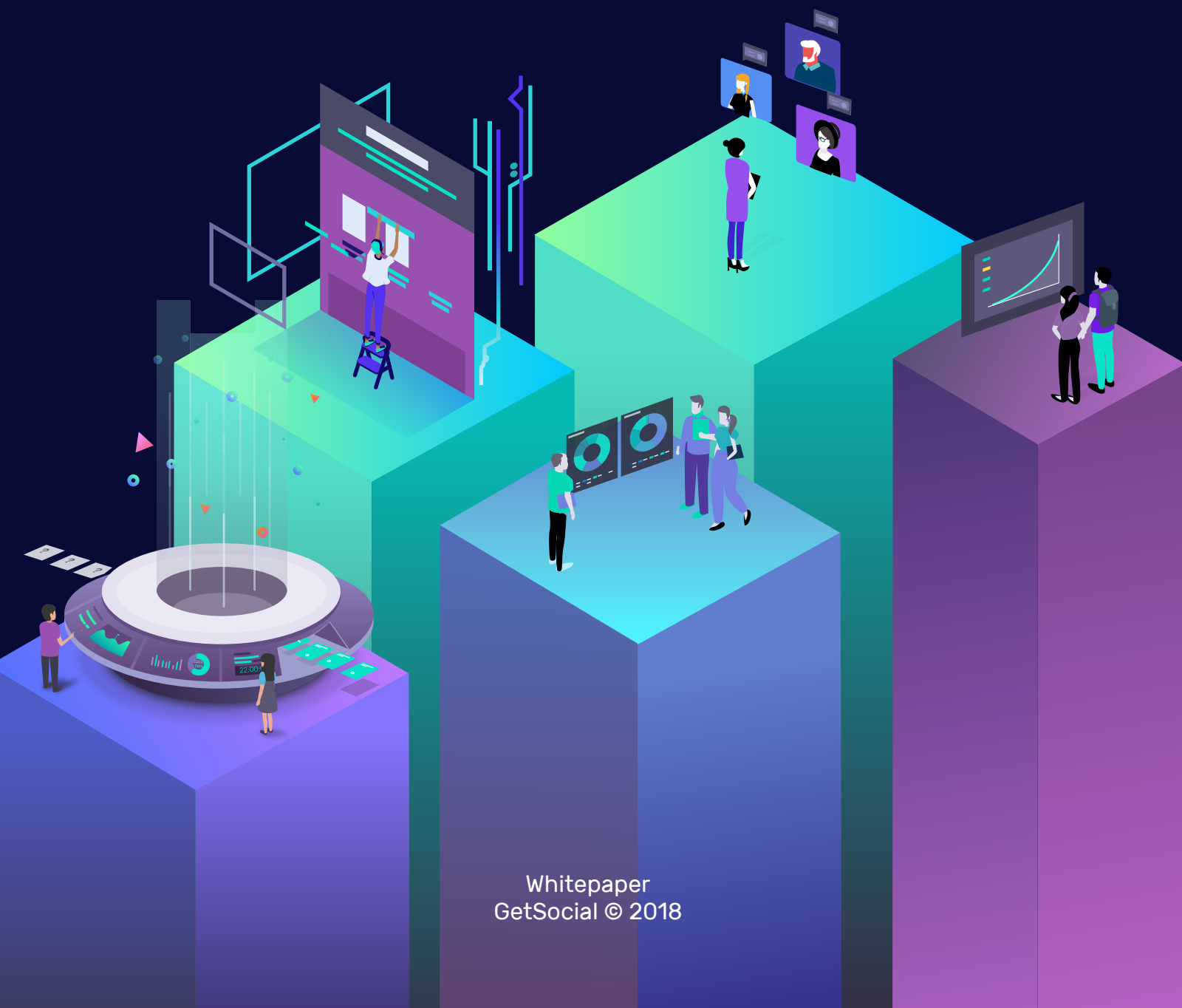


GETSOCIAL

# Uncovering DARK SOCIAL

The essential guide to Dark Social in 2018



Whitepaper  
GetSocial © 2018

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# Communication through private channels can generate unreferrred traffic called DARK SOCIAL

The term **Dark Social** was first used by Alexis C. Madrigal to refer to the **social sharing** of a URL that occurs outside of what can be measured by Web analytics programs and often attributed to direct traffic.

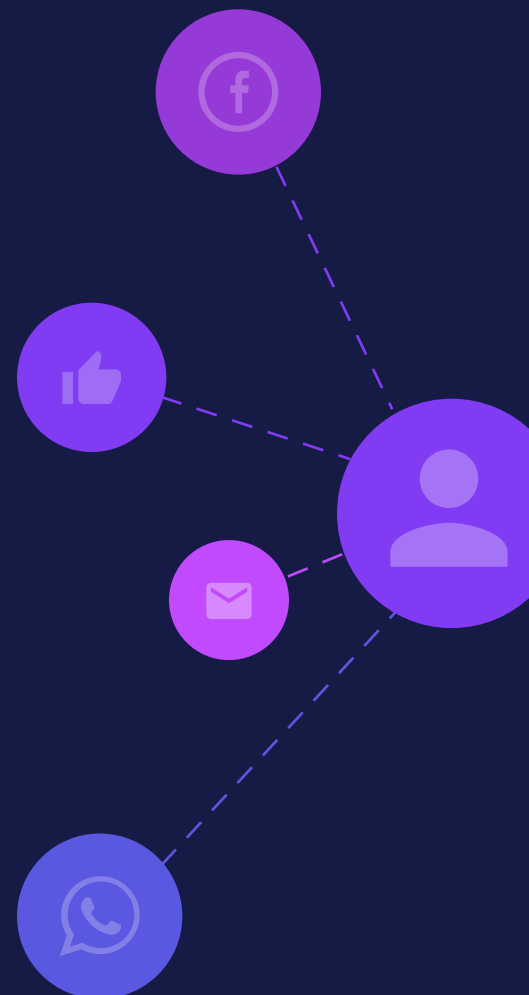


Here's the original quote from his article for "The Atlantic":

*There are circumstances, however, when there is no referrer data. You show up at our doorstep and we have no idea how you got here. The main situations in which this happens are email programs, instant messages, some mobile applications\*, and whenever someone is moving from a secure site <https://mail.google.com> to a non-secure site <http://mail.google.com>*

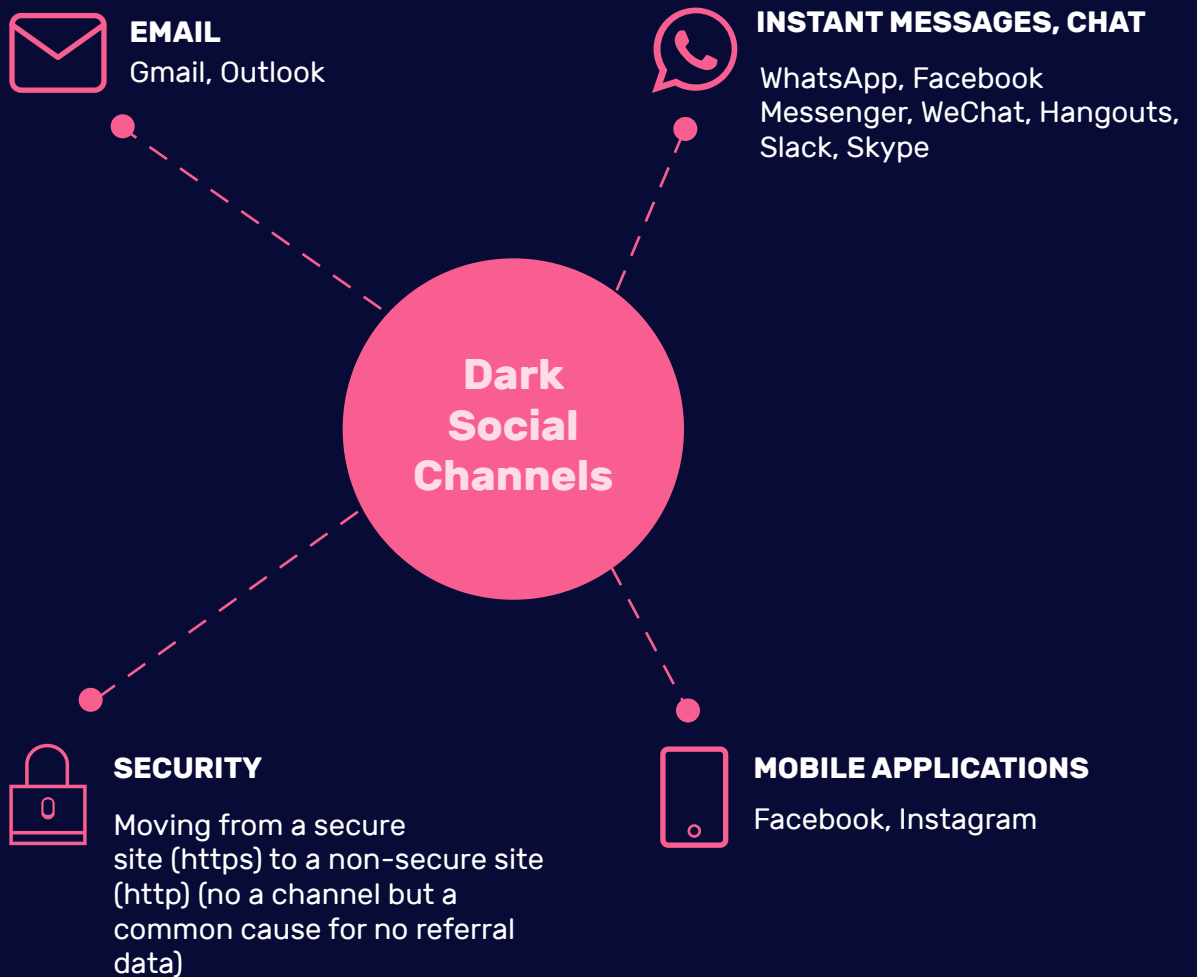


ALEXIS C. MADRIGAL  
Oct 12, 2012



# Dark Social Channels

Without any referral data, marketers cannot properly attribute traffic and track success of their marketing efforts. The key insight of how people discovered their content or products is missing.

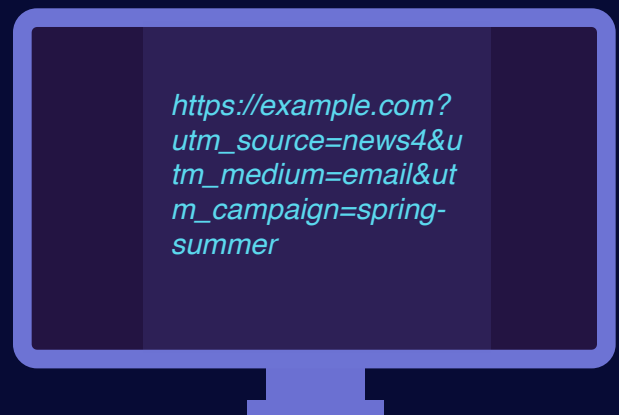


## Dark Social challenge explained

These private channels are not tracked by analytics programs because they do not have any referral data. A usual solution is to add UTM or tracking parameters to each link.

Parameter-enabled link: a URL with added parameters (such as **utm\_source**, **utm\_medium**, **utm\_campaign**) to capture reporting data about the referring campaign

For example, the following link would allow you to identify the traffic to example.com that came from a particular email newsletter, as part of a particular campaign:



Link without referral data: which will be attributed to direct traffic if you send it in the same newsletter.

## UTM parameters

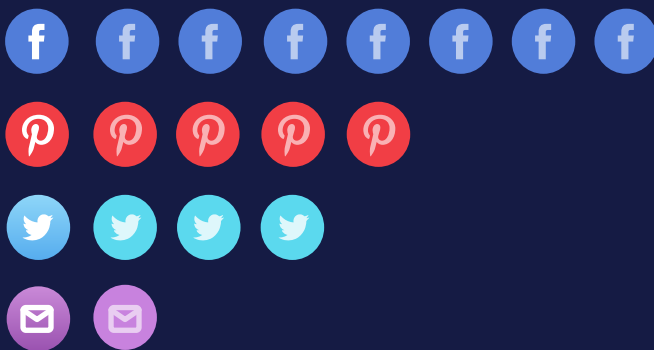
Standard UTM (Urchin Tracking Module) parameters in the referral link are used to track and improve source attribution.

When a conversion is made, for example, you can actually see what specific source & campaign (depending on UTMs used) triggered that customer action.

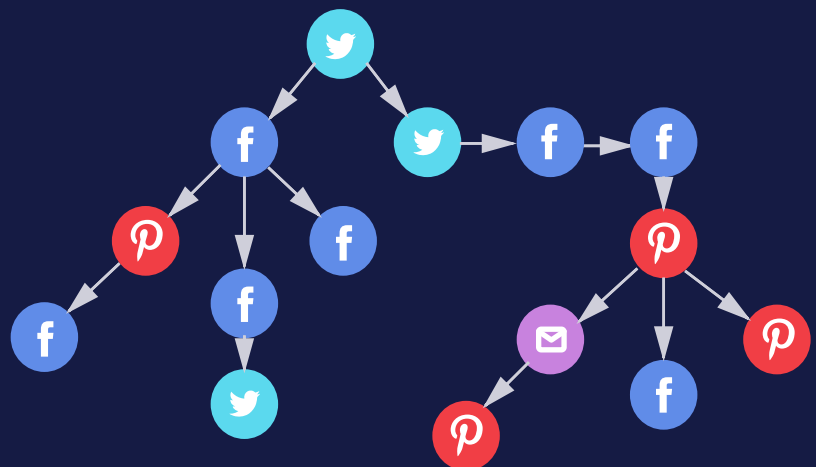
However, UTMs are not dynamic and don't change even if you switch to a different medium or network.

That means if a visitor copied your link (with UTMs) from Facebook to share on Twitter, clicks on such link would still be attributed to Facebook, despite their engagement happening on Twitter.

### What We Saw



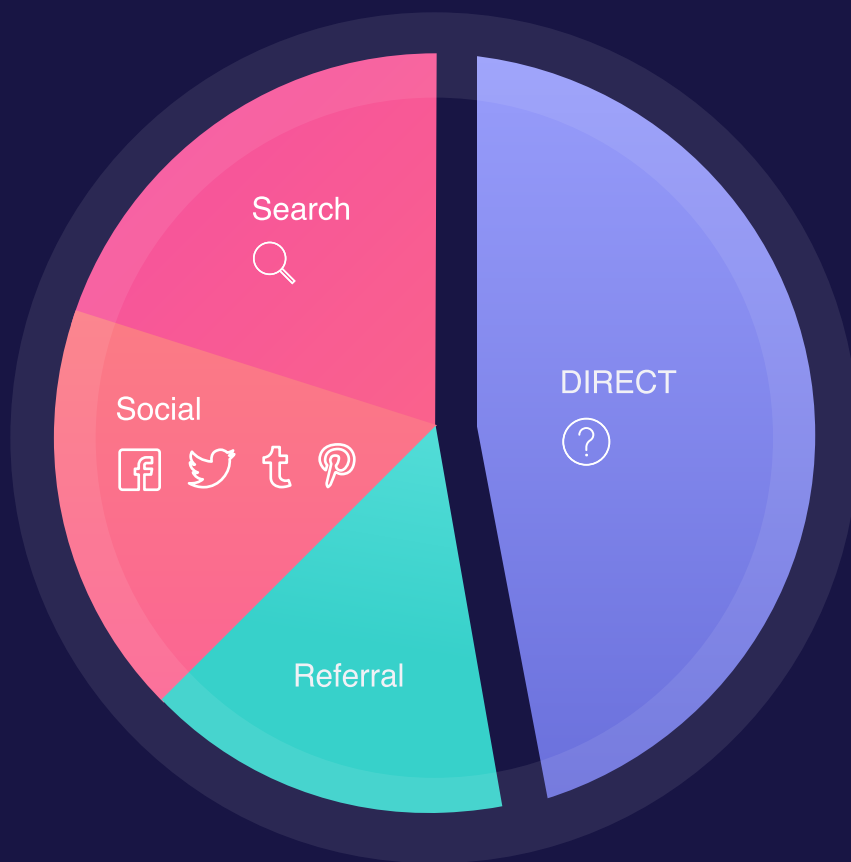
### What Actually Happens



# The mystery of Direct Traffic

According to Google “direct” traffic happens when users type a URL directly into their browser or click on a bookmarked site.

But in reality, it is a fallback for any source of traffic without a referral data.



Do you know where your direct traffic actually comes from?

# On average, 10% of Direct Traffic comes from Dark Social

When measuring Dark Social referrals to the website, the ability to attribute Dark Social traffic rose by 10%.

That's 10% more opportunities to further assign website events such as conversions or leads to the coming traffic that was previously misattributed as direct.

## 10% of Direct Traffic comes from Dark Social





# Messaging is the new social

The number of active users of top 4 Messaging Apps: WhatsApp, Viber, Facebook Messenger and WeChat has surpassed the number of the active users on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn.

Nowadays, it's more common that we share links to articles and products in private messages and not in public posts on social networks. With the increasing number of users of messaging apps, this trend will continue to grow.

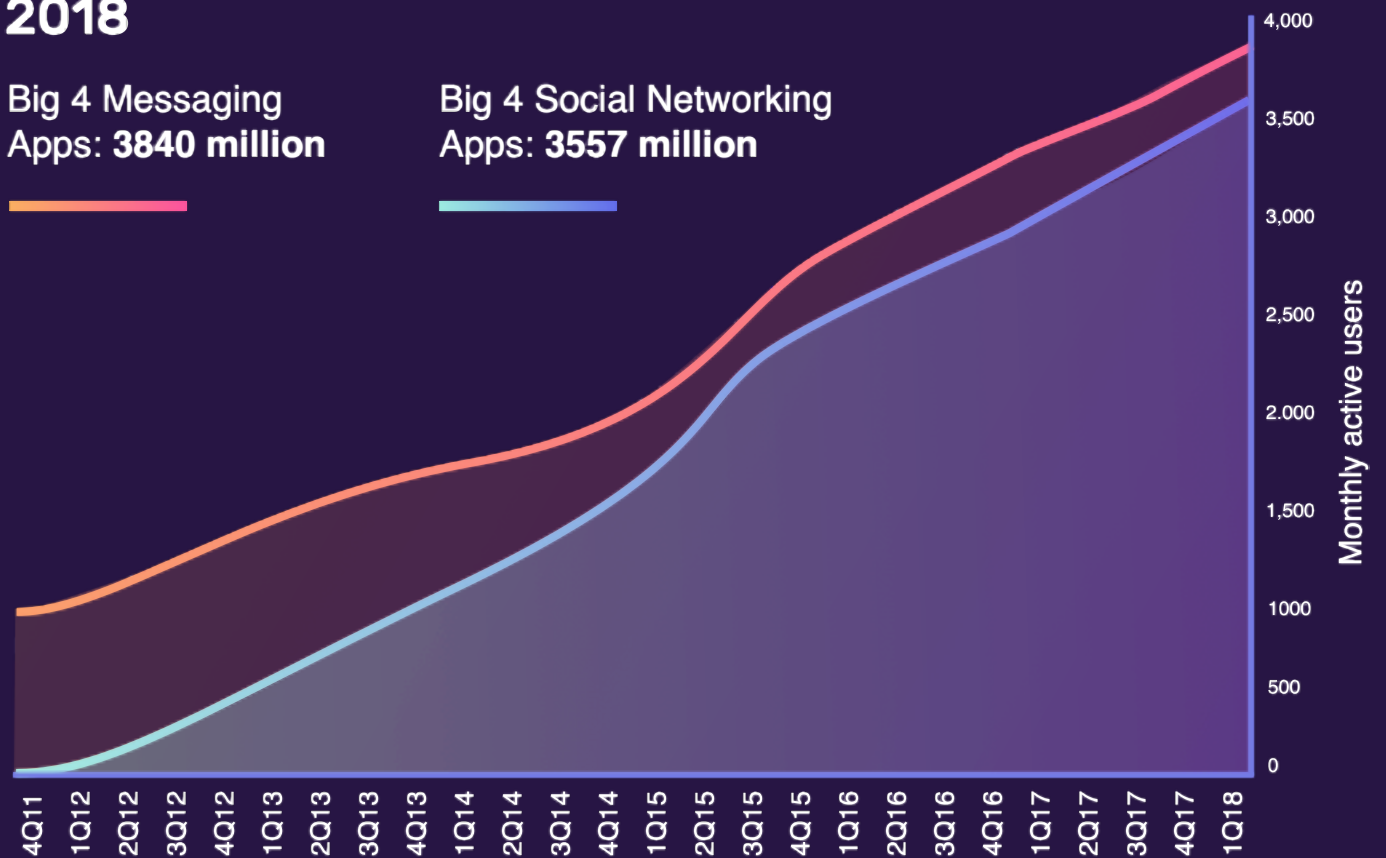
## Messaging Apps Have Surpassed Social Networks.

*Global monthly* active users for the top 4 messaging apps and social networks, in million

**2018**

**Big 4 Messaging Apps: 3840 million**

**Big 4 Social Networking Apps: 3557 million**



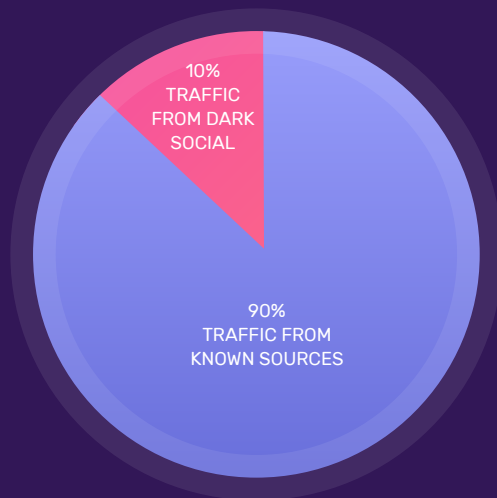
Source: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/258749/most-popular-global-mobile-messenger-apps/>

# A rise in private sharing

“Based on a sample of 100 million posts published in 2017, social sharing of content has been cut in half since 2015.”

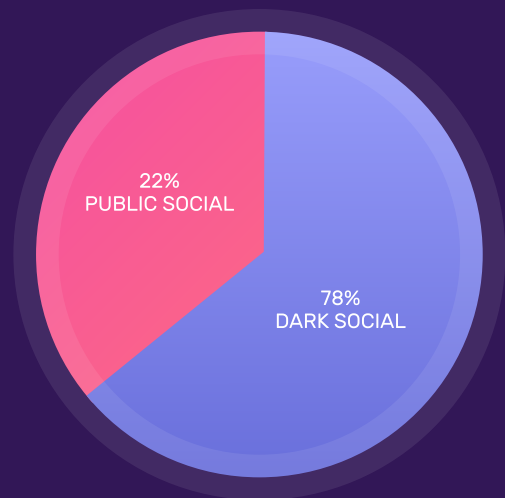
2018 Content Trends  
Report, BuzzSumo

TOTAL WEBSITE TRAFFIC



On average content shares on private channels generate 10% of ALL traffic to the website. Eg. for a website that gets 100,000 visits per month, that's 10,000 visits coming from DARK Social.

TOTAL WEBSITE SHARES



More than one-third of all content SHARES (78%) happen on DARK Social (private channels)

TOTAL REFERRAL TRAFFIC

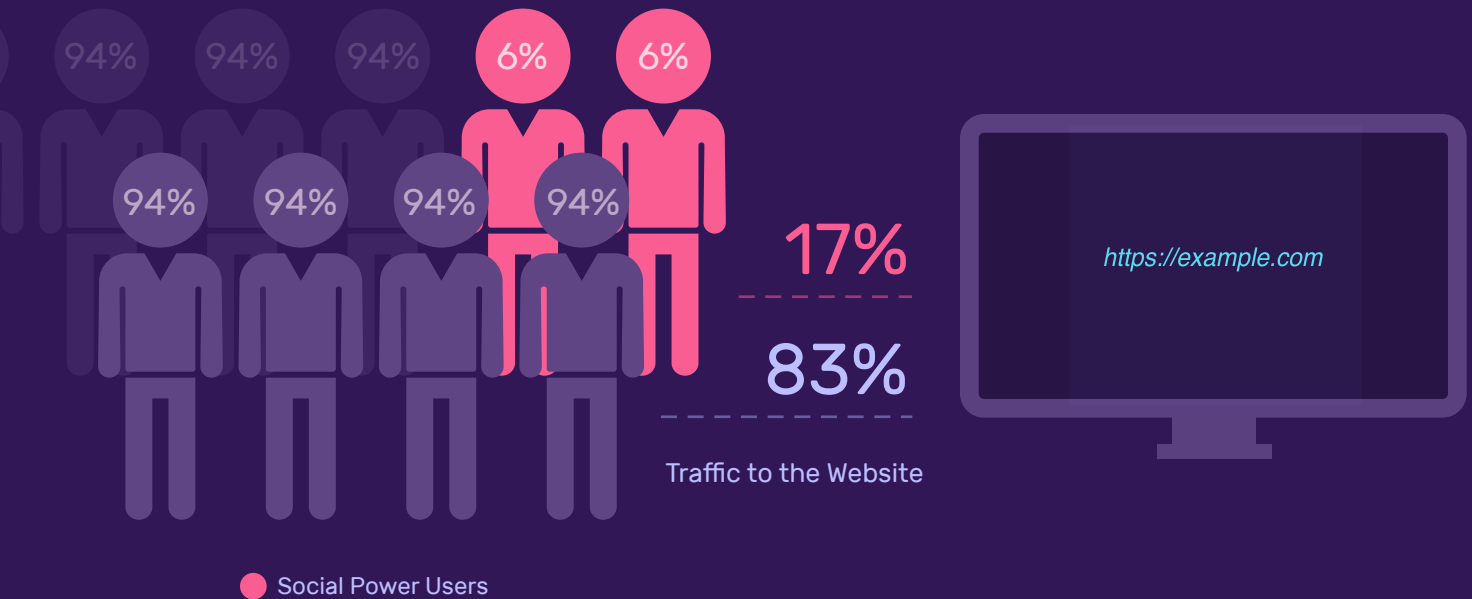


More than one-third of all REFERRALS (57%) to the website are generated by DARK Social Shares

# Social Power Users

A power user on social media is somebody who shares content and information on their social networks and via private channels and generates a substantial traffic back to the website.

**On average 6% of social power users generate 17% of all traffic**



## Why is tracking Dark Social important?

When you start monitoring sharing patterns, volumes, traffic generated and actions taken as a result of that traffic you will get a better understanding of your audiences behaviour.

Having full visibility into content/products that are being spoken about in private conversations will allow you to identify trends and focus on content that's driving growth.

That way, you can increase your revenue by pushing the right messages and prove ROI by attributing traffic more accurately



# Dark Social Use Cases



## CONTENT WEBSITES

Social reach has been constantly dropping over time, unless you pay for it. It is fundamental for content creators to understand which content and channels are resonating with their audiences. By tracking all social interactions, not just the 35% happening on share buttons, they'll get proper traffic attribution from Social.



## BRANDS

Tracking Dark Social they gain full visibility around their brand and, as a consequence, they should be able to identify specific articles, pages and products that are being shared through private messages. Brands can finally learn how much traffic they're generating from Dark Social that's currently misattributed to Direct source.



## E-COMMERCE

A transactional website will be able to identify content that's driving the highest ROI. By tracking Dark Social they will be able to see which product pages are getting the most traction and the traffic & conversions they generate.



## SOCIAL MEDIA AUTOMATION

Having full visibility into private sharing, we can also identify viral content in real-time and automatically share it on networks where it's organically getting traction.



## ONLINE SUPPORT

Dark Social tracking gives the possibility to discover the support content that's being shared in private messages. The support team can see which knowledgebase articles and support pages are being shared the most often and proactively share them on social networks.

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