

Key take-outs from the Hootsuite Social Media Consumer Report 2024

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According to Hootsuite's recently launched Social Media Consumer Report 2024, marketers are getting it wrong when building relationships with consumers online through social media. The findings clearly explain what resonates and what falls flat, offering valuable insights on critical aspects and helping brands foster engaging relationships with target audiences.



The common issues cited include “making assumptions about your audience on social - who they are, how they behave, and what they want. Or worse, not even knowing these things to start. Treating social media like a giant marketing megaphone instead of adding value to people’s experience. Focusing too much on the point of purchase and not on what happens afterwards.”

In December 2023, the report surveyed 6,026 people aged 18–64 across the UK, Australia, the USA, and Canada. Respondents were categorised as active shoppers and casual followers, those who follow brands on social media, and those who claim social media influences purchasing decisions.

Sean Cavé, social media manager at brand communications agency Brandfund, recently attended Hootsuite’s global

webinar and shares key take-outs that he believes will empower local marketers to thrive in the ever-changing world of social media and help forge deeper connections with audiences.

The ad overload

While many users acknowledge that advertising keeps social media platforms free, a significant portion (52%) feel bombarded by self-promotional content. The report reveals that a surprising number would even prefer no brand content. This highlights a clear demand for a shift towards more engaging and less intrusive brand interactions.

Marketing missteps: the road to unfollows

The report identifies common pitfalls for brands on social media. Making assumptions about the audience, treating social media as a one-way broadcast channel, and prioritising transactions over building relationships are all major turn-offs. Embrace social listening for market research to understand public perception and what your audience really wants. Apply insights to brand positioning, product development, and addressing potential PR issues.

Building bridges, not walls

So, how can brands win audiences over in today's social media climate? The key lies in understanding what resonates with them. Interestingly, it reveals that attracting valuable followers goes beyond just brand awareness. Audiences crave authenticity, relevance, and value beyond just a sales pitch. They want informative content that is inspiring, entertaining and connects with their interests while offering a unique perspective.

The power of three: paid, organic, and shared content

The report delves into the effectiveness of different content types. While paid advertising is crucial for initial brand awareness, organic and shared content hold more power in influencing buying decisions. The key takeaway? Create content that's compelling and aligns with your audience's values that they naturally want to share, amplifying your reach and engagement;

- 45% share content because they agree with it.
- People are also more likely to share content they think is informative.
- 78% of people have reshared a brand post shared by family or friends in the past year.
- In the past 12 months, 82% of people were exposed to shared posts and encouraged consideration behaviours at least once.

Ditch the dull, embrace the delightful

There is clear data on what kind of content turns audiences off. Repetitive, boring, and inauthentic content are all major culprits, with 68% of users reporting them as reasons for unfollowing brands. Similarly, blatantly "angling for metrics" with tactics like misleading engagement attempts puts off 63% of users.

Across the board, consumers want brands to share all types of cultural moments in social media conversations, such as major sporting events, pop culture, news, social justice moments and even political events.

Conversely, the report highlights what truly captures users' attention. Create content that is more about them and focuses on new, funny, and inspiring content.

Here's what resonates most with users:

- Educational content (56%)
- Humorous content (55%)
- Surprising content (30%)
- Inspirational content (47%)

- Content that evokes emotion (36%)
- Visually engaging content (36%)

These points emphasise the importance of strategic planning, audience understanding, platform optimisation, content customisation, and integrating technology and AI in creating a successful social media presence in 2024.

By understanding these consumer preferences and avoiding common marketing pitfalls, brands can leverage social media's power to build stronger relationships, drive engagement, and achieve their marketing goals.

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