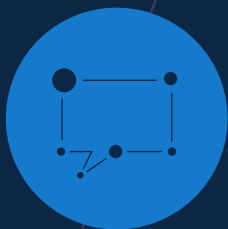
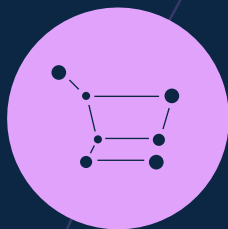
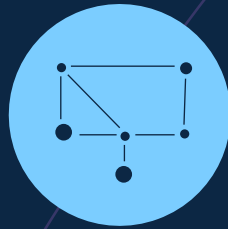
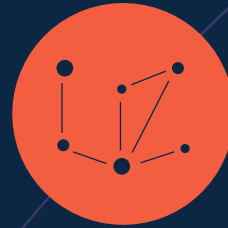


SOCIAL MEDIA TRENDS

2019

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



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the social media world, the pace of change has always been brisk. But 2018 marked a true inflection point.

Long-running issues with privacy and integrity came to a head in Facebook's Cambridge Analytica crisis. Users began to question the value networks provide and seek more meaningful ways to engage. Against this backdrop, intimate new formats have risen for connecting and sharing content, from Instagram Stories to the explosion of one-to-one messaging.

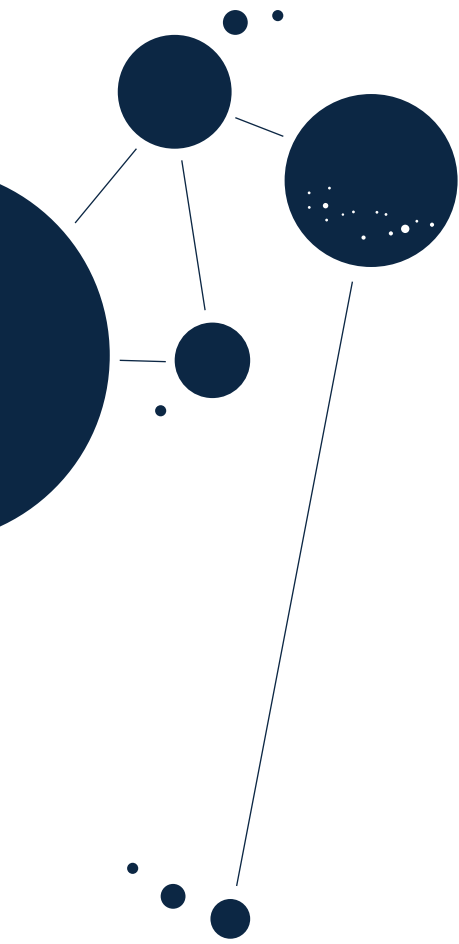
A radically new social paradigm is emerging, and leading brands are already adapting to it. Consumers want to be treated like individuals, not demographics. They're demanding more value in exchange for their time and information. The pendulum has swung back to social's roots: real, personal, and authentic.

Where does this leave brands that rely on social media to reach their customers, prospects, employees, partners, and other audiences? How can they create authenticity and intimacy—at scale—while working within time and budgetary constraints? How can they support customers throughout the entire journey, building loyalty and boosting the return on their investment in social media?

In this report, based on our annual survey of 3,255 Hootsuite business customers, interviews with industry analysts, and exhaustive research, we've distilled these questions and issues into five key social media trends for brands to watch and adapt to in 2019:

- 1. Rebuilding trust:** Brands get human as the circle of trust on social media tightens.
- 2. Storifying social:** Content teams adapt as Stories offer new formats for sharing.
- 3. Closing the ads gap:** More competition on paid social requires marketers to up their game.
- 4. Cracking the commerce code:** Improved social shopping technologies (finally) fuel sales.
- 5. Messaging eats the world:** Customers demand better 1:1 social experiences.

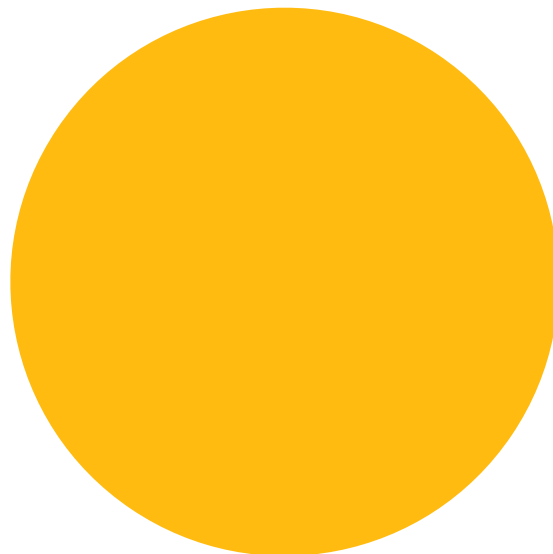
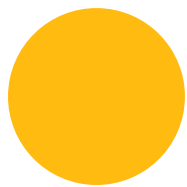
New formats, new challenges, and new ways of engaging make 2019 an exciting time to work in social media, one filled with both pitfalls and possibilities. Here's our roadmap for navigating and thriving in the year ahead.



METHODOLOGY

This report is based on a survey of 3,255 Hootsuite business customers, from large enterprises to small agencies, conducted in Q3 2018. We've supplemented these results with insights from primary interviews with dozens of industry specialists, as well as published reports and data from Edelman, Gartner, GlobalWebIndex, Forrester, Econsultancy, Kleiner Perkins, We Are Social, and others.

These trends are intended to be of value to front-line social media practitioners and leaders alike. To ensure all trends are both specific and actionable, we've included corresponding brand examples and guidelines for implementation, for both beginner and experienced social media practitioners.



TREND 1

Rebuilding trust

BRANDS GET HUMAN AS THE CIRCLE OF TRUST
ON SOCIAL MEDIA TIGHTENS

2018 represented a crisis year for trust on social media. In the wake of the Cambridge Analytica scandal¹ and a Congressional hearing,² Facebook faced unprecedented pressure from users and regulators to improve security, transparency, and accuracy. Twitter, meanwhile, wrestled with controversies over the unfettered proliferation of bots on its platform, purging millions of fake accounts.³

In recent months, consumers, regulators, and media observers have called into question the privacy, accuracy, and ethics of nearly every social network.

The result: According to [Edelman's 2018 Trust Barometer Report](#), 60 percent of people no longer trust social media companies.⁴ Meanwhile, the Ponemon Institute, an independent research firm specializing in privacy and data protection, reports that trust in Facebook has dropped a “shock[ing]” 66 percent.⁵

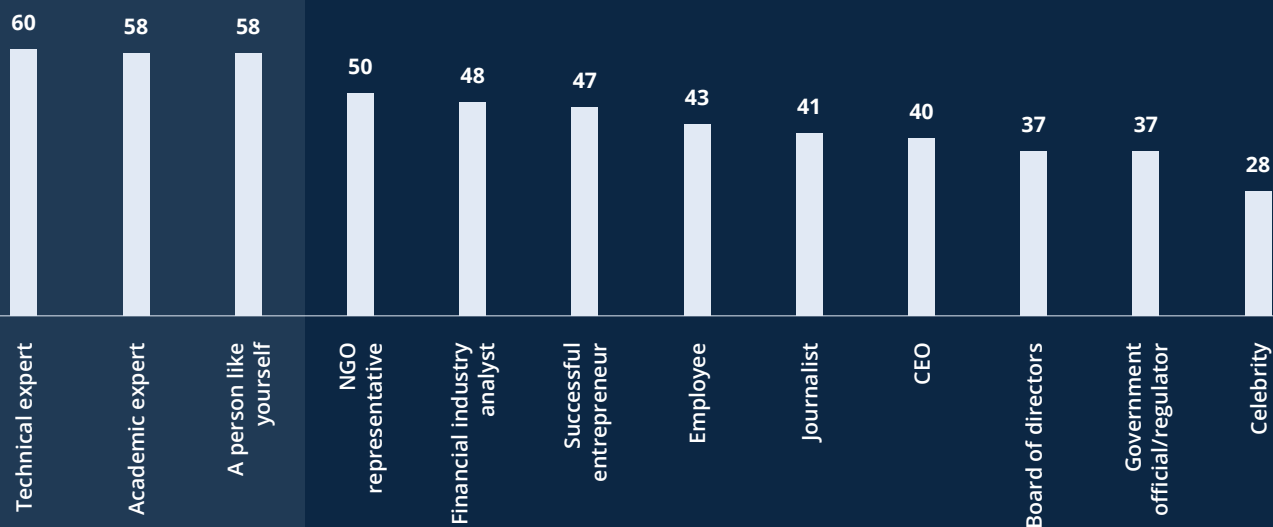
For brands on social media, this shift presents new challenges and opportunities. In an age of social skepticism, the rules of the game have changed. Users have grown distrustful of many media and celebrity influencers⁶ (whose followings, it turns out, are often bought or fake).⁷ In a major pendulum swing, trust has reverted back to immediate friends, family, and acquaintances on social media.

Users are also returning to traditional and trusted journalism outlets and local news sources, with 71 percent of people agreeing that social media should do more to support high-quality journalism.⁸

Deploy Credible Expert and Peer Voices

Percent who rate each spokesperson as very/extremely credible for information about a brand

Experts, peers statistically tied in credibility



Source: [Edelman 2018 Trust Barometer Special Report: Brands and Social Media](#).



To keep pace with these changes, smart brands are focusing less on maximizing reach and more on generating transparent, quality engagement. Indeed, the very definition of “engagement” has matured from simple clicks to behaviors that have more tangible impact on brand value and long-term ROI. And the one-size-fits-all approach to social media—with the same posts plastered indiscriminately across networks—is giving way to context- and audience-specific messaging.

Progressive companies like Adidas and The New York Times, for example, are working to develop intimate, meaningful dialogue with smaller, more valuable audience groups. They’re creating communities⁹ and sharing insightful and researched content¹⁰—then getting out of the way and letting passionate users talk to one another.

Another key tactic: Rather than relying on celebrity influencers, brands are leveraging their own internal experts and employee advocates.

The bottom line: Users are increasingly conscious of whom they’re interacting with on social media and what data they’re sharing. Earning trust and providing real value are key for continued engagement. For years, brands and marketers have emphasized the importance of content—but now, there’s an increasing emphasis on the critical role of *context* in delivering that content so that it’s important, interesting, and timely for the individual while being authentic and genuine to the brand.

BEST-IN-CLASS BRANDS TO LEARN FROM



Condé Nast

Encourages a highly engaged following by creating a safe, intimate community for discussion

When Condé Nast Traveler published their [Women Who Travel](#) website, they realized they had found an untapped community of readers who wanted to engage more on the subject. In response, they launched the [Women Who Travel Facebook Group](#), which allows passionate female travelers to have conversations in a safe environment.

The closed group, which requires moderator permission to access, was an instant success and grew quickly. It currently has 56,000 members, 73

percent of whom are active daily. Condé Nast has since scaled Facebook Groups across seven other publications so they can better focus on the niche communities of their readers.¹¹

TAKEAWAY Facebook Groups, including closed groups requiring permission to access, can be a powerful way to bring passionate customers together and facilitate dialogue.



Adidas

Builds authentic micro-communities with brand ambassadors

Instead of using the typical influencer model—which taps into the power and influence of one “social celebrity” to reach as many customers as possible—Adidas decided to take a more grassroots approach to their social marketing. They built out “squads” of micro-influencers to connect with customers at a more local level.

Adidas’s “groundbreaking” Tango Squad Program partners with young athletes who have influence in

niche communities.¹² By using an influencer model that focuses on authenticity over reach, they’ve earned more engagement from customers.¹³ Adidas continues to expand their micro-influencer program.

TAKEAWAY Partner with micro-influencers to access more niche communities and encourage more authentic engagement with customers.



The British Museum

Leverages technical experts to educate and engage a global following

By inviting in-house experts and employees to participate in social media initiatives, the British Museum keeps millions of followers engaged and excited about their historical collections. For example, if followers want in-depth information about the collections, they can watch Facebook Live videos hosted by museum curators, covering everything from their Scythians exhibit to a series on conserving Vulture Peak.

The museum’s livestreams bring together thousands of viewers from hundreds of different countries. Senior Digital Marketing Manager Kate Carter says, “Our audience trusts us to take them to places that they might not have gone themselves.”¹⁴

TAKEAWAY Run a Facebook Live featuring subject matter experts at your company to educate your audience and build trust.



HOOTSUITE'S RECOMMENDATIONS *FOR THIS TREND*

GETTING STARTED

- **Create a branded hashtag for Instagram aligned with community values.**

To build conversation around your brand, create a short, easy-to-remember [branded hashtag](#) that brings your community together around a common interest. For example, Herschel Supply Co. has a popular branded hashtag, [#welltravelled](#), for people who love to travel. They encourage their customers to share photos of Herschel products while exploring beautiful corners of the world.

Use hashtags to align users around a brand value or noble purpose, rather than just a product offering.

- **Participate in (or run) Twitter chats.**

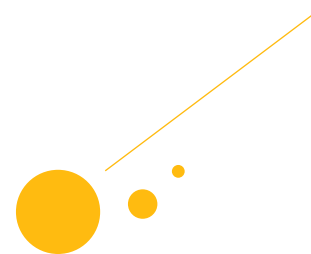
A [Twitter chat](#) is a public discussion on Twitter around a specific hashtag. Twitter chats are a great way to build community by generating lively discussions around your customers' interests. The chats are held at a specific time, cover one topic or theme, and are led by a moderator.

Hootsuite hosts a monthly [#Hootchat](#) on social media marketing and strategy, bringing together a group of engaged participants who want to learn more about social media for achieving business objectives.

- **Build a Facebook Group around a core audience interest.**

If you have a Facebook Business Page, you can easily create a [Facebook Group](#) to complement it. While your page will offer more general information to your followers, your Facebook Group can address niche interests and target your superfans.

The key for brands is to create a space where customers can talk to one another. Facilitate that engagement and then get out of the way. Avoid heavy-handed pitches or product plugs. You can choose to make your group public or closed, and you should clearly identify the purpose of the group so people know why it exists.





GOING PRO

- **Include micro-influencers in your marketing strategy.**

When planning campaigns, consider hiring a micro-influencer to improve the quality of your outreach with more niche audiences. Unlike well-known or celebrity influencers, micro-influencers have smaller, highly engaged social media audiences. Micro-influencers are more affordable for brands, are viewed as more trustworthy by consumers, and often drive better results.

One of the easiest ways to find micro-influencers is through a hashtag search on Twitter or Instagram. This will help you find people that have influence in your industry. To learn more about micro-influencers, check out [this overview](#).

- **Start a secret group on Facebook.**

Public groups on Facebook are open to everyone. Closed groups can be found via search but require admin permission to join. And then there are [secret groups](#): invisible and unsearchable to the outside world. The only way to join is to get a member to invite you.

For the right brands, secret groups can be an effective way to create an aura of exclusivity or intrigue, especially in the context of launches and special promotions. And members, free from the prying eyes of the outside world, may feel freer to share ideas. For a prime example, check out MEL Magazine's profile of the potato-chip themed [Gettin' Chippy With It](#) Facebook Group.¹⁵

- **Run monthly Facebook Live Q&As sessions around commonly asked questions.**

To keep customer trust high, it's important to communicate often, address problems proactively, and be as transparent as possible. [Facebook Live](#) Q&As are an excellent place to start. Not only do they make your brand feel more human by having someone talk to customers in real time, but they're also easy to manage and budget-friendly to run.

Don't worry about scripting beforehand—the goal is to be authentic and engaging in an informal setting.

- **Activate employee advocates.**

To share technical info and unique insights, tap into the experts already on your team, from product specialists to your CEO. And encourage employees to reshare [branded social content](#) that's relevant to their unique audiences. This allows you to tap into existing peer networks and gain entry into existing circles of trust.

Dedicated social employee advocacy tools can streamline the process of creating and amplifying social content.



TREND 2

Storifying social

CONTENT TEAMS ADAPT AS STORIES OFFER
NEW FORMATS FOR SHARING

Will the news feed one day be an endangered species? According to consulting firm Block Party, Stories—the vertical, ephemeral slideshows pioneered by Snapchat—are now growing 15 times faster than feed-based sharing.¹⁶

64%

of respondents have either implemented Instagram Stories into their social strategy or plan to do so in the next 12 months.

Hootsuite 2019 Social Trends Survey

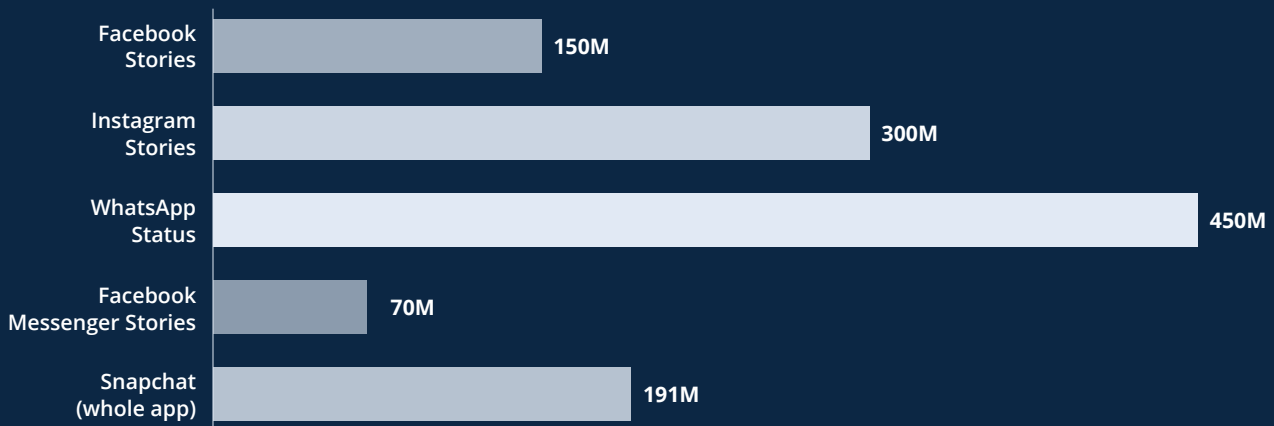
Facebook's own chief product officer Chris Cox shared a chart showing that Stories are set to surpass feeds as the primary way people share things with their friends within the next year.¹⁷ And nearly a billion users across WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, and Snapchat already turn to Stories to share.¹⁸

This is far more than just another new format. Social media is pivoting from text-based platforms originally designed for desktop use (think early Facebook) to truly mobile-only networks that enable users to capture in-the-moment experiences—and Stories embody that pivot.

Stories are overwhelmingly visual and meant to be created and consumed on the fly with nothing more than a smartphone and a creative eye. Because they're ephemeral—often disappearing after a day—there's more room for fun and experimentation. Stories feel real, immediate, and intensely personal.

For brands, this requires a major shift in focus in 2019.

Stories Product Daily Active Users



Source: TechCrunch, Facebook Stories reveals 150M daily users and here come ads. Last updated: May 2018.

While high-production-value posts are still important, it's key to have a balanced diet of different content styles. Increasingly, brands are embracing the intimate, multimedia look and feel of Stories. Brands like the Guardian¹⁹ and Tictail²⁰ have already figured this out—they're finding that less polished, more realistic Stories perform better than heavily edited takes filled with heavy-handed calls to action.

Of course, Stories come with their own set of challenges. This kind of intimacy and spontaneity obviously can't work for all brands. Can big brands find a way to scale this personal touch? The absence of a robust API for Instagram Stories makes scheduling and measuring engagement and ROI exceedingly hard, at least for the moment.²¹ But what's becoming clear is that Stories are second nature for a new wave of digital natives—and the news feed may be slowly becoming a thing of the past.²²

52%

cite **lack of video creation (skills and budget)** as a top challenge.

Hootsuite 2019 Social Trends Survey

Stories are now growing

15x

faster than feed-based sharing.

Block Party, [Beyond the News Feed](#)

"[The] Stories format is on a path to surpass feeds as the primary way people share things with their friends sometime next year."

Facebook chief product officer, Chris Cox, quoted in [TechCrunch](#)

4/5

major brands are already using the Stories format.

Block Party, [Beyond the News Feed](#)

BEST-IN-CLASS BRANDS TO LEARN FROM



The Guardian

Creates spontaneous, low-fi Story content for a higher return on investment

After the Guardian started tracking its Instagram performance, they made an interesting discovery: High-production, highly scripted Stories were not giving them the return on investment they expected. In contrast, their more spontaneous, less polished Stories—like their “explainer videos”—performed much better.

These less polished Stories are aimed at a younger audience who seemingly can't get enough, watching nearly half of these videos to completion. They also feature young presenters and use more casual

language (including emojis), which have resonated much better with their digital audience.

On the strength of its Stories strategy, the Guardian has grown its Instagram followers from 860,000 to one million in just four months.²³

TAKEAWAY Test your Stories content to find out what resonates best with your audience—high production values don't necessarily guarantee a better ROI.



WeWork

Connects their global community with raw, behind-the-scenes Stories

Coworking company WeWork has built its brand on the idea of community, so their social media channels need to reflect that. Their behind-the-scenes Instagram Stories content helps bridge the experiences of members across the globe. Whether it's celebrating a book launch in London or Pride Month in Mexico City, WeWork's Stories feel raw and real because they feature the actual experiences of members using their work spaces.

WeWork also allows members to host Story takeovers to show a day in the life at their offices. The ephemeral nature of Story content allows them to experiment with different formats and approaches, while the “Highlight” feature allows them to display high-performing Stories more permanently.²⁴

TAKEAWAY Find creative ways to incorporate Story content from your users, customers, and communities.



Dunkin' Donuts

Embraces new Stories technologies to delight customers

Dunkin' Donuts was one of the first brands to create and use custom Giphy stickers for Valentine's Day.²⁵ The campaign was fun and interactive, allowing followers to use these branded stickers within their own Stories.

According to Block Party, the Dunkin' Donuts set of 10 Valentine's Day stickers amassed millions of views in just a few weeks—with their highest performing sticker receiving more than six million views. During

the campaign, Dunkin' Donuts used its own Story content to engage with fans and promote campaign participation.²⁶

TAKEAWAY Early adoption pays off. Experiment with ever-evolving Story technologies—from stickers to AR—to give your customers an unexpected experience.



HOOTSUITE'S RECOMMENDATIONS *FOR THIS TREND*

GETTING STARTED

- **Start experimenting with Stories.**

An estimated 4 out of 5 major brands are already creating Stories.²⁷ If you aren't already [creating Stories](#), it's time to start.

Stories can be as easy to create as you choose, so there's a low barrier to entry for any team's skill set. Share content weekly (and at [different times of day](#)) to see what works best with your audiences.

PRO TIP: Shoot your videos vertically. That's how people watch them.

- **Create Story-specific content.**

Your content should reflect the unique look and feel of Stories—raw, unedited, and live action.

Our social team at Hootsuite has tested both professionally animated and live action Instagram Stories, and found that live action videos performed significantly better because they matched the Story aesthetic people are used to seeing.

- **Use the Stories Highlight feature.**

Despite their off-the-cuff aesthetic, Stories can sometimes be time-consuming to create and share.

For brands reluctant to let their efforts simply disappear after 24 hours, there's [Highlights](#). Selected Stories can be displayed as long as you want, along with a designated custom cover image. This feature is ideal for special promotions, campaigns, or longer, more high-production videos that deserve extra exposure.

- **Tap your team's full creative resources.**

Stories work best when they integrate video, storytelling, text, images, and more.

Expecting a single social media specialist to integrate all of these skills is a tall order. Instead, find ways for your video, photography, and graphic design teams to join forces to create something memorable.

GOING PRO

- **Get creative with your Story structures.**

Stories are easy to create and allow you to produce content quickly, so you should [experiment with different structures](#) to find what works best for your brand. For example, you can create tutorials showing people how to use your product, give a behind-the-scenes look at your company culture, host a takeover, or run a Q&A on topics that interest your customers.

- **Add UTMs to your links to track success.**

Verified accounts can add a “swipe up” feature to their Stories that allow viewers to follow a link to another website or landing page. By [adding UTMs to your Story URLs](#), you can track where users are going and get a better understanding of what content resonates with your audience. If you don't have a verified account, add a link with a UTM code to your bio.

- **Get in early with Facebook Stories.**

So far, [Facebook Stories](#) (which appear on the network's flagship platform) haven't really caught on. But CEO Mark Zuckerberg appears determined to get Stories right on Facebook and is investing heavily in the format.

Currently, only around nine percent of major brands post to Facebook Stories, but companies that get in early may enjoy an early adopter advantage.²⁸ Plus, it's easy—the tap of a button lets you syndicate Stories straight from Instagram to Facebook.

- **Experiment with AR and custom GIFs in your Stories**

If you're looking to up your Stories game, consider adding augmented reality features and GIFs to your storytelling. AR experiences and GIF stickers are now widely available as features of the Stories cameras on Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat. You should use GIFs to enhance your images, grab attention, and direct viewers' attention to something like a call-to-action or “swipe-up.”

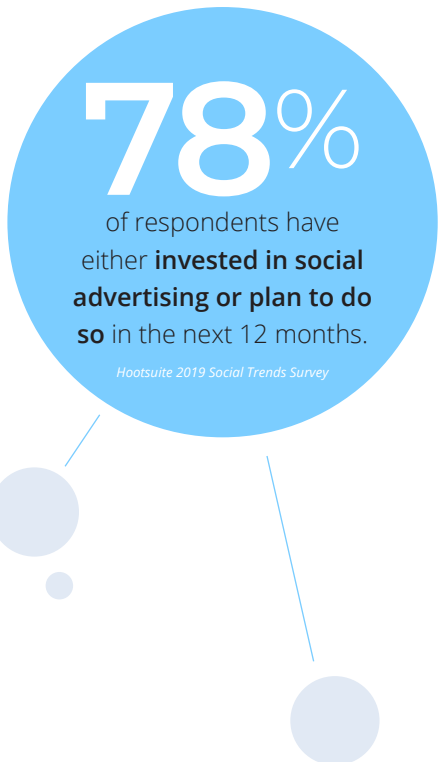


TREND 3

Closing the ads gap

MORE COMPETITION ON PAID SOCIAL FORCES
MARKETERS TO UP THEIR GAME

By now, everyone knows we're in the pay-to-play era on social. Accordingly, marketers are increasing social ad budgets (up 32 percent in 2018 alone) and producing more ads than ever before.²⁹ One of every four Facebook Pages now use paid media,³⁰ and Facebook already accounts for 23 percent of total U.S. digital ad spending.³¹



But with the popularity of social ads have come new challenges: Prices are increasing and it's becoming harder to get noticed. According to Mary Meeker's Internet Trends 2018 report, Facebook click-through rate (CTR) costs have increased by 61 percent, and cost per thousand impressions (CPM) has jumped 112 percent.³² Rising costs and fleeting attention have combined to limit ROI for advertisers and reduce overall margins.

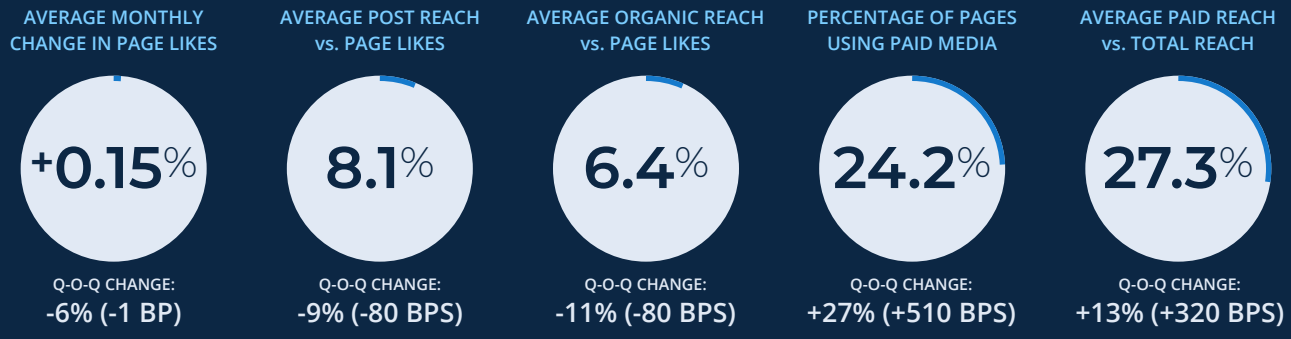
So how can brands ensure they maximize the return on their social ad investment? It's critical to remember that impressions, views, and other reach metrics are rarely indicative of campaign effectiveness. With 293,000 status updates now posted on Facebook every minute, only the most engaging ads rise above background noise.³³

Millennials and Gen Z, in particular, have grown adept at filtering out irrelevant ads, either skimming over or actively using ad blocking tools.³⁴ While you may be able to pay your way into someone's news feed, that's no guarantee that anyone is going to pay attention.

The solution? Paid social teams are recognizing the importance of pairing ad money with an equivalent investment of time, creativity, and targeting savvy. And they're amplifying the best performing organic content with paid boosts.

Average Facebook Page Post Reach

Average monthly growth in page likes ('fans'), average reach of page posts, and the contribution of paid media



Source: 2018 Q3 Global Digital Statshot
Q-O-Q (quarter-on-quarter) changes are vs. Q1 2018. Q-O-Q percentage figures reflect relative change; BPS (basis points) figures reflect absolute change.

Spotify³⁵ and Netflix³⁶ are leading the way with creative social ads that are at once personalized and entertaining, rather than just bland banner ads squeezed into a news feed. The end goal, after all, is to generate user discussion and engagement, rather than simply broadcast an ad at an audience.

The right tech and know-how can help. We're seeing brands build out their social teams (both in-house and agency) with skilled cross-platform content creators versed in video, motion graphics, design, and more—increasingly essential skill sets for the new era of social. Enhanced third-party ad targeting tools, which enable easy A/B testing (in some cases with hundreds of variants), are also becoming the norm.

At the end of the day, brands that respect and engage their customers as individuals and add value to their audiences via content will see real ROI in social ads. The ongoing challenge will be finding cost-effective ways to do so at scale.

64%

identify **decline in organic reach** and the need to **increase paid budgets** as big challenges moving forward.

Hootsuite 2019 Social Trends Survey

58%

cite the volatility of **Facebook's algorithm changes** as a problem.

Hootsuite 2019 Social Trends Survey

Facebook click-through rate (CTR) costs have increased by

61%

in the last year.

Mary Meeker, 2018 Internet Trends Report

1/4

Facebook Pages now **use paid media.**

We Are Social and Hootsuite, 2018 Q3 Global Digital Statshot

BEST-IN-CLASS BRANDS TO LEARN FROM



Spotify

Spotify

Creates moving social media ads to inspire customers and drive positive change

Spotify's industry-leading creative campaigns won them Ad Age's 2018 In-House Agency of the Year award.³⁷ Why are their ads so memorable? Their secret sauce starts with creating content that matters to listeners, then adapting and promoting it on various digital media in thoughtful ways.

For example, Spotify's year-long "Black History Is Happening Now" campaign enlists the voices of Black creators to tell stories through music, video, and

podcasts.³⁸ Janelle Monáe kicked things off with a takeover of the platform. Then, Spotify partnered with Instagram to promote #BlackGirlMagic, a social ad campaign celebrating black female artists. It highlights the most liked Instagram posts for top ranked artists played within the #BlackGirlMagic playlists.³⁹

TAKEAWAY Go beyond your product and create ads that inspire your audience.



NETFLIX

Netflix

Combines social media ads and localized, in-person events

Netflix is a shining example for how to do effective ad personalization without being intrusive. To maximize engagement, they target different geographic areas where they know a particular series is most watched.

To build buzz for the Canadian release of *Riverdale*, they combined online and offline experiences.

[Netflix Canada](#) promoted the series release on social media and directed superfans to [pop-up](#)

[events](#) across the country where fans could get a free Pop's Chock'lit Shoppe milkshake. The events were hugely successful, creating thousands of social media posts from event attendees.

TAKEAWAY Build on the buzz of upcoming live events by engaging your superfans on social media with targeted ads and promoted posts.



Tropicana

Tropicana

Uses Stories ads to integrate video and text into an engaging how-to

Juice brand Tropicana recognized early on the multimedia potential of Instagram Stories to boost awareness and sales among young adults.

In an [especially successful campaign](#), they combined mouthwatering pour shots of juice being mixed into festive drinks like Sangria. Hand-drawn text and arrows offered mixing instructions, and

customers were invited to "swipe up" for the full recipe. The result: an 18-point lift in ad recall and measurable boost in purchase intent.⁴⁰

TAKEAWAY Take advantage of new multimedia ad formats to entertain and inform audiences, instead of just blasting them with ad copy.



HOOTSUITE'S RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THIS TREND

GETTING STARTED

- **Understand and target the right audience.**

Knowing your audience is key to getting a high engagement rate. Each ad campaign should target a focused group based on interests, jobs, relevant competitors, and previous interaction with your brand.

Social networks have different targeting options depending on the type of ad you want to create. If you aren't clear on who you're supposed to target and why, research your customers to understand what their challenges are and how they interact with your business, brand, products, and services.

- **Define your goals and metrics.**

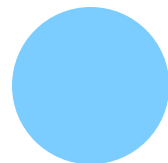
It's important to show that social media has a positive bottom-line impact on your business. That's why every ad campaign should have goals and metrics that tie back to business objectives and that you know how to measure.

Depending on what type of campaign you're running and the audience you're targeting, your metrics will be different. Awareness campaigns, for example, might prioritize impressions, while conversion campaigns should put more value on click-throughs.

- **Invest in high-quality content.**

With more brands competing for people's attention on social media, ordinary posts aren't good enough anymore. You need to create high-quality content that will resonate with your audience.

Prioritize compelling visuals, which are essential for clicks and high conversion rates on social media. Not every brand will have the budget for expensive equipment or a professional crew, but learning some video basics or even hiring a freelancer can make a big difference in quality.



GOING PRO

- **Repurpose concepts from top-performing organic content.**

Creating high quality social ads takes time and money, so you should test your ad concepts as organic posts first to see how they perform. Once you see what's working, you can adapt and repurpose your top performing organic content for ads. This strategy will help increase ROI because you're investing resources into something that has already been tested.

- **Use what you've learned from previous campaigns to improve performance.**

By running ads and measuring their performance, you can compare results and set benchmarks for future campaigns. The right [analytics tools](#) can streamline the process of tracking results and revenue generated by your social media efforts. Incorporating insights from what has worked historically helps set up a positive feedback loop, where ads get more efficient and cost effective.

- **Embrace new ad formats.**

The social ad space is one of constant innovation. Newer formats have the advantage of tapping into consumer curiosity, while also avoiding ad fatigue.

Instagram Stories ads, for example, have been around since 2017. But this year Instagram gave brands the ability to use [three consecutive photos or videos](#) to truly weave a narrative for users. Pinterest recently rolled out [wide-format promoted videos](#) that span the network's whole two-column grid for maximum impact. And Facebook Messenger ads allow brands to connect with customers [directly via instant messaging](#).

- **Split-test for success.**

No matter how savvy your ad team is, it's impossible to predict what users will actually click on. That's where split-testing (also known as A/B testing) comes into play. This scientific approach to social ads involves running multiple ads with slight variations (different images, different headlines, and so on) and then doubling down on the top performers.

Facebook offers basic split-testing functionality through its [dynamic creative ads](#), but for streamlined split-testing with virtually limitless variants, consider a [third-party ad tool](#).



TREND 4

Cracking the commerce code

IMPROVED SOCIAL SHOPPING TECHNOLOGIES
(FINALLY) FUEL SALES

In Asia, social commerce adoption has been swift,⁴¹ with 70 percent of China's Gen Zers now opting to buy direct from social.⁴² In North America, however, social commerce hasn't kept pace. Despite the long-hyped promise of buy buttons, people aren't yet buying on social in huge numbers.⁴³

But while direct sales can remain elusive, a host of new and evolving technologies is bridging the gap between social media and commerce, especially among younger buyers comfortable with casual shopping on social.

Instagram's [shoppable posts](#) now allow users to go directly from discovery to checkout without ever leaving the app, and the platform has even added a Shopping tab to its Explore page.⁴⁴ On Facebook, [Marketplace](#) has streamlined the process of listing and selling items on social media and is now used in 70 countries by more than 800 million people.⁴⁵ And Pinterest, which introduced [Buyable Pins](#) way back in 2015, continues to drive conversions, with 55 percent of customers using the site to find and shop for products.⁴⁶

Video, in particular, is proving a critical bridge for social commerce. In a study of 5,500 consumers by video marketing company BrightCove, 74 percent of viewers drew a connection between watching a social video and making a purchase.⁴⁷

And beyond the familiar YouTube explainers and demos, an expanding array of options—from in-stream buying plugins for Instagram⁴⁸ to livestream shopping on WeChat⁴⁹—have emerged for integrating social video more deeply into the buyer's journey, especially for fashion and luxury brands.



28%

of respondents have either implemented **social commerce** or plan to do so in the next 12 months.

Hootsuite 2019 Social Trends Survey



17%

have either implemented **shoppable galleries** or plan to do so in the next 12 months.

Hootsuite 2019 Social Trends Survey

So, as a brand, how do you start incorporating social commerce into your marketing strategy? It's important to remember that what distinguishes social commerce from other channels is the social aspect. Finding ways to make shopping live, interactive, and seamless—even on mobile devices—is key.

Successful brands are going the extra mile to show how products and services fit into the context of people's lives. Turn written product descriptions into videos, share livestream demonstrations of your products and services, and encourage video testimonials from customers.

The unique blend of peer engagement, trust, and powerful visuals that has made social commerce dominant in Asia is, finally, poised to change the ecommerce landscape across the globe. 2019 is the year for retailers to experiment with the growing array of social shopping technologies and lay the foundations for a more robust strategy in the years ahead.



70%

of China's Gen Zers now **buy directly** from social media.


WARC, [China's Gen Z Relies on Social Media for Shopping](#)



74%

of viewers drew a connection between watching a social video **and making a purchase.**

BrightCove, [The Science of Social Video](#)



Facebook Marketplace is now used in 70 countries by more than

800

million people

CNET, [Facebook Marketplace is used in 70 countries](#)

BEST-IN-CLASS BRANDS TO LEARN FROM



Dr. Brandt

Increases direct sales with video shopping technology

Skincare company Dr. Brandt was an early adopter of MikMak Attach, a tool that enables customers to add items to a retailer's cart from within Instagram and Snapchat videos without ever leaving the platform. Shoppers swipe up when viewing a Story and are connected to the brand's ecommerce pop-up window, where they can begin the purchase process.

By enabling shopping on their Instagram Stories, Dr. Brandt was able to achieve a 500 percent increase in direct sales.⁵⁰

TAKEAWAY Use new tools to streamline the buyer's path and make it easy to purchase on social media.



Glossier

Uses visual social media content to showcase and sell products

Beauty brand Glossier—a retailer that sells almost exclusively online to millennial customers⁵¹—uses social video tutorials, user-generated content, and photography to showcase its products.

In the absence of an in-store experience, they share high-quality videos and photos showing followers how the products will look on different types of complexions. They also encourage user-generated content and reviews to show products on non-models and in everyday light.

Founder Emily Weiss estimates that 90 percent of the company's growth can be attributed to their social media followers.⁵²

TAKEAWAY Sharing a range of video—from professional quality to user generated—helps customers make informed purchases without an in-store experience.



L'Oréal

Shows livestreaming can be the new QVC

For a look at the future of social commerce, turn to China. Over the past year, livestream shopping—where hosts use live social videos to showcase products that consumers can buy while watching—have ballooned in popularity. On Alibaba, for example, livestream sales are up 755 percent.⁵³

L'Oréal put livestreaming technology to good use during last year's Cannes Film Festival. Using social network WeChat, the brand streamed a live broadcast

of celebrities on the red carpet. While watching and commenting, fans could also place orders for products used by the celebrities, which were conveniently displayed alongside the video stream.⁵⁴

TAKEAWAY The best social commerce recreates the experience of shopping for customers by combining live video, chat, and "see now, buy now" features.

HOOTSUITE'S RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THIS TREND

GETTING STARTED

- **Set up shoppable Instagram posts.**

Before you can start [selling products on Instagram](#), you need to have an [approved business profile](#). Then you can add your product catalog to Facebook with Shopify or BigCommerce, and Instagram will approve your submission. This will allow you to tag products in your posts so your followers can browse and buy.

PRO TIP: Tag multiple items in one photo so that people can see how your products look together.

- **Share your products in action.**

High-quality images and videos can help potential customers browse your products and get an idea of look and feel without going in-store. Showcase your products in a variety of different scenarios to add variety and keep your audience engaged.

When building out your content, think about your ideal customers—how they use your products, their interests, and their top questions or concerns.

- **Promote your products with contests.**

If you want to get more followers browsing and buying your products, run a sweepstakes contest for products that you feature in shoppable posts. Before running your contest, clearly outline contest guidelines and use an easy-to-remember hashtag that helps people share and find your contest.

PRO TIP: Make sure that your contest adheres to [Instagram's promotion guidelines](#).

GOING PRO

- **Leverage high-quality user-generated content.**

To succeed at social commerce, you need to build a loyal following that loves your products and will share how they use them. Glossier calls the value people gain from their association with a popular brand “social capital”⁵⁵— and it can be a powerful motivator to encourage fans to share content relevant to your brand.

To elicit high-quality user-generated content from fans, try running a video series with employees or micro-influencers showing how your product looks in action. You can offer exclusive promotions and giveaways to encourage followers to share their experiences.

- **Create a series based on your top-performing content.**

Once you’ve done some testing on product videos and know what works, create follow-up videos and repackage them as a series. This will allow you to retarget people who have already watched and engaged with your video content. You’re much more likely to get a better return when you invest time and resources into top-performing content.

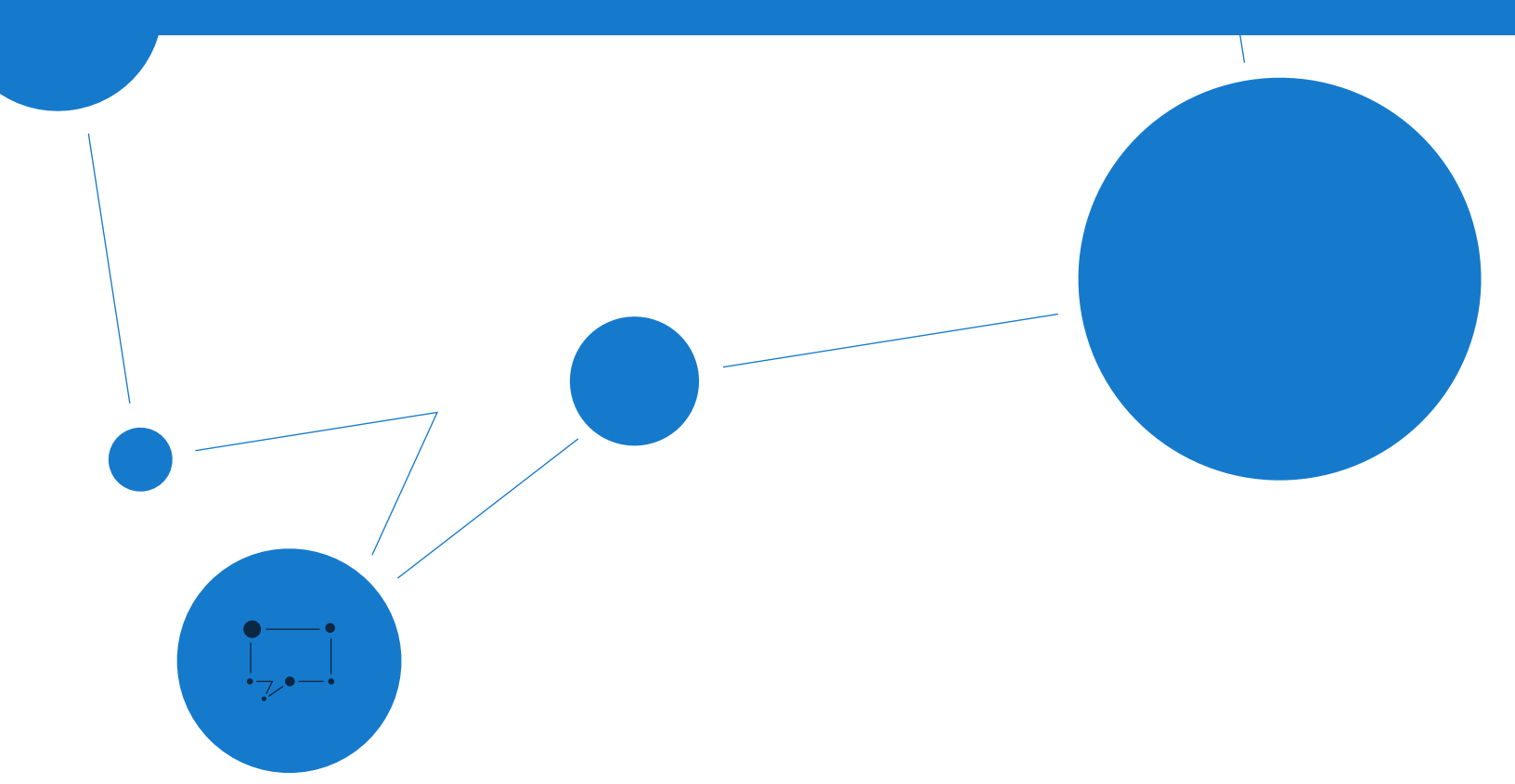
- **Livestream your product demos.**

A live broadcast on Facebook or Instagram can go a long way toward recreating the energy and urgency of real-life shopping experiences. Schedule streams in advance and encourage viewers to tune in with regular social updates. Invest in high-quality lighting and audio-video equipment, and be sure that someone is actively engaging with viewer comments during the broadcast.

- **Experiment with AR to showcase your product in real-life scenarios.**

Augmented reality technology, which superimposes digital images onto a real-world environment, helps brands offer richer online shopping experiences. Facebook has already announced that it will be investing more in AR technology in 2019.⁵⁶

Brands like Sephora and Nike are working with Facebook to test features that will allow users to “try on” their products on social.⁵⁷ While these features are not open to the public yet, early adoption will be key for brands wanting to keep up with social commerce.



TREND 5

Messaging eats the world

CUSTOMERS DEMAND BETTER 1:1 SOCIAL EXPERIENCES

Top messaging apps—WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, WeChat, QQ, and Skype—now collectively count nearly five billion monthly active users, according to We Are Social and Hootsuite’s 2018 Q3 Global Digital Statshot.⁵⁸

For perspective, this means messaging app users now easily eclipse traditional social network users worldwide.

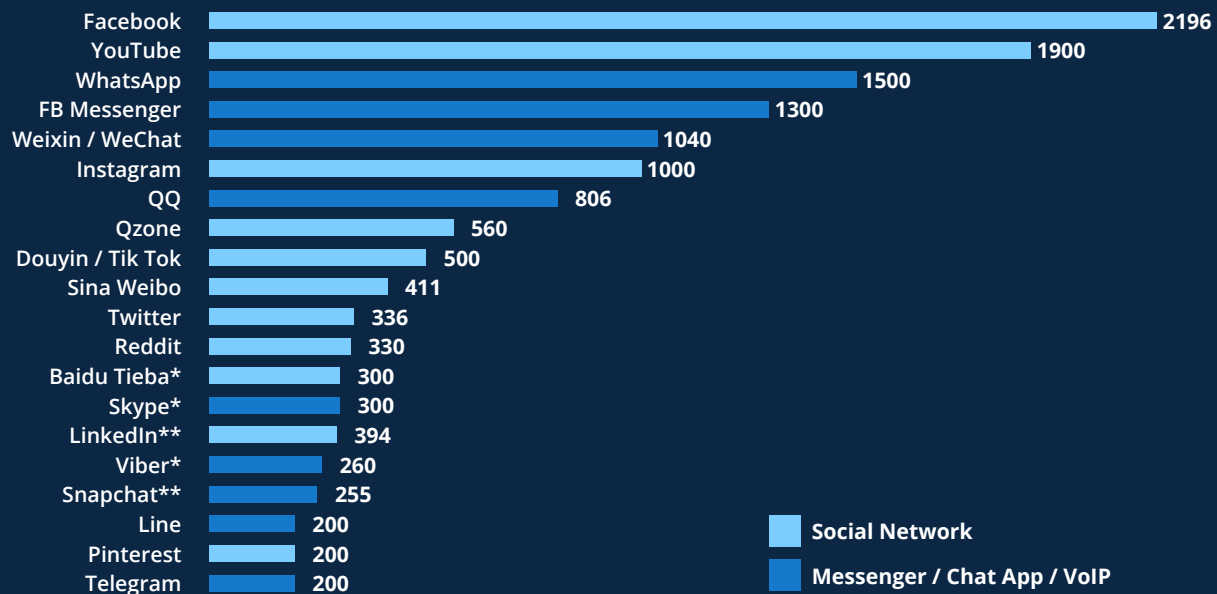
And across the board, users are spending more time on messaging and less time sharing news on social.⁵⁹ This shift from public to private spaces is eye-opening for many reasons—not the least of which is the profound impact these changes are having on consumer expectations.

Nine out of ten consumers would like to use messaging to communicate with businesses, according to a survey of 6,000 people globally.⁶⁰ In the U.S., messaging is the single most preferred channel for customer service. In a 2018 study of 8,000 people by Facebook, 69 percent of U.S. respondents said that directly messaging a company helps them feel more confident about the brand.⁶¹

Given the level of consumer interest, it's little surprise that brands are already developing playbooks for how to do messaging right in terms of content marketing, sales, customer support, and more. Starbucks creates and shares playful, branded [stickers on Viber](#), H&M gives fashion advice through [Kik chatbots](#), and Domino's [Facebook Messenger bot](#) allows customers to find coupons and make delivery orders.

Social Platforms: Active Global Accounts

Based on the most recently published monthly active users, user accounts, or unique visitors for each platform, in millions



Source: 2018 Q3 Global Digital Statshot. Data correct to: 18 July 2018.

NOTE: We have revised the approach we use to report Facebook's active user numbers since our previous report. As a result, Facebook figures reported here are not comparable to those in our previous reports, and any change to reported figures may not reflect an actual change in active Facebook user numbers.

*These platforms have not published updated user figures in the past 12 months, so figures may be less reliable. ** These platforms do not publish MAU data.

What's clear, however, is that consumers don't want more advertising channels. Smart brands are using messaging apps for more high-value conversations—not just as just another channel for interrupting and annoying people.

So how do you up your messaging game? The challenge with one-to-one communications tools like messaging is scale. As Forrester Research points out, AI-powered messenger bots aren't a “set it and forget it” strategy.⁶² Customer service is an opportunity to build empathy—something that few other channels can offer—so savvy brands are using bots to build rapport with customers.

As messaging volume increases, so does the need for a unified inbox for brands: a cross-channel platform for catching, routing, and responding to all messaging queries.

For marketing and sales, it's equally important to remember that the shift to private spaces via messaging apps means a desire for more privacy, so you'll need to tread carefully with your outreach and avoid unsolicited messages. Ensure there's a clear context for contacting people so you can participate in one-to-one conversations without being intrusive.

46%

of respondents have either **implemented messaging** apps or are planning to do so within the next 12 months.

Hootsuite 2019 Social Trends Survey

35%

say **meeting the needs of changing demographics** (digital natives) is a challenge.

Hootsuite 2019 Social Trends Survey

69%

of U.S. respondents say that **directly messaging a company** helps them feel more confident about the brand.

Facebook, [Why Messaging Businesses is the New Normal](#)

Top messaging apps collectively count nearly **5 billion monthly active users.**

We Are Social and Hootsuite, 2018 Q3 Global Digital Statshot

BEST-IN-CLASS BRANDS TO LEARN FROM



Sephora

Creates a seamless booking service with Messenger bot assistant

To create a more seamless booking experience for clients, cosmetics brand Sephora launched the Sephora Assistant on Facebook Messenger.

The Messenger bot allows people to book in-store makeovers and appointments in a few simple steps. Customers select their city, store, and times, aided by the friendly, conversational tone of Sephora's bot. Once the customer books an appointment, they instantly receive a confirmation email.

As a result of this new process, Sephora cut down booking steps by over 60 percent and increased in-store bookings by 11 percent.⁶³

TAKEAWAY To improve customer satisfaction, use bots to automate repetitive and transactional exchanges with customers, freeing up humans for higher-value exchanges.



KLM Royal Dutch Airlines

Expands leading customer service across messaging apps

In an average week, KLM Royal Dutch Airlines responds to 30,000 social media conversations in twelve different languages⁶⁴—so new technologies to automate processes are key to meeting customer demands.

Following the success of their Facebook Messenger chatbot, KLM became the first airline to expand their service to [WhatsApp](#) and its 1.5-billion-plus users.⁶⁵

KLM customers opt in to receive boarding passes and flight status updates and can get 24/7 service in multiple languages via the app.

TAKEAWAY As people spend more time on messaging apps, it's critical that companies develop strategies to engage them there, just as they would on email or social media.

Sephora's bot reduced booking steps by more than 60% and increased in-store bookings by 11%.

Facebook, [Sephora: Simplifying bookings with Messenger](#)

KLM Royal Dutch Airlines uses its bot to help respond to 30,000 social media conversations weekly in 12 different languages.

Digital Genius, [Customer Story: KLM](#)



HOOTSUITE'S RECOMMENDATIONS *FOR THIS TREND*

GETTING STARTED

- **Enable Facebook Messenger for your Facebook Business Page.**

If you're ready to start communicating with your customers via Messenger, you need to enable the Messenger feature on your Facebook Business Page. (Find step-by-step instructions in our [Facebook Messenger guide](#).)

Once you've done that, set up an instant reply for when users send a message to your page. This can be as simple as a short greeting, or you can provide additional information such as typical response times and support hours. You can also share links in your instant replies to direct people to support pages or frequently asked questions.

- **Add plugins to your website that drive customers to messaging apps.**

Show that your brand is available on messaging apps by [adding plugins to your website](#). That way, customers can easily click on the plugin and reach you if they're already on your website looking for information.

PRO TIP: Direct customers to the specific messaging apps most popular with your target demographic, based on region, age, or other variables.

- **Use DMs and/or messaging apps to streamline customer service queries on social.**

When customers reach out to your brand on social, it's important to move the conversation from a [public to private space](#). That way, you can ask for personal information like phone numbers and address details to resolve the problem faster. This can also preempt the need for time-consuming follow-up phone calls and emails.

If your team isn't available at all times of day, post your support hours and time zone in your bio so customers know when they'll get a response.

GOING PRO

- **Set up bots and/or in-app assistants for frequently asked questions.**

Bots are an important way to scale your customer service efforts and create better experiences on social. While they can't replace an in-person experience, they're extremely effective for answering simple questions and helping with more transactional exchanges, freeing up team members to focus on more complex customer needs.

To get started building your own branded bot, check out self-serve platforms like [ManyChat](#), [Chatfuel](#), or [Conversable](#). (Just be sure to keep in mind the [dos and don'ts](#) of messaging bots.)

- **Run campaigns that incorporate messaging apps.**

Get creative with your social media campaigns and think beyond the news feed. [Contests](#) are a good way to start connecting with your customers because they often include a private messaging element to share contest results. Messaging campaigns often work best on mobile formats, so keep that in mind when creating your campaign.

For example, Coca Cola ran a [summer contest](#) using Messenger and chatbots. Aimed at a younger demographic, the entirely mobile campaign encouraged customers to take pictures of their Coke bottles through Messenger to automatically enter to win prizes.

PRO TIP: Always check the latest promotion guidelines for each network before planning your strategy.

- **Experiment with Facebook Messenger ads.**

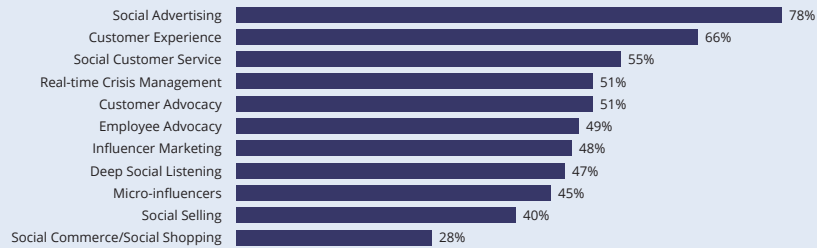
If your target audience uses Facebook Messenger, it's worth putting some budget into [Messenger ads](#). With features like automatic placement, Facebook will deliver ads automatically to your followers. (However, if you choose to [edit placements](#), you can only run Messenger ads in coordination with News Feed ads—they're not available as standalone placements yet.)

Be mindful of when and how you use these ads, as contacting a potential customer by private message is a lot more personal and intimate than publishing a banner or News Feed ad. Make sure your ads are useful, immediate, and actionable. For example, you can share a discount or coupon after someone has made a purchase.

APPENDIX: HOOTSUITE 2019 TRENDS SURVEY

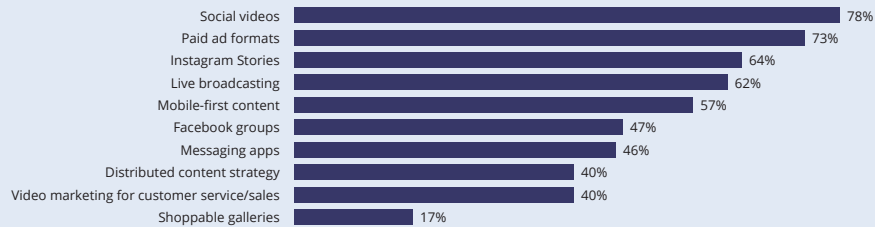
Hootsuite surveyed more than 3,255 Hootsuite business customers on their social media usage, challenges, and plans for 2019. Research was conducted in Q2-Q3 2018.

Percent of Organizations Planning to or Have Adopted Social Media Strategies



Q. What are your organization's plans to adopt the following social media strategies? (select one per row)
Base: Those responsible for social media at their organization (n=2070)

Percent of Organizations Planning to Adopt Social Media Tactics



Q. What are your organization's plans to adopt the following social media tactics? (select one per row)
Base: Those responsible for social media at their organization (n=2070)

Biggest Challenges Looking at the Future of Social Media



Q. As you think about the future of social media, which of the following trends do you see as the biggest challenges ahead? (Check all that apply)
Base: Those responsible for social media at their organization (n=1887)

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