STATE OF MARKETING 2020

CONTENT AND SOCIAL MARKETING

Alex Hadwick

Head of Reports, Incite Group & Founder, Concise Content Marketing

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INTRODUCTION

In 2020 marketers are looking to tell coherent stories about their brands, as the sector shifts towards focusing on quality over output. This is borne out across a number of results from our survey. Content marketing and blogs are surging as brands look to tell narratives about themselves and our respondents told us that building brand awareness and storytelling was their top priority looking towards 2020. Meanwhile, paid social and search advertising forms are not seen as important as organic social and Search Engine Optimization (SEO), and display advertising is barely increasing in terms of usage.

It would seem that a shift is ongoing, following changing patterns of interest and consumption of marketing material, as generational change occurs. Consumers increasingly want brands to have values and express that through their decision-making, products and advertising. Those consumers are also increasingly savvy and becoming less likely to be drawn in by simple clickbait.

They are also more aware of their privacy in the wake of numerous major stories resulting from scandals, most notably revelations surrounding Facebook, and more empowered to take control following the institution of GDPR regulations.

These trends mean that marketers need to produce compelling copy that increasingly breaches the barriers consumers put up and tells them stories that chime with their values and interests.

Although brands are alive to this and shifting to more appropriate content forms, there still appears to be a gap in terms of underlying capabilities. Brands need to do more with supporting systems and also to invest in data gathering and interpretation to understand the profiles of their customers and serve them the right content to drive engagement.

Despite content marketing being the fastest growing marketing form, just 53% of respondents said that they had deployed, or were about to deploy a content management platform in the next 12 months. Although marketers said their second-highest priority is understanding customer data and journey mapping, just 30.6% said they have a customer data platform. Finally, marketing automation is the top investment priority and is expected to be highly talked about in 2020 but a mere 41.4% have, or expect to have in the next year, a marketing automation platform. Similarly, data capabilities for marketers will need to progress to support these objectives. On average, marketers report that they use just 11 data sources to understand and target customers and frequently that data is not made widely available within organizations. For example, when it comes to third-party data, which is increasingly critical for profiling and targeting, two thirds of our respondents reported limited or no integration of data from these sources.

The state of marketing in 2019-2020 is therefore in flux, with marketers playing catch-up to match changing consumer expectations and become empowered in an age of fast-moving digital advertising that is highly reliant on data.

Alex Hadwick

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CONTENT AND SOCIAL MARKETING

Content marketing is very much in the ascendancy in 2020 and branded social content is the most critical pillar within the content marketing portfolio. As we progress through 2020, brands are looking to focus hard on social media posts in order to get close to their customers, cut through the noise and come across as authentic to their target audiences. This is requiring engagement across a rising number of types of content, with video drawing an increasing amount of investment from marketers. There is also divergence across different business types and geographies, meaning marketers will need to consider what will work best for their target audience, whether that be more emphasis on long-form content for B2B marketers, or understanding how to reach consumers in Asia-Pacific through messenger platforms and short-form social posts.

Conversely, when it comes to distribution there continues to be a lack of diversity, with a handful of big beasts continuing to dominate the scene for social and content marketing. Only social domains owned by Facebook, Microsoft and Google were found to be generating a major and demonstrable return on investment for marketers in our survey. Although newer entrants, such as Bytedance's TikTok and Snapchat, may yet come to rival these vast players amongst certain demographics and perhaps even take their reach beyond their current young audiences, for now the results remain clear in terms of who the industry trusts to turn their marketing spend into views and purchases, and that is Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram and YouTube.

Increasingly marketers want to use these platforms to tell cohesive stories and those brands that can create strong narratives about who they are and their products will be the ones that succeed in 2020. For Business-to-Consumer (B2C) marketers there is the rise of story functions on social platforms that can provide a step change in terms of content depth, as well as increasing opportunity to work with influencers both macro and micro. For Business-to-Business (B2B) brands updates to Google's algorithm, increasingly strict data protection regulations and growing competition are also upping the need to create multi-level, original and authoritative content marketing through original research and well-constructed long-form content.

There is then a real need to cultivate audiences in 2020 and beyond with quality content that resonates with the right audience and to deliver that direct to the medium of most audience engagement. Social posts will not achieve their maximum potential without proper construction of message and targeting, and social appears to be moving away from mass engagement as the key benchmark to more quality conversations, such as Facebook's announced focus on private conversations, Instagram's phasing out of the like feature and rounded figures for YouTube subscribers. Consumers too are driving this change as trust in a host of different organizations continues to fall and consumers look for more personal interactions with both brands and their ambassadors.

Furthermore, with such a sparse number of social brands handling the levers of power, it is important for brands to build audiences and relationships that have stickiness, so they are not at the whim of an algorithm change by just one key player that can throw all of their marketing plans into chaos.

With content marketing coming out as king when we asked where marketers were increasing usage, there is recognition of this trend and a race is on to get in front of audiences and stay on their radars through effective content distributed first and foremost through social channels.

1.1. Critical Content Marketing

As noted in the Key Trends and Major Priorities report, content marketing is firmly the fastest growing marketing format and organic forms of content are rising above paid formats in marketers' minds, helped by changes to laws, consumer tastes and the media landscape. It is therefore no surprise that social media posts are the dominant form of content marketing for brands worldwide. In our survey, 64.3% of respondents said that posting on social networks is critical to their content marketing efforts, far ahead of the next most chosen option of blogs at 44.1%.

Although monthly user growth in many of the most well-known social networks is slowing down at the end of 2019 and the start of 2020, there is simply no other marketing format that can effectively reach the numbers of people social networks can in a coordinated and impactful manner. Both Facebook and YouTube claims that they can reach around 2 billion people with advertisements as of late 2019 and their counterpart in the B2B marketing space, LinkedIn, it says that its network now covers more than 650 million profiles. It is therefore no surprise that social media posts are thought to be so key by such a wide spread of marketers.

Looking down to the next tier of content marketing formats, are blogs (44.1%), infographics and imagery (43.2%), e-newsletters (41.8%), and user reviews (40.9%). As noted in our Key Trends and Major Priorities section, blogs and email marketing continue to be strong growth areas for marketers, so it is important not to neglect these areas even if they are far from the hottest new commodity on the marketing space, especially given their potential importance for search engine rankings.

I see the next 12 to 18 months as going 'back to basics' where content distribution channels are concerned. With the need to constantly try and keep up with, and stay ahead of, the ever evolving algorithmic changes that come with using the social and search channels that marketers have to contend with, more and more importance will continue to be placed on 'owned (digital) channels'. Brands will seek to place greater resources in acquiring and building out their own audience database(s), to facilitate direct communication, through channels, such as email and community groups online.

Kerry-Ann Stimpson, Chief Marketing Officer, JMMB Group Limited

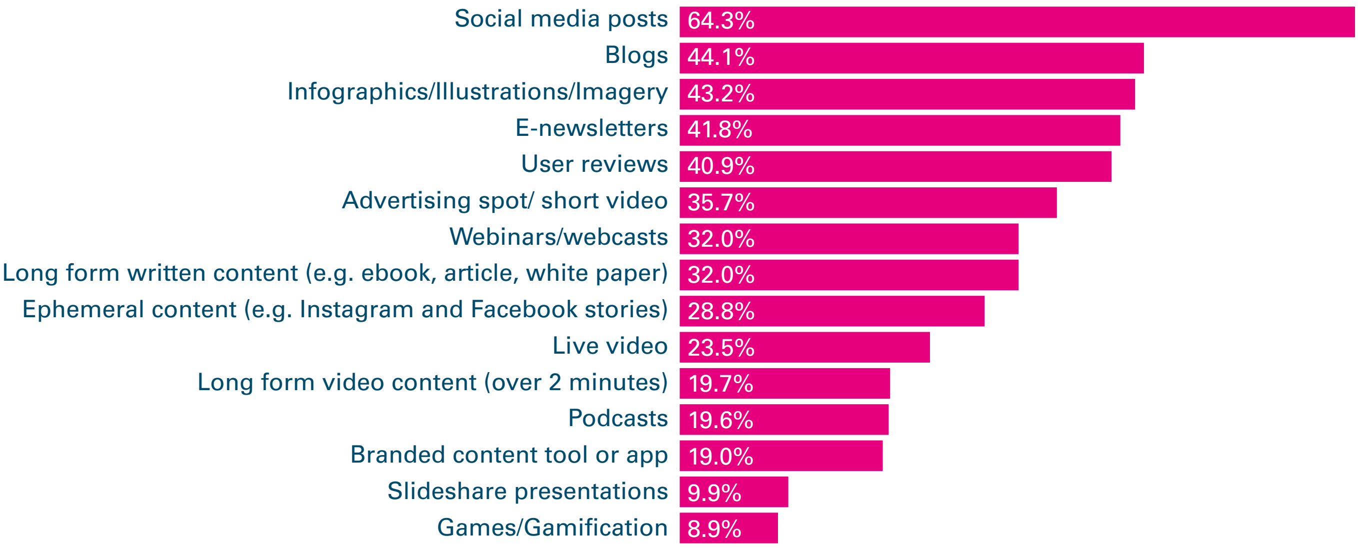
One area gaining more attention and deservedly so is video content, which in short form or as an advertising spot is noted as generating strong ROI by 35.7% of our survey population, when in live video format by 23.5% and when in longer form by 19.7% of marketers.

We can expect the importance of short form video and imagery to rise further over 2020, as key social networks either grow or place more emphasis on these areas. Social networks centered around video, such as YouTube and TikTok continue to rise strongly in popularity, as do several lesser known players in the space, such as Twitch. The competition in the space has even led to bidding wars over talent, particularly for the most popular gaming streamers, with YouTube, Twitch, Mixer and Facebook Gaming all looking to make splashes with talent on their services in 2020.

Furthermore, all the current biggest players have added greater and greater video integration and functionality to their services over the last three years. Alongside the launch of Facebook gaming, Facebook Stories have given greater prominence to imagery and video, which in itself was a reaction to Snapchat's stories function. Instagram has also deepened video content, likewise focusing on developing its stories feature and adding in IGTV in 2018 and then Reels in 2019, which are very short videos of 15 seconds or less in order to better compete with TikTok, a network that is almost entirely driven by video content. LinkedIn has also sought to incorporate and push video more over the last three years and in 2019 launched livestreaming capability. Above all of this there is also the daddy of video content, YouTube, which at more than 2 billion accounts has the second most profiles behind only Facebook.

Although the greater prominence given to video has given it a boost by dent of exposure, it is important to note that this is a reaction driven by market dynamics. Reach and engagement for video formats is extremely high, with GlobalWebIndex estimating that 91% of web users watch online videos each month as of Q2 2019. Zenith estimates that globally the total amount of video watched online has already reached 84 minutes each day and that this will rise 100 minutes per day in 2021 (Zenith, 2020). Currently, the most popular YouTube personalities can pull in millions of views and exceed traditional media channels in reach and engagement, with the top 20 YouTube personalities all having more than 20 million subscribers, making them larger than not only individual TV shows but often entire networks. It therefore seems likely that video content will be one of they growth formats in 2020.

Figure 1: Which Content Marketing Formats Do You Think Are Critical to Your Marketing Efforts?



Source: The State of Marketing 2020

In terms of geographic trends for content market format usage, social media posts continue to be top across all areas but there are some important variations, with marketers in North America more likely to use long-form content than their counterparts in Europe and Asia-Pacific, European marketers less likely to see social as critical and those in Asia-Pacific looking for high impact content on social, as befits the marketing networks on the region, with messenger apps notably more key.

Marketing professionals based in North America posted the highest rates for seeing blogs (49.3%), long-form written content (35.2%), webinars (35.2%), and podcasts (22.1%) as being critical to their content marketing efforts. This appears to suggest a trend in the region for marketers to be reaching out to these more detailed long-form modes of communication to cut through a highly-developed and saturated media market and connect with jaded consumers.

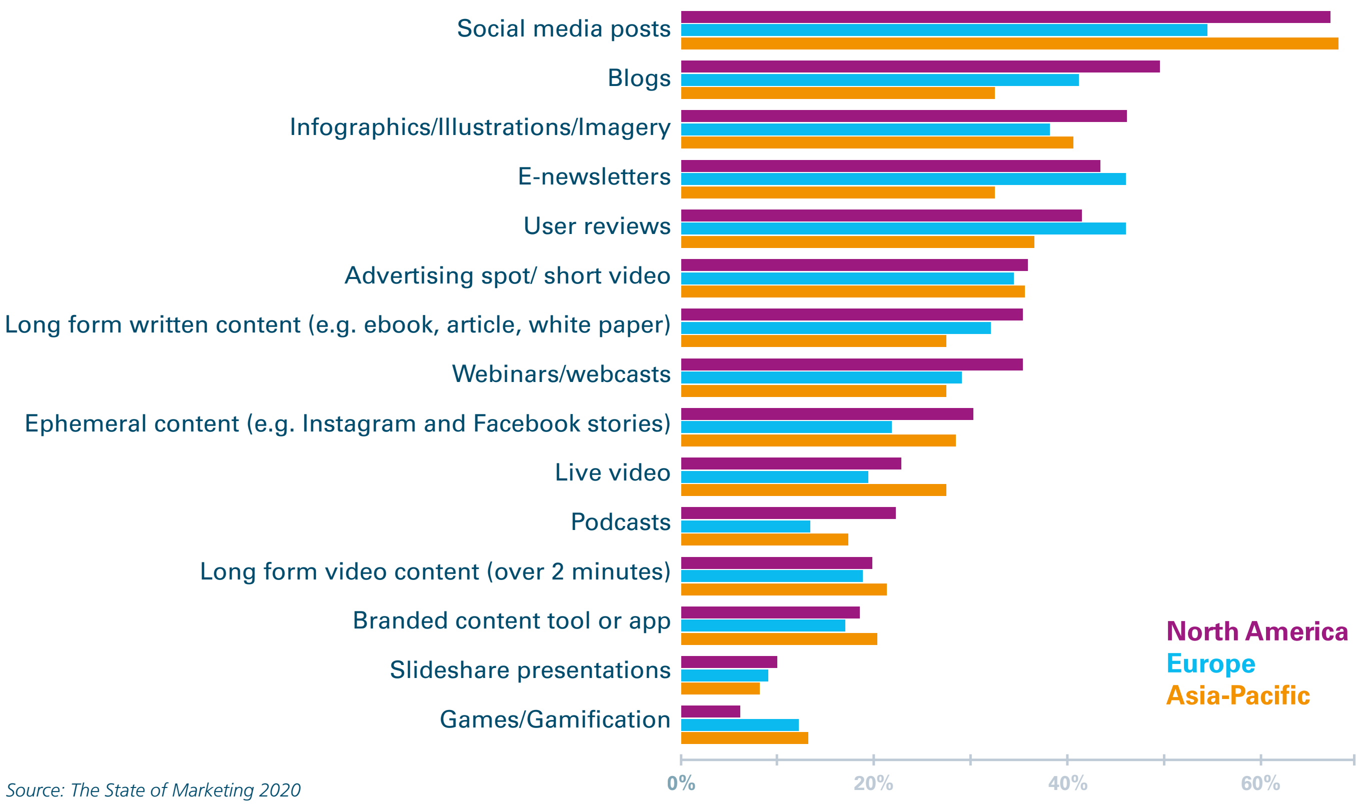
> *Knowing that brand trust is low, we have strategically engaged several content partners that people are more likely to trust. We have partnered with Meredith, Forbes, the New York Times, Buzzfeed and others to develop branded content, including articles and videos. This content runs on their websites and social media channels where their audiences are more receptive to our brand and our messages. People are more likely to engage with us through a publisher they already trust and engage with on a daily basis.*

Katie Berry, Social media Strategy Manager, US Bank

Asia-Pacific trends in the opposite direction, with it rating lowest among the regions for these aforementioned types of content marketing (with the exception of podcasts) and instead marketers there rate social media (67.7%), live video (27.3%), and gamification (13.1%) more highly than in the other regions. This is reflective of the media diet and social network structure across the region, with social apps often the most effective way to reach large audiences consistently and the need to have high-impact, highly-shareable content, which pushes marketers towards video content.

Europe was more traditional and markedly less focused on social, with it coming bottom for interest in social media posting (54.2%) and top for e-newsletters (45.8%) and user reviews (45.8%). European consumers better data protection rates and higher concerns about privacy and legitimacy are likely playing a role in this trend, as is the somewhat lower usage rates for several social platforms. For example, Facebook only has an estimated reach of 38% of the adult population of Germany (Hootsuite, 2019).

Figure 2: Content Marketing Formats Considered Critical by Region of Respondents



Source: The State of Marketing 2020

Looking at content marketing focus depending on the type of organization there are major fluctuations as befits the target audience and type of lead marketers are looking for. B2B marketers are looking at more in-depth and lengthy content pieces, whereas B2C and agency firms are more interested in brand building and reputation management through shorter-form content.

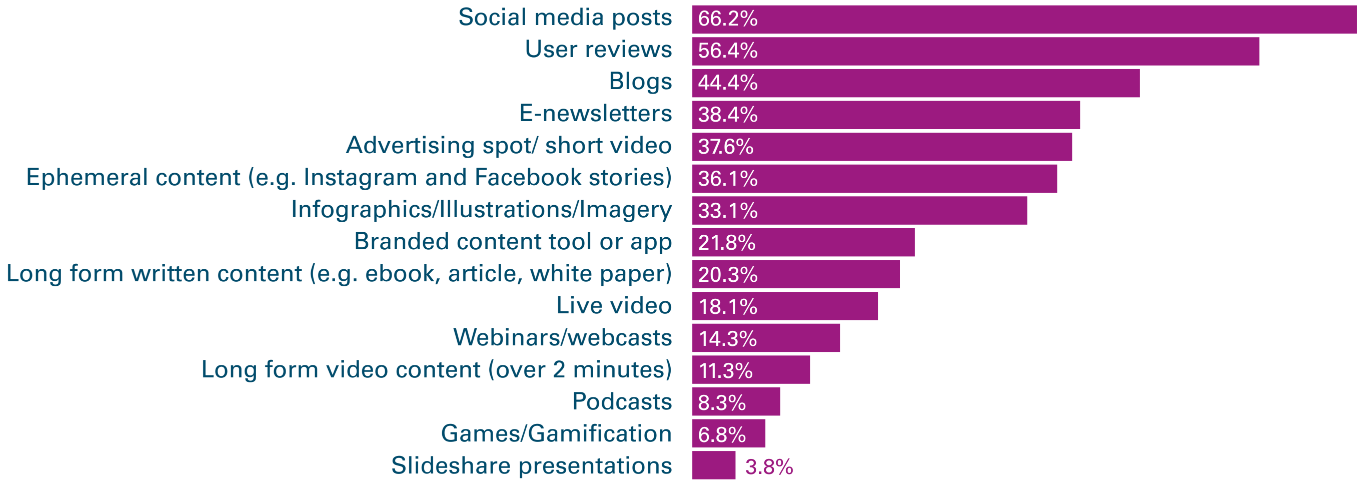
> *Our marketing campaigns feature real-life customers — the unsung heroes of the economy — and focus on having them tell their story. Our brand story is just part of the entrepreneurs' and the heroes' stories, which makes it easier for customers to relate to us. This brings an authenticity that makes the customer feel like the brand is talking with them, not at them. Creating this two-way dialogue cultivates an authentic brand-customer relationship and engenders greater trust.*
>
> **Erica Chan, Head of Brand and Marketing, Alibaba.com**

B2B brands are noticeably more interested in deploying the following content types:

- Infographics, illustrations and imagery – 53.5% versus 33.1% for B2C brands and 44.3% for agencies
- Long-form written content - 50.7% versus 20.3% for B2C brands and 22.1% for agencies
- Webinars - 49.3% versus 14.3% for B2C brands and 30.5% for agencies
- Podcasts – 23.9% versus 8.3% for B2C brands
- Long form videos – 23.5% versus for 11.3% B2C brands
- Slideshare presentations – 15.5% versus 3.8% for B2C brands and 9.9% for agencies.

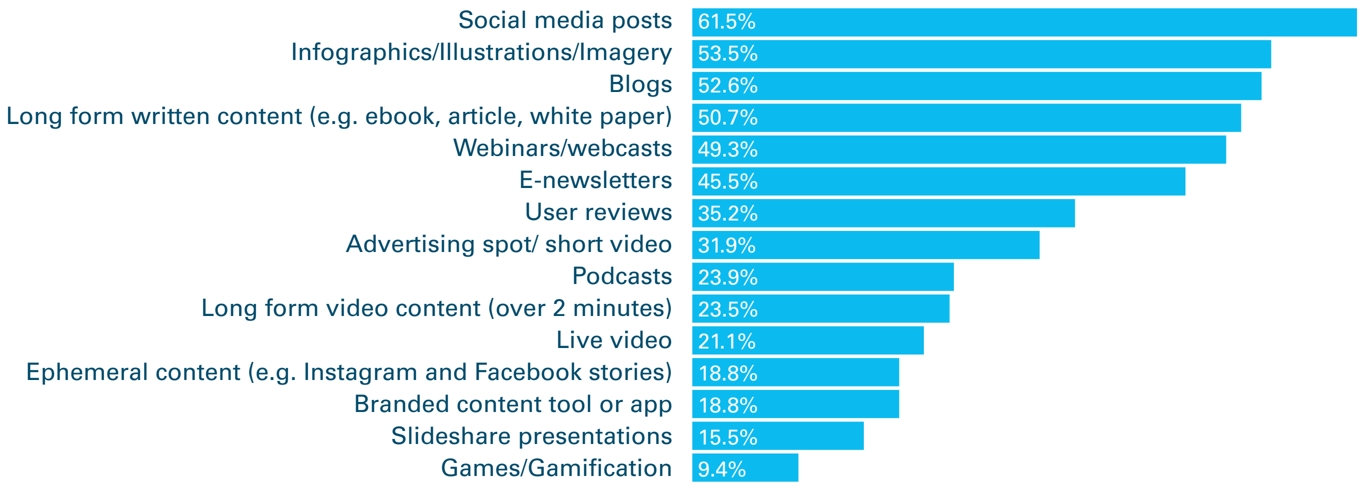
B2C and agency marketers on the other hand were more likely to find user reviews and ephemeral content critical to their content marketing efforts, with 56.4% of B2C and 45% of agencies saying the former are important against 35.2% of B2B marketers, and 36.1% of B2C brands and 34.4% of agency marketers noting the latter as important compared to 18.8% of B2B organizations. This divergence is driven by where the different audiences congregate but also reflects how marketers are tailoring their content to fit their target audiences. The complex stories B2B marketers need to tell and how important they are for building authority both in the minds of their customers and on search engines mean that they need longer, more in-depth content pieces, often led by research and data. Consumer-facing stories on the other hand have to be emotive and engage rapidly to work effectively before consumers' attention is pulled elsewhere, which is helping to drive ephemeral content.

Figure 3: Content Marketing Formats Considered Critical for B2C Brands



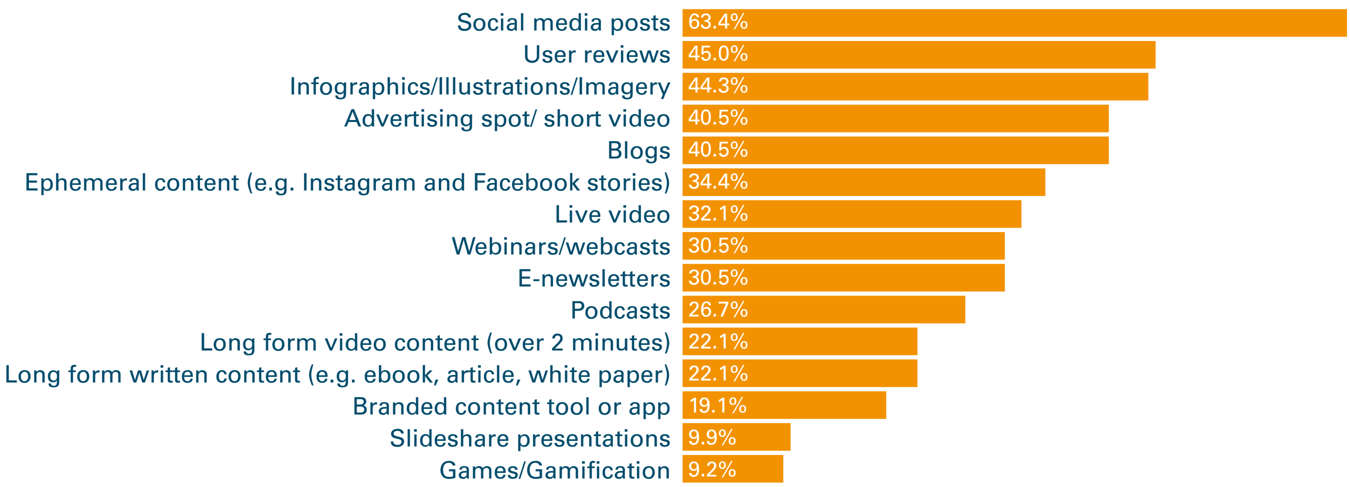
Source: The State of Marketing 2020

Figure 4: Content Marketing Formats Considered Critical for B2B Brands



Source: The State of Marketing 2020

Figure 5: Content Marketing Formats Considered Critical for Agencies



Source: The State of Marketing 2020

Table 1: Content Marketing Formats Considered Critical by Organization

	B2C	B2B	Agency
Social media posts	66.2%	61.5%	63.4%
User reviews	56.4%	35.2%	45.0%
Blogs	44.4%	52.6%	40.5%
E-newsletters	38.4%	45.5%	30.5%
Advertising spot/ short video	37.6%	31.9%	40.5%
Ephemeral content (e.g. Instagram and Facebook stories)	36.1%	18.8%	34.4%
Infographics/Illustrations/Imagery	33.1%	53.5%	44.3%
Branded content tool or app	21.8%	18.8%	19.1%
Long form written content (e.g. eBook, article, white paper)	20.3%	50.7%	22.1%
Live video	18.1%	21.1%	32.1%
Webinars/webcasts	14.3%	49.3%	30.5%
Long form video content (over 2 minutes)	11.3%	23.5%	22.1%
Podcasts	8.3%	23.9%	26.7%
Games/Gamification	6.8%	9.4%	9.2%
Slideshare presentations	3.8%	15.5%	9.9%

Source: The State of Marketing 2020

No matter what the sector, however, content marketing is going to continue to be in the ascendancy in 2020. Consumers are increasingly going to focus on the brands that they feel genuinely speak to them and their values and this means that B2C marketers need to engage them on social with targeted content that is crafted around a compelling message that speaks directly to them. Similarly, B2B marketers will find content only more important going forward with data protection regulations now in place making it more important than ever to generate organic leads and Google's 2019 BERT update to search making it even more important to focus on quality that leads to authority over quantity or stuffing articles with keywords. What is exciting is that there is growth in a variety of formats, particularly video, and that the means to reach audiences on a personal level are growing, with more ability to target marketing through messenger apps and a greater range to deliver engaging narratives through a wider and more developed number of storytelling services on social platforms.

In a time when it is so easy for customers to try brands and to switch brands – and in an age where customers are inundated with 'marketing noise' – brands who can cut through that 'noise' with authentic marketing, will be the ones that win.

Kerry-Ann Stimpson, Chief Marketing Officer, JMMB Group Limited

1.2. Social Media Platform Performance

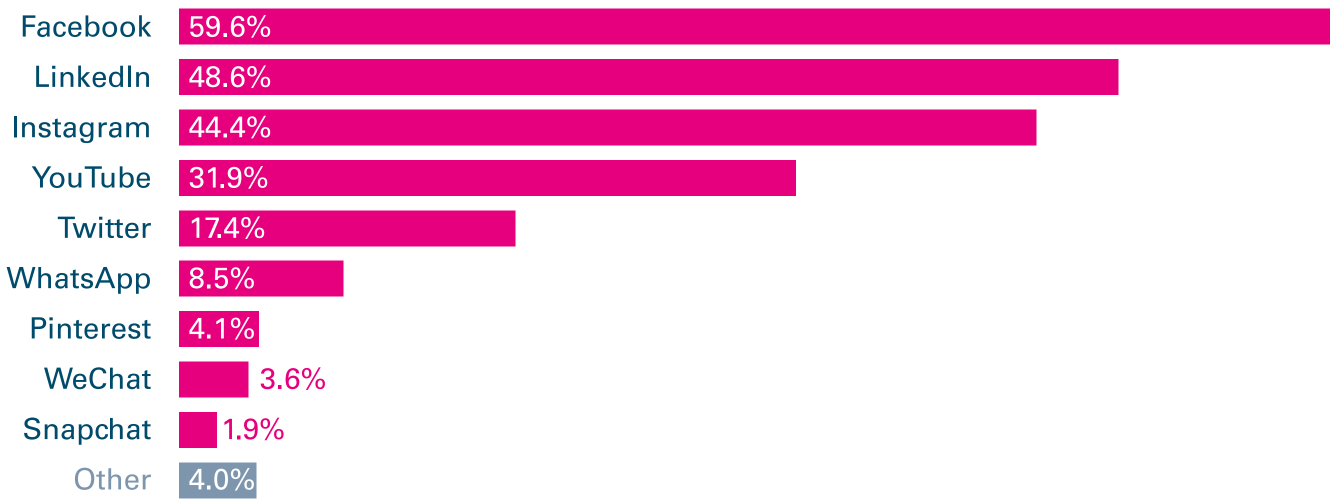
With ad spend shifting to digital and social playing such a large part of this, it is a golden time to be one of the major social media players. Our results show that just a handful of companies in the social media space are seen as effective and are consequently hoovering up marketing dollars.

Among them, Facebook continues to be the behemoth at the center of social, with its different platforms creating a strong, interconnected and supporting system that generates high ROI for marketers. Just under 60% of marketers who responded to our survey said that Facebook generates significant ROI for them. Adding to this, 44.4% said Instagram was one of their top performing channels and 8.5% said the same for WhatsApp. This represents a continuing dominance for Facebook and the acquisitions it has made throughout the years. Not only does the core Facebook app continue to be the most effective social media marketing platform but its other networks mean it has insurance against some of the drop off that has been seen in the core app. Research from Hootsuite, We Are Social and Locowise found that across a variety of benchmarks that Facebook itself was seeing declines in reach and engagement in Q3 2019 and that its advertising reach rose just 0.4% in the time period. eMarketer also found that the core Facebook service is losing users in the 12 to 24 age group. Instagram on the other hand saw advertising reach increase 2.9% in Q3 2019 and index well with younger demographics in developed countries, who have been the most likely to be dropping off the main Facebook app (Hootsuite, 2019; eMarketer, 2019). It therefore seems that the Facebook ecosystem is going to keep its crown for some time to come, especially as it continues to cannibalize the parts of its rivals' businesses that are succeeding.

> *With the elections coming up, Twitter and Facebook have become more toxic. We are planning to grow our presence more on Instagram with interactive Instagram Stories and on Pinterest, where we see a highly engaged audience looking for financial education and planning advice. On these platforms, there is not as much as hard news and politics which leads to a more positive social media environment for our brand.*

Katie Berry, Social media Strategy Manager, US Bank

Figure 6: Which Social Media Platforms Generate the Most Return on Investment?

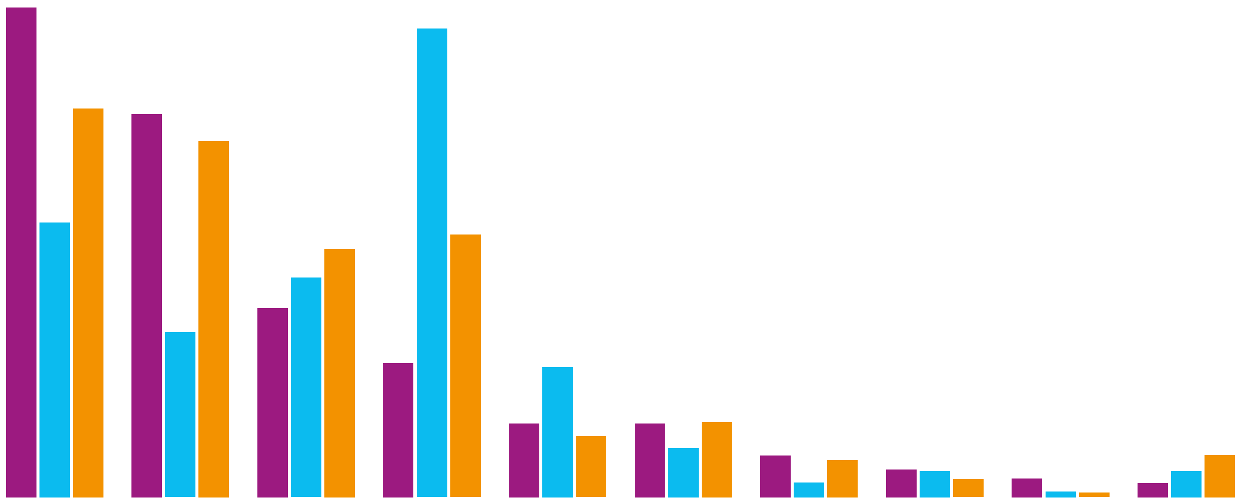


Source: The State of Marketing 2020

Beyond Facebook, Microsoft's LinkedIn platform is huge for business marketers and Google's YouTube rounds out the giants as a strong performer. A massive three quarters of B2B marketers said that they find LinkedIn to be generating strong ROI, with Facebook the next most important, chosen by 42.8% of this segment. The prominence of LinkedIn for B2B marketers is further backed up by research from Chief Marketer, which found 74% chose it as one of their most effective channel, closely mirroring our results.

Twitter remains a laggard in our overall results, with just 17.4% selecting the network as generating substantial return on investment, and Pinterest (4.1%), WeChat (3.6%), and Snapchat (1.9%) are also not thought of highly for generating ROI by marketers. It appears that there is a substantial mountain to climb for the challengers to Facebook's throne currently, and even for those social brands that are now well-established there continues to be issues in creating a strong environment that marketers can work within to generate awareness, clicks and leads.

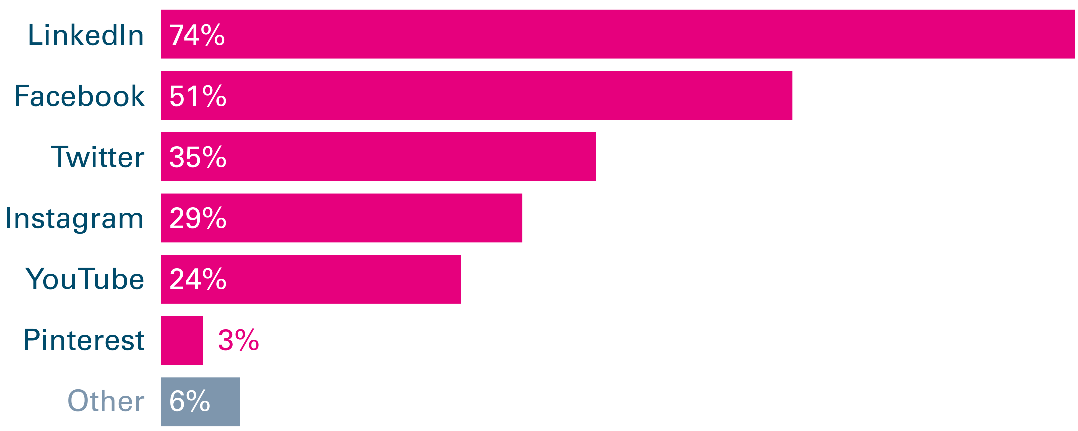
Figure 7: Social Media Platform Return on Investment by Organization Type



	Facebook	Instagram	YouTube	LinkedIn	Twitter	WhatsApp	Pinterest	WeChat	Snapchat	Other
B2C	76.3	59.7	29.5	20.9	11.5	11.5	6.5	4.3	2.9	2.2
B2B	42.8	25.7	34.2	73	20.3	7.7	2.3	4.1	0.9	4.1
Agency	60.6	55.5	38.7	40.9	9.5	11.7	5.8	2.8	0.7	6.6

Source: The State of Marketing 2020

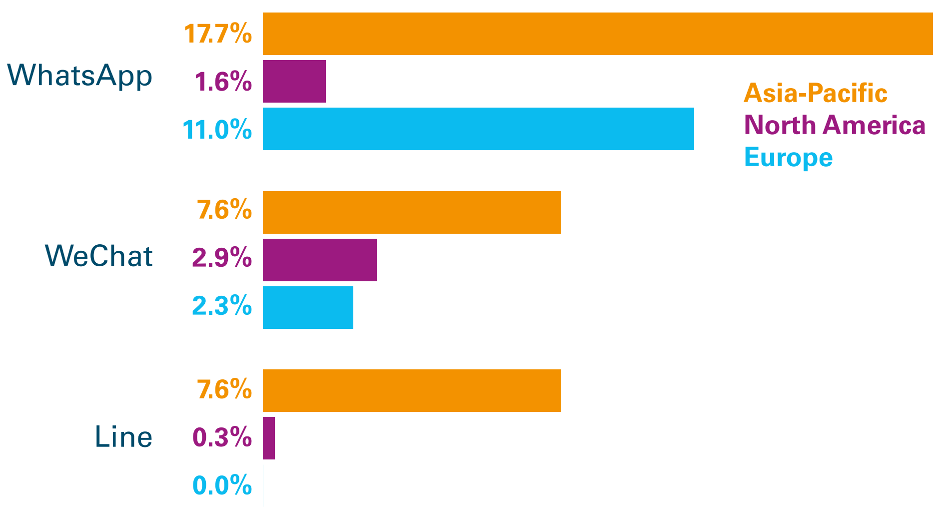
Figure 8: What Are the Most Effective Social Channels for Your Brand (B2B Brands)



Source: Chief Marketer, 2019

Looking at geographic trends, one key emerging trend that marketers should be aware of is the increasing importance of messaging platforms in the Asia-Pacific region. There was a noticeable bounce for several instant messaging platforms when we asked about effectiveness for marketers from that region. WhatsApp, WeChat and Line all indexed higher than in Europe or North America, with 17.1% in Asia-Pacific saying WhatsApp generated strong ROI, compared to 11% in Europe and just 1.6% in North America. Similarly, 7.6% of Asia-Pacific-based respondents said that WeChat was a key platform, compared to less than three percent in Europe and North America and the same percentage in Asia-Pacific said the same for Line, compared to negligible or no respondents from the other two regions. Although WeChat and Line are heavily focused on a handful of core markets in the region and are virtually non-present in other parts of the world, the inclusion of WhatsApp into this and the trend across all three shows that these platforms are increasingly key in speaking directly to consumers in the region. The growing ability to identify and utilize micro-influencers also plays into this trend and empowers these platforms further as dissemination tools and cements the influence of these channels as a key trend to keep an eye on going forward.

Figure 9: Messaging Platforms More Effective for Marketers in Asia-Pacific



Source: The State of Marketing 2020

METHODOLOGY

Incite Group conducted a survey of self-identified marketing professionals between 7th May 2019 to 30th May 2019. These respondents were taken from both Incite's internal database of marketers but select external partners were also used. A total of 954 respondents replied to our survey and 565 completed the survey to end. The following is a breakdown of how respondents identified themselves.

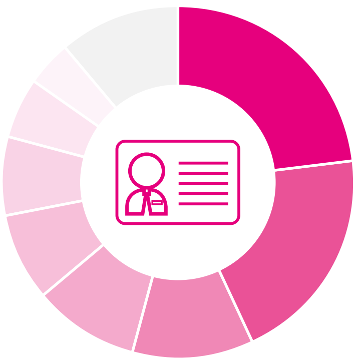
What Type of Company Do You Work for?

Agency - 18.7%
B2C Brand - 20.2%
B2B Brand - 29.5%
Martech Vendor/Technology Partner - 6.5%
Not For Profit - 6.2%
Press/Media - 1.8%
Other - 17.2%

Where Are You Personally Based?

North America - 50.7%
Europe - 23.6%
Asia-Pacific - 15.4%
Rest of the World - 10.3%

Which of the Following Best Describes Your Role's Predominant Focus?



Senior Leadership - Overarching Strategy - 23.2%
Brand Marketing - 20.0%
Product Marketing - 11.2%
Content Creation - 9.6%
Performance Marketing - 8.1%
Customer Experience - 7.3%
Social Media Strategy - 5.4%
Customer Insights & Analytics - 4.1%
Other - 11.1%

Approximately How Big is the Company You Work For?

Less than 25 Employees - 29.6%
25-49 Employees - 10.1%
50-199 Employees - 17.1%
200-999 Employees - 17.9%
1,000-9,999 Employees - 14.8%
10,000-49,999 Employees - 5.4%
50,000-100,000 Employees - 2.0%
Over 100,000 Employees - 3.3%

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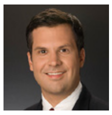

Visa
Chris Curtin
Chief Brand & Innovation Marketing Officer

Estee Lauder
Doug Jensen
SVP, CRM, Corporate Marketing Analytics and Innovation Insights

BUSINESS CRITICAL DISCUSSIONS INCLUDE:

Futureproof Your Brand with Purpose
Delivering a quality product is no longer enough to engage your customers. Consumers now expect brands to have a purpose and give back to humanity. It's time to share your brand purpose.

From Sell, Sell, Sell to Valuable Marketing
Customers want to engage with brands that offer them experiences beyond making a purchase. Deliver personalized marketing that is helpful and appreciated, rather than unwanted digital noise.

The Future of Digital Marketing & Personalization
Embed insights from historical and real-time data, alongside these AI capabilities, to fully understand your customers and make an impact at every touchpoint.

Harness Influencers & Create Lasting Partnerships
Amplify your reach! Collaborate with the right influencers, build long lasting partnerships, create quality content, and coach them to do your brand justice.

Click here to see the full agenda!

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Check out the full speaker line-up

> ***Brilliant brands, brilliant missions, and brilliant minds*** *all in one place to share, listen, and learn from – it's a collaborative, crowdsourced economy*

Alison Herzog, Director, Global Social Business & Digital Strategy **Dell**

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