What Going Dark on Facebook Really Means for Your Brand

|
3 hours ago
It’s mid-2020. Do you know where your favorite brands are advertising? It is not on Facebook and Instagram.

Facebook and its affiliates had become a marketing investment must for companies both large and small. It provides targeted, efficient reach coupled with performance and has an endless pool of inventory with 1.68 billion users, depth of targeting data, and its proprietary algorithms drive traffic and conversions. Despite this, things have recently taken an unexpected turn.

As part of a monthlong boycott in support of curbing Facebook’s spread of misinformation and hate speech, multiple heavy-hitting brands have cut or suspended their advertising spend on the platform. We couldn’t support these brands more, and signs are pointing to this boycott lasting much longer than a single month. Facebook’s perceived disinterest and lack of desire to control the content being published in its advertising, posts and communities make advertisers feel uncomfortable during these times of social change.

July has inadvertently become a time to experiment. As marketers, we wonder what impact pulling out of Facebook will have on a brand’s business.

There’s an opportunity here to challenge the belief that marketing on Facebook is necessary for success.
Because of the existence of walled gardens between major ad tracking platforms, there is a risk of digital and social

measurement being inaccurate, as well as duplicated conversion counting between platforms, without diligent management of pixel and tracking strategy. This makes it necessary for marketers to invest in more advanced measurement tools, like multi-touch attribution and marketing mix models. There’s an opportunity here to challenge the belief that marketing on Facebook is necessary for success.

Going dark on social media could allow many brands to measure the true impact of their social campaigns on sales. We believe most of the larger marketers already understand the impact of cancelling or pausing their campaigns.

Brands that are fortunate enough to have a multifaceted analytics approach are able to triangulate the Facebook impact across digital last touch attribution, digital multi-touch attribution, attitudinal surveys and cross-channel marketing mix modeling. Smaller companies should take note. Multi-touch attribution (MTA) is a good first step, especially for marketers only investing in online advertising. MTA tools help identify where in the path to purchase Facebook assists in the conversion. Facebook even offers a free version of this methodology to help validate their impact on your business. MTAs can help you understand Facebook’s advertising in the path to purchase, but not necessarily the total impact to the business when it comes to offline media investment, promotions and market factors.

Our hypothesis posits that larger brands leaned into their marketing mix (MMM) tools to help make the decision to cut their Facebook spend and to determine the optimal ways to reinvest their budgets to make up for any lost sales. MMMs help quantify an individual media vehicle’s incremental impact on sales and how media vehicles interact with each other, while controlling for promotions, non-paid media, distribution and other internal and external business drivers. This approach allows brands to understand and quantify marginal ROI for any decrease in investment of one tactic and increase in

another.

As the headlines continue to roll in with more brands choosing to divest from Facebook, some of our clients considering similar steps have asked for our assistance in evaluating their media strategy and quantifying the possible impact. We have encouraged them to use the in-house tools they have in place to measure and analyze:

Audience reach

What is the incremental reach you get on Facebook, and who are you reaching? Are you already reaching that same audience through other efforts or can you find them through other channels?

Last touch measures and multi-touch measures

Having used these measures to tactically optimize Facebook, now evaluate how much of your campaign optimization could be impacted by duplicative conversion counts between platforms. How much of that do you anticipate would dry up if your brand was to divested from Facebook?

Digital control groups

Are you currently implementing, or have you previously executed, control groups to better quantify Facebook's incremental impact on your business?

Marketing mix

Based on your marketing mix analysis, what do you anticipate will be the incremental loss in sales to your business by divesting from Facebook, and what components of your media plan can scale to offset any incremental sales loss you will see from Facebook? Secondarily, what has your MMM told you about positive PR in the past? And do you anticipate that any PR related to divesting from Facebook will help offset some of those incremental sales as well?

Now is the time to triangulate your different measurement approaches to get at the truth. If all those fail, you can just go dark and see what happens.

https://www.adweek.com/brand-marketing/what-going-dark-on-facebook-really-means-for-your-brand/