

Is your brand welcome in social media?

How do consumers really feel about brands in social media spaces?



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Executive summary

Headstream commissioned in-depth, independent research into whether brands are welcome in social media, and how keen audiences are to accept and interact with them in these spaces.

The results show that many consumers are frustrated by the approach that brands take to social media, particularly when companies publish updates that are considered irrelevant and impersonal by their followers. The findings also suggest that although brands seem to be investing a great deal of time and effort in their social media strategies, there are still gaps when it comes to effective targeting and personalisation.

- 33% of UK adults advised that they are frustrated by brands' social media updates that are too irrelevant or impersonal
- 28% of UK adults advised that they were unhappy with social media updates from brands that are too 'salesy' with a strong focus on products
- Millennial consumers in particular were annoyed by social media updates that they deem 'too trivial'
- 70% of respondents feel most comfortable engaging with a brand on Facebook than other social media channels

This report takes a more detailed look at whether brands are welcome in social media, and how they must ensure that their content offering is relevant and visible to their target audience to contribute to their overall strategy.

Introduction and methodology

The digital revolution of the past twenty years – and the associated content revolution – has emphasised the need for certain brands to embrace the use of social media, or take the risk of being left behind in the marketplace. Companies have started to realise that if they want to engage with modern, sophisticated consumers, they must speak to them on the platforms they value, where they spend most of their time.

From our experience at Headstream, we recognise that although some brands have made the most of this opportunity, others may not be utilising the power of social media to its full potential. For many companies, investing resources into social media marketing is a huge decision, and one that isn't made lightly. Others have a more easy-going approach, and have adopted social media with a lackadaisical attitude.

Today, consumers expect brands to be present in social media. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, Snapchat all actively encourage brands on their platforms to not only create content for its users but more importantly to drive revenue for its shareholders.

But is it enough for a brand to just be visible in social? What kind of content should they be publishing to really engage their consumers, and ultimately, help them to achieve measureable results?

To answer these questions, as part of our broader brand storytelling research, we asked UK consumers about their opinions of brands on social media. The results of these questions are intended to help us understand the part brands play on social media, whether they are welcome on the channels they have inhabited, and what they can do to enhance their presence there. This report has been created to develop the conversation around brands' presence on social media, and assist us in educating/influencing our clients on the importance of this as part of any broader content strategy.

Headstream's survey was conducted independently among 2,000 UK adults in April 2015. The sample was selected from our partner research agency's panels, which are balanced across regional, age and gender demographic factors.

35%

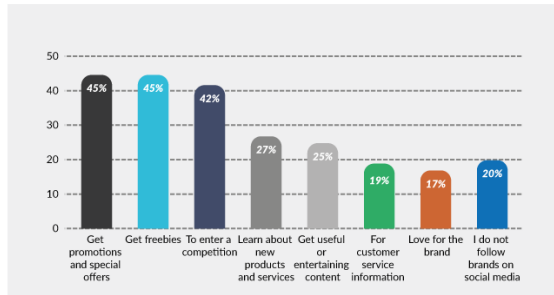
*of people would create
content about a brand if they
really loved the product or
service experience.*

RIV
OP
EP
OOT

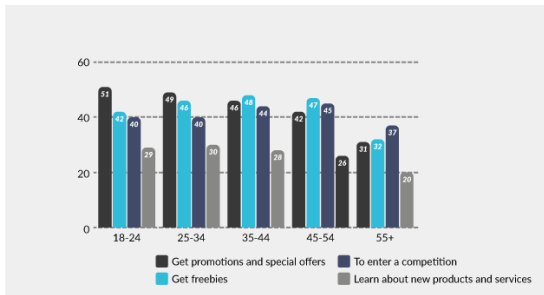
Everybody loves a freebie

Why would you follow a brand on social media?

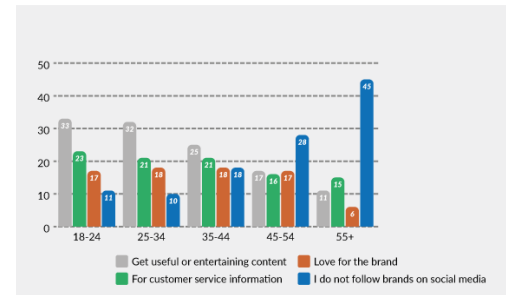
Unsurprisingly 'to get promotions and special offers' and 'to get freebies' were chosen as the top two reasons respondents followed brands on social media. This result was reflected in each age group questioned, apart from those aged 55+, many of whom advised that they didn't follow brands on social media.



Percentages do not add up to 100 because the question was multiple choice.



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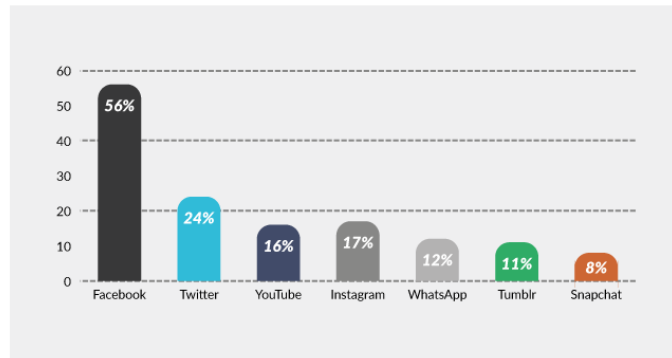


Facebook is still the leading platform

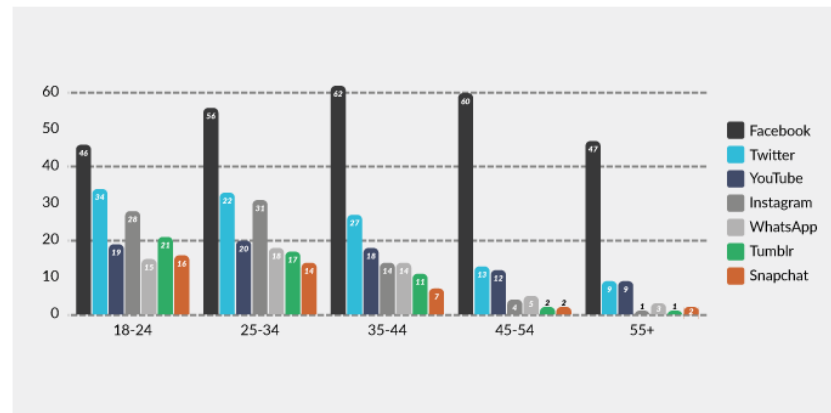
Which social channels are you most comfortable engaging with a brand on?

Over half of respondents, (56%), told us that they felt most comfortable engaging with a brand on Facebook, rather than other social networks. This may be encouraging for many companies who have already established a presence on this platform and have the opportunity to cultivate it further in a brand-friendly environment. Facebook also appears to be the most popular platform for brand engagement with the 45-54 age group, many of whom may not have a presence on the other social networks listed.

Our research also suggests that Instagram is becoming increasingly popular, and is fast approaching Twitter in terms of brand interaction. This is especially true when it comes to consumers in the age groups 18-24 and 25-34, of whom 28% and 31% respectively would be comfortable engaging with a brand on Instagram, positioning the platform in third place, slightly behind Twitter.



Percentages do not add up to 100 because the question was multiple choice.

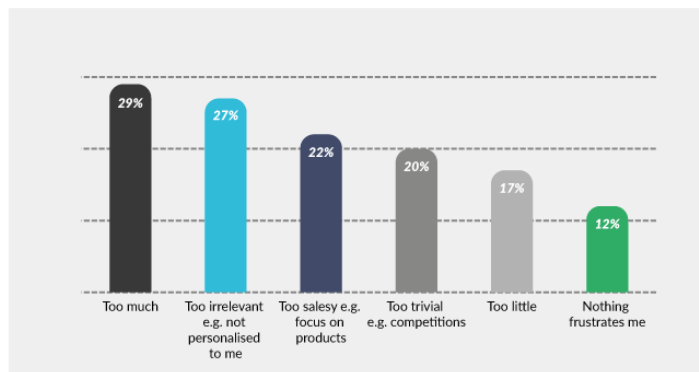


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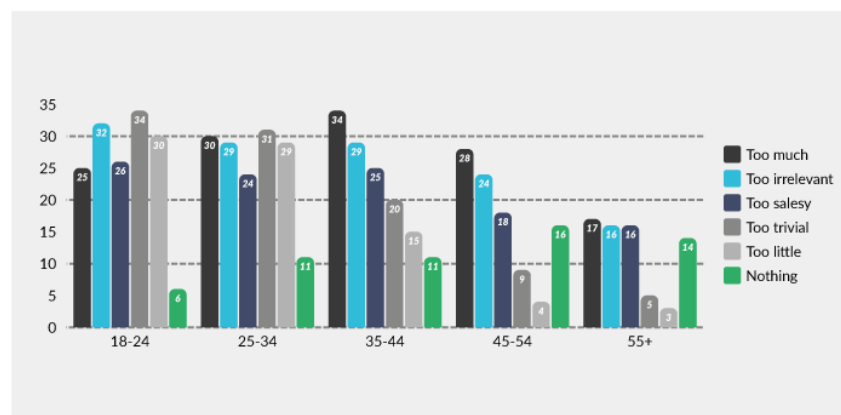
Younger people hacked off by trivial updates

What frustrates you the most in terms of social media updates from brands?

When asked about what frustrates them in terms of social media updates from brands, too many posts and irrelevant content were ranked highest by respondents, with 29% and 27% of votes respectively. Interestingly, the result differed slightly for millennial respondents, who were more frustrated with updates that were 'too trivial', with this option receiving 34% of their vote.



Percentages do not add up to 100 because the question was multiple choice.



Percentages do not add up to 100 because the question was multiple choice.

34%

*of millennials are
frustrated by brands
who publish social
media updates that are
'too trivial'.*

Conclusion

The results of this study highlight that although many brands are now present on social media, may still have yet to work out the best way to share content effectively with their consumers on social media channels. This suggests that there is still much to be learnt by brands in this field, and that they could actually be damaging their reputations by playing in an arena for which they are not yet experienced.

Brands that succeed on social media know where to find the right audiences as well as the right conversations. This can include utilising paid media options, and investing in a paid strategy to make sure that content produced is visible to target audiences. Successful brands will then provide consumers with valuable content that is relevant to their day to day lives and as personalised as possible. They emphasise quality over quantity, and engage with their consumers on platforms where they feel comfortable.

Brands such as these understand that social platforms can form an essential part of a broader content strategy, but their prosperity is about far more than generating likes and shares. Modern consumers are looking for content that inspires emotion, which is why at Headstream we believe that more and more brands are likely to benefit from the use of storytelling-based strategies positioned dynamically on social media platforms.

About Headstream

We're a full-service content marketing agency for ambitious brands.

We believe that in today's connected world a content-led approach to marketing is the only way brands can remain visible and relevant to their customers.

It all started in 2006 when we launched as one of the UK's first social media marketing companies. We built a talented team and helped those early adopters understand and take advantage of social media.

We contributed to the debate on social media performance by creating the Social Brands 100 research, which measured and ranked the best brand performance across social media channels.

As the years have rolled on the agency has grown into the successful, and modest, marketing agency you see today by evolving our capabilities to ensure our clients get what they original came to us for – results for the modern marketer.

Through Headstream, ambitious brands such as GSK, BBC, National Trust, Fat Face, Schuh and P&O Cruises have increased their visibility and relevancy with content.

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