

Real time and real people, living real lives will count in 2017

By [Deseré Orrill](#)

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Over 2016, social media continued to dominate the digital waves worldwide with new apps as well as information hungry audiences, who in South Africa, really started to switch onto mobile. As audiences grow tired of the curated social experience - bored with impeccable photos of everyone having a perfect life, or brands using social as an extension of their advertising "perfect world view" - we saw a move towards a greater desire for REALITY in social media.



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While this may seem like a contradiction in terms – after all, everyone knows that we live the perfect life on Facebook – it is nevertheless a growing trend amongst digital content consumers that they wish to share REAL experiences. People are no longer shirking away from the less than ideal image, or writing purely poetic posts.

This desire for reality is reflected in the swing away from the heavily curated world of perfectionism that lives on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest, and which means that content gains an almost permanent home in the social sphere because it is archived forever in these digital landscapes. No longer the demand, for eternal perfection: much greater the desire for ephemeral reality.

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Welcome to the stage the ‘new’ kids on the block: Snapchat, Periscope, Beme, Meerkat and others. Had these apps tried to launch a few years ago – while we were still desperately seeking perfection in our every image, move, and moment, they would not have made it out of the starting gates. But now, as we grow bored with the over-glamorisation of ourselves to our peers and the idealisations from brands to their consumers, there is a craving for a more realistic view and authentic experience.

Keeping it real: Many believe that millennials are running away from the ‘traditional’ social channels because their parents and grandparents crashed the party. However, this isn’t necessarily the case. It is more like a desire for a different

experience, rather than a running away from a specific audience.

The way that the content is shared is different: traditionally the user has to stop what he is doing to create the social content, so this means he removes himself from the experience instead of remaining within the moment and sharing automatically. He then also concerns himself with putting on filters, scrutinising content, reviewing and then posting perfection. Gone gone gone are those days.

Now with the new wave of social media applications, the content is shared spontaneously, with simple hand gestures and quick and easy flow patterns. All false bravado and posturing are removed from your feed: you become WYSIWIG (what you see is what you get) and it is good! Your work and the moments you live are portrayed as they really are, as they happen. This is the true meaning of real time.

Scroll out: The social media newsfeed is changing shape and the infinite scroll is no longer the alpha and the omega of mobile reading patterns. With the new apps, the infinite scroll is changing to an interface where users choose what content they wish to consume, since content cannot be consumed in the feed any longer. They must exit the feed and focus on one thing without distraction or the need to keep scrolling ad infinitum.

Instant and immersive: In Facebook this trend is reflected in the new 360-degree ads, which take readers into an immersive in-ad experience, and not forgetting Instant Articles, which bring content in-app for Facebook.

Showing it like it is: Just as marketers and brands were getting the hang of things on social media, the rules have changed and our approach is now considered “traditional social marketing”. So quickly does the tide turn in the fickle sociosphere.

There is a new sheriff in town in the ‘emerging social media countries’ and his name is Reality. And what better way to capture reality than through video where we have nuance, images, gesture, movement, and sound all rolled into one.

Living in the moment: In 2017, the big focus will be on creating ephemeral content that tells the brand story in a completely different way. The content lives only for a very short time, is not archived in a content hub and in general, simply feels more truthful. The impact is powerful in the moment – although it doesn’t live on in the digisphere, if the content is strong or real enough it will live on in the minds and memory or subconscious of the observer who experiences it. And if your content can do this then you have struck pay dirt.

FOMO (Fear of Missing Out): For brands wanting to create this kind of real content, the future looks to moving away from highly stylised, studio-type settings and scenarios to a simpler, more authentic approach - away from the bells and whistles (and costs) and the somewhat navel gazing approach of broadcast productions, to a more consumer and viewer oriented one. A more “real” approach of the type which any modern digital agency worth its salt is perfectly poised not only to imagine, produce and create, but also to share, distribute and promote.

And this is the right thing to do for the Millennial market (and its parents) because it demonstrates that your brand is a

living, breathing thing: people will follow you on social media because they will be afraid to miss out on the moments that are not archived or recorded anywhere, the moments in which you have to be present to experience and enjoy.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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