

How to Choose the Best Social Media Channels for Your Business

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There are few businesses that haven't already acknowledged and, at the very least, begun to harness the dynamic capabilities of social media marketing. By spending as little as 6 hours per week, over **66%** of marketers enjoy enhanced lead generation benefits with social media. A properly executed social media strategy can improve search rankings, drive more website traffic and increase conversion rates.

But how can you craft an effective social media strategy when you don't even know which channels to choose? With an overabundance of options, it can seem overwhelming to try and determine whether your business needs to build an online presence using Snapchat or Instagram, LinkedIn or Pinterest.

Below, we've outlined a simple step-by-step process you can follow to help you select your social channels, and make the best decision based on the most important factors.

Ask yourself: What are your social media strategy objectives?

Being able to link your social media channels to your strategy's high level objectives is essential. If you can't explain why or how a particular channel will help you to achieve your goals, then it's more than likely you shouldn't adopt it.

Ultimately, the purpose of your chosen social media channels is to support the achievement of your strategic goals.

If you want to increase brand awareness

You should consider selecting well-established platforms with a large following (avoid anything new or niche). Similarly, one of the most effective methods for raising awareness and extending reach is through paid promotion (this is an advisable option, whatever your budget). Research the social media advertising options available to you. Facebook's advertising platform, for example, has a great reputation for generating impressive ROI.

If you want to enhance lead generation

From a B2B perspective, LinkedIn is renowned for being a champion in social media lead gen, whether it's through joining groups and participating in discussions, or searching with advanced filters. Facebook and Twitter are also highly effective and often enjoy a lower cost per click (CPC) than an AdWords campaign!

Ask yourself: What channels are your target audience using?

After you've aligned your goals with your social channel selection, you need to consider where your audience is interacting online. For instance, maintaining a Snapchat account for your business could be deemed a wasted effort if your largest customer segment is composed of 60 year old women. Similarly, there may not be a particularly persuasive argument for establishing your brand on Pinterest if you're only targeting men.

The tightest and most effective social media strategies are informed by social media demographics. These data-driven insights will ensure that your strategy, and the channels you choose, facilitate the most relevant, targeted approach possible, which in turn will increase your chances of conversion.

Using a social listening tool such as [Sprout Social](#) will help you to conduct an analysis of your current followers. They'll provide you with gender, age and location data for your current social audiences, which will help you to decide which social channels are worth maintaining, and which aren't.

If you haven't yet chosen any channels, or you'd like to expand into previously unexplored platforms, the [Pew Research Center](#) have conducted an analysis that outlines the key demographics for a number of social media platforms.

For example, did you know that online women are more likely to use Instagram than online men (31% vs. 24%)? Or that 41% of LinkedIn users earn a salary over \$75,000?

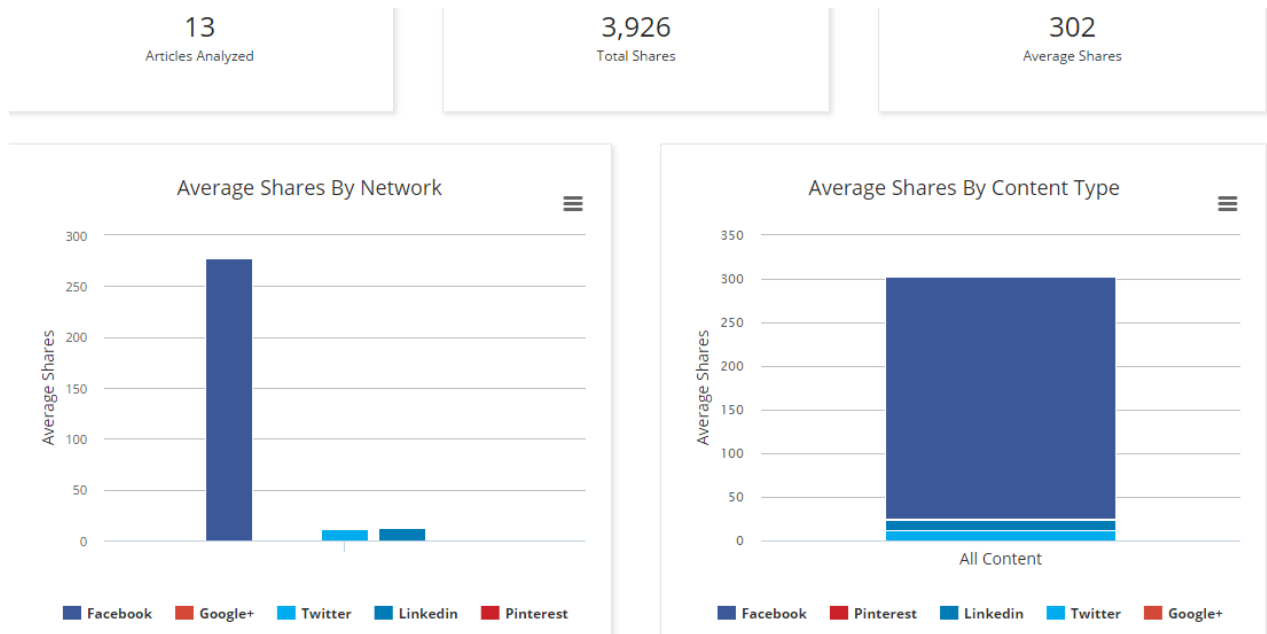
In short, when choosing your social media channels, always back up your decisions with demographic data, rather than being led by current trends.

Ask yourself: What channels are your competitors using?

Equally important as analyzing the channels your target audience adopt is taking into account what social media accounts your competitors are managing. This will provide a baseline against which you can gauge industry activity, and determine what you should be doing.

What type of content do they post? How regularly do they post it? How many likes or shares do their posts gain? Checking how active your competitors are on social media, as well as how well their followers engage with what they post, will provide you with valuable insights that you can then replicate to guarantee success for your own strategy.

Again, you can use social listening tools to ascertain which brands in your industry have the most extensive reach and largest influence on social media. [Buzzsumo](#), for example, will let you analyze your competitors' top performing content in terms of social shares, as well as which content formats and lengths best engage users. You'll also be able to see the social channels from which they get the most shares.



Brandwatch Analytics lets you monitor your competitor’s social media output across Facebook and Twitter and also enables you to track any mentions of them across the internet. There are myriad social listening tools that you can use to carry out such competitor analysis, so whatever you choose, make sure you’ve thoroughly researched the tools available and are fully aware of your options.

Ask yourself: What kind of content do you want to create?

This is a particularly pertinent question as there is a variety of different content formats – some of which will complement your business goals and brand identity, and some which won’t. In turn, certain content formats will be more suited to particular social channels than others.

If you want to share industry updates, company news and whitepapers

These content formats are traditionally suitable for B2B audiences who can be predominantly found on professional platforms such as LinkedIn and SlideShare. If you have a company Twitter account or an individual one that you use for professional purposes, these are also ideal platforms on which to engage fellow professionals with industry-specific content.

If you want to share video content

If your video content is short-form and targeted at a younger audience, you may want to consider Instagram, Vine, Snapchat or Periscope. If it’s longer and more universal in its appeal, Facebook and Twitter can also generate high levels of engagement. Not to mention YouTube, the world’s second largest search engine with **over 3 billion** searches a month.

If you want to share image-based content

If you’re a B2C brand with an engaging product to sell, you might want to consider Pinterest. According to Shopify, **93%** of users leverage the platform to plan purchases. Instagram is ideal

for building an aspirational visual brand story and Tumblr is a channel that leans heavily towards imagery that's suited to a younger demographic.

If you want to share editorial content

For businesses who want to establish themselves as a trusted industry thought leader, publishing an article on LinkedIn's publishing platform can expose their brand to over 300million users. Medium is another highly popular publishing platform, **95%** of whose readers are college graduates and 43% of whom earn six figures or more.

If you can identify the content formats that you want to prioritize within your social media strategy, you'll find it easier to make your final channel choice.

Ask yourself: How many channels can you manage?

Did you know that **91%** of retail brands use 2 or more social media channels? While it's highly unlikely that simply using one channel to showcase your brand will suffice, striking the perfect balance can be tricky. Too many, and you'll spread yourself too thinly and dilute the impact of your efforts as a result. Too few, and your brand visibility and reach might suffer.

A social media scheduling tool such as Buffer [link] will help you to save time and maximize your resources by letting you schedule posting in advance for a number of different social media accounts, such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Google+. You can cross-post the same content across all of your channels, or edit posts for certain platforms. Buffer also lets you add images, which is important when you consider that content with relevant images gets **94%** more views than content without imagery.

This level of automation will enable you to incorporate more channels into your strategy, but it's always important to start small. Once you've found a couple of stalwart social channels that work for you, only then should you aim to experiment with a new addition. Drip feed new channels into yours strategy in this way to avoid wasting time and budget.