

Facebook, Twitter powerful business tools: research group

30 June 2010



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Nearly three in four people worldwide who use the Internet have visited a [social networking](#) or blog, spending an average of almost six hours a month on them, The Nielsen Company said in a report.

Of the seven biggest brands online globally, three are social media networking sites -- Facebook, Wikipedia and YouTube -- it said in its latest report on social media trends in the Asia Pacific region.

"Social media is having a larger and larger influence on purchasing decisions," said Charles Buchwalter, chairman and chief executive of Nielsen Online Japan.

"Everyone understands that social media is hot, it's growing quickly and in very unpredictable ways everywhere in the world," he told reporters in an online media briefing.

According to Nielsen's findings, online product reviews are the third most trusted source of information when consumers decide whether to purchase a product, coming after recommendations from friends and family.

From China and India to Australia, online reviews are a major influence in buying electronics items, cosmetics, cars and food, among other things, it said.

An average 32 percent access social media sites from their workplaces and 31 percent access them from the confines of their bedrooms.

"The findings we've uncovered in this social media report highlight, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that social media is here to stay and needs to be taken seriously by the broader business community," said Megan Clarken, managing director of Nielsen's online business in the Asia Pacific.

Clarken added that "businesses can no longer afford to simply observe the social media phenomenon, they need to embrace it."

Buchwalter said [Facebook](#) "is much more than a poster child for social media" as businesses increasingly use it. "[Social media](#) is for real. There's no turning back."

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APA citation: Facebook, Twitter powerful business tools: research group (2010, June 30) retrieved 27 October 2021 from <https://phys.org/news/2010-06-facebook-twitter-powerful-business-tools.html>

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