

How far has Social Media come in the last decade?

Stuart: Give us an idea of how social media has evolved over the last decade?

David: Sure. It's a huge subject, this. Social media is an absolute monster. It wasn't always this way. It's had an up and down history over the past two decades. If we go back to the mid-1990s, that was when some of the biggest sites that we now know and love were around, such as eBay, Yahoo, Amazon.

Stuart: It's interesting you say that, I'd never have thought of eBay as a social media, really.

David: Yes, I mean eBay, and now obviously the likes of YouTube, which was originally meant for a specific purpose. Some of those are now some of the biggest search engines globally. So, the seeds that were planted were for a specific purpose. But now they've actually become networks of people using those tools.

But yes, some of those big sites have been around from the 1990s were really getting people used to using online search engines and e-commerce. But it wasn't until the late 1990s to early 2000s where we really started see social media come about with the likes of Myspace, Facebook, LinkedIn.

That was when social media as we know it today really started to rise from the ashes, as it were. Moving on from the mid-2000s to now, we've really seen a huge increase in use of social media online, and that's for a number of reasons, which I'm sure we will come on to. But it's a lot richer now in terms of video, in terms of imagery. A lot of people are using this not on a weekly or a monthly basis but literally on an hourly basis. So, yes, it's really grown over the last couple of decades.

Stuart: So, what are the key factors of social media? What are the features that have dragged us through the time?

David: Yes, I mean, again the functionality and the growth of social media has come about really for several reasons. Originally, again, going back through the decades to the mid-1990s, it was really a one way street. So, this was the online diaries and blogs, where people can put sort of things they were feeling on a day-to-day basis. Maybe that they go on holiday and they write about their holiday and post some nice imagery.

Stuart: Were these less interactive?

David: 100% less interactive. Really, this was a one-way street

so you would be able to post information up, and you wouldn't have the ability to share, to comment, to do anything like that. You know, that we take for granted today.

Stuart: So, it really was just writing in my diary, but my diary was online and public.

David: That really was, yes. And as we've seen, the last sort of decade, that's come up leaps and bounds. And really because of the advancements in the internet and the connectivity speeds, as well as the advancements of the technology that people using, such as mobile devices, and the integration of devices such as cameras within the iPhones etc.

Stuart: Which, I guess, has allowed this industry to expand into videos, photographs, and so much more.

David: It has really exploded, especially over the last five to ten years. With the advancement of the camera technology within the mobile devices, and also with some of the apps such as Instagram, Pinterest, allowing people to take pictures and movies on the move and upload them in real time.

Stuart: With things moving so fast in the social arena, if you like, where do you see this going in the next few years?

David: Obviously no one knows for sure, but there are definite trends that are emerging now in terms of real-time technologies that are currently being used, such as real-time video. So, you've probably logged on to Facebook at some stage and had, either one of your friends, or a famous celebrity, actually filming themselves live and streaming it live from where they are. So, there's going to be a lot more live feeds from the video side of things.

But there's also the integration of devices such as cameras, such as phones etc, with the software layer on top, has allowed us to generate a world of augmented reality. So you're going to see a lot more of apps actually interacting with real-time and real-life scenarios. The perfect example of that is Pokemon Go. What we've seen there is an absolute craze of augmented reality and the ability for the app to be able to allow people to search for animated characters. But in real life through the functionality of the camera.

Stuart: So again, the Pokemon Go phenomenon, for want of a better word, that's considered social media as well?

David: Yes, I mean social media is a lot broader than it used to be. Really, any app or any functionality on a device that gives you the ability to be able to interact with other people and socialise in a social way over the internet, is now becoming part of the social media field.

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