

Digital channels review – Department of Conservation April 2025

Purpose:

To review and recommend a digital channels approach to ensure we're investing time and resources into the channels that align with our priority audiences, deliver on our strategic objectives, and enable us to innovate and adapt to a changing digital environment.

Scope:

The use of external DOC-branded digital channels including regional DOC channels but excluding programme/partnership channels, the DOC website and Sounds of Science podcast. Monitoring is out of scope for this review as our current approach can cover all channels.

Context:

- We previously reviewed our digital and social media channels in 2018.
- Our organic audience has grown by 650% since 2018 – we now have more than 750,000 followers across our digital channels.
- The digital channels people use change over time, and we should have an approach that allows us to respond and adapt to those changes.
- We need to align our channels with DOC's priority audiences and brand strategy.
- We need to innovate and adapt while operating within our current resourcing.

Strategic Objectives:

- Our channels are key brand touchpoints, building familiarity with our brand and work.
- We understand our audiences, and this drives our investment and innovation.
- We offer a customer-centric user experience and deliver on DOC's strategic objectives.

Review process:

- Analysed data, analytics and observations from our current channels.
- Gathered feedback from relevant team members, e.g. (Web, Content, Brand & Marketing).
- Examined the channels and digital approaches used by other government agencies and relevant organisations.
- Investigated digital trends, research and insights in both New Zealand and internationally.
- Aligned with DOC's Digital Channels Strategy, Brand Strategy and priority audiences.
- Ensured our channels approach supports Mobilising for Nature objectives to raise awareness, connect and drive action for nature.

New approach to channels:

- We take an adaptive approach to our channels, iterating as and when need to respond to changes in digital channel use by our priority audiences. This reflects the nature of digital channels and enables us to flex in response to a rapidly changing ecosystem.
- We have robust systems and processes to help us make informed and consistent decisions and allow us to adapt and innovate.

- We put our audiences first to deliver a great customer experience in a way that also delivers on DOC's strategic objectives.
- We need to be present on the channels that New Zealanders prefer to use, and on channels that hold a strategically important audience for DOC.
- We recognise that digital channels are one part of the wider digital media ecosystem and therefore take a collaborative approach to navigating that ecosystem.

What this looks like in practice is:

- We have clear guidance for how we manage our channels that we can use to communicate to the business how and when we use our channels and how we will respond to requests for support.
- We use audience summaries to understand which channels each priority audience is using and how. We update these summaries regularly.
- We act quickly, yet strategically, to shift our efforts and energy between platforms based on where people are and what we're trying to achieve. This includes minimising use of some channels and increasing use of other channels or closing some channels and starting new ones.
- We empower our people to make decisions and take actions that are new and innovative to adapt to industry changes.
- We take a bespoke approach to content across channels, making good use of channel and audience insights to publish content that fits.
- We annually review all DOC social media channels (including regional channels) to check progress/impact against purpose and priorities, but we can iterate throughout the year as and when needed.
- Following the review, we create an annual plan for our channels, updated from the previous year, to guide our approach for the year.

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Annual Plan: FY 25/26

*Note that we will start implementing this action plan immediately (in Q4 of FY 24/25)

Focus areas:

- Balancing our channel use based on priority audiences and strategic objectives.
- Establishing robust systems and processes to help us make decisions and allow us to adapt and innovate.

Action plan:

To ensure we balance our channel use based on priority audiences and strategic objectives, we will:

- Reduce daily organic posting on Facebook to 3-4 posts a week, focusing on improving the quality and value of our posts to our target audiences.
- Use paid advertising and targeting tools for important DOC messages that need to reach specific or niche audiences.
- Close our X (formerly Twitter) account and transition it to an emergency only channel.
- Launch a TikTok channel to reach the growing audience on this channel.
- Evolve our e-newsletter approach by segmenting our current 'What's Up DOC' audience so we can deliver more targeted messages to this held audience.
- Review the DOC blog and its purpose and vision
- Increase our use of LinkedIn to build familiarity with our brand and our work.
- Transition from posting the same content on each channel, towards more bespoke posts on each channel aligned to the target audience.

To ensure we have robust systems and processes to help us make decisions and allow us to adapt and innovate, we will:

- Develop one-page guidelines for each channel, the audiences and preferred content.
- Develop social media personas (based on priority audiences) for each channel that would allow us to make decisions on what channels we use for different purposes.
- Use the one-page guidelines and personas to communicate to the business how and when we use our channels and how we will respond to requests for support.
- Set up a process for an annual review of all DOC social media channels (including regional channels) to check progress/impact against purpose and priorities.
- Implement best practice accessibility guidelines across all channels where possible.
- Investigate alternative methods of reporting metrics (e.g. how many conversions) that align with our SCE objectives and reporting needs.
- Build efficient processes with the Media and Communications Teams to facilitate the best use of DOC's digital channels in the changing media landscape.

Channel plan:

Channel	Recommendations	Rationale
Facebook <i>Audience: Social Actives, Mindful Actives</i> <i>Primary purpose: Large, broad</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduce posting from daily posts to 3-4 posts a week• Focus on fewer, but higher quality and visually compelling posts that provide value to the audience	Organic reach on Facebook is declining. While most New Zealanders are still active on Facebook, our posts are often only reaching an existing audience. Our data shows that visually compelling stories with strong calls to action are

<p><i>audience where we share nationally interesting posts/stories</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep text posts short – add more information in comments or links • Focus on engagement posts with strong calls to action 	<p>more likely to reach outside our existing audience.</p> <p>Our data shows that shorter posts are more engaging and likely to be read and clicked on.</p> <p>Facebook is a place to share updates with family and friends, therefore Social Actives are our priority audience on this channel.</p> <p>Return on Investment (ROI): Time spent on this channel allows us the opportunity to reach the largest number of New Zealanders, but posts need to be nationally relevant and engaging to reach outside the existing audience. This currently requires a lot of time investment. We could likely get improved results with fewer posts, focusing more on quality. This would allow capacity for other channels.</p>
<p>Instagram</p> <p>Audience: <i>Social Actives, Enthusiastic Actives</i></p> <p>Primary purpose: <i>Reaching a growing and engaged audience and sharing visually engaging content</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to publish 5-7 post a week. • Prioritise more visually compelling content like reels, stories 	<p>Instagram has always been a highly visual channel, but with the rise of short form video content this has increased.</p> <p>Instagram is a channel where people share their experiences, give advice and discover new adventures, therefore Social Actives and Enthusiastic Actives are our priority audience on this channel.</p> <p>ROI: Time spent on this channel allows us to share visually engaging content and access a slightly younger, but increasingly engaged audience.</p>
<p>X</p> <p>Audience: <i>N/A</i></p> <p>Primary purpose: <i>Emergency only channel</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Close our X account and transition it to an emergency only channel. 	<p>X has never had a high number of users in New Zealand and historically we used it to reach journalists, scientists and teachers. Usage continues to drop and is not worth our investment of time any longer.</p> <p>ROI: Time spent on this channel is only reaching a small (and decreasing) audience.</p>
<p>LinkedIn</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase posts from 2-3 a month – to 2-3 a week. 	<p>LinkedIn continues to grow in number of users throughout New Zealand.</p>

<p>Audience: <i>Mindful Actives</i></p> <p>Primary purpose: <i>Building understanding of DOC and our work and connecting with an influential audience</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect with Strategic Partnerships and Investment Unit to understand how this channel can deliver on their strategy. 	<p>They are an influential audience and more likely to donate or support our work with action. Organic reach and engagement are high on this channel.</p> <p>ROI: Time spent on this channel is a good investment to build familiarity with our work with a large, engaged and influential audience.</p>
<p>TikTok</p> <p>Audience: <i>Social Actives, Enthusiastic Actives</i></p> <p>Primary purpose: <i>Reaching and engaging new audiences, and addressing misinformation.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch DOC's TikTok channel • Start with a soft launch to get a feel for what works well. 	<p>TikTok is New Zealand's fastest growing social media channel. It skews to a slightly younger audience, although this continues to change over time.</p> <p>There is already a lot of engaging nature content on this channel, but there is also a proliferation of misinformation and poor visitor behaviour advice and examples.</p> <p>We need to bring an authoritative but appropriate voice to this channel.</p> <p>ROI: Time spent on this channel reaches a slightly younger but engaged audience. Content is more likely to be displayed to new audiences on this channel – so we are growing our reach and influence. It's also an important channel for correcting misinformation and educating audiences.</p>
<p>YouTube</p> <p>Audience: <i>Social Actives, Mindful Actives</i></p> <p>Primary purpose: <i>Visual storytelling reaching a wide range of New Zealanders.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased use of short-form videos including YouTube Shorts to connect with new audiences. • Increase serial storytelling using long-form videos to build familiarity with our work. 	<p>YouTube is New Zealand's most popular social media channel – although very different to other channels.</p> <p>Serial long form storytelling is a popular use of this channel – but we are also seeing success with their transition to YouTube Shorts (short form video).</p> <p>ROI: This continues to be an important channel to reach a large proportion New Zealanders. It's a place where a lot of people are getting their news and information from. It's useful for connecting with new audiences and build familiarity with our work.</p>
<p>Blog</p> <p>Audience: <i>Mindful Actives</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a clear vision for the DOC blog. 	<p>As one of our "held audience" channels, the blog is an important tool for reaching a conservation interested audience</p>

<p>Primary purpose: Long form story telling and providing a deeper dive into our work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to promote and build subscribers. • Align DOC blog posts more closely to DOC's objectives 	<p>without being subject to external platform's algorithm.</p> <p>We should establish a clear vision for the blog, and continue to grow our blog subscriber base and</p> <p>ROI: A useful channel for providing a deeper dive into the work of DOC, build trust and familiarity with our experts and our work. Considerable time investment required for this channel, so establishing a clear vision for the blog should be a priority.</p>
<p>What's Up DOC</p> <p>Audience: Segment audience</p> <p>Primary Purpose: Engaging a conservation connected and engaged audience through a direct email.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to promote and build subscribers • Segment audience to align with DOC's strategy • Align newsletter updates to DOC's objectives (e.g. Mobilising for Nature). 	<p>As another of our "held audience" channels What's Up DOC provides direct access to our conservation interested audience. We should continue to look at ways to grow this subscriber base and segment this audience, so they have a more tailored customer journey when subscribing to our e-newsletter.</p> <p>ROI: A useful held audience to activate and engage in conservation news, stories and actions. Segmenting this audience will allow us to target our content and calls-to-action more specifically.</p>

Current audience summary:

Social Actives –

- Looking for nature recommendations and inspiration
- Enjoys nature experiences with family and friends
- Likes to share their nature experiences on social media
- Instagram and Facebook are primary channels for this audience
- Tiktok and YouTube are alternative channels for this audience

Enthusiastic Actives –

- Slightly younger audience interested in nature challenges
- Values nature and enjoys nature experiences with friends
- Likes to boast and share experiences on social media
- Instagram and Tiktok are primary channels for this audience

Mindful Actives –

- Older audience seeking peaceful nature experiences
- Interested in learning about biodiversity and more likely to take action
- Blog, Facebook and LinkedIn are primary channels for this audience

Home-close Actives –

- Older audience with strong emotional connection to nature
- More reliant on traditional media
- Facebook and blog could be channels for this audience

Other channels:

As part of the annual review of our current digital channels, we will assess any new and emerging channels against the priority audiences and compared to the above approach. These could include:

- International channels – Weibo, RedNote, ShareChat
- New and developing channels – Bluesky
- Persistent channels – Reddit, Snapchat
- Messaging channels – What's App, Signal

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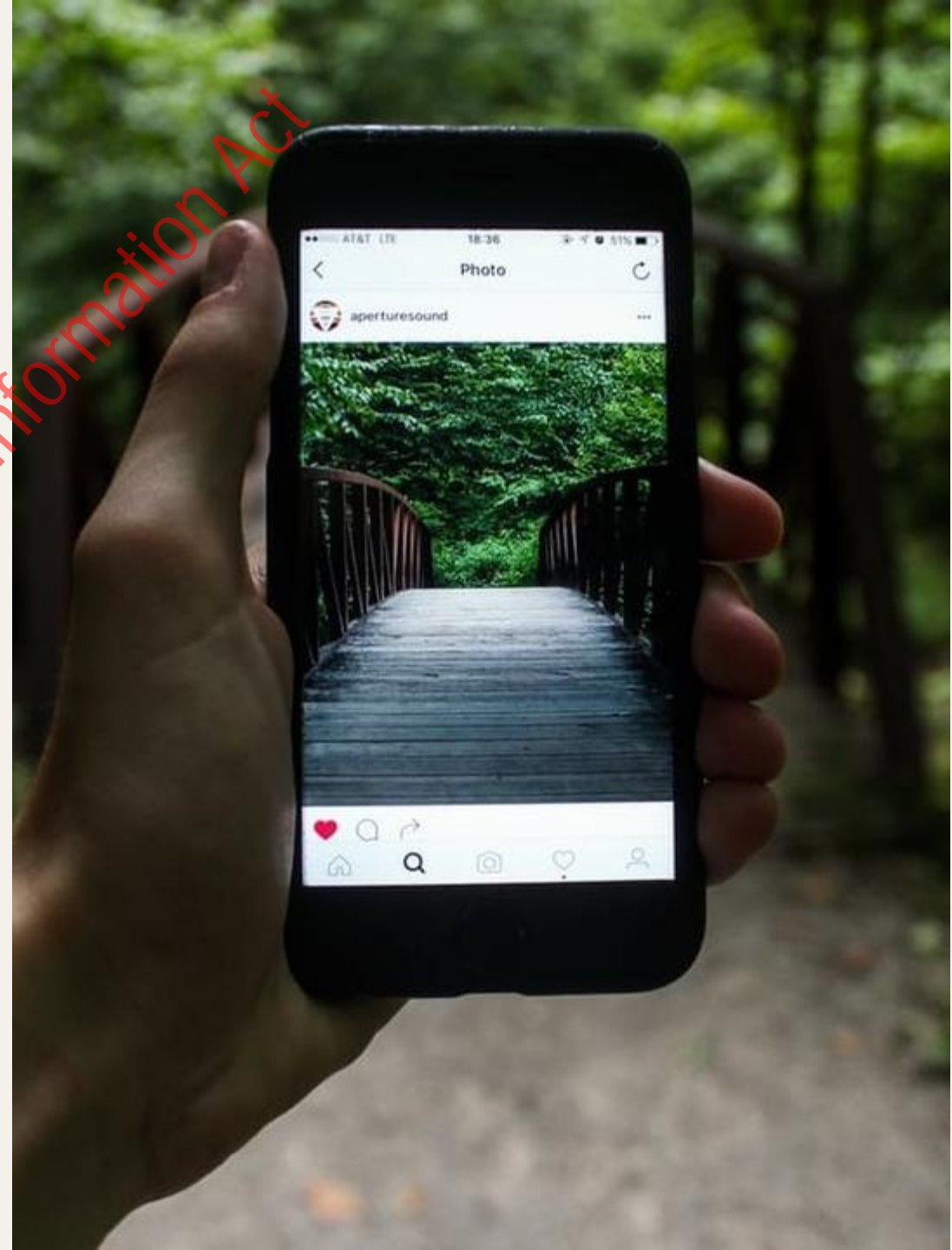
Digital channels review – summary

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Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

**Te Kāwanatanga
o Aotearoa**
New Zealand Government



Purpose for the review:

Ensure DOC is investing time, capacity and resources towards the right spread of digital channels to ensure that we are:

- Found where the majority of New Zealanders get their information online.
- Reaching DOC's priority audiences – social, enthusiastic, mindful, and home-close actives.
- Adapting quickly to a changing digital environment.

Scope:

Channels within the scope of this review:

Social media channels – Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn

Video sharing platforms - YouTube

Digital written platforms – The Conservation blog

Paid social media channels – Meta Advertising, Google Advertising

Outside the scope of this review:

Sounds of Science Podcast – *Separate stand-alone strategy*

DOC Website – *Separate stand-alone team and strategy*

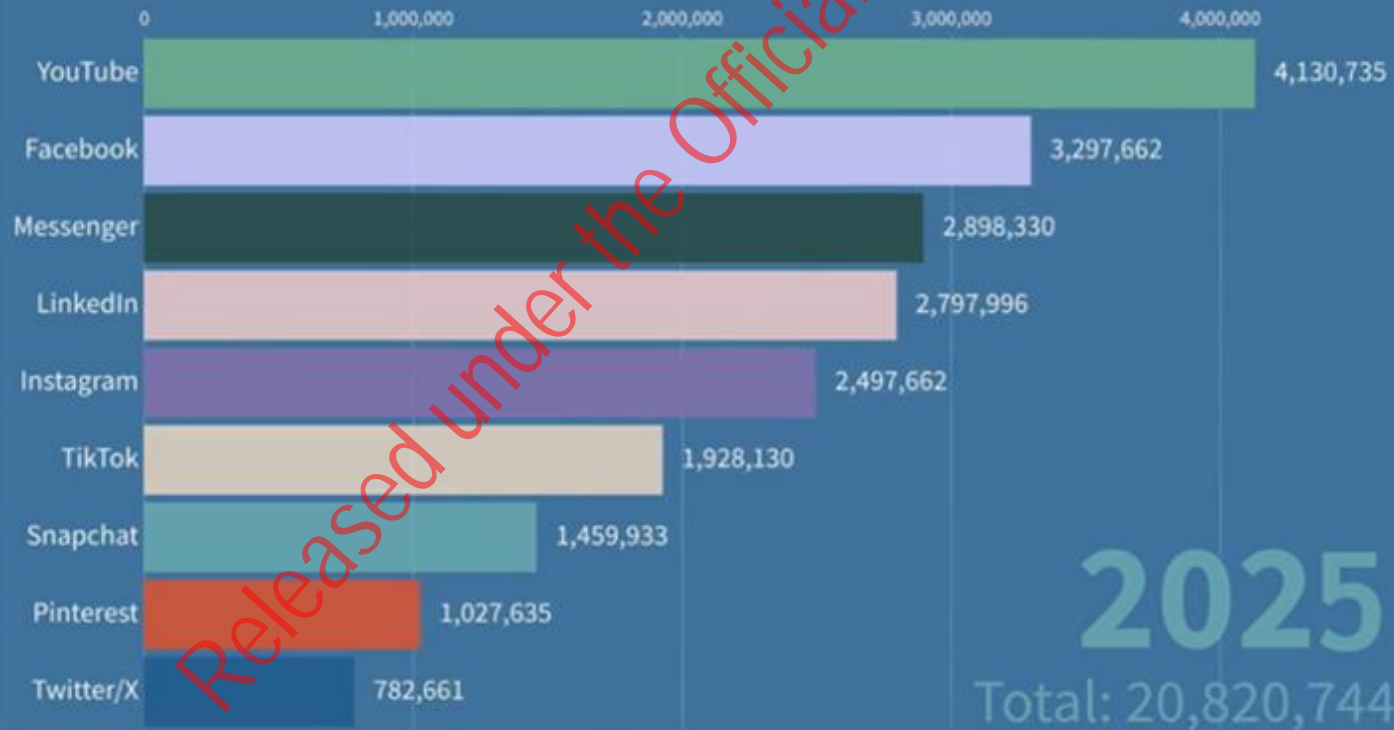
Electronic direct marketing – *Currently under review separately by Digital, Brand and Marketing Manager*

Process for review:

- Analysed data, analytics and observations from our current channels.
- Gathered feedback from relevant team members, e.g. (Web, Content, Brand & Marketing).
- Examined the channels and digital approaches used by other government agencies and relevant organisations – MBIE, Ministry of Education, Waka Kotahi, Air New Zealand and others.
- Investigated digital trends, research and insights in both New Zealand and internationally.
- Aligned with DOC's Digital Channels Strategy, Brand Strategy and priority audiences.
- Ensured any channel recommendations support Mobilising for Nature objectives to raise awareness, connect and drive action for nature.

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Social media platform audiences



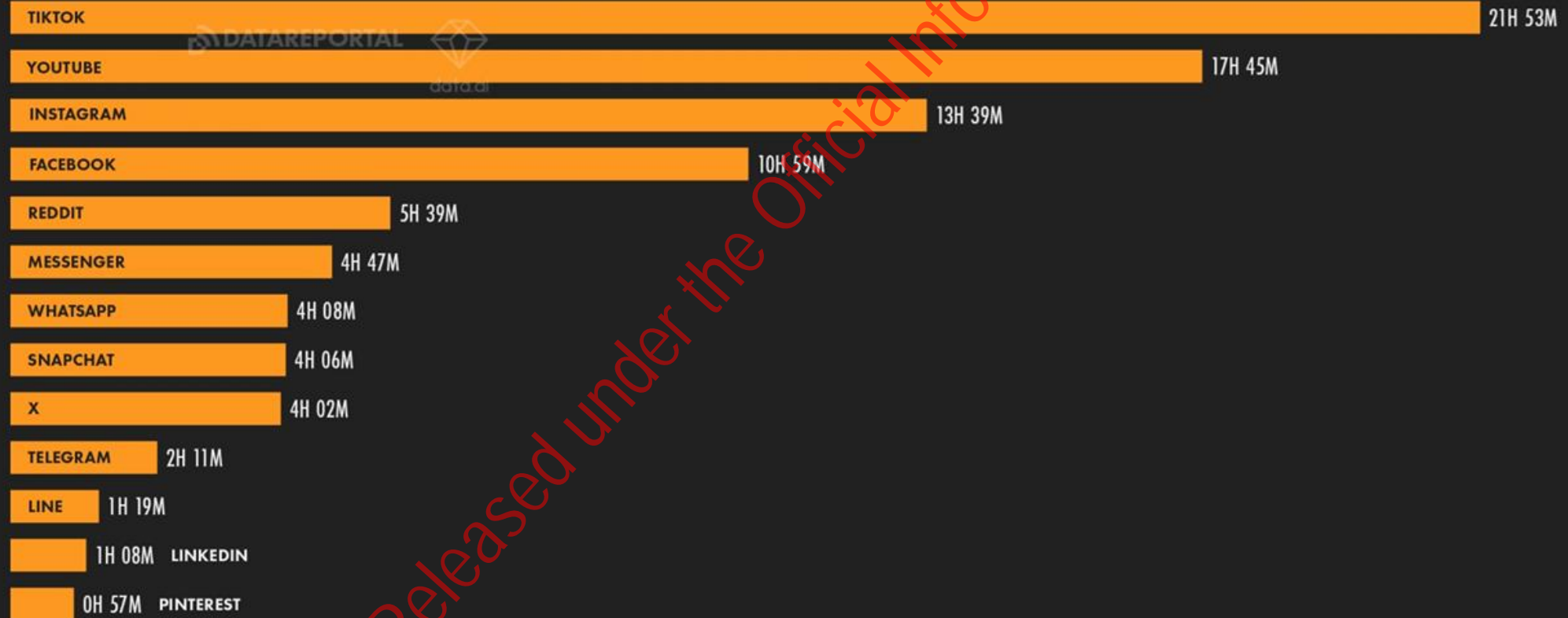
*Potential ad reach in Aotearoa

Context: Time spent on platforms by New Zealanders

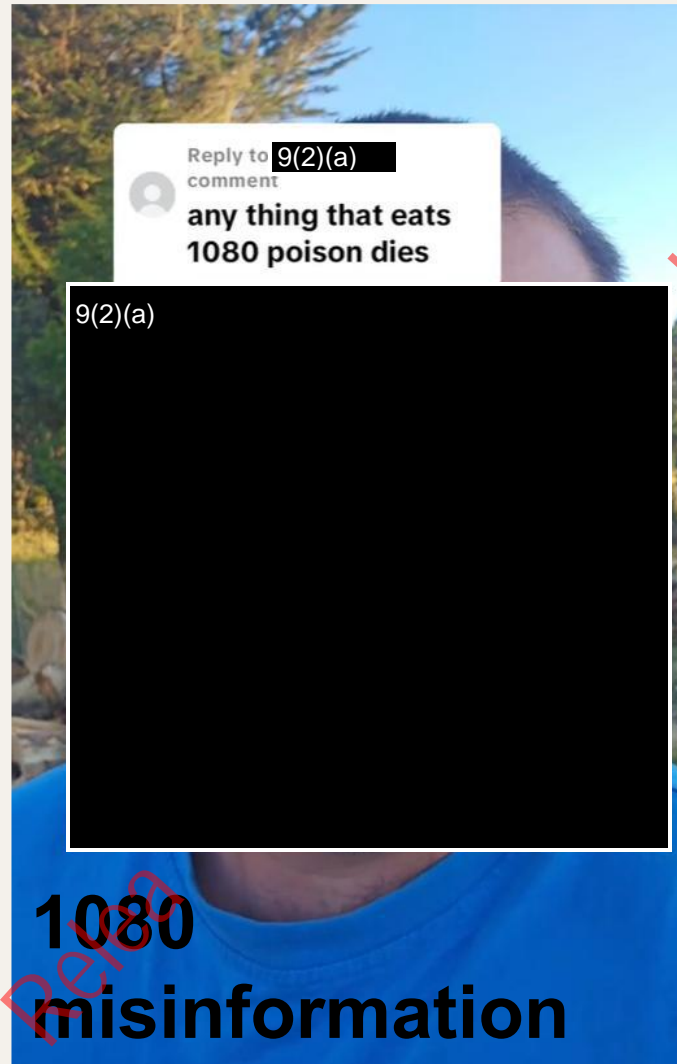
FEB
2025

SOCIAL MEDIA APPS: AVERAGE TIME PER USER

AVERAGE TIME PER MONTH THAT ACTIVE USERS SPENT USING EACH PLATFORM'S ANDROID APP IN NOVEMBER 2024



Context: We need to be addressing misinformation on TikTok



Context: Mobilising for Nature

Strategic Objectives from MFN strategy:

1. Raise **awareness** of the value of biodiversity to New Zealand and the need for action and create the motivation for people to get involved.
2. **Connect** people with nature – including encouraging people to get out into nature.

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Other Context:

- Audiences shifting from digital platforms more than ever before –
Young people (16-24) don't use Facebook, they use TikTok (for now)
- The changing nature of mainstream media –
Fewer staff in newsrooms, more news being shared directly on social media and more media stories being picked up from online channels
- Budgets and cost restraint –
We need to demonstrate value for money more than ever, so we need to ensure we are spending our time on the right channels
- Fighting misinformation – *especially important for DOC's reputation and visitor safety*

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Context: DOC's priority audiences + proposed channels

**Enthusiastic
Actives**
18%

18-30 years old
Enjoy socialising outdoors, seeks a challenge in nature. Values conservation but low nature knowledge.
Channels: Instagram, TikTok

**Home-
Close
Actives**
17%

40-55 years old
Enjoys local recreation opportunities. High emotional connection to nature but low nature knowledge
Channels: Facebook, YouTube, Blog

**Social
Actives**
19%

30-40 years old
Enjoy time in the outdoors with others. Value conservation but low knowledge
Familiar with DOC brand for recreation.
Channels: Facebook, Instagram

**Mindful
Actives**
30%

60+ years old
Enjoys relaxing nature opportunities. Strong emotional connection to nature and high nature knowledge.
Channels: Facebook, YouTube, Blog

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Review Outcomes: New approach – Principles

- We take an adaptive approach to our channels, iterating as and when need to respond to changes in digital channel use by our priority audiences. This reflects the nature of digital channels and enables us to flex in response to a rapidly changing ecosystem.
- We have robust systems and processes to help us make informed and consistent decisions and allow us to adapt and innovate.
- We put our audiences first to deliver a great customer experience in a way that also delivers on DOC's strategic objectives.
- We empower our people to make decisions and take actions that are new and innovative to adapt to industry changes.
- We recognise that digital channels are one part of the wider digital media ecosystem and therefore take a collaborative approach to navigating that ecosystem.

Recommendation 1 – Annual channel “pulse-check”

- We need to be more responsive to the changing media landscape, including where our audiences are getting their information and where they are spending their time.
- Every year we will do a “pulse-check” review of our digital channels and make recommendations to the DD-G Public Affairs on whether there are any new channels we should be progressing or prioritising for the upcoming year.
- For 25/26 we will be recommending:
 - Launching a DOC TikTok channel to reach our DOC priority audiences and also to allow us to combat misinformation found on that platform.
 - We reduce using Twitter/X as it’s New Zealand based audience continues to decrease, and it is not an active channel for our target audiences.
 - The previous Twitter/X audience is fracturing across other similar platforms, these are channels we will watch but we are not currently recommending we use these.
 - We retain X/Twitter as an emergency channels for crisis communications only.

Recommendation 2 – DOC social media “Cheat sheet”

- Ensuring staff understand what digital channels we are on and how we use them, will allow us to share more engaging stories and support for these as an important communication channel.
- We will develop a one-page “cheat sheet” style document for each of our digital channels (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn etc.) to quickly explain what content performs well on each channel, the audience we are reaching, and how they contribute towards DOC’s objectives – including Mobilising for Nature.
- These guidelines would be available to share with all staff.

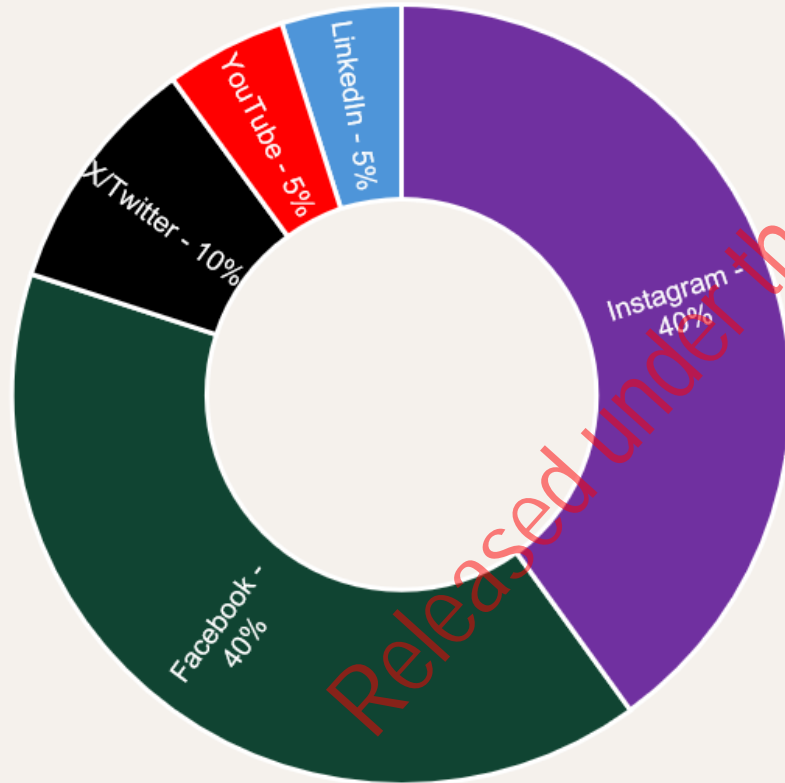
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Review Outcome: New approach - Actions

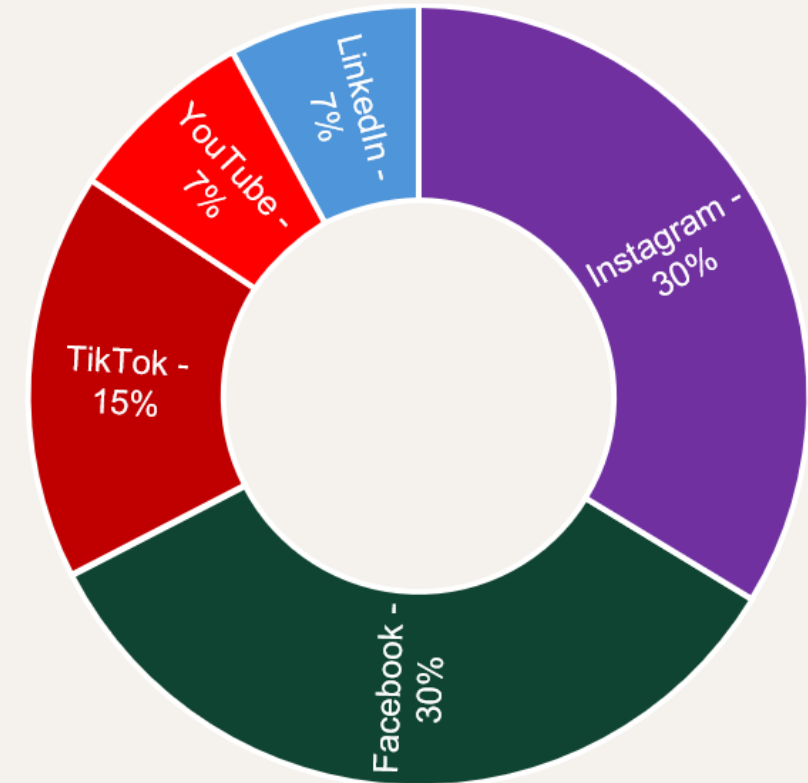
- We prioritise nationally relevant messages and content for our national social media channels. Regional or niche issue posts should use regionally relevant channels or targeted approaches.
- We develop clear one-page guidance for how we manage each our channels (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok) that we can use to communicate to the business how and when we use our channels and how we will respond to requests for support.
- Social media posts must be created bespoke for each channel in line with the channel guidance (we don't just post the same thing to all channels).
- We create one-page digital audience summaries (personas) to understand which channels each priority audience is using and how. We update these summaries regularly.
- Once a year (June) we conduct a quick channel audit (one page) to asses what channels we should be prioritising, those we reduce activity, new channels we should be on, and channels we should close.
- We annually review all DOC social media channels (including regional channels) to check progress/impact against purpose and priorities (we iterate through the year as needed). Following the review, we create an annual plan for our channels, updated from the previous year, to guide our approach for the year.

Review outcome: Rebalancing our platform output

- Before Channels review



- Before Channels review



Annual Plan for FY 25/26

- Develop one page guidance for channels, audience personas and channel audit
- Fewer posts to Facebook – Fewer posts, but higher quality. Nationally relevant messages only, bold visual and video elements, clear calls to action that align with DOC’s strategic objectives. Regional or niche issues use paid targeted posts.
- Launch DOC’s TikTok – Growing channel amongst a target audience. Platform rife with misinformation that needs our authoritative voice to counter.
- Increase use of LinkedIn – Grow LinkedIn in line with our channel guidance. Growing audience, strong organic reach, receptive audience to DOC messages.
- Increase use of YouTube – YouTube is a strong channel to reach NZers, we have strong video and visuals to use this channel effectively.
- Close X/Twitter – Audience size is reducing according to recent stats. Retain as an emergency channel only.

Full review: [docCM - Digital Channels Review and Approach 25-26](#)