

Music streaming platforms and their influence on social networks: a comparative study of Spotify and Amazon Music in Spain

Las plataformas de streaming musical y su influencia en redes sociales: estudio comparativo Spotify y Amazon Music en España



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Abstract:

Music *streaming* platforms have become a phenomenon present in today's popular culture. Nowadays, it is not about positioning yourself as the first in traditional radio programs, but to do it in Spotify or Amazon Music. The music industry has changed, and it has done so at a time when social networks and the dissemination of content play an essential role. Based on this, this study analyses the influence of two of the main platforms of this nature, Spotify and Amazon Music, on the main social networks in Spain: Facebook and Instagram. For this purpose, the study employs a quantitative methodology based on massive data collection through the FanPage Karma tool. The initial conclusions show that there is an extrapolation between the success in social networks and the market share of the main platforms studied.

Keywords:

Communication; brand management; Spotify; Amazon Music; Facebook; Instagram.

Resumen:

Las plataformas de streaming musical se han convertido en un fenómeno presente en la cultura popular de nuestros días. Ahora, no se trata de posicionarse como el primero en los programas radiofónicos tradicionales, sino en hacerlo en Spotify o Amazon Music. La industria musical ha cambiado y lo ha hecho en un momento donde las redes sociales y la difusión de contenidos juegan un papel esencial. El presente estudio analiza la influencia de dos de las principales plataformas de esta naturaleza, Spotify y Amazon Music, en las principales redes sociales en España: Facebook e Instagram. Para ello, el trabajo emplea una metodología cuantitativa basada en la recopilación de datos masiva a través de la herramienta FanPage Karma. Las conclusiones iniciales muestran que existe una extrapolación entre el éxito en redes sociales y la cuota de mercado de las principales plataformas estudiadas.

Palabras clave:

Comunicación; gestión de marca; Spotify; Amazon Music; Facebook; Instagram.

1. Introduction

The evolution of the music scene has encouraged the emergence of new music platforms. In this context, the Internet acts as a primary vehicle, as it is the reason why music consumption has increased (Getrudix Barrio & Gertrudix Barrio, 2014). Furthermore, it is worth noting the role of technologies in the advent of *streaming* (Buil, 2017). The wide variety of devices available to the user allows them to access from anywhere (Marcos Ramos et al., 2020); in fact, there is an increase in the use of *smartphones* and *tablets* which leads the user to search for and learn about a pattern of usage of music streaming services on mobile platforms (Zhang et al., 2013). These factors not only influence the field of music consumption, but also in the context of communication strategies, given that social networks and the new relationships with audiences that are generated are shaping the way we interact and communicate (Campos Freire, 2008).

The wide variety of platforms offering digital music harbours a high rate of competition. According to Statista (2020a, 2020b), the market shares are: Spotify (34%), Apple Music (21%), Amazon Music (15%), Tencent (12%), YouTube Music (5%) and others (13%). (Statista, 2021). Thus, despite diversification, Spotify has become established as the main platform. Its audience mainly consists of people between 25 and 35 years old (28%) and between 35 and 44 years old (30%). Also, the third relevant segment is between 18 and 24 years old (18%) (Statista, 2020a, 2020b). Spotify is positioned as the leading platform for digital music consumption among young audiences and the *smartphone* for the primary device for use (Rivera Magos, 2020).

Currently, 85% of internet users between the ages of 16 and 70 use social networks or, in other words, 27 million people in Spain. The age ranges that use these platforms most are concentrated between 25 and 40 (35%) and 41 and 54 (33%). Among

the massive, non-specialised, social networks, Facebook is the social network with the highest number of users (although this has been decreasing since 2019), followed by Instagram (IAB Spain, 2021) which may reflect the connection between the users of certain social networks and digital music platforms.

Therefore, the existence of two sectors with a great capacity for impact and potential growth due to their evolution is evident. Understanding how the big music streaming brands work and how they behave on social networks has become a fundamental factor of knowledge. Therefore, the main objective of this study is to analyse the influence of the main music *streaming* platforms in Spain, based on Spotify and Amazon Music.

2. State of the question

2.1. The advent of streaming in the music market

The term *Streaming* now forms part of our everyday vocabulary. Just as in the field of OTTs (over-the-top), which refers to audio-visual consumption, with platforms such as Netflix, Amazon Prime or HBO, in the field of music, we can find specialised networks such as Spotify, Amazon Music or Apple Music. In this context, it should be noted that the concept of *streaming* refers to the consumption of content without the need to download any files to the computer, in other words, immediate (Chorén, 2014).

Music has historically formed a fundamental part of culture and society, and the birth of the internet and technological advances have even changed distribution strategies, thus favouring the increase of audiences and their reach (Hormigos-Ruiz, 2010) This change in the distribution and consumption model was generated, as a priority, along with the birth of the first *streaming* platforms, which allowed illegal downloading to be curbed and thus, six years later, are generating a turnover of almost 65 million euros (Buil, 2017).

One of the first music *streaming* platforms was born in 2006, but it was not until 2007 that it was officially launched in some European countries and did not reach the United States until 2011 (Jáuregui, 2015). This was Spotify. Although its initial business model was not as it is configured today (for reasons of subscription types, payment and/or the possibility for free consumption), it was a turning point in the market since, as a new successful business model, competition began to proliferate with companies such as Amazon and Apple, which, although it was not their specific business purpose, as it was in the case of Spotify, expanded their product portfolio accordingly. (Umaschi, 2019).

2.2. Digital social networks as communication tools

One of the possible factors of success of social networks being a fundamental part of the corporate strategy of companies is because they represent a means of direct contact with the customer, where users can be attended to in a more individual way (Del Olmo & Fondevilla, 2014) in addition to the fact that the favourable statistics on the level of use and user engagement through these tools has led companies to pay greater attention to them (Kim & Ko, 2010).

This bidirectionality and interactivity that exists in the context of social networks, which is possible thanks to new technologies (Goméz & Benito, 2014; Caldevilla, 2010), is not only generated by the possibility of engaging in a conversation with the customer, of obtaining instantaneous *feedback* (Selman, 2017), but it has to be understood from an omni-channel perspective and the quest to offer a complete user experience. Therefore, "more and more business strategies are implementing marketing techniques based on a global strategy through networks such as Facebook, Twitter or Instagram with the aim of promoting website traffic and attracting users" (Jiménez-Marín & Pérez-Curiel, 2021, p. 13). These benefits have meant that social networks have been configured as another medium within the communication plan (Vazquez Brotto, 2015). Although it is true that, in order to achieve a real impact of these in terms of business performance, a relevant effort is required. In this sense, it is considered essential to contract a digital services agency or a community manager (Uribe et al., 2013). In other words, a person whose functions are focused on building and maintaining communities around a brand on the Internet (Fonseca, 2014), along with the influence that can be generated through recommendations (Pérez-Curiel & García Gordillo, 2020).

In order for there to be an effective communication strategy within social networks, companies must be predisposed to maintain and manage this conversational model with customers. In short, social networks are thus configured as a space where the intermediaries in terms of media between manufacturer or advertiser and customer disappear, thus establishing a close and direct contact. (Benedetti, 2020).

There are different types of social networks depending on their content. In terms of general content, as previously mentioned, Instagram is one of the most widely used platforms and is also a tool capable of generating a positive return in the medium term (Ramos, 2013), which are the main reasons why companies use it to gain visibility within their market. (Casado-Riera & Carbonell, 2018).

Likewise, the functionality of these social networks is not only limited to advertising and sales promotion, but also to customer relationship management, user research and behavioural analysis (Ashley & Tuten, 2014; Lorenzo-Romero et al., 2011). Furthermore, in line with the target audience, Aguado & García (2009, p. 11) point out that we are facing "a communication model in which, in order to compete, companies must understand that they do not sell products to individual customers, but rather to networks of customers".

Romo-Jaramillo et al. (2020) propose five phases for the management of the social media strategy: 1) Phase 1. Promote the product offered, 2) Phase 2. Attract users and brand followers, 3) Phase 3. Interact experiences on the use of the product and its quality, 4) Phase 4. Build loyalty requirements in offers and promotions and 5) Phase 5. Monitor the behaviour of users and followers of social networks to determine the level of promotional feasibility and sales giving special importance to the role of monitoring, which responds to the measurement and analysis of what refers to phases 2, 3 and 4, through KPIs, such as: number of followers, publications made and their social performance (according to comments and level of shares by users).

Therefore, the final objective of the process is customer loyalty and social networks are a medium that, by allowing direct contact with the customer, can favour permanence over time as well as the level of recommendations (Chávez, 2019), factors that can favour an increase in the impact on the market.

2.3. Marketing analytics

One of the success factors of social networks is the possibility of continuous measurement through various tools that provide endless information on the results that an account is obtaining. The limits of this type of measurement are non-existent as they are even reaching sentiment analysis, also known as opinion mining, which focuses on the study of large amounts of data to extract behavioural patterns (Romero Moreno et al., 2020).

In this context, the concept of metrics appears, in order to refer to the instrument that makes it possible to measure and the term analytics, which refers to the process, to data analysis (Sandulescu Budea, 2018). For example, in the case of Instagram, some of the metrics that could be included would be the monitoring of keywords, hashtags, users, number of comments, followers and *likes*, and number of shares. (Ramos, 2013). In this sense, for example, despite the fact that there is no consensus on how to measure engagement, Laurence (2017) proposes a formula that can be used to analyse this data and find out the degree of engagement (*Engagement Ratio*) of the users.

$$ER = \frac{N^{o} Likes + N^{o} de Comments}{N^{o} of Followers} X100$$

The increase in resources with respect to analysis and monitoring tools for social networks is relevant. They allow, as a priority, to track what users do about a company and its products or about any area within social networks, where we can find, for example, *Social Mention, Amplified Analytics, Lithium Social Media Monitoring* and *Trackur*. (Batrinca & Treleaven, 2015).

More specifically, when looking at Social Media Analytics (SMA), Zeng et al. (2010, p. 14) state that:

Social media analytics is concerned with developing and evaluating informatics tools and frameworks to collect, monitor, analyse, summarise, and visualise social media data, usually driven by specific requirements from a target application. Social media analytics research serves several purposes: 1) facilitating conversations and interaction between online communities and 2) extracting useful patterns and intelligence to serve entities that include, but are not limited to, active contributors in ongoing dialogues.

Therefore, SMAs are considered as a significant process for conducting research at the business level, in order to find strong support by establishing reference models for decision-making (Stieglitz et al., 2014).

There is a diverse range of research that tries to determine the exact parameters and thus establish a consolidated and agreed model for digital audience measurement, but due to the constant evolution of social networks these measurement systems must always be in line with each other, which does not allow a clear system to be established (Quintas-Froufe & González-Neira, 2021)

Although there is no single procedure for analysing brands on social networks, one indicator that can determine the success of an account on any social network can be the number of followers it has compared to the competition. However, a more relevant element for considering that an account has a high reputation is the capacity for interaction with its audiences (Castelló Martínez, 2012).

Metrics make up a very relevant data package for the evolution of the company. Nevertheless, the use of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) is necessary according to the objectives of the social media strategy in order to monitor the results and thus be able to assess the success of the management. (Moncayo & Zevallos, 2018). In other words, companies should consider establishing a plan to analyse and measure the data collected, because, in this way, by collecting continuous information on users and their interaction and behaviour with the different social networks, it facilitates the possibility of being proactive in decision-making (Moe & Schweidel, 2017). Therefore, companies can adapt their communication according to the results and offer an optimal user experience.

3. Methodology

The work is based on a quantitative methodology which focuses on the nature of real events as they occur objectively by trying to point out their common characteristics with other similar events, their origins and their consequences. (Ruiz Olabuénaga, 2012). To work on these profiles in social networks, the FanPage Karma tool has been used, which allows the collection of data on the public profiles in social networks of brands and companies (Caballero-Escusol et al. 2021; Bustos and Ruiz del Olmo, 2021), personalities, influencers and politicians (Bustos Diaz y Ruiz del Olmo, Martínez Sánchez et al., 2021).

3.1. Units of analysis

As mentioned above, this study deals in detail with the evolution and impact of Spotify and Amazon Music in Spain and, more specifically, within the field of social networks. Specifically, this work aims to study the influence of the following platforms on the Instagram and Facebook social networks. Previous studies, such as the one by Bustos Díaz y Ruiz del Olmo (2021) Pérez-Curiel and García Gordillo (2020) Cha, Haddadi, Benevunuto, Gummadi (2010), address the concept of influence as the sum of the different basic variables offered by the social network Twitter. This study partly replicates this methodology, but applies an update based on the variables described in section 3.2.

At this point, it is necessary to delimit the area of study, that is, in this case it focuses on the social networks Facebook and Instagram. The social network Twitter has not been analysed as Amazon Music does not have a specific Amazon Music Spain profile on Twitter. As for Apple Music, although it is the second largest company in terms of market share, it does not have a single account for Spain so it has been excluded from the analysis. On the other hand, it is necessary to divide the study of both social networks into two different periods:

Facebook. The study analyses the impact that both music platforms have had on this social network for one year, namely 2020. Thanks to this, it is possible to obtain a series of trends sustained by the variables explained in the following section.

Instagram. It was not until 7th August 2020 that Amazon Music created its official profile on this social network. Therefore, the study is delimited from the arrival of Amazon Music in Spain on Instagram until October 2020, when the data collection was stopped.

3.2. Variables

Table 1 below shows all the variables used in the study of the social network strategy of the different profiles analysed and their description. As can be seen, those variables that are common to both social networks taken as a reference are grouped together; but, subsequently, other variables specific to each of them are taken into account.

Common variable on Facebook and Instagram	Variable description	Uncommon variable Facebook and Instagram	Variable description
		Facebook	
Weekly developments	studied, it is the weekly growth Images based in na		Publications that are image- based in nature. They may have an associated text
Frequency of publication	The average number of <i>posts</i> published per day in the selected period.	Videos	Publications that are video in nature. May have associated text
Commitment	The average number of interactions on a profile's posts per follower per day.	State	Status publications
		Instagram	
Growth	Difference between the number of fans on the first and last day of the selected period	Images	Publications that are image- based in nature. They may have an associated text
Total number of comments	Number of user comments posted in the selected period to which the page reacted	Videos	Publications that are video in nature. May have associated text
Fans	Number of users who on the last day of the selected period like the page	Carousel	Set of images published in the same <i>post</i>

Table 1. Description of study variables

Source: Fanpage Karma. Table prepared by the authors

4. Results

As indicated in the methodology, it is evident that there are two blocks of variables: those that are common to both platforms and those that are specific to each social network. The block of common variables refers to quantitative aspects based on the trend and presence of each of the brands in the social networks selected for the study, while the variables specific to each of the social networks under study focus on the typology of the *posts*. For this reason, the results are divided into separate sections.

4.1. Amazon Music and Spotify's presence on Facebook and Instagram

	Weekly devel- opments	Frequency of publication	Commitment	Growth	Total number of comments	Fans
Facebook 01/01/2020 to 31/10/2020						
Amazon Music	0,62%	0,5	0,0055%	464K	5.5K	1,9M
Spotify	0%	0, 6	0,011%	0	32K	22,4 M
Instagram 07/08/2020 to 31/10/2020						
Amazon Music	0%	0,5	0,10%	0%	13K	8K
Spotify	0,44%	1,1	0,72%	24k	277K	137K

Table 2. Common variables on Facebook and Instagram

Source: Fanpage Karma. Table prepared by the authors

The first thing that can be seen in Table 2 is that Spotify is the music *streaming* platform with the most followers on either Facebook or Instagram. However, there are many differences when analysing the data in detail.

First of all, Facebook. On Mark Zuckerberg's social network, Spotify seems to have reached its ceiling. It is worth remembering at this point that when growth is referred to, it is described in methodology as the difference between the number of fans on the first and last day of the selected period. As shown in Table 2, although Spotify is the social network with the highest number of followers, its growth is zero. Moreover, the data provided by the analysis tool reveals that in the period from 31st July to 31stAugust it reached its highest ever number of followers, reaching 22.8M followers. However, despite the loss of followers, Spotify continues to be the music platform studied that generates the most interaction on this social network, with 32,000 comments recorded during the study period.

Amazon Music is trending in the opposite direction to Spotify on Facebook. The first thing that stands out is the difference in the number of followers: compared to Spotify's 22.4 million Facebook fans at the time of the study, Amazon Music had less than 2 million, with 1.9 million followers. However, there is a decisive fact to be noted here, and that is the age of each of these platforms on Mark Zuckerberg's social network. According to data extracted from the official pages on this social network, Spotify opened its fan page on 20 November 2012, compared to Amazon Music, which did so five years later, on 24 October 2017.

However, unlike Spotify, Amazon Music has not stopped growing in terms of volume of followers during 2020 showing a growth of 464,000 followers during the study period. On the other hand, the conversation it generates on Facebook is less than that which Spotify can provoke, in this sense, compared to the 32,000 comments indicated above that Spotify generated, Amazon Music led to 5,500 comments being created. Finally, in terms of posting frequency, in both cases it is very similar, with an average daily posting frequency of 0.5 for Amazon Music and 0.6 for Spotify.

The case of Instagram is striking. One would expect that, as Amazon Music is the most recent to open its account, its impact and growth should be greater. However, the opposite process occurs as in the case of Facebook. As can be seen in Table 2, Amazon Music's growth on Instagram is 0%. This figure, as we have already indicated above, reveals that from the time it was created until the end of the study (August-October) it has not gained any more fans. Therefore, it can be said that when the profile was created it had a great impact, as it attracted 8,000 followers at the time of its creation, but then it has not generated more community. Its engagement is 0.10% and posting frequency is 0.5, which is less than one post per day. In contrast to these figures, Spotify seems to have a firm commitment to the image-based social network. It has 137,000 followers on this platform, a growth of 24,000 followers in the months studied and a weekly evolution of 0.44%. Moreover, its posting frequency is slightly higher than one per day, with an average of 1.1 posts per day.

In addition, two relevant data are considered with respect to the engagement index and the comments. Firstly, we observe the difference in the level of engagement depending on the social network addressed. As shown in Table 2, engagement rates on Facebook are 0.0055% for Amazon Music and 0.011% for Spotify; however, on Instagram there are higher levels with respect to this index: 0.10% and 0.72% respectively. With regard to the number of comments, there is also a clear difference depending on the social network; both digital platforms have a higher number of comments on Instagram than on Facebook.

4.2. Types of content on Facebook

As specified in the methodology, there are two types of variables, in this section and in the following section the analysis of the non-common variables is carried out.

	Types of content on Facebook		
	Images	Videos	State
Amazon Music	83	80	0
Spotify	131	36	3

Table 3. Analysis of variables specific to Facebook. Table prepared by the authors

Source: Fanpage Karma. Table prepared by the authors

In this case, we look at the type of posts made on Facebook by the platforms under study: Amazon Music and Spotify. Firstly, we can observe a tendency to abandon one of the typologies typical of this social network: Status. Posting statuses seems to be falling into disuse. As can be seen in Table 3, in the case of Amazon Music, no statuses have been published during the study period, which in this case covers the period from January to October 2020, and only 3 publications of this type in the case of Spotify.

On the other hand, the remaining two types of publications: images and videos, are the ones that stand out the most. In particular, it is interesting that there are two different strategies on the part of each of these companies. In this sense, Amazon Music is committed to a balance between both types of publications, namely 83 images and 80 videos published during the study period. It is clear that the increasingly evident tendency to relegate text in proportion to images means that this trend is becoming the usual line of work. It is also particularly striking that audio-visual production occupies so much space in the case of a music platform.

Spotify places more value on image than video. As we have pointed out in the previous paragraphs, it seems to have a different strategy to Amazon Music. In this case, during the study period, it published a total of 131 images compared to 36 videos. In this case, the publication of 3 different statuses has been observed during the analysis period. However, it is still a very low use and, therefore, initially, we can point to a trend towards the disappearance of this type of information.

4.3. Types of content on Instagram

	Types of content on Instagram		
	Images	Videos	Carousel
Amazon Music	69	66	20
Spotify	89	12	2

Table 4. Analysis of Instagram's own variables

Source: Fanpage Karma. Table prepared by the authors

The first thing that can be seen in Table 4 on the typology of content on Instagram is that Facebook's strategy is replicated. Thus, Amazon Music is committed to a balance between images and videos compared to Spotify, which places more value on images.

It is interesting to note, as in the previous case, that within the differentiating typology between Facebook and Instagram, these are the least used tools. In this sense, if statuses were previously presented as a style in disuse, the carousel on Instagram is the least used option in the management of social networks in both companies, especially in the case of Spotify, which has published only two publications of this type in the analysis period. On the other hand, Amazon Music shows that there is a

constant use of this type of publication with 20 in total, however, it is still a much lower number than the other two available categories.

With regard to Amazon Music's specific strategy, as previously highlighted, it duplicates Facebook's idea. In this sense, we find 69 images and 66 videos, which clearly maintains this commitment to balance in terms of the type of publications. However, it is very striking in this case, since the Instagram social network is more image-based than video-based, in fact, it is popularly known as "the image network".

On the other hand, Spotify places more value on images and has published a total of 89 images compared to 12 videos and 2 carousel videos. As in the previous case, it follows the same social media management pattern as Facebook.

5. Discussion

The main objective of this study was to analyse the strategy of the main music *streaming* platforms in Spain, focusing on Spotify and Amazon Music. From this point, the study has addressed in detail their influence based on the established variables.

In general terms, the different strategies have been studied, such as the number of followers, publications made and their social performance (Romo-Jaramillo et al., 2020). In this way, the relevance of two factors that are closely related to an aspect that is the reason why social networks have become part of the communication strategies of companies has been observed, and that is the bidirectionality and interaction that can exist between brands and the public (Gómez Nieto & Benito Vielba, 2014; Caldevilla, 2010). In this sense, it has been observed that digital music platforms seek the management of social networks in order to connect with their audiences and a fact to highlight in this regard is their social performance (according to the number of comments received) and the rate of engagement; as it is observed how both networks have a high number of comments on Instagram, if we compare it with Facebook; as well as it is noteworthy that Instagram is the social network where both music platforms have the highest rate of engagement. These facts allow us to observe that Instagram may be configured as a social network with a greater capacity for interaction with its audiences than Facebook. However, this does not influence their usage rates; in other words, despite the difference in impact that one social network or the other may have, they maintain their activity on both networks.

More specifically, two essential issues can be obtained: on the one hand, they present completely different strategies when it comes to their management of social networks and, in terms of the data obtained in the study according to content types, there is a tendency to avoid statuses as a type of post on Facebook, as well as limiting the type of carousel post on Instagram.

In general terms, it can be affirmed that Amazon Music Spain employs a strategy based on a balance of publications, giving equal importance to the video format and images. In the case of Spotify, it can be corroborated by the data that it applies a strategy where the preponderance of content is based on image typology.

Finally, a strategy of both platforms is consistency in the publication of content. Both platforms, with the exception of a slight uptick by Spotify Spain on Instagram, publish with a frequency of 0.5 posts per day. In other words, the commitment to content is clear in both brands. It is also a way of connecting with young audiences, since, as explained in the theoretical framework, there is a very high consumption of content on social networks.

On the other hand, it would be interesting for future research to make an advance and be able to count not only publications but also *stories*, which would give a more complete view of the publication of brands.

6. Conclusions

We can affirm that there is a link between the success of social media management and its percentage of market share. It is clear that one of the limitations of the study is that not all music *streaming* platforms have been analysed. However, if we compare the data in terms of followers on social networks of these platforms and contrast them with the percentages of market share, we can see that there is an extrapolation of the data. It should also be added that not only the number of followers should be taken into account to measure success, but also the ability to interact with their audiences. (Castelló Martínez, 2012) because, as we have observed, in terms of number of comments and engagement rate, Spotify is the leader in both social networks. As noted above, there is a lack of consensus on the measurement of engagement, which is why the formulation proposed by the FanPage Karma analysis tool itself has been taken into account. This fact leads us to propose a future line of research focused on the application and validation of tools for measuring user engagement on social networks.

On the other hand, it is evident that there is a maximum follower ceiling, in other words, Spotify peaked at 22.8 million followers on Facebook and then fell back. This leads us to one conclusion, and that is that actions have consequences on social networks, and you can lose as much audience and subscribers as followers on social networks.

Another conclusion that has been highlighted on several occasions and is considered very interesting is the disuse of the status typology. It is clear that it can be something very interesting in terms of user profiles on a personal level, but does it have practical applications among brands/companies? Other studies, such as the one carried out by Caballero-Escusol (2021), which also analyse these brand trends, specifically those of podcast platforms, agreed on this fact.

Finally, it is evident, given the growth of Instagram, that there is a very intense campaign to position itself on this social network; a fact that may be due to its capacity for interaction compared to Facebook. This is due to two facts: it is the fastest-growing network in Spain and, furthermore, the one with the youngest people among its users.

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