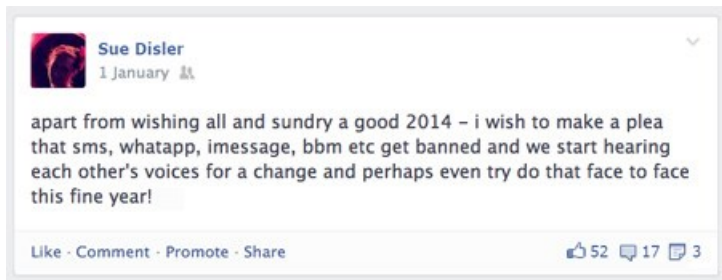


Contradicting addictions

 By [Sue Disler](#)

27 Jan 2014

I started out the new year with a small experiment: A plea to all and sundry on Facebook to stop "talking" via SMS, iMessage, BBM and WhatsApp and start speaking verbally to each other again. It did not take too long for person No 2, a friend in Boston, via his mobile phone of course, to point out that I was 'voicing' my opinion on yet another voiceless platform.



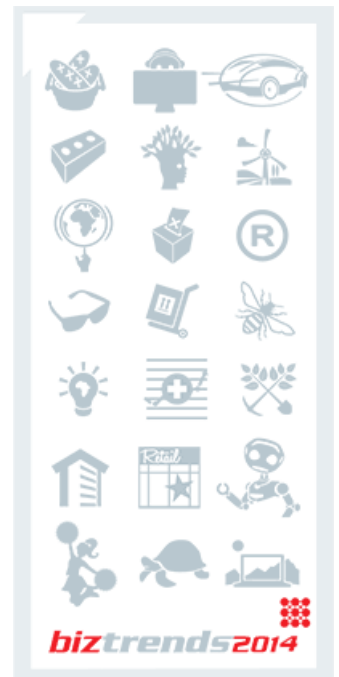
Apart from the fact that I have very astute friends, the fact that I used Facebook was a contradiction in terms of what I was saying, as based on how we communicate today and the mere fact the post was liked numerous times, sporting rather high Facebook and Socialbakers engagement rates, it's safe to say that, looking at 2014, social media is here to stay.

My thought process on this was complete when a friend met, believe it or not, a "Professor of Social Media" from Hong Kong on a plane to London.

Did you know you could get a [Bachelor of Arts in Communication \(Digital and Social Media\)](#) at Sydney's University of Technology? Or get a [Master's Degree in Social Media](#) from the University of Florida?

Traditionally, well only in the past decade, social media would have been part of a Media Studies/Communications or Digital Design/Marketing degree, but recently more and more institutions are creating courses solely dedicated to social media. Currently South Africa offers a smattering of dedicated short courses, such as GetSmarter's 9-week online [UCT Social Media short course](#) - but I predict this will change soon.

But let's get back to my plea... most people I know are never out and about without their trusty mobile and its connectivity to the internet. Nor are they not ever on their phone - be it checking email, Facebook, uploading pictures to Instagram or trying to have a group discussion regarding an event on WhatsApp. And have you noticed how frantic they get, when their phone is about to die or they have to deal with no 3G, let alone 4G? Have you considered that they (and you) may have an addiction called SMADD (Social Media Attention Deficit Disorder)?



According to [Wikipedia](#), our obsession with technology started with radio in the 1930s and television in the 1960s. Then in 1995, when the web was still in its infancy, a psychologist first coined the term "internet addiction" as a joke... jokes aside, since September 2013, you can voluntarily book yourself into America's first hospital-based 10-day in-patient [internet addiction treatment programme](#) just outside of New York. That will set you back \$14,000 excluding flights getting there, so perhaps look somewhere closer to home?

I would suggest self-diagnosis first before declaring your addiction, so feel free to take [sofeminine.co.uk's](#) slightly edited

social media addiction quiz below:

1. What's the first thing you do when you wake up?

1. Reach for your phone next to your bed to check Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp
2. Stumble into the shower
3. Hit snooze and go back to sleep

2. How often do you take a picture of your meal and share it on social media?

1. Only whenever you eat something that looks particularly amazing
2. Never - it's so annoying when people do that
3. Almost everything you eat gets snapped and shared on social media

3. When a work colleague asks how your weekend was, what's your reaction?

1. Reply that it was nice but don't go into any detail
2. You decide to unfollow them on Instagram, because what's the point if they're not looking
3. You pull out your phone and show them your Instagram pics

4. How often do you 'check-in' on social media?

1. Only on a Friday or Saturday night when you're heading to a club
2. Never. You're not even sure how to do it!
3. Several times a day

5. Someone famous dies, so you...?

1. Go back to doing whatever it was you were doing before you found out
2. Put the news as your status alongside the hashtag #RIP
3. Rush to Google their career and find an obscure fact about them to post online

6. How often do you tweet when watching TV?

1. Only when watching MasterChef/Idols/Sport. Or when something good is on.
2. Never - you're too busy watching the show!
3. Sometimes but only if you can be bothered and have something funny to say

7. Has your partner/best friend ever complained that you spend more time on your phone than you do talking to them?

1. No, they're worse than you for social media
2. Yes, that's what you last argued about
3. Once or twice, but you usually just laugh it off

8. When you see/hear something funny do you...?

1. Try to memorise it to post online later
2. Laugh

3. Immediately post it to Twitter/Facebook/Instagram

9. How often do you take selfies?

1. Occasionally you might take one but not every day
2. All the time - it's a good way of checking how you look
3. What's a 'selfie'?

10. Do you know how many friends/followers you have on social media?

1. Yes, of course
2. No, you have no idea actually
3. You could probably give a good estimate

I will leave you to draw your own conclusions...

I am pleased to say that my phone now *rings* instead of a series of beeps, so I am moving onto my next experiment: Raise money via gofundme.com to sponsor a trip to see all my friends across the globe.

So to wrap up (as this is a trends piece after all), the two main things to note: 1.) Social media is here to stay and 2.) SMADD may never find a cure, but in order for us to manage the condition, we need to constantly create content that's highly visual, easily shareable, equally relevant and most importantly be device agnostic.

For more specific social media predictions for 2014 you can go read Jeff Bullas' [The 10 Big Social Media Marketing Trends in 2014](#) and Social Media Today's, [A 2014 Social Media Guide: New trends and solutions to live by.](#)

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ABOUT SUE DISLER

Sue Disler has more than 25 years of experience in the advertising and marketing as a designer (and sometimes coder), art director and strategist, the last 20 largely dedicated to digital. Email her at suediz@gmail.com, follow @suediz on Twitter or find out more on LinkedIn.

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