

SOCIAL TRENDS 2022





On behalf of our talented marketing and research teams, I'm pleased to share Hootsuite's Social Media Trends 2022 Report.

This year's report analyzes the topics that marketers consistently want to learn more about: emerging industry behaviors, breakthrough platforms, and new normals. In this year's report we also wanted to look at the bigger picture—the themes, innovations and infrastructure that have become fixtures in the social space, regardless of yearly trends.

After the turbulent times we've all just experienced, when many brands and companies were forced into operating tactically just to survive, it's time for marketers to start thinking strategically again—considering how to create connected, enduring online communities; championing the infinite potential of social commerce; and committing to the possibilities that elevated customer care creates.

Use the data and be courageous! We want to support you in making bold choices designed for growth—choices informed by research, data, vision and purpose.

Enjoy the report and let's make them wonder how you did it.

Tom Keiser
CEO, Hootsuite

Social Trends 2022



Dive in!

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Executive summary

Based on our annual survey of 18,100 marketers, exhaustive research, and interviews with industry experts, customers, and partners, we've identified five key social media trends for 2022.

The Brand Strategy Trend

Brands finally get community right (with the help of creators)

Digital communities are only becoming more central to consumers' lives and identities, and creators are the key to unlocking them. Brands that partner wisely with creators are connecting with new audiences, earning their trust, and gaining cultural capital.

The Social Advertising Trend

Marketers get creative as consumers wise up to social ads

Consumers are holding brands to a higher standard when it comes to creativity in social advertising—but rewarding those that get it right. As marketers plan to spend more on social ads in 2022, they'll have to work harder to create ads that mirror and enrich the distinct experience each social network offers.

The ROI Trend

Social quietly matures out of the marketing department

Having seen the value of social in marketing, business leaders are buffing up employee advocacy programs, mastering social listening to gather consumer insights, and looking to deliver the kind of impact they've seen social have on their marketing elsewhere in their organizations.

The Social Commerce Trend

Social becomes the heart of the post-pandemic shopping experience

The era of social commerce is in full swing and the opportunity is only getting bigger. Competitive small businesses are finding a balance between social storefronts and bricks and mortar, while large brands test the outer limits of the online shopping experience.

The Customer Care Trend

Social marketers rescue their brands from the customer service apocalypse

Amid halting global supply chains and staffing shortages, many businesses can expect an influx of not-so-happy customers in 2022. Meanwhile, demand for customer service over social has been surging. Social media managers now find themselves in an ideal position to play the hero and steer their organizations through the upheaval.

Methodology

This report is based on a survey of 18,100 marketers conducted in Q3 of 2021.

We conducted primary interviews with dozens of industry specialists, observers, businesses, and partners.

We supplemented our research with reports and data from The Harvard Business Review, McKinsey, Deloitte, Edelman, eMarketer, Forrester, GlobalWebIndex, The CMO Survey, and others.

A special thank you to all of the interviewees and partners who graciously lent their expertise, resources, and time.

Canière Ann, Customer Service: Digital Projects, Fluvius

Nathan Allebach, Creative Director, Allebach Communications

Chloe Beaudoin, Founder, Apricotton

Jamie Byrne, Senior Director Creator Partnerships, YouTube

Chris Campbell, CEO, ReviewTrackers

Adam Kruse, Global Account Executive, Global Brands, Twitter

Elena Melnikova, CMO, Talkwalker

Jessica Miao, Founder, Apricotton

Olga Onulov, Founder, Rebel + Beauty

Viet Vu, Senior Economist, The Brookfield Institute

PR and Comms, Google My Business

Colin Fenn, VP Value and Solutions, Hootsuite

Simon Kemp, CEO, Kepios

Maggie Lower, CMO, Hootsuite

Étienne Mérineau, Founder, Heyday by Hootsuite

Christoph Neut, Vice President of Sales, Sparkcentral by Hootsuite

T R E N D 1

The Brand Strategy Trend

Brands finally get community right (with the help of creators)

Real, rich, and impactful communities are thriving across social media

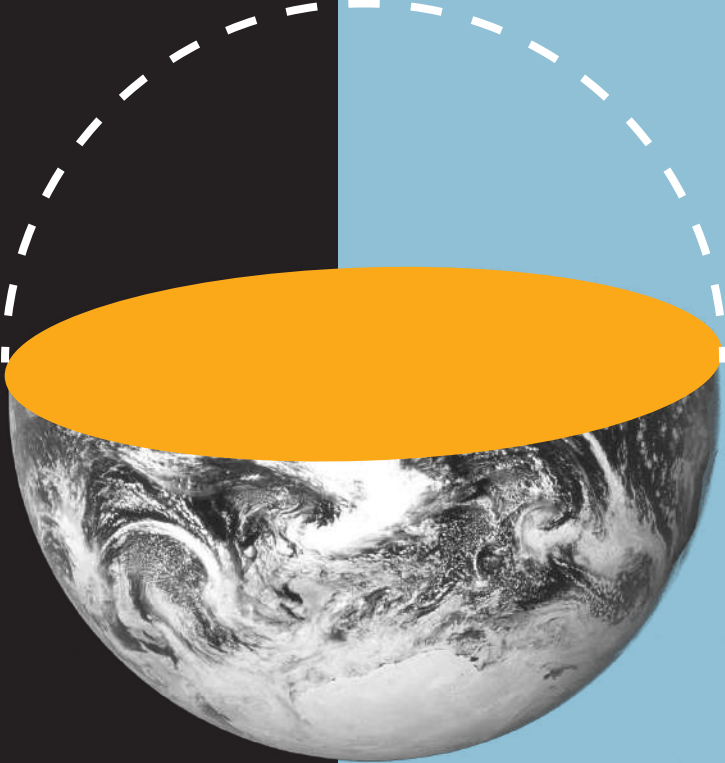
Gamers are gaming on Twitch. Readers are reading on Goodreads. Bikers are biking on Peloton. Our digital communities have never been richer, more vibrant, and more impactful on our experience of daily life than they are now.

Seventy-seven percent of people surveyed for a joint report by Facebook and NYU's Governance Lab indicated that the *most important* group they are part of operates online.¹ And according to a recent Squarespace survey, young people now find digital life more important and memorable than in-person life.²

And nowhere are these groups being created and catered to more than on social media.

Over a billion Facebook users regularly engage within groups.³ On TikTok, plant fanatics, witches, and rug aficionados are carving out their own spaces to share and develop their interests—no matter how obscure. And Twitter has started testing a feature that has the potential to fundamentally change its platform called (wait for it...) Communities, which Twitter says will give people “a dedicated place to connect, share, and get closer to the discussions they care about most.”⁴





“The distinction between digital and physical is blurring and young generations are leading the charge.

There will be many opportunities and challenges for brands to take on as we go through this shift. But when it comes to the amalgamation of online and offline experiences, it’s not a question of *if* marketers react, but *when*.”

Elena Melnikova

Chief Marketing Officer, Talkwalker

50 million
people
around
the world
consider
themselves
“creators”

Source:
SignalFire

This should all be great news for marketers, right? Building a community of voracious customers around their product is every brand's dream. But the most wildly successful brand communities you see online have been built over time by global brands with tons of resources.

Think Lego, Atlassian, and Nike. These global brands have had the luxury of being able to give their digital communities what they need to thrive. They can offer exclusivity in the form of early access to products and discounts. They have enough members to become a hub of peer-driven support. And they have enough fame that members feel they can personally benefit from participating in the co-creation of brand collateral.

Small and midsize businesses, or those just starting out, typically don't have the resources or brand awareness to make these sorts of digital communities actually worth it. But that doesn't mean it's impossible, according to Maggie Lower, CMO of Hootsuite.

“Thriving communities on social media present a big opportunity, especially for smaller brands,” says Lower. “You no longer have to create a niche community from the ground up—you can find a community that you fit into and if you show up for them, they'll do the same for you.”

In 2022, the key to unlocking online communities (no matter the size of your business) is in the hands of digital creators.

Whether it's chef Joshua Weissman bringing home cooks to YouTube or streamers like Tyler Blevins drawing Fortnite fanatics to his Twitch streams, creators add richness and value to already existing interest groups.

And as the tide on social shifts away from glossy mega-influencers towards smaller and more authentic communities, brands that partner wisely with creators are connecting to new audiences, earning their trust, and gaining cultural capital.

The opportunity is big—and only getting bigger. Over 50 million people around the world now consider themselves creators, according to a seminal report by VC firm SignalFire.⁵ And after barely a decade in existence, the creator economy already boasts a hilariously Dr. Evil-esque estimated value of over 100 billion dollars.⁶

In 2021, almost every major social network introduced features to help creators monetize their work, or funds to pay them directly. Across Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, and Snapchat, there is no shortage of ways for creators to build and sustain their communities, or for brands to support them.

Jamie Byrne, senior director of creator partnerships at YouTube, has been watching growth in this space since 2006. “Even then, it was clear to me that creators were going to change the way we consumed content,” he says. “Creators have risen to a new level of influence and power in the media ecosystem.”

★ **Instead of trying to build a community from the ground up, the smartest brands in 2022 will tap into existing creator communities to learn more about their customers, simplify content creation, and build brand awareness and affinity.**

“The most successful brands attach to pre-existing communities.

Instead of creating communities from the ground up, they engage with communities that form organically. They shift from top-down communication to meaningful conversations. They build relationships that evolve, grow and stand the test of time.”

Sid Lee

The Belong Effect


BiGDUG®


The trend
IN ACTION

Storage solution company BiGDUG dives into TikTok with the help of @theP001guy

If you think commercial shelving, racking, and storage providers aren't likely candidates for TikTok brand fame, UK-based BiGDUG is here to prove you wrong. While people were in lockdown, BiGDUG saw a boom in home renovation and organization inquiries—and took the opportunity to pivot from their typical B2B service model and target communities of DIY enthusiasts on TikTok.

They used TikTok's [Creator Marketplace](#) to get in touch with popular home improvement creator [@theP001guy](#), Miles Laflin, and sent him products to use in his uniquely satisfying videos.

They've since become a regular fixture on Laflin's feed, even showing up as recurring characters in his videos.

The boon to the brand has been massive. The videos BiGDUG has made in collaboration with Laflin have been seen millions of times and garnered hundreds of thousands of impressions with home improvement and cleanliness aficionados. Not bad for a B2B shelving, racking, and storage brand.



While people were in lockdown,
BiGDUG saw a boom in home renovation and organization inquiries.



What you should **DO ABOUT IT**



Now let's make them wonder how you did it

Learn more about how to put this trend into action—and how Hootsuite can help—with [this infosheet](#).

Stop thinking about your followers as your community

A lot of small and midsize businesses make the mistake of thinking that all they need to do when it comes to online community building is get people to follow them. Assuming that a passive following is equal to an engaged, thriving, and loyal community does the power of social media a disservice. And it can cloud your judgment of your product's *real* value.

Instead, seek out online communities that are active and engaged around interests relevant to your product category. If you make dishware, talk to home cooks. If you service cars, find auto clubs. By using creators to tap into these circles where you're not well known and adding value there, you'll reach new audiences, build cultural relevance, and learn more about your customers.

Support the growth of content creators in earnest

Last year, we wrote about how leading brands were focused on listening and finding their place in the conversation before making themselves heard online. This year, we're taking that recommendation a step further. Not only should you be listening to what people are saying within the online communities you're targeting—you should be actively supporting the content creators who are making those communities flourish.

This goes beyond handing out freebies and swag (although those are nice too). Build trust by investing in your creator partners, taking the lead in distributing their content, and actively amplifying their content on your channels.

If people within the community see you as an active partner in supporting the creators they admire, they'll be more likely to trust that you have their best interests at heart too. Then it's just up to you to deliver.

T R E N D 2

The Social Advertising Trend

Marketers get creative as consumers wise up to social ads

Despite historically low budgets, marketers are spending more on social ads

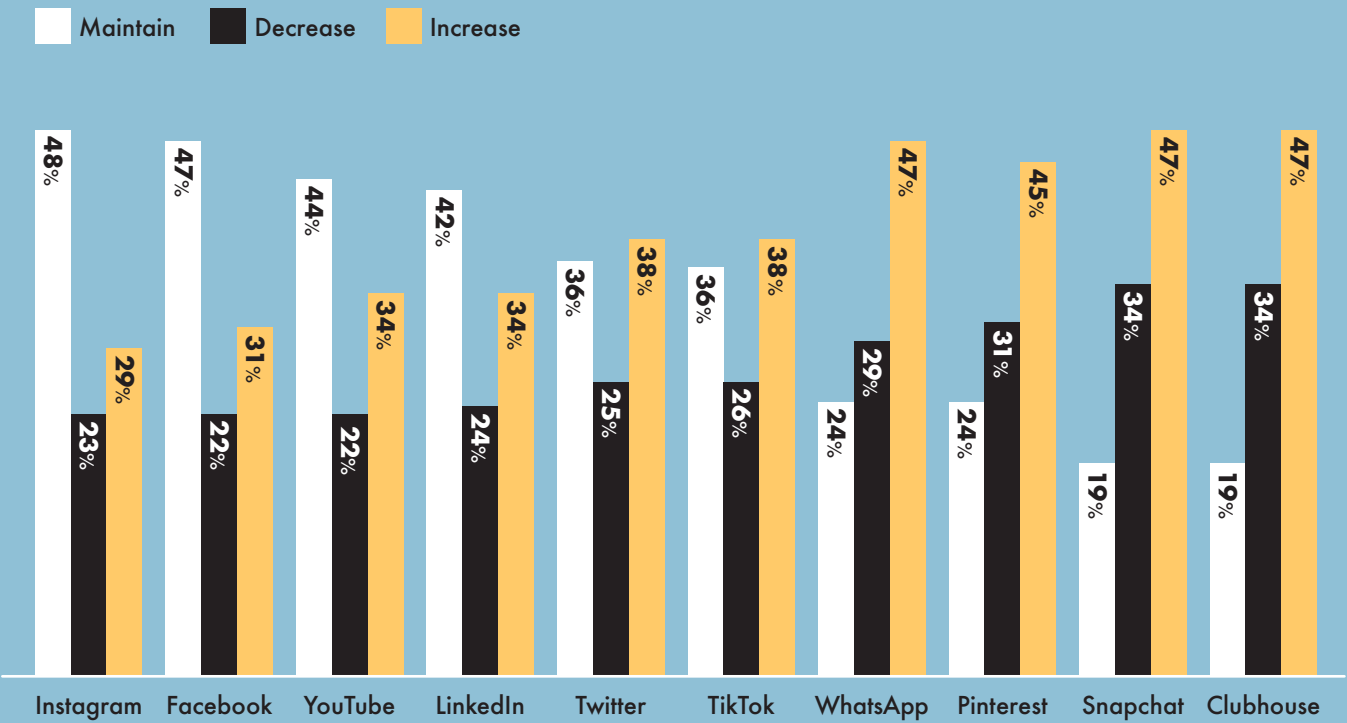
This year, marketing budgets relative to revenue are the lowest they have ever been, according to Gartner's annual CMO Spend Survey.⁷ However, more than half (51.4%) of the marketers that we surveyed said they plan to increase their paid social spend in 2022.

Where do they plan to spend that money? Last year, most of the marketers we spoke to disproportionately pointed at Instagram. This year, investment in Facebook, YouTube, and LinkedIn has caught up.

But it gets really interesting when we start to look beyond those tried and true channels. The largest increases in spend *relative to last year* are going towards TikTok, Pinterest, and Snapchat. Marketers are shifting their resources to where they can make the most impact—and, increasingly, that's on networks that typically haven't been a priority in the social marketing channel mix.



Do you plan on increasing/decreasing/maintaining your investment in the following channels in 2022?



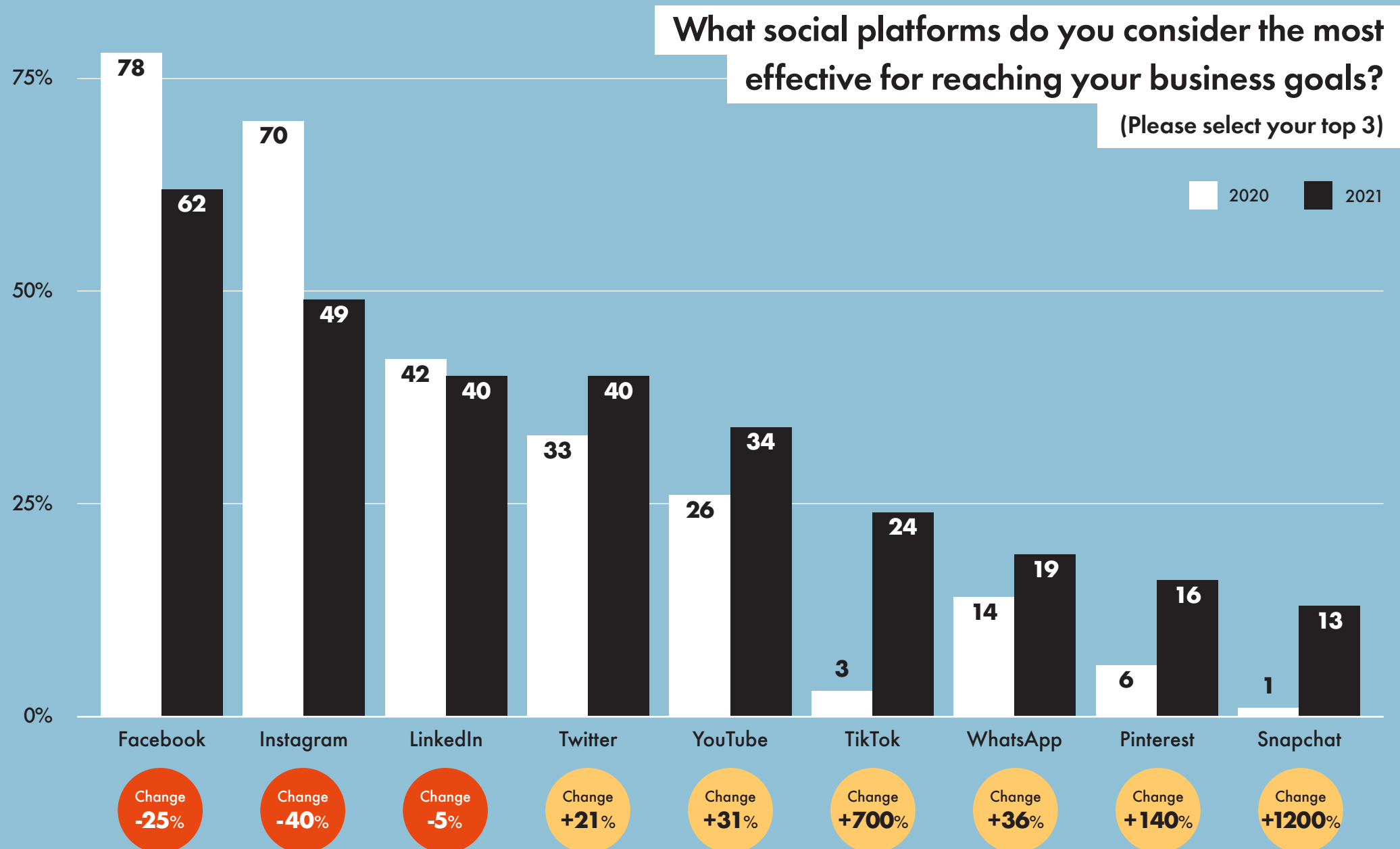
Source: Hootsuite's Social Trends 2022 Survey.
n=14,850

Optimism in the efficacy of less traditional networks is growing

This spending isn't being made on a hunch. Marketers are finding platforms like TikTok, Snapchat, and Pinterest to be far more effective for reaching business goals than they have in the past.

Although marketers in our survey unsurprisingly ranked Facebook and Instagram as the most effective platforms overall, both networks saw significant decreases in perceived effectiveness when compared to last year.

Does that mean Facebook and Instagram are becoming less effective? Not necessarily. A closer look at the data suggests marketers are beginning to find more success on other networks. The biggest jumps in perceived effectiveness belong to TikTok, Pinterest, and Snapchat—which all went from single to double digits. TikTok rocketed from 3% last year to 24% this year—a 700% increase. And Snapchat increased from 1% to 13%—a mind-bending increase of 1200%.



Source: Hootsuite's Social Trends 2021 and 2022 surveys.
 Respondents were asked the same question but samples varied from year to year.
 In 2021 n= 11,189. In 2022 n=14,850.

Consumers on these networks are challenging marketers to have more fun

Not only are these niche networks growing at impressive rates (TikTok just hit one *billion* users) but research shows that consumers may actually be more receptive to advertising on channels like TikTok, Snapchat, and Pinterest than other social networks.

A study by Kantar, commissioned by TikTok, found that consumers ranked TikTok ads as more inspiring and enjoyable than ads on other platforms.⁸ A Nielsen study commissioned by Snapchat found that ads on Snapchat had more reach than TV ads and led to greater awareness and purchase intent across the funnel. And according to Pinterest Business, ads on Pinterest had higher ROI and cheaper conversion rates than ads on other social networks.⁹

Why is this the case? For starters, these networks simply aren't saturated with brands to the same degree as

Facebook or Instagram are (yet!) so there may be less messaging fatigue.

But another more likely reason—and a bigger takeaway for marketers when it comes to advertising anywhere on social—is the fact that these networks encourage advertisers to make content that fits organically into the platforms. TikTok's whole brand-facing wing operates on the tagline "Don't make ads. Make TikToks."

Pinterest's call to action for advertisers is "Stop interrupting, start inspiring." And Snapchat invites advertisers to "Become a part of Snapchatters' everyday conversations."

Brands that advertise successfully on these networks understand that audience mindset is key. Simply put, no one wants their experience on any social network interrupted by ads from brands that are as boring as they are self-serving.

"In a lot of ways, these formats go back to original product placement in soap operas," Anne Hunter, VP of product marketing at consumer insights platform Disqo, recently told Digiday.¹⁰ "Display ads don't have the same emotional resonance as we're seeing with TikTok formats in an environment where having fun and being playful is part of the *raison d'être* to be on the platform."

★ **Consumers, wise to the sameness of social advertising, are holding brands to a higher standard when it comes to creativity—but they're also rewarding those that get it right. Brands that want to stand out in 2022 will have to work harder to create ads that mirror and enrich the distinct experience offered by each social network.**



Structube make themselves at home on Pinterest

Contemporary furniture darling Structube has gone from a single family-run shop in Montreal in the 1970s to boasting over 75 stores across Canada.

To inspire more purchases, Structube created a series of Pinterest shopping ads reminiscent of furniture catalogs from the golden age of department stores in which the company was founded.

Knowing that Pinners search for home decor room by room, the marketing team adapted their ads to match Pinner behavior, creating shopping campaigns for keywords like “bedroom ideas” and “living room decor.” The ads showed both room scenes and individual products, so Pinners looking for inspiration could picture exactly how the products would warm up their homes.

The results speak for themselves. The campaign boasted 2x higher return on ad spend compared to the industry average in Canada.

The campaign boasted 2x higher return on ad spend compared to the industry average in Canada.





What you should **DO ABOUT IT**

Build social marketing teams with the intent to experiment

In 2022, we expect to see more niche networks pop up as consumers seek new experiences—and as developers and investors eye opportunities to build the next TikTok.

To keep up with the changes in the social landscape, your organization must welcome and embrace experimentation. When hiring, look for people who understand specific platforms intuitively. And make sure to diversify the skill sets on your team, either with training or by hiring people who specialize in analytics, video, audio, or writing.

Choose the right social channels for your business goals

While less traditional social networks may be thriving, you shouldn't completely abandon core networks like Facebook and Instagram. Consumers expect to find you there—and a strategic presence on a network that you *know* drives business results beats stretching yourself too thin across every network out there.

But do seek out new strategic opportunities where you're most likely to see the greatest ROI. Our research shows that small businesses in particular find niche networks more effective. In a survey we conducted with 800 small business owners, we found that 62% were active on Facebook, yet only 24% said it was highly effective. In fact, our survey found that the more established the social network was, the less effective small businesses rated it.

Accept that nailing attribution will take time, trial, and error

Attribution will only become more challenging as businesses try to understand the impact of their content on networks where benchmarks are less clear and analytics may be harder to come by. Over the long term, this will force marketers to become more strategic, more resourceful in gathering data, and more adaptable to change.

But when most businesses operate on quarterly cycles that ask practitioners to track and attribute every action to an equal and opposite (financial) reaction, getting buy-in to experiment with your social channel mix can be difficult.

Instead of zeroing in on metrics, focus on shifting the internal culture and mindsets of your marketing teams, embracing experimentation, and accepting that measurement may be murky and imperfect in the short term.

New channels promise potential: the potential to impress customers with your ability to innovate, to beat your competitors to the punch, and to push your own creative boundaries. The reward in temporary imperfection outweighs the risk of missing your moment.



Now let's make them wonder how you did it

Learn more about how to put this trend into action—and how Hootsuite can help—with [this infosheet](#).

T R E N D 3

The ROI Trend

Social quietly matures out of the marketing department

Confidence in social ROI is at an all-time high

For over a decade, marketing leaders have struggled to quantitatively link social media to business outcomes. Now, after being forced to rely on social significantly more during the pandemic, it seems something has clicked.

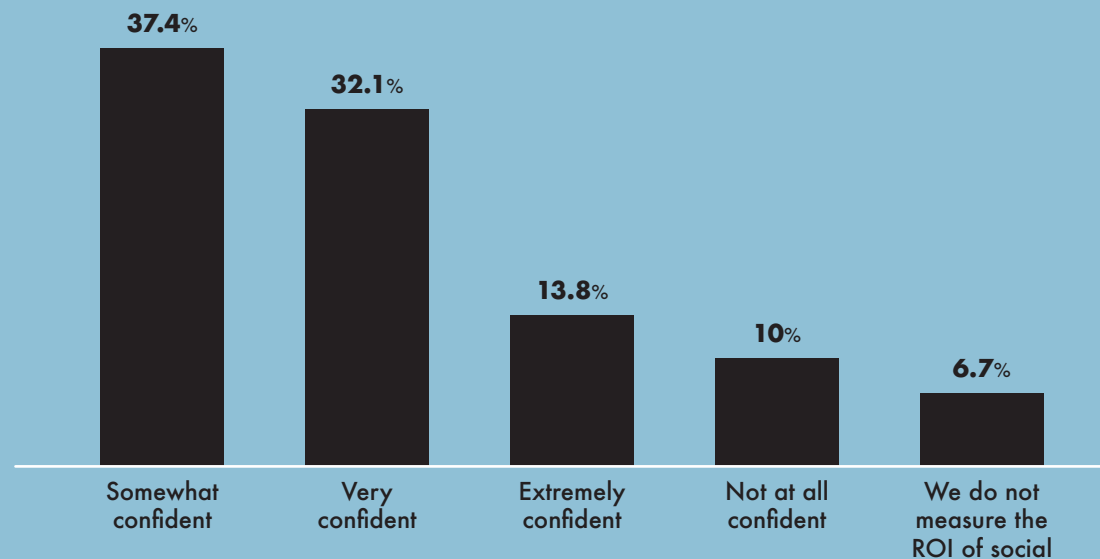
Before 2020, more than half of marketing leaders didn't feel confident attributing the impact of their social media marketing investment on business goals.¹¹ But as businesses were forced to depend on social channels to keep up with customers, manage service requests, make sales,

and figure out what the public actually wanted from them, business leaders have become much more comfortable measuring social's impact.

Respondents in our 2022 Social Trends survey—particularly larger businesses—indicated that they have become more confident in quantifying the return on investment (ROI) of their social media practices. The majority of marketers (83%) report that they are either somewhat, very, or *extremely* confident in quantifying the ROI of their social efforts, up from 68% last year.



How confident are you in your organization's ability to accurately quantify the ROI of social media?



Source: Hootsuite's Social Media Trends 2022 Survey.
n=14,209

What's driving this boost in confidence? It's true that there have been improvements to marketing attribution tools offered by both the social networks and social media management vendors (including ourselves).

But part of the answer also lies in the growing willingness of marketers to step away from old attribution models and mindsets. The few businesses (14%) that have become extremely confident in measuring their ROI are looking at the holistic benefit of social media on their marketing practices—beyond just direct sales.

What can you learn from marketers who said they're "extremely confident" in measuring the ROI of social media?

- 1 Social media has a priming effect on the rest of your marketing.** 55% say their social ads strategy is completely integrated with other marketing activities. Meaning these marketers know that social works *in conjunction with* other marketing efforts to drive awareness and help with brand recall.
- 2 Social can help you gain valuable customer insights.** 48% strongly agree that social listening has increased in value for their organization. Meaning these marketers are using social to learn more about what their customers want and need so that they can deliver exactly that.
- 3 Social is at its most powerful when paid and organic work together.** 65% have completely integrated their paid and organic social media efforts. Meaning these marketers understand how to strategically use both to attract new customers while deepening relationships with existing ones.

VPs and directors
were the most
likely survey
respondents to
say that expanding
social's impact on
other departments
was the most exciting
opportunity for their
social strategy
in 2022.

Having seen the value of social in marketing, leaders look to pass the results to other departments

High-performing businesses are eager to test social's utility beyond leads and conversions. According to our survey, the number one goal for organizations *extremely* confident in measuring the ROI of social is expanding its impact on other departments.

And this goal is coming from the top. VPs and directors were most likely to choose "expanding social's impact on other departments" as the most exciting opportunity for their social strategy in 2022.

So where do high-performing teams see the most opportunity? Protecting their brands, limiting organizational risk, and creating richer experiences for their employees.

Organizations that told us they wanted to use social to "improve the employee experience" jumped from 4% last year to 20% this year. Likewise, organizations looking to use social for "brand protection and risk mitigation" jumped from 5% to 20%. And as employers grapple with the Great Resignation and the public holds brands to higher and higher standards, these goals will only increase in importance.

 **Bold businesses in 2022 will buff up their employee advocacy programs, get better at using social to gather consumer insights, and strive to deliver the kind of impact they've seen social have on their marketing elsewhere in their organizations.**

Ochsner Health sets the gold standard in social utility for big business

Not only has Ochsner Health become the largest nonprofit, academic healthcare system in Louisiana—it has become a gold standard for how large businesses can use social media beyond their marketing. As Ochsner continues to expand throughout Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama in the midst of a pandemic, the organization is putting even more focus on managing its reputation, dispelling public misinformation, and bringing employees together using social.

During a boom in remote work, they've managed to create a thriving and effective brand ambassador program. Originally launched with a handful of volunteers who were already active on social, today their ambassador program boasts 431 members and holds regular recruitment drives, offering prizes for high performers and even credits towards an employee's annual appraisal.

Ochsner also started using Talkwalker, a Hootsuite partner, to reduce corporate risk by tracking negative sentiment across social media. They built a list of approved responses to common, negative feedback, and established a formalized process for managing serious complaints and addressing misinformation more effectively.

Ochsner has been exemplary in finding new utility in old tools and helping to reimagine how large businesses can use social to solve genuine business problems.

Today their ambassador program **boasts 431 members** and holds regular recruitment drives.



Ochsner
Health



The trend
IN ACTION



What you should **DO ABOUT IT**



Now let's make them wonder how you did it

Learn more about how to put this trend into action—and how Hootsuite can help—with [this infosheet](#).

Create a better employee experience with advocacy tools

Help your employees feel more connected to your business and one another. Consider an employee advocacy tool like [Hootsuite Amplify](#) to empower employees to share your posts across their own social networks and increase internal awareness by sharing news across teams within your business.

Sharpen your strategy with deeper customer insights

Organizations that were extremely confident in measuring the ROI of social media were also more likely to use it to gather insights about their customers. If you're looking to get more value from social this year, consider investing in a social listening service like [Hootsuite Insights](#).

Social listening gives brands an opportunity to track, analyze, and respond to conversations happening all over social. Find new customers, retain existing ones, discover what people are saying about your brand, and build sharper social strategies with immediate feedback.

Integrate your paid and organic social strategies

While they're often pitted against each other, the truth is, having your paid and organic efforts work together can lead to amazing results. By playing to the strengths of one and filling the gaps with the strengths of the other, you'll build a more holistic and effective social strategy.

Make your paid strategy smarter by using your organic audience to help you figure out who to target with paid ads. Use retargeting ads to let your organic audience (your best customers) know whether you're having a sale, changing operating hours, or adding new products to your shelves. Your paid ads can bring new customers in while your organic channels build community and push people further along the buying journey.

T R E N D 4

The Social Commerce Trend

Social becomes the heart of the post-pandemic shopping experience

Lockdowns shot ecommerce forward a decade—in three months

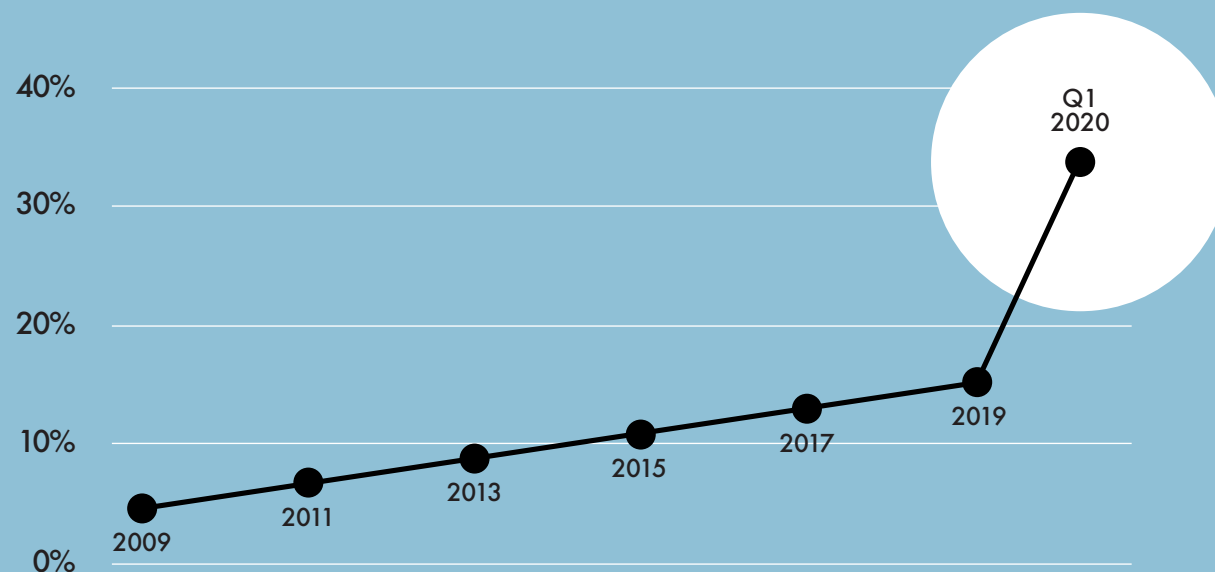
Before the pandemic, social commerce was a flashy new opportunity for the most innovative businesses to play with and create a bit of competitive advantage. That all changed overnight when consumers went into lockdown and many looked to meet basic needs by buying online.

Suddenly, 84% of consumers were shopping over the internet, according to Shopify.¹² eMarketer reported a surge in ecommerce sales growth to 18%, the highest increase the firm had ever reported for this figure.¹³ And in what McKinsey dubbed “the quickening,” ecommerce penetration rocketed ahead more in the first 90 days of the pandemic than it had in the previous *decade*.



10 years' growth in 3 months

U.S. ecommerce penetration, %



Source: McKinsey¹⁴

This 'temporary' boom in online shopping isn't stopping

Nearly two years since the beginning of the pandemic, this shift in consumer spending has shown no signs of slowing down. And with eMarketer projecting that double-digit annual growth will drive ecommerce sales from \$792 billion in 2020 to \$1.6 *trillion* in 2025, it's clear that our new ecommerce habits aren't just here to stay—they're very much on the rise.¹⁵

This growth is particularly acute when it comes to *social* commerce. According to Hootsuite and We Are Social's Digital 2021 report, the global social commerce industry is currently worth more than half a trillion US dollars.¹⁶ Simon Kemp, founder of strategic marketing consultancy Kepios, expects that number to grow.

"Those are already big, juicy numbers," says Kemp, "but if we look at the broader trends, it's easy to see where there's still plenty of potential for them to continue growing."

He points to China, which in recent years has emerged as the place to watch for emerging global ecommerce trends. In a historic first, more than half of China's retail sales will come from ecommerce this year, up from 44.8% last year.¹⁷ And social commerce makes up a fast-growing segment of those sales, projected by eMarketer to grow by 35.5% this year to more than \$360 billion.¹⁸

"I suspect that we'll start to see that really take off outside of Asia in the coming months," says Kemp. "Social commerce clearly represents a huge and growing opportunity wherever you are in the world in whichever categories you operate in."

Younger generations
now turn to social
networks to research
brands more than
search engines.

Search engines: 51.3%

Social networks: 53.2%

Percentage of global internet users aged 16-24 who use each channel as a primary source of information when researching brands.

Source: Hootsuite and We Are Social, Digital 2021¹⁹

Social has become the heart of modern shopping

Shoppers on social media aren't just scrolling feeds and clicking "buy now" buttons on sponsored ads for consumer packaged goods. They're using social media for every stage of the purchase journey, across almost every product category.

"Ads on social media are one of the primary ways in which the world's 4.8 billion internet users discover new brands, new products, and new services," says Kemp. "It's clear that social media has a role to play all along the purchase cycle."

And it's not just discovery that gives social commerce its business utility. Buyers are using social media to search, research, and evaluate the brands they buy from, making social networks the second most important channel for online brand research after search engines.²⁰ What's more, if we look at people aged 16 to 24,

social networks actually rank even higher than search engines like Google when it comes to brand research.²¹

Social media has become the new boulevard, the high street, the avenue. It's your display window. Few people know it as well as Étienne Mérineau, founder of Canadian social commerce giant Heyday—recently acquired by Hootsuite.

"Social used to be just a satellite of the business, an extension of the brand's voice," says Mérineau. "Now it is the brand's voice. It is its core platform to engage with, sell to, and service customers. Social is the interface of commerce and the backbone of the new customer experience."

Social brands are reimagining the customer experience

We won't go so far as to tell you that this is a revolution. Social commerce is the latest iteration in a long and storied history of how people buy and trade goods. The brick-and-mortar storefront isn't dead. And it's not dying anytime soon.


We will, however, strongly encourage you to see social commerce for what it is: a massive opportunity for businesses to reimagine how consumers experience their brands.

Mérineau has bold predictions for what social commerce means for the future of shopping.

"People are addicted to authentic, creative and exclusive experiences," he tells us. "They are also eager to break the codes and reinvent them. The brands of tomorrow will not be defined and set within the confines of a brand book. Brands will be co-created with their consumers and creators—the

result of ongoing collaboration and conversation with their fans."

Fashion and luxury brands are paving the way to this not-so-distant future. Balenciaga recently collaborated with The Simpsons for their latest digital runway. Burberry released an NFT collection in the game Blankos Block Party that sold out in less than 24 hours. And Marc Jacobs, Sandy Liang, and Valentino have all been debuting new styles in Nintendo's breakout hit, Animal Crossing.

 **While the brick-and-mortar storefront lives on post-pandemic, it's become clear that social commerce is an opportunity businesses can't afford to miss. Small businesses in 2022 will work to extend the experience customers have with their brands across social storefronts and real life, while global enterprises test the limits of the online shopping experience.**

"The brands of tomorrow will not be defined and set within the confines of a brand book."

Brands will be co-created with their consumers and creators—the result of ongoing collaboration and conversation with their fans."

Étienne Mérineau

Founder, Heyday by Hootsuite

SMALL BUSINESSES EXTEND THEIR BRAND ACROSS SOCIAL STOREFRONTS

Rebel + Beauty threads their brand between Instagram and IRL

Toronto-based brow and lash shop Rebel + Beauty has managed to perfectly balance their customer experience between Instagram and the real world.

When Toronto went into the longest lockdown in North America, owner Olga Onulov found herself struggling with what to do next.

"We were really stuck," she says. "I had to find a really quick way to keep up with my regulars and let them know that I was still there for them."

The solution? Turn their branded Instagram page into a functional storefront. Onulov started hosting live tutorials on the app for people stuck doing their brows and makeup while at home, and she opened a Shopify store complete with a new product line to keep revenue coming in.

Now that doors are open again, Onulov says she's maintaining a hybrid sales model between the Instagram storefront and the IRL one.

"Making the move was a challenge, but now that we have everything in place, I can't imagine going 100% back to just having the shop. It's really helped me grow the brand in ways I never would have anticipated."

ENTERPRISES TEST THE LIMITS OF THE ONLINE SHOPPING EXPERIENCE

Gucci celebrates its hundredth anniversary in the metaverse

Gucci spent its hundredth birthday this year on Roblox, a social gaming platform that looks like an early iteration of the metaverse. In a virtual activation called the "Gucci Garden," they hosted multiple themed rooms that pay homage to past Gucci campaigns. Visitors entered through a virtual lobby in which their avatars could view, try on, and purchase digital Gucci items.

One visitor paid over \$4,000 for a *digital* version of Gucci's Dionysus GG Supreme Canvas Embroidered Queen Bee bag. The *physical* bag retails for \$3,400 at Neiman Marcus. If there was any doubt that people's digital lives hold real value to them, that mind-boggling fact should undo the last of it.

Ultimately, the event was a wild success: 20 million people visited the digital exhibition over a span of two weeks.²² For comparison, Gucci's website averages under 10 million visits per month. Meanwhile, some of the most well-known marketers in the world lauded the exhibition on Twitter.





What you should **DO ABOUT IT**

Remove moments of friction

The easier you make the purchase process, the more likely your customers are to follow through. Ask yourself what simple things you can do to improve their experience with your brand, even on your existing social profiles.

Before you take on any more work in maintaining something like a Facebook Shop, make sure you plug all of the gaps in your existing social points of presence—for example, by updating your business profile with basic information like your operating hours and location.

Even if you aren't ready to open a social storefront, you can promote sales, events, and discounts directly on your business pages. Add product descriptions, encourage reviews, and respond to publicly visible customer service inquiries.

Invest in your social storefront

Now that your business profiles are spotless, you're ready to delve into the world of the online storefront. From [Instagram](#) to [Facebook](#) to [Pinterest](#), there are plenty of options for you to sell products directly on social.

Given the size of the social commerce opportunity, brands should invest as much energy and effort into their online storefronts as they would in keeping their brick-and-mortar locations tidy. Invest in photography, hire a writer to craft product descriptions, and put consideration into how you're organizing your storefront.

All of these efforts will impact consumer impressions of your brand. So put some energy into it and make sure that the way people experience your brand on social media is as close to the IRL experience as you can make it.

Personalize the shopping experience at scale

So you've cleaned up your business profiles and opened your social storefront, and now sales are booming—too fast, actually. In fact, you're unable to focus on what's happening in your physical store because you're managing such a large volume of inquiries and customer service requests.

Your next step is to personalize the shopping experience at scale by investing in conversational AI tools like [Heyday by Hootsuite](#). Relieve yourself of the expectation that you'll be able to manage everything yourself. With an AI-powered assistant at your disposal, you can manage all your customer touchpoints in one place, serve up instant product recommendations, and let bots handle routine inquiries while you take the complicated stuff. Now *that's* a great experience.



Now let's make them wonder how you did it

Learn more about how to put this trend into action—and how Hootsuite can help—with [this infosheet](#).

T R E N D 5

The Customer Care Trend

Social marketers save their brands from the customer service apocalypse

Marketers bear the brunt of a crisis in customer service

Social marketers, if you feel like your job description has ballooned over the past year, you're not alone. Spurred on by lockdowns and chaotic shifts in business operations, we've seen social marketers take on more responsibility for managing an influx of customer service inquiries.

The best and brightest in the industry are saying as much, too.

"As a social media manager, you're not just in charge of content creation and strategy," says Nathan Allebach, creative director at Allebach Communications and the mastermind behind Steak-umm's [viral Twitter threads](#). "It's really often one person who is also in charge of customer service and community management, too. It's a meme that social media managers do it all, but that's increasingly the reality."



Anyone expecting this to subside as the pandemic wanes is in for a rude awakening.

People have spent the last two years becoming increasingly bored, anxious, and frustrated. Many are spending money to cope. Massive increases in consumer demand have put the global shipping industry into a chokehold at ports around the world, making it almost impossible for businesses to fulfill orders. Meanwhile, labor shortages are sweeping global markets, leaving fewer workers to deliver bloating orders bound for soon-to-be-disappointed customers.

A customer service apocalypse is upon us. And social is where it will play out.



Social has become the front line of this crisis

Consumers, fed up with waiting on hold, have discovered that service delivered via social is immediate, convenient, and effective. In a Nielsen survey commissioned by Facebook, 64% of people said they now prefer to message rather than call a business.²³ The pressure on businesses to adapt to as many digital customer service channels as possible is sky high.

That same Nielsen survey shows us that 60% of consumers say they're open to receiving personal messages from companies. While some struggle to add and integrate new service channels, the most innovative customer service leaders are finding new opportunities to deliver proactive customer care and streamline some of the volume.

Not only do customers expect their needs to be met on social, but some regulators—such as the Australian Securities and Investments Commission—are also beginning to mandate that organizations deliver support via customers' preferred channels.²⁴ The writing is on the wall.

According to Gartner, 60% of all customer service requests will be managed via digital channels by 2023.²⁵ Consumer expectations are mounting. Demand for integrating customer care channels is increasing—and social is where that pressure is peaking.



“Social customer care increases customer acquisition, builds brand awareness, and drives new purchases and product inquiries.

When consumers have questions about products, being accessible on social lets you reach them quickly and far more easily.

When you bundle social marketing and social care, you’re actually covering the core outcomes that have a huge impact on customers’ buying experience *and* your company’s bottom line. That’s the big picture many businesses still aren’t seeing.”

Christoph Neut

Vice President Sales
Sparkcentral by Hootsuite

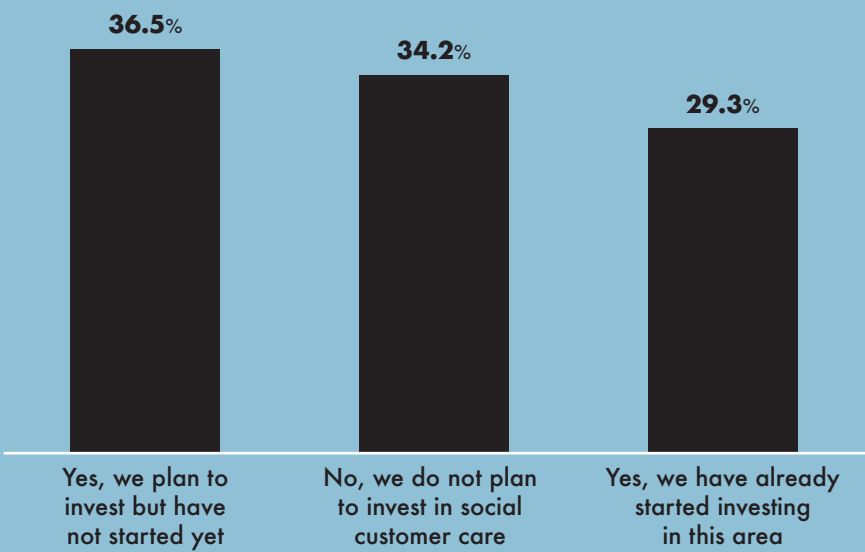
Most organizations are not ready to deliver customer care on social

Despite a rise in demand, many organizations aren't well positioned to deliver effective customer care over social media... at least not yet. Our internal data from research conducted in July 2021 tells us that 71% of organizations have either not started investing in social customer care yet, or they don't plan to to invest in it at all.

However, that tide may be turning. Businesses are beginning to see social as a vital customer service channel, with 59% of respondents to our Social Trends survey agreeing that social customer care has increased in value for their organization.

What's more interesting is that, according to our survey, organizations that are extremely confident in quantifying the return on investment (ROI) of their social media practices also strongly agree that customer care has increased in value for their organization. Simply put: The more confident organizations are in their use of social media to achieve other business goals, the more likely they are to see the value of social customer care.

Is social customer care an area your organization will be investing more in the future?



Source: Hootsuite's Customer Care 2022 Survey.
n=13,000

59%
of marketers
agree that social
customer care
has increased in
value for their
organization
over the past
12 months.

Source:

Hootsuite Social Trends
2022 Survey

Social marketers have an opportunity to shine

With the pressure increasing and business leaders slowly becoming aware that they should be prioritizing social customer service, nobody is in a better position to help organizations navigate this shift than social marketers.

- Social marketers know the channels better than anyone else. They're much more likely to understand which social networks customers are using, and where they're seeking help from any given business.
- Social marketers are closer to the customer. They have a keen sense of the recurring issues customers are running up against, and they can be a key source of insight for many businesses looking to streamline common inquiries and consolidate ballooning support tickets.

★ In 2022, business leaders will look to social marketers to take a greater role in customer care. Pioneering social marketers will break from their departmental silos to build deeper inroads with customer service teams and take more agency in delivering customer care.

The Careem logo, featuring a stylized 'C' with a smiley face inside, followed by the word 'areem' in a sans-serif font.

The trend
IN ACTION

Ridesharing service turned super app, Careem, empowers their social team to deliver better customer care

Careem, the largest ridesharing service in the Middle East, has seen a 350% increase in inbound customer service traffic since the start of the pandemic.

To help streamline engagement with their rapidly growing community of six million followers and enable their teams to handle over 400,000 customer conversations every month, Careem's head of community management, Mohannad Baig, knew something had to be done.

"Managing active, social communities is vital," says Baig. "We rely on our customers to help us improve our business—whether that is our marketing, our services, or our app."

Careem invested in Sparkcentral by Hootsuite, which gave their social teams an easy-to-use workflow to handle engagement across their social channels. The ability to tag and filter messages helped them make sense of a deluge of inbound communication across all of their messaging and social channels.

To help empower the rest of their organization, Careem's social team uses Sparkcentral to report KPIs, then shares reports with marketing, service, operations, and partner teams to spot issues, find opportunities, and mine for insights.

"Our aim is to simplify life for people in the Middle East," Baig told us. "We want to make a difference in people's lives, and we do that."

"We rely on our customers to help us improve our business."



What you should **DO ABOUT IT**



Now let's make them wonder how you did it

Learn more about how to put this trend into action—and how Hootsuite can help—with [this infosheet](#).

Give yourself a unified view of all your messaging channels

Whether you're managing a crisis or simply trying to make sure customers' needs are met on time, social customer care is the front line of your business. From fielding DMs on Instagram to handling public complaints on Twitter, managing all these inquiries across every single social channel that your business uses can quickly become a challenge. Get [Hootsuite Inbox](#) to help you monitor messages from different networks in a single view.

Make it easier for customer service and marketing to share information

Your customers don't make the distinction between your customer support, marketing, and sales teams. To them, every interaction is just an experience with *your brand*. Make sure your marketing and customer service teams have clear lines of communication with one another so they can streamline common inquiries and mitigate issues in tandem. Invest in [Sparkcentral by Hootsuite](#) to tag inquiries by importance, delegate requests, and make sure the right teams are there to answer the right questions.

Invest in training and services for social media teams

From developing strategies to making standout content to resolving customer service requests and every little task in between, social marketers are expected to do it all. Invest in [trusted training and services programs](#) that will help your social marketers develop critical business skills, set themselves apart from other marketers, and help them thrive within your business.

See the full survey results

What's different about the social media strategies of SMBs, midsize companies, and enterprise organizations? Which industry is leading the pack in integrating their organic and paid social? How are marketers collecting and integrating data to measure performance?

Find the answers to your burning questions in our Social Trends 2022 survey results. We surveyed 18,100 marketers across nine industries in five languages, brought in scary-smart analysts to crunch the numbers, and packaged it all up in a glorious bundle of beautiful charts you can use to show your boss why they'd better increase your budget this year. You're welcome.

[Show me the charts](#)

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We hope it gives you the confidence to navigate a new year in style.

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Building enduring brands, one social connection at a time

In less than a decade, social media has entirely reshaped how we live, work, and communicate. It's the first place people turn when they're looking to discover, learn, and buy—and it's an essential platform to build your brand, uncover deep strategic insights, and get closer to your customers.

From smart social listening and engagement to AI-powered social commerce and social customer care, Hootsuite has the scalable platform, deep expertise, strong industry partnerships, and bold vision to help your organization deliver world-class digital experiences to your customers at every stage of their journey—today and tomorrow.

Make them wonder how you did it



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200,000 customers

**150+ apps
and integrations**

**1 million courses
delivered via Hootsuite Academy**

