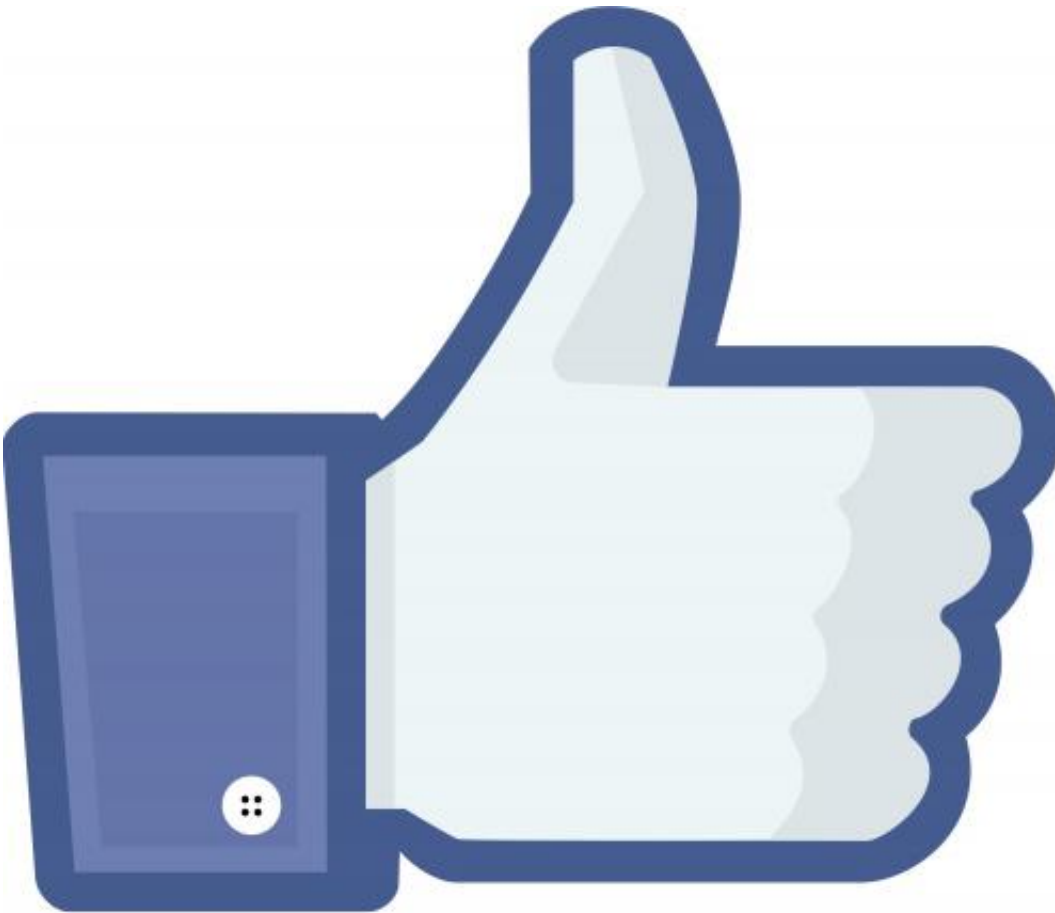


Facebook hopes iPhone users keep eyes glued to Paper app

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If you want to get a glimpse of Facebook's future, download Paper, the social network's new mobile news reader.

The app for the iPhone is part of what Facebook says is its big push to deliver "the best personalized newspaper in the world."

But it's more than just an app for reading news. It's Facebook reimagined for the smaller screen.

Paper doesn't just help users discover news on dozens of topics. It can also be used by users to browse their News Feed, get messages and notifications, and search Facebook.

That has led some observers to speculate that - if popular with users - Paper could become the new face of Facebook on mobile devices, one day replacing the current Facebook app for smartphones and tablets.

For now, Facebook wants to establish Paper as the go-to news reader, taking on Google News, Twitter, mobile app Flipboard and LinkedIn's Pulse. Facebook Inc. declined to say how many people have downloaded the app, which became available Monday.

The effort comes after Facebook changed what kinds of news users see in their News Feed. In December, Facebook began favoring what it calls "high quality" news publishers over viral videos and other Web content.

With Paper, users swipe to browse their News Feed or stories on topics including technology, sports, cooking, even "pride," a section on gay rights.

The image-rich format is colorful and uncluttered. There are no buttons to click or menus to navigate. The overall experience is much like leafing through the pages of a glossy magazine, albeit one on a very small screen.

Paper owes that look and feel to Mike Matas and his team at Facebook

Creative Labs, a new company initiative charged with coming up with new apps. Matas designed software for the original iPhone. Facebook bought his company, Push Pop Press, in 2011.

Paper may succeed where other Facebook experiments, such as Home software for Android phones and the Snapchat clone Poke, failed because it plays into how users already consume news and information on Facebook, Gartner Research analyst Brian Blau said.

"Many people use Facebook for consuming news they find interesting," Blau said. "I think the Facebook Paper app may have a bit more success than some of the other app failures that Facebook has had in the past mainly because news has been a central tenet of the Facebook interface for many years."

Facebook has been working on developing stand-alone apps as a way to catch up to the emerging trend of apps developed for specific purposes, such as Instagram for photo-sharing and Snapchat and WhatsApp for messaging.

In 2012, when Instagram was surging in popularity, Facebook built a separate Camera app. Then it bought Instagram for \$1 billion in cash and stock.

In December 2012, Facebook launched Poke, a clone of Snapchat, the popular app that makes messages disappear after they are viewed. Poke flopped. Facebook bid \$3 billion for Snapchat Inc. but was rebuffed.

Last year it redesigned its stand-alone Messenger app, which is growing in popularity.

The goal: to keep users deeply engaged so the company can continue to show them ads and command high ad prices. Last week, Facebook

reported better-than-expected ad sales, which lifted the stock to record highs.

Danny Sullivan, founding editor of Marketing Land, spent time playing with Paper this week. He said the app reminded him of the lush visual feel of Google Inc.'s rival social network, Plus.

"Apps and consumption of media have become much more visual, much more focused around photos," Sullivan said. "The existing Facebook app did not allow Facebook to offer that to users."

Paper could become habit-forming, Sullivan said.

"I'm intrigued by it personally because I like to sit at lunch time and read news stories," Sullivan said. "I might fire up the [app](#) if it delivers good [news](#) content."

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