

The State of Social Media:

**After a Year of Transformation,
Executives Are All-In on Social**

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Research method

This survey was conducted online by The Harris Poll on behalf of Sprout Social among consumers and business executives in the US.



- The consumer survey was conducted January 27–February 4, 2021 among 1006 adults aged 18-74 who use at least one social media platform. Raw data were weighted by age within gender, race/ethnicity, annual income, size of household, education and marital status to be representative of the total population of US adults ages 18-74.
- The business survey was conducted February 5–16, 2021 among 250 business executives who have a title of Manager or above, employed full time at a company in the US which uses social media as an external communications channel, and are involved in the decisions about social media strategy, social media marketing and/or social media advertising for their respective companies. Raw data were weighted by company size to be representative of the US businesses.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and postsurvey weighting and adjustments. Therefore, The Harris Poll avoids the words “margin of error” as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

Reading the report

Raw consumer and business data were weighted.

Percentages may not add up to 100% due to weighting, computer rounding and/or the acceptance of multiple responses. Throughout the report, consumer data are displayed in teal, while business data are in blue – icons in the upper right corner of each page indicate the respondent type.

-  Consumers
-  Businesses



Consumers

1006

**US adults
ages 18-74**

**Use at least one social
media platform**

10 min online survey

Survey dates

**January 27 through
February 16, 2021**

Businesses

250

**US executives
ages 18+**

**Employed full time,
manager and above,
involved in social media
strategy decisions**

**Company uses social
media for external
communications**

15 min online survey



Reading the report

Throughout this report, subgroup analysis is shown among generations (consumer sample) and company size based on number of employees (business sample). Please use the information to the right as reference for subgroup definitions.

Numbers with letter notations (e.g., A, B) indicate a statistically significant difference between the subgroups being analyzed. Letters always appear next to the numbers that are significantly higher.

By generation

18-24

Gen Z (A)

25-40

Millenials (B)

41-56

Gen X (C)

57-74

Baby Boomers (D)

By company size

1-199

Small business (A)

200-999

Mid-market (B)

1000+

Enterprise (C)

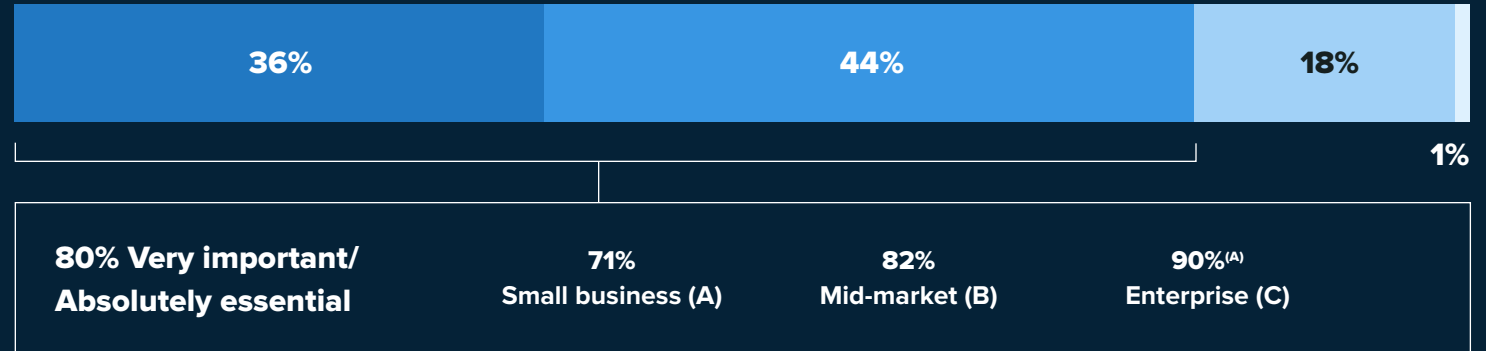
Investing in social media to support business



Businesses that do not invest in social media marketing will be left behind

Eighty percent of business executives think it is very important or absolutely essential for their company to invest additional resources in social media marketing. Most consumers agree that brands and companies need a strong social media presence to succeed in the long run.

Importance of investing more resources into social media marketing



■ Absolutely essential
 ■ Very important
 ■ Somewhat important
 ■ Not very important

89%

of businesses agree companies which do not invest in social media marketing will be left behind

62%

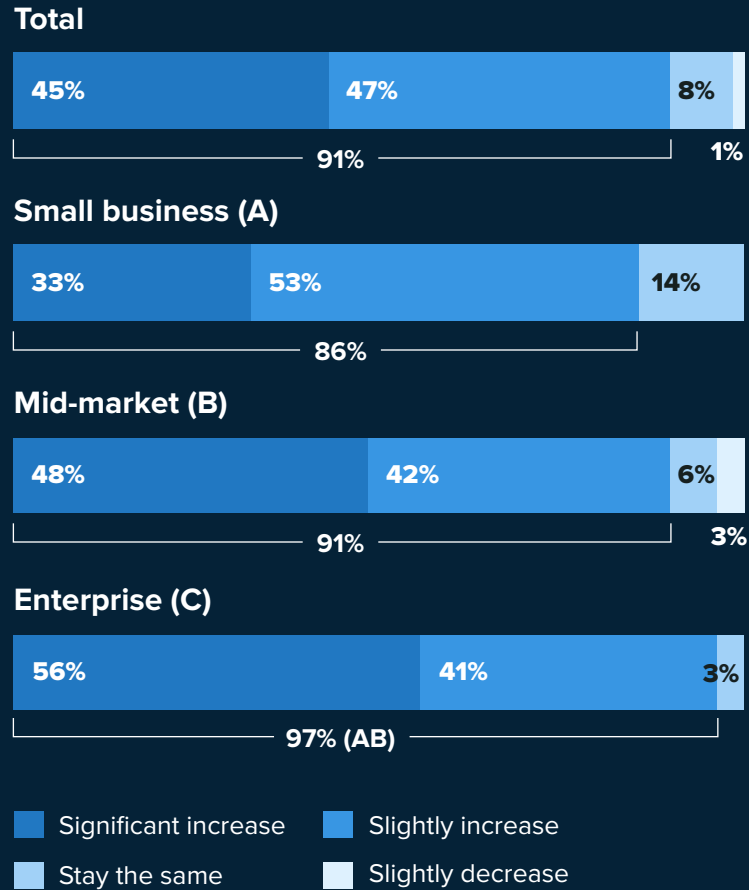
of consumers agree brands and companies that do not have a strong social media presence will not be able to succeed in the long run

BASE: ALL QUALIFIED EXECUTIVES (n=250); Small business(n=58), Mid-market(n=95), Enterprise(n=97)
 Q8. How important do you think it is for your company to invest more resources into social media marketing?
 Q11. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?
 BASE: ALL QUALIFIED CONSUMERS (N=1006)
 Q25. How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

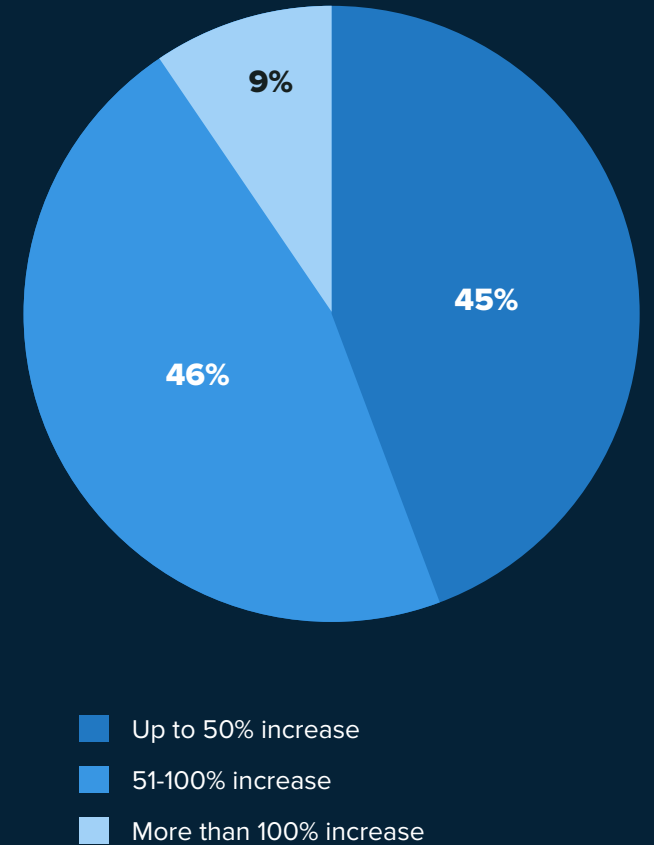
Social media marketing budgets are set to increase significantly in the coming years

Overwhelmingly, 91% report that over the next three years, their company's social media marketing budget will increase; over half say it will grow by more than 50%.

Anticipated change in social media marketing budget (next three years)



Expected social media marketing budget increase (next three years)



BASE: ALL QUALIFIED EXECUTIVES (n=250); Small business(n=58), Mid-market(n=95), Enterprise(n=97)
 Q9. In the next three years, how do you anticipate your company's social media marketing budget to change, if at all?
 BASE: SOCIAL MEDIA BUDGET WILL INCREASE IN THE NEXT 3 YEARS (n=230)
 Q10. Approximately, by how much do you expect your company's social media marketing budget to increase in the next three years?

Most businesses see investing more resources into social media as a way of gaining a competitive advantage going forward

Greater collaboration between departments in developing social media strategy is also viewed by nearly half of all businesses as a way to achieve a competitive advantage in the future; enterprise businesses are much more likely to put emphasis on buy in from the executive team to attain this goal.

What can give companies a competitive advantage going forward?

(% who selected each response option)

Investing more resources into social media

60%

Greater collaboration between different departments in developing and supporting social media strategy

46%

Buy in from the executive team on social media strategy

36%

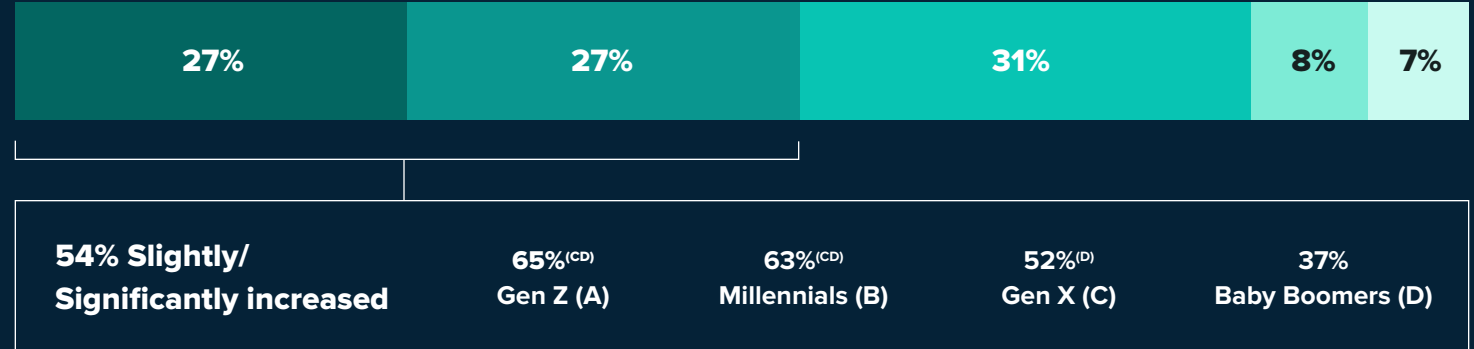
28%	32%	48% ^(AB)
Small business (A)	Mid-market (B)	Enterprise (C)

Social media as the primary communication channel

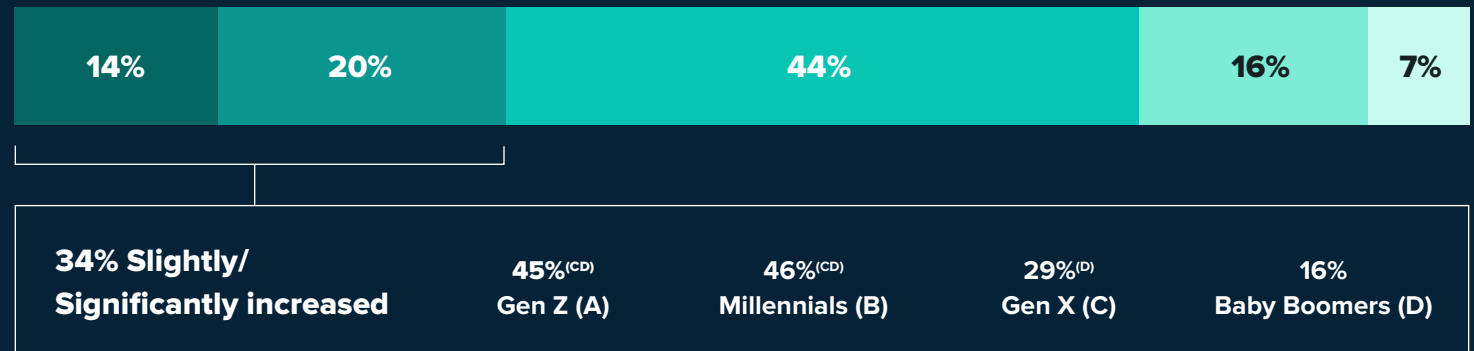
Over the past year, a majority of consumers say their use of social media has grown, and one in three feel it will continue to rise in the next three years

Gen Z and Millennials have seen the greatest surge in their social media use over the past year and are much more likely to expect it to keep rising in the near future.

Social media use compared to a year ago



Social media use three years from now



■ Significantly increased
 ■ Slightly increase
 ■ Stay the same
■ Slightly decrease
 ■ Significantly decreased

BASE: ALL QUALIFIED CONSUMERS (n=1006); Gen Z(n=210), Millennials(n=285), Gen X(n=259), Baby Boomers(n=252)
 Q1. Compared to a year ago, has your use of social media increased, decreased or stayed the same? Q2. Thinking about three years from now, do you expect your use of social media to increase, decrease or stay the same?

While most consumers today see social media as a way to communicate with friends and family, at least one in four use it to discover, learn, purchase or recommend products, services or brands

Around one in three consumers use social media to learn about or discover new products, services or brands.

Current use of social media for general and communication purposes



For products, services and brand-related purposes



Social media is nearly as common as TV/radio ads and WOM for learning about brands or companies. In fact, one in three say it would be their preferred way going forward

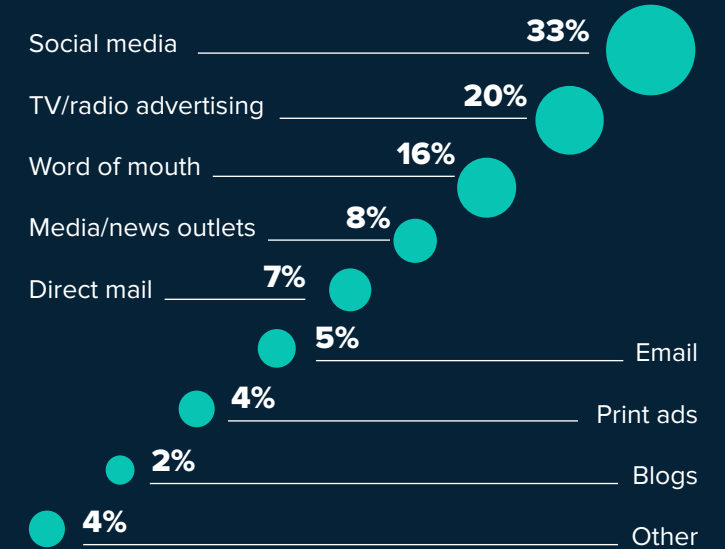
Not surprisingly, Gen Z are significantly more likely than all others to learn about brands or companies on social media.

Three most typical ways to learn about brands or companies



78%^(BCD) Gen Z (A)	61%^(D) Millennials (B)
56%^(D) Gen X (C)	35% Baby Boomers (D)

Preferred way to learn about brands or companies (going forward)



Social media is the primary way I learn about new products, services, brands

35% True today

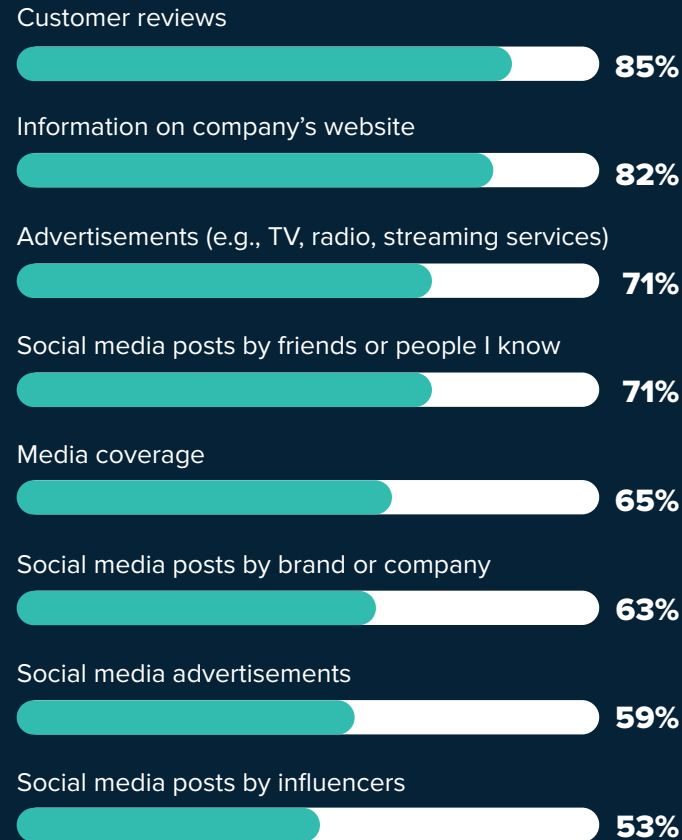
35% True in next three years

BASE: ALL QUALIFIED CONSUMERS (n=1006); Gen Z(n=210), Millennials(n=285), Gen X(n=259), Baby Boomers(n=252)
Q6. Which of the following is true about you today? Please select all that apply. Q7. Which of the following do you anticipate being true about you three years from now? Please select all that apply. Q20. How do you typically learn about brands or companies? Please select all that apply. Q21. Going forward, what would be your preferred way to learn about brands or companies? Please select on response only.

Customer reviews and company website information lead the list of most influential sources for making purchasing decisions, followed by social media posts by friends and other ads

To evaluate products/services before buying, nearly two in three consumers read reviews on a company's website and about one in two read reviews on forums or social media.

Level of influence of each information source on purchasing decision (% Very/Somewhat influential)



Actions taken to evaluate products/services online before buying



BASE: ALL QUALIFIED CONSUMERS (n=1006)
Q30. When you purchase products or services, how influential is each of the following sources of information for your decision? Q32. Have you done any of the following to evaluate products or services online before buying? Please select all that apply.

Social media enables consumers to engage and interact with brands and companies

At least two in five report they engage with a brand or company by 'liking' its posts or following it on social media; nearly one in three leave a review and about one in four share brand or company related content.

68%

Social media enables me to interact with brands and companies

(% Strongly/Somewhat agree)

76%^(D) Gen Z (A)

75%^(D) Millennials (B)

74%^(D) Gen X (C)

48% Baby Boomers (D)

Social media is clearly less of a catalyst for Baby Boomers than their younger peers.

Ways of engaging with a brand or company on social media



45%

"Like" posts from brand or company social media accounts



21%

Report issues with products or services



43%

"Follow" a brand or company on social media



20%

Private message or DM a brand or company



32%

Leave a review of a product or service



20%

Follow an influencer who is a brand ambassador



23%

Share brand or company-related content



18%

Tag a brand or company in my posts

BASE: ALL QUALIFIED CONSUMERS (n=1006); Gen Z(n=210), Millennials(n=285), Gen X(n=259), Baby Boomers(n=252)
Q8. How much do you agree with the following statements? Q22. What are some of the ways in which you engage with a brand or company on social media? Please select all that apply.

The use of social media is clearly on the rise across all aspects of the customer lifecycle

Compared to a year ago, about two out of five consumers increased their use of social media to discover or learn about new products, services, brands — an increase expected to continue in the next three years.

Use of social media increased compared to a year ago for... (% Significantly/Slightly increased)



Use of social media expected to increase in next 3 years for... (% Significantly/Slightly increased)



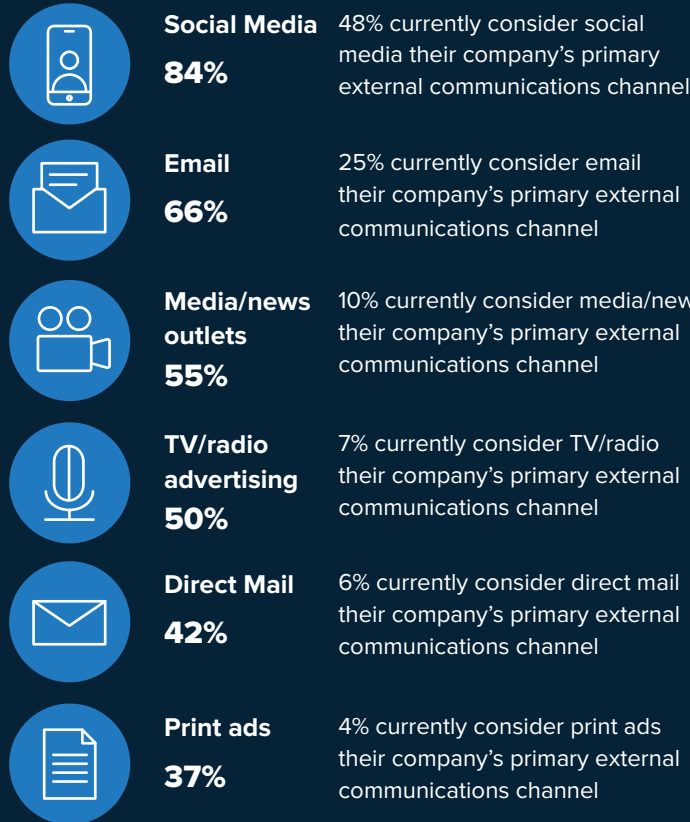
BASE: ALL QUALIFIED CONSUMERS (n=1006).
Q4. For each of the following, has your use of social media increased, decreased or stayed the same compared to a year ago? Q5. Thinking about the next three years, do you expect your use of social media for each of the following to increase, decrease or stay the same?

For most businesses, social media is quickly becoming the most popular external communications channel

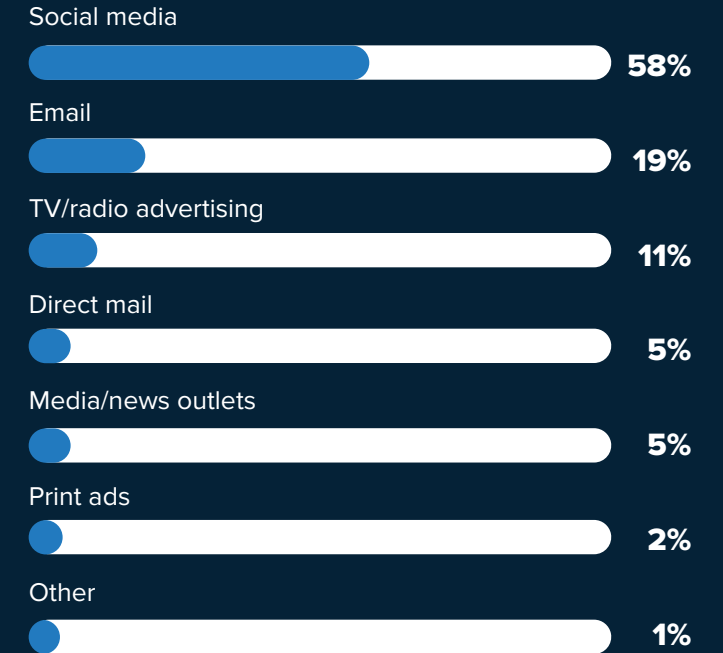
A strong majority (84%) expect their company's use of social media for communications to increase over the next three years. Nearly one in two businesses consider it their primary channel now and even more—58%—anticipate it to become their primary channel in three years.

Anticipated increase in use of external communications channels (next three years)

(% Significantly/Slightly increased)



Anticipated primary external communications channel (next three years)



90% Agree (51% Strongly agree)

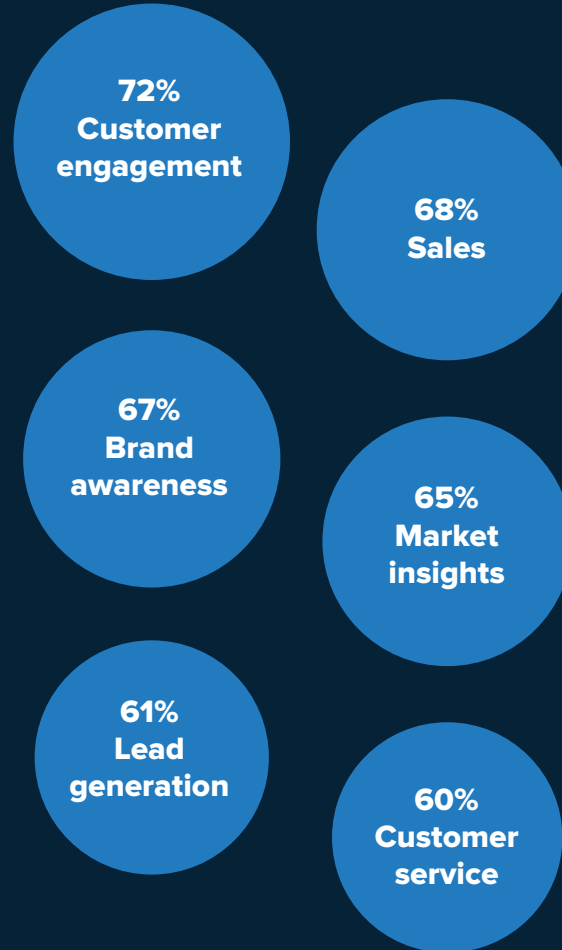
Social media will soon become the primary communications channel for companies to connect with their existing and prospective customers

BASE: ALL QUALIFIED EXECUTIVES (n=250)
Q2. Overall, which of these channels do you currently consider your company's primary external communications channel? Please select one response only. Q3. In the next three years, how do you anticipate your company's use of each of these external communication channels to change, if at all? If you are currently not using a channel and do not anticipate using it in the next three years, please select "stay the same". Q4. In the next three years, which of these communications channels do you anticipate being your company's primary external communications channel? Please select one. Q11. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statement?

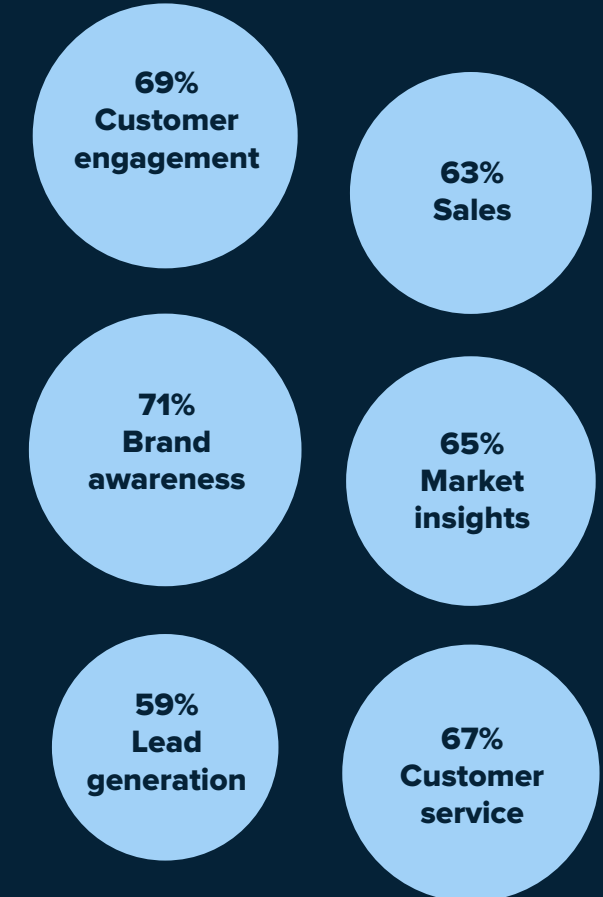
Social media is already widely used across all aspects of business, and its usage is poised to increase in the next three years

Majority of businesses expect the use of social media to grow across all aspects of business, but particularly for brand awareness, customer engagement and customer service.

Company is currently using social media for:



Company anticipates using social media to a greater degree in next three years for:



BASE: ALL QUALIFIED EXECUTIVES (n=250)
Q5. For each of the following aspects of the business, please indicate which external communications channels your company currently uses. For each aspect of the business, please select all channels that apply. Q6. In the next three years, which external communications channels do you anticipate your company using to a greater degree for each of these aspects of the business? For each aspect of the business, please select all channels that apply.

Creating positive experiences for customers on social media

Most consumers expect brands and companies with a social media presence to interact with their customers in meaningful ways, and businesses agree that creating interactive experiences for customers is critical for their success

As over half consumers say that they find it to be more engaging to connect with a brand or company on social media than to visit a physical store, it comes as no surprise that most anticipate social media to be the main channel for brands and companies to reach out to their customers.



80%

of consumers expect brands and companies that have a social media presence to interact with their customers in meaningful ways

58%

of consumers find it more engaging to connect with a brand or company on social media than to visit a physical store

63%

of consumers expect brands to use social media as a main communications channel to reach out to their customers

90%

of businesses agree creating interactive experiences for customers through social media is critical for my company's success

BASE: ALL QUALIFIED CONSUMERS (n=1006)

Q25. How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

BASE: ALL QUALIFIED EXECUTIVES (n=250)

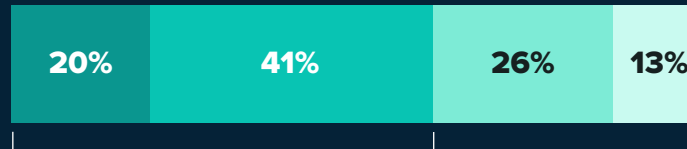
Q11. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

Most consumers expect companies to provide a more personalized experience on social media based on their previous interactions with those companies

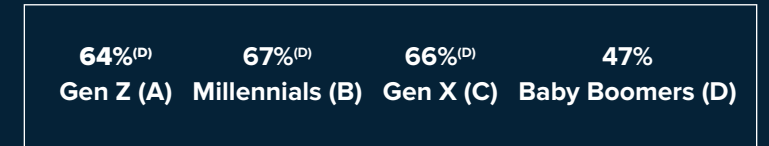
At least one in two expect companies to read and analyze their posts and know them better based on their activity on social media—the latter is much more pronounced among Gen Z, Millennials and Gen X.

Customer expectations

I expect companies to provide a more personalized experience on social media based on my previous interactions with them.



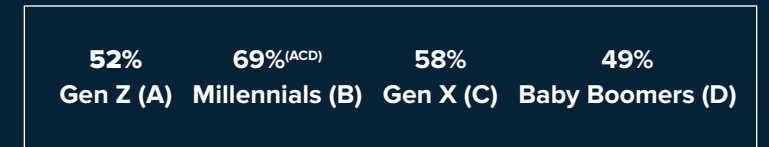
61% Strongly/Somewhat agree



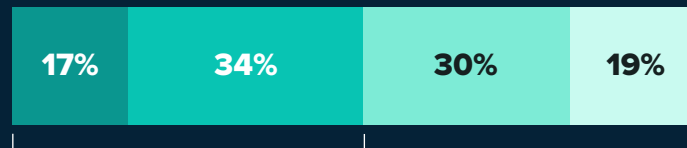
I expect companies to read and analyze what I post on social media.



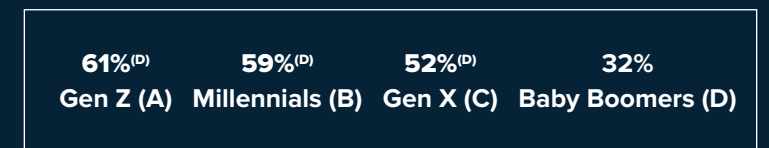
59% Strongly/Somewhat agree



I want companies to know me better based on what I post and/or my activity on social media.



51% Strongly/Somewhat agree



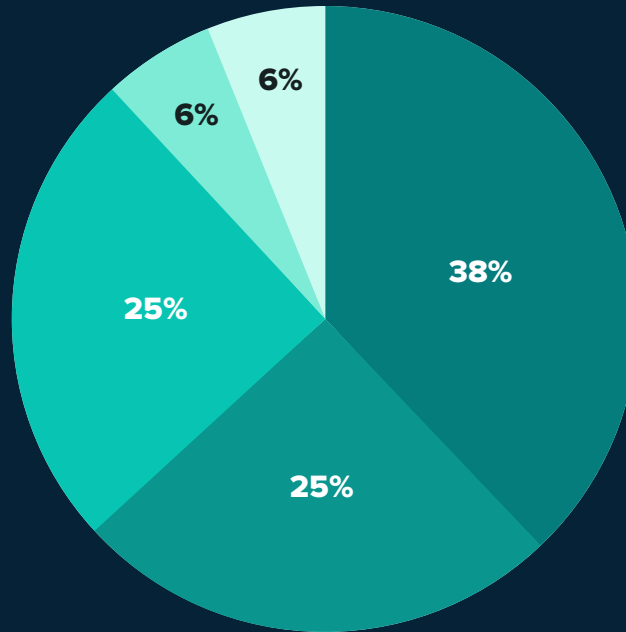
■ Strongly agree
 ■ Somewhat agree
 ■ Somewhat disagree
 ■ Strongly disagree

That said, consumers also expect companies to use customer social data responsibly and to have transparent privacy policies

Around six in ten customers report that responsible use of their social data and transparent privacy policies are very important or absolutely essential in creating a positive experience with a brand or company on social media.

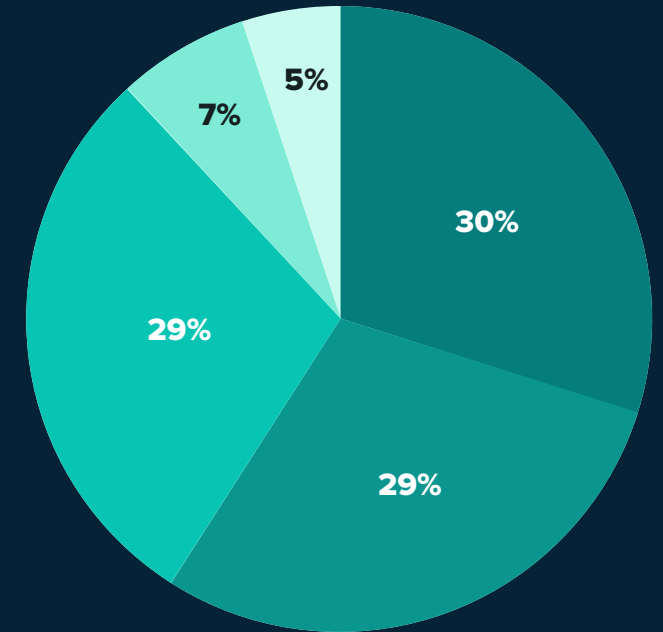
Importance of various factors in creating a positive experience with a brand or company on social media

Responsible use of my social data



63% Absolutely essential/Very important

Transparent privacy policies



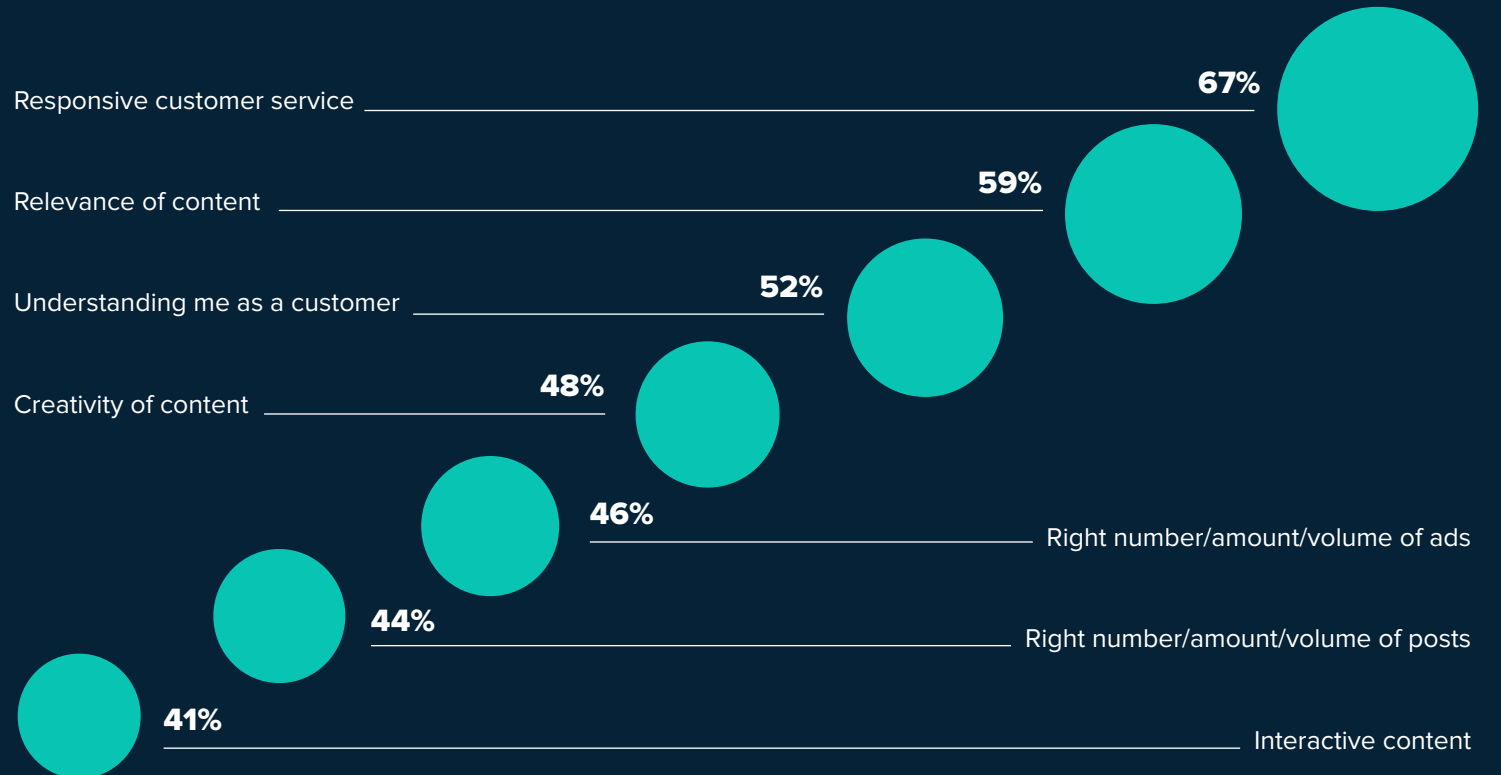
59% Absolutely essential/Very important

■ Absolutely essential ■ Very important ■ Somewhat important ■ Not very important ■ Not at all important

About two in three consumers attribute a high level of importance to responsive customer service in creating a positive experience with a brand on social media

Nearly three in five also consider the relevance of content as an important factor, while around one in two consider understanding them as customers and creativity of content is very important or absolutely essential.

Importance of each factor in creating a positive experience with a brand or company on social media (% Absolutely essential/Very important)

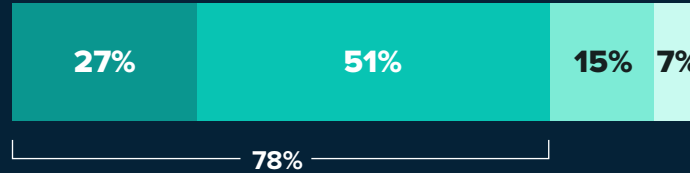


The impact of a positive experience with a brand or company cannot be underestimated

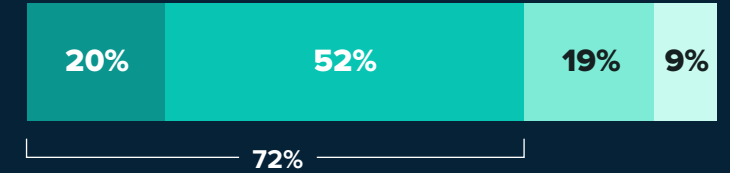
As a result of a positive experience, consumers are willing to buy that brand (78%), choose that brand over the competition (77%), recommend the brand (76%), increase their spending with that brand (72%) and develop a stronger bond (70%).

Likelihood of action after a positive interaction

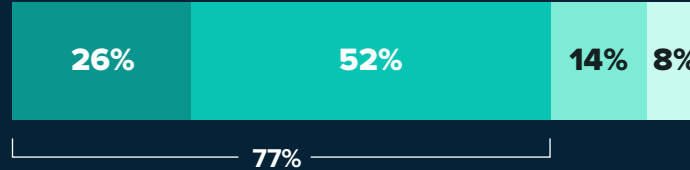
Buy from that brand or company



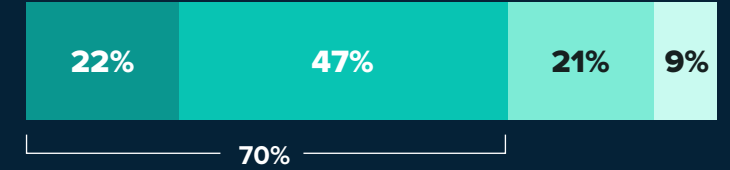
Increase my spending with that brand or company



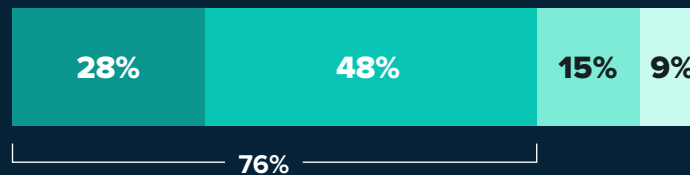
Select that brand or company over its competitors



Develop a stronger bond/relationship with that brand or company



Recommend that brand or company to a friend or relative



For nearly half of businesses, engaging with customers is the main goal of their current social media strategy

Increasing sales and growing their customer base are leading the list of priorities for the next three years.

Main goals/top priorities of social media strategy

(Select up to three)

Engaging with customers



Increasing sales



Growing customer base



Strengthening brand image/brand perception



Raising awareness of company's brand(s)



■ Main goals currently
■ Top priorities in next three years



BASE: ALL QUALIFIED EXECUTIVES (n=250); Small business(n=58), Mid-market(n=95), Enterprise(n=97)
Q22. To the best of your knowledge, what are the main goals of your company's current social media strategy? Please select up to three responses. Q24. In the next three years, which of these do you think will be top priorities for your company's social media strategy? Please select up to three responses.

Although business executives generally feel that their company's current social media strategy is effective, fewer than half consider it very effective on any measure

Effectiveness of current social media strategy

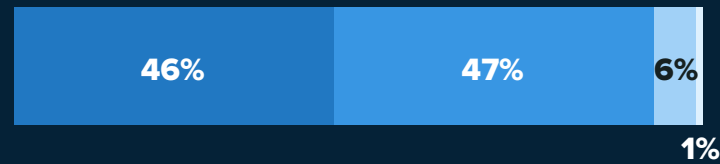
Strengthening brand image/brand perceptions



Increasing sales



Engaging with customers



Growing customer base



Raising awareness of company's brand(s)



Moreover, most business executives are at best somewhat confident in their company's current social media strategy to provide interactive experiences to followers

Similarly, no more than 44% are very confident in their company's social media strategy meeting the needs of different generations.

Confidence in company's current social media strategy to...

Provide interactive experiences with followers

3% **89% Very/Somewhat confident**



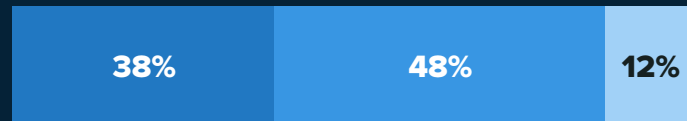
Meet the social media experience needs of younger generations (Millennials and Gen Z)

2% **86% Very/Somewhat confident**



Meet the social media experience needs of older generations (Gen X and Baby Boomers)

2% **86% Very/Somewhat confident**



75% of consumers agree brands and companies need to better customize their social media marketing strategies to address the needs of different target audiences

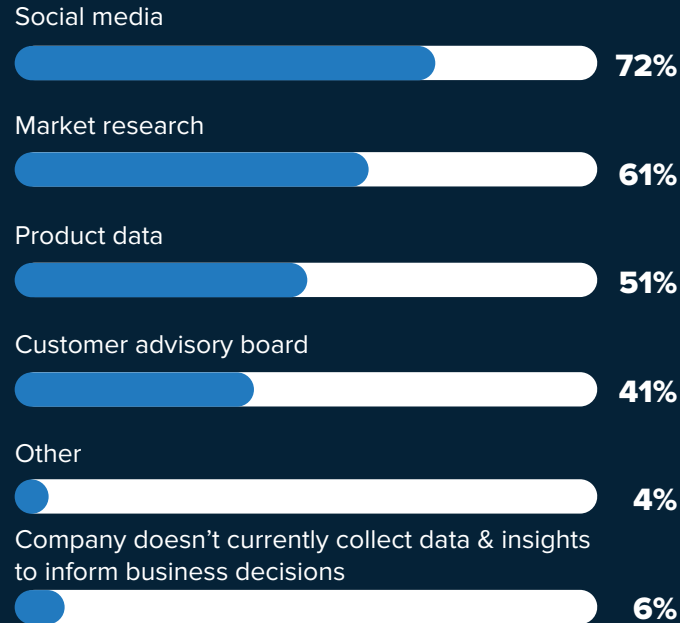
BASE: ALL QUALIFIED EXECUTIVES (n=250); Small business(n=58), Mid-market(n=95), Enterprise(n=97)
 Q25. How confident are you in your company's current social media strategy to...?
 BASE: ALL QUALIFIED CONSUMERS (n=1006)
 Q25. How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

Social media as the data and insights resource

Majority of businesses are currently using social media to collect data and insights to inform business decisions and agree their company's success depends on effective use of social data

About one in two business executives think social media will become the most important source of data and insights in the next three years. Many more—85%—agree that social data will be a primary source of business intelligence going forward.

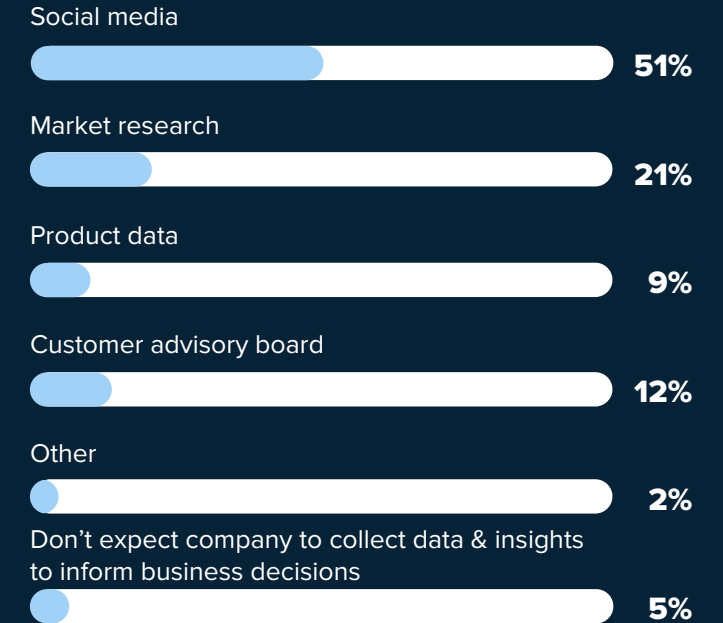
Current source of data and insights used to inform company's business decisions



85% (Strongly/Somewhat agree)

Going forward, social data will be a primary source of business intelligence for my company

Most important source of data and insights for informing company's business decisions (next three years)



89% (Strongly/Somewhat agree)

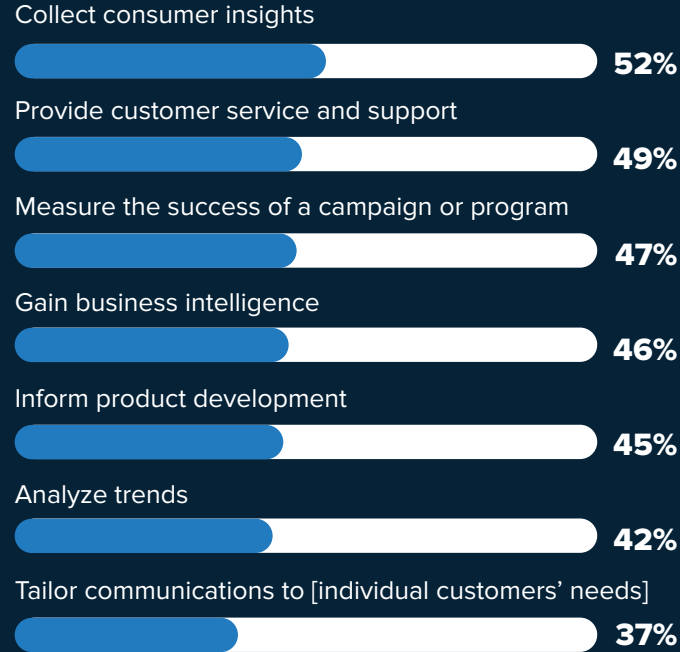
My company's success will depend on how effectively it can use social data to inform marketing strategy

BASE: ALL QUALIFIED EXECUTIVES (n=250)
 Q32. Which of the following does your company currently use to collect data and insights to inform business decisions? Please select all that apply.
 Q33. In the next three years, which of these do you think will be the most important source of data and insights for informing your company's business decisions? Please select one. Q37. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

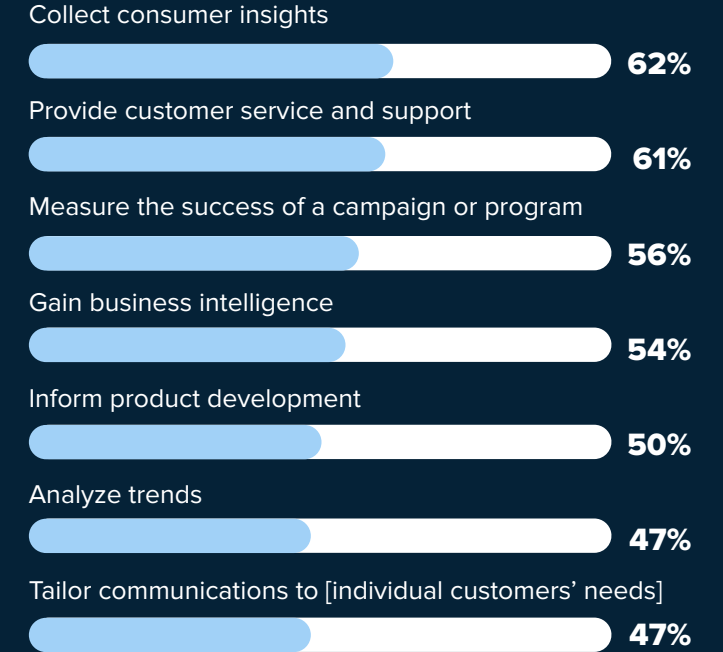
About 3 in 4 business executives expect their company's use of social data to increase, especially for mid-market and enterprise businesses

In the next three years, at least one in two businesses anticipate an increased use of social data for collecting consumer insights, providing customer service, measuring program success, gaining business intelligence and informing product development.

Currently use social data for the following...



Anticipate use of social data to increase in next three years for the following...



Anticipate company's use of social data to increase

Total

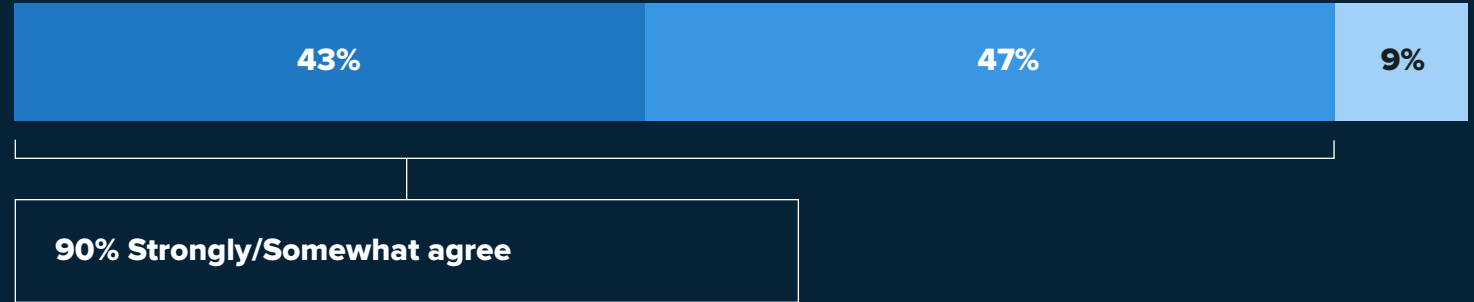


BASE: ALL QUALIFIED EXECUTIVES (n=250); Small business(n=58), Mid-market(n=95), Enterprise(n=97)
 Q34. Does your company currently use social data for any of the following? Please select all that apply. Q35. In the next three years, do you anticipate your company's use of social data to increase, decrease, or stay the same? If you are currently not using social data and do not anticipate using it in the next three years, please select "stay the same".
 BASE: EXPECTS COMPANY'S USE OF SOCIAL DATA TO INCREASE (n=198)
 Q36. For which of these do you anticipate the use of social data to increase in the next three years?

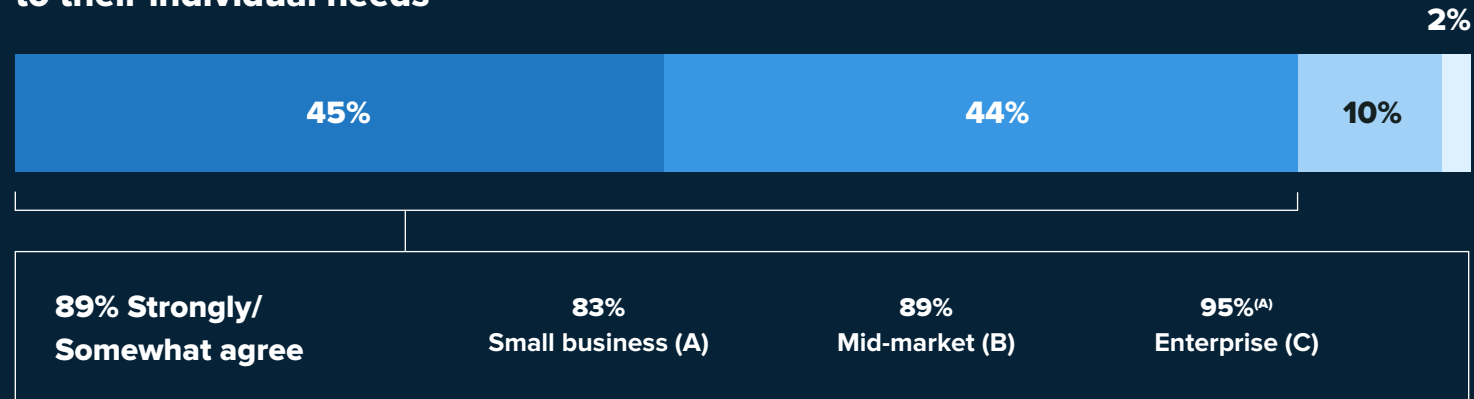
The vast majority agree that companies will need to more effectively use social data to understand their customers

Understanding the customer is not where the use of social data ends, most also agree that customers will expect social data to be used to better tailor content to their individual needs.

Companies will need to more effectively utilize social data to understand their customers



Customers will expect companies to use social data to better tailor content to their individual needs



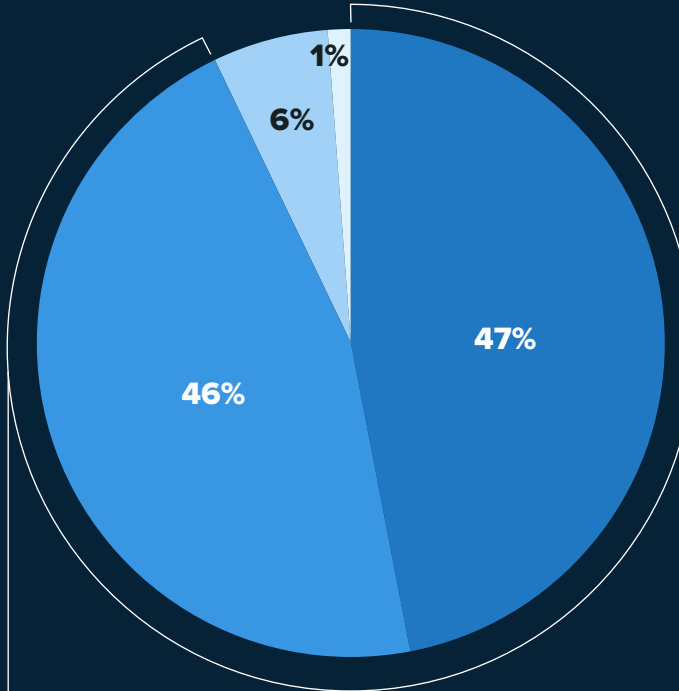
■ Strongly agree
 ■ Somewhat agree
 ■ Somewhat disagree
 ■ Strongly disagree

Social media strategy for marketing and beyond

Executives overwhelmingly agree that businesses are increasingly moving their e-commerce to social media

The vast majority also agree that social media commerce is an increasing portion of their company's marketing-driven revenue.

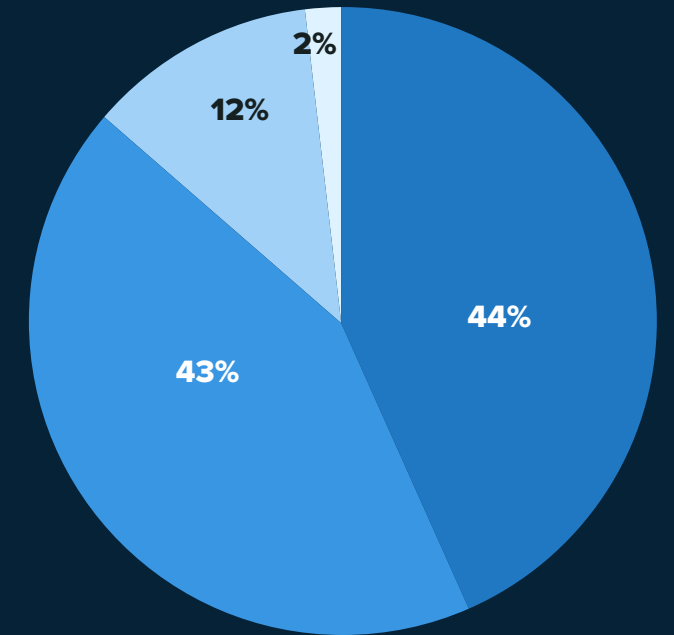
Companies are increasingly moving e-commerce to social media



93% Strongly/Somewhat agree

Company Type	Agreement Level	Percentage
Small business (A)	Strongly agree	90%
	Somewhat agree	90%
Mid-market (B)	Strongly agree	92%
	Somewhat agree	92%
Enterprise (C)	Strongly agree	98% ^(AB)
	Somewhat agree	98% ^(AB)

Social media commerce is an increasing portion of my company's marketing-driven revenue



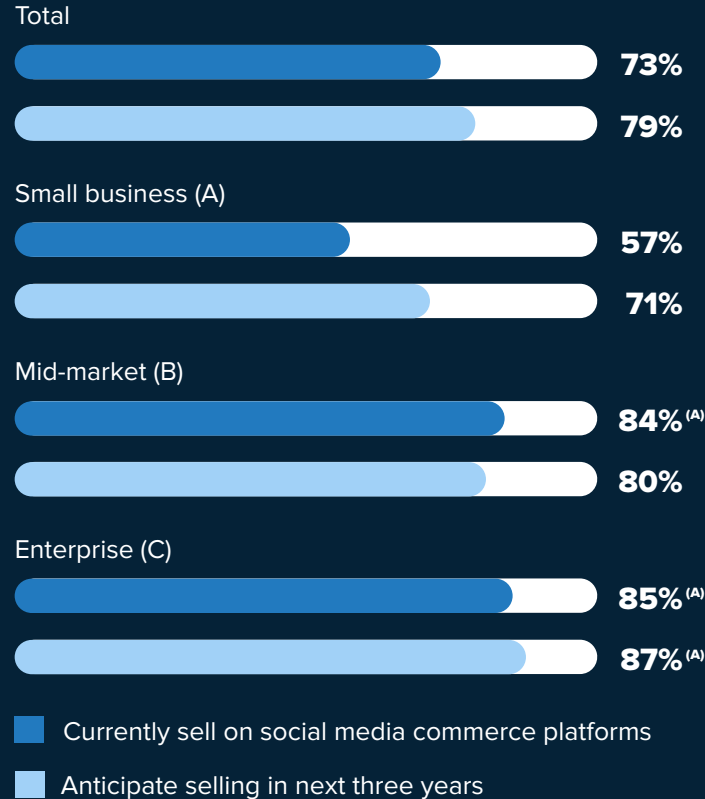
Strongly agree Somewhat agree
Somewhat disagree Strongly disagree

About eight in 10 businesses anticipate selling products or services via social media commerce platforms in the next three years, especially enterprise businesses

Businesses are clearly making plans to align with younger generations who are more likely to have purchased directly from a social media platform (43% Gen Z and 49% Millennials vs. 27% Gen X and 20% Baby Boomers).

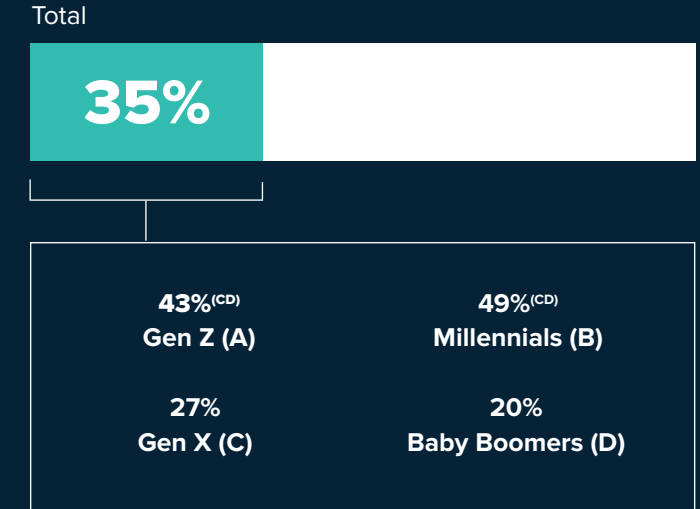
Selling on social media commerce platforms

(Business perspective)



Purchased products or services directly from a social media platform

(Customer perspective)



BASE: ALL QUALIFIED EXECUTIVES (n=250); Small business(n=58), Mid-market(n=95), Enterprise(n=97)

Q30. Does your company use any of the following to sell products and services online? Please select all that apply.

Q31. In the next three years, which of the following do you anticipate your company using to sell products and services online? Please select all that apply.

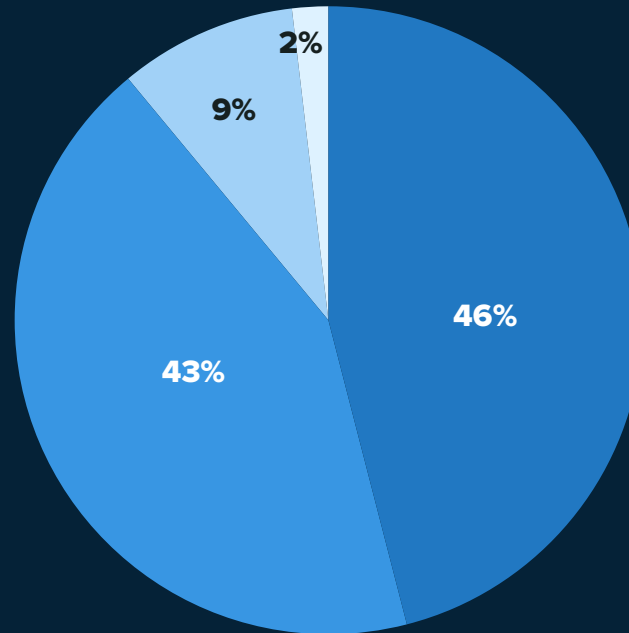
BASE: ALL QUALIFIED CONSUMERS (n=1006); Gen Z(n=210), Millennials(n=285), Gen X(n=259), Baby Boomers(n=252)

Q31. Have you used any of the following to purchase products or services? Please select all that apply.

In the opinion of most executives, social media will soon become the primary channel for customer service/support

More than four in ten consumers report contacting a company's customer service by sending a private message or posting publicly on social media platforms.

Social media will soon become the primary channel for customer service/support (Business perspective)



88% Strongly/Somewhat agree

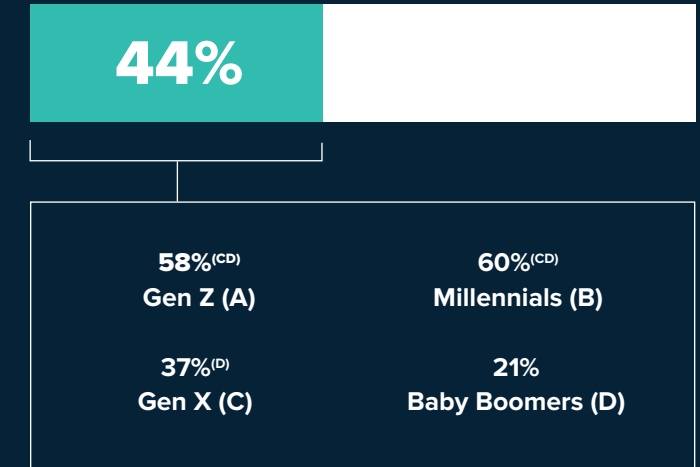
- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

BASE: ALL QUALIFIED EXECUTIVES (n=250)
 Q11. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?
 BASE: ALL QUALIFIED CONSUMERS (n=1006); Gen Z(n=210), Millennials(n=285), Gen X(n=259), Baby Boomers(n=252)
 Q40. Have you done any of the following to contact a company's customer service? Please select all that apply.



Contacted a company's customer service (Customer perspective)

Sent a private message or posted publicly on social media platforms



Asking questions about a product or service or getting a quick response to customer service issues are the top reasons for reaching out to a company on social media

When reaching out to a company on social media, more than 75% of consumers expect a response in less than 24 hours.



56%
Ask questions about product/service



56%
Quick response to customer service issue



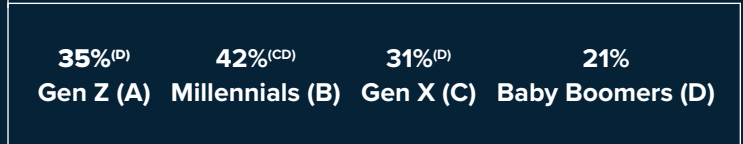
43%
Provide positive review/feedback



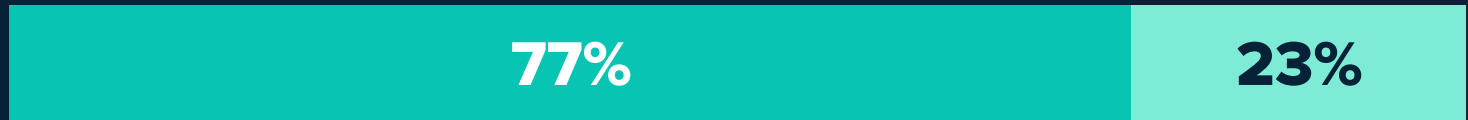
38%
Provide negative review/feedback



33%
Highlight a product/service I love



Expected social media response time



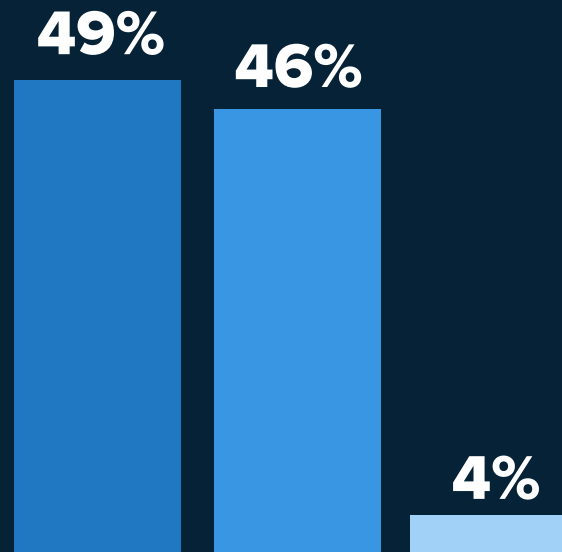
■ In less than 24 hrs. ■ In 24 hrs. or more

BASE: HAVE CONTACTED COMPANY'S CUSTOMER SERVICE (n=866); Gen Z(n=183), Millennials(n=259), Gen X(n=216), Baby Boomers(n=208)
Q41. Which of the following, if any, are reasons you would reach out to a company over social media? Please select all that apply.
BASE: ALL QUALIFIED CONSUMERS (n=1006)
Q42. If you reach out to a company on social media with a question, how quickly do you expect a response?

Virtually all executives share the sentiment that companies will rely more heavily on social data to identify business opportunities outside of marketing

They also anticipate increased use of social media data for Product, R&D, Sales, HR and Data Analytics departments to inform strategy and business decisions.

Companies will more heavily rely on social data to identify business opportunities outside of marketing

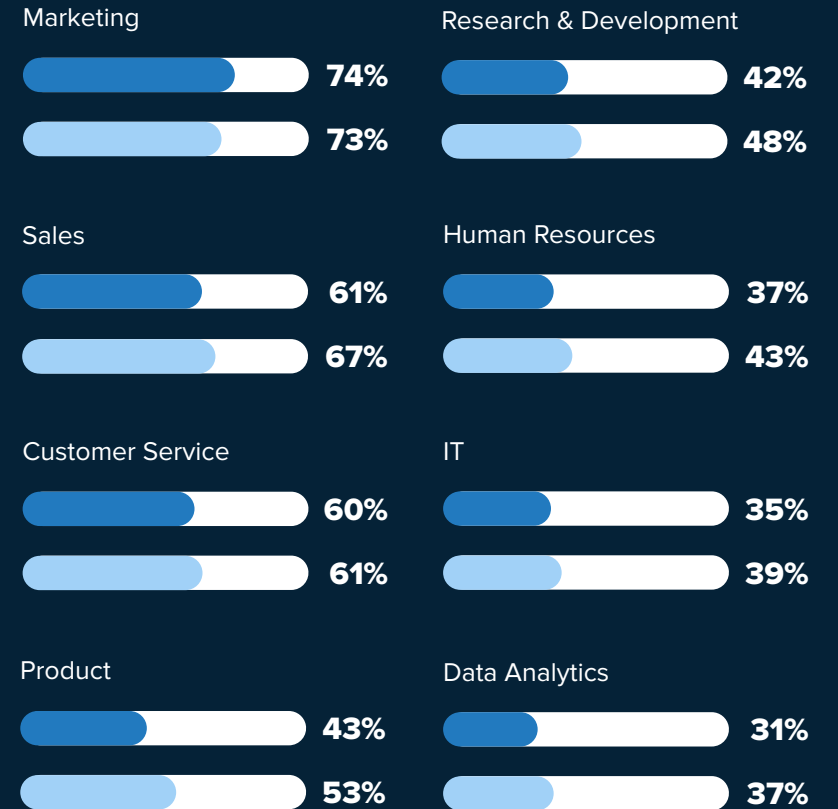


95% Strongly/Somewhat agree



Departments utilizing social media data to inform strategy and business decisions

Currently use (dark blue) | Anticipate using in three years (light blue)



BASE: ALL QUALIFIED EXECUTIVES (n=250)
 Q20. At the present time, which of the following departments utilize social media data to inform their strategy and/or decision? Please select all that apply. Q21. In the next three years, which of these departments do you anticipate utilizing social media data to inform their strategy and/or decisions? Please select all that apply. Q37. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

Demographics

Consumer demographics

Gender (n=1006)		Marital status (n=1006)		Race/Ethnicity (n=1006)		Household income (n=1006)	
Male	48%	Never married	32%	White	72%	Less than \$15,000	6%
Female	50%	Married/Living with partner	52%	Hispanic	18%	\$15,000 to \$24,999	5%
Other/prefer not to answer	2%	Divorced/Separated/Widowed	15%	Black/African American	15%	\$25,000 to \$34,999	7%
				Asian or Pacific Islander	7%	\$35,000 to \$49,999	11%
				Native American, Arab/West	8%	\$50,000 to \$74,999	16%
				Asian/Other race		\$75,000 to \$99,999	13%
						\$100,000 or more	42%

Age		Employment status		Region		Household size	
18-24	14%	Employed (NET)	63%	Northeast	18%	1 HH member	12%
25-34	21%	Not Employed (NET)	37%	Midwest	19%	2 HH members	30%
35-44	19%			South	40%	3 HH members	21%
45-54	18%			West	23%	4 HH members	19%
55-64	16%					5+ HH members	17%
65+	12%						

Generation		Education		Children in household	
Gen Z	14%	Less than high school	9%	No	56%
Millennials	33%	High school to less than 4-year college degree	55%	Yes	44%
Gen X	29%				
Baby Boomers	24%	4-year college degree or more	35%		

Business firmographics

Gender (n=250)		Job title (n=250)		Functional role (n=250)		Top industries represented (n=250)	
Male	65%	Owner, C-suite, EVP	31%	Administration/Executive	16%	Banking and Finance	12%
Female	34%	SVP, VP, Director	38%	Advertising/Public Relations/ Corporate Communications	2%	Information Technology and Services	10%
Other/prefer not to answer	1%	Supervisor, Sr Manager, Manager	30%	Customer Service	4%	Construction (heavy/special trades)	8%
Age		Company size		ebusiness/ecommerce		Manufacturing	
18-24	4%	1-199	42%	Finance	2%	Retail	7%
25-34	18%	200-999	20%	Human Resources/Legal	13%	Administrative Support and Business Services	4%
35-44	50%	1000+	38%	Information Technology (IT)/MIS	5%	Education	4%
45-54	15%	Company revenue		Marketing/Social Media Management	2%	Healthcare, Pharmaceutical, Medical Device	4%
55-64	9%	Less than \$5 million	31%	Production/Operations	13%	Engineering Services	3%
65+	5%	\$5 million – \$99.9 million	33%	Research and Development	1%	Religious/Non-Profit Organizations	3%
US region		\$100 million - \$999.9 million	21%	Sales	7%	Telecommunications	3%
Northeast	23%	\$1 billion or more	13%	Telecommunications	1%	Transportation and Warehousing	3%
Midwest	19%	I work for a nonprofit or governmental agency	2%	Decision-making role		Wholesale Trade	3%
South	35%	Customer focus		I am the key decision maker	65%	Other industries*	29%
West	23%	Directly to consumers (B2C)	36%	I have a role in the final decision, but am not the sole decision maker	25%	*Industries with less than 3% representation each: Advertising, Marketing, Public Affairs; Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting Arts, Entertainment and Recreation; Automotive Services; Communications; Entertainment, Media Gaming, and Sports; Food and Beverage; Insurance; Legal Services; Public Administration/ Government; Real Estate, Research Services; Travel and Tourism; Utilities; Other	
		To other businesses (B2B)	14%	I make recommendations/provide input, but am not the decision maker	10%		
		To both consumers and businesses	51%				

Appendix

Most businesses are currently using Facebook for marketing purposes

At least half are using Instagram, Twitter and YouTube.







Social platforms companies currently use for marketing purposes

84% Facebook	23% Pinterest
64% Instagram	22% Snapchat
60% Twitter	21% Yelp
57% YouTube	19% TikTok
42% LinkedIn	18% Reddit
36% Facebook Messenger	14% TripAdvisor
36% Amazon	9% Twitch
31% Google My Business	3% Other
27% Whatsapp	

Currently social media, followed by email, are the most commonly used communications channels for every aspect of the business

External communications channels for business aspects

Company is currently using

	Customer service	Lead generation	Sales	Brand awareness	Market insights	Customer engagement
 Social media	60%	61%	68%	67%	65%	72%
 Email	64%	50%	53%	48%	45%	61%
 Direct mail	36%	29%	38%	34%	28%	38%
 Media/news outlets	24%	22%	37%	39%	28%	27%
 Print ads	22%	26%	34%	36%	23%	24%
 TV/radio advertising	20%	29%	34%	41%	29%	27%







BASE: ALL QUALIFIED EXECUTIVES (n=250)

Q5. For each of the following aspects of the business, please indicate which external communications channels your company currently uses. For each aspect of the business, please select all channels that apply.

At least six in 10 executives anticipate the use of social media to increase across all aspects of the business in the next three years—far more than for any other channel

External communications channels for business aspects

Anticipate company using to greater degree in next three years

	Customer service	Lead generation	Sales	Brand awareness	Market insights	Customer engagement
 Social media	67%	59%	63%	71%	65%	69%
 Email	53%	39%	44%	37%	40%	51%
 Direct mail	29%	28%	31%	29%	30%	30%
 Media/news outlets	25%	33%	33%	32%	30%	24%
 Print ads	26%	25%	30%	30%	23%	18%
 TV/radio advertising	28%	33%	35%	34%	28%	27%

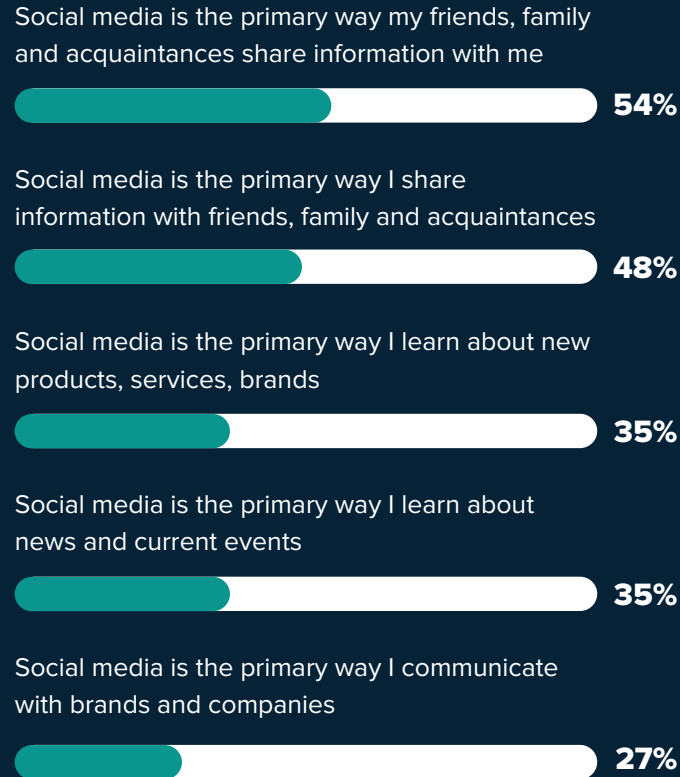
BASE: ALL QUALIFIED EXECUTIVES (n=250)

Q6. In the next three years, which external communications channels do you anticipate your company using to a greater degree for each of these aspects of the business? For each aspect of the business, please select all channels that apply.

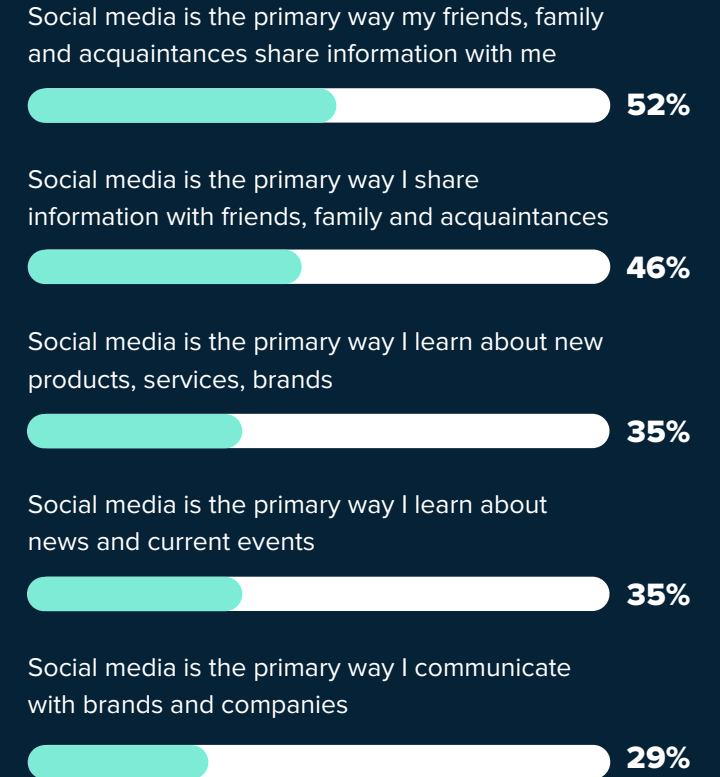
Around one in two consumers see social media as a primary way for exchanging information with friends and family in the next three years

Over one-third (35%) anticipate social media to be their primary way to learn about new products, services, and brands, with nearly three in 10 (29%) anticipating it to be their primary way to communicate with brands and companies.

True today



Anticipate being true three years from now



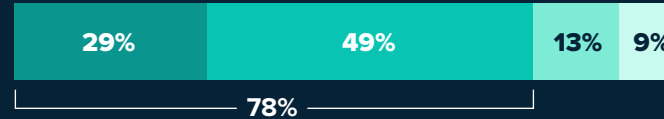
BASE: ALL QUALIFIED CONSUMERS (n=1006)
 Q6. Which of the following are true about you today? Please select all that apply.
 Q7. Which of the following do you anticipate being true about you three years from now? Please select all that apply.

For most consumers, social media allows them to share their thoughts, feelings and observations with others, stay up-to-date on current events and learn about cultural trends

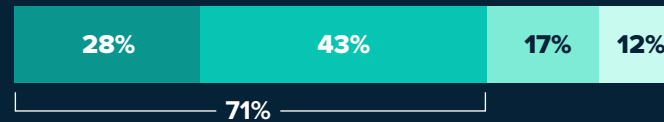
Three in five consider social media as an essential part of their life, particularly younger generations.

Attitudes about social media

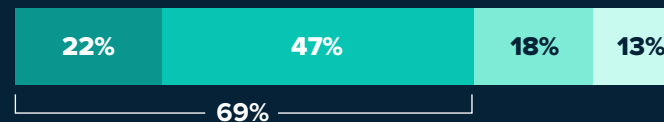
Social media allows me to share my thoughts, feelings and observations with others



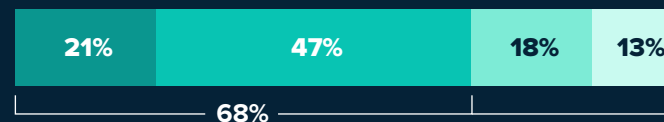
Social media is a way for me to stay up-to-date on current events



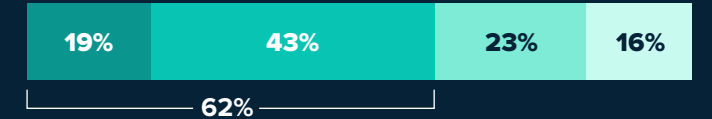
I learn about cultural trends on social media



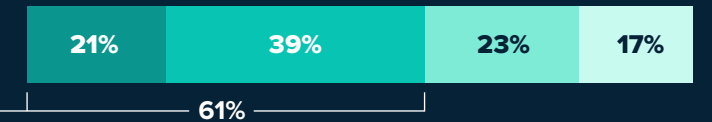
Social media enables me to interact with brands and companies



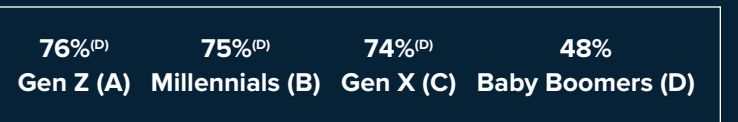
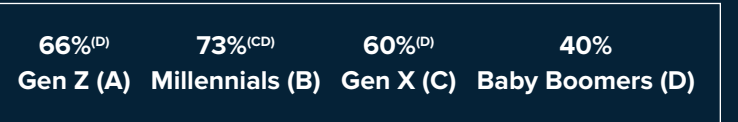
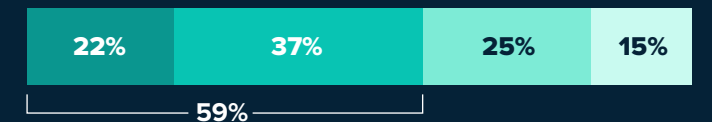
Social media impacts the way I see the world



Social media is an essential part of my life



Social media is something I only use to stay connected with friends, family and acquaintances



Sprout Social

Sprout Social offers deep social media listening and analytics, social management, customer care and advocacy solutions to more than 25,000 brands and agencies worldwide. Sprout's unified platform integrates the power of social throughout every aspect of a business and enables social leaders at every level to extract valuable data and insights that drive their business forward. Headquartered in Chicago, Sprout operates across major social media networks, including Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, YouTube and LinkedIn. Learn more at sproutsocial.com.



The Harris Poll

The Harris Poll is one of the longest running surveys in the U.S. tracking public opinion, motivations, and social sentiment since 1963 that is now part of Harris Insights & Analytics, a global consulting and market research firm that delivers social intelligence for transformational times. We work with clients in three primary areas: building a twenty-first-century corporate reputation, crafting brand strategy and performance tracking, and earning organic media through public relations research. Our mission is to provide insights and advisory to help leaders make the best decisions possible. To learn more, please visit theharrispoll.com.

