

## Today's Top Social Media Trends – Great Growth Opportunities

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As more consumers go online for information, entertainment, and e-commerce, social media can be a virtual lifeline between you and your customer, providing ongoing personalized connections that engage and motivate. To seize upon this growth opportunity in today's digitally-driven world, your business must appear in their feeds.

### Overall Usage is Pervasive, Platforms are Age-Specific

Global usage of social networks is pervasive in all but a few countries, projected to reach nearly 4 billion in 2022. More than half the world's population now uses social media. Penetration is significant in most countries around the world, the highest being UAE (99%) and South Korea (89%), and all but 6 countries hitting 50+%. (Statista, 2021)

In the US, 72% of adults confirm using some social media, with the top three platforms being YouTube (81%), Facebook (69%), and Instagram (40%). Usage is greater among a younger audience: 95% of 18-29 year-olds use YouTube vs. 49% of 65+; for Facebook, 70% of 18-29 vs. 50% of 65+; and for Instagram, 71% vs. 13%. Other platforms popular among the younger age groups are Snapchat, TikTok, and Twitter. (Pew Research Center, 2021)

Armando Ajuria, Managing Partner of IMSA Search Global Partners Mexico, confirms the necessity of social engagement for companies: "Consumers are having important conversations on social media and companies need to be there. Companies must understand their customers' interests, habits, hobbies, and build content that is relevant to them."

### Important Trends for Social Media Impact

So, what do social media users want in their online experiences today? And importantly, what should brands and businesses be considering as they strategize their social media initiatives? Here are some essentials to consider as you map your business's digital journey:

#### 1. Values and Authenticity Matter

Social media messaging must be authentic, and values clearly communicated. The pandemic upset the consumer-brand relationship. So did social movements like BLM and #metoo. Customers look to brands for more than a great sale. They want to be cared about and cared for. They also want to know that brands are helping the world, not exploiting it. Social media interactions should reflect this, as consumers continue to expect more from brands.

If online influencers are part of a digital strategy, select for honesty, transparency, and integrity, not just the number of followers.

#### 2. Build Long Term Relationships, Talk About What Matters

Online conversations between brands and customers have shifted from quick interactions meant to drive immediate sales to multiple interactions which nurture and educate for the long term. Building a relationship is the goal which, in turn, leads to not just an immediate purchase but to loyalty and repeat business.

Technology enables detailed understanding of individual wants, needs, and behaviors, and messaging can be tailored to specific audiences. Content should include what matters to your customers, not only about the company or the brand.

#### 3. Quality Over Quantity, "Low-Fi" and User-Generated Content

It's no longer how often you post, but rather what you post that is important. The quantity of content has exploded, so consumers are looking for meaning as they scroll. Are your posts relevant to their lives? Do your values reflect their own? Be thoughtful about when you post and how frequently; consider when customers are more likely to be receptive.

Also, "low-fi" production quality has become not just acceptable but a viable communications tactic. It began as necessity when Covid shut down studios and forced marketers to produce content from home. Audiences liked the down-home feel, finding it humorous, authentic, and more accessible, connecting with the pandemic reality of their own lives. Similarly authentic, user-generated remixing of content is also on the rise, made easier by platforms like TikTok and Instagram Reels.

#### 4. Snackable Content is Best

Consumers are scrolling through 24/7 feeds on multiple platforms. While longform content has its place, shorter "snackable" compositions are preferred. Offering immediate entertainment or enrichment, they are quickly digestible and easy to share.

For example:

- Quote Graphic – an entertaining or thought-provoking quote with an engaging graphic/photo
- Meme – a visual/message representing a cultural phenomenon or theme that spreads virally
- Infographic – graphic representation that presents data or information quickly and clearly
- GIF – short video or image on a loop that captures emotions and reactions

#### 5. Video a Must-Have, VR On the Rise

The statistics make the case for video as an essential part of your social strategy: Social video generates 1200% more shares than text/image content combined. Viewers retain 95% of a message in video compared to 10% in a text. 86% of consumers want more video from brands, and 64% make a purchase after watching branded social videos. (Wordstream.com, 7/21/2021)

Gaming and Virtual Reality (VR) use continues to increase. In the past year, the number of social media users identifying as "gamers" grew by 10 million or 32%. (Hubspot, 2021) Social media companies are in: Facebook owns VR game/experience producer Oculus; Twitch is expanding game-streaming and product promotional partnerships; and Snapchat continues its launch of mini-game apps. As gaming/VR capabilities expand, opportunities for partnerships increase to reach this growing online community. One caveat – make sure game and brand values are aligned.

#### 6. Sell on Social

In 2019 pre-pandemic, worldwide e-commerce was at \$3.4 trillion. With Covid and resulting lockdowns, as consumers increased their online shopping, it's projected to reach \$4.9 trillion by the end of 2021. Even as restrictions ease, it shows no sign of slowing. (Statista, 2021) Social platforms have expanded business marketing and social commerce capabilities, making it easy for brands to sell online. Of note, Facebook Shops and Instagram Shoppable Posts allow consumers to purchase a product seen in a post without leaving the site – convenient timesaver for consumers, and companies do not have to build out their own ecommerce platform.

#### 7. Livestreaming Here to Stay

Livestream went mainstream during the pandemic, providing companies with opportunities to break geographic constraints and connect broadly with audiences unable to attend in-person events. Facebook Live, Instagram Live, YouTube Live, and others provide capabilities for online live events, webinars, and other types of content. Many offer social interaction and mixed-media experiences to further engage a remote audience. Livestreaming continues to grow as consumers embrace the convenience of not having to travel and businesses turn local marketing into global outreach.

Covid-19 has upended the world as we knew it, especially in the social media ecosystem. As new ideas, platforms, and content continue to explode across the social media universe, it is critical for businesses to evaluate and update social media strategies for success.