

Background

The subject of the ‘Dislike’ button was raised during a question and answer session at Facebook’s Menlo Park, California headquarters, where it was announced that the button was “very close” to the user testing stage. The development of a ‘Dislike’ button represents the second official attempt to quantify an emotion on the platform, after the introduction of the Facebook ‘Like’ button back in 2009.

Details and Implications

The concept of being able to ‘dislike’ a Facebook post raises several questions. Would the button be used as a way to express sympathy, when ‘liking’ a post is considered inappropriate? Or would the button have a more judgmental undertone and be used to express animosity for a particular piece of content or status?

It initially seems that the ability to express sympathy is the intended outcome. With Zuckerberg intimating that Facebook would like to stay away from the Reddit-esque culture of deciding the value of content by subjecting it to a tirade of up or down votes. According to [Business Insider](#), Zuckerberg has been quoted as saying in response to the debate surrounding the implementation of a dislike button: “What they really want is the ability to express empathy. Not every moment is a good moment”.

For brands and advertisers the introduction of a ‘dislike’ button, raises a different set of questions. It may be Facebook’s intention that the dislike button be used in an empathetic fashion, but that only really relates to how users communicate with each other. As evidently it seems highly unlikely that a user would wish to express sympathy for a brand. It therefore begs the question, that if the button is introduced could it in fact have two different meanings dependent upon the nature of the content the ‘dislike’ was intended for?

Furthermore, what will the intended outcome of ‘disliking’ a piece of content be? At present, as far as user targeting goes, if particular piece of content is ‘liked’ a user has similar content directed to their newsfeed. However, if something is ‘disliked’ will content of that nature be revoked from their newsfeed? Will the context of the ‘dislike’ be taken into consideration?

Summary / POV

In summary, it seems the introduction of a ‘dislike’ button on Facebook could cause as much controversy as the media storm surrounding its development.

The use of the ‘dislike button’ when applied to brand content may not be quite as straightforward as its intended use for more personal expressions of empathy or sympathy. Brands would possibly face the added fear of a sea of dislikes being directed at their content. However, on a more positive note, the increased user data may of course benefit brands. After all, having a deeper understanding of which content truly resonates with users, should serve to aid content development and more nuanced user-targeting.