

Digital Trends Report

AUGUST 2021

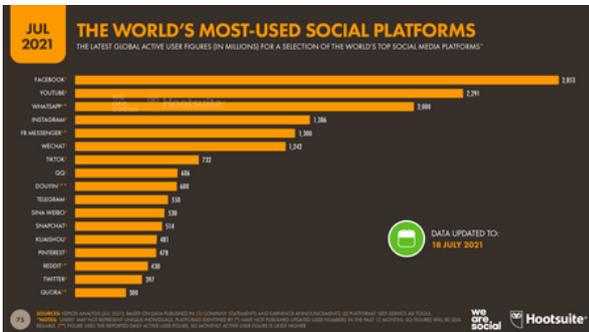
Welcome to our August Digital Trends report. This is our round up of what's been going on across social media, search engines, and more, explaining what each development means for your business.

**Let's talk! Get in touch with us via email:
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SOCIAL EVOLUTION 1

EVOLUTION OF TOP SOCIAL PLATFORMS IN 2021



The world's most used social platforms in 2021 have been announced. Facebook is still in the lead, with 2.853 billion monthly active users, followed by YouTube (which stands at the intersection between a search engine and a social media platform), with 2.291 billion monthly active users (Datareportal, "Global Social Media Stats").

What's interesting to observe is that, compared with last year's data, Facebook's growth has not been as high as YouTube's growth. Last year, Facebook was still the world leader of the most used social media platforms with 2.701 billion monthly active users, which means an increase of 5.62% from 2020 to 2021. In this time, YouTube recorded a 14.54% growth since last year, when it recorded 2 billion worldwide user monthly active users.

Another interesting point to observe is WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger's stagnation (at 2 billion, respectively 1.3 billion monthly active users). On the other hand, Instagram recorded a 20.20% growth since last year, while TikTok saw a 6.24% rise.

What this means for your business:

When looking at the overall statistics of the world's most used social platforms in 2021, it's easy to affirm that Facebook is the leader. But at a closer look, it can be noticed that Facebook's growth rate is below other social platforms. Instagram, YouTube, and even TikTok recorded higher growth rates compared with Facebook this year.

It looks like Facebook has reached its maturity stage, where its growth isn't very visible, but the growth rate is now visible for other platforms like Instagram and YouTube. Furthermore, Facebook users are less active on Facebook as they switch to other social media platforms where they post more or engage with more content.

For your business, this means that it's time to explore new social media platforms, where the fast growth rate also indicates that users consider the platform popular, trendy, and will likely be more active and engaged there than on Facebook.

MORE VIDEOS ON LINKEDIN

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LINKEDIN PLANS TO EXPAND VIDEO FOCUS

B2B social media giant LinkedIn has acquired Jumprope, a 'how-to' video app meaning that creative tools on the platform are in for a major facelift. As of early August, content on the app will be exclusive to LinkedIn and from 20th August, Jumprope will take down their website and apps to start "an exciting new chapter of [their] journey helping creators around the world share their stories, skills and ideas on LinkedIn."

The app currently has over 50,000 how-to guides for food, beauty, fitness and DIY among others and has been growing in popularity for creators in 2021 for ease of use.

Previously, LinkedIn introduced its Stories feature to compete with other social media platforms such as Instagram. Earlier this year, the platform brought in another new feature, Cover Story, to personalise introductions to the user's profile, helping people to grow their following, share expertise and find new jobs.

What this means for your business:

Many had been speculating whether LinkedIn was going to make the move to freshen up their content to help bring new creators to the platform. Ultimately, the more interesting content is, the more time users will spend on the platform which in turn makes it more lucrative for conversions and brand awareness.

Videos can be used to spotlight new team members, product launches and short reactions to industry developments. As LinkedIn is more business-focused, this could be a breakthrough for organisations who feel services like Instagram and TikTok are for younger, more B2C audiences.

In the future, LinkedIn may monetise opportunities for creators, however, it's more a matter of whether these will be "borrowed" from the existing monetisation models at Facebook, Instagram or Twitter, or whether they'll come with their original strategies that we'd expect from a professional platform.



60-SECOND REELS ON INSTAGRAM

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MORE FREEDOM FOR CREATORS WITH 60 SECONDS REELS

On 27th July, Instagram announced that their Reels feature would be extended to 60 seconds. Previously, Reels had limited videos to 15 seconds, before being upgraded to 30 seconds. Instagram said that longer Reels would encourage more creativity and would widen the room for expression on the platform. This move will make it easier for users, businesses and creators to post how-to videos, storytelling and creative campaigns.



In more great news, the platform is implementing a captions sticker within the feature, which converts audio into text captions so that users can view videos without sound. The new feature is available in several English-speaking countries and there are plans to expand it worldwide soon.

This move has been made as Adam Mosseri, Head of Instagram, recently explained that Instagram was now focused on four key areas: creators, video, shopping and messaging.

What this means for your business:

The social media giant has likely made this decision to sway users from jumping onto the TikTok and YouTube Shorts bandwagon. Back in January, Instagram's leader said "we have to be honest that TikTok is ahead." However, this move may have come too late as last month, TikTok announced that their videos would be extended to up to three minutes.

It is important to remember that the demographic of users using TikTok and Instagram can differ, so when you are planning which platforms you should use for your campaign, it's imperative to think of where your audience will likely be.

The new feature will doubtlessly make content more interesting across the platform, allowing businesses more free reign for creative campaigns. This provides the opportunity for product demonstrations or showcasing your company's culture online.

TWITTER LAUNCHES 'SHOP MODULE'

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MOVING FURTHER TO E-COMMERCE

Twitter has launched an initial test of its new 'Shop Module' feature suggesting that the social media platform is making further steps towards e-commerce.

The feature is being tested on a selection of brands in the US and will allow the platform to integrate shopping elements in one place, helping to keep users on the platform for longer.



No decision has yet been made on whether this will be rolled out worldwide. If the trial is successful, businesses will be able to highlight products, apps and images on their profile. Think of it as a Google My Business page but on Twitter.

Upon this update, Twitter explained:

"The Shop Module is a dedicated space at the top of a profile where businesses can showcase their products. When people visit a profile with the Shop Module enabled, they can scroll through the carousel of products and tap through on a single product to learn more and purchase - seamlessly in an in-app browser, without having to leave Twitter."

What this means for your business:

Many social media platforms have made the move to e-commerce and this is Twitter's attempt to capitalise on the market to help double its revenue by 2023. For businesses, having details of their location, products and apps is another way to push services to new audiences.

It is unknown whether businesses will receive this feature for free or if it will be a paid-for service for these add ons. The question is, would you pay to receive more features on social media? Only time will tell whether this will be a success.

In other plans, Twitter is also experimenting with shopping options within tweets, taking users directly to specific products on their timelines. We can expect that more of these types of features are on the horizon following the platform's new e-commerce focus.

WEBSITE SPEED AND GOOGLE CORE WEB VITALS - ARE THEY RELATED?



Since Google rolled out its core web vitals update in June 2021, there have been visible ranking changes for many websites. While reputable websites that previously had top rankings for their targeted keywords saw a decrease in their ranking, others, maybe even smaller websites, experienced an increase in how Google ranked them in June and July 2021.

One such strategy was introduced back in April when Facebook launched the “Topic of Interest” feature in some users’ feeds, which helps advertisers target users based on their interests. Another strategy is to add a new badge on ads displayed for small businesses, with the purpose to encourage users to support SMBs.

This led to the question: Are Google’s core web vitals influencing websites’ speed, and hence, affect their ranking? John Mueller (Senior Webmaster Trends Analyst at Google) “assumes” the two are not related, because page speed updates affect a certain aspect of ranking, while the core web vitals affect another one. In other words, one change resulting from either speed or core web vitals update won’t affect the other one.

However, both speed and core web vitals affect page rankings, but in different ways. Both of them are meant to improve page experience, therefore they both play a separate role in how algorithms perceive them to provide a qualitative user experience.

What this means for your business:

After listening to Google’s John Muller assuming how different updates affect Google’s ranking algorithms, one thing is sure: if Google doesn’t know it, it means they’re either not ready to disclose this information, or they really don’t know the full story of how the algorithms are evolving and ranking websites.

This shouldn’t mean that businesses like yours are left in the dark. Here’s what we know:

1. Speed and core web vitals (the metrics that score users' experience when loading a page and user interaction) are affecting websites' ranking in search engine results pages.
2. A page that loads quickly and contains the main information that the user is looking for at the top of the page instead of in the middle or towards the end of the page will be considered to provide a better page experience than others that don't follow the same model for structuring their content.
3. Regardless of the page experience ranking system, Google also ranks websites depending on their SEO.



In conclusion, this means that whilst you still need to assign your web developers the task to take the necessary actions to fix your website's core web vitals and improve the speed, your website needs to be optimised with relevant keywords in order for it to rank.

Easy, right? Let us know if you've faced any troubles implementing SEO on your website.



Want to talk to us about the latest stories facing business owners?

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