The Smart Social

Report: Volume Two

Spredfast

Think smarter, think bigger, think social.

As the summer months draw to an end, we don't see any signs of a slowdown in the social media industry. In fact, the reality is quite the opposite – as more established networks continue to innovate, new avenues for connection emerge alongside them, allowing brands to continually inspire us with groundbreaking social executions. As the industry becomes increasingly complex, we see more opportunity than ever before. That's why we've spent our summer continuing to find insights in the social world in places you'd expect us to look, as well as in a few new areas that might catch you by surprise.

With this quarter's Smart Social Report, we'll follow up with our 50 major brands to measure their growth in social sophistication. We'll then dive deep into topics pertinent right now: we'll decipher the actual (as opposed to rumored) social maturity of European brands, as well as how brands can establish a voice on Reddit, take advantage of messaging apps, and determine the half-life of their social content to better serve their bottom line.

At Spredfast, we are pushing the industry forward every day. We know that taking a Smart Social approach means that we'll always need to work to make ourselves, our customers and partners, and the industry smarter. We welcome the challenge.

Jim Rudden | CMO, Spredfast

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State of Social

Introduction

As 2015 unfolds, it's clear that brands, by now, are truly smart about social: They're exploring new channels, trying new strategies, and tweaking campaigns in existing spaces. As brands mix these new tactics with go-to methodologies from the past, they are figuring out what works...and what needs work. The State of Social report is our quarterly check-in with 50 of the top brands in the world and their sophistication across the major social properties. Last quarter, Sports, Retail, and Media led the pack. Let's take a look at who pushed ahead in Q2.

Methodology

We looked at 50 leading brands in ten different verticals to gauge their maturity across eight of the leading social networks. Brands were measured at the end of June 2015, and will continue to be measured on a quarterly basis to chart growth over time.

To evaluate social sophistication, we used a combination of the following metrics, depending on which metrics are available publicly for individual networks:

- **Audience size:** followers, likes, etc.
- **Responsiveness:** time to respond to inbound communication
- **Post frequency**
- **Use of rich media:** images, GIFs, video
- **Audience engagement:** comments, likes, shares, favorites on posted comments

50
Leading
Brands

10
Different
Verticals

8
Social
Networks

Key Takeaways

Auto Overtook Retail In the Top Three Verticals

An increase in social maturity for automotive brands, coupled with a decrease among several retail brands, landed auto in the top three performing industries for the first time in our study. The auto brands in our study saw the biggest bumps on Twitter, Tumblr, and Instagram.

Financial Services Saw Big Gains on Visual Networks

Insurance and financial firms saw the biggest advance in social maturity vs. the Smart Social Report Volume One. These companies did especially well increasing their presence on Instagram and Pinterest.

## Brands were moving ahead in Q2 with great new social campaigns.

Social Maturity is Growing Across All Verticals

Of the 50 brands in our study, 32 of them saw an increased score in social maturity in Q2 when compared to Q1. The largest gains across the board were seen on Tumblr, where 7 new brands jumped in to build out a presence in the past quarter.

Top Moving Social Brands

Across all 50 of the brands we researched, a few stood out for growth in different areas of social.

Here are some highlights:
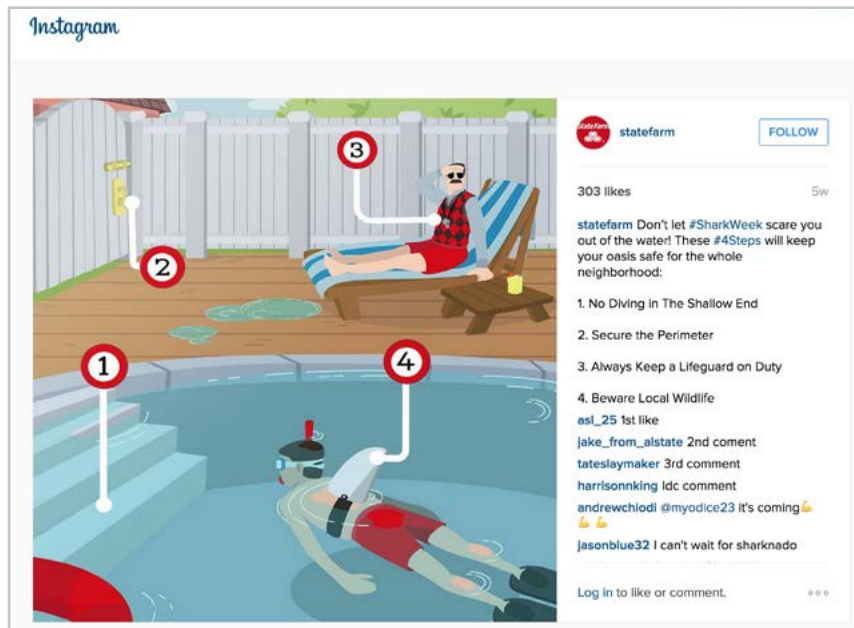
State Farm: Made big strides across many different social channels, most notably with a more sophisticated Instagram strategy that led to an average of more than 30% more likes per post in Q2.
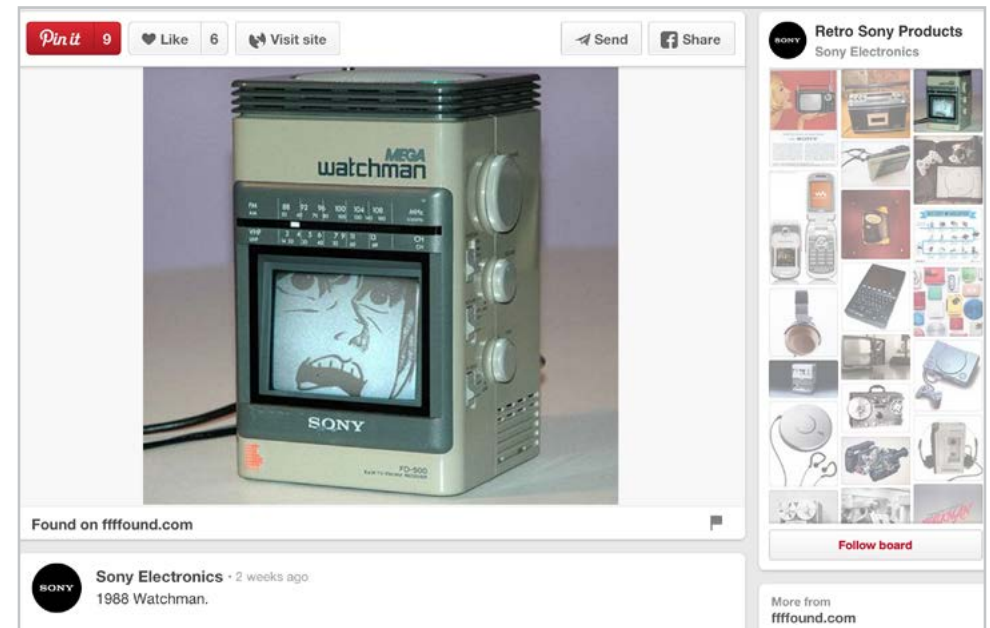
Sony: Had one of the highest growth rates in the study, including a large increase in notes per post on Tumblr and a much more active Pinterest presence.

Nescafé: Added more video content to Facebook and increased post frequency on Instagram, resulting in higher engagement and a higher standing on our list.

Netflix: The media giant saw gains across a variety of social networks, including increased scores on multiple networks in just one quarter. Advances across Snapchat, Pinterest, Tumblr, and Twitter made the brand a social top performer.

Top Verticals for Social Maturity

Based on data from Q2 2015, the media, sports, and automotive verticals are leading in terms of social sophistication across channels. A deeper dive into the data will yield actionable lessons from the winning industries.
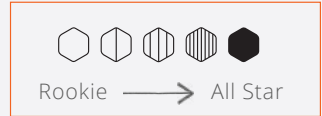
1 Media and entertainment brands showed strong social performance across a few channels, and some room for growth on others:

Media	Facebook	YouTube	Twitter	Tumblr	Pinterest	Instagram	Google+	Snapchat	Trend
BBC	◧	◉	◧	●	○	◧	●	◧	∧
ESPN	◧	◧	◧	◑	◧	●	◑	●	—
Fox News	◑	◧	◧			◧	◧		∨
MTV	●	◧	◧	●	◧	●	◧	◧	∧
Netflix	◧	●	●	●	◧	◧	●	◧	∧

- Every media company we researched showed an increase in their Twitter maturity score vs. Q1 2015.

- MTV, the BBC, and Netflix all saw overall gains in the media group, advancing their social strategy across multiple channels.

- Of all media brands on Pinterest, Netflix saw the most growth. The brand increased their volume of pins and in turn, saw higher engagement.

Ratings Key:

Rookie ——→ All Star

2 Sports leagues, teams, and networks were some of the earliest adopters on many social channels, and continue to push the envelope in terms of strategy and social maturity. While a few sports brands slipped in the rankings, this vertical still commands one of the top three spots in our study.

Sports	Facebook	YouTube	Twitter	Tumblr	Pinterest	Instagram	Google+	Snapchat	
English Premier	◫		◫			◫			⌄
MLB	◫	●	●	◫	◫	●	◫	◫	⌃
NBA	◫	●	●	●	◫	●	◫	◫	⌃
NFL	◫	●	◫	◫	◫	◫	●		⌄
NHL	◐	●	◫	◫	◫	●	◫	◫	⌃

- The MLB saw the biggest gains from Q1, buoyed by a new Snapchat presence and bumps on Instagram, Tumblr, YouTube, and Facebook.

- Sports brands created more content in Q2, earning them 5 of the top 10 spots for volume of content on Twitter.

- Sports brands on Instagram had some of the highest averages for comments and likes on posts.

Top Verticals for Social Maturity

Ratings Key:

Rookie ——→ All Star

3
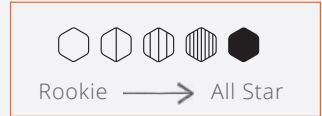
In Q2 we welcomed a new vertical into the top 3: automotive. The industry had some impressive strategies and tactics. Here are the highlights.

Automotive

	Facebook	YouTube	Twitter	Tumblr	Pinterest	Instagram	Google+	Snapchat	
Audi			●	●		●			∧
Ford				●			●		∧
Hyundai				●					∧
Mercedes–Benz	●					●	●		—
Volkswagen			●	●					∧

- Volkswagen, Hyundai, Audi, and Ford all saw sizable increases on our social scale in Q2.

- Auto became the most sophisticated vertical on Tumblr, outweighing the other 9 industries, led by strong efforts from Ford and Audi.

- Mercedes-Benz, already one of our top brands from Q1, saw a large jump in its Facebook score—making it one of the four brands across all industries to have an "All-Star" standing on Facebook.

Ratings Key: Rookie → All Star

B2B

	Facebook	YouTube	Twitter	Tumblr	Pinterest	Instagram	Google+	Snapchat	Trend
Accenture	●	●	●			●	●		▲
GE	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	▲
IBM	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		▲
Siemens	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	▲
VMWare	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		—

CPG

	Facebook	YouTube	Twitter	Tumblr	Pinterest	Instagram	Google+	Snapchat	Trend
Cadbury	●	●	●		●	●	●		▲
Crest	●	●	●		●	●			▲
Dove	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	▼
Nescafe	●	●	●		●	●			▲
Pepsi	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	▲

Electronics/Tech

	Facebook	YouTube	Twitter	Tumblr	Pinterest	Instagram	Google+	Snapchat	Trend
Apple	●	●	●	●	●	●			▲
Electronic Arts	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	▼
Microsoft	●	●	●	●	●	●			▲
Samsung	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	▲
Sony	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		▲

Finserv/Insurance

	Facebook	YouTube	Twitter	Tumblr	Pinterest	Instagram	Google+	Snapchat	Trend
Barclays	●	●	●		●				▲
Bank of America	●	●	●		●	●	●		▼
Citibank	●	●	●			●	●		▲
Progressive	●	●	●	●		●	●		▼
State Farm	●	●	●			●	●		▲

Retail

	Facebook	YouTube	Twitter	Tumblr	Pinterest	Instagram	Google+	Snapchat	Trend
Coach	◨	◨	◧		◧	◨	◧	◨	—
Gap	◧	◐	◧	⬢	◐	◨		◨	—
Target	⬢	◨	◧	◧	⬢	◨	◧	◨	▲
Tesco	◨	◧	⬡		◨	◐	◧		▼
Victoria's Secret	◨	◨	◨	⬢	⬢	⬢	◨	◨	▼

Telecom

	Facebook	YouTube	Twitter	Tumblr	Pinterest	Instagram	Google+	Snapchat	Trend
AT&T	◨	◧	◧	◨	◧	◐	◨	◐	▲
BT	⬡	◐	◨		⬡	⬡	◧		—
Orange	⬡	⬡	◧		◧	◨	◧		▲
T-Mobile	◨	◨	◨	◐		◨	◨	◐	▲
Verizon	◨	◨	⬡	⬢	◨	◐	◧		▼

Travel/Hospitality

	Facebook	YouTube	Twitter	Tumblr	Pinterest	Instagram	Google+	Snapchat	Trend
American Airlines	◧	◨	⬡		◧	◨	◨		▲
British Airways	◧	◨	◨	◧	◧	◨	◧		▲
Delta Airlines	◐	◨	◐	◧	⬡	◨	◧		▲
Hilton	◧	◨	◧		◧	◨	◨	◐	▲
Hyatt	◧	◐	◧	◐		◨	◧		▼

Ratings Key:

Rookie ⟶ All Star
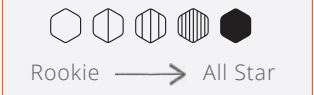
State of Social Takeaways

1 Victoria's Secret had the highest engagement rate per follower on Google+, averaging over 5,000 shares and +1s per post.

2 Five of the brands in our study – BBC, Coach, MLB, Netflix, and NHL – began using Snapchat in Q2.

3 The NBA earned an "All-Star" spot on Twitter for increased engagement and a rise in the use of rich media.

4 Of the many brands who ramped up their Pinterest presence this quarter, Crest and Cadbury were two of the leaders.

5 Mercedes-Benz saw the highest Facebook video engagement rate in Q2; over 10% of viewers liked, shared, or commented on its videos, on average.

6 Citi had the highest rate of likes per follower and comments per follower on Instagram, with interaction rates of .29% and 7.51% respectively.

7 Who commands the largest Twitter following? Sports teams – including ESPN, the NBA, and the NFL – take three of the top four spots for largest number of followers (MTV snagged the last spot).

State of Social

This research shows the current state of social across some of the biggest brands and identifies patterns behind their social performance. Stay tuned for next quarter - we're excited to report back on how different brands and industries have developed on social.

Content & Community:
Social Half-Life

Introduction

Networks like Twitter and Instagram operate as a stream. The flow of content is swift, with more content being added as you scroll, and occasionally this can be overwhelming. A million updates from one user is annoying but going silent means you're out of sight and therefore out of mind. This made us wonder: exactly how frequently should your brand be posting? Brands can learn from self-testing different posting schedules to find the answer, but risk losing followers along the way.

Using social half-life, you can estimate how often you should post. For instance, if you determine that a Tweet has 15-minute half-life, you should post every 30 minutes to optimize engagement.

Social Half-Life
The amount of time it takes a brand to get half of its average engagement

Social Half-Life

We spent two weeks tracking 100 brands that were active on both Twitter and Instagram. We recorded the engagement of every post in five-minute intervals for twenty-four hours.

Social Media Half-Life

Median **Twitter** Engagement at **30** Minutes

Median **Instagram** Engagement at **57** Minutes

Key
— Instagram
— Twitter

Audience Engagement
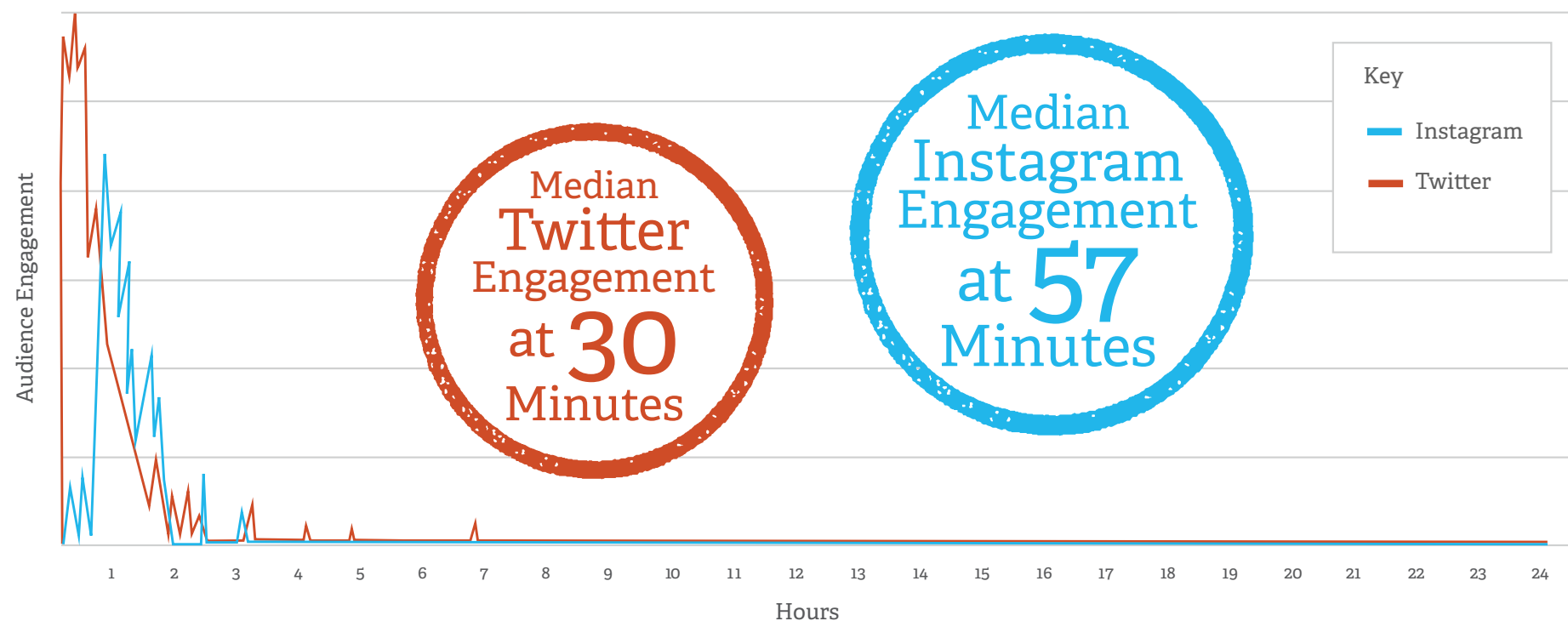
Hours

The majority of content posted on either Twitter or Instagram receives half of its engagement within an hour of publishing, but the dataset had a very long tail with some outliers receiving half of their engagement nearly twenty hours after being originally published. Things, generally, move quickly.

Updates on both platforms are displayed in the same way—reverse chronological order. Yet the speed of engagement for a Tweet is faster than a Post on Instagram. How should the difference in engagement speed impact content planning? We can use Mercedez-Benz as an example.

Mercedes-Benz saw half of their engagement on Twitter arriving within a half hour, but on Instagram it took 90 minutes. Instead of using average engagement as a guide for when to post again, their social half-life is a better and more reliable guide. In this example, Mercedes-Benz should wait about an hour on Twitter or three hours on Instagram to push new messaging or attempt to re-engage with a different part of their audience with the same content.
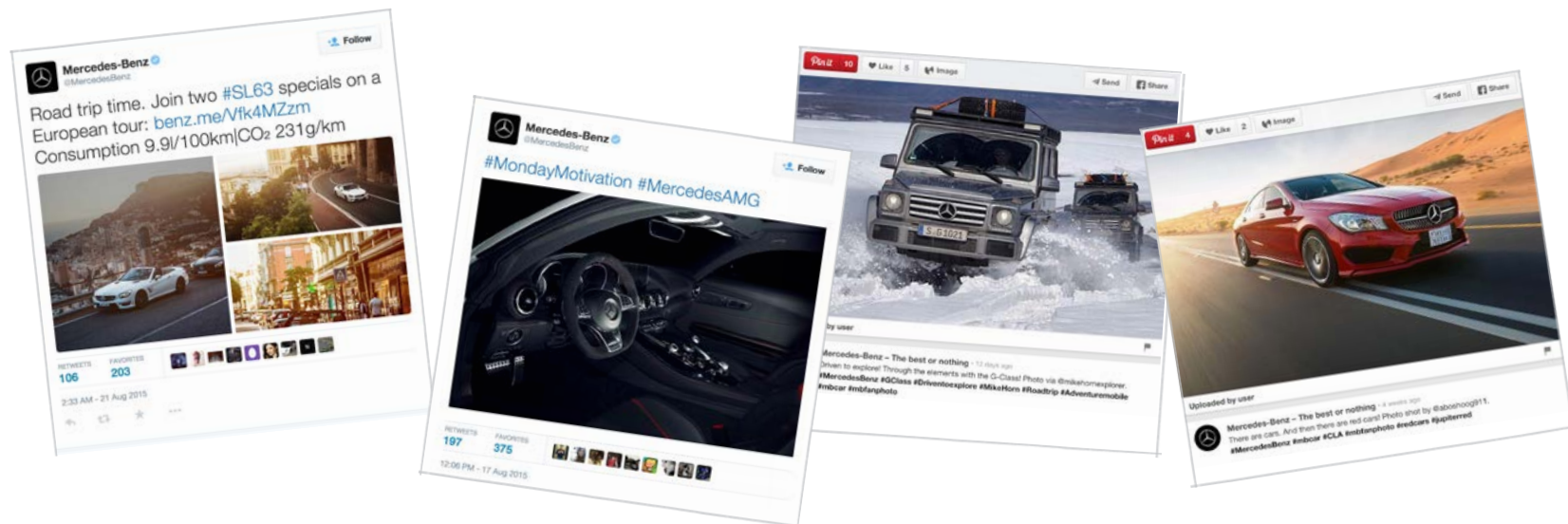
Half-Life by Industry

By breaking the dataset down into verticals we found patterns in engagement speeds. Even within the same industry, engagement speeds varied across social networks. For example, the data shows that print brands have the quickest social half-life on Twitter, which is roughly a third of their half-life on Instagram. Of all the verticals in the study, auto brands had the slowest engagement speed on Instagram: to maximize engagement, they should only post every two hours or so.
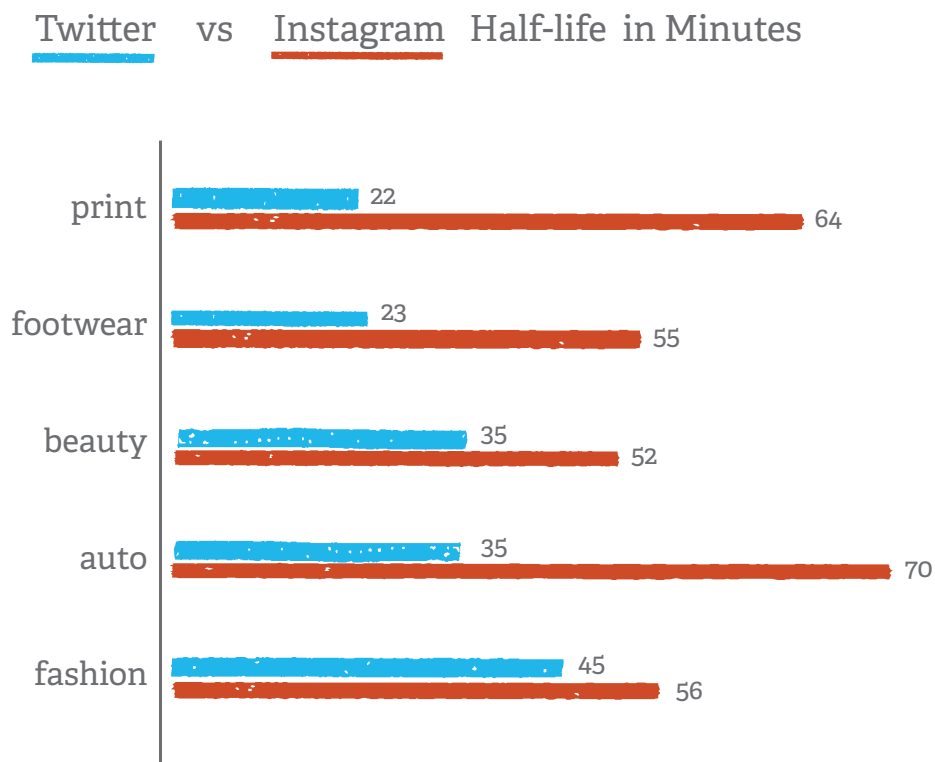
These differences highlight the importance of segmenting data. By doing so a brand can play to their specific strengths and idiosyncrasies that might not be readily apparent when using network-level statistics.

What about paid?

Knowing your brand's social half-life can help you know when it's a good time to put paid media behind content. With a time-sensitive message like driving same-day sales, combining half-life data with paid promotion could make the all the difference in the world for meeting your numbers. If you've reached your half-life and you're still seeing below-average engagement, then it's worth considering paid to bring the results up to normal levels.

Twitter vs Instagram Half-life in Minutes

Industry	Twitter	Instagram
print	22	64
footwear	23	55
beauty	35	52
auto	35	70
fashion	45	56

Content & Community

We've all read those reports that say you should publish every Tuesday at 10:30 a.m., or push each Tweet precisely 4.5 times over the course of a month. But determining your brand's specific social half-life is another tool that lets your content team determine how frequently they should be posting—intelligently, and based on data. Content will be delivered just when it's needed and you'll know how long it will stay fresh and relevant even before you've pressed the publish button.

Branding & Consumers

How Europe Stacks Up
in Social vs. the USA

Introduction

There's a dirty little secret spreading across the United States. It's being whispered at afternoon agency drinks, in board rooms, and maybe within the walls of your own company. It's something we've heard year after year, and many have begun to accept it as fact. But it leaves us wondering:

We wanted to test this theory to see if it held up. We wanted to use data to compare two slices of social from the US and the UK and see if the US is truly that far ahead.

Is the rumor that Europe is 18 months behind the US in social media sophistication actually true?

America vs. Europe
Social Sophistication

Key
- American Wins (blue)
- European Wins (orange)
- Tie (gray)

Americans Brands vs. Europeans Brands	Facebook Likes	Facebook Posts	Twitter Followers	Twitter Tweets	Pinterest Followers	Pinterest Pins	Instagram Followers	Instagram Posts
FOX vs. BBC NEWS	European	American	European	European	European	European	European	European
ShopRite vs. John Lewis	European	American	European	European	European	Tie	European	European
Hasbro vs. LEGO	European	European	European	European	European	European	European	American
Cottonelle vs. Andrex	European	American	American	American	American	American	American	American
Walgreens vs. Boots	American	American	American	American	European	Tie	European	European
Bissell vs. dyson	European	European	American	American	American	American	European	American
DAWN vs. Fairy	American	Tie	American	American	Tie	Tie	Tie	Tie
jetBlue vs. virgin atlantic	American	American	American	American	European	European	American	American
NORDSTROM vs. MARKS & SPENCER	American	American	American	American	American	American	American	American
Bank of America vs. HSBC	American	American	American	American	American	American	Tie	Tie
Kroger vs. TESCO	European	European	American	European	European	European	European	European

We looked at 22 companies arranged into 11 head-to-head vertical matchups including consumer packaged goods, travel and hospitality, retail, media, and financial services. We paired two companies in each match: one based in the US and one in Europe, and chose each based on similar market capitalizations (the financial size of the company) to make for a fair comparison.

We then looked at follower levels and social content creation rates across Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and Instagram to gauge a winner for each matchup. Our findings show that there's no truth to the rumors. When placed side by side, the US and European companies in our study were in a virtual tie for social media sophistication.

Tie
10%

USA
Wins
46%
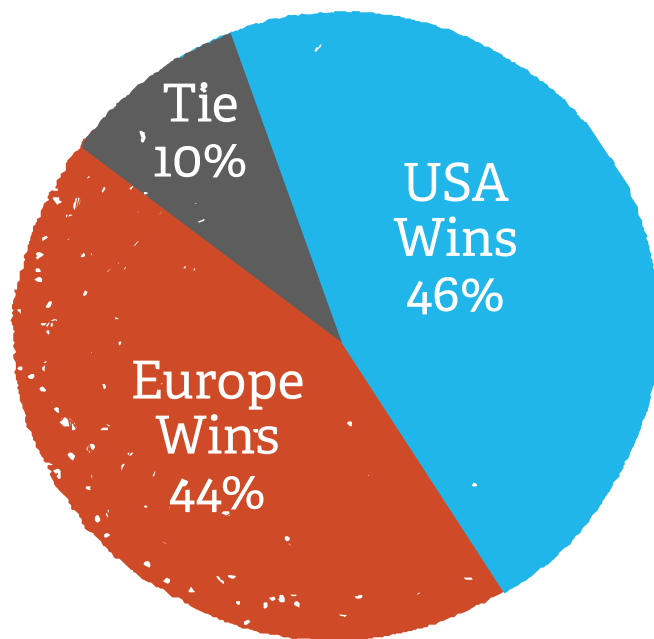
Europe
Wins
44%

Looking at 11 matchups across 8 different categories, the split is almost exactly even.

US-based brands saw only 1 more win over the European companies out of 88 matchups, ending our study in a virtual tie.to be a big focus across all major social networks.

American vs European Winners per Social Channel
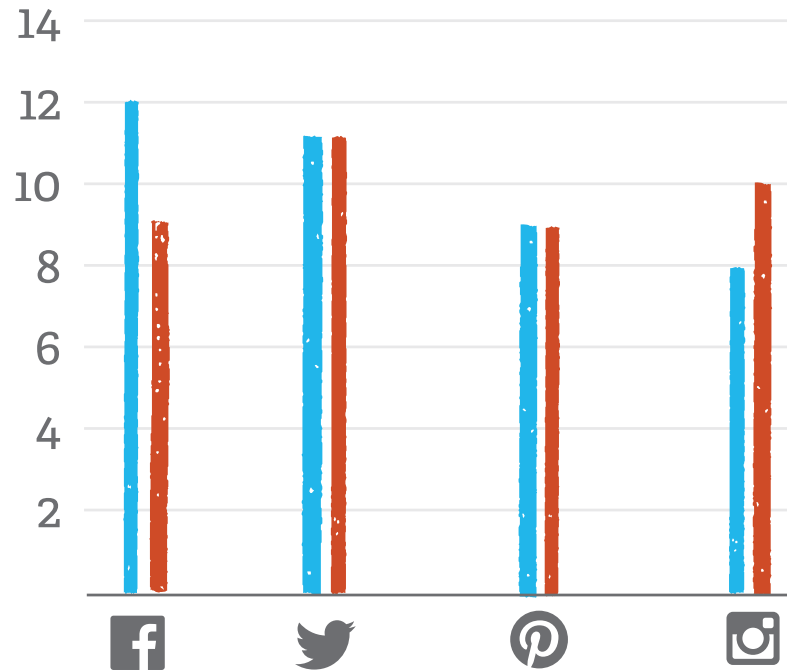
More Alike than Not: Slight Differences Per Channel

If we segment the data by social channel, we can see some minor differences in sophistication patterns, but nothing that stands out. American brands beat out their European counterparts on Facebook, but Europe had roughly the same lead on Instagram.

Strength in Numbers: Europe Has the Follower Advantage

When it comes to building a large follower base across social channels, European companies had bigger followings on social, winning 21% more matchups compared to US brands. Across social networks, the American brands had just over 68M followers, and the European brands had almost 100M.

## Staying Top of Mind: Americans Post More Content

When it comes to brand and posting frequency, American brands won with 37% more wins in our head-to-head matchups vs. European companies.

Branding & Consumers

Apply this same wary lens to your own efforts in social: rely on data, not rumor. American marketers can learn from the EU in terms of building a follower base. Abroad, social marketers can aim for posting more content, as is done in the United States. Regardless, don't let whispers and tribal knowledge skew your thinking when it comes to pushing your social agenda forward. Brands are embracing social media world-wide, and it's rash to dismiss a continent's social media efforts based on rumor alone.

Fan Activation:
What Brands Need to Know About Reddit
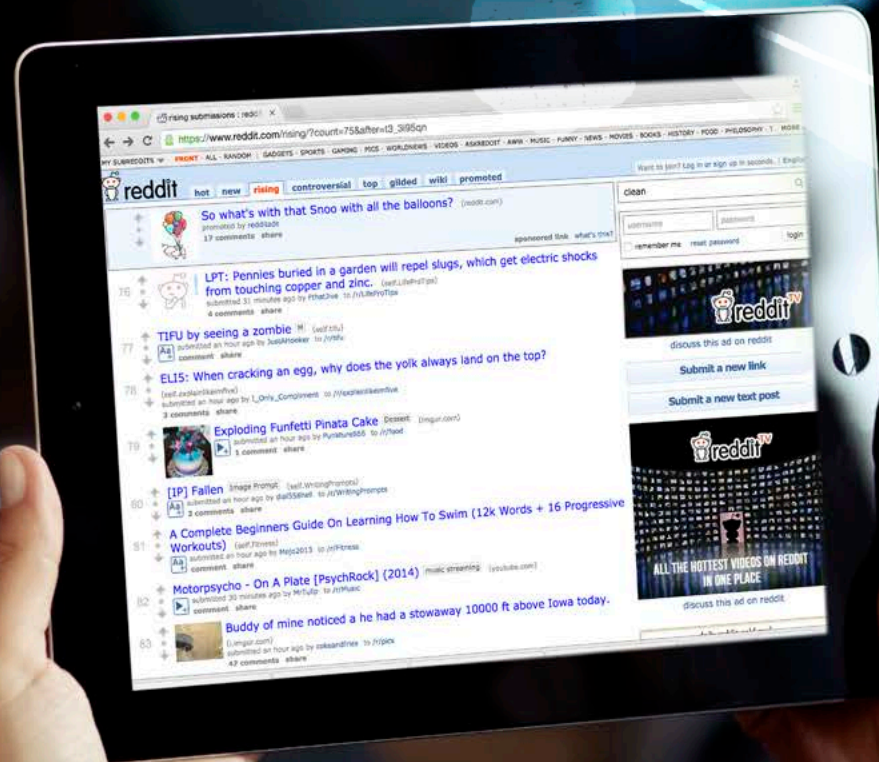
Welcome to the
World of Reddit

Reddit was founded in 2005 with the goal of serving as "the front page of the Internet," where communities could share and vote on content representing a diverse set of sources and themes. It's a growing focus of attention in the daily lives of its users, attracting more than 70 billion pageviews and 55 million posts across over 8,000 active communities in 2014. These communities, called subreddits, allow users with similar interests to focus their conversations around thousands of topics – everything from NHL hockey to books, philosophy, pop culture, and breaking local news.

Unlike many other social networks, brands don't have an official presence within the Reddit community. It's a primarily user-driven community, with limited advertising opportunities. Reddit is a growing focus of attention across the internet—according to alexa.com, it's the tenth most trafficked site in the United States. How can brands make the most of the Reddit opportunity without disrupting the flow of how the community works?

Let's take a look at few different ways that brands are already being talked about on Reddit, and share a few key recommendations for brands looking to participate.

Automotive on Reddit:
Brand loyalists and advice seekers

There is an active community of Reddit users talking about various, specialized auto topics. These communities include subreddits to discuss specific auto brands and models, swap tips on general car maintenance, and discuss new developments in the auto world.

Let's take a look at how these communities work through the lens of a major auto brand: The Ford Motor Company

Ford Related Subbreddits
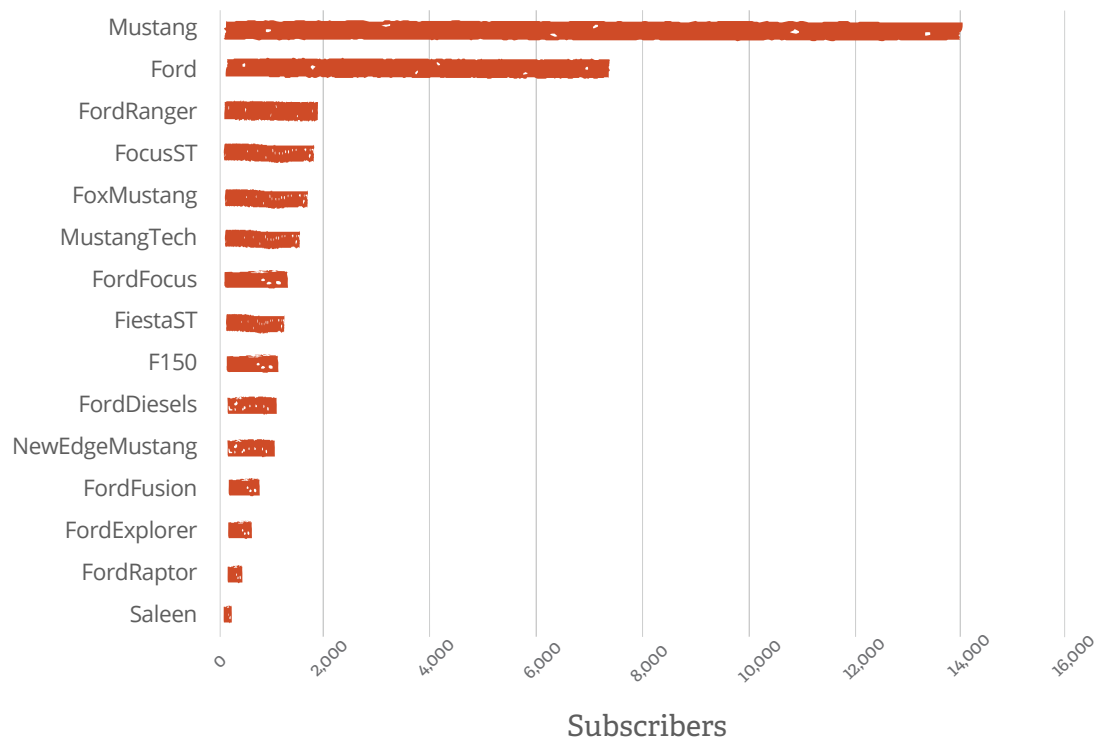
Subscribers

While there are rich collections of subreddits for major auto brands (like Nissan, Mazda, Chevy, and BMW), Ford has one of the largest collections of communities across their different brands and models. If we look at the reported subscribers for each subreddit, we can see that the "Mustang" and "Ford" boards are the most popular, but the conversations don't stop there.

The Ford Subreddit:

7,075	readers
2,564	monthly posts
11,952	comments on posts
14,516	total posts/comments
2.05	monthly participation/reader

The power of Reddit is not just in numbers; its tightly-knit communities are also highly engaged. Let's look at the Ford subreddit as an example.

The Ford subreddit has an average of 2+ posts/comments per month per subscriber, which is impressive by any standard. And the "Ford" subreddit doesn't even drive the best content creation rate of the group. The "F150" subreddit enjoys a participation rate of 8.28 posts or comments per reader, per month.

What we're seeing on Reddit is not just a group of followers or listeners, but instead a community of participation.

In addition to the brand-focused subreddits, there are also a number of general automotive discussions happening at any time. Users looking for car-buying advice, maintenance tips, or industry news read and subscribe to subreddits like "Trucks", "CarTalk", and "SportsCars". While these discussions are about broader automotive categories, that doesn't mean that brands aren't being discussed within them.

We looked at three popular subreddits where car buyers are asking for guidance to see how many Ford vehicles received mentions.

Automotive Subreddits Driving
Brand Conversation
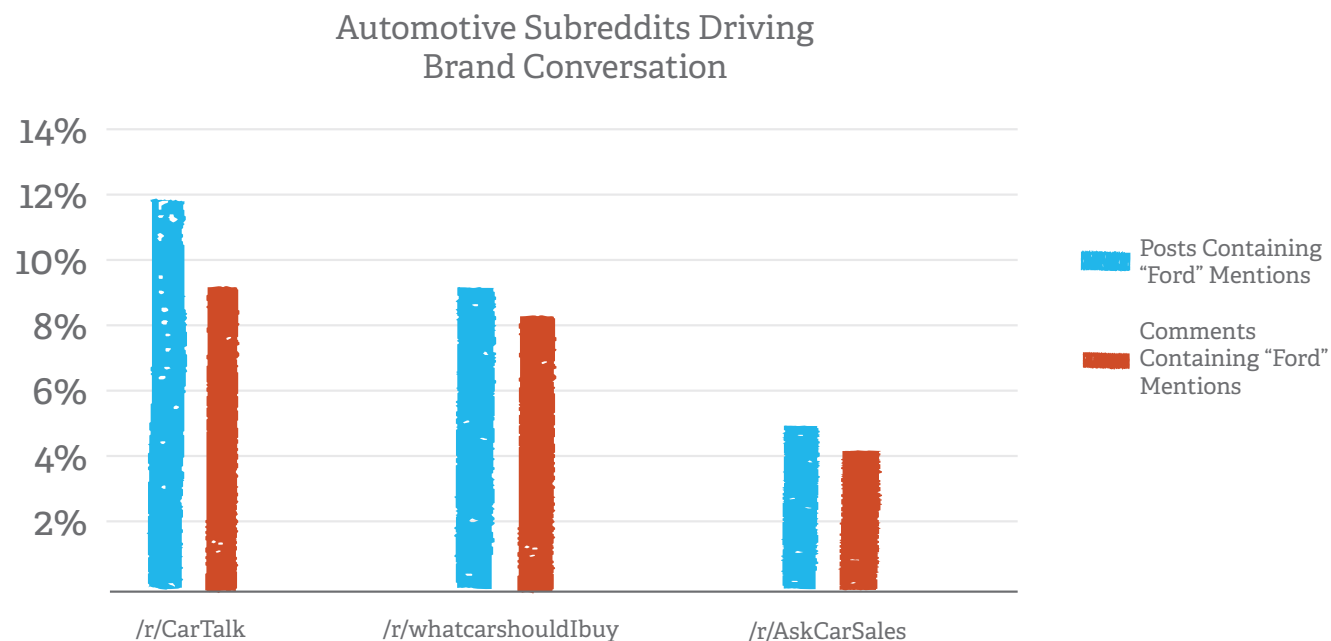
Close to 10% of posts on the "WhatCarShouldIBuy" subreddit mention Ford, as do 8% of the responses in that community over the past month. Just around 5% of posts in the "AskCarSales" subreddit asked questions about Ford vehicles and dealerships in June.

So what's the best go-forward plan for a brand in this situation?

The Reddit community isn't very receptive to obvious advertisements, but a Ford representative who is well-versed in Ford culture and information – and who can communicate with honesty and integrity – could be welcomed in this community. Many examples of this are already happening on the regional level. For example, questions posted in "AskCarSales" are answered from self-identified car salesmen from various dealerships.

There's no reason the right corporate-level voice wouldn't be welcomed into the conversation as well–as long as brands don't try to turn the conversation into an advertisement and keep their focus on adding genuine utility to the community.

Sports on Reddit: Sport and team-focused conversations

Fans of every sport meet on Reddit to discuss live games, off-season moves, and the latest breaking news around their favorite teams and players. Each team's subreddit boasts a different level of subscribers, but which teams and sports bring with them the highest levels of participation?

NFL Teams

A few NFL team communities show higher subscriber levels than others, including the New England Patriots, Seattle Seahawks, and Green Bay Packers. But what if we measure the subreddits not by subscribers, but by activity per reader? The San Diego Chargers and the New Orleans Saints see the highest per capita participation across the different NFL subreddits. **What are those communities talking about?**

- The Chargers content creation rates benefit from talk of a new stadium. Starting threads on current events can help to inspire fans to chime in and share their views.

- The Saints subreddit sees great content, even during the postseason. Subscribers post "countdown threads" each day with the days remaining until the regular season's kickoff, boosting excitement and conversation within the community.

Key

- **NFL Subreddits: Readership**
- **NFL Subreddits: Posts per Reader**

Subscribers | **Posts per Subscriber**

/r/patriots
/r/seahawks
/r/greenbaypackers
/r/49ers
/r/eagles
/r/chibears
/r/cowboys
/r/steelers
/r/denverbroncos
/r/minnesotavikings
/r/nygiants
/r/browns
/r/ravens
/r/detroitlions
/r/redskins
/r/texans
/r/chargers
/r/nyjets
/r/saints
/r/falcons
/r/panthers
/r/buffalobills
/r/miamidolphins
/r/colts
/r/oaklandraiders
/r/kansascitychiefs
/r/bengals
/r/buccaneers
/r/saintlouisrams
/r/azcardinals
/r/tennesseetitans

MLB Teams

Looking at Major League Baseball, we can see a few teams in the lead for readership levels. The top teams include a few recent champions that shouldn't surprise anyone (Boston Red Sox, San Francisco Giants), and a few other teams that may come as a surprise (Atlanta Braves, Toronto Blue Jays). The Cincinnati Reds and Washington Nationals subreddits are in the lead for posts per capita. **What is happening in these communities to drive such high content creation rates?**

- The Nationals have a big chunk of their subscribers commenting within games, doing their own version of a play-by-play on dedicated game threads in the subreddit.

- The Reds subreddit sees a large mix of eclectic content – from game notes to trades to more nostalgic content (including pictures of classic jerseys, photographs, and autographs).

Key

MLB Subreddits: Readership

MLB Subreddits: Posts per Reader

	Subscribers	Posts per Subscriber
/r/RedSox		
/r/SFGiants		
/r/Braves		
/r/TorontoBlueJays		
/r/Dogers		
/r/Cardinals		
/r/Mariners		
/r/MotorCityKitties		
/r/Phillies		
/r/Orioles		
/r/NewYorkMets		
/r/TexasRangers		
/r/KCRoyals		
/r/OaklandAtletics		
/r/Nationals		
/r/Reds		
/r/Buccos		
/r/MinnesotaTwins		
/r/ChiCubs		
/r/Brewers		
/r/WahoosTipi		
/r/NYYankees		
/r/WhiteSox		
/r/Astros		
/r/AngelsBaseball		
/r/Padres		
/r/TampaBayRays		
/r/ColoradoRays		
/r/ColoradoRockies		
/r/AZDiamondbacks		
/r/LetsGoFish		

No matter your sport, you can take advantage of Reddit communities by paying particular attention to your specific community and the issues affecting it. If there's a story within your fan-base, chances are high that it might surface on Reddit before any other social network. Dip into the conversation already happening only if and when your brand can be of utility to its fans.

Fashion & Beauty on Reddit: Checking the Labels

When looking at fashion and beauty discussions on Reddit, the communities that have formed show different patterns than previous examples. With fashion and beauty, there are few brand-specific subreddits –almost all of the conversation on the network is happening in generally-themed communities like "maleFashionAdvice" and "sneakers".
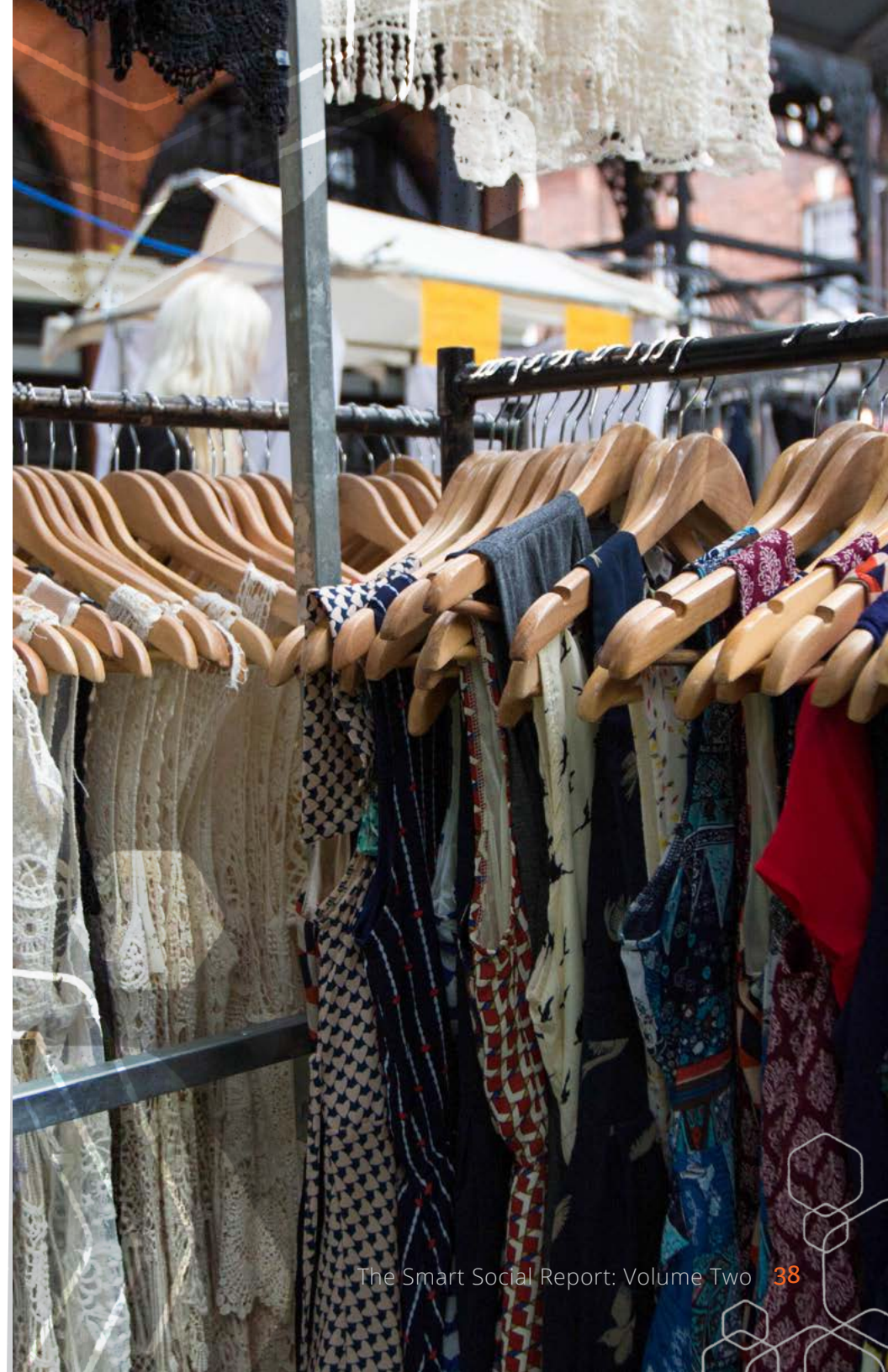
These general boards – while talking about style do's and don'ts, recommendations, and trends – include many brand references on a daily basis. A quick look at a sample of 1,000 posts and associated comments from "maleFashionAdvice" shows the following count of brand mentions. "MakeupAddiction" shows a similar pattern with brand mentions.

MaleFashionAdvice Subreddit:
Brand Mentions per 1,000 Posts
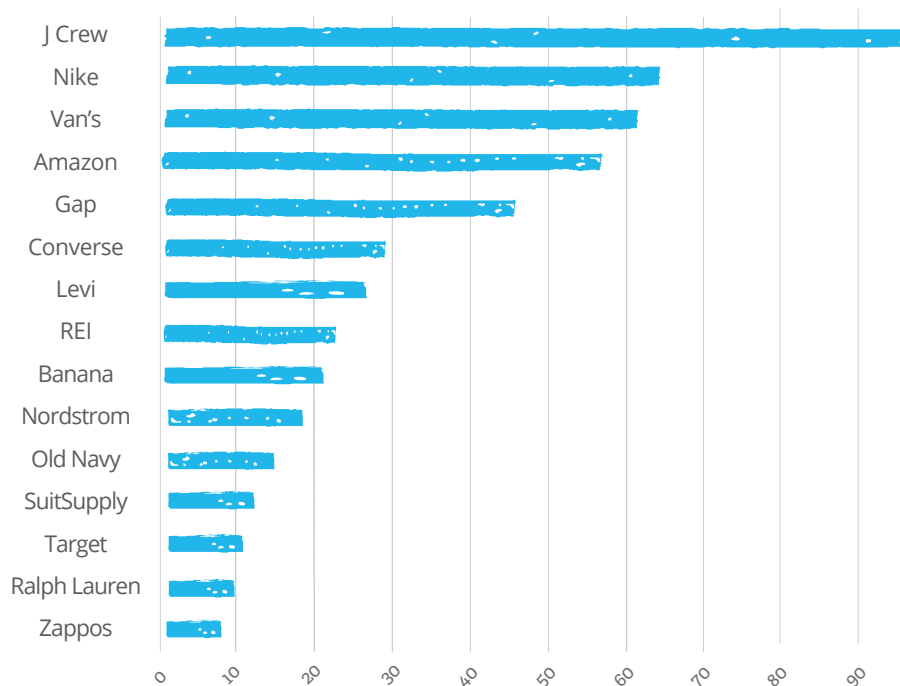
MakeupAddiction Subreddit:
Brand Mentions per 1,000 Posts
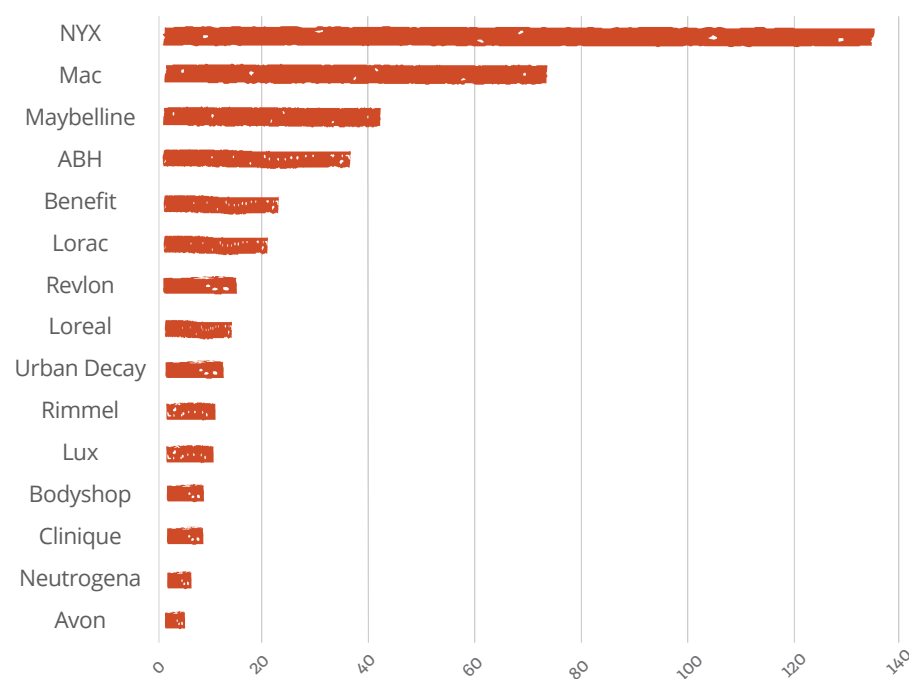
Remember:

Just because communities on Reddit aren't forming specific subreddits around your brand doesn't mean they're not talking about you. Research industry conversations to find mentions of your brand and your competition.

Recommendations for Brands on Reddit

Now that we've revealed that there's a healthy amount of brand conversation on Reddit, how can a company make the most of this opportunity? While different communities present different opportunities for brands, there are a few rules that you'll need to stick to when joining a community-based site.

1 Add value

The only way to truly make the most of Reddit from a brand perspective is to help the community with answers, insight, and advice. The community does not welcome sales pitches, so don't come in with one. If you post commercials, you'll quickly get the boot. Everybody knows what corporate jargon sounds like, and it doesn't sound like a real human.

2 You're a guest on Reddit; behave like one

Reddit is not an owned channel, so treat it that way. Identify yourself as a company representative, let people know why you're there, and be nice. If you can answer questions with authority, you have the chance to meet members at critical decision points where your point of view can have a real impact.

3 Experiment with advertising on Reddit

There are limited advertising opportunities available across the site, but with the structure of subreddits across different topics, the targeting capabilities are strong for interest graph-type classification.

4 Monitor posts for patterns, questions, and issues that arise

Monitor both branded ("Ford") and non-branded ("auto") boards for any mentions of your brands, products, or services. If an issue comes up where you can help out, great. If you're just looking to monitor high-level trends around your product set, you can accomplish that via some simple searches on a periodic basis through Reddit's own search functionality.

Building Relevance:
Introduction to Messaging

Introduction

One-to-one communication is paramount to the mobile experience. This has led to a proliferation in applications dedicated to messaging. Messaging apps replace SMS texting, which, while vastly utilized, is not without limits—and depending on where you live or where you're visiting, can be costly. Messaging apps allow for the same intimacy for free, and boast additional (often paid) features to enhance the one-to-one communication users value so deeply. These platforms are massively popular with their users and marketers are taking notice because of the large amounts of time consumers are spending within these applications.

Thanks to their popularity, entire business models have grown out of these applications. And new business models abroad means new business opportunities stateside: their success in Asian markets has led many Asian messaging companies to expand to the West and US-based companies to start or expand their own messaging offerings.

> Mary Meeker identified that a majority of the largest social networks by usage are messaging applications in the 2015 Internet Trends Report.

Come for the stickers.
Stay for the fun.

Let's take a deeper dive into how the NBA is using Line. Line launched in Japan in 2011 and is now the country's largest social network. Along the way it has provided new ways for brands to interact with consumers and recently expanded to the US. Many of the strategies they pioneered have been incorporated into other messaging applications.

Stickers are part of the essential DNA of a messaging application and Line was innovative in this regard. These can be thought of as emojis on overdrive. They can also be branded assets. The NBA has the following set pictured to the right available.
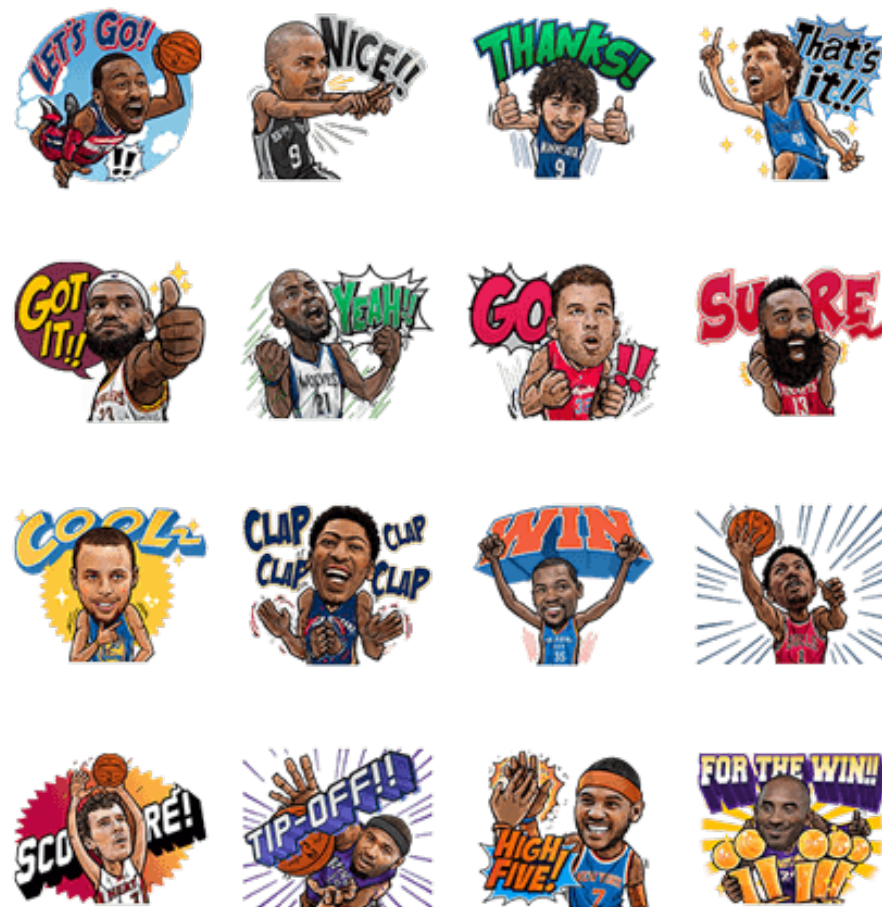
To download and use the stickers a user has to follow the NBA account. After this the NBA can communicate directly whenever they want. Line doesn't allow brands to send unlimited messages to all of their followers, but the possibilities and value for flash sales and seizing on follower impulses are clear. During this year's draft, for example, the NBA shared interviews with the top draft picks as they were drafted. These all appeared as a one-to-one conversation with the NBA for the users who follow them.

The NBA also has a public timeline that's able to take on the personality of Line users. A Like is much more than a thumbs-up here — users can choose from five different stickers to express their exact feelings. We can even see how many people picked each reaction. This lets the NBA create a conversation with a lot more personality that's fast and easy to interact with on their timeline. These updates can also be shared to chats with friends all within the application.

What the NBA has been able to do with Line is take a platform that is primarily used for one-to-one communication and work their brand into the communication flow. Gated assets, like stickers, allow the NBA to build a follower base while opening a communication channel directly with a valuable international fan base.
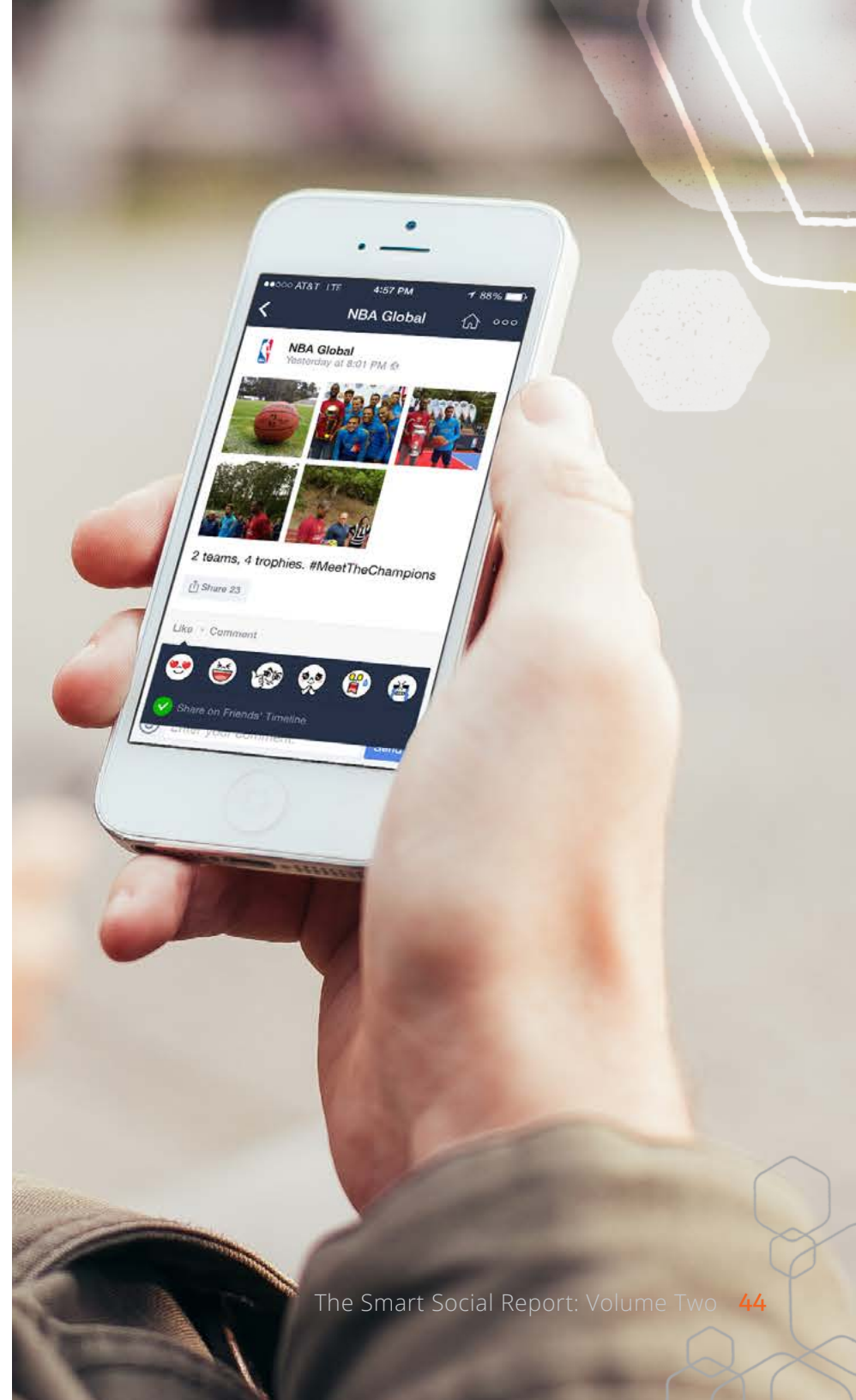
Line isn't the only messaging app brands should monitor closely in the coming months. A few other major messaging apps seeing exponential growth:

WhatsApp

User Base: 800 Million

Date Founded: February 2009

No Advertising: After their acquisition by Facebook they are still committed to this goal, but are exploring allowing brands to provide opt-in messaging to users.

"Free": For the first year the application is free to use, and just $1 a year afterwards.

Kik

User Base: 300 Million

Date Founded: October 2010

Demographics: 82% of its user base are between the ages of 13-24.

Web Platform: Any brand can create an in-app webpage for users to interact and share with their friends within the application.

WeChat

User Base: 438 Million

Date Founded: October 2010

Public Accounts: Allows one-to-many communications through subscriptions and is used by government, news, and media companies in China.

Mobile Wallet: In China, users are able to sync their credit cards and use the application to pay for services like taxi fares.

Line

User Base: 600 Million

Date Founded: March 2011

Public Timeline: A worldwide community for brands and individual users. Full of personality and Sharable across the application.

Flash Sales: In Korea and Japan, Line flash sales are big business. Users only know about these events if they are following a brand and see the notification in time to act.

Messenger

User Base: 600 Million

Date Founded: August 2011

Customer Care: Businesses are able to have private conversations with customers via their owned Pages. Conversations can also be started directly from comments left on the Page.

Sales: Users can sign up with brands to allow them to contact them. The brand can send messages highlighting time-based events like flash sales or when merchandise is back in stock.

Building Relevance

Messaging applications will only continue to grow their user bases and add new features. For now, there are three initial options your brand should consider:

Stake Your Claim: It will be easier to act when you're ready with your brand's username in place and you'll be spared an unknown party damaging your brand's hard-earned value.

New Partnerships: Reach out to the platform directly to engage for a specific campaign or new release.

Custom Strategies: Play to each application's strengths, rather than adopting a one-size-fits-all approach.

Considering messaging apps before your competitors do will keep your team ahead of the curve and have you already in place and prepared to answer when your customers come calling.

Spredfast is transforming the way companies connect with consumers.

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