The 12 Days of Data

A Look at Key Public Marketing Data From 2021

TRUST INSIGHTS

Introduction

The 12 Days of Data has been a tradition almost since the inception of Trust Insights. Throughout the year, we collect publicly available data about marketing, from press releases to TikTok. Each year, we look back to see what happened, to glean insights from the way marketing has changed, and to provide guidance for what we think the year ahead looks like.

This year, we saw very few surprises; unpaid social media continues to diminish in effectiveness for brands, especially on properties owned by Facebook Inc. (now Meta, Inc.) making it less and less worth your time on average. We've seen explosive growth on TikTok and private social media channels. We've also seen content republishing continue to be a valuable tactic - especially if you're down staffed.

Looking ahead to 2022, we see more of the same; the world remains an exceptionally uncertain and unpredictable place to conduct marketing. Our overall guidance for 2022 is to focus heavily on community, on retaining the trust and loyalty you've built with your existing audience. Word of mouth - though notoriously difficult to measure - remains one of marketing's most trusted allies, especially in an era where AI-powered algorithms suppress unpaid brand efforts.

That word of mouth, that community, is essential because customers and prospects who voluntarily contribute their presence and their information to a community circumvents both AI and privacy restrictions. Communities, especially in private social media networks, are more resistant to AI-based algorithms. Community participants also proactively and voluntarily gift us with their data, eliminating worries about data privacy.

We can be reasonably certain that the movement towards greater privacy restrictions and less third-party data will continue to increase. For example, in the USA, California's new law, the California Privacy Rights Act, takes effect January 1, 2023 but will encapsulate data collected by companies beginning January 1, 2022 - so ensure that your data privacy efforts are ramped up as quickly as possible. Avoid collecting non-compliant data as soon as your MarTech infrastructure permits such change. You want as little bad data in your systems as possible. New York State's new privacy law takes effect May 7, 2022. And China's new PIPL privacy laws took effect on November 1, 2021, adding more complexity to the overall global privacy ecosystem.

As marketers, we need to constantly be looking at the data we collect, the data we have access to, and the necessary decisions we make from that data. If we narrow our focus to the most essential data, we will make better, faster decisions and be more compliant with privacy laws.

Now, onto the 12 Days of Data to dig into each day's findings!

Day 1: Instagram for Brands

Introduction

Welcome to the 12 Days of Data 2021 Edition, our look back at the data that made marketing in 2021. We're looking at the year that was (and oh, what a year it was… again…) from an analytics perspective to see what insights we can take into the next year. Sit up, get your coffee ready, and let's celebrate some data and look forward to the year ahead.

Instagram Brand Engagement for Unpaid Content

We start our 12 days of data with Instagram, Facebook's visual social media network. It used to be photos. Then photos and albums. Then videos. Then Instagram live. Then Instagram TV. Then Stories. Then Reels. As competing social networks came up with new, popular features, Facebook did its best to copy them, and today's Instagram is the result.

With all these changes, is Instagram worth our time? Let's take a look at what brand engagement for unpaid content looked like on Instagram in 2021.

Using a curated list provided by Crowdtangle (a Facebook company) and then manually inspected and augmented by Trust Insights, a sample size of 7,647 Instagram brand accounts.

Before we go further, we define engagement as the number of interactions (reactions, comments, shares) that occurred on an unpaid, unsponsored Instagram brand post, divided by the number of followers of that Instagram brand account at the time of posting. For all the computations that follow, we use the median as the measure of centrality, rather than the mean (average) because medians deal better

with outliers, especially in large social media datasets.

How have brands fared on Instagram in 2021?
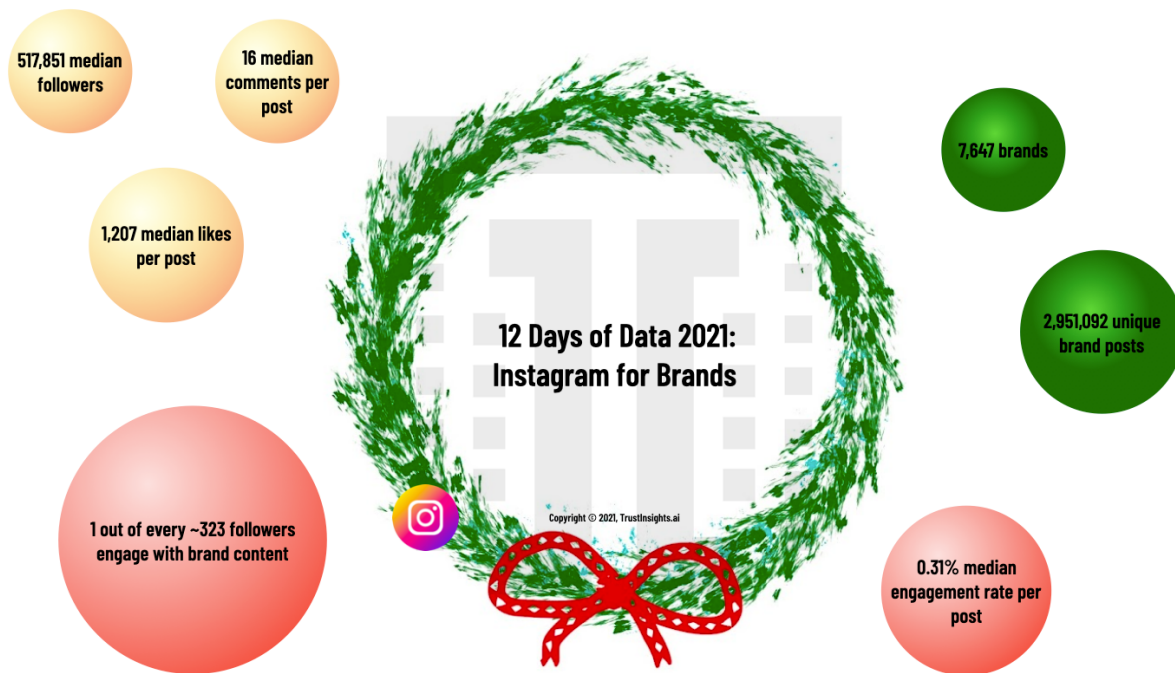
Let's start with the high-level summary. In 2021, brands had:

- A median of 517,851 followers on their accounts
- A median of 1,207 likes on their posts
- A median of 16 comments on their posts
- A median engagement rate of 0.31% per post

Put another way, 1 out of every 323 followers engaged in some way with unpaid brand content.

That number doesn't tell the whole story, however. Let's look at how unpaid brand content performed throughout 2021:

Average Instagram Engagement Rates for Brands :: Analysis by TrustInsights.ai

Time frame is 2021-01-01 to 2021-11-30. Data source is Facebook's Crowdtangle. Contact sales@trustinsights.ai for more detail or a custom report.
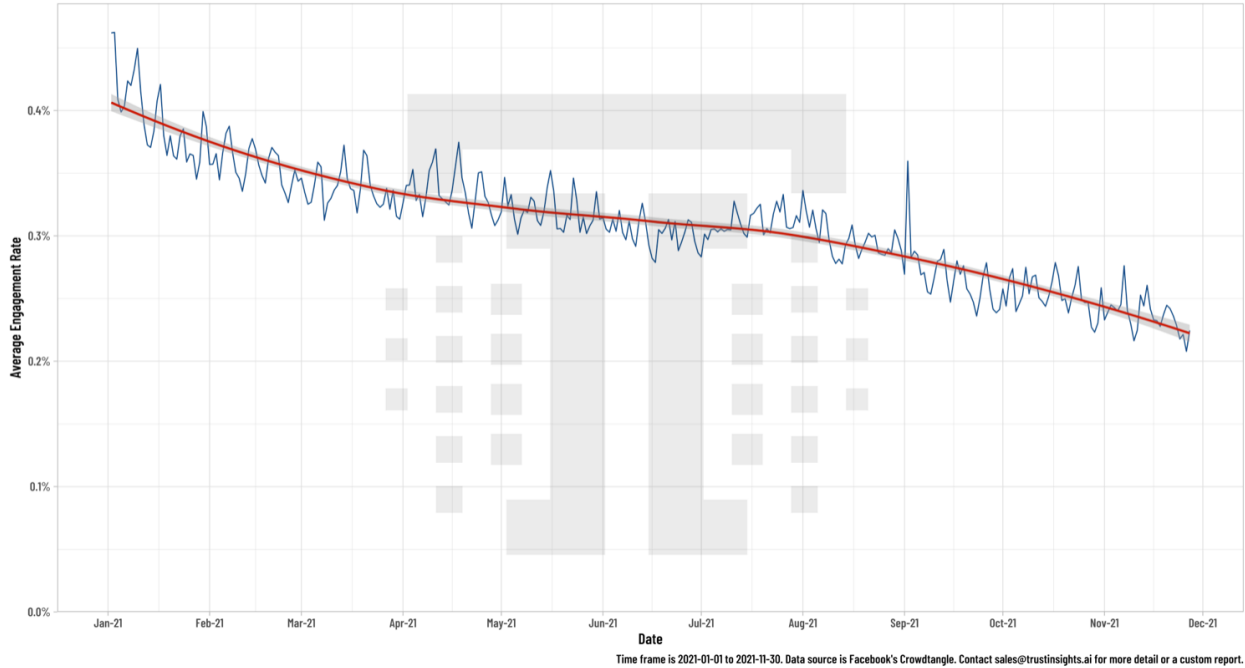
As seen above, the engagement rates for unpaid brand content has dropped considerably throughout the year, from a January high of 0.41% to a most recent 0.23%. That's an intra-year drop of -43.9%.

So What?

When we look back over the past few years at Instagram brand engagement on unpaid content, the trend is painfully obvious: brands are getting less and less out of their investment of time and energy in Instagram for unpaid content. When we first started to dig into Instagram engagement on a regular basis back in 2019, brands were earning roughly 0.5% engagement on their posts. In less than two years, Facebook has more than halved brand performance for unpaid content.

What should you do about it? If Instagram is an integral part of your brand's social media strategy, it's time to diversify. You've got a few different tactical options:

1. **Change your overall strategy towards a conversational one**.

Identify content that performs well in your topic area and engage with audiences - yours and others - to gain temporary favor with Instagram's algorithm. The more people who engage with you, the more likely it is that your content will be seen in the overall feed, thanks to the way the recommendation engine works. One of the four key factors Instagram co-founder Adam Mosseri identified in mid-June was the history of interpersonal interactions.

2. **Change which part of Instagram you interact with**. Again, Mosseri publicly stated that Instagram doesn't have one algorithm; each part of the product has their own separate and discrete algorithms. If the Feed algorithm doesn't favor you or your content, experiment with the Explore algorithm and the Reels algorithm. They behave differently.

3. **Change the content and language you use**. Remember that Facebook's artificial intelligence does image and video analysis to determine what's in the visual content as well as the words we provide in captions and comments. If you're not seeing results, try changing your creative.

4. **Diversify to a different network**. If you haven't tried Tiktok, for example, it's worth experimenting with to see if the audience there responds more favorably to your content.

At the end of the day, no one social network should be so essential to your brand that your marketing effectiveness is endangered by changes to the platform. If that's the case, diversifying away from that one network is critical as long-term insurance for your marketing's effectiveness.

Methodology Statement

Trust Insights used Facebook's Crowdtangle software to extract 2,951,092 unique posts from 7,647 brands on Instagram. The timeframe of the dataset is 1 January 2021 - 30 November 2021. Trust Insights is the sole sponsor of the study and neither gave nor received compensation for data used, beyond applicable service fees to software vendors, and declares no

competing interests.

Day 2: Instagram for Influencers

## Instagram Influencer Engagement for Unpaid Content

On day 2, we look at influencer accounts. Influencers - individuals who can create awareness, build trust, perhaps even incite purchasing - have been a part of Instagram's landscape since the very beginning. In recent years, they've emerged as one of the most powerful forces for marketers to ally with.

With all these changes, how impactful are influencers? How much engagement do they get - is it more than ours, enough to justify working with them? Let's see how influencer engagement for unpaid content looked on Instagram in 2021.

Using a curated list provided by Crowdtangle (a Facebook company) and then manually inspected and augmented by Trust Insights, we analyzed a sample size of 10,290 Instagram influencer accounts.

Before we go further, we define engagement as the number of interactions (reactions, comments, shares) that occurred on an unpaid, unsponsored Instagram influencer post, divided by the number of followers of that Instagram influencer account at the time of posting. For all the computations that follow, we use the median as the measure of centrality, rather than the mean (average) because medians deal better with outliers, especially in large social media datasets.

How have influencers fared on Instagram in 2021?
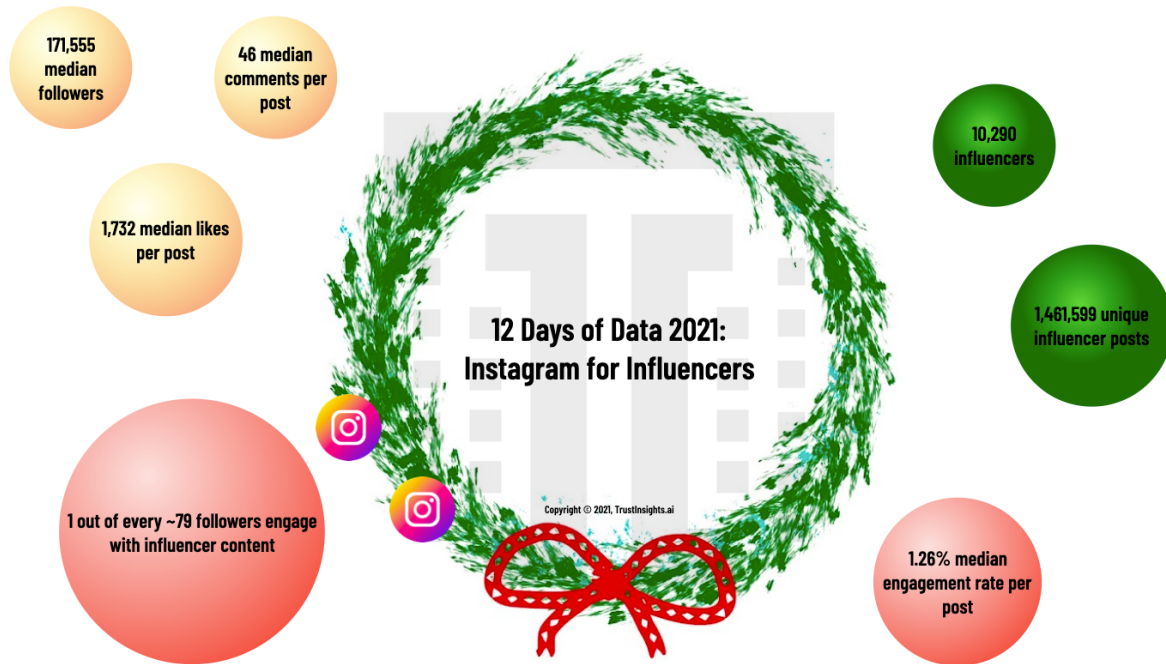
Let's start with the high-level summary. In 2021, influencers had:

- A median of 171,555 followers on their accounts

- A median of 1,732 likes on their posts

- A median of 46 comments on their posts

- A median engagement rate of 1.26% per post

Put another way, 1 out of every 79 followers engaged in some way with unpaid influencer content.

That number doesn't tell the whole story, however. Let's look at how unpaid influencer content performed throughout 2021:

Average Instagram Engagement Rates for Influencers :: Analysis by TrustInsights.ai

Time frame is 2021-01-01 to 2021-11-30. Data source is Facebook's Crowdtangle. Contact sales@trustinsights.ai for more detail or a custom report.
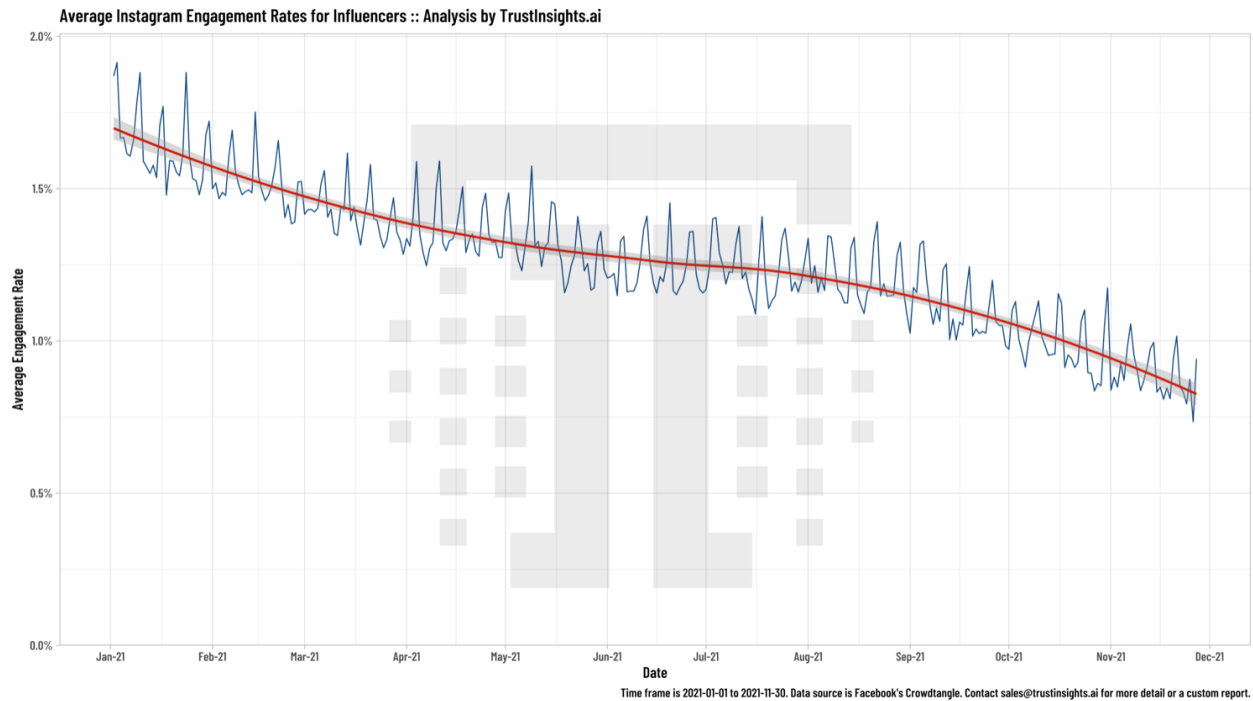
As seen above, the engagement rates for unpaid influencer content has dropped considerably throughout the year, from a January high of 1.7% to a most recent 0.7%. That's an intra-year drop of -58.8%.

So What?

The news about Instagram influencers' engagement shouldn't be a surprise to anyone. What is a surprise is that influencer engagement dropped more on a percentage basis in 2021 than brands did, a first in the three years we've been looking at the data. It's impossible to know the exact reason for the decline, only that it exists.

It could be that as influencers become more prominent, Facebook expects them to pay up for reaching their audiences. That would be unsurprising given Facebook's track record of what feels like bait-and-switch marketing about their platforms. It could also be that as the space gets more and more crowded, with dozens or even hundreds of prominent accounts on nearly any given topic, there's simply less

attention to go around.

Whatever the reason, there are two key takeaways.

1. If you're an influencer (or you aspire to be one), **now is the time to diversify**. The writing is on the wall for engagement for influencers, at least on Instagram. Unless you have the budget to keep in front of your audience through paid means, it's time to slowly migrate your audience to someplace else. Ideally, it's a platform you have more control over, such as a Discord instance. But no matter what, it shouldn't be solely any property owned by Facebook, Inc.
2. If you're a brand engaged in influencer marketing on Instagram, **aim to be flexible in any contracts you sign**. An influencer who earns great results for you in February may be delivering sub-par results by October depending on market conditions. Consider paying more for performance, rather than just awareness and exposure.

Influencer engagement continues to decline on Instagram, while many creators have moved or are replicating content on YouTube and Tiktok. Survey your ideal customers, your audience, and ensure you're following them wherever they go.

Methodology Statement

Trust Insights used Facebook's Crowdtangle software to extract 1,461,599 unique posts from 10,290 influencers on Instagram. The timeframe of the dataset is 1 January 2021 - 30 November 2021. Trust Insights is the sole sponsor of the study and neither gave nor received compensation for data used, beyond applicable service fees to software vendors, and declares no competing interests.

Day 3: Instagram Media Types

Instagram Media Types

On day 3, we look at media types for Instagram. Instagram currently publishes analytics data for four kinds of media - albums (carousels), photos, videos, and IGTV. Each media type offers its own benefits and drawbacks, but the key question marketers have is, which media types seem to offer the best performance? Let's take a look at some headline numbers.
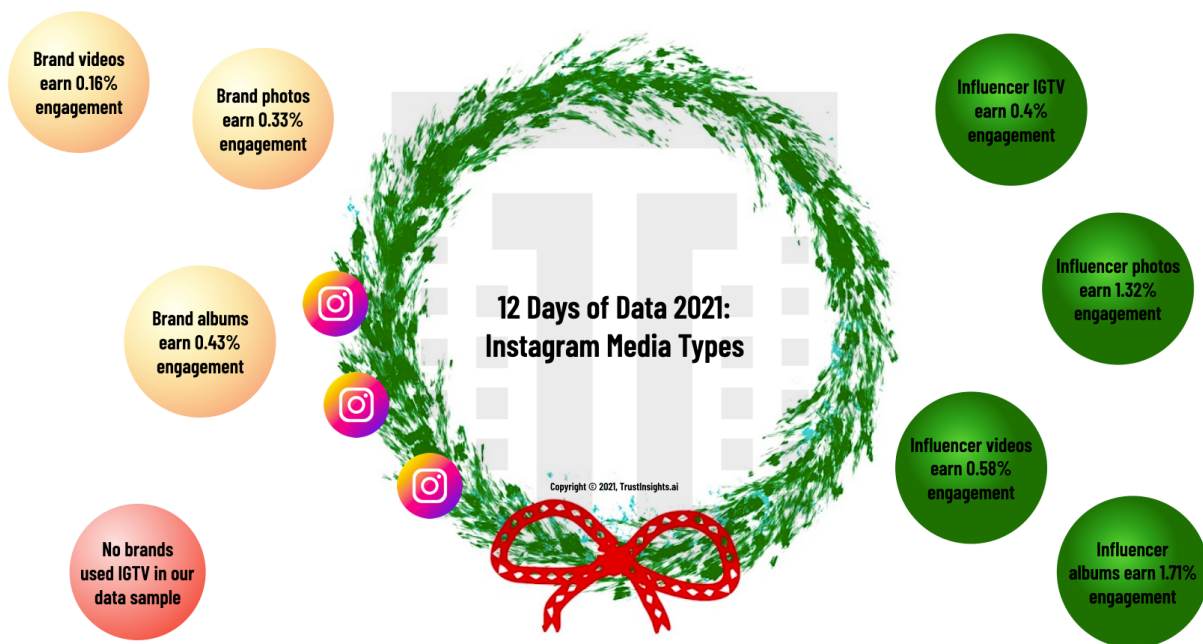
For brands, we see:

- Videos earn a median of 0.16% engagement per video
- Photos earn a median of 0.33% engagement per photo
- Albums earn a median of 0.43% engagement per album/carousel

- No brands published IGTV videos in our sample

For influencers, we see:

- Videos earn a median of 0.58% engagement per video
- Photos earn a median of 1.32% engagement per photo
- Albums earn a median of 1.71% engagement per album/carousel
- IGTV videos earn a median of 0.40% engagement per IGTV video

For both brands and influencers, the clear winner is definitely the carousel format. Let's look over time to see how these media types performed over the year.

Brands had this performance:

Influencers had this performance:

Instagram Influencer Engagement by Type of Media
Analysis by TrustInsights.ai

Data from Facebook's Crowdtangle service, calendar YTD 2021
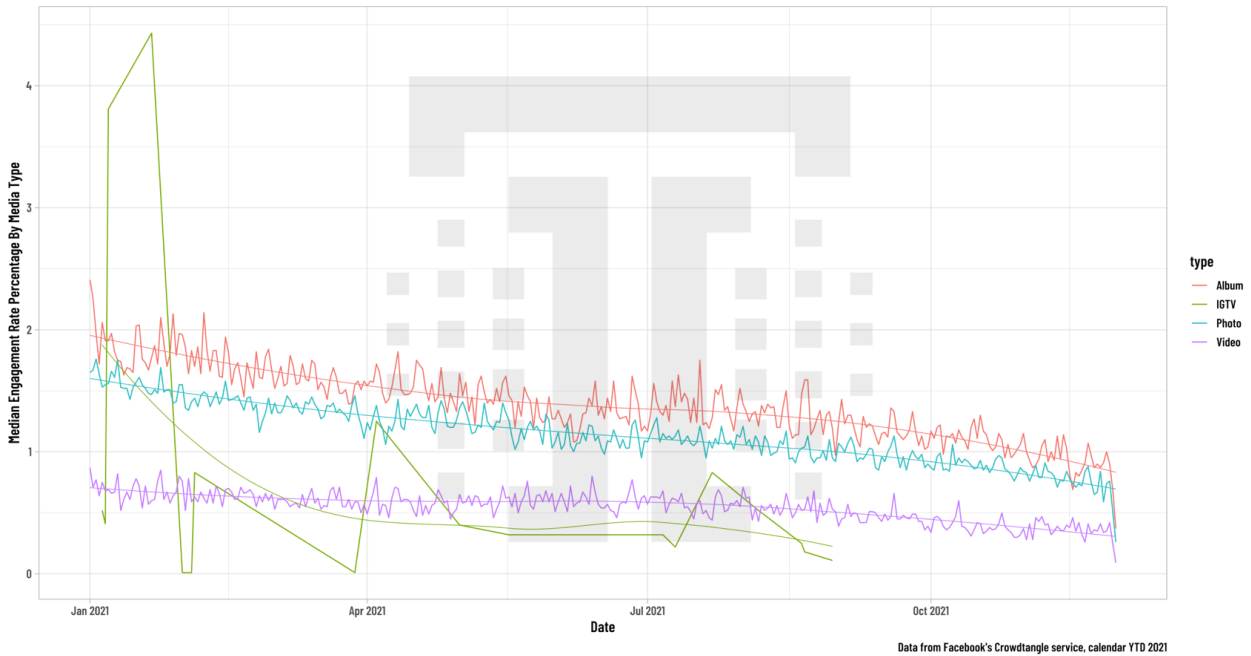
What we see in both cases is a significant decline across all media types, but a substantial absence of IGTV. Why? While we don't get Reels data from Facebook's Crowdtangle software, it's not unreasonable to assume that Facebook's strategy - to copy Tiktok as much as possible - has led to their cannibalizing attention away from IGTV to promote Reels.

So What?

While we don't have data for Reels or Stories, it stands to reason that these features - Reels in particular - have diverted substantial attention from existing Instagram features. At the same time, we note that Facebook continually looks for ways to extract more revenue from large accounts. It should be no surprise that unpaid content, especially from brands, continues to decline in effectiveness over time.

So what should we do about this? Two key takeaways. First, for existing legacy content types - albums, videos, and photos - test them to see which delivers the best response from your audience. Generally

speaking, albums - carousels of photos and videos - seem to perform best across multiple account types.

Second, if you haven't already, start testing Reels and Stories on your account. Reels in particular are intended to be a clone of Tiktok's main features, so if you're already generating content for Tiktok, porting that content to Reels should be trivial. Conversely, if you find it relatively easy to create Reels content, you should consider posting it on Tiktok as well if you aren't already.

As we reach the end of our investigation into Instagram, it's become clear that for many brands, if you want to achieve reach and results, you'll need to pivot into paid advertisements. If you don't have the budget, look into collaborating with individuals and non-competitive accounts to reach new audiences, or explore newer platforms like Tiktok if your audience is there.

Methodology Statement

Trust Insights used Facebook's Crowdtangle software to extract 2,951,092 unique posts from 7,647 brands and 1,461,599 unique posts from 10,290 influencers on Instagram. The timeframe of the dataset is 1 January 2021 – 30 November 2021. Trust Insights is the sole sponsor of the study and neither gave nor received compensation for data used, beyond applicable service fees to software vendors, and declares no competing interests.

Day 4: Tiktok Trending Videos

TikTok Trending

Let's look at TikTok, the short-form video platform that stormed the world in 2020 and has been on a tear ever since. We've seen search traffic about the app steadily on the rise over the years:
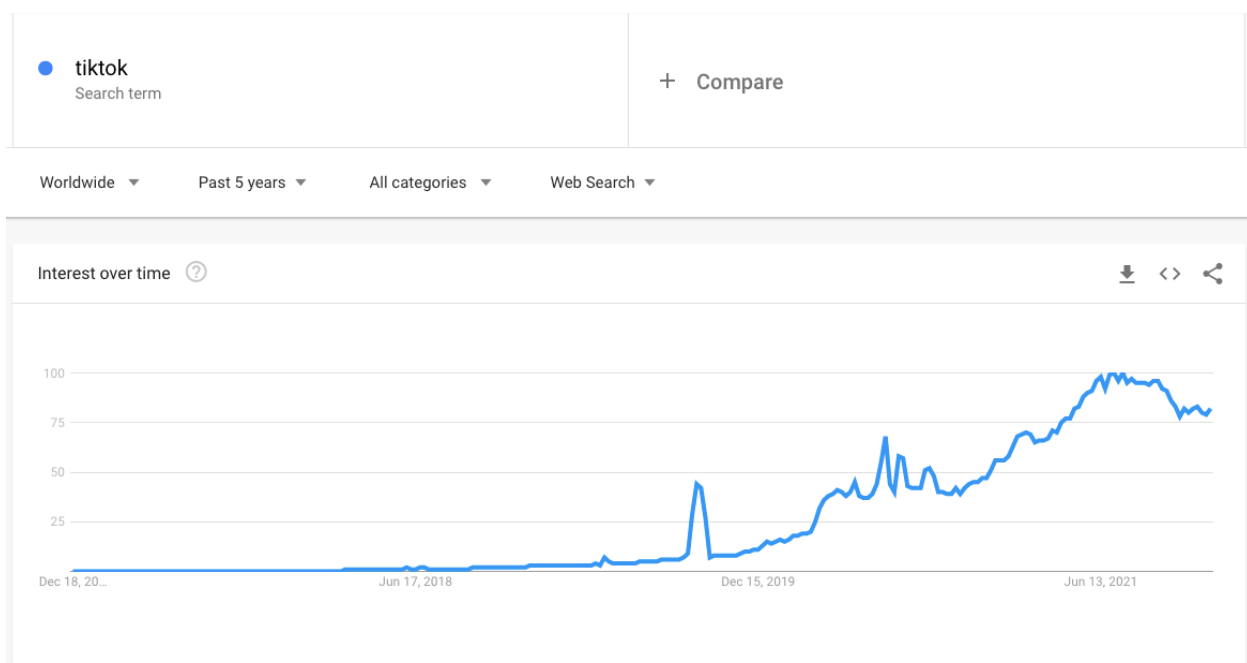
However, many marketers struggled to understand what TikTok even was, much less how to use it for any kind of marketing. TikTok is well known for its selection algorithm, designed to keep people watching. Let's see if we can decode it at all.

First, for the average video that is recommended in TikTok's trending section of the app, what do the basic numbers look like?
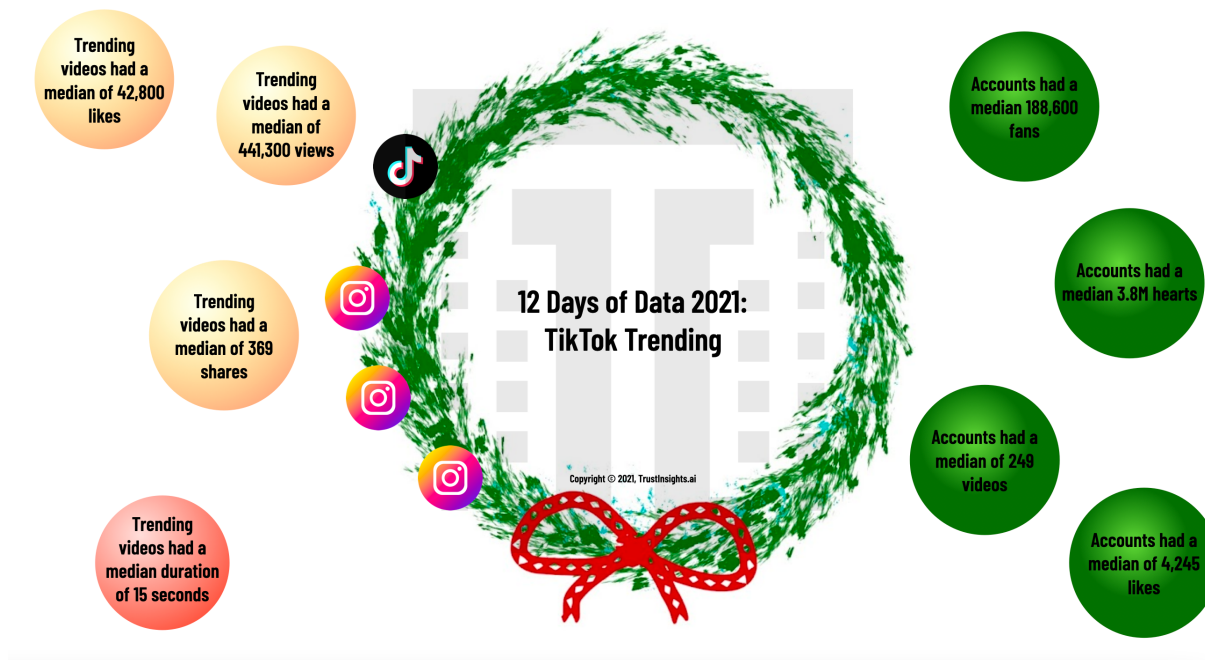
Above, we see:

- TikTok trending videos had a median of 42,800 likes

- TikTok trending videos had a median of 441,300 views

- TikTok trending videos had a median of 369 shares

- TikTok trending videos had a median of 15 second durations

- TikTok trending video accounts had a median of 188,600 fans

- TikTok trending video accounts had a median of 3.8 million hearts

- TikTok trending video accounts had a median of 249 videos on their accounts

- TikTok trending video accounts had a median of 4,245 likes

In addition, we saw a few other useful statistics about trending videos:

- TikTok trending videos had a median of 406 comments

- TikTok trending videos had a median of 3 hashtags

- TikTok trending videos had a median of 61 characters in their

captions

Clearly, TikTok prefers popular accounts to feature in trending videos; these numbers are all very large, for the most part.

Now, the big question is, what predicts a trending video? Are there attributes that the most viewed videos in trending have in common? Does every video that uses #fyp (for your page) and other popular hashtags do well? Let's dig into a basic correlation analysis.

Most Correlated Factors to Tiktok Plays
Analysis by TrustInsights.ai

Factors	Spearman Correlation
play_count	1
digg_count	0.91
comment_count	0.73
share_count	0.72
author_meta_heart	0.28
author_meta_fans	0.25
word_funny	0.04
video_meta_height	0.03
word_duet	0.02
word_comedy	0.02
author_meta_video	0.02
word_pov	0.01
word_follow	0.01
word_asmr	0.01
video_meta_duration	0.01
word_love	0
word_foryou	0
video_meta_width	0
numhandles	0
word_xyzbca	-0.01
word_viral	-0.01
word_trend	-0.01
word_parati	-0.01
word_greenscreen	-0.01
id	-0.01
create_time	-0.01
word_trending	-0.02
word_foryourpage	-0.02
word_foryoupage	-0.02
word_tiktok	-0.03
author_meta_digg	-0.03
word_fy	-0.04
author_meta_following	-0.05
word_fyp	-0.06
word_xuhuong	-0.07
text_length	-0.1
numhashtags	-0.11

Derived from 175,670 unique trending posts on Tiktok in December 2021

What we see in the analysis above is not surprising, but it is helpful to know. We calibrated on play count, on the premise that if your video isn't being seen, there's really no point to your efforts on TikTok. So what correlates to video plays? The most statistically significant factors are likes (digg count), comments, and shares – in other words, traditional measures of engagement.

The challenge with TikTok's data is that there's no way to determine if these are leading or lagging indicators. That is, does a video that's been seen a lot get more shares and comments, or does a video that earns

momentum with shares and comments end up with a lot of views? There's no way to prove causation from this data alone.

We see minor correlations for video authors' account stats such as fans and hearts. This is again no surprise – audience begets audience. If you're popular already, your stuff will be seen more.

As part of the analysis process, we extracted the top 200 hashtags and put them into the correlation analysis to see if their usage tracked with plays. The answer was universally no – using hashtags like #fyp had no mathematical relationship to your video being viewed.

So What?

In our look at trending videos on TikTok, the only conclusion we can draw with certainty is that it doesn't behave much differently than other social networks. Popularity breeds popularity; the chances of doing well in trending videos are directly proportional to your existing content quality and audience you've already recruited.

What does this mean for your TikTok strategy? The short answer is that there isn't a magic bullet, a secret shortcut you can take to achieve incredible results quickly. Like every other social network, quality content and building, a community are the paths to achieving reach and audience.

Trust Insights used a NodeJS data extraction package to extract data about 175,670 trending videos on TikTok. The timeframe of the dataset is 23 November 2021 – 5 December 2021. The date of the study is December 13, 2021. Trust Insights is the sole sponsor of the study and neither gave nor received compensation for data used, beyond applicable service fees to software vendors, and declares no competing interests.

Day 5: TikTok Marketing Topic Deep Dive

TikTok Topic Deep Dive: Marketing Topic

We continue our focus on TikTok, the short-form video platform that stormed the world in 2020 and has been on a tear ever since. In yesterday's piece, we looked at TikTok overall. Today, let's zoom in on a specific topic as an example to see why we shouldn't just accept top-level statistics about the service if we want to make use of it for our niche.

First, for the average video that is recommended in TikTok's app after searching for the #Marketing hashtag, what do the basic numbers look like?

Trending videos had a median of 11,400 likes

Trending videos had a median of 162,050 views

Trending videos had a median of 163 shares

Trending videos had a median duration of 27 seconds

12 Days of Data 2021: TikTok Marketing Topic

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Accounts had a median 75,450 fans

Accounts had a median 1.2M hearts

Accounts had a median of 247 videos

Accounts had a median of 3,465 likes

Above, we see:

- TikTok marketing videos had a median of 11,400 likes compared to trending videos' 42,800 likes
- TikTok marketing videos had a median of 162,050 views compared to trending videos' 441,300 views
- TikTok marketing videos had a median of 163 shares compared to trending videos' 369 shares
- TikTok marketing videos had a median duration of 27 seconds compared to trending videos' 15 second duration
- TikTok marketing video accounts had a median of 75,450 fans compared to trending videos' 188,600 fans
- TikTok marketing video accounts had a median of 1.2 million hearts compared to trending videos' 3.8 million hearts
- TikTok marketing video accounts had a median of 247 videos compared to trending videos' 249 videos on their accounts
- TikTok marketing video accounts had a median of 3,465 likes compared to trending videos' 4,245 likes

In addition, we saw a few other useful statistics about trending videos:

- TikTok marketing videos had a median of 111 comments compared to trending videos' 406 comments
- TikTok marketing videos had a median of 7 hashtags compared to trending videos' 3 hashtags
- TikTok marketing videos had a median of 114 characters compared to trending videos' 61 characters in their captions

What's interesting is how different the metrics for videos on the marketing hashtag are compared to the big trending videos. This shows that there may be some tactical misalignment that folks publishing on this hashtag might want to test and correct.

Why does this matter? If we want to use a platform - any platform - for marketing, we cannot assume that all users are the same. We need data about our niche to learn more about our audience, about the content that does well with our audience.

Which raises the question - is this the right audience? If we're looking to connect with marketers, do we know if these people are in fact marketers? A quick look at the contents of TikTok bios will tell us:

Most Frequent Terms in TikTok Bios for Marketing Topic
Analysis by TrustInsights.ai

Derived from 5,776 unique trending posts on Tiktok in December 2021
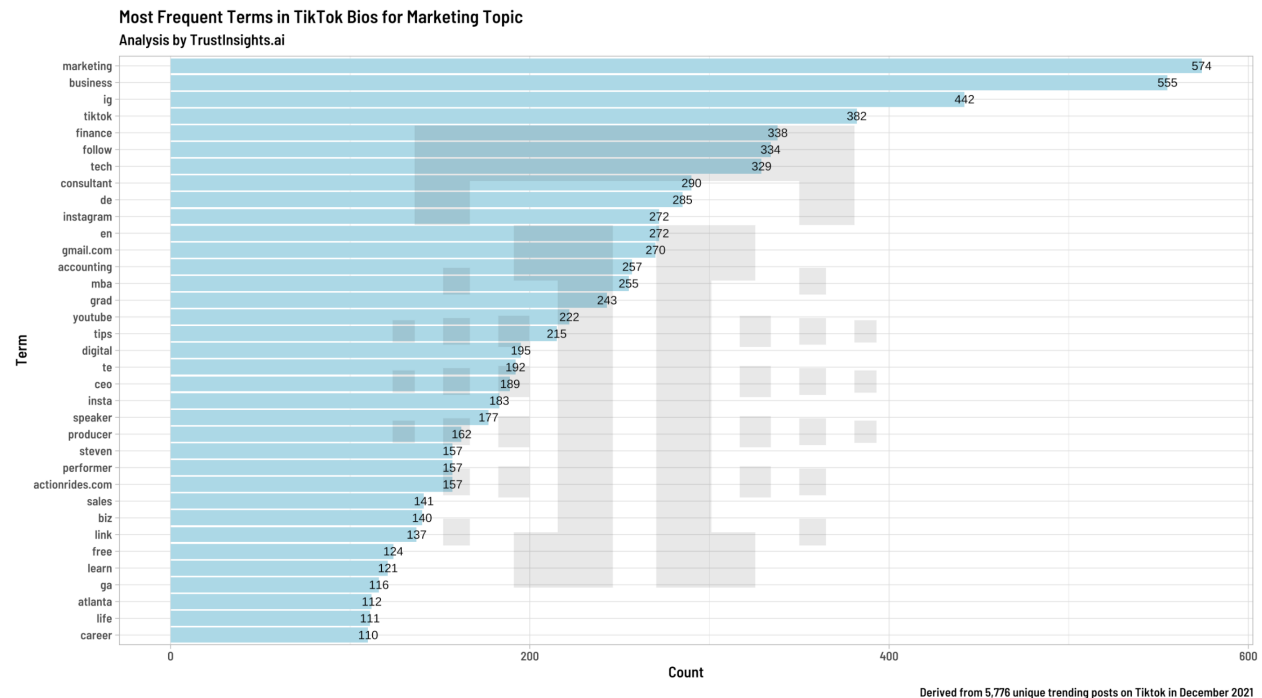
In short, it would appear so; we've got at least words we'd expect to see in the bios of marketing folks.

Now, the big question is, what predicts video views in the marketing hashtag? Are there attributes that the most viewed videos in marketing have in common? Do those extra hashtags matter? Let's dig into a basic correlation analysis.
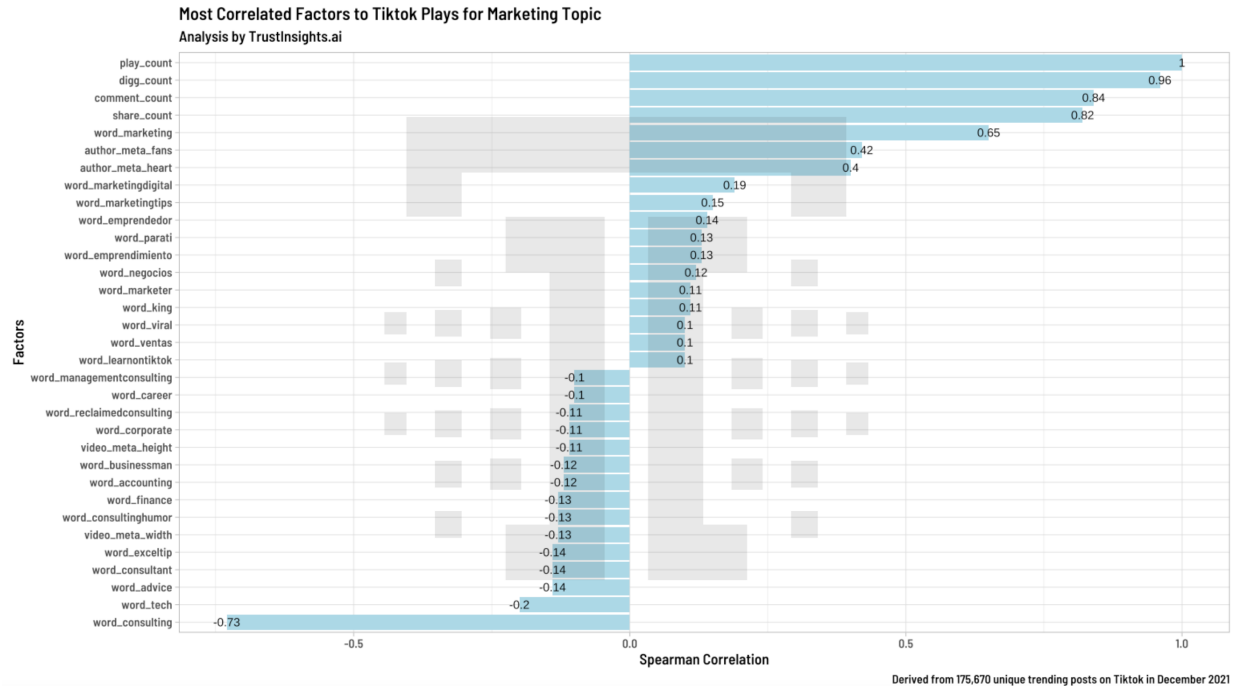
Most Correlated Factors to Tiktok Plays for Marketing Topic
Analysis by TrustInsights.ai

Derived from 175,670 unique trending posts on Tiktok in December 2021

What we see in the analysis above is not surprising, but it is helpful to know. We calibrated on play count, on the premise that if your video isn't being seen, there's really no point to your efforts on TikTok. So what correlates to video plays? The most statistically significant factors are likes (digg count), comments, and shares – in other words, traditional measures of engagement.

Followed by the obvious measures, we do see that the main hashtag, along with variations on the hashtag, do seem to provide minor correlation with video views. That is, videos which use topically-relevant hashtags do seem to get viewed more.

The challenge with TikTok's data is that there's no way to determine if these are leading or lagging indicators. That is, does a video that's been seen a lot get more shares and comments, or does a video that earns momentum with shares and comments end up with a lot of views? There's no way to prove causation from this data alone.

So What?

Unlike trending videos, which can be on nearly any topic at all, looking at videos within a specific hashtag shows very different performance. We also see hashtags potentially play a greater predictive role in whether a video gets seen or not. That said, the same general guidelines about building an audience to improve the probability of a video being seen hold true.

In a [recent article in the New York Times](#), TikTok documents confirmed many of the findings above; watch time, likes, comments, and other basic user activities are central to the recommendation algorithm, so creating content that adheres to these practices is essential for improved performance.

If we wanted to improve the performance of our videos, we might also look to marketers and check if any of their videos have entered the trending dataset - and then see what specifically they did to achieve good results.

The key takeaway is that TikTok is not an unknowable black box. With the right data, you can make good use of it for marketing purposes as long as the content you provide is valuable and what your audience wants more of.

Trust Insights used a NodeJS data extraction package to extract data about 5,776 videos on TikTok using the marketing hashtag. The timeframe of the dataset is 23 November 2021 - 5 December 2021. The date of the study is December 13, 2021. Trust Insights is the sole sponsor of the study and neither gave nor received compensation for data used, beyond applicable service fees to software vendors, and declares no competing interests.

Day 6: SEO Page Decay Statistics

SEO Page Decay Statistics

On the sixth Day of Data, we turn our attention to page decay. In the world of SEO, page decay is what happens when a page goes bad. If we allow a page on our website to go missing or to stop working, what are the consequences and how swiftly do we earn them?

Google's John Mueller, a representative from their search relations team, [recently stated](#) that Google can take anywhere from a few hours to a few weeks for the search engine to detect a change in a page, depending on how important your site is. The more important a site or page is, the faster Google is likely to check in on it - which means that something going wrong can have rapid, unfortunate consequences.

What are those consequences? Let's take a look at an apples-to-apples comparison of SEO metrics after 30 days of a page going missing to understand the importance of keeping our websites - especially key pages on them - in good health. We'll use the AHREFS SEO tool and a broad English language query to scoop up a bunch of pages for analysis:

12 Days of Data 2021:
SEO Page Decay Impact

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- Page value declines 95%
- Domain rating declines 41%
- Referring domains decline 41%
- Social media shares drop off 98%
- Traffic to the page declines 99%

What we found was stunning, in terms of what happens if you let a page go bad on your website. Instead of looking at the whole year, we restricted our investigation to just pages in the last 30 days, comparing pages that have gone bad with pages that were still good.

When a page goes bad on your site, or a page linking to your site goes bad, here's what changes in just 30 days:

- Domain rating declines 41%

- Referring domains decline 41%

- Page value declines 95%

- Social media shares decline 98%

- Page traffic declines 99%

What's changed since the last time we looked at this data in 2020 is how few pages are shown as going bad. In 2020, we saw about 7% of pages listed in content exploration tools as bad. This year, it's a tiny sliver of a fraction of 1%.

Why? Because Google and other search engines have dramatically increased the speed at which they process data, SEO practitioners and content marketers have had to do much more due diligence in keeping websites up to date and operational. Letting a key page remain broken likely causes much more alarm than it used to.

The number to really pay attention to above is referring domains - these are inbound links to our pages from other websites. We can fix up most of the other metrics in some fashion ourselves, but referring domains and inbound links are out of our control. Once they're gone, it's laborious work to re-earn them, to reach out to every site that previously linked to us and ask them to link to us again. That pages lost 41% of their inbound links in 30 days is a stunning number.

Key Takeaway

SEO is meaningless if the page itself is gone. These sharp declines in basic marketing metrics underscore the absolute necessity of keeping your website running and healthy. Letting a page decay diminishes every marketing metric we care about.

The sharp decline in referring domains also means SEO practitioners are becoming more vigilant about removing dead links - links you may never get back. If a page goes missing on your site, redirect it as soon as possible, lest the linking party finds it missing and removes your link altogether. Many SEO professionals use automated tools to identify and remove dead links, so the faster we fix things, the less likely it is we'll lose inbound links.

How do we stay on top of our site's health? Free services like Google Search Console and Bing Webmaster Tools offer notifications and alerts when they detect something's amiss. Make full use of these tools to keep an eye on your website and ensure everything is running as it should be. If organic search traffic is a key part of your attribution model, consider using paid SEO tools to monitor your site's overall

health on a faster interval than free tools can provide. Losing a key page has serious, rapid consequences.

Methodology

Trust Insights used the AHREFS crawling engine to examine 228 million articles from the 2021 index in the English language. A subset of 160,946 pages formed the basis for comparison of working versus broken content, further restricted to a 30-day dataset comprised of 39,314 pages, clustered and matched using propensity score matching. The sample has a 99% confidence level with a 0.75% confidence interval, or margin of error. The period of the study is November 14, 2021 – December 15, 2021. The date of data extraction is December 16, 2021. Trust Insights is the sole sponsor of the study and neither gave nor received compensation for data used, beyond applicable service fees to software vendors.

Day 7: Press Release Statistics

Press Release Top Level Statistics

On the seventh day of the 12 Days of Data, we dig into the press release, or news release. How many releases happened in 2020? What did they accomplish? Thanks to the Google News database and the GDELT Project, we are able to read all the press releases in 2021.

This year, we were able to extract the full text of 98,311 press releases out of 118,813 press releases in the Google News database. This is an increase of 5.8% from the number of releases in 2020:

Number of Press Releases Per Year 2016-2021

Analysis by TrustInsights.ai

Let's take a look at the top level numbers:

12 Days of Data 2021:
Press Release Statistics

Median impact of releases was 3 on the Goldstein Scale

Median number of syndications per release was 6

Median number of outlets picking up a release was 1

49.6% have invalid email contact information

38.3% of releases had detailed contact information

10.6% of releases were from PR agencies

65.4% of releases were on a wire service

Median 582 words per release

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- 10.6% of releases were sent by agencies, down from 13.1% last year, a 19.1% decrease

- 65.4% of releases were sent using a wire service, up from 51.4% last year, a 27.2% increase

- 38.3% of releases had detailed contact information including email address, down from 49.4% last year, a 22.5% decrease

- 49.6% of releases had invalid contact information supplied, up from 24.9% last year, a 99.2% increase

For some details where we don't have year over year data, let's see what we found:

- Releases had a median of 582 words per release

- Releases were picked up a median of 1 time per release

- Releases were cited or syndicated a median of 6 times per release

- Releases had a median Goldstein score of 3 on a -10 to +10 scale

What do we make of this data? Each individual statistic isn't particularly helpful by itself, but in aggregate, this paints a picture of a very changed

public relations profession. It would appear, at least in terms of volume, that press releases (which tend to cost a fair bit of money for reputable news wire services) have fallen out of favor.

Some of this is very likely pandemic-related, especially the decrease in releases as more PR agencies have pivoted into other areas of media such as content marketing and influencer marketing. Many agencies have been mired in the massive employment dislocation, with lots of people quitting or switching positions at competitors.

Key Takeaway

Press releases and news releases still have a role to play, especially in highly-regulated industries. Financial services and investment firms subject to rules such as SEC Regulation FD (Fair Disclosure) still hold the newswire release to be the gold standard of acceptable public disclosure. While the SEC ruled that social media was an acceptable form of disclosure in years past, the nature of social network algorithms could potentially imperil that ruling in the years to come. If you have news to distribute that requires public disclosure in a time-tested (and more importantly, court-tested) manner, use a press release.

However, for other forms of outreach, do what many PR agencies have done and pivot into social media, influencer marketing, and content marketing. These channels tend to offer more reliable results, especially at a time when traditional news media outlets are shorter-staffed than ever before. Getting information out to customers, prospects, and the general public has never been simultaneously easier and harder. Easier in that there are many more channels to choose from, and harder in that there are so many channels, it's hard to find the right one for your audience.

Methodology

Trust Insights used Google's GDELT news service to extract 118,813 news

releases published in 2021 in the English language. Releases were filtered to require a minimum of five sentences and had to be publicly accessible, leaving 98,311 from the initial extract. The timeframe of the study is January 1, 2021 to December 16, 2021. The date of extraction is December 16, 2021. Trust Insights is the sole sponsor of the study and neither gave nor received compensation for data used, beyond applicable service fees to software vendors, and declares no competing interests.
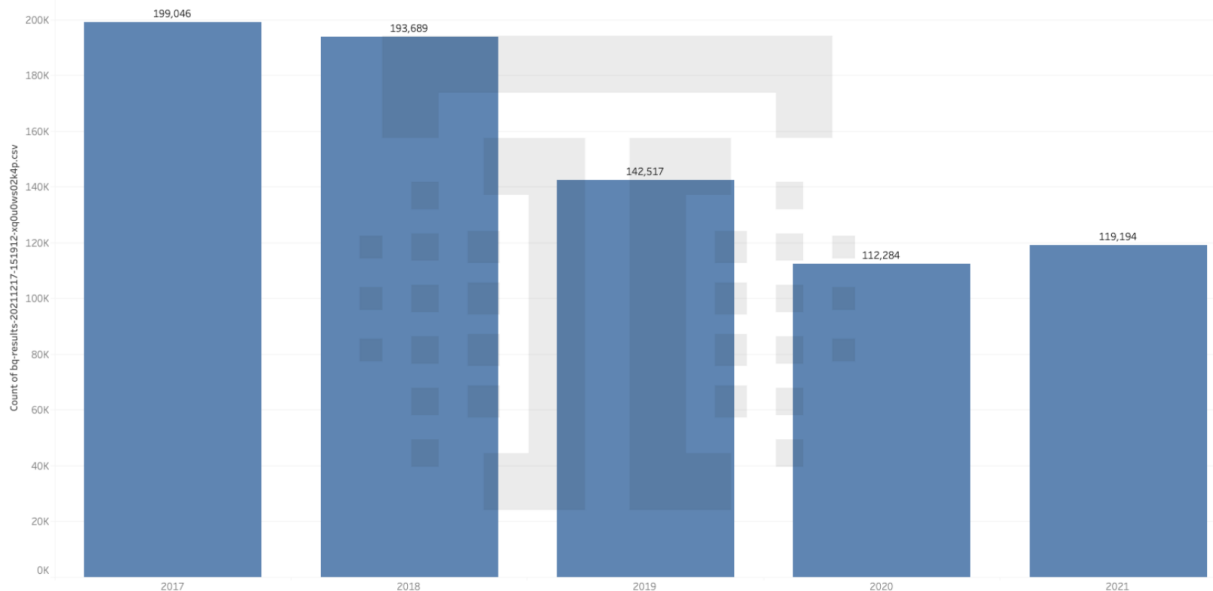
Day 8: Press Release (Over)used Words

Most Used Words in Press Releases

On the eighth day of the 12 Days of Data, we dig into the language of the press release, or news release. Thanks to the Google News database and the GDELT Project, we are able to read all the press releases in 2021.

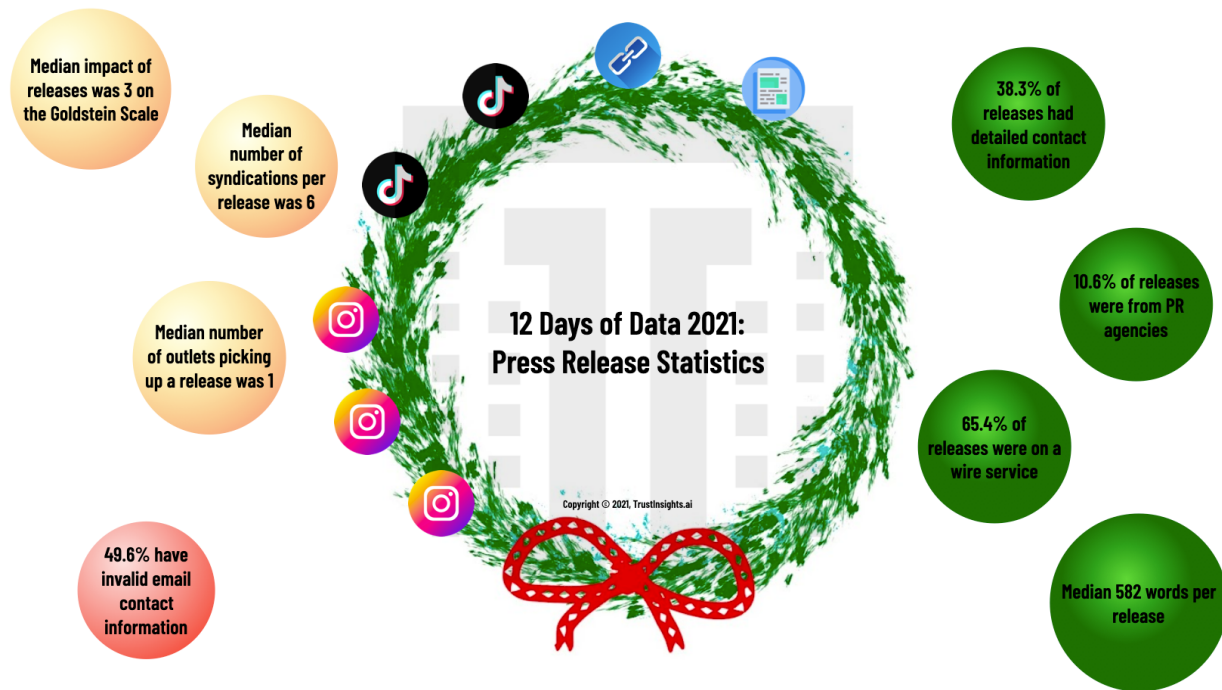One of our favorite exercises from years past was to look at words in releases that tended to be used a little too much, from old corporate stand-bys like "synergy" to the rash of expressions like how excited or proud or pleased we are about some piece of news.

Why do these terms matter? Because an awful lot of the time, when words and phrases are used by everyone, they lose distinctiveness. We end up sounding like every other brand or company. Thus, to sound a little different, we should be using different words.

Let's take a look at the words of 2021. We dug into 115,099 press releases longer than 5 sentences published this year to find this data:

12 Days of Data 2021:
Most Used Words in
Press Releases

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8,411 distinct adjectives

12,552 distinct verbs

38,975 distinct nouns

1,991 distinct adverbs

Average length of 203 words

23,763,563 words

115,099 Press Releases

What we see at a top level is relatively little lexical diversity. Lexical diversity means a large variety of words used; the more lexical diversity any given document has, the more unique words it uses. In this case, out of 23 million words, we have a relatively small selection of unique words:

- 38,975 distinct nouns
- 12,552 distinct verbs
- 8,411 distinct adjectives
- 1,991 distinct adverbs

When we look at the words as a whole, obviously most are dominated by nouns:

Most Used Words in 2021 Press Releases
Analysis by TrustInsights.ai

Word	Word Count
company	104082
news	104007
information	97522
business	87747
services	76978
global	71207
industry	57603
health	57524
including	56954
technology	50432
article	48469
data	47828
share	47809
development	47368
million	43951
media	43464
growth	43282
world	42849
research	42263
management	41597
time	41400
people	40053
visit	39728
service	39665
social	38549
community	38014
leading	37300
experience	36161
source	35975
content	35873
president	35539
team	34718
energy	33625
public	33047
international	32676
care	31849
report	31673
release	31308
top	30950
provide	30688

pos
- Adjective
- Noun
- Verb (intransitive)
- Verb (transitive)

Data source is Google's GDELT Project and Trust Insights news extractor, timeframe is January 1 – December 17, 2021

1   Company: 104,082 uses

2   News: 104,007 uses

3   Information: 97,522 uses

4   Business: 87,747 uses

5   Services: 76,978 uses

Where things get interesting is when we look at the different parts of speech, such as adjectives:

Most Used Adjective Words in 2021 Press Releases
Analysis by TrustInsights.ai

Word	Word Count
global	71207
social	38549
leading	37800
public	33047
international	32676
digital	30001
national	29177
medical	25299
real	23730
local	22205
free	21124
american	20445
economic	18597
largest	18379
private	18245
chief	17700
additional	17448
growing	17377
current	16519
major	16149
registered	16109
innovative	15902
potential	15841
strategic	15142
commercial	15097
similar	14936
comprehensive	14657
significant	14313
human	13976
searching	13961
corporate	13952
senior	13387
strong	13365
clinical	13238
limited	13158
unique	13100
total	13087
level	12941
critical	12940
vice	12871

Data source is Google's GDELT Project and Trust Insights news extractor, timeframe is January 1 – December 17, 2021

Adjectives are important because they're descriptors, they're differentiators in speech. When we look at the list of adjectives most used, we see familiar saws like leading, comprehensive, strategic, etc. in the list.

Key Takeaway

As our colleague Jay Baer says, "Same is lame." When you say, "We are the first solutions-oriented partner focused on innovation as the largest, best leading platform for customer experience now and in the future", you're not really saying anything - at least not anything that can't also be claimed by a thousand other companies.

Presumably, if you're publishing a news release, you have actual news. There's nothing new at all in these overused words, and using them diminishes any perception of newness about your announcement. Instead, your news comes across as an also-ran, a competitor, perhaps even a knock-off or copycat.

Why do we do this to ourselves? Two reasons. First, while such language is incredibly repetitive, it's also perceived as safe. No one will object to phrases like leading and strategic, nor will anyone find objection in discussing industry-leading services or your future-proof platform. Compare that with a brand taking controversial points of view and perspective; the trite jargon is seen as the ultimate safe choice (even if it causes an audience to immediately ignore you).

Second, many companies, especially larger ones, employ consultants and agencies to handle media relations. Anyone who's worked for any significant period of time at a public relations agency knows that tasks like press release writing are typically delegated to the most junior, lowest-paid staff members who copy and paste from templates or previous releases to save time. The net effect is that every release sounds like boilerplate because it's all sourced from the same boilerplate language, with only the company name and CEO quotes changed from release to release.

What's the solution? Better writing. At the very least, consider using a free service like [Related Words](#) to try finding synonyms for the most frequent offenders, like the top ten list above. Ideally, create something so remarkable, so newsworthy that customers do the talking for you, and then you're not using jargon, but real words from real people.

Methodology

Trust Insights used Google's GDELT news service to extract 118,813 news releases published in 2021 in the English language. Releases were filtered to require a minimum length of 5 sentences, leaving 115,099 from the initial extract. The timeframe of the study is January 1, 2021 to December 16, 2021. The date of extraction is December 16, 2021. Trust Insights is the sole sponsor of the study and neither gave nor received compensation for data used, beyond applicable service fees to software vendors, and declares no competing interests.

Day 9: 2022 Marketing Campaign Forecast

2022 Marketing Campaign Forecast (USA)

One of our favorite forecasts for marketers, B2B and B2C, is our annual marketing campaign forecast. With this forecast, we look at what's likely to happen over the coming year so that you can plan your marketing appropriately. What weeks will our campaigns do best or worst?

Q1 Worst Week: March 6
Q2 Worst Week: June 26
Q3 Worst Week: July 3
Q4 Worst Week: December 18

12 Days of Data 2021: 2022 Marketing Campaign Forecast

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Q1 Best Week: January 16
Q2 Best Week: April 24
Q3 Best Week: September 18
Q4 Best Week: October 23

How do we know what's a good time for marketing and what isn't? By people's behaviors. Our audience, our customers may not tell us when the best time to market to them is, but they do tell search engines, and those searches help us understand when they're likely to be doing something.

For example, what is someone about to do when they type in a search

like "Outlook out of office" or "GMail out of office"? Unsurprisingly, they are looking for how to manage the out of office feature in these software products so that they can go on vacation, or at least be away from work, away from the office.

If we know when people are searching for these terms, then by default we know when they won't be in the office. And if we know when they won't be in the office, then we know when not to launch major marketing campaigns that will simply fall on deaf ears or flooded inboxes.

So, if we use some predictive analytics to forecast ahead the next 12 months, when will people be searching for these terms the most? Those are the times not to launch major campaigns. When will people be searching for these terms **the least**? Those are the times when major marketing campaigns will at least be made available to people while they're in the office:
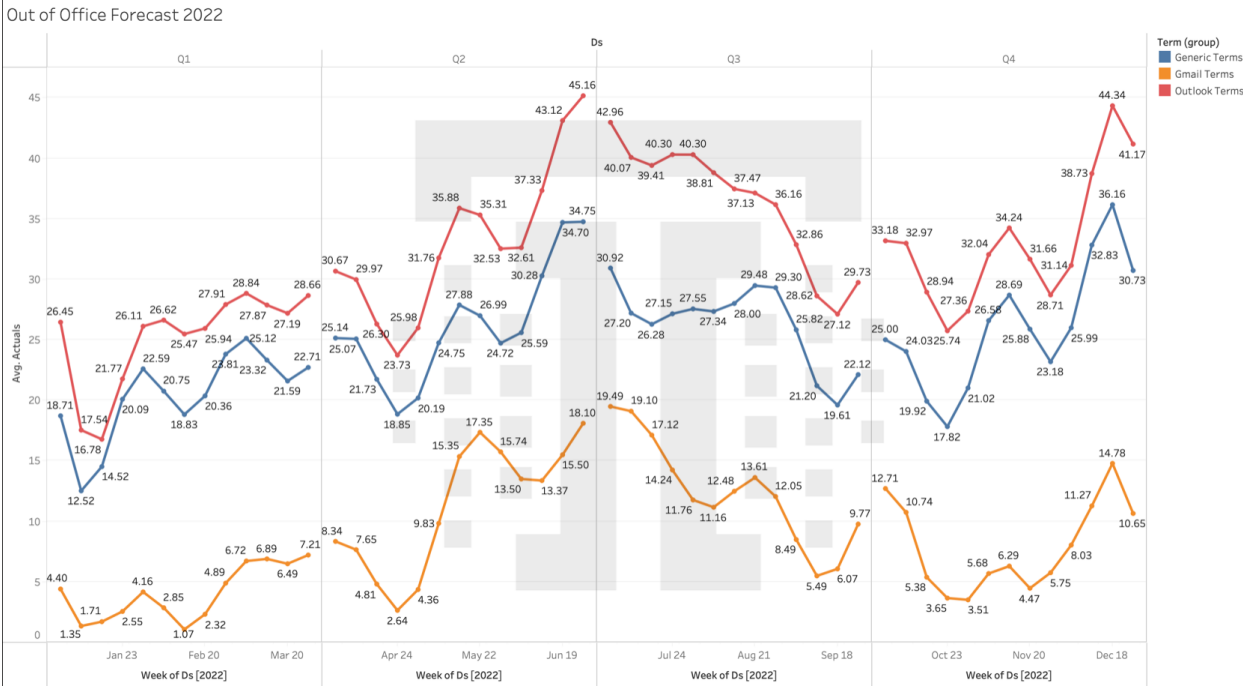
When volume is highest, people are leaving the office shortly. We shouldn't be doing any kind of major marketing campaigns during those weeks if we can avoid it. This data also applies to efforts such as sales;

note how difficult quarter-end will be at the end of Q2. Also note that this data is based on USA search volume; if you do business in another nation and especially in the Southern Hemisphere, your regional calendar is likely to look different.

The power of predictive analytics helps us to understand what we should be doing and when. We know the broad generalities of when people are in or out of the office, but predictive analytics helps us nail down the specifics.

Methodology

Trust Insights used its proprietary software combined with data from AHREFS and Google Trends to produce this forecast. The timeframe of the training data for the machine learning model is January 1, 2016 to December 16, 2021. The date of prediction is December 20, 2021. Trust Insights is the sole sponsor of the study and neither gave nor received compensation for data used, beyond applicable service fees to software vendors, and declares no competing interests.

Day 10: Top News and Web Content

Top News and Web Content

On the tenth day of 12 Days of Data, we turn our attention to top content around the web, especially the news. For content that did well in 2021, what characteristics did it share? Using the AHREFS index of over a trillion web pages, we examined a large sample of 1,793,796 top stories from 2021 by traffic to see what made the best content on the web.

Let's take a look at the headline numbers. In 2021:

- Length of top performing stories was a median of 463 words
- Top content earned a median of 7,249 views per piece
- Top content earned a mere median 1 social share

- Content was consumed most on Saturdays
- Key topics included stimulus checks, the World Cup, and COVID vaccines

The top story topics of 2021 are no surprise to anyone in such a tumultuous year:

Most Used Phrases in 2021 Top Performing News Articles
Analysis by TrustInsights.ai

Word	Word Count
world cup	160
sports illustrated	159
stimulus check	156
dot esports	149
themotleyfool stocks	136
net worth	125
news analysis	118
hbo max	106
star wars	102
free download	98
donald trump	96
official site	95
free fire	95
floyd mayweather	94
abc news	92
elon musk	88
bernie sanders	84
hotels hotels.com	83
cancel free	83
nintendo switch	81
covid vaccine	81
news times	80
logan paul	80
south africa	79
price prediction	79
xbox series	77
tokyo olympics	77
apk download	77
super bowl	76
stimulus checks	76
recipe critic	76
social media	75
android free	73
los angeles	72
teal mango	69
stock market	69
grand prix	69
weather channel	68
movie review	67
amazon prime	67
air fryer	66
pubg mobile	65
transfer news	64
meghan markle	64
samsung galaxy	63
revenue service	63
las vegas	63
vaccine mandate	62
share price	62
internal revenue	62

Data source is AHREFS, timeframe is January 1 - December 17, 2021

Using raw frequency counts, we see:

1. The World Cup
2. Sports Illustrated
3. Stimulus checks
4. Esports
5. The stock marketing
6. Net worth of various billionaires
7. Content on the HBO Max streaming service
8. Star Wars-related content

9   Free downloads

10   Former US president Donald Trump

So What?

A couple of key points stand out; this year, content that performed well was half as long as content from previous years. Whether this is an anomaly or a trend remains to be seen, but given the meteoric rise of other forms of short-attention span content like TikTok, it's not surprising that audiences might not be willing to dig into longer content. As you're planning your content marketing for 2022, consider not only the length of the content you produce, but also experimenting in many more formats if possible.

Second, one of the major surprises in the data was how few social shares were observed. While the underlying data source AHREFS doesn't have visibility into all social networks, we still would have expected major news stories and popular content to have earned more shares than a median of 1. What do we take away from this? Social media may be playing less and less of a role in how publications attract readers – and by proxy, it may be playing a smaller role in how you get your audience to your content as well.

The trend over the last 5 years is clear: **social networks want brands to pay up for any attention at all**. Even credible news sources strain to reach their audiences on social media. If your strategy does not involve extracting audiences from social networks and putting them into reliable reach tactics like email marketing, you expose yourself to substantial risk.

Methodology

Trust Insights used the AHREFS crawling engine to extract 1,793,796 articles from the 2021 index. Pages were selected using English language stopwords with adult content filtered out and homepages of sites filtered

out. The dataset was merged, then de-duplicated by article URL. Articles were limited to the English language, and republished articles from prior years were excluded. For top stories, article headlines were aggregated and then parsed into bigrams, then frequency counted as a representation of the most important stories. The measure of centrality used for this study was the median. The period of the study is January 1, 2021 – December 20, 2021. The date of data extraction is December 21, 2020. Trust Insights is the sole sponsor of the study and neither gave nor received compensation for data used, beyond applicable service fees to software vendors.

Day 11: Content Republishing

Content Republishing

On the eleventh day of the 12 Days of Data, we examine content republishing. Content republishing is the act of taking an existing piece of content, potentially making changes to it of some kind, and then publishing it again on a new date. This practice has become far more commonplace in the last few years as publications of all kinds have focused on enhancing SEO strength (continually reposting their best content for new inbound links) as well as journalistic publications facing staffing shortages simply republishing to fill a content queue. But does content republishing work? Does it generate results? Let's take a look.

At a high level, content republishing:

- Earns 14% fewer shares on Twitter

- Earns 71% fewer shares on Pinterest

- Earns 0.45% less traffic

- Earns 175% more linking domains

- Is done so frequently, content is rarely more than 30 days old

- Is 23% longer in terms of word count

Out of 104 million English language pages published in 2020:

- 5.4 million pages, 5.21%, were republished intra-year

- Republished pages earned 7.78% less traffic than new pages

- Republished pages had 5.6% less traffic value in terms of organic search value

- Republished pages had 23% fewer social shares

- Republished pages had a 32% increase in referring domains

When we look at the trend of when content was republished, we see:

Republished Articles in 2021
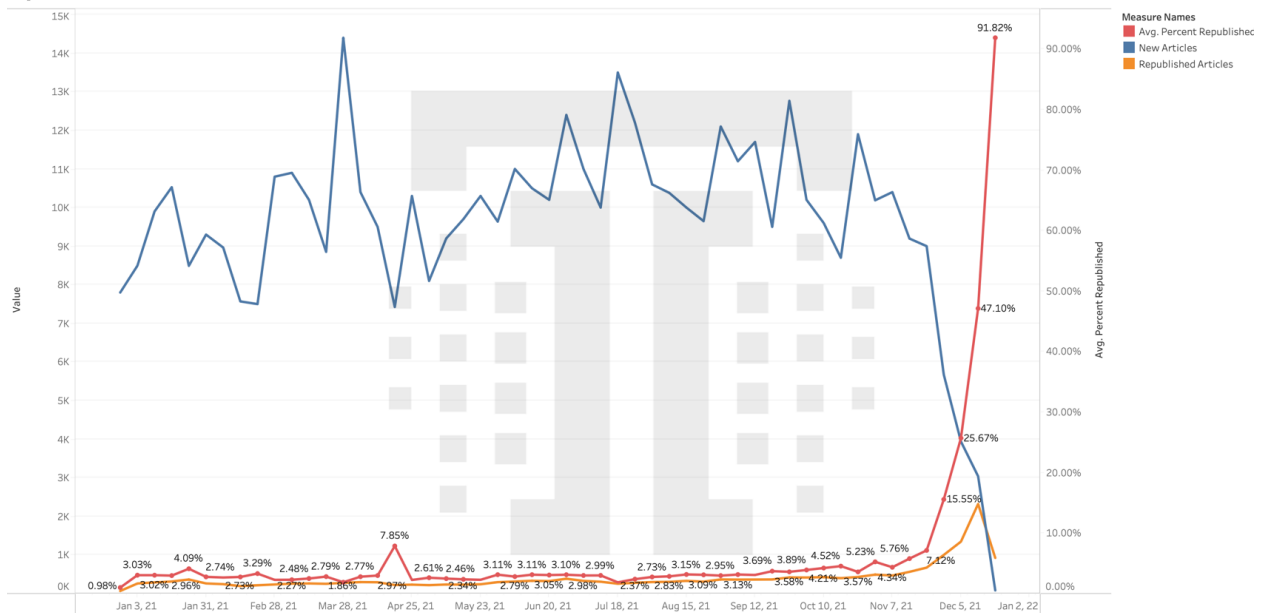
We see this clear, massive wave of content that's consistently being republished and kept fresh; rarely is republished content allowed to

simply sit and age in place - if it's worth republishing once, it's worth continuing to republish.

So What?

Republishing content is a useful technique to refresh and update old content. But new, original content performs better for the third year in a row for traffic and social shares - but not for inbound links.

With this insight, it's important to weigh the considerations about a republished page versus a new page. If you don't have the resources to consistently crank out new, high-quality content, republished content is better than poor quality or no content, but it's less than optimum. If you're pursuing republishing content as a way to make up for staffing shortfalls, just know that it will not perform as well. If you're pursuing it for long term SEO benefit, you'll receive some benefit from potentially increased inbound links.

This remains a marketing opportunity for those who excel at creating original content. If you identify a publication in your industry or niche which is relying heavily on republished content just to keep the lights on, you may be able to submit new, original content that is better than what they're recycling. That in turn can be used as leverage to publish content on ever-increasing quality publications as you develop a reputation for being a source of high-quality, original material.

Methodology

Trust Insights used the AHREFS crawling engine to extract 1,793,796 articles from the 2021 index. Pages were selected using English language stopwords with adult content filtered out and homepages of sites filtered out. The dataset was merged, then de-duplicated by article URL. Articles were limited to the English language, and republished articles from prior years were excluded. For top stories, article headlines were aggregated and then parsed into bigrams, then frequency counted as a

representation of the most important stories. The measure of centrality used for this study was the median. The period of the study is January 1, 2021 – December 20, 2021. The date of data extraction is December 21, 2020. Trust Insights is the sole sponsor of the study and neither gave nor received compensation for data used, beyond applicable service fees to software vendors.

Day 12: Slack and Discord

Slack and Discord Instances

On the 12th day of the 12 Days of Data, we look to two of the largest private social media community platforms and their continued explosive growth, Slack and Discord. Back in 2019, we identified these two platforms as strong contenders for private, "velvet-rope" social media communities that escaped the grasp of Google and Facebook, but provided people with safe spaces to interact, [such as our Analytics for Marketers Slack community](#).

With the pandemic, both platforms experienced rapid, substantial growth over the last two years. Audiences, looking for communities that supported the niches they were interested in, flocked to these platforms and started creating communities for their specific interests. Enterprising companies, especially those operating in more restricted spaces such as gambling, cryptocurrencies, and adult entertainment, also seized the opportunity to create their own private communities, a bulwark against the continued squeezing of brands on public social media like Facebook Inc.

(A note of clarification that Slack refers to its communities as instances, while Discord refers to the same entity as a server)

Some of the headline statistics:

- 32,141 new publicly-accessible Slack instances in 2021, up from 16,170 in 2020 (many more that are not publicly accessible, such as company workspaces, are not included), a 98.8% increase

- 189,703 new Discord servers in 2021, up from 124,603 in 2020, a 52.2% increase

- On the single largest day, 3,090 new Slack instances were formed, up from 350 in 2020, a 783% increase

- On the single largest day, 3,883 new Discord servers were formed, up from 2,888 in 2020, a 34.5% increase

- Traffic to just the invitation pages for Slack and Discord earned 117.4 million visitors in 2021

We see these traffic surges clearly in an examination of the past few years.

Slack and Discord instances by creation date
Analysis by TrustInsights.ai

Number of new instances

Data from AHREFS

value
discord_count
slack_count
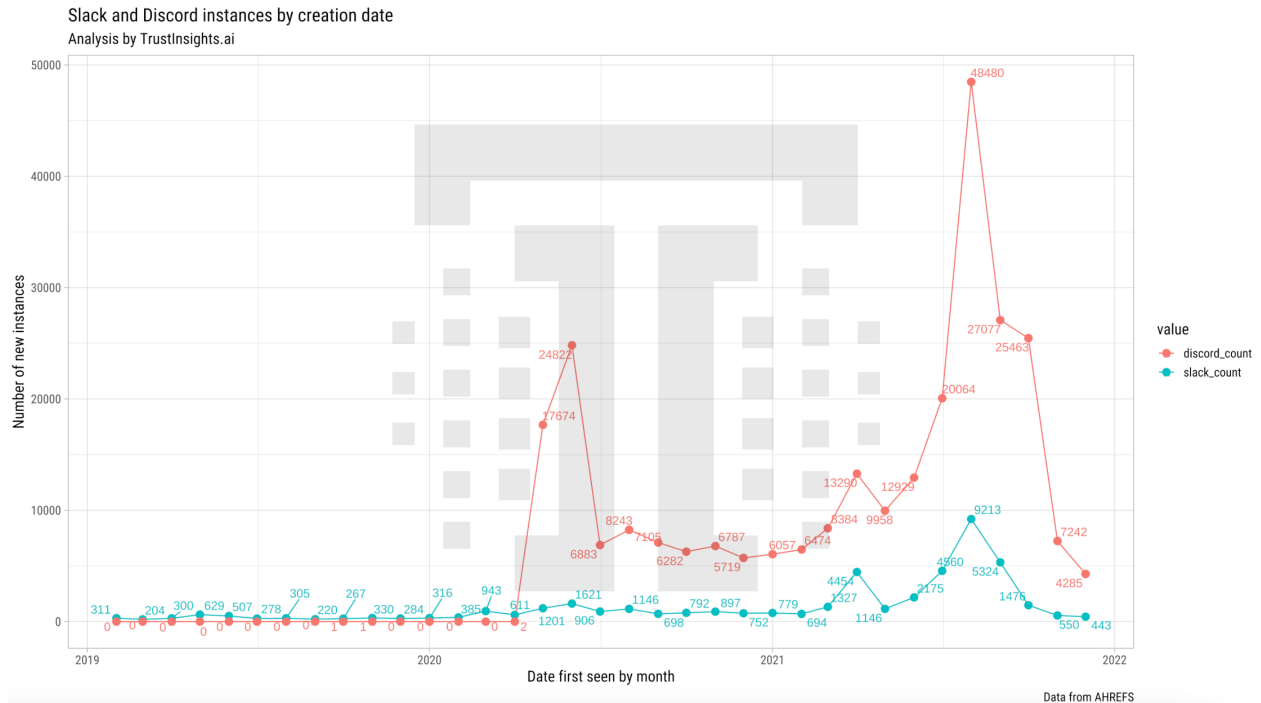
We see the first big spike last year for both services in the early months of the pandemic - again a reminder that the majority of Slack instances are private (usually companies) and are not reflected here. But the surge was nothing compared to the second major surge in August of 2021 as both Slack and Discord saw record growth of new instances.

Let's now look at the top instances in each network. What are the most popular servers on each service, by invitation page traffic?

Top 25 Slack Instances by Referring Page traffic
Analysis by TrustInsights.ai

Referring Page Name	Traffic
Net□□□□□□ | □□□□□□□□□□□□□	223953
$0.0006 | BITFXT COIN (BXT) Token Tracker | Etherscan	172712
Synergy - Share one mouse & keyboard across computers	53414
Three.js – JavaScript 3D Library	49522
Dorian 2019 – Hurricane And Typhoon Updates	40553
Downloads | Selenium	34489
Plan Your Visit | The Guggenheim Museums and Foundation	30374
Overview - Redmine	27596
Online Certification Training Courses for Professionals	27313
Apache Airflow	27244
Presto | Distributed SQL Query Engine for Big Data	24394
Sequoia	22821
Webcoin (WEB) Price, Chart & Market Cap | DigitalCoinPrice	19005
Bitcoin Diamond (BCD)	19004
Alpaca - Commission-Free API First Stock Brokerage	14873
18 high-impact virtual team building activities and games...	13837
Roam Research – A note taking tool for networked thought.	13483
Nginx - Official Image | Docker Hub	13049
Cloud Native Computing Foundation	12993
Homepage - CoderPad	12677
ESPEasy - Let's Control It	9899
Chip | the savings and investments platform of the future	9182
ITV2's Love Island sub	8677
10 Best Pixel Art Software & Programs for Developers (202...	8339
Spinnaker	8270

Data from AHREFS

For Slack, we see lots of tech and cryptocurrencies, neither of which is a surprise. A surprise entrant on the list, however, is the Guggenheim Museum and Foundation. Slack is being increasingly used by non-technical organizations for managing their communities.

Top 25 Discord Instances by Referring Page traffic
Analysis by TrustInsights.ai

Referring Page Name	Traffic
Y8 Games : Free online games at Y8.com	4995517
Hentai Haven | Watch free Hentai HD	4239473
Zula | Türk Yapımı Online Silah ve Savaş Oyunu	3743947
Firo price today, FIRO to USD live, marketcap and chart |...	3484054
MyAnimeList.net - Anime and Manga Database and Community	2710716
The Best Discord Bots and Servers | Top.gg	1797374
Discover | Discord Bots | Top.gg	1730052
Rythm - You, your friends, and some good tunes	1691450
Coin Master free spins – daily links | Pocket Tactics	1398865
r/LivestreamFail: Livestream wins, fails, and everything ...	1375387
MangaDex - MangaDex	1256624
GeoGuessr - Let's explore the world!	1211199
Download Bluestacks - App Player on PC - Windows and Mac	1197157
Paper.io play online	1152771
South Park - Satirical Animated TV Show | Watch Free Epis...	1144674
Manga Livre | Leitor Online e Host de Mangás PT-BR!	1093702
Reddit Soccer Streams | Soccer Streams | The Original Soc...	999868
HentaiFox - Free Hentai Manga, Doujinshi and Anime Porn	987032
Filmovizija - Online filmovi sa prevodom	911399
Canlı Maç izle - Taraftarium24 - Justin tv izle	773840
Moo Moo	742158
wallstreetbets	738801
RLCraft - Modpacks - Minecraft - CurseForge	703064
Discord Status	692944
Danbooru: Anime Image Board	690950

Data from AHREFS

Discord's gaming heritage shines through in the number of communities dedicated to gaming. However, a number of other forms of entertainment also show up on the list. Discord's more public nature invites a lot more traffic and prominence than Slack.

Thinking of starting your own instance? Here are the top words used in the invitation links for each service.

Top 35 Most Frequent Phrases in Slack Links

Analysis by TrustInsights.ai

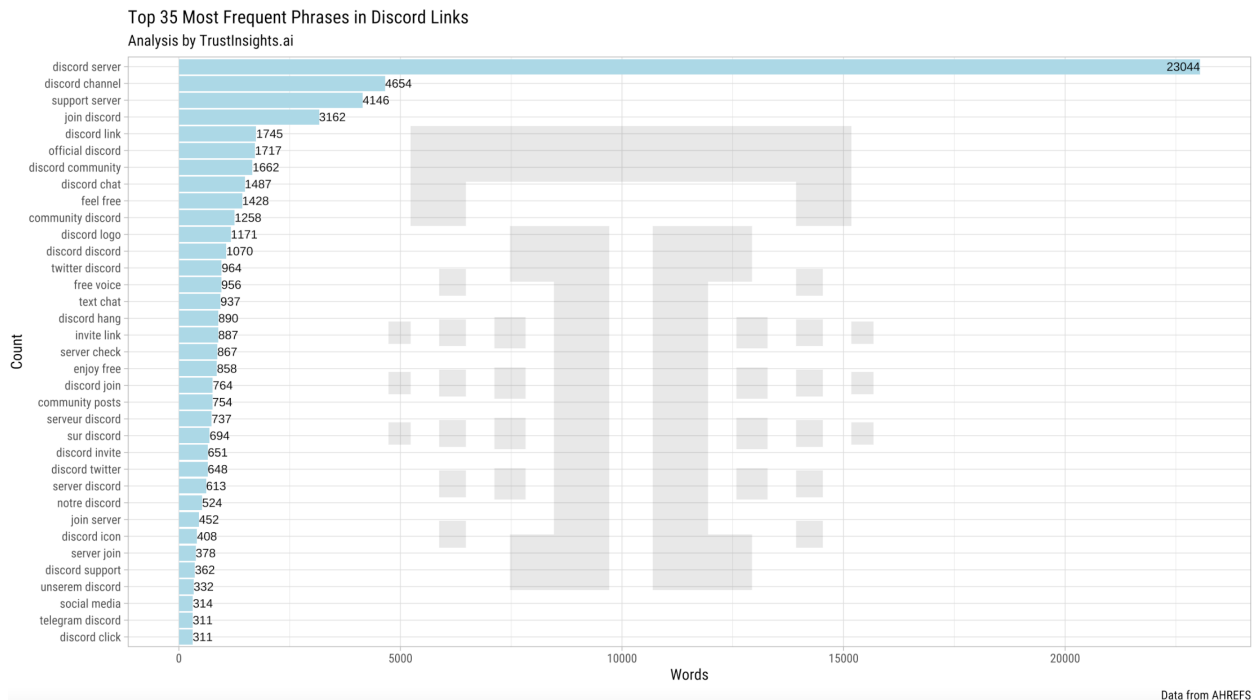| Phrase	Count
slack channel	2685
mydata slack	792
slack workspace	723
slack community	658
community slack	327
slack app	271
join slack	265
slack team	237
feel free	164
join shared_invite	163
app directory	154
slack chat	151
slack slack	142
invite link	111
email address	91
slack join	90
slack channels	84
public slack	84
slack invite	77
sur mydata	67
slack account	67
slack archive	65
twitter slack	60
slack thread	60
slack link	60
mailing list	60
real time	58
incoming webhooks	57
slack discussion	54
incoming webhook	53
slack twitter	51
social media	48
slack space	45
github slack	45
sur slack	44

Words (x-axis): 0, 1000, 2000

Data from AHREFS

Slack channel, Slack workspace, and Slack community top the list; if you're unsure what to refer to yours as, those would be three recognizable choices.

Top 35 Most Frequent Phrases in Discord Links

Analysis by TrustInsights.ai

Phrase	Count
discord server	23044
discord channel	4654
support server	4146
join discord	3162
discord link	1745
official discord	1717
discord community	1662
discord chat	1487
feel free	1428
community discord	1258
discord logo	1171
discord discord	1070
twitter discord	964
free voice	956
text chat	937
discord hang	890
invite link	887
server check	867
enjoy free	858
discord join	764
community posts	754
serveur discord	737
sur discord	694
discord invite	651
discord twitter	648
server discord	613
notre discord	524
join server	452
discord icon	408
server join	378
discord support	362
unserem discord	332
social media	314
telegram discord	311
discord click	311

Words (x-axis): 0, 5000, 10000, 15000, 20000

Data from AHREFS

For Discord, Discord server, Discord channel, and just referring to your community as a Discord are the most popular choices for naming conventions.

So What?

The explosive growth of both these platforms is a testament to the willingness of people to add yet another service to their social media habits if the service provides them the benefits they're looking for.

Community platforms like Slack and Discord incorporate no algorithms in what members see, opting instead for a simple chronological timeline – an appeal of the mainstream social media platforms early on that have since been lost due to services using AI to promote retention.

Critically, these platforms also make money differently. Slack charges companies to administer their platforms after a certain number of messages. Discord charges users who want to upgrade their servers to have more premium features like improved voice and video chat and other appearance customizations. Neither uses advertising to pay the bills, which means that both have different financial incentives. Instead of selling ads, these services are incentivized to promote member retention in their communities.

Inside each service, multiple offerings exist for community managers to maintain and improve their communities, from moderation tools to member retention activities like events.
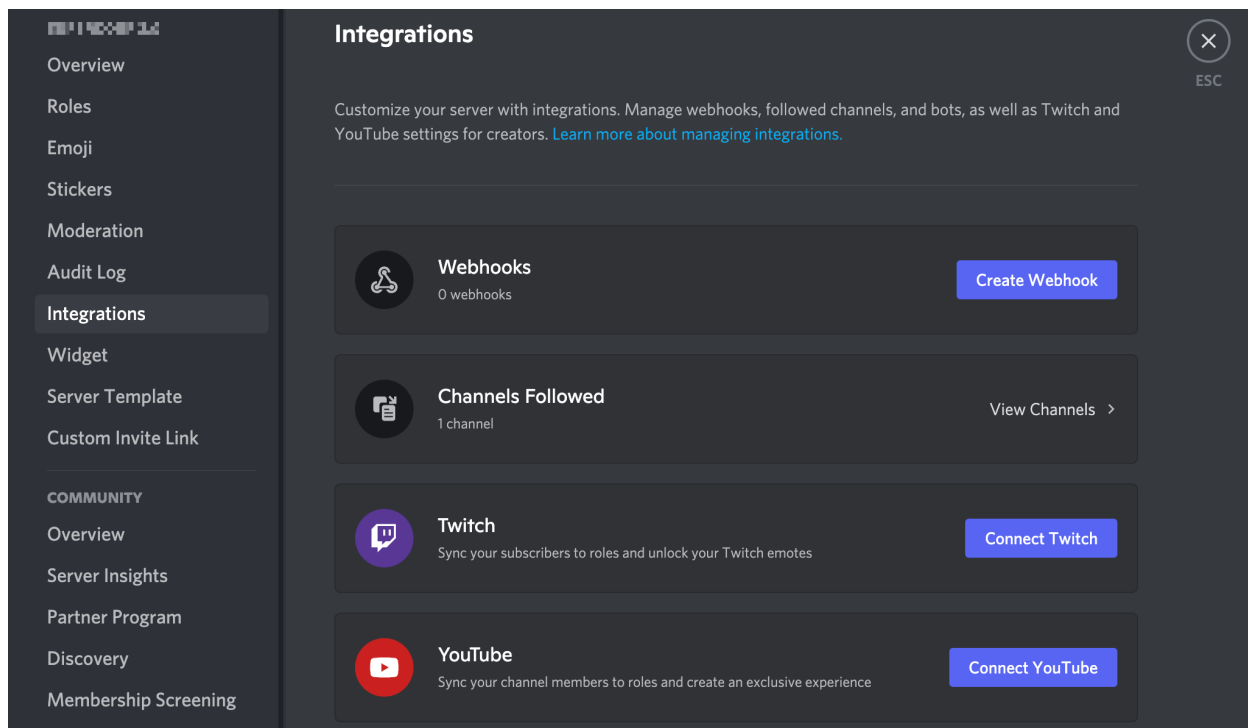
Combined, these tools promote member retention on the services, encouraging both members and sponsoring brands to upgrade and pay.

We said in 2019 that companies should give serious consideration to adopting and innovating on private community platforms like Slack and Discord. Those who took that advice early on benefitted strongly during the pandemic, with communities growing like crazy. For those that did not jump in, there is still time if you can curate a valuable community.

Methodology

Trust Insights used the AHREFS crawling engine to extract 49,685 unique backlinks to the slack.com domain and 273,228 unique backlinks to the discord.com/discord.gg domain, removing links to support/service/status subdomains operated by the respective companies, such as status.slack.com. The period of the study is January 1, 2021 – December 21, 2021. The date of data extraction is December 22, 2021. Trust Insights is the sole sponsor of the study and neither gave nor received compensation for data used, beyond applicable service fees to software

vendors.

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