

A man wearing a hat, glasses, a purple sweater, and a yellow backpack is looking at his smartphone on a train platform. The background shows train tracks and a platform with red and blue railings.

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BLOG

BRING THE NOISE

CONTENT MBA OPINION

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IN A WORLD OF MOBILE AND SECOND SCREENING, MUCH OF OUR CONTENT CONSUMPTION IS DONE IN SILENCE, ESPECIALLY ON SOCIAL. BUT FACEBOOK ARE HOPING TO CHANGE THAT. WE ASKED, WILL SOUND-ON VIDEO, FALL ON DEAF EARS?

The rise of online video has been an important topic across the industry for a while now. People are viewing more, on more devices and in more places than ever before. That's not just because there's more ways to do so, but also because of the sheer volume out there. We could all watch videos until the cows come home, of just about anything. Probably even videos of cows coming home. We just bloody love the stuff.

Consumers, publishers and brands are all producing more than ever. Which we all know, means more noise,

more competition, more need to stand out, in a war for attention that's growing by the day.

And it's no longer good enough to create a good video is it? Oh no, we need multiple edits, for multiple formats, on multiple platforms! For noisy environments, for silent environments, for fast moving environments. Arrrgh!! It's all got a bit complicated hasn't it?

Facebook stated last year that it "will be probably all video" within the next 5 years. And has its monolithic eyes set on becoming the biggest video platform. In addition to rolling out 'Watch' (think somewhere between Netflix and YouTube), it's also introducing auto-play with 'sound on' to the Facebook and Instagram feed, which could remove some of the complexity for those creating video content to communicate with consumers. A bold move. But a smart move? Who knows. But we asked two of our experts what they think, is this the right one?

No, says Content Strategist, Ben Bleet

From a user perspective, auto-play with sound-on will become problematic for smartphone multi-tasking; consider, for example, that browsing the Facebook App whilst background listening (to music or podcasts for instance) will now cause a great deal of interruption to user listening experiences. Or if you're a person whose partner (or family) second screen in front of the TV, there could be plenty of friction heading your way.

Yes, the volume getting louder on TV when the adverts come on has been an effective attention tactic at home, however the difference there is that the user expectation was set long ago. And it remains the primary screen of the living room, not the secondary one that must play nicely with its big brother.

This new feature could frustrate and frighten off the less tech savvy older audience, and disrupt the user experience of younger users enough to drive their (still) considerable numbers away towards new alternatives. Perhaps the sound-on content of other social apps is what has stopped them from reaching the heights of Facebook and Instagram? Maybe it's been the unrecognised key to their dominance in terms of user numbers.

Yes, says Nik Postinger, Social Media Manager

For some years now, Facebook have been progressing from a network for sharing status updates and links, towards becoming the chief platform that will rival YouTube in providing video content to the masses. Their

latest move to introduce 'sound on' as a default for videos on the mobile app is one that no doubt will be divisive, but is one that must be embraced by brands. Because if this move pays off, it could well ensure their apps become (or remain) the primary social and video platforms of their 2 billion plus users. That's a lot of eye balls.

The new Facebook and Instagram user experience will likely drive consumers to the point where they will have to opt for one of these over their other apps. This 'opting' could prove decisive for freshening up Facebook as both an advertising channel and a consumer content platform.

YouTube as a video platform has always been sound-on, and interrupted your background listening experience (96% of its content is watched with the volume up). To keep up, Facebook must become a platform that users browse while giving full attention to the content they are being fed. However, the reality is that consumers seemed happy with things the way they were. So the onus will be on those brands (and publishers) to ensure their video content is engaging enough with sound, to prove worthy of the behaviour change. And they need to start now.

Whether users embrace or reject sound on video from their feeds will (like most new tech) will as always, be down to them. Only time will tell. For now, brands who want attention will do well to design video for sound-off, but consider how it will work with sound-on. If you want people to listen that is.

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