Executive Summary

“Facebook is the most difficult channel for us” a social media manager at a foreign ministry recently admitted, echoing a sentiment shared by many a social media manager about the platform. Technically world leaders, governments and foreign ministries have their biggest audiences on Facebook compared to their size of their audiences on Twitter or Instagram. However, with Facebook’s change of algorithm it has become more and more difficult for governments to stand out and reach the 2.3 billion monthly active users organically.

According to the 2019 edition of World Leaders on Facebook, part of the acclaimed Twiplomacy series from BCW (Burson Cohn & Wolfe), the governments and leaders of 182 countries – seven more than in 2017 - had an official presence on the social network, representing 94 percent of the 193 UN member states. The governments of only 11 countries do not have a Facebook presence, including Eritrea, Laos, Mauritania, Nicaragua, North Korea, Swaziland and Turkmenistan and a small handful of Pacific island states.

One hundred and eight heads of state, 83 prime ministers and 88 foreign ministers maintain personal pages on Facebook and, in general, they are more popular than the pages of their respective institutions. As of March 1, 2019, all 692 personal and institutional Facebook pages of world leaders had a combined total of more than 345 million page likes and registered 767 million interactions since March 1, 2018.

Growth of the Facebook pages of world leaders has been considerably less than in previous years. All pages combined have registered a 10 percent growth in followers year on year. The Facebook page of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has grown by less than one percent over the past 12 months and his institutional page @PMOIndia registered a decline, losing 84,533 over the past 12 months. The page of Donald Trump has only grown by three percent, a fraction of his growth rates in our last study.
Interactions on their pages have dropped significantly. While world leaders registered 1.1 billion interactions in 2016, that number has decreased by 32.3 percent compared to their interactions in all of 2018.

«When from one day to another, the organic reach of our pages was decimated, we knew it was time to reconsider our strategy. Just over a year later, we still haven’t cracked the code but trial and error has helped us realise that there is little we can do to get around the restrictions set by the algorithm.»

Read the full post by Paolo Ganino, Digital and Social Media Officer, European External Action Service on page 30 below.

However, a few leaders have been able to buck the downward trend, particularly those who are in campaign mode. Facebook pages tend to become alive and register strong growth during election campaigns. Not surprisingly, the Facebook page of Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro has registered the most growth over the past 12 months, adding 4.1 million new fans. Mexico’s new president, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, added more than 3 million likes over the past 12 months and more than doubled his followers. And Ukraine’s President Petro Poroshenko, who is facing an election on April 21, 2019, has tripled his followers to 2.3 million.

«While Facebook’s algorithm changes were frustrating at first, they’re increasingly looking like a blessing in disguise. They’ve forced us to pinpoint our target groups even more precisely and produce more targeted, relevant content.»

Read the full post by Rasmus Eljanskog, Press Officer at the Swedish Foreign Ministry on page 32 below.

Leaving Facebook

In early February 2019, German Chancellor Angela Merkel made headlines announcing her decision to delete her personal Facebook page @AngelaMerkel.

In a farewell video message on the page, she thanked her followers for their support and asked them to follow the governmental accounts on Facebook and Instagram instead. By the time of the deletion, her page had 2,541,471 followers, making her the most followed EU leader on the platform.

In mid-March 2019, Kenya’s President Uhuru Kenyatta temporarily deleted all his social media profiles, including his Facebook page which has 3.6 million followers and is the most followed Sub-Saharan African leader. The profiles were taken down because of ‘unauthorized access,’ according to his chief of staff, and they have not been revived yet. The official page POTUS page set up for the President of the United States, which has 2,666,220 followers, has been dormant since May 2018 as President Donald Trump prefers to use his personal page.

It is highly unusual for world leaders to delete their social media pages during their life time. The page of former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and the page of Nelson Mandela continue to be managed by their respective foundations.
«With more than a hundred pages, Facebook is the most used social media for the Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs, even though the Ministry itself is not on the platform (but the Minister is). Even in 2019, with Facebook’s alleged decline of interest and reach difficulties, it is still the preferred platform when a Swiss mission decides to be present on a social media.»

Read all about the Facebook strategy of the Swiss missions abroad by Renée Bäni, Digital Project Manager at the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs Switzerland on page 34 below.
How do World Leaders use Facebook?

Brazil’s new President Jair Bolsonaro, who took office on January 1, 2019, has dominated the rankings of World Leaders on Facebook over the past 12 months and has taken the top spot from U.S. President Donald Trump. The Brazilian president has been emulating Trump in tone and style, running a social media-powered campaign that successfully uses Facebook to bypass mainstream media.

Bolsonaro’s Facebook page has registered more than 145 million interactions, almost twice as many as President Trump, who has 84 million total interactions and 2.5 times as many followers. Bolsonaro averages more than 100,000 interactions per post, compared to 53,000 for Donald Trump, and this and without having promoted any of his posts on Facebook. Meanwhile, Donald Trump’s page has run more than 50,000 ads related to politics or issues of national importance since inception, according to Facebook’s Ad Library (see page 27 below).

Sixty-one of the 100 Facebook posts with the most interactions are from Bolsonaro, while only 10 posts from Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and nine posts from Donald Trump make the Top 100 list.

The most liked Facebook post of any world leader over the past 12 months is the text update Jair Bolsonaro posted on the day of his election on October 28, 2018, reporting the congratulatory phone call he received from President Trump whom he tagged in the post which garnered 549,899 likes. “We express the desire to bring these two great nations closer together and to advance on the path of freedom and prosperity!” Bolsonaro wrote. The post that received the most comments and was shared the most is a Facebook live broadcast Bolsonaro organized, flanked by his team shortly before the first round of the elections.
The Facebook post that received the most expressions of love was a Facebook live broadcast by Bolsonaro on election night, flanked by his wife and a sign language interpreter, thanking his followers and claiming “a new future awaits us.” Bolsonaro also received the most expressions of laughter for a picture which shows him chairing a cabinet meeting dressed in a fake T-shirt of his favourite football team, Palmeiras, while all ministers are wearing ties.

The Facebook post with the most expression of sadness and crying emojis was posted by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on February 14, 2019 when he paid homage to the 40 Indian paramilitary police who were killed in a suicide bombing in Indian Administered Kashmir. “We salute you, brave sons of Mother India. (...) We stand in solidarity with the bereaved families,” read the sombre note on Facebook.

The Facebook posts with the most angry reactions are two live videos with former Brazilian President Michel Temer posted in May 2018 which have attracted 173,035 and 90,565 angry reactions, respectively.

Bolsonaro’s post sharing the death threats he receives on social media garnered 55,797 angry emojis.

Jair Bolsonaro and Donald Trump both post on average four posts per day, twice as many as the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi who has only half of the interactions compared to the U.S. President despite having almost twice as many followers.

Posts that show a personal and often lighter side of world leaders often perform well on Facebook. Much like any other Facebook user, world leaders sometimes share information about their private lives on the platform, celebrating birthdays, sharing pictures of their children and announcing their latest offspring. These personal posts are generally the most popular ones.

Only a handful of world leaders manage their pages on their own or post on their timeline themselves. This is generally done by their social media teams. However, there are notable exceptions.
Singapore’s Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong entertains his 1.2 million followers with occasional snapshots he has taken himself and he even participated in the #10YearChallenge, an Internet meme which consisted of posting a photo of yourself in 2009 next to a photo of yourself in 2019.

Danish Foreign Minister Anders Samuelsen is visibly having fun on his personal Facebook page. He posts the occasional selfie and short video snippets from his activities, including going shopping on a skateboard or a 360° video from his skiing holidays. These raw and unedited videos might not have much news value, but they provide a glimpse into “life as the Foreign Minister of Denmark” and are certainly engaging for his 93,000-strong Facebook audience.

Government use of Facebook varies from country to country. While some pages merely share the daily activity of their leaders, others engage with their citizens, replying to the most salient comments and even allowing a free-flow of visitor posts on their respective pages.

Facebook has become the place where citizens can easily send private messages to their government leaders via Facebook Messenger. However, our study has found that few world leaders reply to private messages on the platform and many simply use the platform as a one-way broadcasting channel.

With their publications on Facebook, world leaders can reach an audience of millions of Facebook users worldwide, regardless of the number of likes on their respective pages.

«The daily visits of the Armenian Foreign Ministry’s Facebook page are much higher than the visits to the Ministry’s official website.»

Read why social media is a big opportunity for small countries by Anna Naghdalyan, Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia on page 36 below.
Facebook Photos

The 692 pages analyzed in our study have shared 449,739 posts since March 1, 2018. World leaders mainly tend to share posts with photos, accounting for 55 percent of all their Facebook publications. These photo posts generate an average of 1,333 interactions per picture and account for 34 percent of all interactions. Nineteen percent are posts with links to other websites, often including a visual. These link posts perform less well and only generate 327 interactions per post, or four percent of all interactions.

Less than five percent of all the publications are text-only status updates without any visuals. However, these status updates generate, on average, 3,132 interactions totalling nine percent of all interactions.

The picture of the letter sent from President Trump to Nancy Pelosi, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, titled "Dear Madame Speaker..." is the photo that has received the most interactions. Among the 935,524 interactions the post received are 135,558 expressions of love and 73,931 expressions of laughter that may be due to the unusual wording of the letter in which the U.S. President announced that due to the government shutdown her "trip to Brussels, Egypt, and Afghanistan has been postponed. We will reschedule this seven-day excursion when the Shutdown is over", adding that "I also feel that, during this period, it would be better if you were in Washington negotiating with me (...) to end the Shutdown."

Not surprisingly, the three-picture collection on the British Royal Family’s Facebook feed of the wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle has become the second most popular photo posted over the past 12 months, with 822,870 interactions including 186,170 expressions of love.
President Trump’s picture congratulating Judge Brett Kavanaugh on his Senate confirmation to the Supreme Court is the third most popular picture post.

The government of Botswana leads the rankings in terms of the number of pictures posted, having published 7,717 pictures since March 1, 2018. The government of Ethiopia is in second place with 6,073 photo posts and the Foreign Ministry of Colombia with 5,562 pictures posted in the same period comes in third.

The most popular link post, with 224,183 interactions, was shared by Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau celebrating the fact that Canada has been ranked as the #1 country in the world for quality of life: “Agreed!”, he commented, adding that “This is the best place in the world to live and we’re going to keep working to make sure every Canadian has a real & fair chance at success.”
Facebook Videos

«In the last few months, we are operating under the formula 70/20/10, and it means 70% of video content, 20% photo with text (it is worth mentioning that photo albums have a better reach), and 10% text messages.»

Read about the Facebook strategy of Moldova’s Foreign Ministry by Spokesperson, Alexandr Roitman on page 38 below.

Not surprisingly, videos and live videos perform best on Facebook. Native Facebook videos represent 16 percent of all the posts but generate 26 percent of all interactions. A Facebook video garners, on average, 2,867 interactions and live videos have the best engagement with an average of 6,082 interactions per broadcast. Live videos generate the most likes, comments and shares and are clearly appreciated by users. The 90,678 Facebook videos posted on world leaders’ pages have been viewed 5.9 billion times with an average view count of 64,281 per video. The native videos have an average length of 3:37 while Facebook Lives run on average for 32 minutes.

Links to YouTube and other videos shared on Facebook generate the fewest interactions with only 608 interactions per shared video. Most world leaders now share videos natively on the platform. Less than one percent of all posts are links to other videos and they only garner 0.34 percent of all interactions.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s annual Ramadan message to Muslims in Canada and around the world posted in May 2018 has become the most watched video over the past 12 months. The 55-second video has clocked up more than 10 million video views and 834,605 interactions, including 109,899 expressions of love.

The second most watched video was posted by the Hungarian government blasting European parliamentarian and former Belgian Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt for allegedly calling for more migration to Europe. The video’s dramatic music and voice-over claims that his policy “of more migration is reckless” and that “it is time to shake up Europe.” However, as a fact check by the French news agency AFP has shown, the clip of Verhofstadt has been taken out of context. The 35-second clip has been watched more than 9 million times, and so far, the government in Budapest has not taken the misleading video down.

The third most watched video was shared by Brazil’s President Jair Bolsonaro during his election campaign in August 2018. The two-minute video, seen 8.6 million times, shows one of his supporters explaining in simple words why he will vote for Bolsonaro.

The government of the Philippines leads in terms of the number of videos posted, with 2,359, followed by the page of the presidential administration of the Dominican Republic and Colombian President Iván Duque Márquez, posting 2,337 and 1,582 videos on their pages, respectively. Pakistan’s Prime Minister Imran Khan, Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama, Ukraine’s President Petro Poroshenko and Venezuela’s President Nicolás Maduro have all shared more than 1,000 videos on their respective pages during the past 12 months.
Many world leaders use Facebook videos to communicate directly with their audiences. Leo Varadkar, the Irish Taoiseach (Prime Minister), posts regular one-minute subtitled video messages, generally shot on location and direct-to-camera where he addresses his social media community. UK Foreign Minister Jeremy Hunt also often updates his community on his visits and issues with a piece to camera.
Facebook Live Videos

«Our President’s speeches, statements, remarks or messages are streamed live on Facebook, for Ghanaian citizens, locally and in the diaspora, to watch. Through Facebook, President Akufo-Addo and his government are bringing governance to Ghanaians everywhere in the world at their own convenience.»

Read the full post by Kow Abaka Essuman, the Social Media Manager for the President of Ghana on page 40 below.

Almost half (332) of the 692 pages have used Facebook Live either to broadcast a press conference, an election rally or an official ceremony. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has generated 35,672,489 live video views on his 237 broadcasts. The White House is not far behind with 32,419,918 live views on its 172 broadcasts. U.S. President Donald Trump averages 438,389 views on his 47 broadcasts over the past 12 months.

The most watched Facebook Live was shared by Jair Bolsonaro live from his hospital bed where he was recovering from an assassination attempt during the election campaign in September 2018. During the emotional 20-minute broadcast, then-candidate Bolsonaro attacked his political opponents from the rival Workers Party accusing them of electoral fraud.

The European Commission broadcasts occasional Facebook live chats taped in a studio, including a moderator who puts the questions from Facebook users to the relevant Commissioners. The EU Commission also produced the first Facebook Live interview with EU Vice President Maroš Šefčovič in the back of a self-driving car while driving through the streets of Leuven in Belgium, with the camera in the driver’s seat.

Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte and UK Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt are among the few world leaders who sit down for the occasional Facebook Q&A.

Hunt has organized three half-hour Facebook Q&A sessions with his team primarily to address questions from his constituents in South West Surrey, including questions about the state of the roads in his constituency but also about national issues including Brexit.
Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte, who also posts the occasional pieces straight to camera, sat down for a Facebook Live interview outside on his terrace answering selected question directly from his iPad.

A handful of leaders have taken matters into their own hands, holding their mobile devices in their own hands while going live on the go talking directly with their followers on Facebook Live. Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan often updates his constituents about his government’s activities going live on Facebook from the back of his car or walking about in his office. The quality of the audio or the filming might not be the best, but the direct engagement has endeared his followers and he has made it into the Top 10 list of the world leaders with the most interactions.

New Zealand’s new Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern, often does impromptu Facebook Live broadcasts using her mobile device from her couch at home and even from her car, updating her followers about the latest government decisions. Her most watched live broadcast, with 870,399 views, is a thank you message to her followers shortly before leaving the hospital after giving birth to a baby girl in June 2018.

The 38-year-old politician has seen her page follower count balloon to over half a million in the wake of the March 2019 Christchurch terrorist attacks which killed 50 people in two mosques.

For the second year running, Jacinda Ardern is the “most loved” world leader with 20 percent of her Facebook interactions being love hearts sent by her followers, which is all part of what has become known Down Under as #JacindaMania.

Costa Rica’s President Carlos Alvarado Quesada is the second most loved world leader, with 19 percent of his interactions being expressions of love which might be linked to his use of Facebook Live. He is known to do impromptu “person on the street” broadcasts with his mobile phone. The 38-year-old did a short Facebook Live during an official meeting with his Chilean counterpart, 68-year-old Sebastian Piñera.
His most watched Facebook Live broadcast, viewed more than 1 million times, is a five-minute walkabout in Plaza de la Cultura in the capital San José, meeting random passers-by who took selfies with him. The presidential walk about was designed to show how peaceful Costa Rica is after the president and his wife had been harassed by protestors in the same square that same morning.

Danish Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen takes to Facebook Live every other week sharing his Sunday thoughts reflecting on the week gone past without any of his advisers or spokespeople by his side. His most viewed broadcast was a 15-minute reflection about international cooperation, a discussion which he continued in the comments under the video.

And Puerto Rico’s Governor Ricardo Rosello also does occasional short Facebook Lives announcements by himself in Spanish. He also records in English and posts as promoted posts to reach a larger audience in the United States.

Relatively few pages have taken advantage of Facebook’s cover video, which plays automatically. Only 49 pages have a video as their cover illustration. The Facebook page of the White House uses a video compilation of the most salient moments of the Trump presidency. The cover video of the Austrian government takes viewers on a fisheye whirlwind tour of the Chancellery on Ballhausplatz in central Vienna, which has been the official residence of the most senior Austrian cabinet minister for over 200 years. Only four world leaders have stitched together a series of photos to create a carousel cover. Seventeen pages do not have a cover picture.

Facebook cover pictures can also be used to highlight specific campaigns. Recently the President of Costa Rica, Carlos Alvarado Quesada, posted a picture of himself, his wife and his son wearing different colored socks in honour of the International Down Syndrome Day with the slogan Different but Equal.
Facebook Stories

It is impossible to ascertain how many pages have posted Facebook Stories as they disappear after 24 hours. However, we have counted 20 pages which have shared these ephemeral stories which are highlighted with a blue circle around the avatar of each page.

It is easy to share Instagram Stories on Facebook by linking both accounts, as the Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison has done, sharing more personal moments with his constituents on both platforms.

Are World Leaders Connecting on Facebook?

Facebook is one of the best platforms to contact and start conversations with world leaders and their social media teams.

Out of the 692 pages analyzed, 264 publish their contact email and 247 publish their telephone number. Three quarters of all the pages prominently feature a Facebook page button.

One in four of these pages with call-to-action buttons invite users to 'Contact Us' or to 'Learn More' by sending them to their respective websites. Thirty-one pages invite users to watch a promotional video on Facebook or YouTube, 31 pages suggest to 'Sign Up' to a newsletter, 14 pages promote a separate app and 15 pages encourage users to 'Call Now.'

“We receive dozens of messages every day via our Facebook page alone with questions, suggestions and criticism. In fact, not only do we read them, but we also do our best to react to the situations where we can offer any assistance.”

Read how Russian Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Maria Zakharova personal Facebook profile has been one of the driving forces behind Russia’s digital diplomacy on page 42 below.
Two world leaders, namely Keith Rowley, the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, use the page button to invite their fans to join their respective support groups. The support group for the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago has 78,896 members, more than his Facebook page which has 52,423 fans. Benjamin Netanyahu’s private support group has grown from 1,467 members in 2018 to 30,000 members in 2019.

Facebook groups are a smart way to interact with one’s most dedicated fans. Membership is reserved for fans only, keeping pesky detractors and critics at the door and groups offer more direct communication between the group administrator and its members. Benjamin Netanyahu’s private group is probably more powerful than the 2,394,595 fans on his Facebook page.

The page of President Donald Trump is the only page which encourages fans to 'Shop Now,' directing users to the Shop.DonaldJTrump.com website where they can buy Make America Great Again paraphernalia, from MAGA pet leashes to MAGA hats and t-shirts.

**Are World Leaders Responsive on Facebook?**

Two thirds of all World Leaders' Facebook pages allow fans to contact the page privately using Facebook Messenger. Furthermore, 280 pages display a large 'Send Message' button on the top of their pages. Until recently, Facebook was tracking their interactions and publicly displaying the average response time to messages on each page. As of March 2019, 22 pages typically reply ‘within a day,’ six ‘within a few hours’ and three were flagged as “Very responsive to messages” displaying a special button.

But being open to messages and being responsive using automated responses doesn’t necessarily mean that these pages will reply to messages. The ‘very responsive’ pages tend to send automated replies using chatbots. The presidency of Senegal, the Department of Information of the government of Malta and the government of Singapore all send automated replies. The government of Malta promises to “be with you in due course” and includes the customer care opening times. The Presidency of Senegal promotes the presidential website to follow the news of the president.

«We strive to make content inviting, interactive and above all relevant. Through social media, the Department of Information provides on-demand services with the social media team replying instantly (in less than 15 minutes) to comments on posts and to all direct messages received.»

Read how Malta’s Department of Information replies to direct messages on page 44 below.

The government of Singapore, which has 287,537 followers, uses the Gov.sg bot, designed “to help you stay connected with the latest government news and announcements.” The chatbot is surprisingly chatty, giving users the choice between leaving a question or feedback. If ‘feedback’ is chosen, it will give a choice of 10 topics from housing to immigration, defense and education, or the Gov.sg chatbot itself and it will ask the visitor to leave an email or telephone number.
New Zealand’s Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, who has more than half a million followers, has changed her automated reply over the past year. In 2018 she indicated that: “I try to reply to everyone personally but that does mean a bit of delay.” Her message now reads: “Unfortunately, due to the large number of messages I receive, I’m no longer able to reply to all messages personally. However, one of my team will reply to you ASAP.” And her team does reply in person to the Messenger messages, inviting users to send an email to her parliamentary assistant.

Reacting to Comments

“Our challenge is to keep looking for formulas and ways of engaging people that suit our target groups and will reach them in an organic way. This is increasingly difficult due to Facebook’s changing algorithm. If Facebook cannot contribute to specific goals, we use other platforms. But for the time being, Facebook remains a valuable platform for interaction and building strong relationships.”

Discover the Dutch 10-step social media plan by Paul Frank, online & social media strategist at the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs on page 46 below.

The German government doesn’t accept direct messages on its Facebook page; however, the page of the Bundesregierung is unusual in terms of the open and direct interaction with its users. The page was created on January 20, 2015 with the aim of starting a dialogue between the government and its citizens. Today, the page has more than half a million followers and the social media team does read all the comments under each post and interacts directly with its fans. The 16-person strong team likes positive feedback, provides more in-depth information or sets the record straight.

The team also reacts with irony to negative and insulting comments, while reminding the users that “The page is there for us to enter into a dialogue and you can communicate your opinion. Would you be so kind and strike a more cordial tone? Have a nice Sunday, the editor.” To a user who congratulated the team on the way they moderate the page and respond even to the harshest comments the page manager replied: “Thanks for the 🌸” including the flower emoji.

Accessibility

Adding closed captions on video is crucial since most users watch videos in silent mode. Many governments will add text to videos before upload, but few use the closed caption function available on Facebook. The closed captions will improve its discoverability in Facebook search, help the hearing impaired and make the videos watchable in silent mode.
When posting infographics, the German government consistently posts the text of the infographic and describes the visual elements in a comment which helps the visually impaired read and understand the infographic.

**Tagging**

One of the best ways to draw attention to posts and potentially increase their reach is by tagging other Facebook pages. The Belgium Foreign Ministry consistently tags other pages in its publications, such as international organizations and the pages of its own embassies. The digital diplomats in Brussels also show that institutional communication doesn't have to be boring - they add Facebook expressions to their posts. The Facebook expressions range from "eating waffles at the United Nations" to “supporting UN Women” on International Women's Day, from "feeling cold in Astana" and "remembering our fallen soldiers at the Canadian War Museum." Using the Facebook's pre-set expressions is a simple and fun way to make the official communications more engaging.
Most Liked World Leaders

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is by far the most popular world leader on Facebook, with more than 43.5 million likes on his personal page and 13.7 million likes on his institutional Prime Minister of India page, which is in fourth position.

U.S. President Donald Trump is the second most popular world leader, with more than 23 million likes on his personal Facebook page, which has grown by only three percent over the past 12 months.

Jordan’s Queen Rania has seen her page grow by five percent over the past 12 months, and is in third position with 16.9 million likes, reaching an Arabic and English audience well beyond the 5.8 million Facebook users in Jordan.

The Facebook page of Cambodia’s Prime Minister Hun Sen continues to register double-digit growth and has shot into fifth position of the most followed world leaders, with 10.9 million page likes and a growth rate of 14.8 percent. Interestingly, he has more Facebook fans than Cambodia has Facebook users.
users (8.8 million) but still less than the 29 million people interested in the Khmer language on Facebook.

Brazil’s President Jair Bolsonaro has made his entry into the top 10 most followed leaders in sixth position, with 9.3 million followers and a 78 percent growth rate over the past year which was marked by the election campaign in Brazil.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Pakistan’s Prime Minister Imran Khan, Indonesian President Joko Widodo and the White House complete the Top 10 of the most popular world leaders on Facebook, each with more than 8 million likes.

Fifty-three world leaders can boast more than 1 million likes on their respective Facebook pages. However, not everyone has such large communities and the median average of the 692 pages analyzed stands at 37,737 likes.
Most Liked Regional Leaders

Kenya’s Uhuru Kenyatta is the most popular leader in Sub-Saharan Africa with 3.6 million likes, ahead of Ghana’s President Nana Akufo-Addo with 1.6 million likes. Rwanda’s Paul Kagame, Cameroon’s President Paul Biya and Nigeria’s Muhammadu Buhari complete the top five list with more than 65,000 and 761,000 likes, respectively.
Jordan’s Queen Rania, an early adopter of Facebook, has been topping the list of the most popular leaders in the Middle East and North Africa for several years. With 16.9 million likes, she has twice as many followers as Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi with 7.3 million likes and is ahead of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the Emir of Dubai, with 3.8 million likes and Jordan’s Royal Hashemite Court with 2.9 million likes.
Brazil’s President Jair Bolsonaro has become the most popular leader on Facebook in Latin America ahead of Mexico’s President Andrés Manuel López Obrador with 5.6 million likes (as many as his predecessor Enrique Peña Nieto). Argentinian President Mauricio Macri is the third most followed Latin American leader with 4.4 million likes. The Argentinian Presidency and Guatemala’s Jimmy Morales complete the list of the five most liked leaders in Latin America, with 1.6 and 1.2 million likes respectively.
The British Royal Family is the most followed leader in the European Union with 4.1 million likes, ahead of French President Emmanuel Macron with 2.3 million likes and Romanian President Klaus Iohannis with 1.8 million likes. The EU Commission and Italy’s Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte complete the top five of the most liked European leaders on Facebook with both more than 850,000 likes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Liked European Leaders on Facebook</th>
<th>Page Growth / Page Likes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Royal Family, UK</td>
<td>17.86% 4,874,286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emmanuel Macron, France</td>
<td>13.38% 2,383,652</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Klaus Iohannis, Romania</td>
<td>0.86% 1,829,812</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Commission, EU</td>
<td>10.66% 896,632</td>
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<tr>
<td>Giuseppe Conte, Italy</td>
<td>n/a 855,944</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sebastian Kurz, Austria</td>
<td>7.33% 792,302</td>
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<td>Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, Croatia</td>
<td>88.28% 749,587</td>
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<td>Andrzej Duda, Poland</td>
<td>-0.38% 649,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orbán Viktor, Hungary</td>
<td>12.55% 644,659</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prime Minister, UK</td>
<td>12.34% 556,860</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data collected on March 1, 2019, covering the past 12 months using CrowdTangle.com

The governments of only 11 countries have not yet set up a presence on Facebook, including Nicaragua, North Korea and Turkmenistan, where the social network is banned, as well as a handful of small island states in the Pacific Ocean. A Facebook page was set up for the Chinese State Council Information Office @ChinaSCIO on September 1, 2015. The page which shares information in English from Chinese state-run media is not verified and only has 601 likes.
World Leaders with the Most Interactions

Large Facebook pages should generally translate into large interactions (defined as the sum of likes, comments and shares), however this is not always the case. Brazil’s President Jair Bolsonaro tops the ranking for the most interactions with 145 million interactions on his Facebook page over the past 12 months. Bolsonaro has three times more interactions than Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who has more than four times more followers. Donald Trump’s interactions on Facebook also dwarf those of the Indian Prime Minister, despite Modi having almost twice as many followers. With 8.9 million followers, Pakistan’s new Prime Minister Imran Khan is in fourth position and over the past 12 months he had almost as many interactions as Modi, who has four times as many followers.

Mexico’s new president, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, Colombia’s new president Iván Duque and Armenia’s Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan have all made it into the top 10 list of the leaders with the most interactions. With five of the 10 leaders having fought election campaigns in 2018 it seems likely that the engagement on their respective Facebook pages exploded during election campaigns. And Indonesian President Joko Widodo is facing a re-election in April 2019. Since his inauguration in 2017 U.S. President Donald Trump has been using his Facebook page to gear up for the election in 2020.

BCW World Leaders on Facebook 2019
Overall, interactions have markedly decreased across the board. In our last study in 2018, Donald Trump had accumulated 204 million interactions on his page and an overall interaction rate (the sum of all interactions divided by the number of posts and the average page likes) of 0.41 percent. In this year’s study, his interaction has dwindled to 84 million and his interaction rate was slashed in half. Likewise, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi only registered 47 million interactions, down from 113 million interactions a year ago.

**Most Active World Leaders**

Some governments use Facebook as their governmental wire service, and 17 pages average more than 10 posts per day. The Facebook page of the government of Botswana is the most prolific, with an average of 37 posts per day over the past 12 months. The presidential administrations of the Dominican Republic and of Ghana both average more than 20 posts per day. The foreign ministry of Colombia and the government of Ethiopia complete the list of the five most active governments with 18 posts per day, respectively.

![Most Active World Leaders on Facebook](image)

However, the posting frenzy doesn’t necessarily translate into greater engagement, or more likes on their respective pages. The average posting rate for all the pages stands at 1.77 posts per day. All 692
world leaders combined have published 449,739 posts over the past 12 months, which is a median average of 385 posts per page.

While an active social media presence is vital to keeping an audience engaged, pages that are overly active generally don’t enjoy high interaction rates. All 692 pages combined have an average interaction rate of 0.83 percent, which is the sum of all interactions divided by the number of posts and the average page likes over the past 12 months. Only a quarter of the pages analyzed enjoy a better than average interaction rate. Three pages have double-digit interaction rates; these are exceptions because these pages have published few posts and only have several hundred page likes.

The new President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Félix Antoine Tshisekedi, has the best interaction rate, at 26.79 percent, on his 15 posts shared over the past 12 months with his 104,630 followers. Posting intermittently seems to be the recipe for success for Finnish President Sauli Niinistö, who has an interaction rate of more than 5.65 percent on his page which has 292,515 likes.

**How big are the Social Media Teams?**

To increase the transparency of pages, Facebook publishes the number of people who have access to the page either as an administrator, editor, moderator, analyst or jobs manager as well as their geographic locations. We have counted a total 4,142 page managers on the 592 pages where the information was available. The median average number of page managers is five which is probably the ideal size of a social media team.

Ninety-six people have access to the Facebook page of the Korean government with most of them based in South Korea and one in the U.S. The government of Singapore has given 62 people access to its page, some of them based in the Philippines, India, Taiwan and Malaysia. The European Commission’s page is also managed by 62 people, mainly based in Belgium but also in Greece, Germany, the Netherlands, Romania, the island of La Réunion and the U.S.

The page of the UK Foreign Office is managed by 28 people with two in the U.S., one in India, one in Singapore and one in Spain where the Foreign Office has regional social media hubs. Having regional editors allows the Foreign Office to operate through time zones and helps with crisis or out of hours work.

The size of social media teams varies widely from country to country. In smaller countries, such as Iceland, the Foreign Ministry’s social media team “is still a one-woman operation,” as the community manager put it.
Pay to Play

«Since the follower base of the Slovak MFA (@mzv.sk) Facebook account is quite small (12,140 followers), our main focus is to increase our audience. In the past 12 months we have grown from 6,400 to 11,600 likes. We very rarely boost our posts (and if so with very small amounts - 10-100€) so any big reach is always organic. To achieve this, we try to get viral.»

Read about the Facebook strategy of the Slovak Foreign Ministry by Vladimír Stanko on page 48 below.

It is widely accepted that to make an impact on Facebook in 2019 you must ‘pay to play’ and promote the posts or page using Facebook ads. In the beginning of March 2019, 50 pages had been running ads on Facebook according to Facebook’s Ad Library which is available on each page. There are a variety of reasons to promote a post or the page in their own countries or even in other countries.

Examples:

- Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko has been running ads in 22 countries promoting his country’s jump of 61 places in the Doing Business index, claiming that “The best time to invest in Ukraine is right now!”
- The Prime Minister of Palestine ran ads in 18 Middle Eastern countries, including Israel, to promote his personal Facebook page to an Arabic speaking audience.
- The team of the new President of Georgia, Salome Zourabichvili, has paid to promote the page to Georgian Facebook users.
- Ilham Aliyev, the president of Azerbaijan, has promoted his page in Azerbaijan but also in Turkey.
- The Foreign Ministry of the Dominican Republic promoted a post of the Twiplomacy ranking in which the foreign ministry is listed among the 10 most active Instagram accounts.
- The UK government has been running ads in the UK in English and in Polish about the virtues of bonding with your baby during the first year.
- UK Prime Minister Theresa May has paid for 74 ads in December 2018 with the simple message: “I want to get on with Brexit.” According to media reports the UK government spent USD $127,000 to promote these posts.
- Ricardo Rossello, the governor of Puerto Rico, generally promotes his Facebook Live broadcasts. He has also promoted a personal video message to the US President in which he pleads with Donald Trump not to eliminate recovery funds for his island struck by Hurricane Maria.

In general, governments pay less than USD $100 to promote each post, but some have spent between USD $1,000-$5,000 on their Facebook ad campaigns.

The page of Donald Trump has posted more than 50,000 ads since inception which can all be viewed in his Facebook ad library. On any given day the Donald Trump page has several ads live on the platform. The U.S. President is clearly gearing up for re-election in 2020 and his Facebook page is one of the cornerstones of his digital re-election campaign.
disclaimer about the political nature of their ad. The innocent 15-second video ad promoting the
different social media accounts of Bolivia’s President Evo Morales was taken down because as
Facebook put it: “This ad ran without a disclaimer. After the ad started running, we determined that
the ad was related to politics and issues of national importance and required the label.” Likewise the
video of Zimbabwe’s President Emmerson Mnangagwa replying to one of his Facebook followers,
which ran without a disclaimer, was also taken down, but not before it had reached between 50,000
and 100,000 impressions for a budget of less and USD $100.
We still haven't cracked the code

By Paolo Ganino @PaoloGanino, Digital and Social Media Officer, European External Action Service, @eu_e eas

Making New Year’s resolutions is a fairly common practice but sticking to them is a more difficult challenge.

Since 2009, Facebook’s CEO Mark Zuckerberg - the man single-handedly responsible for adding a new digital dimension to the verb ‘to share’ - has been making his personal challenges public (or sharing them) at the beginning of each year.

Last year, Zuckerberg announced he wanted to (or rather had to) “fix Facebook”. A few days later he told the world how he would do it: Facebook would start prioritising “meaningful social interactions” over other content. Facebook’s algorithm (the system that decides what you see and what you don’t see on your news feed) had already started doing this a while back – populating your screens with memes from friends rather than news stories or any content produced by Pages.

For my team, or anyone else working in digital diplomacy and media, this caused a big headache. A couple of years back, so many media companies and institutions like ours had jumped on the bandwagon of the so-called ‘pivot to video’. We used social videos linked to news hooks to promote our main priorities such as human rights and multilateralism. Their current organic reach makes the effort to produce them hardly justifiable. Some social media native outlets even shut down as a consequence of this change.

At the European External Action Service, we manage one central Facebook account and coordinate the work of over a hundred pages managed by our delegations around the world, producing their own local content and multiplying relevant messages coming from Brussels.

Over the years, we have managed to build a diverse audience of people interested in the work of the European Union across the globe. On Twitter, our work is more focused on traditional digital diplomacy efforts, press outreach and the work of Federica Mogherini – the European Union’s foreign policy chief.

Facebook has always required a different type of content, inescapably the content we produce for and share on the platform is meant for a broader audience that goes beyond the world of diplomacy. And what we have on offer is rather unique, as there is no other institutional player communicating on EU foreign policy as such. When from one day to another, the organic reach of our pages was
decimated, we knew it was time to reconsider our strategy. Just over a year later, we still haven’t cracked the code but trial and error has helped us realise that there is little we can do to get around the restrictions set by the algorithm.

That is one of the reasons why we have decided to shift to a more campaign oriented approach. In the past few months, we have run three major and very diverse video campaigns: one on Human Rights Defenders to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; "Europeans Making a Difference", a campaign that shows the Western Balkans’ most successful face as part of the European family, through profiling talents from the region; and "They are Syria", a campaign that accompanied the 3rd Brussels conference on "Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region".

In building an audience for each campaign, Facebook still played a central role. In the social platforms pool, it still allows us to target and reach the largest audience possible, even if regrettably this is no longer possible through organic means. At the end of a major campaign, some in those audiences stick with your page. In the case of the Western Balkans, after the end of the campaign we discovered that the organic reach was much higher than expected for posts related to the region. A video focussing on the resolution of the name dispute between North Macedonia and Greece was particularly successful without the need for paid promotion.

Yet, even this approach may not prove sustainable. After taking action in the US, the UK, Ukraine and India, Facebook is about to roll out new rules regarding political advertising in the European Union and elsewhere.

Last year, the tech giant signed up to the EU Commission’s Code of Practice against disinformation, a self-regulatory platform. While the EU moves forward in tackling disinformation - an action plan was released in December and its implementation is ongoing - we expect Facebook to make a bigger effort to fully implement the Code of Practice.

If rumours are confirmed their new rules about political ads will make it difficult for European and international institutions to roll out information campaigns. And this would force us to look beyond Facebook and focus on how to maximise our impact elsewhere.
Changes in Facebook’s algorithms meant we needed to change our approach

By Rasmus Eljanskog @Eljanskog, Press Officer, Ministry for Foreign Affairs Sweden @SweMFA

“How do we get more likes on our Facebook posts?” If I had a krona for every time I’d been asked that question by our foreign missions, the International Space Station would have to adjust its orbit to dodge a copper-plated tower every time it floated past Stockholm.

But rest assured, space people – my employer’s salary structure is unlikely to cause you any problems. The question remains, though. So, what do I answer?

Well, it depends.

The Swedish Foreign Service has been active on Facebook for more than half a decade now. In that time, it’s safe to say that digital communication platforms in general – and Facebook in particular – have gone from being ‘annoying’ add-ons to a public diplomacy tool like any other. But while this process has served us well in terms of establishing social media as a communication asset, it has also made us very Facebook-centric. This wasn’t really an issue in the mid-2010s, when Facebook reigned supreme. But the rise of Instagram, Snapchat, WhatsApp and many others combined with changes in Facebook’s algorithms meant that we needed to change our approach. We have to stop asking ourselves how we reach our target audience on Facebook and instead consider how we reach our target audience full-stop. This does come with a proviso, however: a very large number of users still consider Facebook home, and in some countries it’s the only slice of the internet available. In other words, we’re not jumping ship just yet.

While Facebook’s algorithm changes were frustrating at first, they’re increasingly looking like a blessing in disguise. They’ve forced us to pinpoint our target groups even more precisely and produce more targeted, relevant content. Putting the target group front-and-centre has also led to a push for increased autonomy among our 135 embassy-related Facebook pages, with the Ministry in
Stockholm focusing more on providing policy framework and support and less on ready-made content.

Granted, tips such as posting more native videos or holding Q&As on Facebook Live might help nudge engagement figures in the right direction, but core message and tonality will always win in the long run. And the key to unlocking those factors boils down to knowing your target group. Because the type of content that works for urban Romanians in their twenties doesn’t necessarily set the news feed ablaze among middle-aged Chileans or Swedish expats in Bangkok.

See? It depends.
The Facebook strategy of the Swiss missions abroad

By Renée Bäni @ReneeBani, Head of social media center of competences, Presence Switzerland, Federal Department of Foreign Affairs Switzerland @SwissMFA

With more than a hundred pages, Facebook is the most used social media for the Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs, even though the Ministry itself is not on the platform (but the Minister is). Even in 2019, with Facebook’s alleged decline of interest and reach difficulties, it is still the preferred platform when a Swiss mission decides to be present on a social media.

How can this be explained? In 2019, Facebook remains the world’s third most visited website and the top social platform in terms of monthly active users. For Swiss missions it is the main platform to reach and engage with the general public. And this is the main objective they all have on Facebook: get their messages across to the general public of their host countries. Usually this target audience can be split in two categories: the locals and the Swiss living abroad. This is why most of the posts are posted in several languages, first one being the national language of the host country, the other being one of the Swiss national languages or English.

Regarding the type of messages that are shared, we have three main categories: the mission’s activities and engagements in the host country, consular information and general information about Switzerland.
For the form, thanks to regular training and support from the headquarters, good practices are more and more adopted by the missions: native videos or strong visuals, live videos, use of emojis and occasional advertising to boost key messages.

Lately the Facebook algorithm has been pushing posts “creating meaningful conversations”. How do we encourage the Swiss missions to do so? Whenever appropriate, the community is invited to share its experiences in the comments, and if they do, we take time to reply to these comments, with the motto: if someone gives two minutes of their time to comment, this should be valued, and we should reply.
Social media: big opportunity for small countries

By Anna A. Naghdalyan, Spokesperson (@Naghdalyan), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia (@MFAofArmenia)

The digital domain, namely social media, seems to be the tool that emerged to suit the needs of countries like Armenia, which, being constrained by small territory, can make the best out of the unlimited virtual space and resources. In that sense, by no means did the digital age catch Armenia by surprise as soon after the establishment of Facebook and Twitter as reputable platforms for meta-national dialogue and communication, the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs quickly developed a targeted strategy to utilize these as well as many more tools in its cause to step up its connectedness with a wide array of agents and entities.

Facebook became the medium of choice for the general public with 62.83% of Armenians being connected to Facebook compared to only 4.88% on Twitter and less than one percent on Instagram and VKontakte. Moreover, two separate audiences developed that needed to be addressed: 1. the Armenian citizens media, and 2. the foreign media, officials, and nationals. Each group had its specific needs as well as the language of communication. Thus, the Armenian public became the target audience for the Ministry’s network on Facebook.

Figuratively speaking, the Ministry’s official page was in the centre of the strategy, with the periphery of the official representations and diplomatic missions surrounding it.

The first of the functions draws directly from this arrangement: The Facebook page of the Foreign Ministry, in addition to acting as a direct source of information for citizens and Armenian media, also selectively showcases posts by the 40 Facebook pages of the official representations and diplomatic missions.

Facebook is also a reliable source of fast bits of information for the Armenian media and Armenian citizens. The statistics of the Facebook page’s daily visits are much higher than the visits to the Ministry’s official website: social media puts a “human face” on the official information and allows to create an impression of personal approach to the inquiries of the media and citizens.

It is apparent that during and after the Velvet Revolution, social media and live broadcasts from the leadership have become the main channel of communication with the people of Armenia to provide information about ongoing reforms, explain decisions made and even response to criticism. Our Prime Minister held regular “Talk with the citizen” sessions on Facebook. The significance of this medium with regards to its explanatory function cannot be overstated, especially for a foreign political agency to ensure the clarity and predictability of the country’s foreign policy.
In foreign policy, social media provided us an additional platform to be heard and join the bigger community of digital diplomacy. However, at the same time the accessibility of Facebook and temptation of uber-informality of communication also requires additional regulations and security precautions for the official users. That is why the Ministry is amending the code of conduct of its diplomatic staff to include the clause of behaviour on social media.
Use all the tools: Facebook Stories, create events, use locations, tag people

By Alexandr Roitman @AlexandrRoitman, Spokesperson, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, Moldova @Diplomacy_RM

As a worldwide tendency, Facebook becomes more and more popular in the Republic of Moldova, therefore we are intensifying our range of activities to reach the audience we want, and the one which wants to know about us. Taking into account that our Facebook followers are predominantly from Moldova and Romania we use one language only to deliver our messages via Facebook. We use Twitter exclusively in English mainly for our external audience. That neatly “divides” our audience, so we can create targeted messages for every category of people which follows us.

Facebook is growing rapidly in Moldova. There are currently 940,000 Facebook users in the country, more than a quarter of the total population. - Facebook has the biggest audience compared to its competitors show that Instagram has 610,000 users, Odnoklasniki (800,000), VKontakte (208,000), Linkedin (174,000).

As we see in the global statistics, in 2018 one billion Facebook users have created Facebook stories every day. Lately we started to use this mechanism to engage with our followers. It gives you not only the possibility to highlight your message, to put the „cherry on the cake”, and drawing special attention to that particular subject, but also allows you to see the number of engagements, to gather likes and to see what’s the most popular theme or situation for your audience.
We’ve noticed that the most liked, shared and viewed posts are the ones with videos in it. Thus, we increased our communicational video products (special occasion messages). Here I can bring up as an eloquent example a poetry recital by our young diplomats on the day of memory of our greatest poet, Mihai Eminescu, a video that went viral. Besides a very favorable reaction within the institution, and a positive feedback outside of it, seen by the number of likes and shares the post has received, we’ve reached an encouraging outcome in people to people contacts, and even unexpectedly in the local media.

In the last few months, we are operating under the formula 70/20/10, and it means 70% of video content, 20% photo with text (it worth mentioning that photo albums have a better reach to the audience), and 10% text messages. I would add here that due to this proactive, video-oriented activity, our reach has increased several times, making the Facebook page of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration more visible to a broader audience.

In regard to reaching a higher visibility and making your page more visited use the latest tools Facebook offers, and here I return to the Facebook Stories, but also interactive Facebook tools and addons. Proceed also to tactics which trigger your audience to interact with the page you manage, create events, use locations, tag people-try them all in order to see which is more suitable for your topic, region or interests.

In some situations, challenge your audience, experiment, dare to try new ways to reach the community you need. Facebook can also be used as the main and only communication channel. Let me explain: imagine you have a semi-official message to be sent to the press, just make a Facebook post announcing it, for example a new position opening at your institution and send it to the press. You’ll be amazed by the positive effect it will have on your page.
Echoing Government’s Achievements using Facebook

By Kow Abaka Essuman, Esq. @KAEssuman, Counsel and Social Media Manager for the President of the Republic of Ghana @NAkufoAddo

In 2019, there is absolutely no doubt that social media, and in particular, Facebook, is a necessary tool in governance and political campaigns in Ghana. Having used Facebook successfully during his presidential campaign in 2016, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, President of the Republic of Ghana, has integrated Facebook upon assuming office, to communicate the achievements of his government to the people of Ghana. The President’s social media team has been committed to changing the so-called myth, to wit, “governments are not good advocates of their achievements”.

Since assuming office, President Akufo-Addo’s team has been using Facebook to inform Ghanaians about the numerous policies and programmes that the government has rolled out, to bring prosperity to all Ghanaians. Some of these policies and programmes, including Free Senior High School education (#FreeSHS), One District One Factory (#1D1F), Planting for Food and Jobs (#PFJ), have generated a lot of conversations on Facebook and the President’s team has been able to use some of the feedback from Facebook to address some of the issues raised by Ghanaians on Facebook. The President’s team has also used Facebook to assess the nation’s reaction to certain government decisions and this has helped government in taking the necessary steps to address the concerns of Ghanaians at an early stage, thereby earning the government the nickname, “listening government.”

One of the most effective ways that the President uses Facebook to communicate with citizens is through digital cards. Every speech, statement, remarks or message delivered by the President is reduced to several digital cards with readable quotes for Ghanaians on Facebook. In addition to the digital cards, the President’s team ensures that the President’s speeches, statements, remarks or messages are streamed live on Facebook, for Ghanaian citizens, locally and in the diaspora, to watch. Through Facebook, President Akufo-Addo and his government are bringing governance to Ghanaians everywhere in the world at their own convenience.

With almost 1.7 million followers, President Akufo-Addo is the most followed political personality on Facebook in Ghana. His official Facebook page (@NAkufoAddo) has an average of almost 700,000 post reach per week and almost 5,000 new likes per week. Almost 75% of the people who follow President Akufo-Addo on Facebook are between the ages of 18 and 34. And thus, most of the content uploaded onto the President’s page is targeted at this audience. Going into an election in 2020, the President’s social media team is mindful of the need to let Ghanaians on Facebook know...
that the President has delivered on the mandate given to him by the Ghanaian people in December 2016. Any social media strategy will be formulated with this in mind.
Our Spokesperson, the driving force behind our digital diplomacy

By Sergey Nalobin @SNalobin, Deputy Director Information and Press Department, Russian Foreign Ministry @MFA_Russia

At the Information and Press Department, our priority is to provide the audience with the most up-to-date official foreign policy coverage accompanied by rich media content. To that end, over the past few years we established our firm presence on the world’s most popular media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Flickr, as well as services like Viber and VKontakte, which in our case are oriented slightly more towards the Russian-speaking audience.

That said, one of our goals is to deliver multilingual content with as little latency and as much outreach that we can possibly achieve. This, of course, applies to Facebook, where we have a “multi-purpose” account for both Russian and English-speaking followers. While the majority of our publications on this platform are indeed in Russian, all comments, statements and interviews related to the most pressing foreign policy issues, as well as coverage of Foreign Minister’s activities are translated into English.

As is the case with all our social media accounts, we rely primarily on the Foreign Ministry’s multilingual website as a source of news that we share on Facebook. This includes not only text publications, but also rich visual content provided by our own team of photographers, camera crews and IT engineers. Together, they enable our social media division to utilize the most advanced platform features, such as streaming Foreign Minister’s public appearances live from around the world directly to our Facebook account.

Notably, Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Maria Zakharova has a very strong following on her personal accounts on Facebook (more than 400,000 people) and Instagram (around 150,000), where she acts as an expert on foreign policy issues. More to the point, a significant part of her own content is then shared on the Ministry’s official account, particularly her first-hand coverage of Minister’s visits abroad as well as comments and opinion on international issues. We have also seen a steady public interest in weekly press briefings, which are made readily available to our followers on Facebook. As a Foreign Ministry official and a social media influencer all in one, Maria Zakharova has been one of the driving forces behind our efforts in the field of digital diplomacy.
Another important asset in our work is the Russian digital diplomacy network of more than two hundred institutions (embassies, consulates, regional offices, permanent and trade missions). Most of them have a presence on Facebook and contribute significantly to our social media activity, both by sharing our content and by creating their own.

Of course, we do realize that making foreign policy news appealing and engaging is a serious challenge. This pushes us to embrace and build upon the opportunities offered by Facebook as a truly global social network. In many ways, our strategy is a constant process of trying out new ideas and looking at how the audience reacts. Over the years we have introduced notes, in-house made videos, infographics, stories, and even viral GIFs to complement our foreign policy coverage in a way that makes our content richer, visually appealing and more approachable to the public.

Finally, the progress we have made in the field of digital diplomacy would have been nearly impossible without us carefully listening to the feedback from our followers. We receive dozens of messages every day via our Facebook page alone with questions, suggestions and criticism. In fact, not only do we read them, but we also do our best to react to the situations where we can offer any assistance.

We are passionate about our work, and we’d highly value your input and ideas on how we could do what we love even better.

We’ll see you online!
We reply instantly, in less than 15 minutes

By Charmaine Bonnici, Department of Information, Malta @DOI_Malta

The Department of Information (Malta) ethos is to provide the public with up-to-date, comprehensive and meaningful information on Government policies, services and activities as well as on matters of public interest. In doing so, it uses a variety of platforms including social media.

**Audience**

In its strategy, the Department regards social media as another primary diffused medium that citizens use to communicate with it and thus it gives it its due importance. It is worth mentioning at this stage that the Department of Information disseminates daily information relating to the different portfolios covered by 15 ministries – it is therefore very much aware that there are multiple stakeholders that might become engaged with the Department over social media.

Thus, the Social Media Team focuses on drafting a social media plan that incorporates a diversified content. Topics of the day are likely to attract specific stakeholders, but the other daily posts aim to reach those stakeholders who do not necessarily have an interest in the topic of the day. The Department goes the extra mile to keep away from partisan politics and in a way, this has been endorsed and vindicated by the large number of followers it has garnered over the years.

**Planning content**

The Department’s role is to inform and with that clear goal in mind the social media team starts to identify what to include in its social media plan. What content will be shared? What is already available? What can be reproduced or repurposed? A quarterly plan is compiled and updated regularly which helps in planning in advance daily posts for Facebook.

With the plan set, the team can move on to research information, check availability of stock photos available from the Department’s photo library or make specific photography requests to the photography section and prepare infographics and have short videoclips edited in advance. It strives to make content inviting, interactive and above all relevant.
Each week a draft calendar of posts to be uploaded on the page is drawn up. It usually also includes anniversaries of events for that week, which can sometimes prove to be a good time to get people talking about an experience that they want to share when it comes to the historic or momentous events.

While text still matters, some of the more official information that is typically shared over an official portal is repurposed as most people are reading on the run and thus content needs to be brief. Visual content gains the most attention and it is incorporated frequently - posting photo albums, photos from archives as Throwbacks, videos and creating infographics/posters.

Although most posts are posted or shared in real-time, the team does have a posting schedule taking into consideration resources, amount of content available and workload, peak engagement times and frequency.

**Replying instantly**

Through social media, the Department provides on-demand service with the social media team replying instantly (in less than 15 minutes) to comments on posts and to all direct messages received.

In providing customer care, the Department acts as a one-stop shop and the same applies to its social media platforms - full replies are given by the social media team, which is assisted by the Department’s information service. When replying, the team uses real names so that communication is more personalised and engaging while interaction is encouraged.
No ‘one size fits all’ solution on Facebook

By Paul Frank @FrankPaul, Online & social media strategist, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs @DutchMFA

Of all the tools that the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs has at its disposal for maintaining contact, communicating, networking and providing services, Facebook plays an important role. This is not only due to Facebook’s scope and the potential it offers for reaching a large number of people. It’s primarily due to the fact that with 131 Facebook pages in 105 countries, the ministry and its missions come into direct contact with the public and professionals.

Facebook has taught our organisation to take a different approach when it comes to communicating with our target groups. One that’s less formal, and more visual, practical and concrete. The platform and its users force us to constantly show the added value of the ministry and the mission network. It also makes us clarify why we make certain choices, what the Netherlands represents and what our work means for the Netherlands and our host countries. And it lets us show our target groups how they themselves can benefit from the services offered by our ministry. Before Facebook, this was something that we did very rarely – if at all.

Our strategy in this regard is actually very simple. There is no ‘one size fits all’ solution. The ministry in the Hague doesn’t dictate what missions should say and do on Facebook or on other online platforms. It does, however, develop frameworks, and gives advice, keeps a record of activities, and provides encouragement. Data analyses and periodical qualitative surveys have allowed the ministry to gain good insights into each Facebook account’s engagement and reach. Benchmarks help show trends and uncover strengths and weaknesses in our online network. We know which accounts, regions and content are doing well or not so well on Facebook.

Within our broad strategic frame, our diplomatic missions decide for themselves whether or not to use social media and, if so, how they will use it. However, they must take a logical, considered approach, and follow a 10-step plan. This covers all aspects of our online presence and integrates monitoring and evaluation opportunities. This way, accounts can be further adjusted and optimised. Each mission knows how best to communicate, as well as what topics are sensitive, which socio-cultural differences need to be considered and what tone and type of message will have the best impact.
We try to treat all our online accounts as one single coherent system, and to use them as such. The power of Twitter and LinkedIn – both more interesting and effective tools for public diplomacy – is different to the opportunities and possibilities that Facebook, or Instagram offer us. The ministry doesn’t spread the same message everywhere, it takes a tailored approach that corresponds to the intended target groups and platforms being used.

The Netherlands is a country with expertise in areas such as water management, sustainability, peace and justice, high-tech industry, and design. Vlogs, live broadcasts, personal stories from diplomats, behind-the-scenes videos, photos of projects and policy results can all be shared on Facebook, allowing us to showcase our expertise in all these areas. At the same time, engaging in conversations with followers helps create an active community and network that will benefit everyone.

Our challenge is to keep looking for formulas and ways of engaging people that suit our target groups and will reach them in an organic way. This is increasingly difficult due to Facebook’s changing algorithm. If Facebook cannot contribute to specific goals, we use other platforms. But for the time being, Facebook remains a valuable platform for interaction and building strong relationships.
Our main focus is to increase our audience

By Vladimír Stanko, Press Department, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic @SlovakiaMFA

Since the follower base of the Slovak MFA (@mzv.sk) Facebook account is quite small (12,140 followers), our main focus is to increase our audience. In the past 12 months we have grown from 6,400 to 11,600 likes. We very rarely boost our posts (and if so with very small amounts - 10-100€) so any big reach is always organic. To achieve this, we try to get viral. Political messages and long texts don't work. We try to be visually appealing and, therefore, communicate as many messages as possible through videos. We produce them entirely in-house and speakers in them are employees of the Slovak MFA. This also enables us to put "faces behind our ministry," so citizens can see "real people" behind the institution.

Our goal is to be as succinct as possible and not exceed the length of the videos beyond 2 minutes. During important historical anniversaries (Founding of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1918, the Munich Agreement 1939, the Prague Spring 1968 or the Velvet Revolution 1989) we produce slideshows of historical images supported by subtitles and background music. If we can't produce a video, we try to use photos or info-graphics with (as short as possible) descriptions. Sometimes, in the description, we specifically invite people to share our posts in order to increase its reach and share count.

This worked very well, for example, with our post on the International Day of Tourism: we used a gallery of about 30 photos of Slovakia from Shutterstock and asked people to share the messages, so the entire world can see how beautiful our country is (Reach 122k). We also tend to congratulate Slovak athletes if they achieve significant accomplishments. These messages tend to get very high amount of likes but are usually not shared by many people.
From our experience, people best respond to emotionally charged topics - both sad and happy. Two of our three best-performing posts were videos with Kenyan kids from a local school funded by the SlovakAid. In the first video they sang the Slovak Anthem during the celebration of the 100th Anniversary of Founding of Czechoslovakia (Reach 210k); in the second they sang a popular Slovak folk song (Reach 408k).

Our second most successful group of posts are rebuttals to various statements from Slovak public figures. Despite being very long in nature, they always attract a number of responses well exceeding the average. Our second most successful post is the rebuttal to MP L. Blaha's false, manipulative statements about Slovakia's Security Strategy (Reach 262k).

We very rarely like and reply to comments on our posts. We never ban people from our page but hide comments quite frequently to keep the discussion under our messages civil and constructive.
About this Study

*World Leaders on Facebook* is BCW’s latest research into how world leaders, governments and international organizations communicate via social media. The research is part of BCW’s highly acclaimed annual *Twiplomacy* study. Initially focused solely on Twitter, the study has been expanded to other social media platforms including Facebook and Instagram.

For the fourth edition of the World Leaders on Facebook study, BCW has identified a total of 692 Facebook pages and 13 personal profiles, 393 of which have been verified by Facebook and carry a blue verification mark. The remaining 299 pages are not verified, but we believe that they can be considered as official pages. We also discovered 13 personal profiles of world leaders, including the personal account of Japan’s Prime Minister Shinzō Abe, which we could not include in this analysis despite having 590,801 followers since it is not a verified profile. And finally, we have not included inactive pages as it was virtually impossible to determine their authenticity.

Data was collected on March 1, 2019, using BCW’s proprietary tools and Crowdtangle.com to capture the historic data for all 692 pages including the total interactions (comments, likes, shares), interaction rates as well as all video views and posts from March 1, 2018 to February 28, 2019.

The full Twiplomacy data set can be downloaded [here](#). Feel free to contact us for more detailed explanations and analysis.

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