condemned and people reacted angrily on the KFC Facebook page, despite the brand's assurance that it had no knowledge of the practices.

Cundill warned that social media is an ideal platform for consumers to vent their anger and frustration at company service and culture, rather than embarking in direct engagement on products and services.

"VB News says consumers complain 879 million times a year on social media alone, and 20% of these complaints are made on Facebook. One thing that we know for certain is that social media carries the risk of impacting a brand negatively.

"It is common knowledge that many customers and individuals leverage social media as a means of complaining or venting their frustration towards a brand, and this poses significant business and reputation risks."

Social media also falls far short of email as a communication tool in that control of the database rests with third party companies, unlike email where a firm can control its own user contact list.

"Although social media has the potential to integrate with, support and compliment a business's email database, a significant insight is that a company has full ownership of its email contacts. The same is not true of social media, which leaves businesses with extremely limited ownership rights and negligible control of the data contained within their social media pages," Cundill said.

But that doesn't mean that companies should abandon social media. In fact, the investment into social media should augment a wider and deeper customer engagement strategy, Cundill added.

"Social media is more likely to be leveraged as a means of complementing or supporting a marketing strategy rather than driving it."

Source: [\*View the original article on Fin24\*](#)