

ComScore study says Facebook ads effective (Update)

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(AP) — As investors question just how much Facebook is worth, a study from Internet research firm comScore suggests that marketing on the world's most populous online social network can help increase sales.

The report released Tuesday found that people who were fans of Starbucks and Target, or friends of those fans, were more likely to buy something than those who were not fans. People become fans by hitting a "like" button for a brand's Facebook page and receiving updates about that brand mixed in with content shared by their friends.

In the case of Starbucks Corp., those exposed to the company's message on Facebook were 38 percent more likely than the typical Facebook user to make a purchase in the four weeks that followed. Target Corp. saw a 21 percent lift in the same time frame.

The comScore study came a day after the research firm said that the number of unique visitors to Facebook's website is growing at a slower pace. And it's less than a month after Facebook had a disappointing debut as a public company.

The report was partly commissioned by Facebook Inc., a client of comScore's. It was based on a panel of Internet users who agreed to participate in the study — a condition that can skew results.

ComScore urges marketers to look beyond acquiring as many fans as possible on Facebook and focus on their message and on social media

marketing campaigns. Accumulating fans represents only the "initial springboard" of reaching fans and their friends with ads and other brand messages, the report said.

Once a brand has acquired a certain number of fans for its Facebook page, its goal should be to reach as many people as possible, have the brand resonate with them and "hopefully influence consumers to purchase or engage with the brand, comScore said.

Facebook's stock has declined sharply since its rocky initial public offering last month. It is down 28 percent from its \$38 initial public offering price after gaining 40 cents, or 1.5 percent, on Tuesday to close at \$27.40.

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