2018 SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING INDUSTRY REPORT

How Marketers Are Using Social Media to Grow Their Businesses

MAY 2018

BY MICHAEL A. STELZNER

Published by Social Media Examiner

Copyright 2018, Social Media Examiner
Letter from the author…

Hello, fellow marketer!

Welcome to our 10th annual study! This is one of the longest-running studies in our industry. And yes, social media marketing is still evolving.

This 44-page report contains easy-to-digest insights into how marketers are currently using social media and their future plans.

If you're in charge of marketing your business, you'll want to closely examine the 70+ charts on the following pages. I'll reveal the "not-so-obvious" findings in this data-rich content.

The report covers all of the major social platforms, organic and paid activities, content marketing, and much more.

More than 5,700 of your fellow marketers provided the kinds of insights you won't find elsewhere.

I hope you enjoy it! If you find value in this report, please let your peers know about it.

You can find the original page for the report here: https://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/report2018/

All my best!

Michael A. Stelzner
Founder, Social Media Examiner
Host, Social Media Marketing podcast
# Table of contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAJOR FINDINGS</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOP QUESTIONS FACED BY SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETERS</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING EXPERIENCE</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEASURING SOCIAL MEDIA ROI</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFFECTIVENESS OF FACEBOOK MARKETING</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FACEBOOK ORGANIC REACH</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BENEFITS OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMONLY USED SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE MOST IMPORTANT SOCIAL PLATFORM FOR MARKETERS</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORGANIC SOCIAL MEDIA POSTING</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS MARKETERS WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAID SOCIAL MEDIA</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOW HAVE MARKETERS CHANGED THEIR PAID SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVITIES?</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOW WILL MARKETERS CHANGE THEIR FUTURE PAID SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVITIES?</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAID SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS MARKETERS WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FACEBOOK MESSENGER BOTS</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WORK WITH INFLUENCERS</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMONLY USED TYPES OF CONTENT</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE MOST IMPORTANT CONTENT FOR MARKETERS IS</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOW WILL MARKETERS CHANGE THEIR FUTURE CONTENT ACTIVITIES?</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONTENT FORMS MARKETERS WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SURVEY PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABOUT MICHAEL A. STELZNER</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Executive summary

This study surveyed more than 5,700 marketers with the goal of understanding how they're using social media to grow and promote their businesses. On the following pages, you'll discover:

- **The top social media questions marketers want answered**: We reveal the big questions today's marketing pros want answered.

- **Facebook marketing**: We explore how effective Facebook marketing has been for marketers and whether their organic reach has declined.

- **The benefits of social media marketing**: This section of our study reveals all of the major advantages marketers are achieving with their social media efforts. We also look at how years of experience affect the results.

- **Most-used social media platforms**: Discover which platforms marketers are using now and how their usage will change over the next 12 months. We also examine which platforms experienced marketers are using and the most important platforms for marketers.

- **Organic social media posting**: We explore how marketers changed their organic activities in the last year and how they plan on changing their future activities.

- **Paid social media**: We reveal the social advertising platforms marketers are using, how their use of ads has changed in the last year, and which ad platforms they plan to focus on in the next 12 months.

- **Facebook Messenger bots**: We explore if marketers are using Messenger bots and what their future plans are.

- **Other analyses**: We also examine the role of content and live video in social media marketing, as well as using social media influencers. In addition, we take a look at how business-to-business (B2B) companies differ from business-to-consumer (B2C) companies. We also highlight significant changes since our 2017 study.
Major findings

Here’s a quick summary of some of our more interesting findings:

• Facebook Uncertainty: Only 49% of marketers feel their Facebook marketing is effective and 52% said they’ve seen declines in their organic Facebook reach in the last year. However, 62% plan on increasing their organic activities in the next year.

• Marketers focusing less on developing loyal fans: For the first time in years, generating leads has become more of a focus for marketers than cultivating a loyal fan base. This could be a sign that metrics and automation are becoming more important than engagement.

• Facebook dominance still strong: A very significant 94% of marketers use Facebook (followed by Instagram at 66%). Two in three marketers claim Facebook is their most important social platform.

• Facebook ads reign supreme: Facebook ads are used by 72% of marketers (followed by Instagram at 31%). Nearly half of all marketers increased their Facebook ad activities in the last year and 67% plan on increasing their use of Facebook ads over the next 12 months.

• Facebook Messenger bots pique marketers’ interest: While only 15% of marketers are using Messenger bots, 51% plan on using Messenger bots in the next year.

The above summary is just a taste of what’s in this report. On the following pages, you’ll find 70+ charts that visually convey some fascinating findings.
Top questions faced by social media marketers

We asked marketers to indicate if they'd like to get answers to broad social marketing questions. The graph below indicates the percentage that agreed or strongly agreed that they were seeking answers to these questions.

At least 84% of marketers surveyed felt they were seeking answers to all of the following questions:

- What social tactics are most effective? 90%
- What are the best ways to engage my audience with social media? 89%
- What are the best ways to use paid social media? 85%
- How do I measure the return on my social media investment? 85%
- What are the best social management tools? 85%
- How do I create a social strategy? 84%
- How do I find my target audience with social media? 84%

This can be summarized with the following keywords:

- Tactics
- Engagement
- Paid
- Measurement
- Tools
- Strategy
- Audience
Social media marketing experience

Here's how we determined the survey participants' experience using social media to market their businesses.

**Years using social media marketing**

We asked participants how long they've been using social media for marketing.

Seventy-two percent of marketers surveyed have at least 2 years of social media marketing experience.

**Is social media marketing your main job responsibility?**

Slightly more than one out of three marketers said social media marketing was their full-time responsibility.

**Note: For a detailed demographic breakdown of survey participants, see pages 41–43 of this report.**

On the following pages, we asked marketers to rate their agreement with a few statements related to social media.
Measuring social media ROI

We wanted to understand marketers' ability to measure the return on their social media activities, so we asked them to rate their agreement with the following statement: "I am able to measure the return on investment (ROI) for my social media activities."

Only 44% agreed they're able to measure their social activities. The ROI issue has plagued marketers for years. In 2017, 38% indicated they could measure ROI.
Effectiveness of Facebook marketing

We asked marketers if they agreed with the statement: "My Facebook marketing is effective."

Forty-nine percent of marketers feel like their Facebook efforts are working, an increase from 42% in 2017. However, more than half of marketers either don't know or indicated that their Facebook marketing is NOT working.
Facebook organic reach

We wanted to understand if marketers experienced a decrease in their organic Facebook reach, so we asked them to rate their agreement with the following statement: "My Facebook organic post reach has declined in the last year."

A significant 52% of marketers surveyed said they saw their Facebook reach decline. Plus, 23% of marketers surveyed were unsure. When combined, 75% of marketers either don't know or have seen a decline in Facebook organic reach over the last year.
A significant 87% of all marketers indicated that their social media efforts have generated more exposure for their businesses. Increased traffic was the second major benefit, with 78% reporting positive results. These top two benefits have remained virtually unchanged for 4 years.

**For the first time in 4 years, the order of the lesser benefits has changed.** Also, many of the benefits have declined:

- Generated leads dropped to 64% from 66% in 2017
- Developed loyal fans dropped to 63% from 69% in 2017
- Provided marketplace insight dropped to 54% from 66% in 2017
- Improved sales increased to 53% from 52% in 2017
- Grew business partnerships dropped to 49% from 53% in 2017
- Increased thought leadership dropped to 46% from 57% in 2017

Some questions that naturally emerge from the above chart might include: "Are marketers who've been using social media for years achieving better results?" and "Is there a difference between B2B and B2C?" The following charts address these questions.
Improved sales

A large percentage of marketers find better sales results with more years of social media experience.

For example, more than half of marketers who've been using social media for more than 2 years report it helped them improve sales.

Conversely, 47% of all marketers taking this survey report that social media has not helped them improve sales (see page 11). This may be because they lack the needed tools to track sales.

Increased exposure

Nearly all marketers (83%+) who've been employing social media marketing for 1 year or longer report it generates exposure for their businesses.

Grew business partnerships

More than half of marketers who've invested at least 3 years in social media marketing report that they gained new partnerships.

B2B marketers were more likely (57%) to use social media to grow partnerships than B2C marketers (45%).
**Generated leads**

About two-thirds of marketers with at least 2 years of social media marketing experience were generating leads with social platforms.

**Increased traffic**

Those who've used social media for 2 years or more reported substantially better results driving traffic (83%+ reported benefits), compared with those with less experience.

**Provided marketplace insight**

Of those with at least 3 years of experience, more than half found social platforms provided marketplace insight.

B2B marketers were more likely (60%) to use social media to gain competitor insight than B2C marketers (45%).
Developed loyal fans

Of those who have been using social media for at least 3 years, more than half found it useful for building a loyal fan base.

It’s interesting to note that those new to social media marketing are less successful with fan development.

Increased thought leadership

Only those with the most experience (5+ years) have seen real success with building thought leadership.
Commonly used social media platforms

Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter were the top three platforms used by marketers, with Facebook leading the pack by a long shot. Other platforms lag behind these top three.

NOTABLE CHANGES SINCE 2017

- Instagram jumped from the #4 slot to the #2 slot, up from 54% in 2017.
- Twitter lost the #2 slot, falling from 68% in 2017.
- YouTube moved up from 45% in 2017.
- Pinterest dropped from 30% in 2017.
- Snapchat barely rose from 7% in 2017.

Here’s a close examination of which social channels experienced social media marketers are using, compared to those just getting started.
Platform use: Beginners vs. advanced marketers

This chart compares social platform choices of those just getting started with social media marketing (the blue bars: less than 12 months) compared to those with the most experience (the green bars: more than 5 years).

New social media marketers mostly focus on Facebook (88%) and Instagram (55%). The most experienced marketers are highly diversified.
Platform use: B2C marketers

This chart shows that nearly all business-to-consumer (B2C) marketers are focused on Facebook.
**Platform use: B2B marketers**

This chart shows that most business-to-business (B2B) marketers use Facebook and a significant percentage use LinkedIn.
The most important social platform for marketers is...

We asked marketers to select the single most important social platform for their business. Because only one choice was allowed, the findings are revealing.

More than two-thirds of marketers (67%) chose Facebook as their most important platform, followed by LinkedIn (12%), Instagram (10%), and then Twitter (5%). This chart clearly reveals Facebook is still the primary platform for marketers.

NOTABLE CHANGES SINCE 2017

- Facebook increased from 62% in 2017.
- Instagram jumped from the #4 slot to the #3 slot, up from 7% in 2017.
- Twitter lost the #3 slot, down from 9% in 2017.
- LinkedIn dropped from 16% in 2017.
**B2B vs. B2C**

Notice the fascinating differences between B2B- and B2C-focused marketers.

Clearly, Facebook dominates in the B2C space (75% of marketers select it as their number-one choice). However, for B2B marketers, Facebook also grabs the most important slot, surpassing LinkedIn.

Changes since 2017: *LinkedIn is losing to Facebook in importance for B2B marketers*. LinkedIn dropped from 37% to 28% and Facebook rose from 43% to 54% for B2B marketers.
Organic social media posting

We asked marketers about their organic activities in the following ways: (1) are they posting more or less than they did a year ago and (2) how they'll change their organic activities over the next 12 months.

Here's a breakdown by social media channel:

**Current Facebook activities**

A significant 50% of marketers have increased their organic activities on Facebook over the last 12 months.

Only 18% of marketers have decreased their organic activities.

**Future Facebook plans**

Our research shows a significant 62% of marketers plan on increasing their Facebook organic activities over the next year.

As shown earlier, Facebook is still the most important social network to most marketers.
Current YouTube activities

Our research shows only 26% of marketers have increased their YouTube organic activities over the last 12 months.

Future YouTube plans

A significant 58% of marketers plan on increasing their YouTube organic activities over the next 12 months.
Current Instagram activities

A significant 48% of marketers have increased their Instagram organic activities over the last 12 months.

Future Instagram plans

Our research shows a significant 66% of marketers plan on increasing their Instagram organic activities over the next 12 months.
Current Twitter activities

Less than a third of marketers (31%) have increased their Twitter organic activities over the last 12 months.

Future Twitter plans

Forty-four percent of marketers plan on increasing their Twitter organic activities over the next 12 months.
Current LinkedIn activities

About one-third (30%) of marketers have increased their LinkedIn organic activities over the last 12 months.

Future LinkedIn plans

More than half of marketers (51%) plan on increasing their LinkedIn organic activities over the next 12 months.

Sixty-five percent of B2B plan on increasing LinkedIn posting frequency, compared to 43% of B2C.
Current Pinterest activities

Only 13% of marketers have increased their Pinterest organic activities over the last 12 months.

Future Pinterest plans

Twenty-nine percent of marketers plan on increasing their Pinterest organic activities over the next 12 months.

Thirty-two percent of B2C marketers plan on increasing Pinterest organic activities, compared to 23% of B2B.
Current Snapchat activities

Only 6% of marketers have increased their Snapchat organic activities over the last 12 months.

Future Snapchat plans

About one in six marketers (16%) plan on increasing their Snapchat organic activities over the next 12 months.
Social media platforms marketers want to learn more about

We asked marketers to identify which social media platforms they want to learn more about.

B2C marketers are more interested in learning about Instagram (79% B2C vs. 64% B2B), Facebook (82% B2C vs. 72% B2B), and Pinterest (42% B2C vs. 34% B2B), than their B2B counterparts. B2B marketers are far more interested in learning about LinkedIn (70% B2B vs. 51% B2C).
We asked marketers to identify which forms of paid social media they regularly use.

The ad platform most used by marketers is Facebook (72%), followed by Instagram (31%).

B2C marketers are using Facebook ads more (76%) than B2B marketers (66%). B2B marketers are using LinkedIn ads more (21%) than B2C marketers (8%).
How have marketers changed their paid social media activities?

We asked marketers to indicate how they’ve changed their paid social media use in the last year. Respondents were asked to indicate whether they were doing more, the same, less, or did not use various ad networks.

The platforms where marketers have most increased their use of paid media are Facebook ads (49%) and Instagram ads (28%).

Here’s a breakdown by ad network:
How will marketers change their future paid social media activities?

We asked marketers to indicate how they'll change their paid social media use in the near future. Respondents were asked to indicate whether they plan to increase, decrease, remain the same, or not use various ad networks.

Marketers mostly plan on increasing their use of Facebook ads (67%), Instagram ads (53%), and Facebook Messenger ads (41%). A significant 73% said they have no plans to use Pinterest ads and 81% have no plans to use Snapchat ads.

Here's a breakdown by ad network:
Paid social media platforms marketers want to learn more about

We asked marketers to identify which paid social media platforms they want to learn more about. **Facebook took first place at 81%.**

B2C marketers are more interested in learning about Instagram ads (72% B2C vs. 58% B2B) than their B2B counterparts. B2B marketers are far more interested in learning about LinkedIn ads (67% B2B vs. 45% B2C).
Facebook Messenger bots

We asked marketers if they’re using Facebook Messenger bots in their marketing. Most (85%) were not.

**Future Messenger bot plans**

We then asked marketers how their Facebook Messenger bot plans will change in the next year. The majority (51%) planned on including Messenger bots in their future marketing.
Work with influencers

We asked marketers if they're working with influencers as part of their marketing. Most (61%) were not.
We asked marketers to identify the types of content they use in their social media marketing.

A large percentage (80%) use visual assets in their social media marketing. In second place was video (63%), up from 57% in 2017 and surpassing blogging (currently 60%; 66% in 2017). Live video is also gaining wider adoption at 35% (up from 28% in 2017).

B2B marketers are much more likely to use blogging (67%) when compared to B2C marketers (56%).
The most important content for marketers is...

We asked marketers to select the single most important form of content for their business. Only one choice was allowed.

The top pick was visual images (32%), down from 41% in 2017. Blogging dropped to 27% from 32% in 2017.

Blogging is more important for B2B marketers (36% say it's the most important) than B2C marketers (22% claim it's most important). B2C marketers place more importance on visual content (36% say it's the most important) than B2B marketers (25%).
How will marketers change their future content activities?

We asked marketers to indicate how they'll change their use of content in the near future. Respondents were asked to indicate whether they'll increase, decrease, remain the same, or not use various forms of content. Marketers plan to increase their use of videos (77%), visuals (68%), live video (63%), blogging (57%), and podcasting (25%), in that order. Here's a breakdown by form of content:
Content forms marketers want to learn more about

We asked marketers which forms of content they want to learn more about. Creating videos took first place as the area marketers most want to learn about, followed by live video and creating visuals.

B2C marketers are more interested in learning about using live video (71%) than B2B marketers (63%).
Survey participant demographics

We leveraged email to find participants for our survey. We conducted this survey in January 2018 by emailing a list of 450,000 marketers and asking them to take the survey. After 5 days, we closed the survey with 5,726 participants.

Here are the demographic breakdowns:

Survey participants

The largest group that took the survey works for small businesses of 2–10 employees (38%), followed by the self-employed (21%). Eighteen percent of people taking the survey work for businesses with 100 or more employees.

More than two-thirds (66%) of survey participants focus primarily on attracting consumers (B2C) and the other 34% primarily target businesses (B2B).
Industry

Below are the different industries of survey participants.

Age of participants

Most survey participants (84%) were age 30 or older.
**Gender**

Females edged out males, representing 61% of all participants.

**Country**

Most participants (50%) were based in the United States, followed by the United Kingdom (7%), Canada (6%), Australia (4%), and India (4%).
About Michael A. Stelzner

Michael Stelzner is the founder of Social Media Examiner, author of the books *Launch* and *Writing White Papers*, and host of the Social Media Marketing podcast—a top business podcast on Apple Podcasts. He also is the central character in "The Journey," a documentary video show.

Follow Michael on Twitter:  
https://twitter.com/mike_stelzner

Our Shows:  
https://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/podcasts/

Social Media Examiner® is one of the world's largest business blogs, helping millions of businesses discover how best to use social media. Social Media Examiner also hosts the largest social media marketing conference, Social Media Marketing World.