

# What Should My Social Strategy Be?



To date, there are 200-plus social media platforms available, so how do small-business owners decide how to strategically spend their time on them? Do you have to be on all of them? Can you just pick one and go with it? You spent a lot of time on your website—isn't that enough? These are a few of the questions that this publication aims to answer.

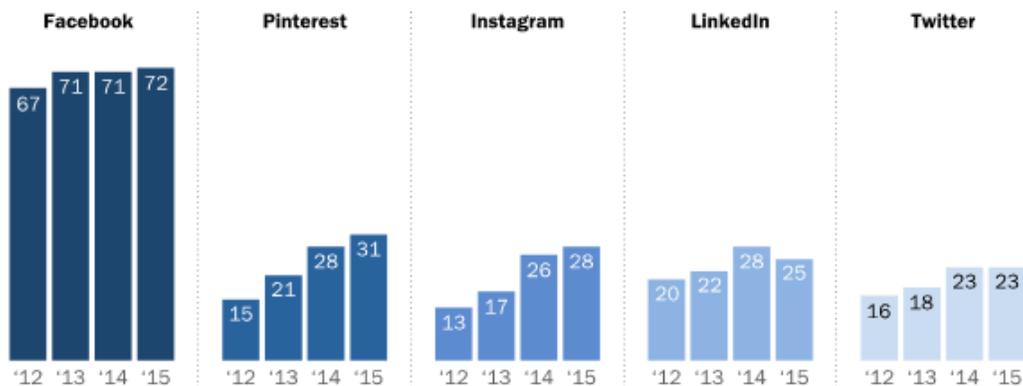
Before we get started, imagine this: A customer walks into your retail location, browses for a couple of minutes, and then asks you a question about an item, and you completely ignore them. How would the customer react to that? They would more than likely leave without buying anything. Of course, a good business owner would never do that, but, unfortunately, it happens every day online,

and the result is exactly the same. Often, a customer wants to check things out or maybe ask a simple question before actually driving to your store or ordering an item or service online, and the easiest way for them to do this is through a social media channel. One of the biggest social media mistakes small-business owners make is jumping on every platform they think they need and then not having time to properly manage them all.

The first thing to look at is the overall number of people who are actively using a social media platform. Since we can't discuss all 200-plus platforms, let's look at the top five platforms by use, according to a 2015 Pew Research Internet study.

## Pinterest and Instagram Usage Doubles Since 2012, Growth on Other Platforms is Slower

*% of online adults who say they use the following social media platform, by year*



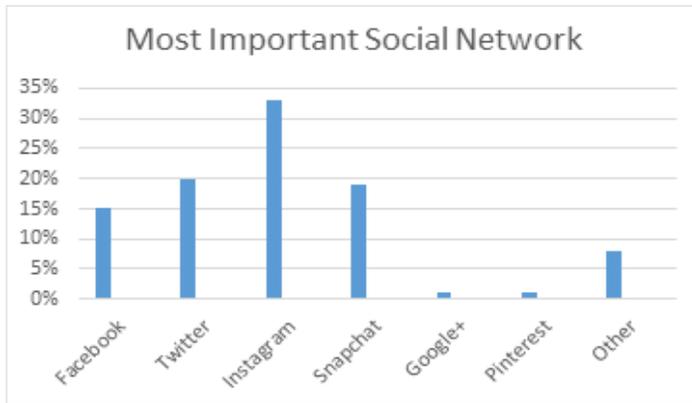
Pew Research Center Survey, March 17-April 12, 2015.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Source: Pew Internet Research 2015 (<http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/08/19/mobile-messaging-and-social-media-2015/>)

According to these figures, Facebook sees the most use, with 72 percent of adults saying that they use the platform. However, as you can see, Facebook use has plateaued, while the less-often-used platforms Pinterest and Instagram are seeing large gains in use. Will these trends continue? It's difficult to know but worth considering as part of your social media strategy.

Secondly, you should consider the demographics of your customer compared to the demographics of various social media platforms. It's no secret that different people use social media in different ways; the strongest distinction of usage is often between different age groups. For example, *The Wall Street Journal* found that teenagers largely prefer Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat.



Source: Wall Street Journal (<http://blogs.wsj.com/digits/2015/10/16/survey-finds-teens-prefer-instagram-snapchat-among-social-networks/>)

Finally, you need to consider your type of business when determining what social media platforms to use. For example, a Shopify study has found that Facebook dominates industries like photography, pet supplies, and jewelry, while Twitter dominates home and garden industries, and YouTube dominates the automotive sector (<https://www.shopify.com/infographics/social-commerce>). Also, as part of this consideration, you have to reflect on the platforms people are using in your area. Rural social media use is going to differ from urban use, and the Midwest will differ from the Southeast.

You can't cover all social media platforms that exist, so you should be strategic about which ones you choose for your business. To make sure that you don't stretch yourself too thin, consider starting with one or two of the social platforms that can most benefit your business. For example, boutiques are a social media-heavy business that often benefit from being on Instagram and Pinterest. Restaurants need a Facebook presence but don't necessarily need a Google+ account, and a construction company does not have to have an Instagram presence. After you get comfortable with your first few social media channels, you can begin to branch out to other platforms as needed. This way, you are not "jumping in the deep end," and you will not risk overwhelming yourself and unintentionally missing out on interactions with customers.

See **Table 1** for a look at what type of person is on each platform. While Facebook is the clear overall leader in total numbers, you can see that, for instance, women ages 18–29 are heavy users of Instagram. You can also see that a person's annual salary makes a big difference in whether or not they have a LinkedIn account. It is important to be aware of these differences when you're deciding which platforms to be active on. It is also important to keep in mind that these numbers will change over time.

**Table 1. Users of social media platforms.**

Demographics	Facebook	Twitter	Instagram	Pinterest	LinkedIn
Overall	79%	24%	32%	31%	29%
Men	75%	24%	26%	17%	<b>31%</b>
Women	<b>83%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>45%</b>	27%
18–29	<b>88%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>34%</b>
30–49	84%	18%	33%	34%	33%
50–64	72%	28%	18%	28%	24%
65+	62%	10%	8%	16%	20%
<\$30k	<b>80%</b>	23%	<b>32%</b>	30%	13%
>\$75k	77%	<b>30%</b>	31%	<b>35%</b>	<b>45%</b>
Urban	<b>81%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>34%</b>
Rural	<b>81%</b>	24%	31%	25%	18%

Source: Pew Internet Research 2016 (<http://www.pewinternet.org/2016/11/11/social-media-update-2016/>)

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