

COLUMNS

## Implications of Facebook Home for marketers

April 29, 2013



By AN AMERICAN MARKETER COLUMNIST

By **Brendan A. Fitzpatrick**

Perhaps you heard Facebook announced Facebook Home on April 4. What is it? Does it matter? If so, why? For those who do not have the time or inclination to track down those answers, here is the gist:

What is it?

If you are a smartphone user, you are familiar with the Home screen. It is the first thing you see every time you turn on your phone. It is the starting point for everything you do on your phone. It may only technically be the face of your operating system but, for all intents and purposes, it is your operating system.

Most would not be able to tell you the difference. Lots of nuts-and-bolts stuff happens behind the scenes, but the Home screen is what you see and interact with. This makes it important.

What if you could replace that Home screen? How could that change your experience? In a word, dramatically. And, if you are using an Android phone, you can.

Replacement Home screens have been available for some time, but have been used mostly by the Android enthusiast set. Facebook Home may change all that.

It is a home screen replacement that Facebook says "lets you see the world through people, not apps."

Facebook Home puts your friends and their updates front and center. You can post. You can Like. You can upload photos. You can chat. You can check your notifications.

Everything you can do on Facebook yes, even view ads can now be done from the home screen of your Android phone. It is no longer an experience that revolves around the manufacturer it is an experience that is centered around you.

Yes, Facebook Home was announced alongside the HTC First, and is the default home screen on that device which was released April 12 for \$99.99. That is small potatoes.

Facebook Home will also be released on the Android Market, where any Android user can download and install it.

Rather than building its own devices the route taken by Google, Amazon and Microsoft Facebook is going over-the-top in an effort to make all Android phones, regardless of carrier or manufacturer, de facto Facebook Phones.

By replacing the most important part of the experience with one that revolves around you and your friends, Facebook

is embarking on a smartphone coup d'etat.

Why would we care?

We care because it has implications for social services similar to Facebook.

Let us say you are more of a foursquare person. Perhaps you would like to turn on your phone and be immediately immersed in that service, with recommendations for where to have dinner, your friends' check-ins, or tips to make the most of the place where you are standing at your fingertips.

Look for more social services to launch Home replacements of their own in the near future.

We care because this has implications for how brands connect to people.

As more brands start connecting their products, advertising and customers with a service layer such as Nike Plus, Amazon Kindle/Prime, HBO Go and iTunes, opportunities such as Home replacements make more and more sense.

What might a Sharpie Home look like? What if your Cox Communications Home screen gave you wallpapers from your favorite shows, localized programming recommendations and DVR/remote control capabilities?

Can I order a KFC Famous Bowl before I even unlock my phone?

For the news junkies of the world, imagine customizable news and finance feeds powered by MSNBC Home. Can your brand find its own Home on Android?

And, finally, we care because interruptive innovations matter.

THE IPHONE was a game changer with its intuitive experience and app ecosystem.

Android was a game changer in bringing smartphones to a wider audience through its "open" rebuttal to Apple's walled garden.

Facebook Home may be a third game changer for the mobile space.

If any phone can have its core experience replaced by its user, then users can choose the experience that matters most to them, and that could have huge ramifications.

*Brendan A. Fitzpatrick is user experience planner at [Draftfcb Chicago](#), Chicago. Reach him at [brendan.fitzpatrick@draftfcb.com](mailto:brendan.fitzpatrick@draftfcb.com).*