

2017 SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING INDUSTRY REPORT

*How Marketers Are Using
Social Media to Grow
Their Businesses*

MAY 2017

BY MICHAEL A. STELZNER

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Letter from the author...

Hello, fellow marketer!

Welcome to our **9th annual study!** Social media marketing is always evolving. And for businesses, social media marketing has become an important pillar, as you'll see detailed in this year's report.

This **49-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 77 charts** on the following pages. I'll reveal the "not-so-obvious" findings in this data-rich content.

The report will uncover the "who, what, where, when, and why" of social media marketing.

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:
<http://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/report2017/>

All my best!



Michael A. Stelzner
Founder, Social Media Examiner
Host, Social Media Marketing podcast and
the Social Media Marketing Talk Show



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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 marketing pros want answered about social media.
- **Facebook marketing:** We explore how effective Facebook marketing has been for marketers.
- **The time commitment:** We examine the weekly hours marketers invest in their social media efforts. This analysis will be helpful for marketers just getting started or those seeking support staff.
- **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 weekly time invested and years of experience affect the results.
- **Most-used social media platforms:** Discover which platforms marketers are using and how their usage will change this year. We also examine which platforms experienced marketers are using.
- **Social posting frequency:** In this section, we explore how often marketers are posting to major social platforms and how they plan to change their strategies.
- **Other analyses:** We also examine the role of content and live video in social media marketing, as well as paid social media. 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 2016 study.

How to use this report: Regardless of your experience with social media marketing, there's something here for you. If you're a beginner, take a look at the time commitment, benefits, and platforms that your peers are using.

If you're experienced with social media, compare yourself against other marketers, see which platforms they're looking at next, and determine whether you're achieving the same benefits as your more experienced peers.

Major findings

Here's a quick summary of our primary findings:

- **Visuals have become essential:** A significant 85% of marketers use visuals in their marketing and 73% plan on increasing their use of visuals.
- **Live video is hot:** A significant 61% of marketers plan on using live video services such as Facebook Live and Periscope, and 69% want to learn more about live video.
- **Instagram is on a growth trajectory:** Currently, 54% of marketers are using Instagram, yet 63% plan on increasing their Instagram activities and 71% of marketers want to learn more about Instagram.
- **Facebook is the most important social network for marketers by a long shot:** When asked to select their most important platform, 62% of marketers chose Facebook, followed by LinkedIn at 16%.
- **Many marketers are unsure about their Facebook marketing:** A significant 40% of marketers don't know if their Facebook marketing is working and 53% have seen declines in their Facebook News Feed exposure.
- **Facebook ads dominate:** A surprising 93% of social marketers regularly use Facebook ads and 64% plan on increasing their Facebook ads activities.
- **Tactics and engagement are top areas marketers want to master:** At least 91% of marketers want to know the most effective social tactics and the best ways to engage their audience with social media.

The above summary is just a taste of what's in this report.

On the following pages, you'll find 77 charts that visually convey some fascinating findings. For example, we look at which social networks are used by those who invest the most time in social media marketing, the benefits achieved by those who've been at this for years, and what emerging technology social media marketers are interested in.

Top 5 social media questions marketers want answered

The top social media questions marketers want answered can be summarized with the following keywords: tactics, engagement, measurement, paid, and audience—in that order.

Below are the top issues marketers are facing today with social media marketing. At least 87% of marketers surveyed felt they're struggling to answer all of the following questions:

#1: TACTICS: What social tactics are most effective?

The number-one question marketers want answered (93%) is which tactics work best. This isn't a surprise, given the constant changes taking place across many social networks.

#2: ENGAGEMENT: What are the best ways to engage my audience with social media?

Figuring out how to best connect with people remains high on the list of questions marketers want answered (91%). Engaging with customers is becoming a unique competitive advantage.

#3: MEASUREMENT: How do I measure the return on my social media marketing?

A significant 89% of marketers want to know how to measure their return on investment for social media activities.

#4: PAID: What are the best ways to use paid social media?

Determining how to use social media ads is a big question for marketers (88%). Figuring out how to use various social platforms for more paid exposure and customer acquisition is important.

#5: AUDIENCE: How do I find my target audience with social media?

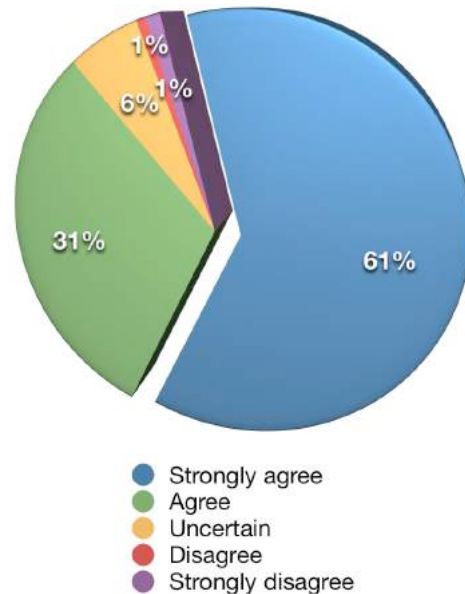
Locating ideal customers and prospects is a big concern for marketers (87%). Marketers are looking for guidance on sifting through enormous social networks and connecting with the right people.

Use of social media marketing

We asked a few questions to determine the survey participants' experience using social media to market their businesses.

Social media is important for my business

A significant 92% of marketers said that social media is important to their businesses.



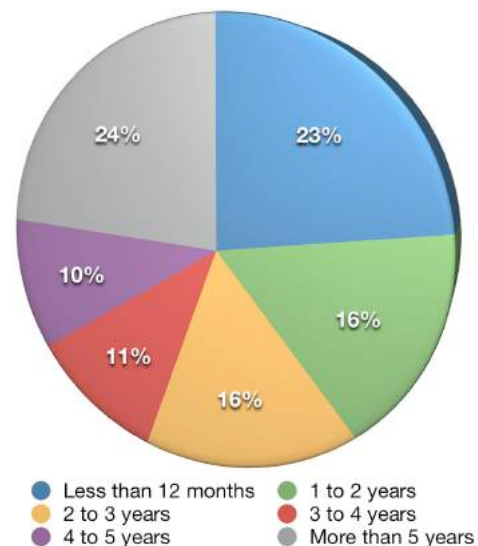
Years using social media marketing

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

Sixty-one percent of marketers surveyed have at least two years of social media marketing experience.

Note: For a detailed demographic breakdown of survey participants, see pages 46–48 of this report.

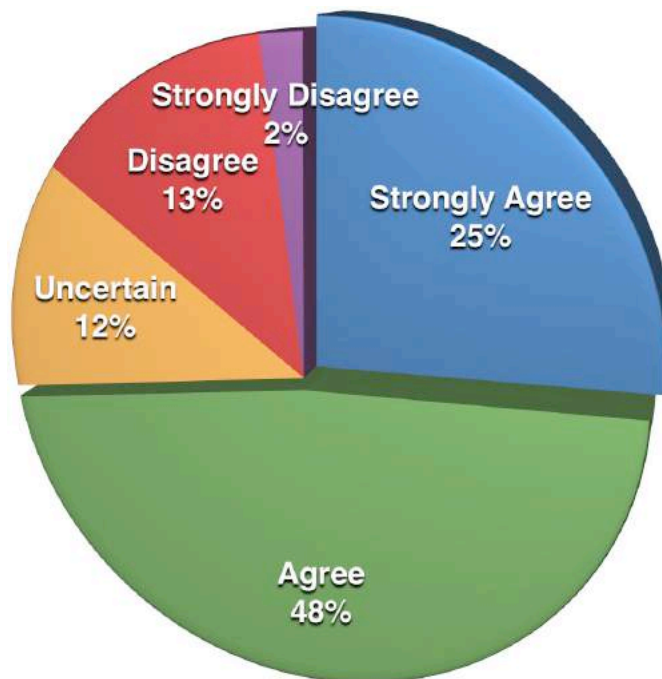
On the following pages, we asked marketers to rate their agreement with a few broad statements related to social media.



Analyzing social media

We wanted to understand marketers' ability to analyze their social media activities, so we asked them to rate their agreement with the following statement: "I regularly analyze my social activities."

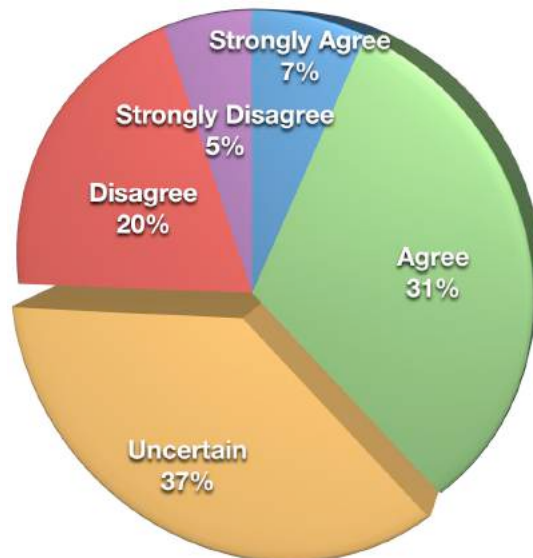
A significant 73% of marketers surveyed analyze their social media activities.



Measuring social media ROI

We wanted to understand marketers' ability to measure 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."

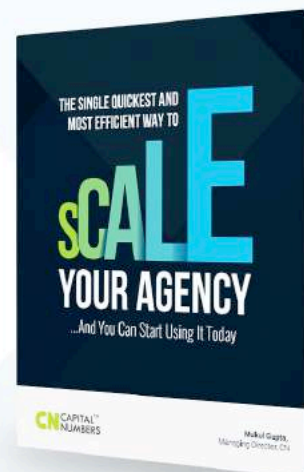
Only 38% agreed they're able to measure their social activities. The ROI issue has plagued marketers for years. In 2016, 41% indicated they could measure ROI and in 2015, it was 42%.



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- ✓ How freelancers can KILL a project (and not in a good way...be careful).
- ✓ A foolproof, one-minute method for finding quality talent even on low-quality platforms.
- ✓ And finally...the single most effective way I have EVER FOUND for scaling your business quickly, efficiently, and WITHOUT GOING OVER BUDGET.



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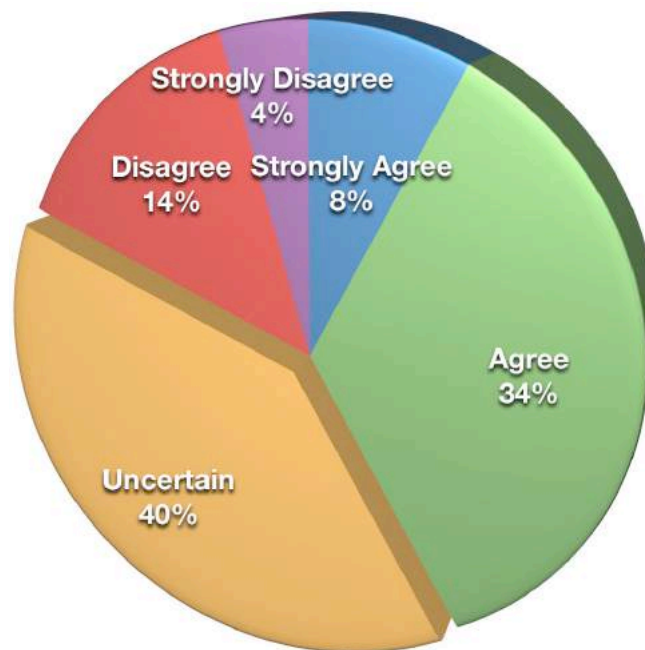
CN CAPITAL
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Effectiveness of Facebook marketing

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

Only 42% of marketers feel like their Facebook efforts are working, a decrease from 46% in 2016. However, most marketers either don't know or indicated that their Facebook marketing is NOT working.

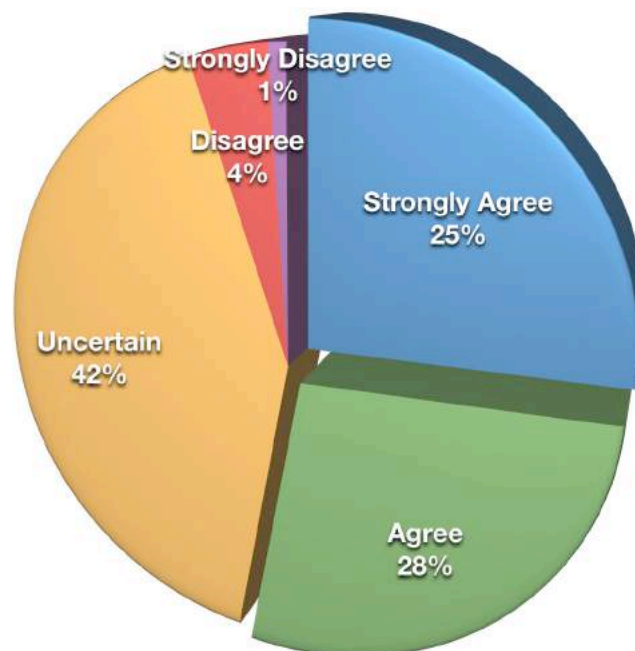
B2C marketers were far more likely to agree or strongly agree (45%) than their B2B peers (37%).



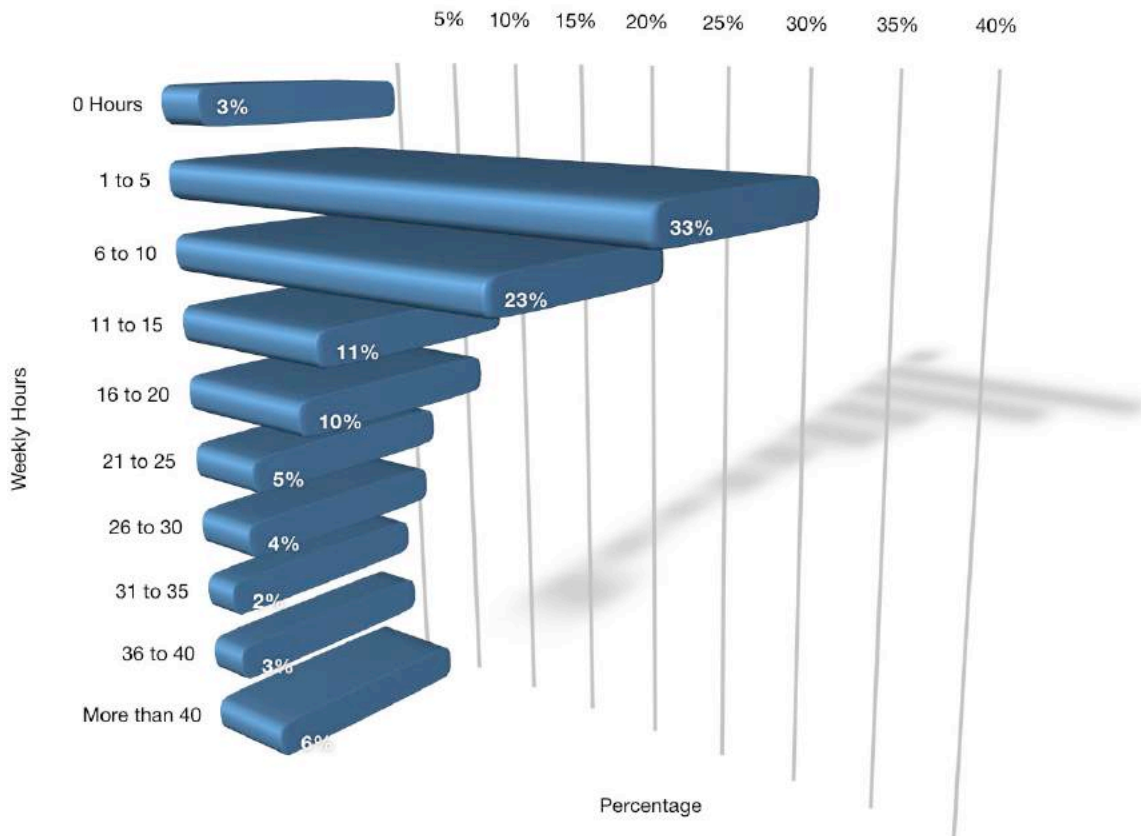
Facebook News Feed exposure

We wanted to understand if marketers experienced decreased Facebook News Feed exposure, so we asked them to rate their agreement with the following statement: "Facebook's algorithm has decreased my News Feed exposure in the last 12 months."

A significant 53% of marketers surveyed said they saw News Feed declines. Plus, a significant 42% of marketers surveyed were unsure. When combined, **95% of marketers either don't know or have seen a decline in Facebook News Feed exposure over the last 12 months.**



Weekly time commitment for social media marketing



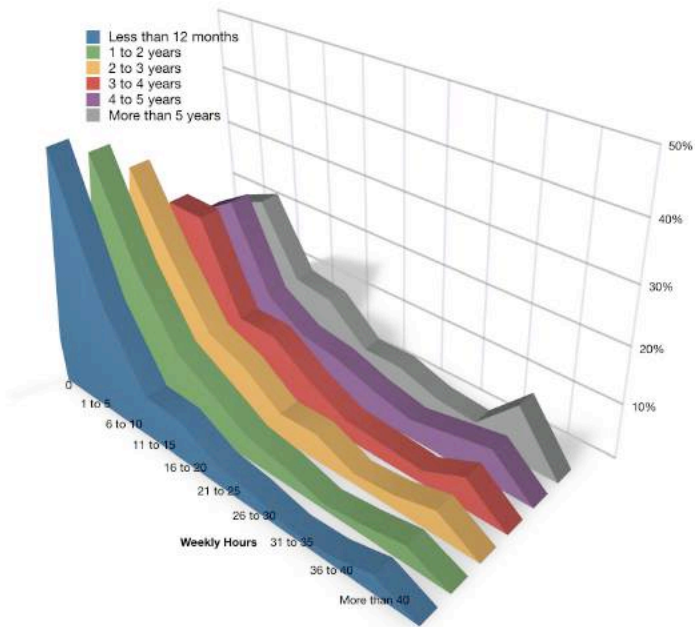
A significant 64% of marketers are using social media for 6 hours or more and 41% for 11 hours or more weekly. It's interesting to note that nearly 20% of marketers spend more than 20 hours each week on social media.

The experience factor

There's a direct relationship between how long marketers have been using social media and their weekly time commitment.

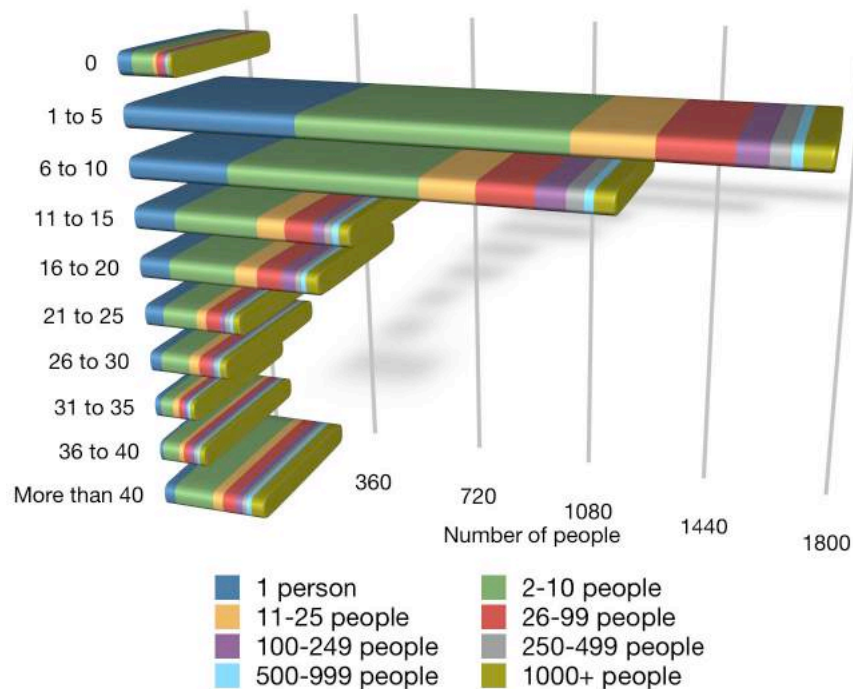
For people **just beginning** with social media (less than 12 months of experience), 51% spend **5 or fewer hours per week**.

However, of folks who have been **doing this for 2 years or longer**, at least 65% spend **6 hours or more per week** on social media activities.

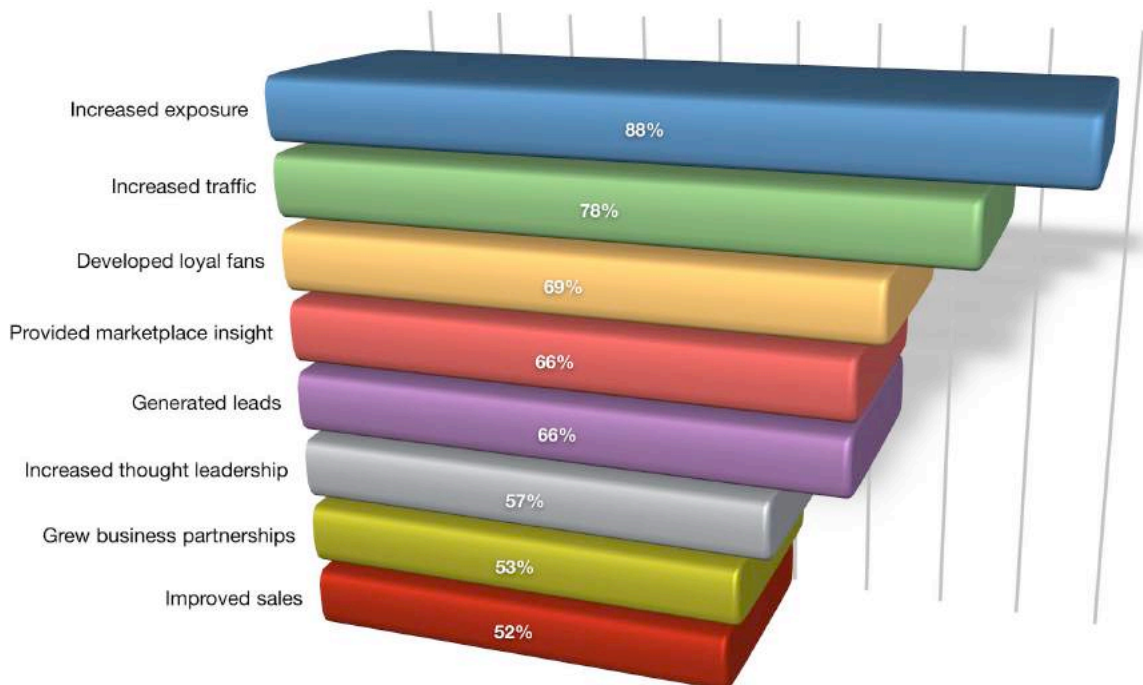


How the time commitment varies with business size

This chart shows how different-sized businesses invest their time with social media activities.



Benefits of social media marketing



The top two benefits of social media marketing are increasing exposure and increasing traffic. A significant 88% of all marketers indicated that their social media efforts have generated more exposure for their businesses. Increasing traffic was the second major benefit, with 78% reporting positive results.

Most marketers are using social media to develop loyal fans (69%) and gain marketplace intelligence (66%).

The order of the benefits hasn't changed since 2015, and for the most part, the percentages have only changed 1 or 2 points.

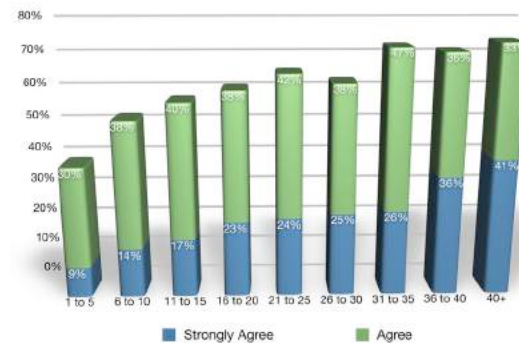
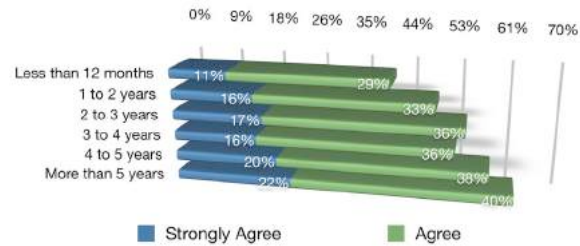
Some questions that naturally emerge from the above chart might include: "Can I achieve more benefits by investing more time in social media?", "Are marketers who've been using social media for years gaining even better results?", and "Is there a difference between B2B and B2C?" The following charts address these questions.

Improved sales

It takes time to develop relationships that lead to sales. However, a large percentage of marketers who take the time find great results.

For example, more than half of marketers who've been using social media for more than 2 years report it helped them improve sales. More than half who spend 6 or more hours per week find the same results and 74% of those who spend 40+ hours per week earn new business through their efforts.

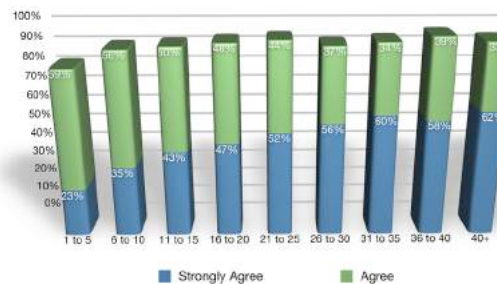
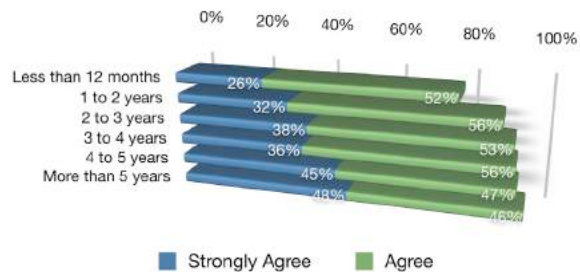
Conversely, 48% of all marketers taking this survey report that social media has *not* helped them improve sales (see page 14). This may be because they lack the needed tools to track sales.



Increased exposure

With as little as 6 hours per week, the vast majority of marketers (91%+) indicated their social media efforts increased exposure for their businesses.

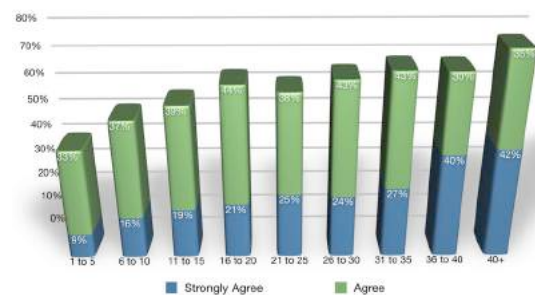
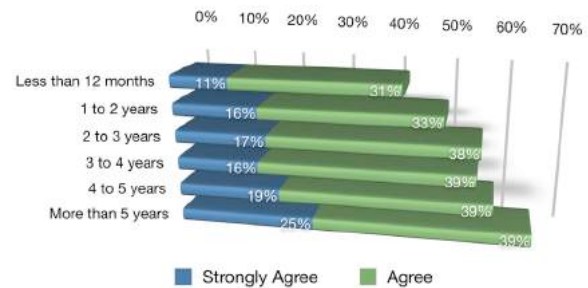
Nearly all marketers (88%+) who've been employing social media marketing for 1 year or longer report it generates exposure for their businesses.



Grew business partnerships

The more time marketers invest in social media, the more they gain business partnerships. More than half of marketers who've invested at least 2 years in social media marketing report that they gained new partnerships.

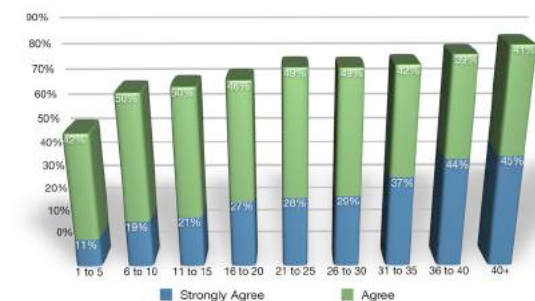
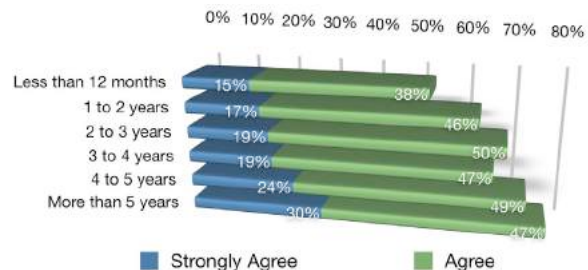
More than half of those investing as little as 6 hours per week in social media were able to build new partnerships.



Generated leads

By spending as little as 6 hours per week, 69%+ of marketers see lead generation benefits with social media.

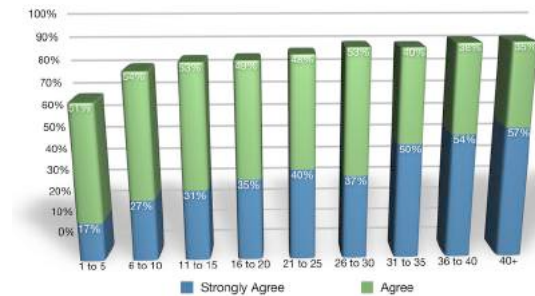
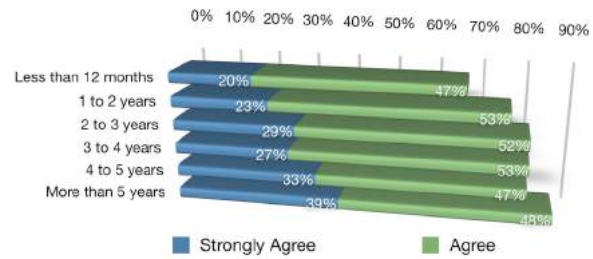
More than half of marketers with at least 1 year of social media experience were generating leads with social platforms.



Increased traffic

A significant 81%+ of participants found that traffic increased with as little as 6 hours per week invested in social media marketing.

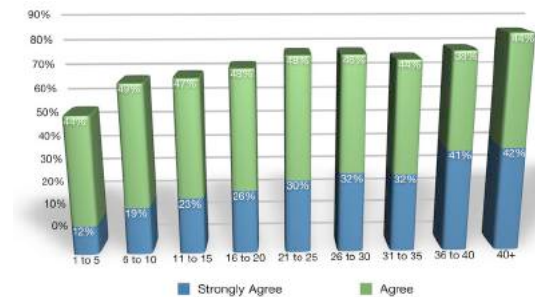
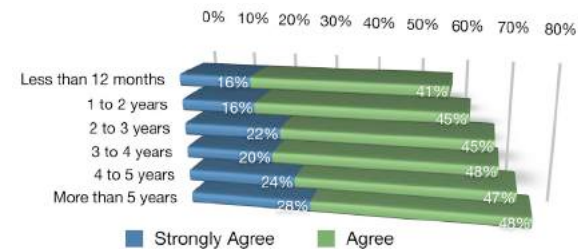
And those who've used social media for 1 year or more reported substantially better results (76%+ reported benefits), compared with those with less experience.



Provided marketplace insight

Of those with at least 1 year of experience, 61% or more found social platforms provided marketplace insight.

At least 68% of those spending at least 6 hours per week were more likely to gain marketplace insight.

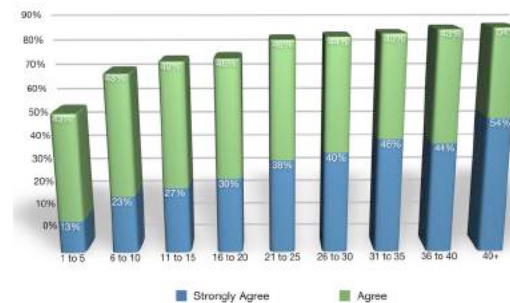
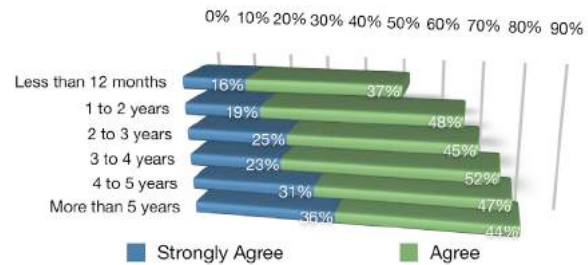


Developed loyal fans

Of those who have been using social media for at least 1 year, 67% found it useful for building a loyal fan base.

Time invested makes a difference. Of those spending at least 6 hours per week, 71% found benefit, compared to 56% of those spending 5 hours or fewer per week.

B2C marketers (72%) were much more likely to develop a loyal fan base through social media than B2B marketers (64%).

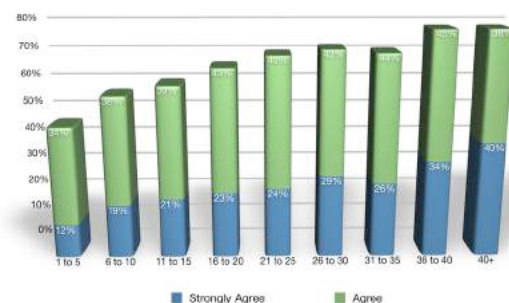
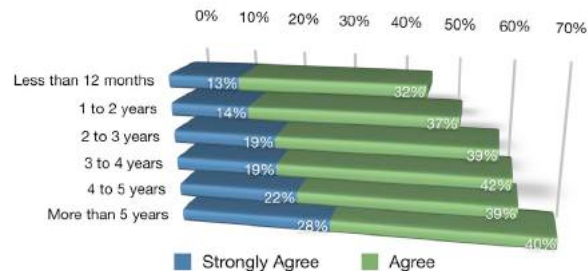


Increased thought leadership

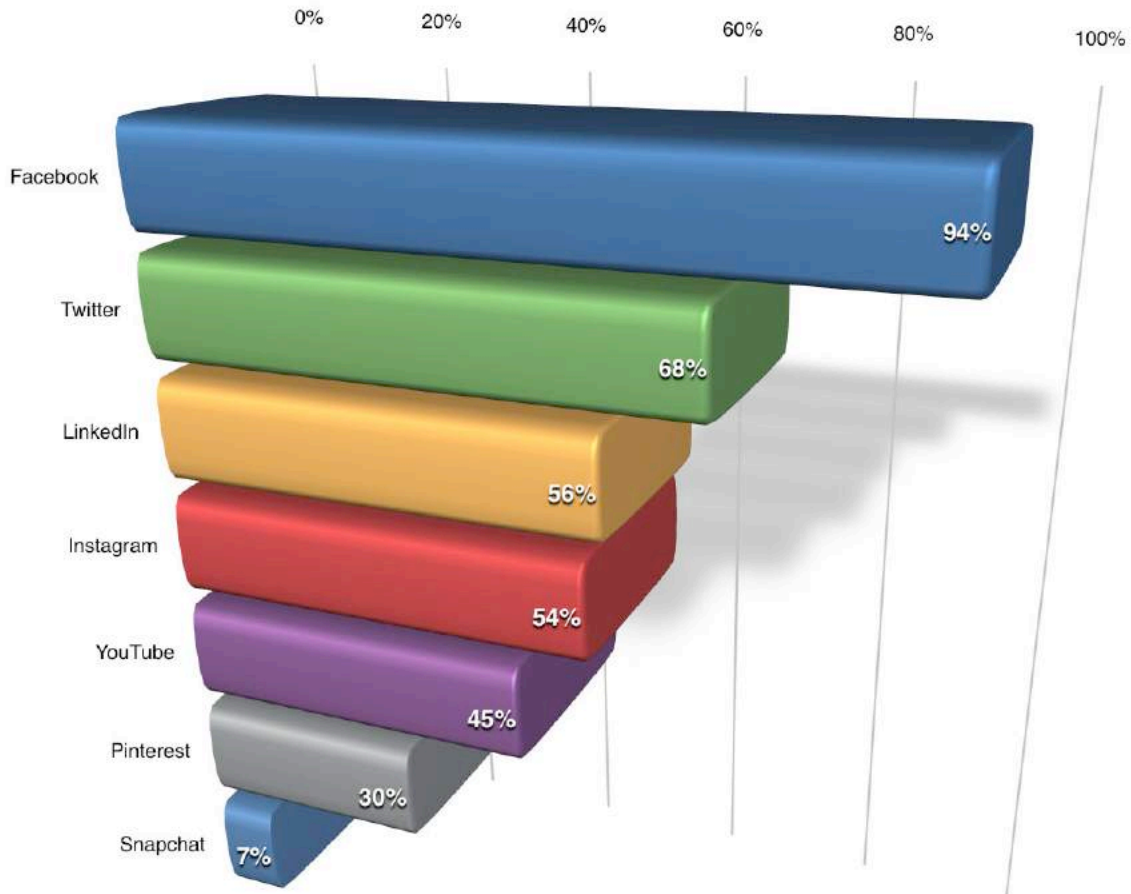
More than half of marketers who have been using social media for 1 or more years (51%+) have been able to increase thought leadership.

Most marketers (57%+) gained thought leadership with at least 6 hours per week invested.

B2B marketers were more likely (64%) to use social media to gain thought leadership than B2C marketers (54%).



Commonly used social media platforms



Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram were the top four platforms used by marketers, with Facebook leading the pack by a long shot. Other platforms paled in comparison to these top four.

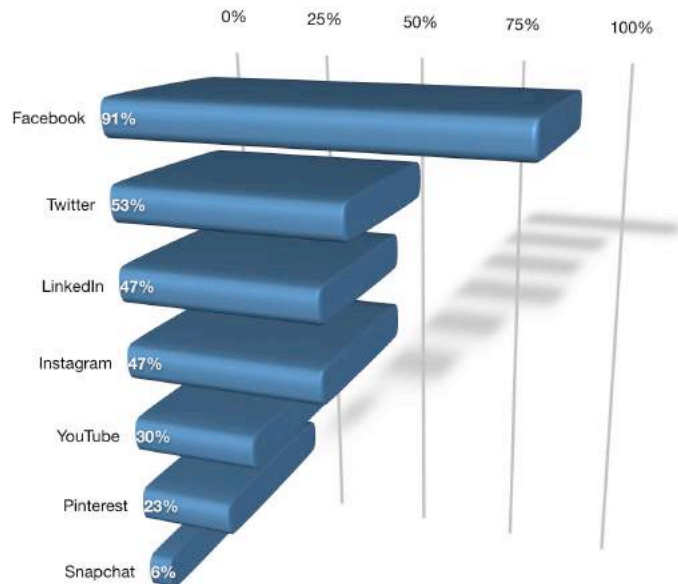
CHANGES SINCE 2016

- Facebook rose from 93% to 94% in 2017.
- Twitter declined from 76% to 68% in 2017.
- LinkedIn dropped from 67% to 56% in 2017.
- **Instagram jumped from 44% to 54% in 2017.**
- YouTube declined from 53% to 45% in 2017.
- **Pinterest dropped from 40% to 30% in 2017.**
- Snapchat rose from 5% to 7% in 2017.

Here's a close examination of which social channels experienced social media marketers are using, compared to those just getting underway.

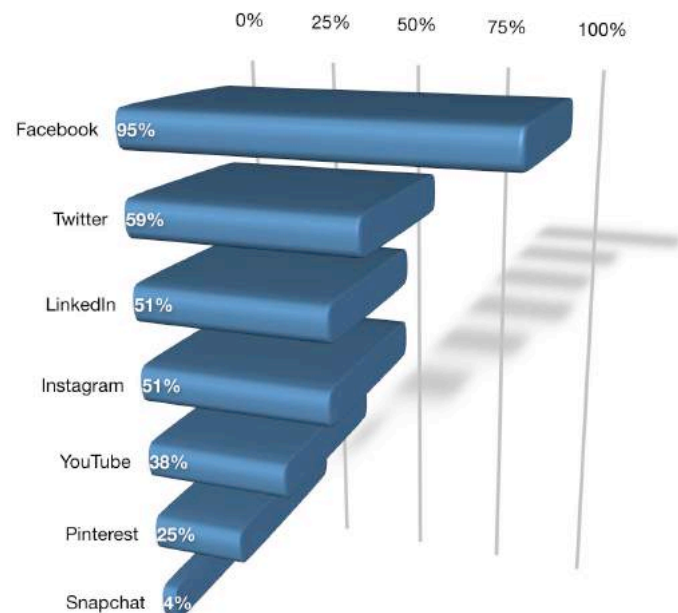
Platforms used by those with less than 12 months experience

Those just getting underway with social media marketing select Facebook as their number-one choice (by a long shot), followed by Twitter and LinkedIn.



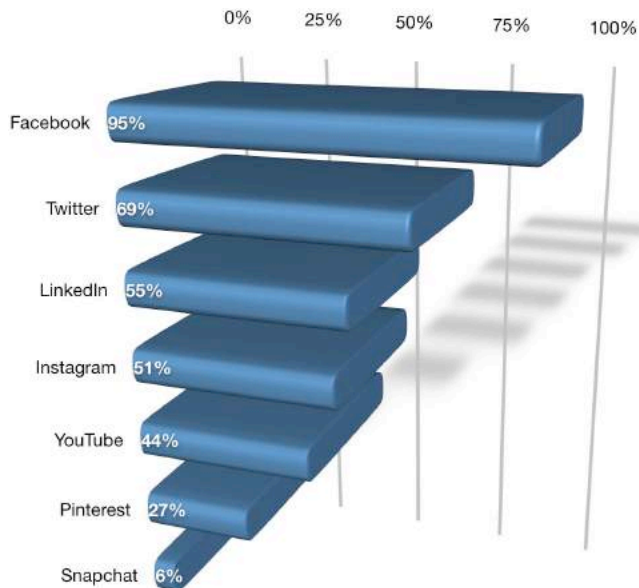
Platforms used by those with 1 to 2 years experience

For marketers who have been employing social media marketing for 1 to 2 years, Facebook and Twitter remain the top two choices.



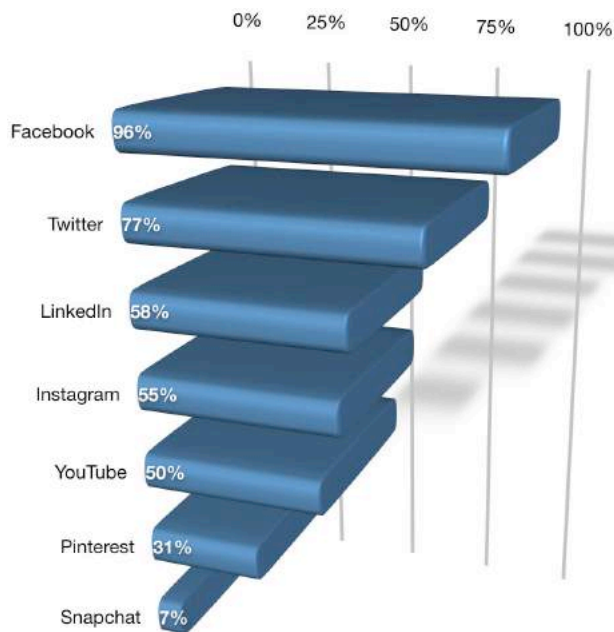
Platforms used by those with 2 to 3 years experience

Facebook and Twitter are the two standouts among the platforms used by social media marketers with 2 to 3 years experience.



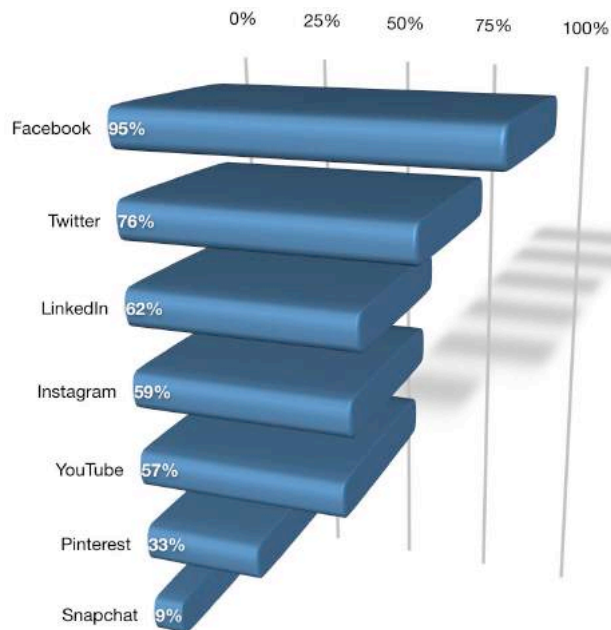
Platforms used by those with 3 to 4 years experience

Nearly all marketers with 3 to 4 years of social media experience use Facebook (96%).



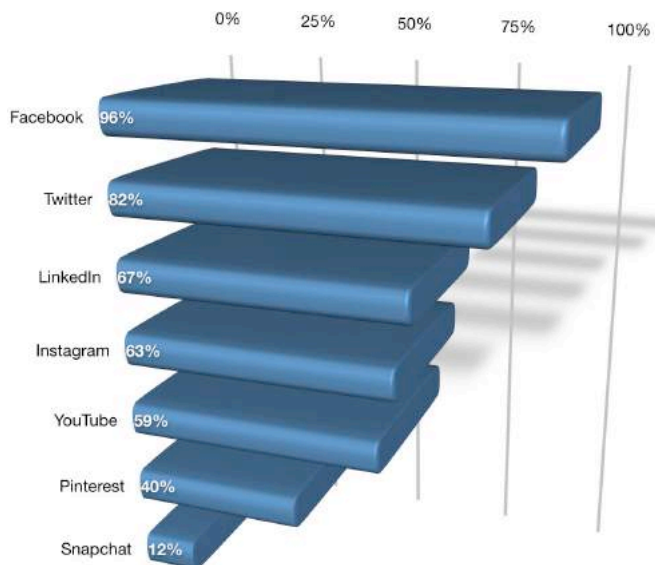
Platforms used by those with 4 to 5 years experience

As marketers gain experience, their marketing efforts seem to expand across most major social platforms.



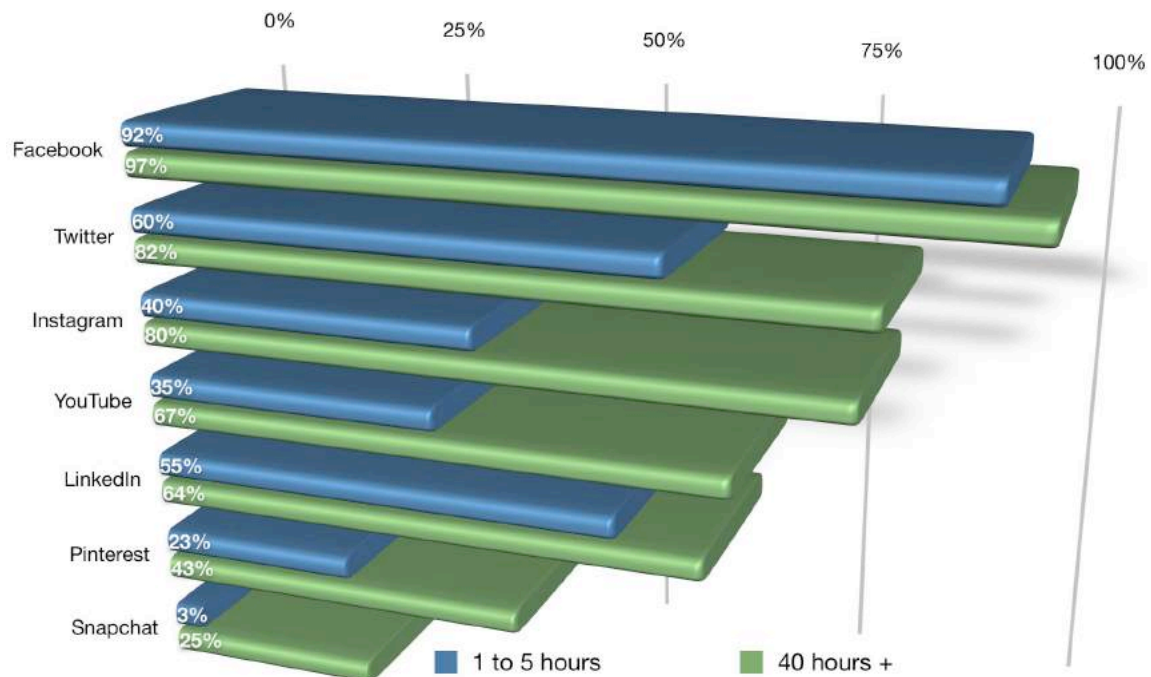
Platforms used by those with more than 5 years experience

Those with the most social media marketing experience also put the highest focus on using each of the social networks.



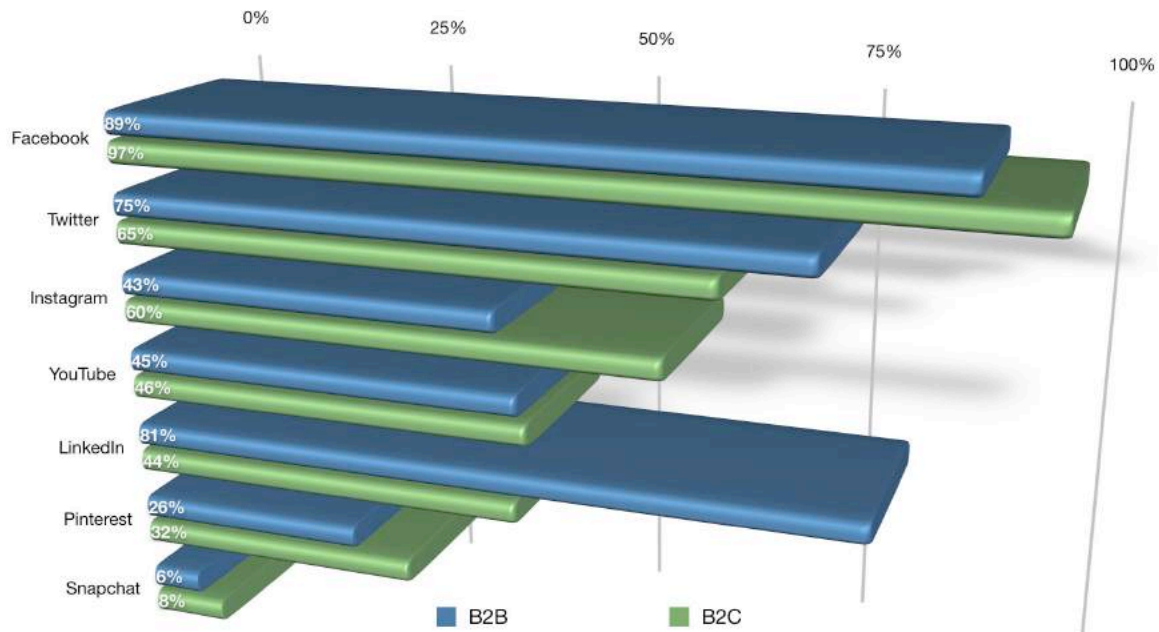
Platforms used by those who commit small versus large amounts of weekly time to social media

This chart shows where marketers putting in the least time are investing versus those putting in the most time. There are some interesting findings here. Marketers investing 40+ hours per week are much more focused on Instagram (40% more), YouTube (32% more), Twitter (22% more), and Pinterest (20% more) than those investing 6 or fewer hours a week with social media.

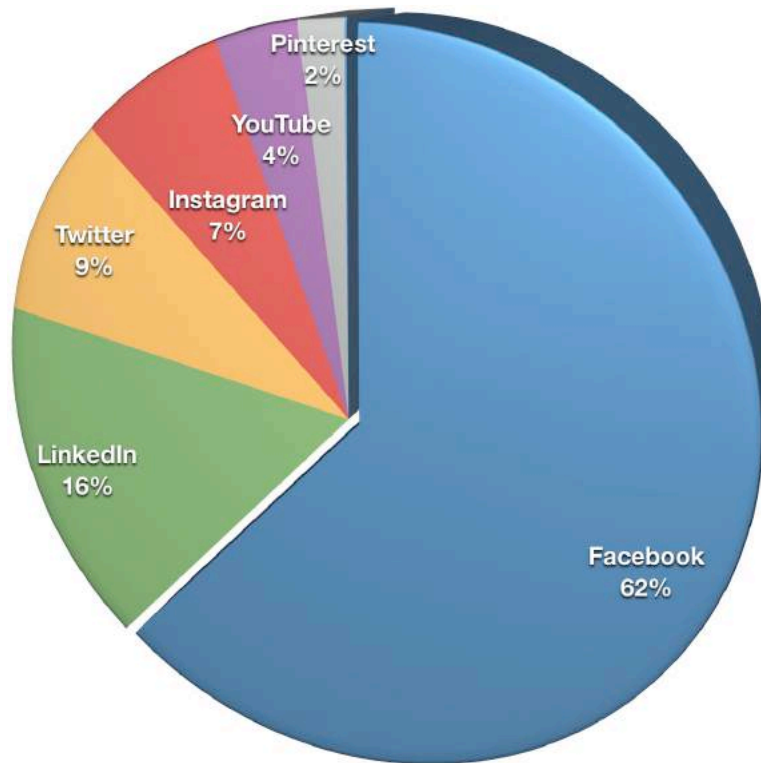


Platforms used by B2B versus B2C

This chart shows how platform use varies between B2B- and B2C-focused marketers. B2C marketers are more focused on Instagram (17% more), Facebook (8% more), and Pinterest (6% more). B2B marketers are more focused on LinkedIn (37% more) and Twitter (10% more).



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.

Nearly two-thirds of marketers (62%) chose Facebook as their most important platform, followed by LinkedIn (16%), Twitter (9%), and then Instagram (7%). This chart clearly reveals Facebook is still the primary platform for marketers.

CHANGES SINCE 2016

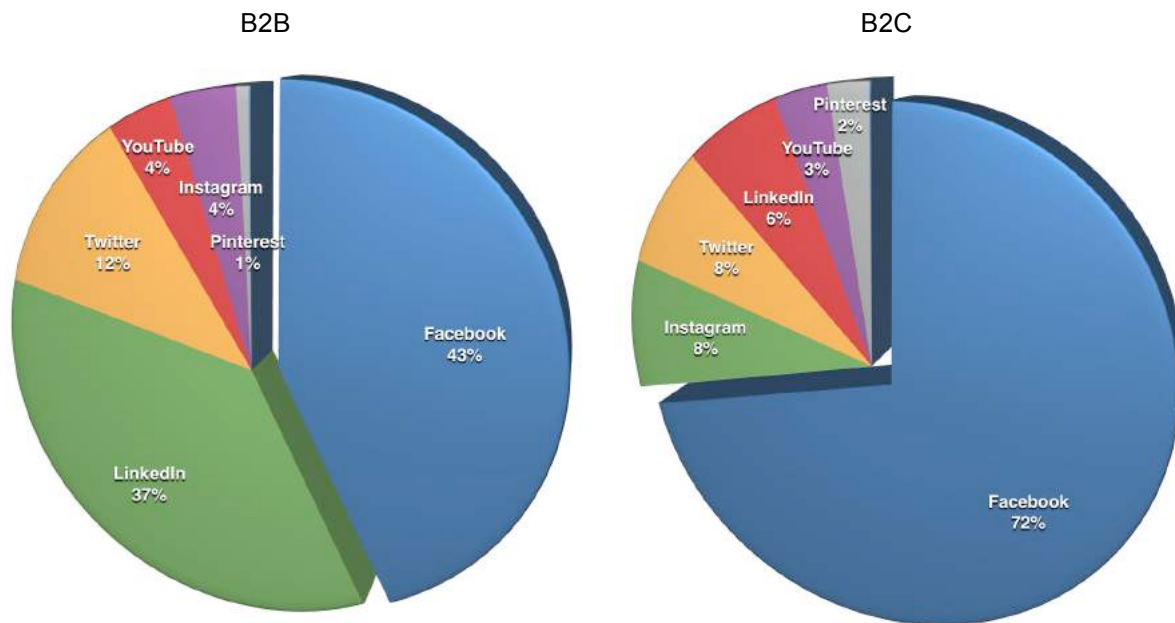
- Facebook increased from 55% to 62% in 2017.
- LinkedIn decreased from 18% to 16% in 2017.
- Twitter dropped from 12% to 9% in 2017.
- Instagram rose from 4% to 7% in 2017, surpassing YouTube.
- YouTube and Pinterest remained the same.

B2B vs. B2C

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

Clearly, Facebook dominates in the B2C space (72% of marketers select it as their number-one choice). However, for B2B marketers, Facebook also grabs the most important slot, surpassing LinkedIn.

Changes since 2016: For the first time in the history of our study, Facebook has passed LinkedIn as the most important platform for B2B marketers. LinkedIn dropped from 40% to 37% and Facebook rose from 37% to 43% for B2B marketers.



Social media posting frequency

We asked marketers to indicate (1) how they've changed their social posting frequency over the last 12 months, (2) how often they currently post on major social networks each day, and (3) how they will change their posting frequency over the next 12 months.

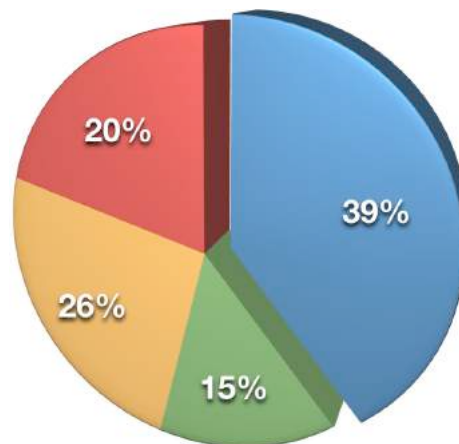
Here's a breakdown by social media channel:

Current Facebook activities

The marketers we surveyed post 8 times to Facebook per day.

A significant 39% of marketers have increased their posting frequency on Facebook over the last 12 months.

Only 15% of marketers have decreased their posting frequency.



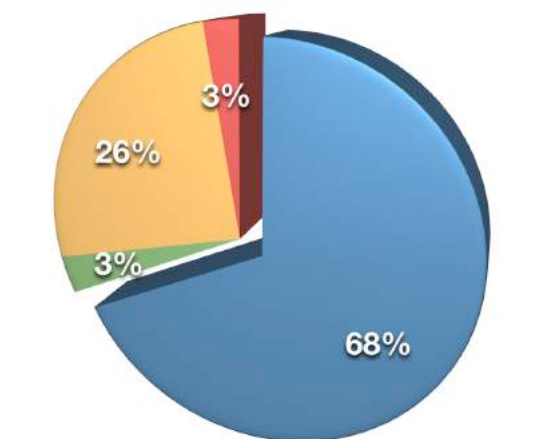
More
The same
Less
Do not utilize

Future Facebook plans

Our research shows a significant 68% of marketers plan on increasing their Facebook posting frequency over the next 12 months.

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

Seventy-two percent of B2C plan on increasing Facebook posting frequency, compared to 63% of B2B.

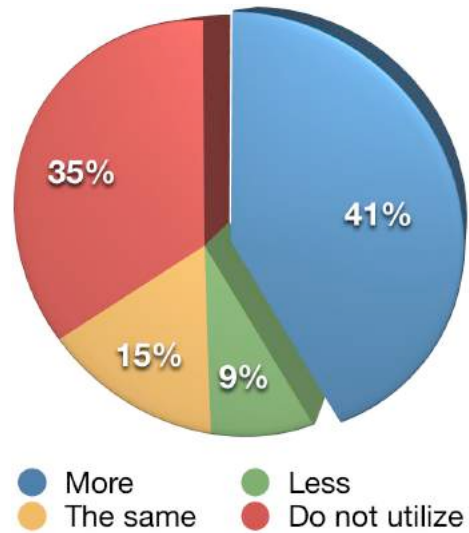


Increase
Stay the same
Decrease
No plans to utilize

Current Instagram activities

Marketers post to Instagram 4 times per day.

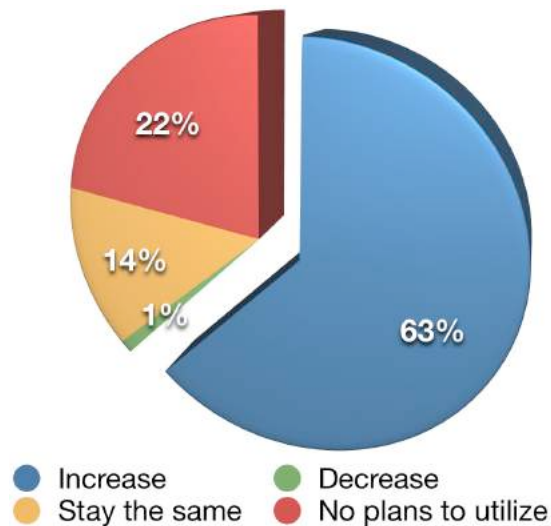
A significant 41% of marketers have increased their Instagram posting frequency over the last 12 months.



Future Instagram plans

Our research shows a significant 63% of marketers plan on increasing their Instagram posting activities over the next 12 months.

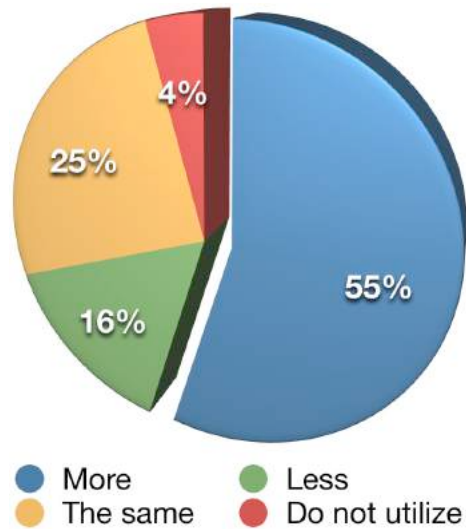
Sixty-eight percent of B2C plan on increasing Instagram posting frequency, compared to 53% of B2B.



Current Twitter activities

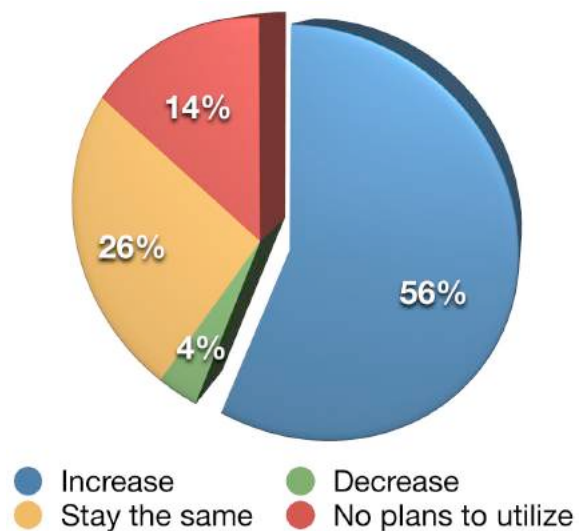
Marketers post to Twitter 6 times per day.

More than half of marketers (55%) have increased their Twitter posting frequency over the last 12 months.



Future Twitter plans

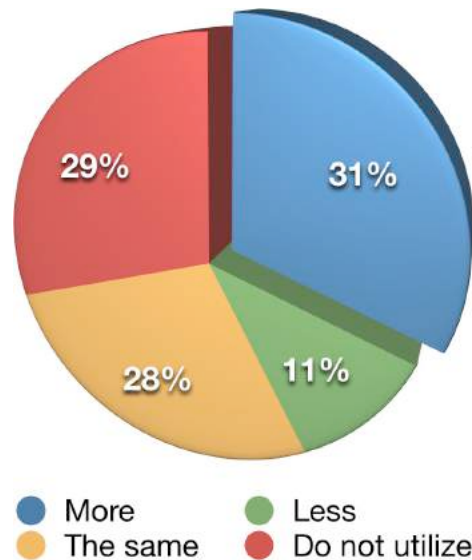
A significant 56% of marketers plan on increasing their Twitter posting activities over the next 12 months.



Current LinkedIn activities

Marketers post to LinkedIn 4 times per day.

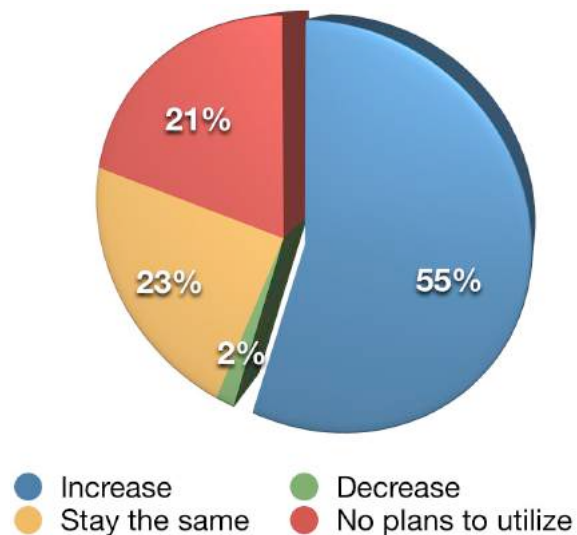
About one-third (31%) of marketers have increased their LinkedIn posting frequency over the last 12 months.



Future LinkedIn plans

More than half of marketers (55%) plan on increasing their LinkedIn posting activities over the next 12 months.

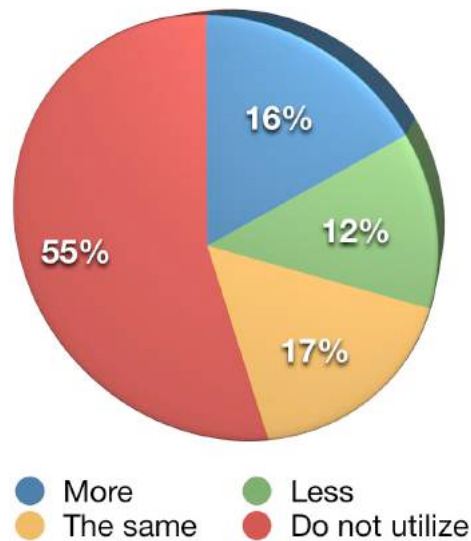
Sixty-eight percent of B2B plan on increasing LinkedIn posting frequency, compared to 48% of B2C.



Current Pinterest activities

Marketers post to Pinterest 3 times per day.

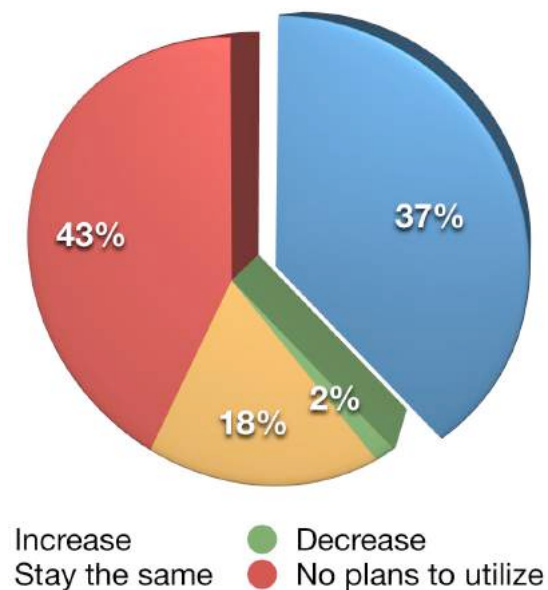
Only 16% of marketers have increased their Pinterest posting frequency over the last 12 months.



Future Pinterest plans

Thirty-seven percent of marketers plan on increasing their Pinterest posting activities over the next 12 months.

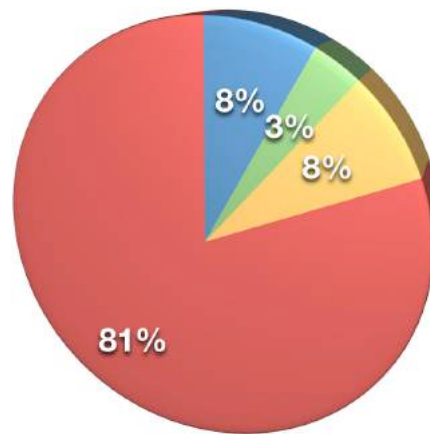
Forty percent of B2C plan on increasing Pinterest posting frequency, compared to 30% of B2B.



Current Snapchat activities

Marketers post to Snapchat 1 time per day.

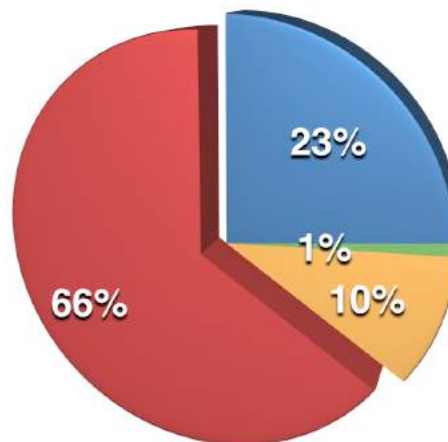
Only 8% of marketers have increased their Snapchat posting frequency over the last 12 months.



More Less
The same Do not utilize

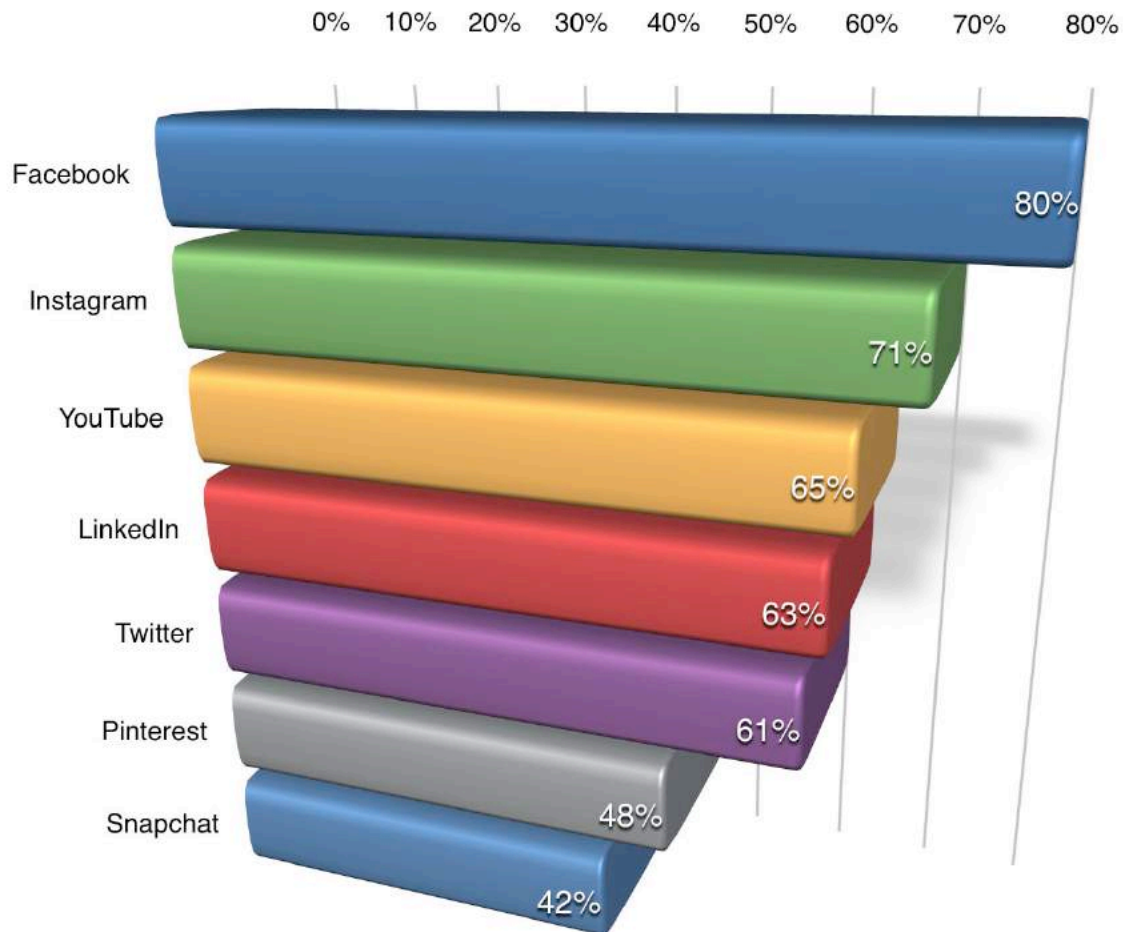
Future Snapchat plans

About one in four marketers (23%) plan on increasing their Snapchat posting activities over the next 12 months.



Increase Decrease
Stay the same No plans to utilize

Social media platforms marketers want to learn more about



We asked marketers to identify social media platforms about which they most want to improve their knowledge. Facebook took first place, growing from 73% in 2016 to 80% in 2017. Instagram increased from 55% in 2016 to 71% in 2017. Snapchat also rose significantly, from 28% in 2016 to 42% in 2017.

B2C marketers are more interested in learning about Facebook (84% B2C vs. 73% B2B), Pinterest (52% B2C vs. 41% B2B), and Instagram (76% B2C vs. 61% B2B) than their B2B counterparts. And B2B marketers are far more interested in learning about LinkedIn (74% B2B vs. 58% B2C).

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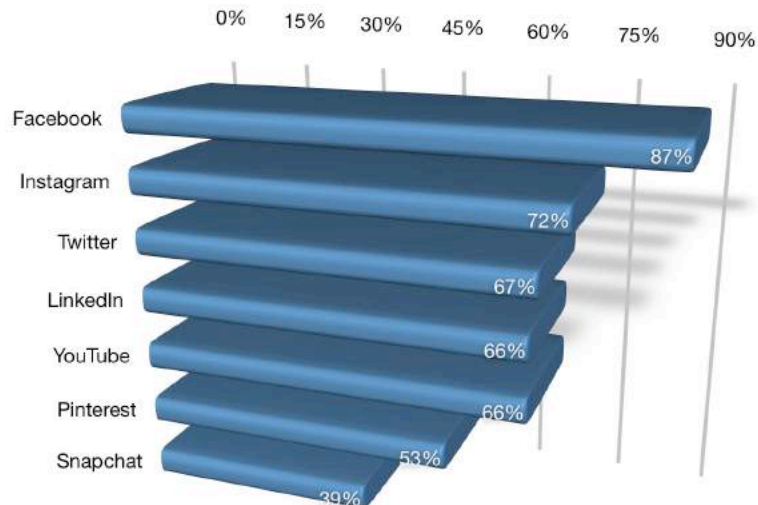
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What follows are social platforms marketers are interested in based on how long they've been using social media marketing.

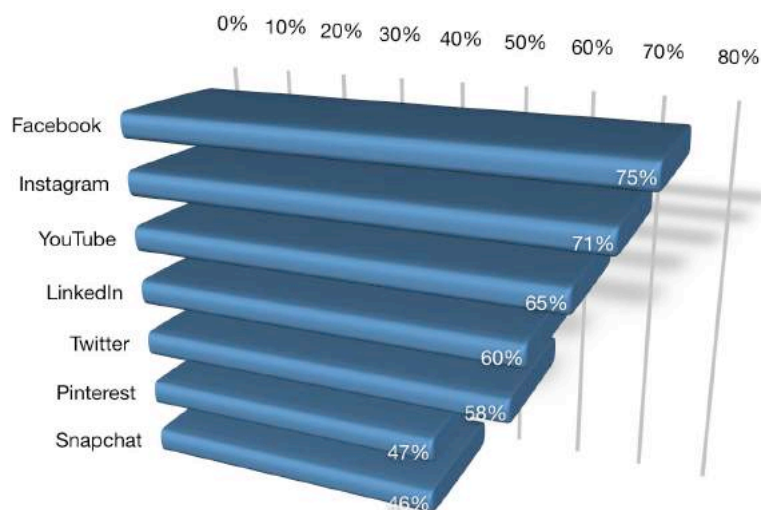
Marketers with less than 12 months social media experience:

Facebook (87%), Instagram (72%), and Twitter (67%) are the top social networks new social media marketers want to learn about.

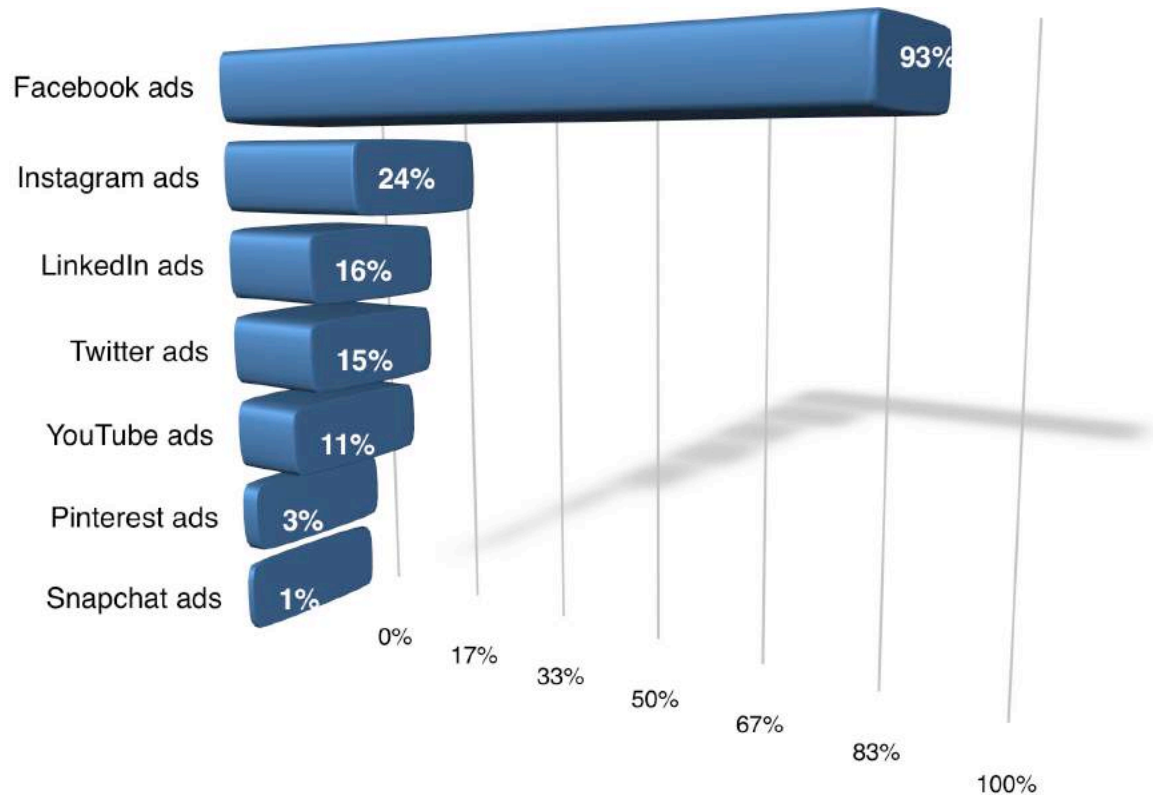


Marketers with 3+ years social media experience:

For experienced pros, Facebook (75%) still tops the list, followed by Instagram (71%) and YouTube (65%).



Paid social media



We asked marketers to identify which forms of paid social media they regularly use.

The overwhelming majority (93%) use Facebook ads (up from 87% in 2016), followed by Instagram ads (24%).

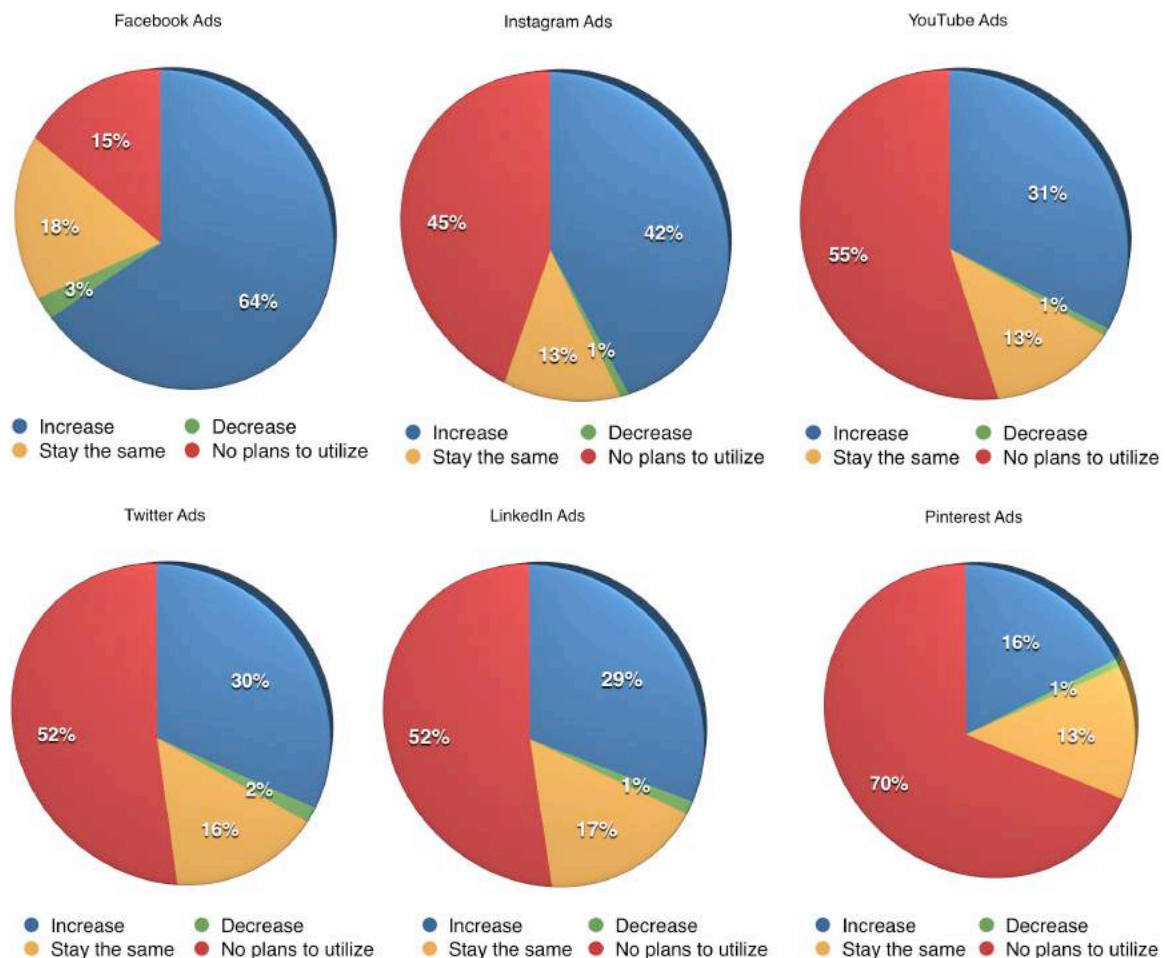
B2C marketers are using Facebook ads more (95%) than B2B marketers (87%). B2B marketers are using LinkedIn ads more (29%) than B2C marketers (10%).

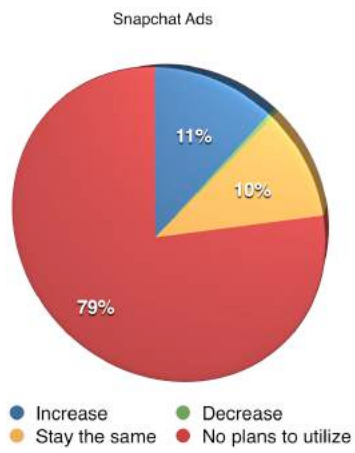
How will marketers change their paid social media activities?

We asked marketers to indicate how they will 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 utilize various ad networks.

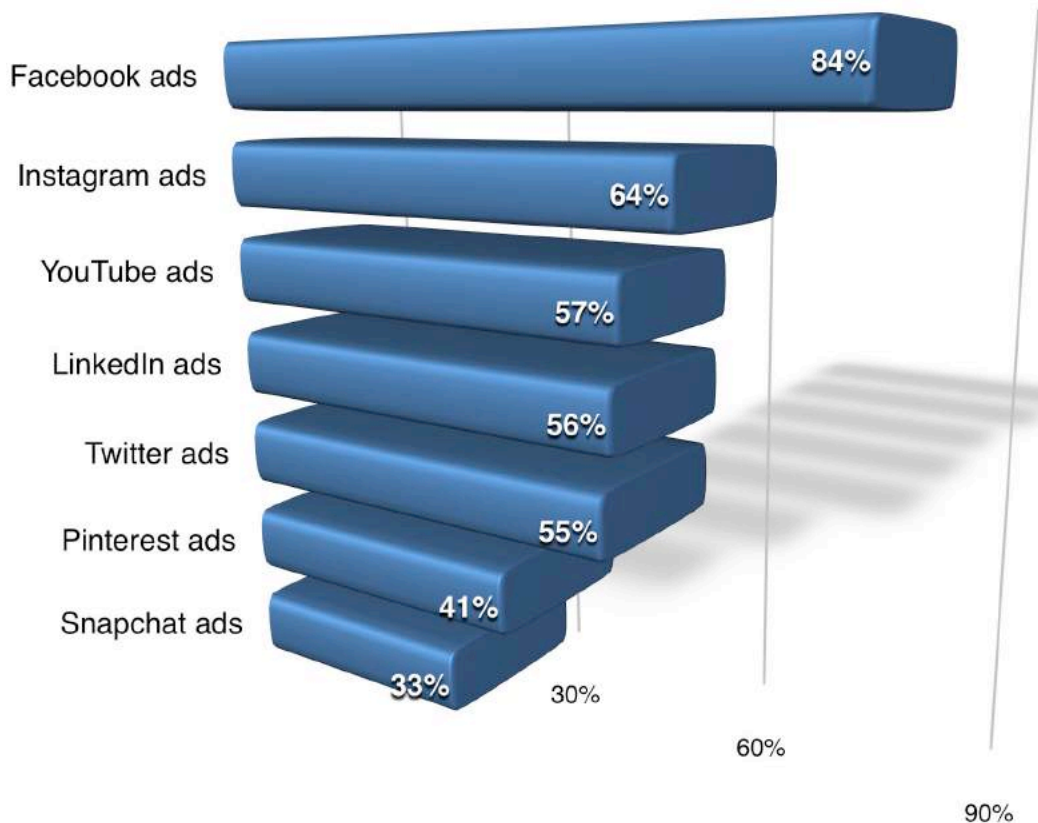
Marketers plan on increasing their use of Facebook ads (64%), Instagram ads (42%), YouTube ads (31%), Twitter ads (30%), and LinkedIn ads (29%), in that order. A significant 70% said they have no plans to utilize Pinterest ads and 79% have no plans to use Snapchat ads.

Here's a breakdown by ad network:





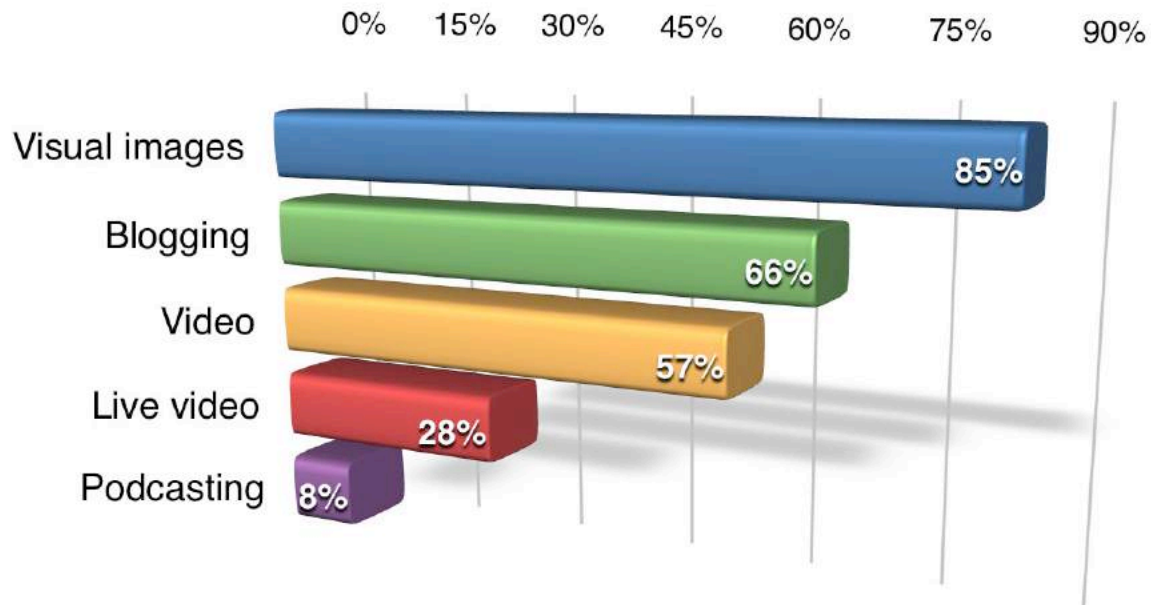
Paid social media options marketers want to learn more about



We asked marketers to identify the paid social media options for which they most want to improve their knowledge. **Facebook took first place at 84%.**

B2C marketers are more interested in learning about Instagram ads (69% B2C vs. 54% B2B), Pinterest ads (44% B2C vs. 34% B2B), and Facebook ads (86% B2C vs. 79% B2B) than their B2B counterparts. And B2B marketers are far more interested in learning about LinkedIn ads (72% B2B vs. 49% B2C).

Commonly used types of content



We asked marketers to identify the types of content they use in their social media marketing.

A large percentage (85%) use visual assets in their social media marketing, up from 74% in 2016. In second place was blogging (66%).

Live video (such as Facebook Live and Periscope) is used by 28% of marketers (up from 14% in 2016).

Podcasting is only used by 8% of marketers and represents an opportunity.

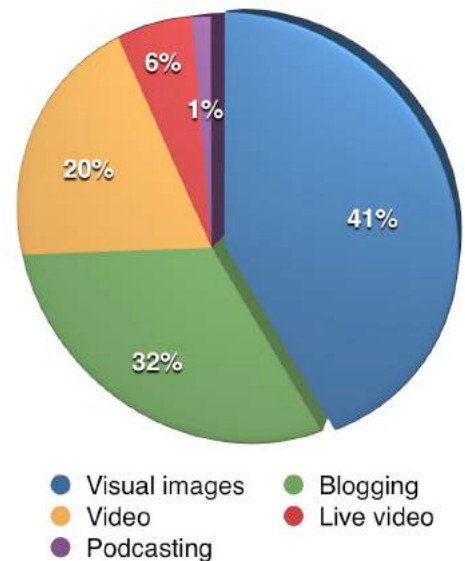
B2B marketers are much more likely to use blogging (75%) when compared to B2C marketers (61%). B2C marketers are more likely to use live video (30%) compared to B2B marketers (24%).


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 (41%) up from 37% in 2016, surpassing blogging for the first time. Blogging dropped from 38% in 2016 to 32% in 2017.

Blogging is more important for B2B marketers (43% say it's the most important) than B2C marketers (26% claim it's most important). B2C marketers place more importance on visual content (45% say it's the most important) than B2B marketers (32%).



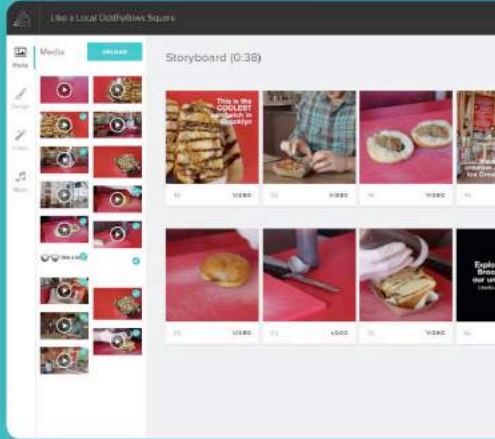


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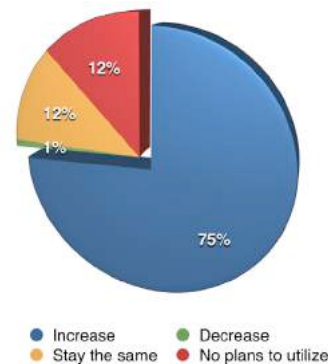
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How will marketers change their future content activities?

We asked marketers to indicate how they will change their use of content in the near future. Respondents were asked to indicate whether they will increase, decrease, remain the same, or not utilize various forms of content. Marketers plan to increase their use of videos (75%), visuals (73%), blogging (65%), live video (61%), and podcasting (26%), in that order. Here's a breakdown by form of content:

#1: Video

The use of video is a key part of most marketers' plans in 2017, with 75% planning on increasing their use of videos.






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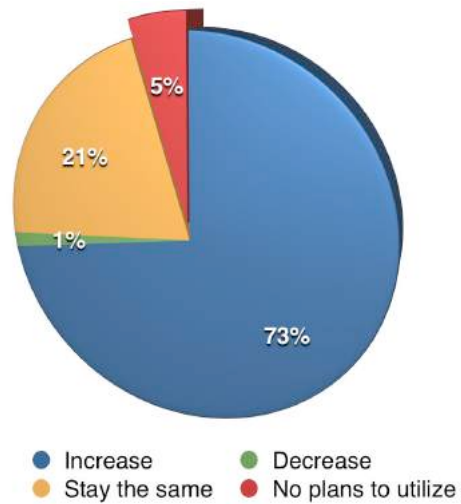
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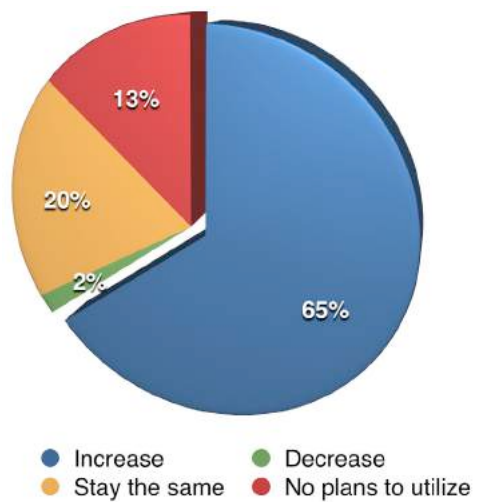
#2: Visuals

A significant 73% of marketers plan on increasing their use of visuals in 2017.



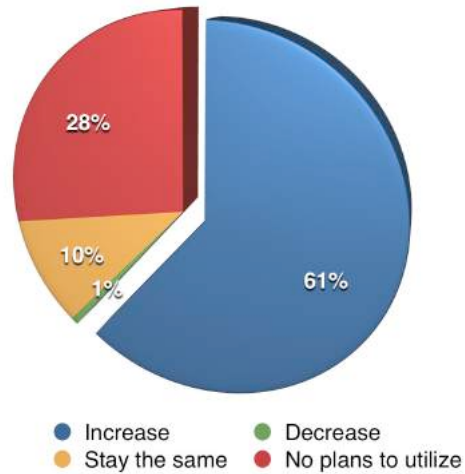
#3: Blogging

The written word is still important for marketers. About two in three plan on increasing their use of blogging.



#4: Live video

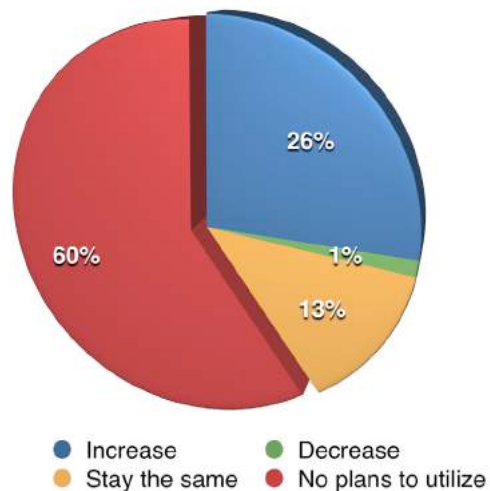
Considering that live video is a relatively new content option, it's impressive that **61% of marketers plan on increasing their use of live video** in the next 12 months (up from 31% in 2016).



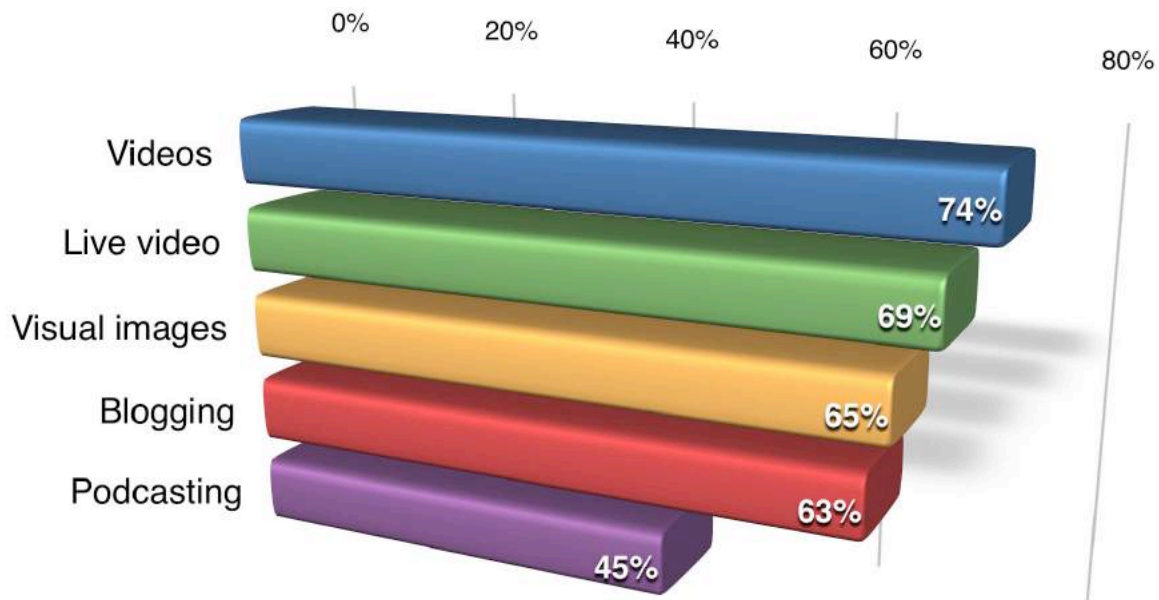
#5: Podcasting

Only 26% of marketers plan on increasing their use of podcasting and a significant 60% have no plans to get involved in podcasting.

B2B marketers are more likely to increase podcasting activity (30%) than B2C marketers (23%).



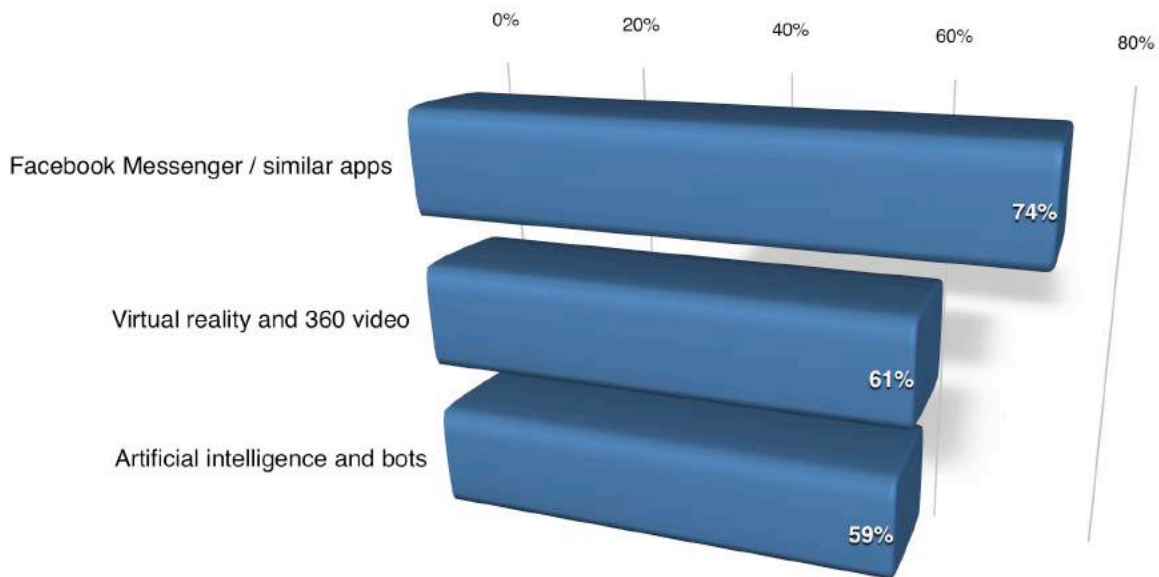
Content forms marketers want to learn more about



We asked marketers which forms of content they most 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 videos (76%) than B2C marketers (67%).

Emerging technology marketers want to learn more about



We asked marketers to indicate topics they want to learn more about. Facebook Messenger and similar apps took the top slot with 74% of marketers indicating they wanted to learn more.

Virtual reality and 360-degree video is also interesting to a significant 61% of marketers.

B2B marketers are more interested in learning about artificial intelligence and bots (64%) than B2C marketers (57%).

Survey participant demographics

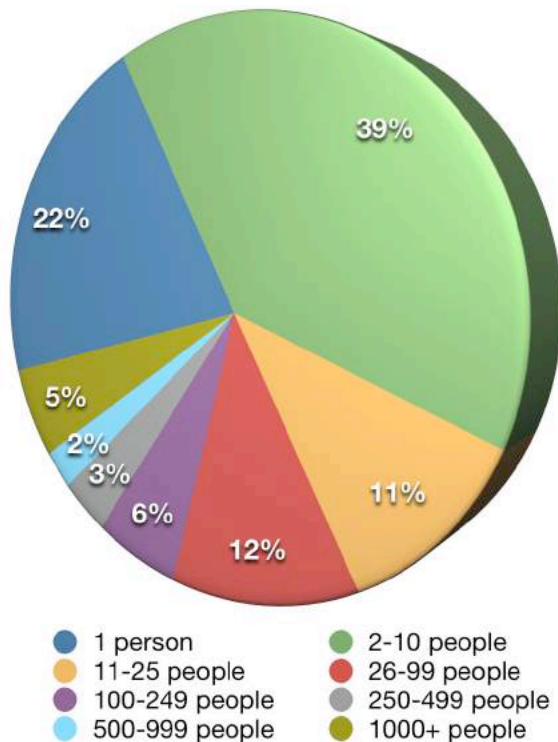
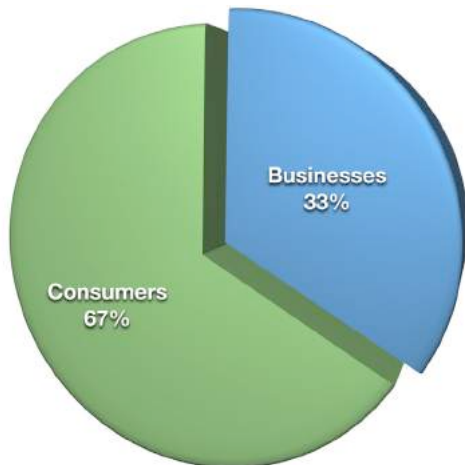
We leveraged email to find participants for our survey. We conducted this survey in January 2017 by emailing a list of 550,000 marketers and asking them to take the survey. After 5 days, we closed the survey with **5,710 participants**.

Here are the demographic breakdowns:

Survey participants

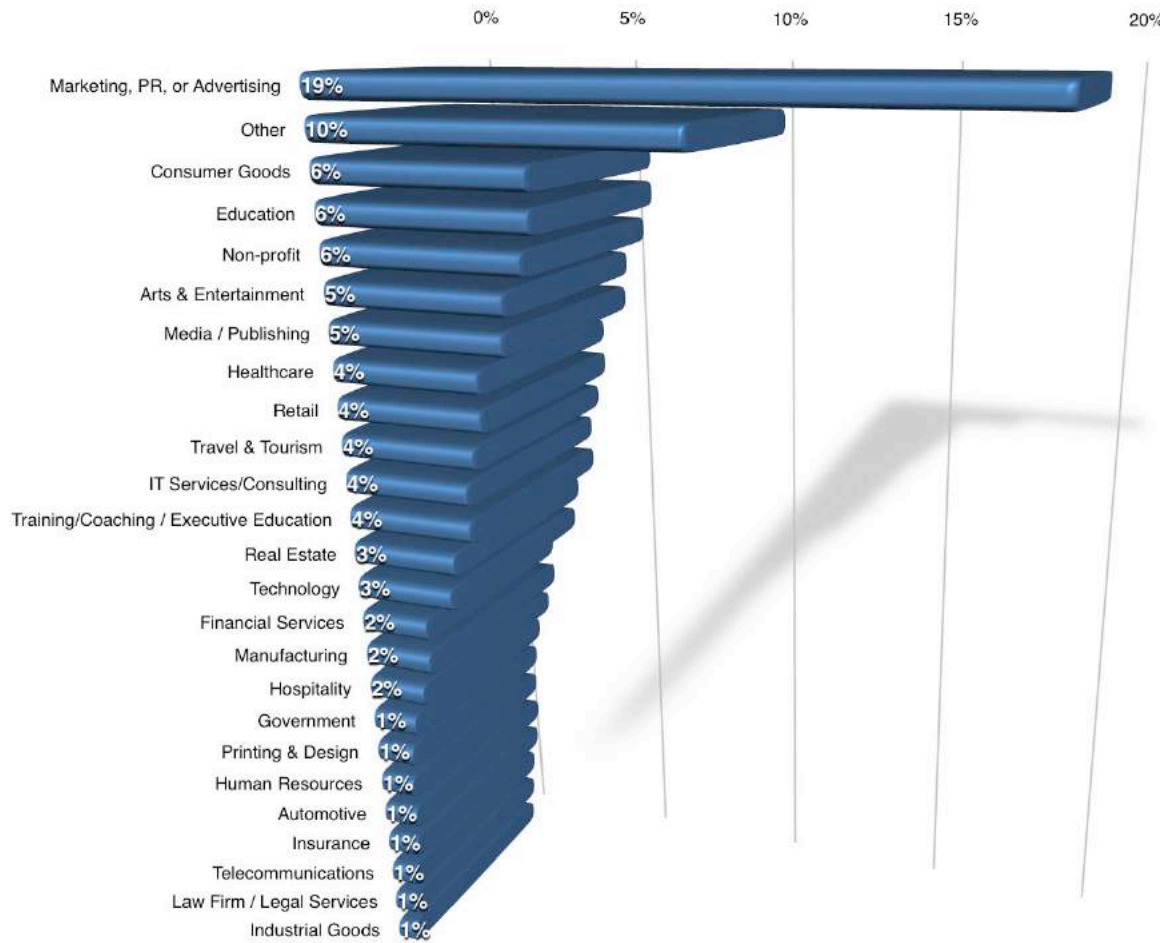
The largest group that took the survey works for small businesses of 2–10 employees (39%), followed by the self-employed (22%). Sixteen percent of people taking the survey work for businesses with 100 or more employees.

More than two-thirds (67%) of survey participants focus primarily on attracting consumers (B2C) and the other 33% primarily target businesses (B2B).



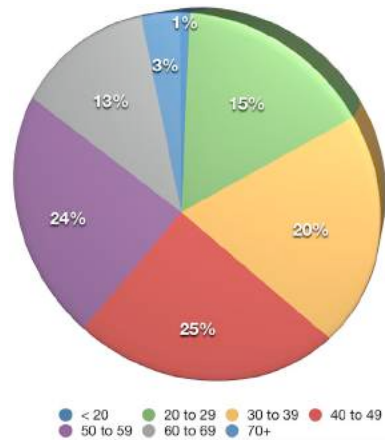
Industry

Below are the different industries of survey participants.



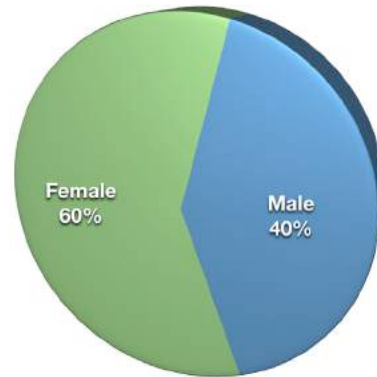
Age of participants

Most survey participants (69%) were between the ages of 30 and 59.



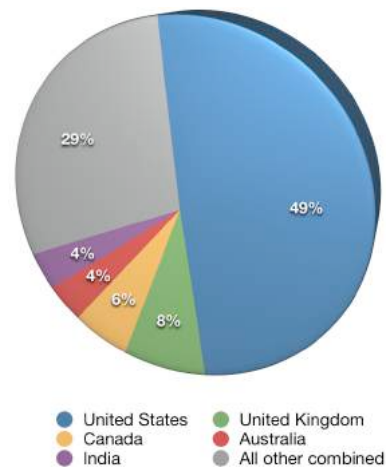
Gender

Females edged out males, representing 60% of all participants.



Country

Most participants (49%) were based in the United States, followed by the United Kingdom (8%), 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 40 business podcast on iTunes. He also hosts the Social Media Marketing Talk Show—a weekly live show.

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