Social Media Trends

2020

Hootsuite's annual report on the latest global trends in social media
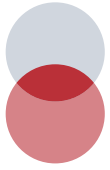
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Contents

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Executive summary

Based on our annual survey of 3,110 marketers, interviews with industry analysts, and exhaustive research, we've identified five key social media trends for 2020.

TREND 1 | PAGE 5

## Brands strike a balance between public and private engagement

The rise of private behaviors like messaging—while important—has not diminished the importance of public social media feeds, which remain a critical space for brand discovery and customer acquisition. The key is creating a seamless experience across both worlds, while balancing automation and human connection to build deeper customer relationships at scale.

TREND 2 | PAGE 9

Employers take center stage in a divided world

As our world becomes increasingly divided, employees are looking to their organizations to make things right. Progressive organizations will take advantage of this new role, building strong internal cultures, amplifying their company purpose with employee and customer advocacy, and putting to work the inextricable link between employee and customer experience.
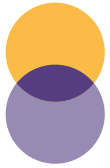
TREND 3 | PAGE 14

TikTok shakes up the status quo

TikTok continued its meteoric rise in 2019, but only time will tell if the hype will last. Staying power aside, TikTok's popularity brings valuable insight into the future of social culture, content, and collaboration. Social marketers should keep an eye on TikTok, while using these insights to adapt their strategies on established networks for the next generation on social.

TREND 4 | PAGE 20

Social marketing and performance marketing collide

Our analysis found that social marketers are facing increasing pressure to expand the scope of their skill sets. Established champions of brand awareness and community building must also become fluent in performance marketing. The challenge will be finding balance, building out holistic skill sets that can drive both short-term conversions and long-term strategies to build brand equity, customer happiness, and differentiation.

TREND 5 | PAGE 25

The social proof gap closes

ROI and measurement continue to be persistent challenges. However, this year we uncovered three best practices that high-performing organizations are following to advance their understanding of social attribution and gather the data CMOs need to elevate the strategic priority of social in their go-to-market strategies: They unite social data with other data for a holistic view, they focus on omnichannel integration, and they borrow established attribution models from other channels.

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Methodology

This report is based on a survey of 3,110 marketers conducted in Q3 2019. We've supplemented these results with insights from primary interviews with dozens of industry specialists, as well as published reports and data from Deloitte, Edelman, eMarketer, Gartner, GlobalWebIndex, The CMO Survey, and others.

Brands strike a balance between public and private engagement

TREND 1

Marketers reach new customers in the open while using closed channels to build deeper relationships

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"THE FUTURE IS PRIVATE," MARK ZUCKERBERG ANNOUNCED IN 2019, revealing his vision to unify Messenger, Instagram, and WhatsApp in response to global consumer demand for more intimate social experiences. Instagram launched Threads, a camera-first messaging app that allows users to connect with close friends in a dedicated, private space.[1] And LinkedIn began rolling out its new Teammates feature to help users see more updates and content from people they work with in real life.[2]

This is all part of an ongoing shift in social that has private channels in the spotlight, putting increasing pressure on brands to adapt. According to data from GlobalWebIndex, 63% of people say messaging apps are where they feel most comfortable sharing and talking about content.[3] And half of the senior marketers polled in our 2020 Social Media Trends survey say that the shift to private social channels has made them rethink their content strategy.

But is the future of social media going to be entirely private, one-to-one interactions? Not according to our analysis. The rise of TikTok, IGTV, and continued growth of Twitter show that public content discovery and consumption remains a core use case for social—and the data backs this up. In our annual global study of digital habits, we found that 52% of brand discovery online still happens in public social feeds.[4] Finding entertaining posts, reading news, and researching products—these are all major motivations for using social, just as central to customers' experiences as private messaging.[5]

The distinction between these two worlds is an opportunity, not an obstacle, as it creates a clear path for the full customer journey to take place on social. In 2020, we predict the most successful brands will be those that strike a purposeful balance between driving awareness on public feeds and delivering meaningful one-to-one engagement on private channels.

52% of brand discovery online happens in public social feeds.

WE ARE SOCIAL AND HOOTSUITE, DIGITAL 2019

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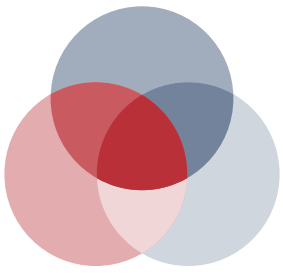
The trend in action

Citadel

Attracts competitive candidates by gamifying public and private engagement

Leading hedge fund Citadel created the Data Open, a tournament aimed at identifying and recruiting the brightest young minds in math, statistics, and data science.[6] They used public social feeds to raise awareness and create excitement about the tournament, and to promote school-specific social updates that encouraged students to form teams. On private channels, they helped students connect with each other and get career advice through an invite-only Facebook Group called Office Hours. They also built a Facebook chatbot that challenged students to a series of complex math problems—and rewarded students who completed the problems successfully by sending their resumes to the front of the line for consideration.

As a result, the number of applications for entry-level positions increased by 74%, and Citadel saw a 200% higher click-through rate compared to previous paid advertising efforts around the tournament. Students interested in the Data Open spent 149% more time on the Citadel website than other visitors, and the Facebook chatbot garnered over 5,500 valuable new conversations.

Headspace

Creates a private space to nurture relationships with—and between—customers

Headspace, a meditation app, uses public social networks to raise awareness of the brand by promoting local events, live meditation sessions, and promotional initiatives. But through a closed group on Facebook called Everybody Headspace, they've created a private space for over 17 thousand members to discuss their mediation practices, ask questions, and lend support to one another.[7] Headspace keeps this group free from product placement posts, advertising, and fundraising to protect the relationship between the brand and its customers—as well as the relationships being created between community members.

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What you should do in 2020

✓ Create a seamless journey between public and private

Instead of treating public and private as two disparate channels, create a cohesive social strategy by using public feeds to guide customers to your private channels. For example, you can now create Facebook or Instagram ads that send users directly into a private conversation with your business on Messenger or WhatsApp using the Click-to-Messenger feature.[8] By setting up a predetermined message to begin the conversation, you can seamlessly move customers from the public feed to a private conversation that drives a specific outcome for your business.

✓ Automate the easy stuff

People and businesses now exchange over 20 billion messages each month on Facebook Messenger—ten times more than they did in 2016—and responding to these individual messages at scale is a challenge for businesses of every size.[9]

Messaging bots can help reduce the workload, but too much automation can have negative consequences. In a survey conducted by Invoca and Harris Poll, 52% of consumers say they get frustrated when brands don't offer any human interaction.[10] And according to GlobalWebIndex's 2020 Consumer Trends report, consumers in the top income bracket are nearly twice as likely to prefer human interaction for customer service.[11]

Use a blend of automation and human connection to build deep relationships on private channels. Bots are best for addressing the most common customer queries, the ones that come up time and time again, but real people still need to be available to handle the more nuanced customer inquiries.

✓ Respect the function and nuances of private channels

People have gravitated toward private channels to escape noisy and impersonal social networks—so don't chase them with the same strategies that drove them there in the first place.

"It's one thing to flip through a brand post on an Instagram feed, but it feels much different if it slides into your personal, private conversations," explains John Stauffer, managing director of strategic planning and channel strategy at DEG, a full-service digital agency. "The utility of your content becomes paramount on private channels. If you're engaging somebody one-to-one you have to be clear about the value you're providing, whether that's helping them find content, choose the best product, or resolve an issue."

52%
of consumers say they get frustrated when brands don't offer any human interaction.

INVOKA, NEW INVOKA RESEARCH CONDUCTED BY THE HARRIS POLL

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Employers take center stage in a divided world

TREND 2

Brands earn employee trust and advocacy by taking a stand on social

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PESSIMISM AMONG CONSUMERS IS GROWING with the rise of populism, divisive politics, and global mistrust of traditional institutions. Only one in five people believe economic and social systems are working for them, and the majority of the mass population does not believe they will be better off in five years.[12] Millennials are feeling particularly bleak about the state of the world, with fewer than a quarter expecting an improvement in their country in the next year.[13]

In this divided world, trust has found itself at work. According to the 2019 Edelman Trust Barometer, 75% of people say they trust their employers to do what is right—more than government, media, or business in general.[14]

This trust is conditional on *making things better,* not just *making better things*—and it's especially important for younger generations in the workforce. There is a strong correlation between millennials who plan to stay in their current jobs and those who say their companies deliver best on community impact, talent development, and diversity and inclusion.[15]

We're seeing businesses shift priorities in response to these increasing expectations from both employees and customers. In 2019, a group of nearly 200 top CEOs announced a shared commitment to not just shareholders but also customers, employees, the communities they operate in, and society as a whole.[16] And 73% of executives say their organizations have changed or developed products or services in the past year to generate positive societal impact.[17]

Brands that earn employee trust through a genuine commitment to purpose will gain a significant competitive advantage. Along with higher workforce and customer satisfaction, purpose-driven companies witness higher market share gains and grow three times faster on average than their competitors, according to Deloitte.[18]

In 2020, we'll see employee advocates become beacons of trust for consumers as they use social media to amplify bold sentiments and goodwill from their organizations.

75% of people look to their employer as the most trusted institution.

EDELMAN 2019 TRUST BAROMETER

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The trend in action

Citi

Takes a stand on pay equity—and challenges other organizations to follow their lead

Citi took the bold step of conducting primary research into the company's pay gap figures and taking public action to address the results. The report found that female employees earned 29% less than their male counterparts, minorities earned 7% less than non-minority employees, and only 37% of women were in senior positions, despite making up half of Citi's workforce.[19]

To highlight their commitment to make things right, they created a video that featured young women (who happened to be the daughters of Citi employees) being told about the gender pay gap, capturing their confusion and frustration on camera. The campaign used digital and outdoor ads to drive engagement to a branded microsite, while continuing the conversation about the gender pay gap across social media channels using the hashtag #itsabouttime.

Patagonia

Wins social accolades and boosts retention with progressive employee benefits

Many parents feel torn in two directions returning to work after having a child, but Patagonia has made it much easier for their employees by offering on-site childcare. One employee took to LinkedIn to share her gratitude for the company's policies and advocate for others to follow suit, noting that Patagonia has a 100% retention rate for employees returning from maternity leave. The post has generated over 87,000 reactions on LinkedIn, and is a clear example of the internal culture that has landed Patagonia on the 2019 Fortune 100 Best Companies to Work For list.[20]

Subaru

Builds brand love by shining a spotlight on employees

Rather than taking a hard stance on one side of a contentious issue, some brands are generating trust by promoting positivity and common ground. For example, Subaru Australia used an internal Facebook Group to challenge employees to capture and share a moment they might usually overlook for 30 days using the hashtag #OneLittleMoment.[21] What started as a small, internal initiative then grew to become a national campaign with staff becoming spokespeople and inviting the community to join them.

Subaru Australia saw 42% growth in brand equity among young families, along with an increase in sales and major lifts in ad recall, top of mind awareness, and message association. Six months after launch, the campaign was still a core component of employee culture at Subaru.

What you should do in 2020

Do it before you talk about it

People are wary of brands using societal issues as a marketing ploy, and social media is a particularly unforgiving forum for "woke washing."[22] What your organization says has to match what it does. True purpose is more than just a marketing campaign; it's a long-term belief that needs to underpin the very existence of the company.

Lead from the top

According to Edelman, 71% of employees believe it's critically important for their CEO to respond to challenging times and expect them to speak up on industry issues, political events, national crises, and employee-driven issues.[23]

"Social channels provide CEOs with the opportunity to succinctly express company goals and priorities to both customers and talent," notes Paul Frampton Calero, EMEA CEO for travel tech startup Hi Incorporated, in the book *The Social CEO*.[24] "Social media enables the CEO to be much more accessible and closer to their workforce, most of whom will have limited day-to-day contact or insight into their leader. Employees want to know more about their CEO and never has there been a better opportunity for CEOs to both connect and demonstrate proximity and vulnerability."

Building a stronger reputation from the top down is particularly important for earning the trust of the largest consumer group out there: millennials. Only 37% of millennials believe business leaders make a positive impact on the world, and more than a quarter (26%) don't trust business leaders as sources of reliable and accurate information.[25]

Have a strong brand protection plan in place

Society is becoming increasingly polarized, and taking a stance on social media may anger some customer bases as much as it wins loyalty and praise from others. Gartner advises that all brands have a game plan in place for this type of controversy, cautioning that "even for brands that typically remain neutral, marketing leaders must prepare for the inevitable day when their brand winds up in the center of a maelstrom."[26]

"Everyone wants to work for a company that represents what they believe in, but taking a stance is bound to bring both negative and positive attention," said Jonathan Ready, vice president of marketing and business development for Proofpoint, in an interview with Hootsuite. "Run crisis simulations, and be prepared with policies and technology to know when your brand is being attacked on social media—and how to respond."

71% of employees believe it's critically important for their CEO to respond to challenging times and expect them to speak up.

EDELMAN 2019 TRUST BAROMETER

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Make employee advocacy a business priority

When forming an opinion of a company, people trust a company technical expert more than they do a CEO, a journalist, or even one of their peers.[27] Employee advocacy can clearly impact an organization's bottom line, yet half of the respondents in our 2020 Social Media Trends survey say their top challenge is finding the time to source content and run an employee advocacy program. To live up to its potential, employee advocacy needs to be prioritized as a corporate strategy and embraced by the entire organization.

Meliá Hotels International, a Hootsuite customer, prioritized employee advocacy on social media in an effort to increase brand recognition, recruit talent, and humanize the brand. A joint effort between the social media team and the HR department led to the launch of an internal ambassador program that has helped increase job applications and led to over 61,000 posts shared by company ambassadors.[28]

This focus on advocacy has paid off. "Making our staff brand ambassadors and creating a social media culture has been key to our success on social media," says Tony Cortizas, Meliá's vice president of global brand marketing. Meliá reports their focus on social—including employee advocacy, a social CEO program, and customer advocacy content—has led to social generating 24% of the traffic to melia.com and more than €42 million in sales attributed to social.[29]

"The organizations that will thrive will be the ones on a journey together with customers and talent alike, leading with empathy and courage to define the human truths worth serving, and the experiences and economics through which to serve them."

INTERBRAND, BEST GLOBAL BRANDS 2019

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TikTok shakes up the status quo

TREND 3

The meteoric rise of a new network brings valuable insights into the future of social culture, content, and collaboration

THERE'S NO DENYING THE EXPLOSIVE GROWTH OF TIKTOK is shaking up the social media landscape. It was the most installed app in Q1 of 2019, and now boasts over 800 million monthly active users who are spending an incredible amount of time—46 minutes per day—consuming videos that are typically only 15 seconds long.

More impressive is just how much these short, addictive video clips are influencing pop culture and digital content. Browse through Instagram, Twitter, or YouTube and you're bound to see reposted content from TikTok spreading like wildfire. After launching the unknown artist Lil Nas X into stardom, TikTok continues to reshape how music is both made and marketed. Songs in every genre are getting shorter,[30] and artists are beginning to take a "meme-first" approach to creating music.[31]

While TikTok is new, the role it occupies in the social media landscape is not. Younger generations have consistently flocked to new social networks, which present a low-pressure space to experiment and be creative online without being bombarded by advertisements (or spotted by their parents). Some of these networks have survived (Snapchat, Instagram), while others have not (RIP Vine and Peach).

So the million-dollar question is: Will the hype last? According to stats from Trust Insights and Talkwalker, the number of people quitting TikTok is just as noteworthy as the number of people signing up.[32] And as reported in The Verge, TikTok recently experienced its first ever growth slowdown on a quarterly basis.[33] With over 60% of its user base residing in China, TikTok still needs to gain some serious global steam.[34]

The biggest threat to that growth is other social networks. Instagram was very successful incorporating Stories, a key feature of Snapchat, into their platform—and they've now set their sights on TikTok with the release of Reels.[35] This new feature allows Instagram users to set 15-second video clips to music, share them as Stories, and potentially see them go viral on the new Top Reels section of the Explore tab. Unlike TikTok, Instagram can immediately start making money

> **TikTok recently experienced its first ever growth slowdown on a quarterly basis.**
>
> THE VERGE

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from Reels because it already delivers ads in both Stories and the Explore tab. And with 500 million people opening Stories and Explore each month, the Reels feature is sure to attract a significant base of users who now don't have to leave Instagram to create the type of content that TikTok has made so popular.

Even though the future of TikTok is uncertain, ignoring it completely would be a mistake. TikTok can be a great way for innovative brands to reach a very specific demographic, since a whopping 69% of users on the platform are 16-24 years old. And with Gen Z still fully in the driver's seat, TikTok can be an invaluable source of insight into the tastes and motivations of the next generation on social.

TikTok's popularity is built on short video clips that feature real people doing fun, creative things—and this authenticity reflects the continuing shift away from the glossy, carefully staged content that has come to dominate other social networks. Whether or not Gen Z sticks with TikTok as their social network of choice, it's clear they're done with the "Instagram aesthetic." As one 15-year-old said in an interview with The Atlantic, "Avocado toast and posts on the beach. It's so generic and played out at this point. You can photoshop any girl into that background and it will be the same post. It's not cool anymore to be manufactured."[36]

69%
of TikTok users are 16-24 years old.

60%
of TikTok users reside in China.

TIKTOK INVESTOR PRESENTATION, VIA AD AGE

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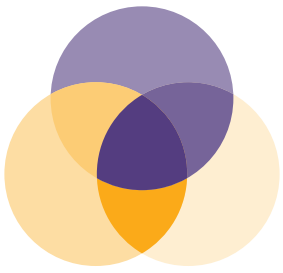
The trend in action

Nike

Takes aim at stereotypes with an influencer campaign—and inspires 46,000 video responses

Nike knew that young women in Italy faced challenges and stereotypes that prevented them from being seen, celebrated, or even included in sports. But they also saw that thousands of young women were demonstrating their physical prowess on TikTok by challenging each other to perform intricate dance routines. This was a revelation for AnalogFolk, the agency behind the campaign, as they realized "we'd been looking at sport through Nike's lens, not what it meant to our audience."[37]

Nike recruited three TikTok influencers in Milan and paired them with elite athletes who introduced the young women to boxing, basketball, and soccer. They then worked together to co-create a dance based on each of these sports, choreographing routines that the influencers performed on TikTok and challenging their followers to participate.

The campaign earned over 100 million views and generated more than 46,000 user-generated routines in response. More impressively, the TikTok campaign drove engagement on Nike's owned channels as well, including a rise in NikePlus membership numbers and a shrinking gender gap in the region.

Hearst Magazines

Connects with new audiences to inform content strategy across platforms

Hearst Magazines, which owns titles such as Seventeen, Harper's Bazaar, and Cosmopolitan, repackages content from other platforms onto TikTok and has found that "mesmerizing" videos receive the most engagement (along with anything featuring a celebrity). One of Seventeen magazine's most popular TikToks, for example, was one that showcased the art of bullet journaling.

But Hearst Magazines sees the most valuable use for TikTok being a way to engage and grow a new audience over the long term. In an interview with Digiday, Sheel Shah, VP of strategic partnerships and consumer products for Hearst Magazines, said, "We want to figure out what this audience is interested in and how we can extend this understanding onto other platforms where we do have ROI."[38]

What you should do in 2020

Keep an eye on TikTok—for now

If Gen Z isn't your target audience, or if funny and playful isn't the right tone for your brand, you're better off investing your time and resources elsewhere in 2020. It's really that simple.

That being said, smart social marketers should always keep a close eye on new and emerging networks. If TikTok evolves beyond formulaic meme-based content and attracts a broader user base, you may want to get in on the action. For now, monitor trends that bubble up on TikTok and adapt the ideas that make sense for your brand into your other social content, bringing some of the fun and innovative energy of TikTok back to your social profiles on established platforms.

Use new video formats to build community

Video is still the top performing content format on social media. In a survey conducted by GlobalWebIndex, 60% of internet users said they had watched a video on Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, or Instagram in the past month.[39] But there's no better place for brands to experiment with fun, authentic video content than on Instagram Stories. Brands can reach a larger and more diverse audience than on TikTok, but the desire for raw and unpolished content is just as high.[40]

LinkedIn is also rolling out a live video feature that will offer brands a way to deliver authentic video content to a more relevant audience. Use it to showcase the real people behind your business, or host a Q&A session for customers.

60%
of internet users said they had watched a video on Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, or Instagram in the past month.

GLOBALWEBINDEX, SOCIAL MEDIA FLAGSHIP REPORT 2019

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Experiment on other growing niche platforms

The rise of TikTok points to a continuing diversification in social platforms, offering more opportunities to engage audiences in specialized contexts and at different points in the customer journey. TikTok may not be the right fit for every brand, but marketers should think about diversifying their audience targeting beyond the major social platforms. Pinterest now has 322 million global monthly active users, a 28% year-over-year increase driven by double-digit growth in nearly every market.[41] LinkedIn's user base also continues to grow. And our Digital 2019 report found that advertisers can now reach more than 650 million users on LinkedIn—an increase of more than 2% in the past three months alone.[42]

Gartner notes that smaller niche platforms tend to punch above their weight when it comes to delivering web traffic and engagement for brands. Retailers with large shares of social traffic to their sites receive just as much inbound traffic from smaller platforms like Pinterest and Reddit as they do from big-name platforms like Facebook and YouTube.[43]

"Pinterest isn't just about curation," says Simon Kemp, CEO of Kepios and one of the world's leading digital analysts. "The company's image search technology—already implemented on its core platform—is arguably more intuitive and user-friendly than image search on any of the 'conventional' search engines."

TikTok may not be the right fit for every brand, but marketers should think about diversifying their audience targeting beyond the major social platforms.

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Social marketing and performance marketing collide

TREND 4

A new holistic skill set helps elevate the role of social marketers

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BRAND BUILDING HAS LONG BEEN THE PRIMARY USE case for businesses on social media, but with the decline of organic reach and increasing demand for return on investment, we've seen a rise in social performance marketing (using social ads to achieve a specific conversion such as a sale, lead, or click).

In our 2020 Social Media Trends survey, 44% of senior marketers cited "driving conversions" as a top outcome for social media, right behind brand awareness. And it's no surprise why—performance marketing delivers the type of concrete ROI that executives want from social media. But we know it takes more than short-term tactical wins for a business to succeed. Driving true compound growth requires long-term marketing strategies that build brand equity, customer happiness, and differentiation.

Balancing brand and sales activation for long-term growth

As shown in the extensive research of Les Binet and Peter Field, with the rise of digital media, marketers have placed a short-sighted focus on sales activation. The problem is that sales activation tactics only generate temporary lifts in revenue, not the incrementality that results in long-term growth over time.

However, balancing brand building and sales activation activities—with a 60:40 weighting for B2C and a 54:46 weighting for B2B—is a predictable and evidence-backed formula for sustainable growth.

Brand building activities should broadly target all buyers in the category with the goal of providing the critical emotional priming, positioning with memory structures, and brand codes that help prospects decide between different brands. In contrast—but equally as important for driving growth—is sales activation, which can be tightly targeted to hot prospects with rational messages and relevant offers designed to elicit an immediate response.[44]

Marketing Works in Two Ways
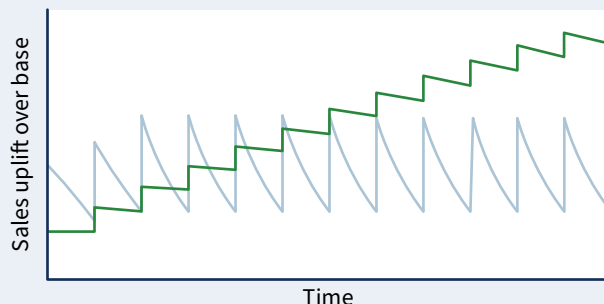
Brand Building
Builds brand preferences and reduces price sensitivity. Main driver of long term growth and profit.

Sales Activation
Converts brand preference into immediate responses. High efficiency and ROI.

Source: Binet & Field, 2013

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This need to balance long-term brand building and short-term conversions is now reshaping the role of social marketing teams.

Performance marketing on social media has typically been handled by specialists, such as paid media teams or outside agencies, but third-party social advertising tools are lowering the barriers to entry, making it more accessible for anyone to create and optimize ads. This is turning performance marketing into a standard tool set that social marketers can easily master, decreasing the need for specialization within many organizations. In fact, Gartner has predicted that 40% of specialized mobile and social marketing jobs—think community managers, paid social specialists, and "performance growth hackers"—will be absorbed into generalist roles or replaced by automation by the end of 2022.[45]

Expertise in both brand and performance is also critical for showing the strategic value of social to CMOs, since their role has also evolved to encompass the two. According to a report from eMarketer, "Today's CMO must have a background in both brand and performance marketing to balance creative with data-driven execution."[46] Thanks to advancements in technology and the massive amount of customer data now available, the scope of skills needed to be an effective marketing leader have expanded. As eMarketer puts it, "having fluency in just one type of marketing will no longer cut it."

In 2020, the most successful social marketers will be those with expertise in both—those who can keep long-term creative strategy in mind while optimizing ads on the fly and working with data analyst teams to understand the impact of social across all channels.

44%
of senior marketers cite 'driving conversions' as a top outcome for social in 2020.

HOOTSUITE SOCIAL MEDIA TRENDS 2020 SURVEY

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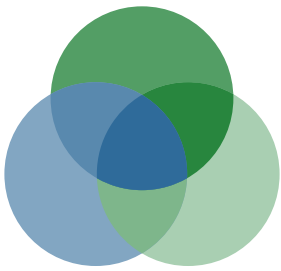
The trend in action

Adidas

Rebalances brand and performance marketing budgets to drive long-term growth

Adidas found that brand activities—not performance marketing—were actually driving the majority of their ecommerce sales. This was a problem because Adidas's advertising split was 23% into brand and 77% into performance.[47] After realizing they were overinvesting in performance marketing, they introduced a new campaign framework with emotional, brand-driving activity at the center. They now have a healthier balance between short-term promotional activity and long-term strategies that drive brand desirability.

Michael Graham

Unites organic and paid social teams to align messaging and strategy

One of Hootsuite's customers, Michael Graham, is a group of specialist town and country estate agents with 14 offices across England. They wanted to better convey their brand identity while also increasing click-throughs and business inquiries made on their website. They had been using an outside agency for basic scheduling and maintenance of their social media profiles, but quickly recognized they needed to unify their social marketing strategy in-house to achieve both their brand and performance marketing goals.

Michael Graham assembled an internal social team that could manage the entire process—from initial content creation to full campaign management. They united organic and paid social teams across one platform so everyone could better analyze ad performance alongside data from Google Ads. This enabled the team to refine, boost, and manage its advertising accordingly, while ensuring all content aligns with the same unified brand message.

Social media has now grown into Michael Graham's biggest communications channel. Most of the £1 million a year the company used to spend on print advertising has been redirected to social and digital marketing as it recognizes the benefits of expanding its marketing offering.[48]

What you should do in 2020

✓ **Use a full-funnel approach in your social advertising campaigns**

A common misconception is that long-term brand building takes place through organic social, while performance marketing happens through ads. But paid social is just as effective for brand awareness as it is for clicks and conversions. In fact, running only performance-driven ads that are heavy in sales messaging is the number one mistake social marketers make when it comes to paid social, according to Ryan Ginsberg, global director of paid social at Hootsuite. "Marketers end up trying to do way too much with one ad, instead of creating a full-funnel advertising campaign using smart retargeting that moves customers along the purchase path," says Ginsberg.

✓ **Unite search and social ad campaigns**

Your brand awareness efforts on social will go to waste if you're sending your audience straight to the competition on Google, so a strategic approach to brand and performance marketing across both channels will help your digital ad campaigns be as effective as possible. Search and social work together in the customer journey, with Forrester finding that 56% of consumers use both channels in complementary ways to drive customer awareness, consideration, purchase, and ongoing engagement.[49] For more on this, check out our guide: Making Search and Social Ads Work Together.

✓ **Give your brand campaigns time to perform**

Data has shown that the marketing industry's increasing focus on short-term metrics is eroding the effectiveness of longer-running campaigns rooted in storytelling and creativity. The impact of brand building happens over the long term, but social marketers are often quick to abandon these campaigns in favor of chasing quick wins.[50]

"Social marketers have a tendency to see the vast amount of data available and become super quick to change up their approach and tactics week by week," says Phill Agnew, director of product marketing at Brandwatch. "But we know that one of the smartest tenets of advertising is to repeat your key message over an extended period of time, because it's massively beneficial to improving recall, engagement, and awareness."

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The social proof gap closes

TREND 5

High-performing organizations lead the way in advancing social attribution and elevating the strategic influence of social

SOCIAL MARKETERS HAVE ACCESS TO MORE DATA THAN EVER BEFORE. Attribution models are now built into social ad platforms, and new social commerce features have bridged the top and bottom of the sales funnel, creating a wealth of measurable insights around the conversion side of the customer journey.

Despite these advancements in tools and technology, measuring return on investment remains a top challenge for social marketers. Most CMOs say that even though they have a good qualitative sense of the impact social media has on their business, they still struggle to quantitatively measure that impact.[51]

Even though there isn't a universally perfect method, many social marketers have yet to take even basic steps towards measuring the business value that social is bringing to their organization. For example, 70% of respondents in our Social Media Trends 2020 survey aren't using an attribution model at all, which makes it hard to prove the value of social compared to data-rich channels like paid media.

However, our analysis found that leading marketers are creating a clear path for others to follow when it comes to measuring the impact of their work and elevating social media's influence in the organization.

Among the 3,000+ respondents in our 2020 Social Media Trends survey, we found three traits of organizations who reported either being "very confident" or "extremely confident" in measuring ROI.

70% of respondents in our Social Media Trends 2020 survey aren't using an attribution model at all.

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They unite social data with other data for a holistic view.
We found that marketers who only gather native data from social networks were the least confident when it comes to ROI, because they're measuring social activity in a silo. By contrast, the most confident marketers are developing a holistic view of their customers by gathering data at every stage of the social customer journey and analyzing it alongside web data, digital analytics, and CRM systems.

They focus on omnichannel integration.
Our survey showed that having an integrated customer engagement approach between social media and other digital and traditional channels leads to a higher level of confidence in social ROI. This goes for paid social as well; we found that the more an organization's social ads strategy was integrated with other channel activities (such as email programs, PR activities, and advocacy programs) the more confident they are in ROI. Social is a crucial part of these activities and not executed—or measured—in isolation.

They don't reinvent the wheel when it comes to attribution.
Finally, our analysis found that high-performing organizations are using attribution models that have been tried and tested in other channels like search engine marketing, television, and outdoor advertising, and applying them to social. In contrast, organizations that struggled to measure ROI used no attribution models at all. Respondents in our survey specifically singled out multi-touch and market mix modeling attribution models as the most useful for measuring the revenue effects of social.

High-performing organizations are using attribution models that have been tried and tested in other channels and applying them to social.

HOOTSUITE SOCIAL MEDIA TRENDS
2020 SURVEY

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The trend in action

ThirdLove

Switches attribution models to give social ads the credit they deserve

ThirdLove—a women's underwear brand—made a simple change in attribution models and discovered their Facebook Ads were getting significantly under-credited compared to other channels. They had historically only tracked sales that came via clicks on their ads, but began including view-through attribution as well. This allowed them to also track when someone who only *viewed* their Facebook ad then purchased the product. ThirdLove realized they were actually seeing a 2x lower CPA with Facebook and a 4x lower CPA with Messenger.[52]

Amway

Uses a centralized system to track social selling results

Amway, a Hootsuite customer, is a great example of an organization that has been able to tie social media clearly to direct sales. Amway knew that social is essential for inspiring purchases, especially when products are recommended by like-minded peers, but tracking that last step to purchase can be opaque if customers leave social networks to convert on websites.

Amway provided each of its distributors with a personal retail website (for example, *amway.com/ [distributorname]*). This gave the company a simple and centralized way to track the individual distributor's ROI from social selling tactics, making it much easier to track these vital conversion metrics and better understand how social is directly increasing revenue. It was this investment in social selling programs and ROI measurement savvy that led to Amway being able to specifically attribute its 2018 sales growth increase to social selling in its annual report.[53]

What you should do in 2020

Standardize UTM codes

In large companies, simple things like UTM consistency can go a long way. This is especially important for ensuring data hygiene if you're syncing social data with other sources like web analytics and CRM data.

Every owned social post should contain a unique UTM tracking parameter. Certain elements of the UTM remain consistent across every post, while others will change based on source, campaign, or ID. This consistent UTM framework will allow you to analyze what specific pieces of content are achieving business objectives. Other teams in marketing can then use these insights to make smarter decisions.

Don't get lost in attribution

Attribution is one way you can unite social performance with marketing performance, using the same language as other channels to show social's influence on broader marketing campaigns and goals. However, no attribution model is perfect, and there may be other metrics that work better for your organization.

Customer Lifetime Value (or CLTV) can be effective as a primary success metric, since this presents a single unified number that can be used to determine how much investment is required to earn a new customer. In this context, the value of social media can be measured by how it helps improve the Cost of Acquiring a Customer (CAC)—for example, through improving customer engagement and loyalty.

Invest in both skills and tools

Having access to data and tools doesn't solve the challenge of knowing *what* to measure and *how* to analyze it.

"Companies are recognizing that simply buying software isn't going to help you understand the value of social media," says Kushal Sharma, manager of enterprise analytics at Hootsuite. "Just because you bought a calculator, doesn't make you good at math. The value will come when you have dedicated capacity in your company or in a partner to integrate and analyze all of the data that is meaningful to your business."

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Resources

✓ **Benchmark your social strategy against industry peers**
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Contact us to request a custom assessment

✓ **Hootsuite Ads**
Improve the effectiveness of your organic and paid ads with our automated ad solution.

Learn more

✓ **Hootsuite Amplify**
Expand your social reach by empowering your employees with our scalable advocacy solution.

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✓ **Hootsuite Impact**
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Credits
RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS Sarah Dawley
ART DIRECTION AND DESIGN Eric Uhlich
EDITOR Curtis Foreman

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