

State of social media and CX

Q2 2021

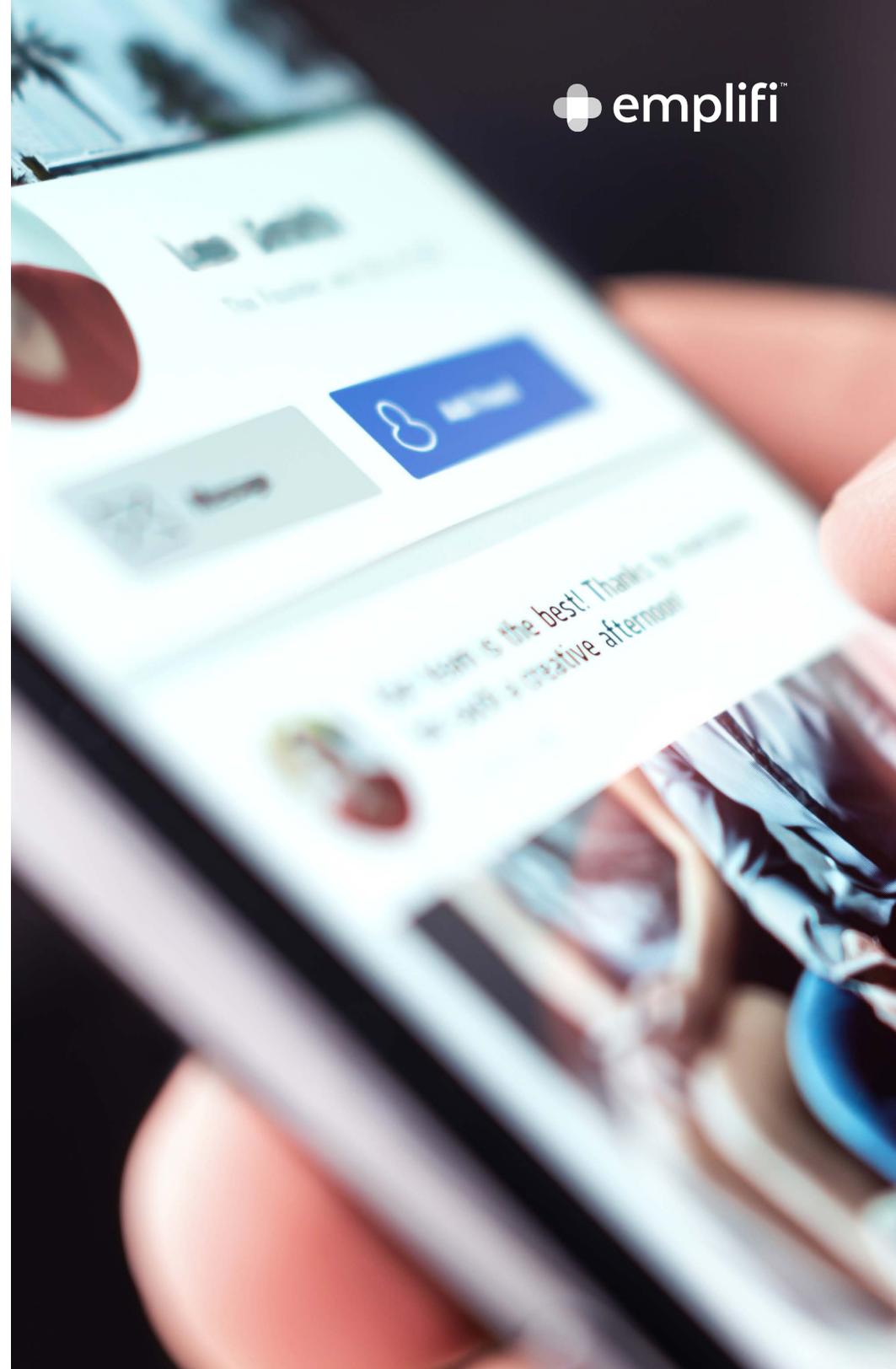
About the report

Engaging people with the right content at the right place, and at the right time in the customer journey, is key to a seamless customer experience (CX). However, doing this should not be guesswork. It requires having the latest data and analysis at your disposal.

The main focus of Emplifi's Social Media and CX Trends report is to look at the latest data in paid and organic social media to help digital marketers get the most from their efforts and deliver stellar experiences for their audiences.

Highlights of our Q2 2021 report include insights into average response times to incoming messages and comments, changes in Facebook Ads reach, and developments into the types of content that audiences engage with the most on social media. Emplifi data also shows a 50% YoY increase in digital ad spend, broken down by region and industry.

To deliver great experiences, it is more important than ever to empathize with your audience and truly understand what they need every step of the way. Delivering amazing CX takes effort, and this report is for social media marketers ready to take their efforts to the next level.



“Emplifi’s Q2 2021 social media ad spend data clearly shows the continuation of a shift in how marketers are choosing to spend their ad dollars. More and more brands are relying on social media marketing to engage with their audiences meaningfully and at scale. In fact, marketers spent 49.9% more on Facebook and Instagram advertising in Q2 2021 compared to Q2 2020.

Social commerce and the formats that support it are also becoming more prevalent. As more brands recognize the value of live streaming and start to leverage more live content to cater to users at different stages of the customer journey — including for social commerce — live streams on both Facebook and Instagram should continue to take up a greater share of the post types.

As more and more consumers begin to expect a brand’s social media channels to facilitate outstanding customer experiences across many stages of the customer journey, what we’re seeing is that an engaging and responsive social media presence is no longer just a ‘nice-to-have’ for consumer-facing brands — it’s a key point of differentiation.”

Zarnaz Arlia
CMO, *Emplifi*



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Trends: Paid social media



Global social media ad spend grows 50% YoY

The pandemic altered people's habits, changing where and how marketers could reach their audience with advertising. That shift is here to stay, as Emplifi data shows an increasingly heavy reliance on social media marketing.

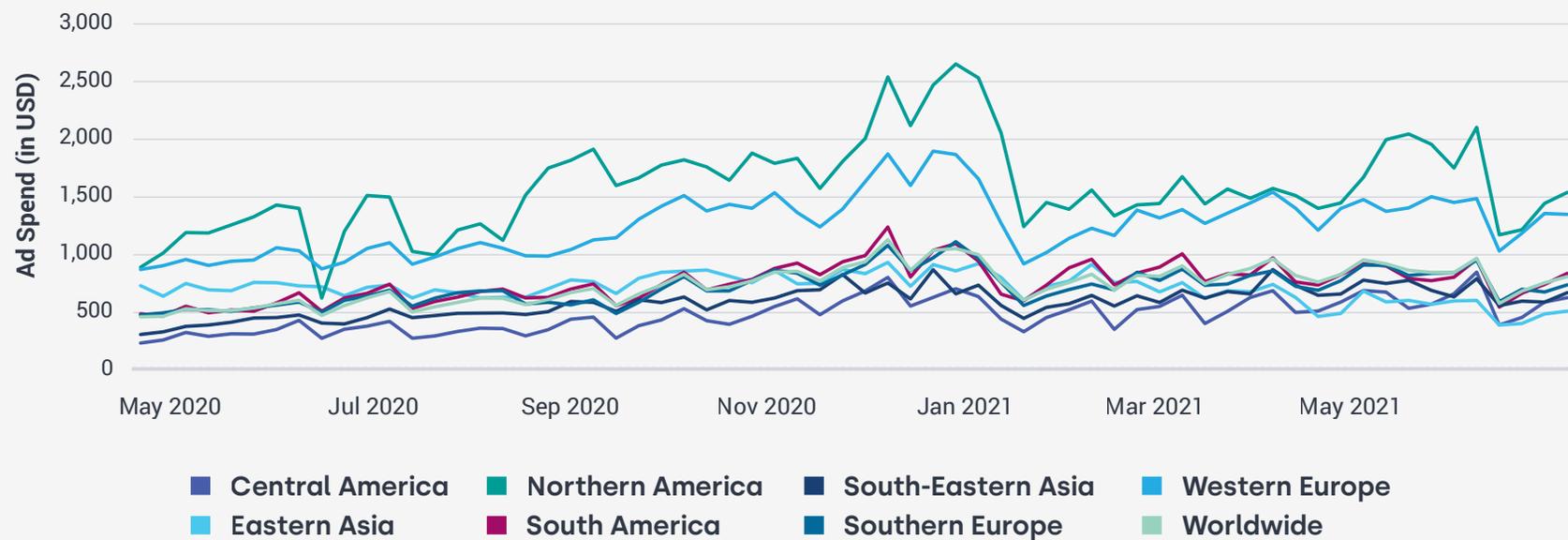
While only a modest growth was seen from Q1 to Q2 2021 (up 3.2%), there was a notable increase year-over-year (YoY). **Marketers spent 49.9% more on Facebook and Instagram advertising compared to Q2 2020.**

The YoY worldwide comparison (detailed on page 7) shows that this is not simply a bounce back from the pandemic, but that an increase, albeit a more modest one, was also seen from Q2 2019 to Q2 2020 (page 8).



Spend (in USD) by Region

Median Weekly Ad Account Values

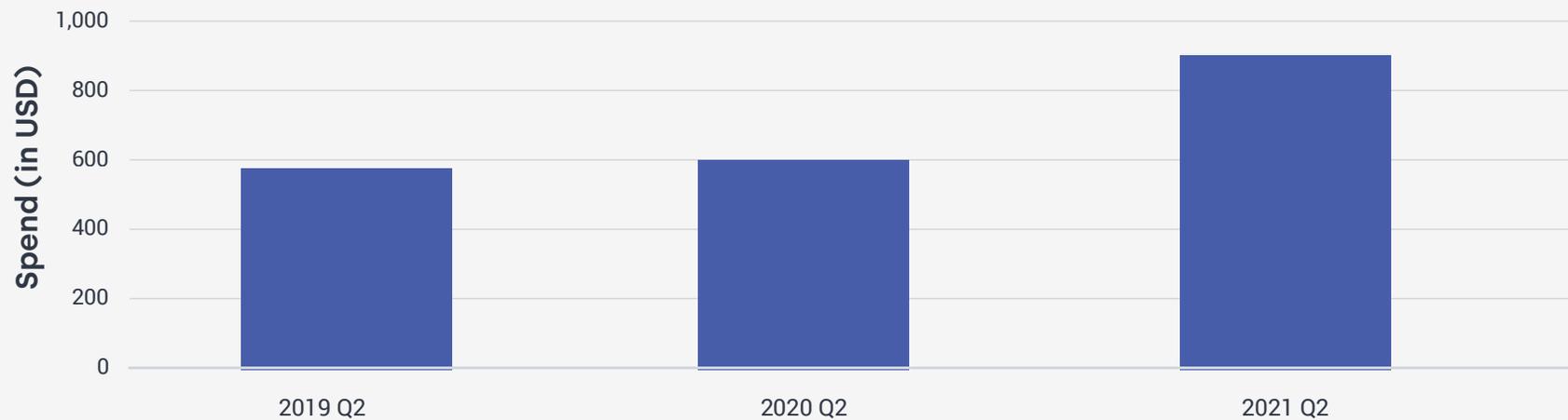


Source: Emplifi data
 Date Range: Apr 4, 2020 – Jun 27, 2021
 Sample: Ad Accounts Benchmarks (FB and IG Aggregated)

Facebook ad spend on continuous growth trajectory

Q2 Year-Over-Year Comparison of Ad Spend (in USD)

Median Weekly Spends of Individual Ad Accounts



Source: Emplifi data

Date Range: Apr 1, 2019 – Jun 27, 2021

Sample: Ad Accounts Benchmarks (FB and IG Aggregated)



Industry social media spending continues to grow

Many industries have bounced back in terms of ad spend since Q2 2020, from what had been a very uncertain time. Although, as seen in more detail on the next page, this was seen for some industries more than others.

Overall spend for the industries analyzed in this report grew by 58.9%, with every industry growing its YoY ad spend by at least 40%. That includes Fashion (95.5%), Alcohol (88.4%), Beauty (44.1%), and Ecommerce (41.4%).

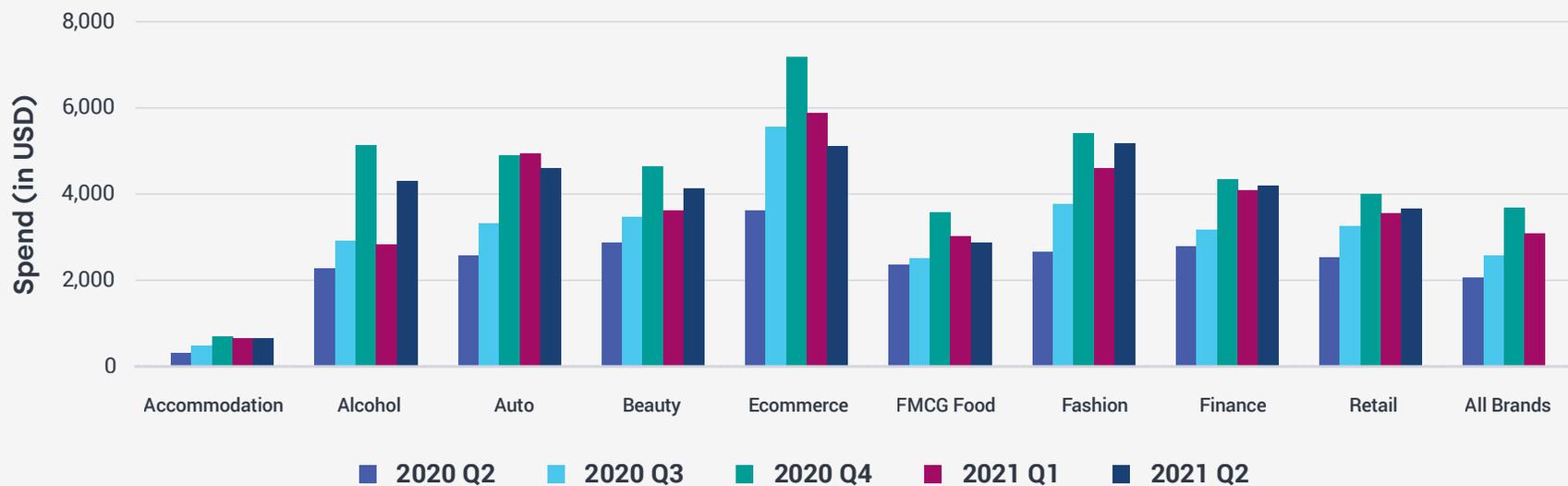
Among the most affected industries during the initial stages of the pandemic was Accommodation, due to the lack of travel and other restrictions. But with the world reopening and people looking to get out, Accommodation brands increased social media spending, as the **YoY growth in Q2 2021 was 104.7%**.

Ad spend is only expected to keep growing through 2021 as marketers continue to adapt their tactics to reach the right audience at the right time during this unique period.

Facebook and Instagram ad spend by industry

Spend (in USD) by Industry

Median Monthly Ad Account Values



Source: Emplifi data
 Date Range: Apr 1, 2020 – Jun 30, 2021
 Sample: Ad Accounts Benchmarks (FB and IG Aggregated)

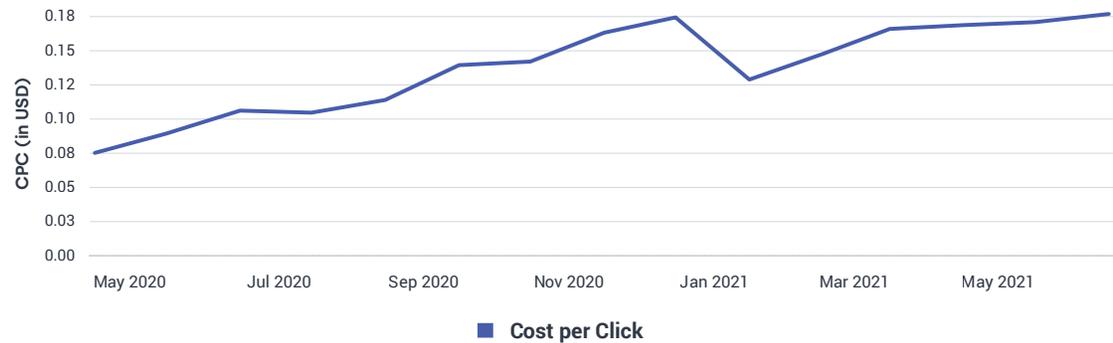
While advertising costs grow, CTR remains stable

As we move further away from the early days of the pandemic, total ad spend and costs are steadily increasing. What has remained very stable, however, is the click-through rate (CTR) of Facebook and Instagram ads.

This trend suggests that businesses can depend on social media advertising to return value, even if other channels are not working as well. The resilience of social media advertising and the effectiveness of the app algorithms to find the right people who will engage with your content combine to yield positive advertising ROI.

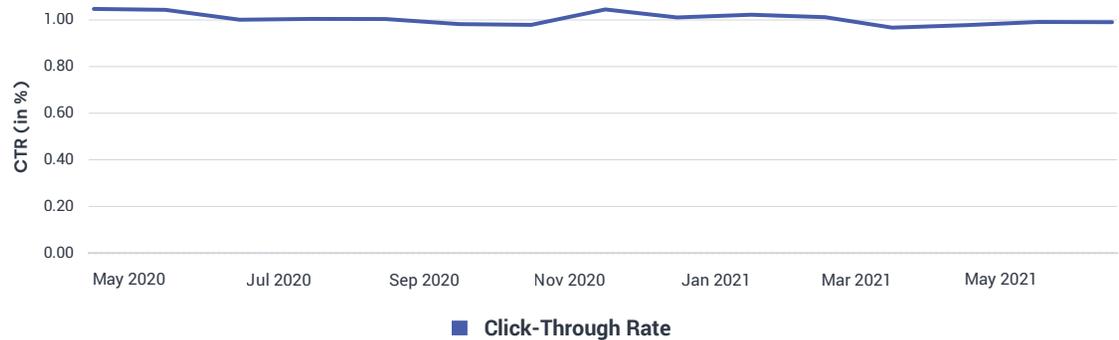
Cost per Click for Facebook and Instagram Ads

Median Monthly Ad Account Values



Click-through Rate for Facebook and Instagram Ads

Median Monthly Ad Account Values



Costs to advertise increase in parallel to ad spend

With total Facebook and Instagram spend reaching new highs this year, **the overall worldwide costs to advertise grew by 85.1% YoY in Q2 2021.**

How did costs to advertise grow YoY in different regions?

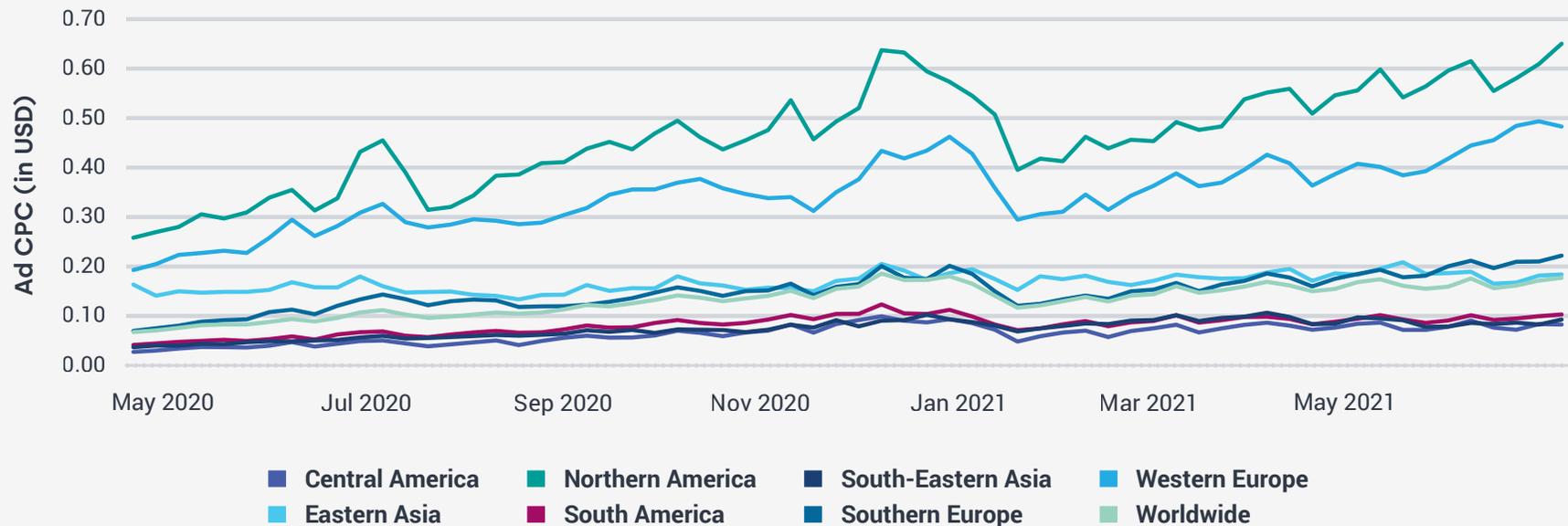
- Central America: 99.5%
- Southern Europe: 84.8%
- Southeast Asia: 83.4%
- North America: 72.3%
- Western Europe: 66%
- Eastern Asia: 18.6%

Increased costs means more pressure on marketers to make the right decisions. The right advertising tools that provide a better understanding of target audiences is key to deliver them exactly what they are looking for, and at the right time.



CPC (in USD) by Region

Median Weekly Ad Account Values



Source: Emplifi data
 Date Range: Apr 4, 2020 – Jun 27, 2021
 Sample: Ad Accounts Benchmarks (FB and IG Aggregated)

Facebook ads reach decreases 12% globally

Reach is an incredibly important metric to monitor when it comes to Facebook advertising, and the latest Emplifi data shows an important shift. In Q2 2021, Emplifi data showed that **Facebook ads reach decreased by 12.4% YoY**.

As data from Socialbakers (now part of Emplifi) showed earlier in 2021, **Facebook ads reach increased by 30% YoY** from 2019 to 2020. There continued to be some modest increases in early 2021, but that has now slowed down. In fact, it has decreased across the globe.

However, this decrease does not need to set off alarm bells; following big increases, there will inevitably be fluctuations. However, it is vital for marketers to monitor this trend and adjust their social media marketing strategies and spend as needed.

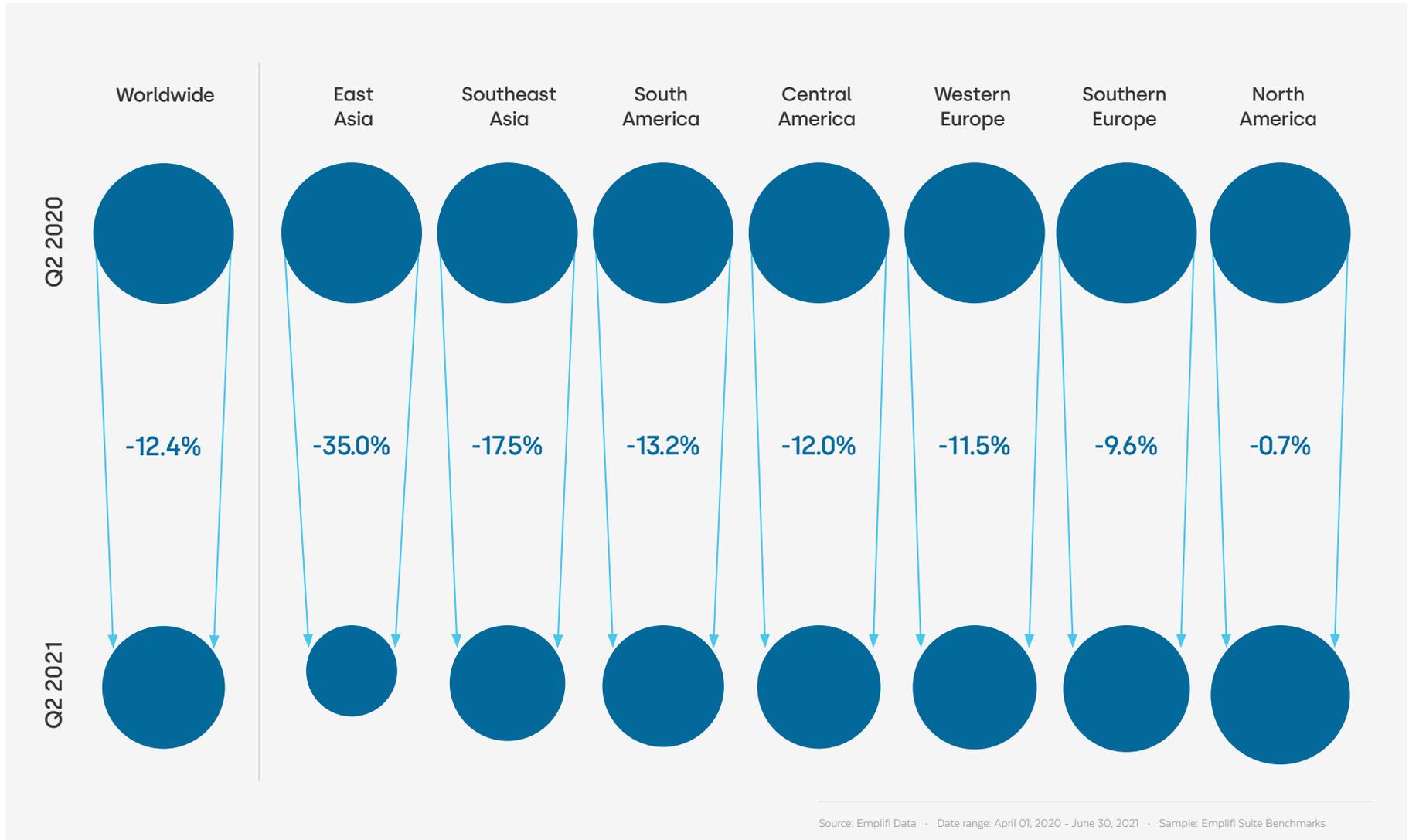
Worldwide Facebook Ads Reach

Median Monthly Facebook Ad Account Reach

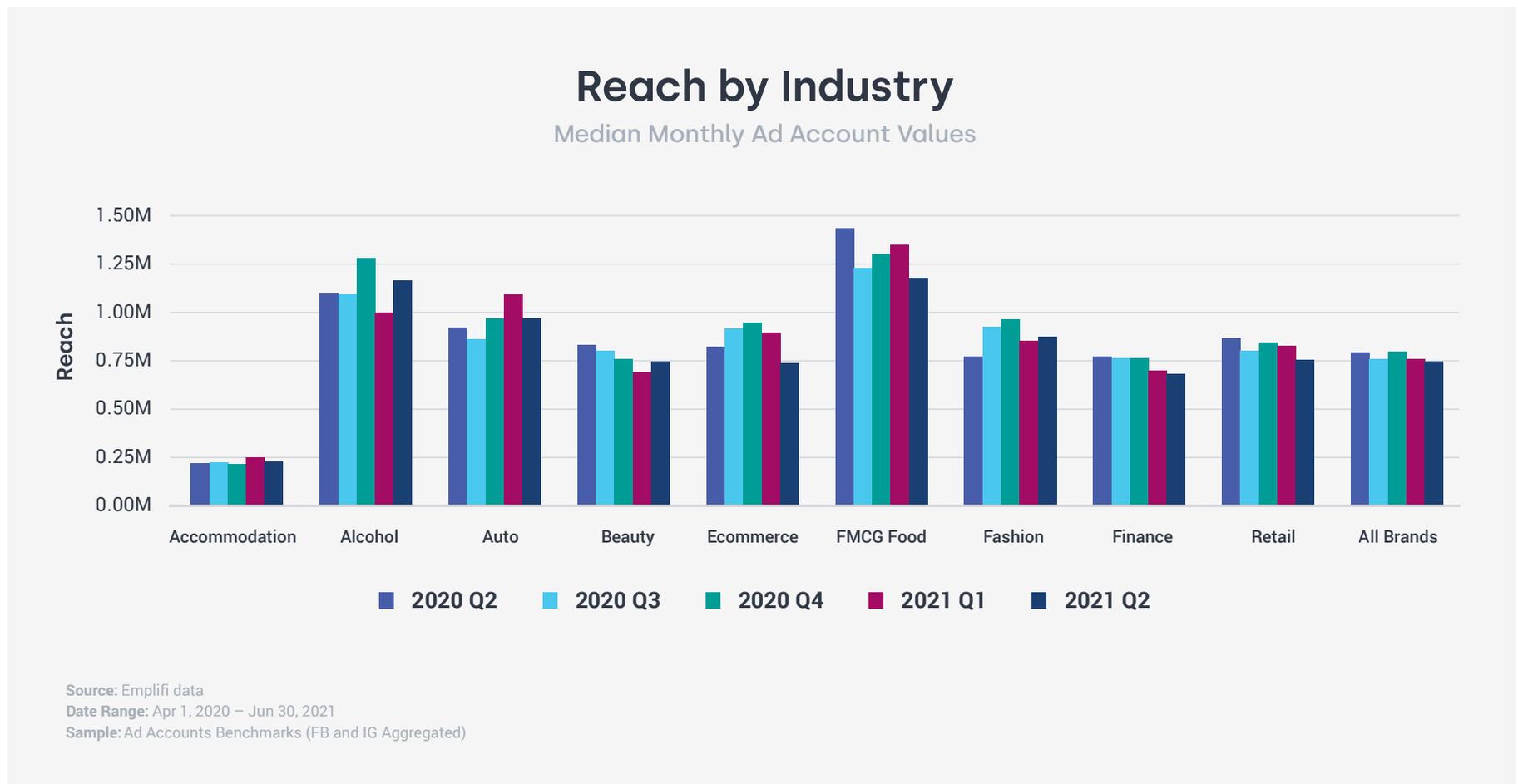


Facebook ads reach by region

Median Monthly Facebook Ad Account Reach



Facebook ads reach by industry



Facebook News Feed, Instream Video deliver the best CTR for marketers

Emplifi data shows that over half of social media ad spend across Facebook and Instagram is going to Facebook News Feed.

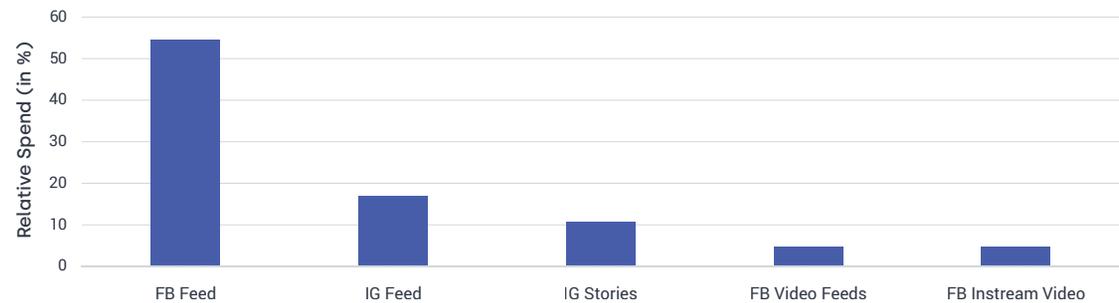
While Facebook has been actively seeking to increase ad space on its platform, the main feed still receives the vast majority of spend, in part because it also delivers some of the best click-through rates.

In Q2 2021, the Facebook News Feed ad placement returned the second-best CTR at 0.29% on average, trailing only Facebook Instream Video (0.33%). **Both provided at least 3x higher CTR than the next platform position.**

See a more detailed breakdown on the next page.

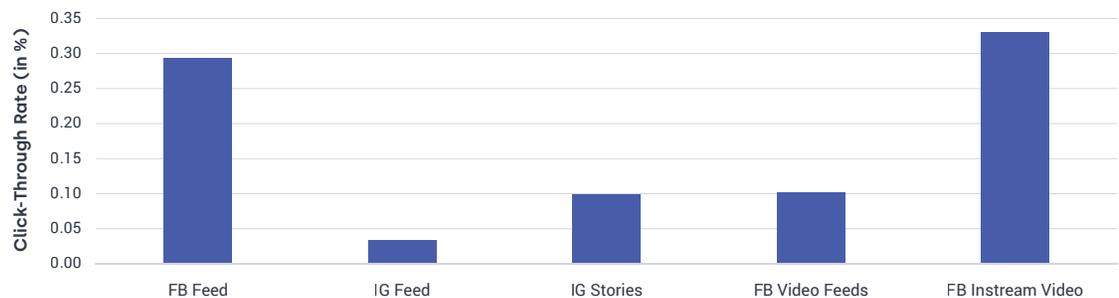
Ad Spend by Platform Position

Top 5 by Relative Spend



Click-Through Rate by Platform Position

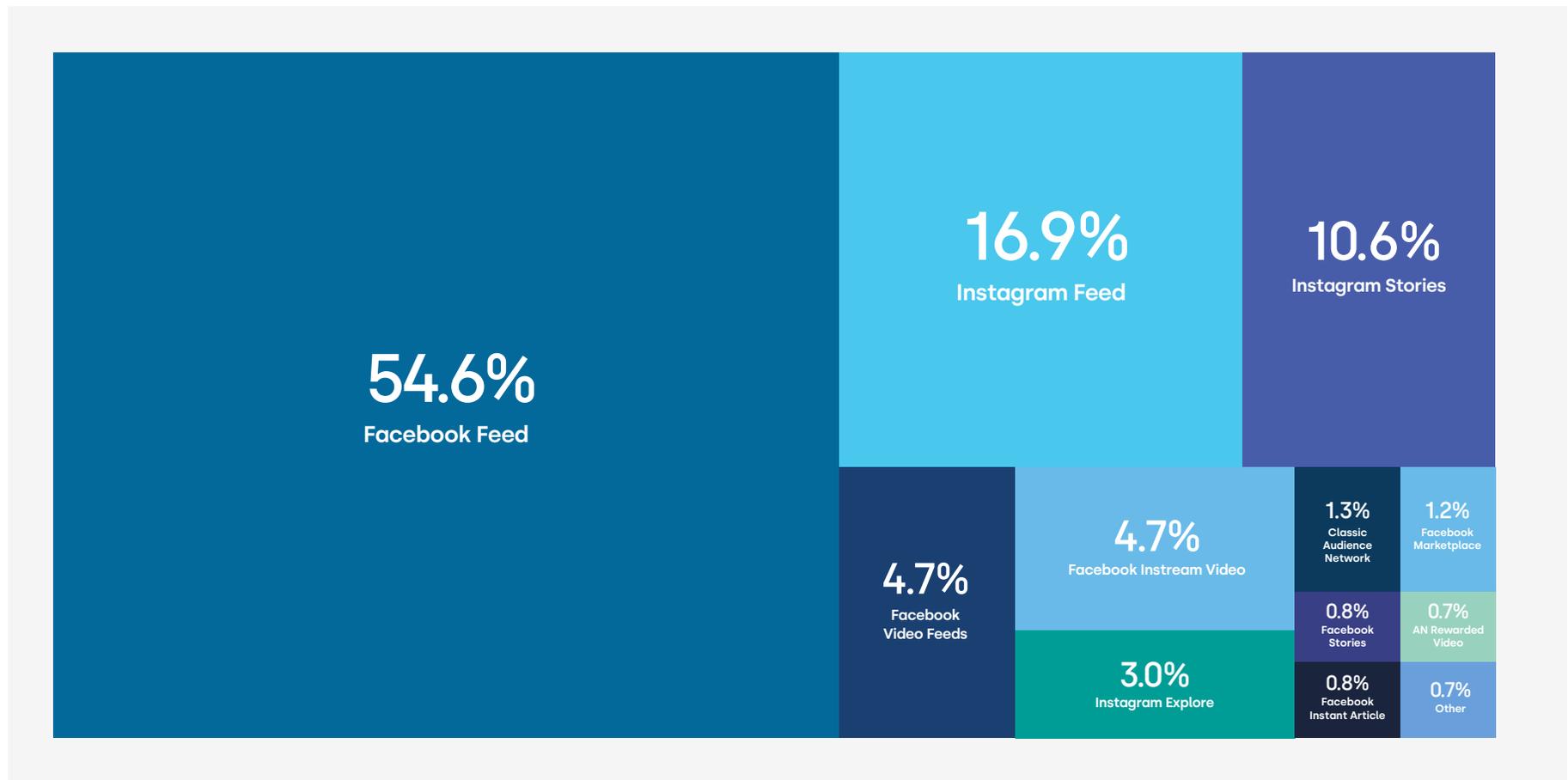
Top 5 by Relative Spend



55% of total Facebook ad spend is on the Facebook News Feed

According to Emplifi data, the proportion of Facebook ad spend that went towards the Facebook News Feed slightly decreased from Q1 to Q2 2021 (56.6% vs. 54.6%, respectively). However, it remains the clear top choice among marketers.

Instagram Feed, the second most popular placement by spend, received 16.9% of total allocated ad spend by marketers, while Instagram Stories received 10.6% of total spend in Q2 2021.





Paid takeaways

Higher costs and lower reach – the data does not paint an easy picture for social media marketers. When costs go up, budget allocation becomes even more important, which means spending money to reach the right customers at the right time. Working smarter is key to get ahead.

There is no one right way to do it. However, it all starts with designing ads and content that resonate to your audiences, and delivering experiences that are empathetic to their needs. This means listening to what they truly want and expect from their social media experiences, wherever they are in the customer journey. More importantly, it's about making sure the right people have the right insights at the right time to deliver these experiences.



Trends: Organic social media

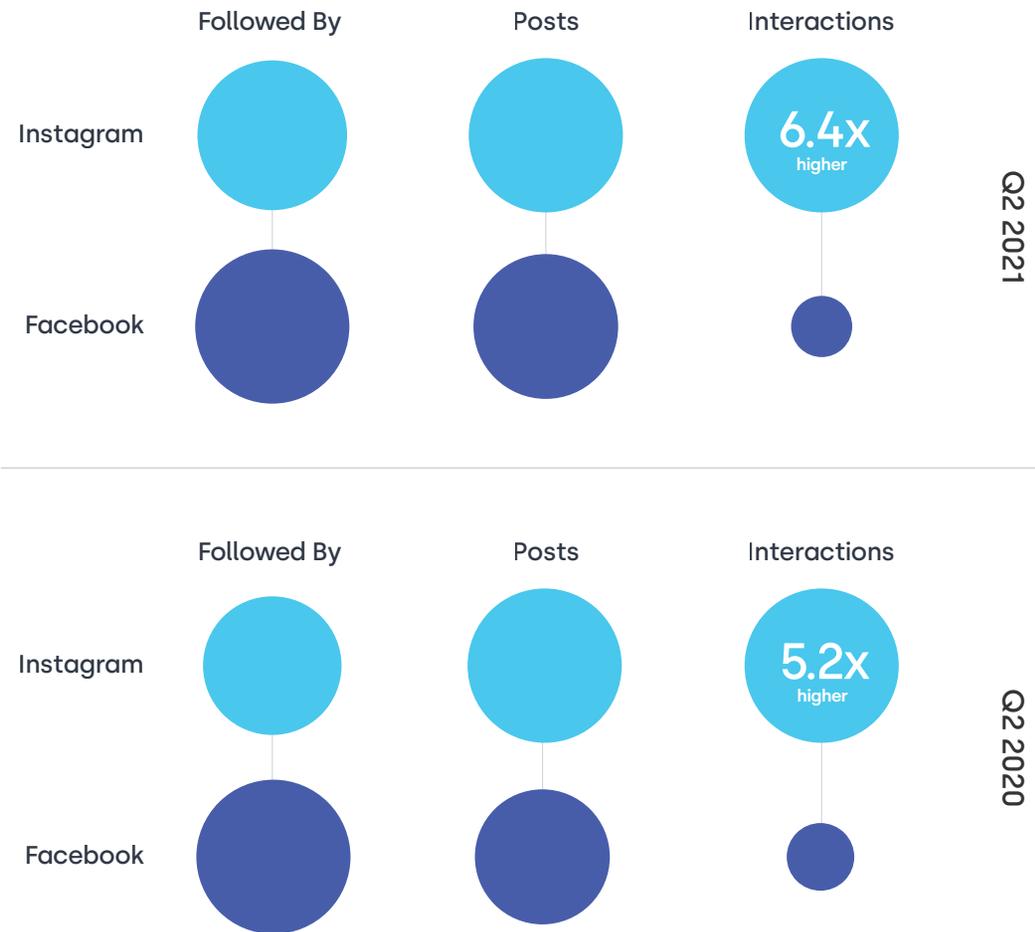


The engagement gap between Facebook and Instagram continues to increase

In Q2 2020, the total number of interactions generated by Instagram profiles (Likes and Comments on posts published by brands on their profiles) was **5.2x higher** than on Facebook profiles. This gap has only **increased in Q2 2021, reaching 6.4x**.

While it is known that engagement is stronger on Instagram compared to Facebook, this data suggests that the gap between the two platforms has not stabilized - it is still widening.

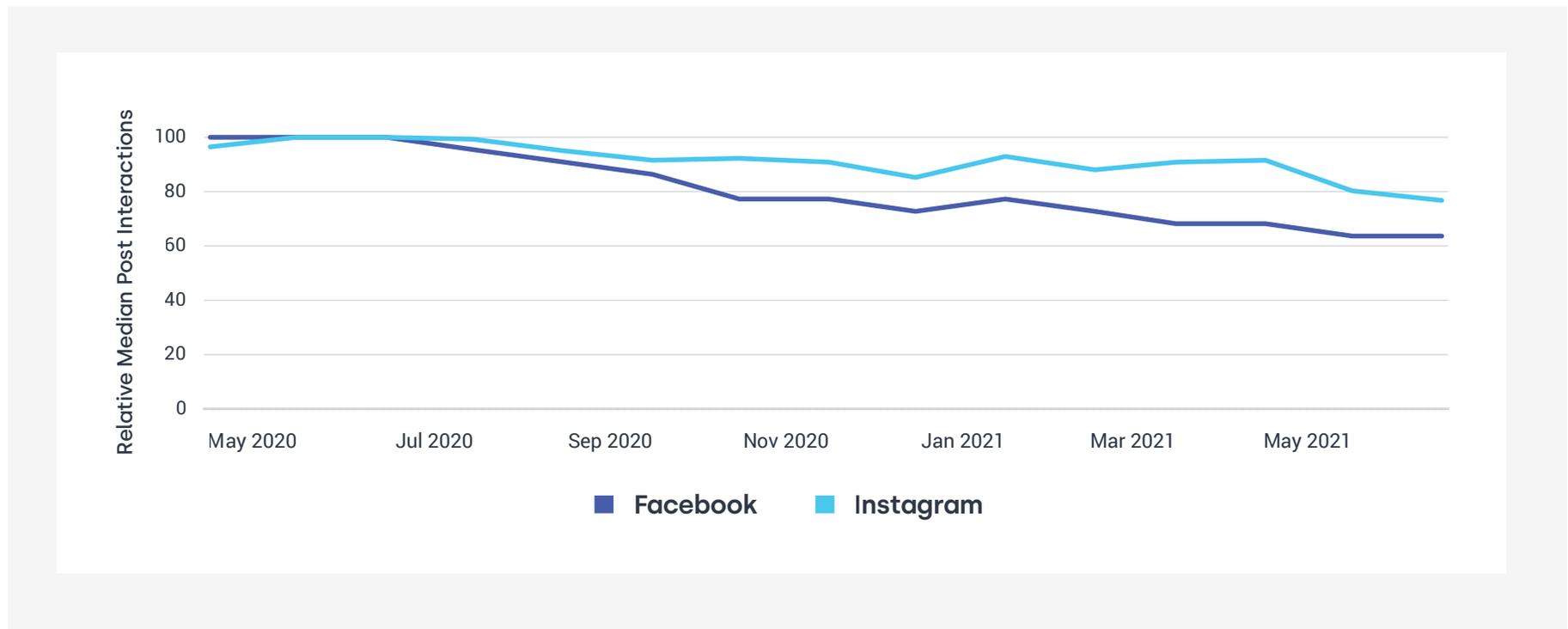
Social Media Landscape



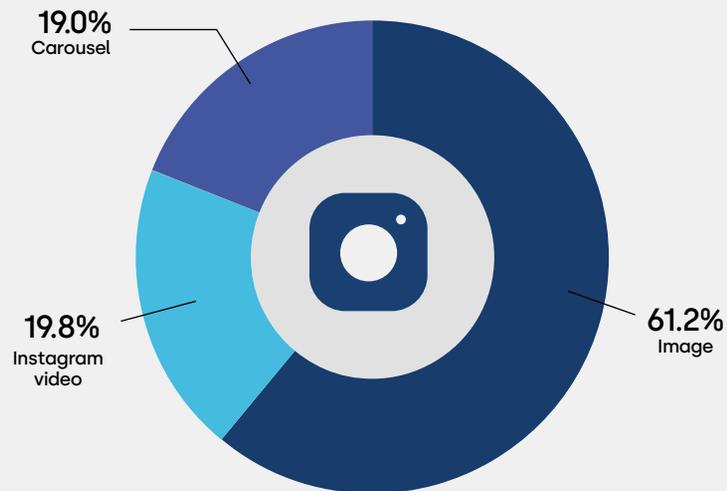
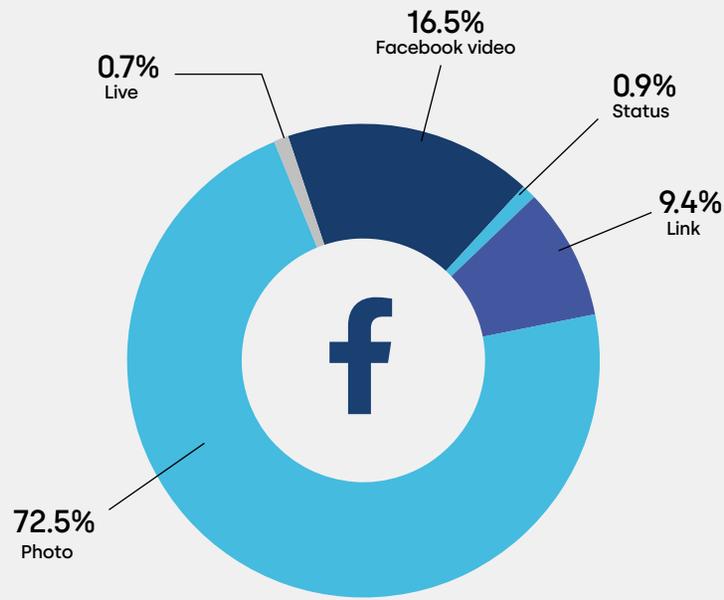
Relative interactions for Facebook and Instagram decrease in 2021

The last 15 months show that the relative post interactions for brand accounts on both Facebook and Instagram have been trending down since Q3 2020. Instagram interactions had been relatively steady throughout 2020 up until Q3, when the downward trend started.

On the other hand, Facebook saw a sharp uptick in relative post interactions at the beginning of 2020, and as a result the platform is seeing a harsher correction compared to Instagram - especially since interactions on Facebook have been trending down for years.



Source: Emplifi Data • Date range: April 1, 2020 - Jun 30, 2021 • Sample: 164,478 Facebook and 58,273 Instagram Brand Profiles Worldwide



Distribution of post types on Facebook and Instagram

Looking at worldwide brand profiles, images made up 72.5% of all content on Facebook and 61.2% of all content on Instagram.

It is important to note that the carousel format makes up a notable percentage of branded Instagram posts, and can include both images and videos.

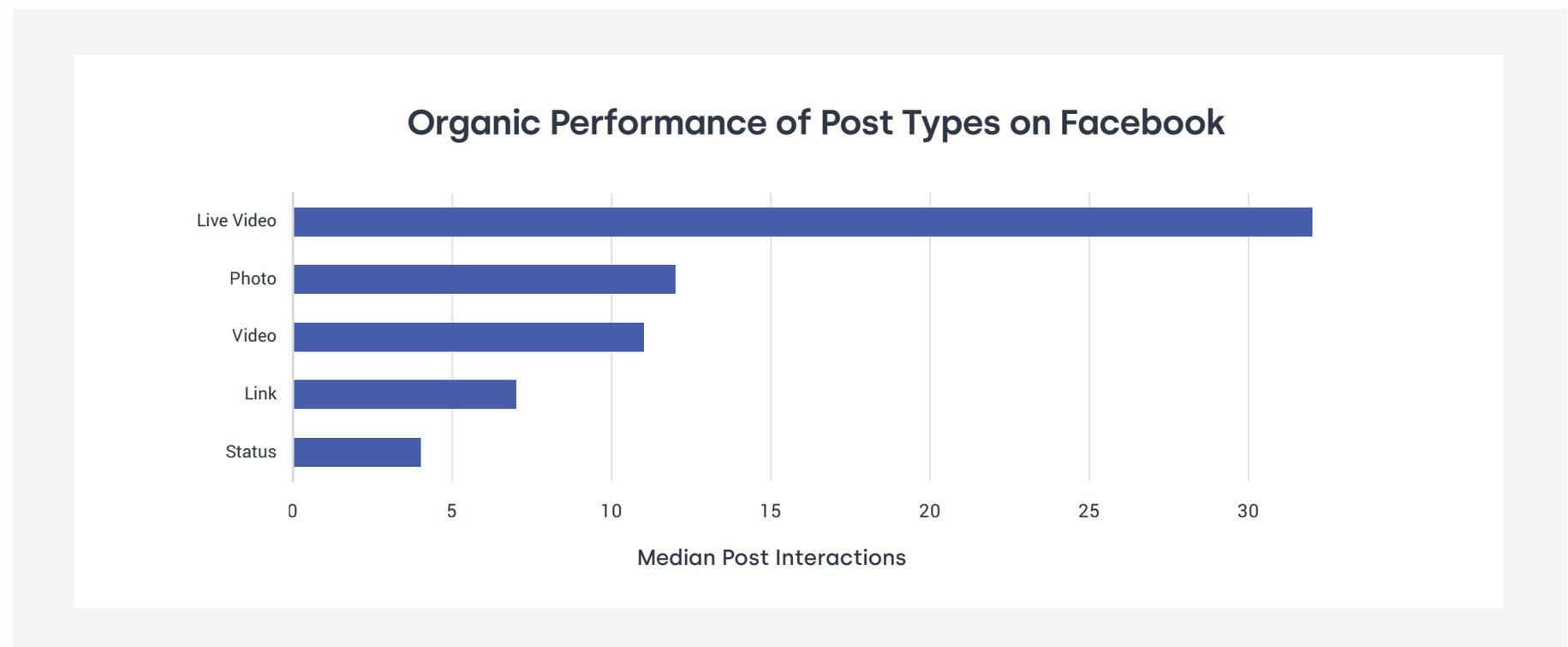
On Facebook, video has been the second most common post type (16.5%). Although, as seen on the next page, while Emplifi data shows that Facebook Live videos are **only being used 0.7% of the time**, they actually garner the highest number of organic post interactions compared to other post types.

Facebook Live delivers nearly 3x the engagement of traditional video

As was seen in the [Q1 2021 State of Social Media and CX](#) report from Socialbakers (now part of Emplifi), Facebook Live remained the most engaging format on the platform in 2021 by far, seeing a median of 32 post interactions,

Although interaction data for Instagram live streams are not made available, it is safe to assume that they would also perform relatively well compared to the other content formats available on the platform.

As more brands recognize the value of live streaming, and they start to leverage more live content to cater to users at different stages of the customer journey (including for social commerce), live streams should take up a greater share of posts on both Facebook and Instagram to ensure engaging social media experiences for their audiences.



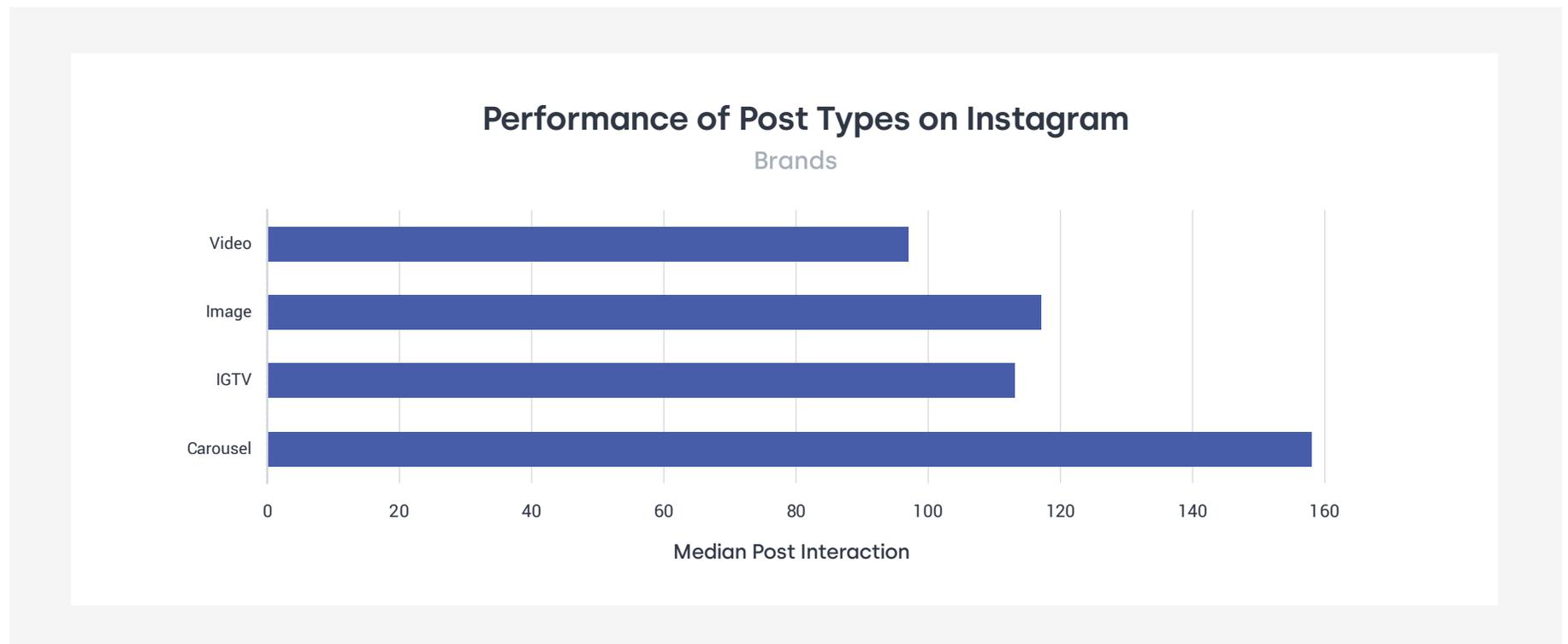
IGTV more engaging than standard video posts on Instagram

Since the release of IGTV, Facebook has added multiple integrations with the main Instagram app to increase viewership and adoption. Some of these include:

- Featuring IGTV content in the explore tab of Instagram
- Allowing creators to post embedded IGTV previews to their Instagram Feed

In Q2 2021, Emplifi data suggests that these initiatives are beginning to pay off. In terms of interactions, IGTV performed almost as well as photo-based posts, and outperformed standard video posts.

While it is unclear just how much of IGTV’s engagement comes from the aforementioned integrations, the interaction numbers are still encouraging for brands that plan to make video a bigger part of their social media strategy.



Posts with fewer hashtags often perform better on Instagram

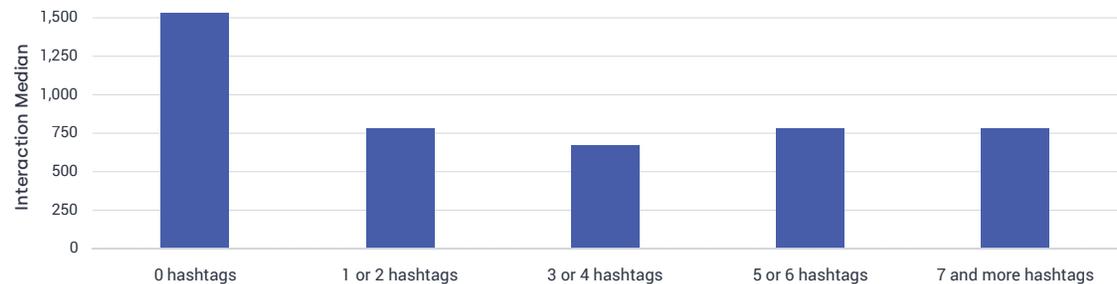
According to Emplifi data, Instagram posts from Media accounts (including but not limited to news outlets) that used no hashtags had nearly double the amount of median interactions as posts that did use hashtags.

On the other hand, when it comes to Brand accounts, Instagram posts with 1-2 hashtags garnered slightly more interactions than posts that used more hashtags, or none at all.

What is consistent in both cases is that stuffing posts with too many hashtags is not an effective strategy to gain more traction. The data suggests that, depending on the context of the post, less is usually more when it comes to hashtags, and should not come at the expense of engaging content.

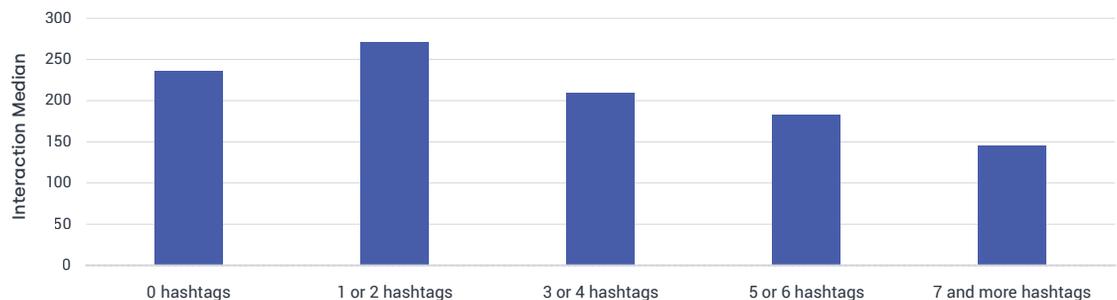
Median Interactions on Instagram

By Number of Hashtags Used by Media Worldwide



Median Interactions on Instagram

By Number of Hashtags Used by Brands Worldwide

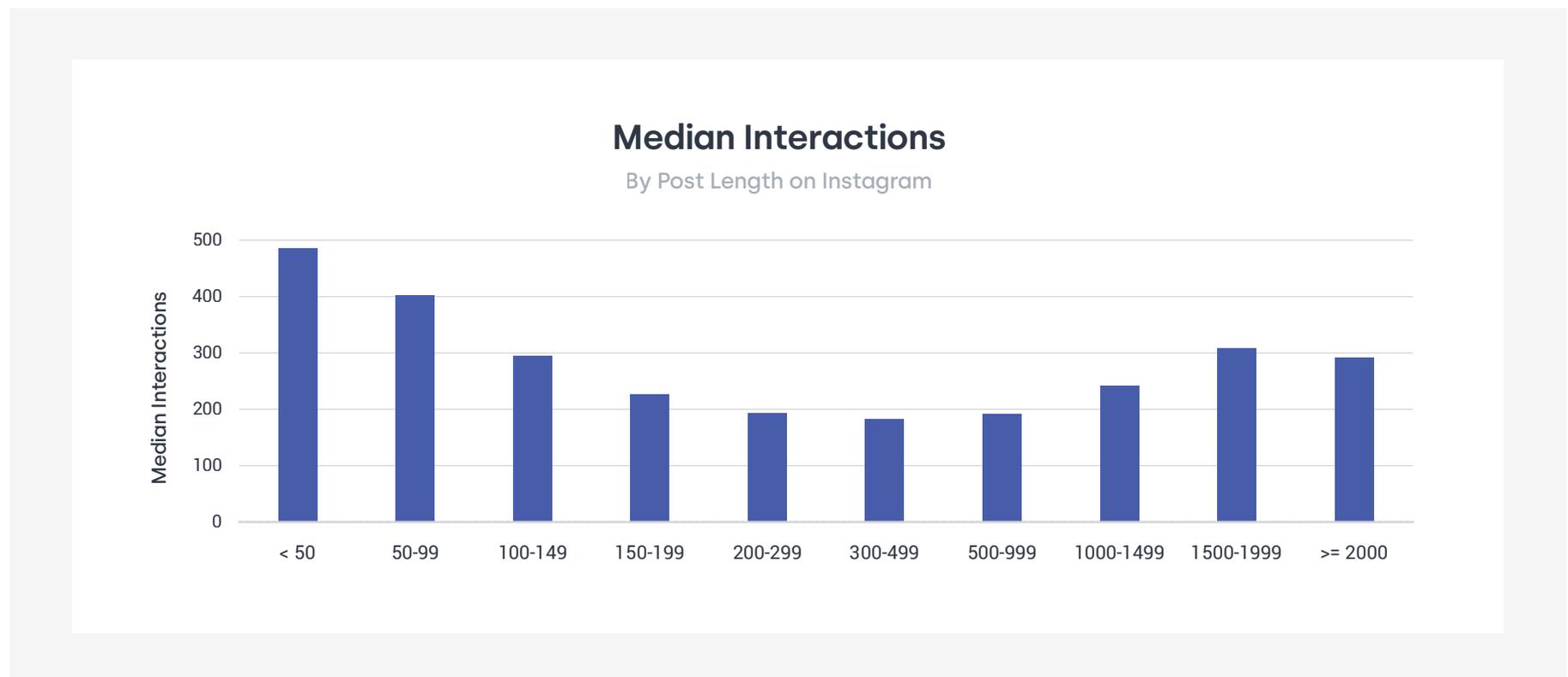


Shorter posts garner more interactions

Emplifi data shows that Instagram posts with fewer than 50 characters received the highest number of median interactions in Q2 2021. Interestingly, an inverted bell curve was seen once the post length increased past 500 characters, suggesting that both very short and very long Instagram posts performed the best.

One possible explanation could be that past a certain point of length, captions are viewed as having more valuable information and actually

viewed as content in themselves, while shorter captions place the image as the main content piece. One takeaway from this data is to not be afraid to experiment with short or very long posts. Whether sharing a detailed story or simply breaking news, if the post itself is engaging, audiences will not be deterred from interacting with it.



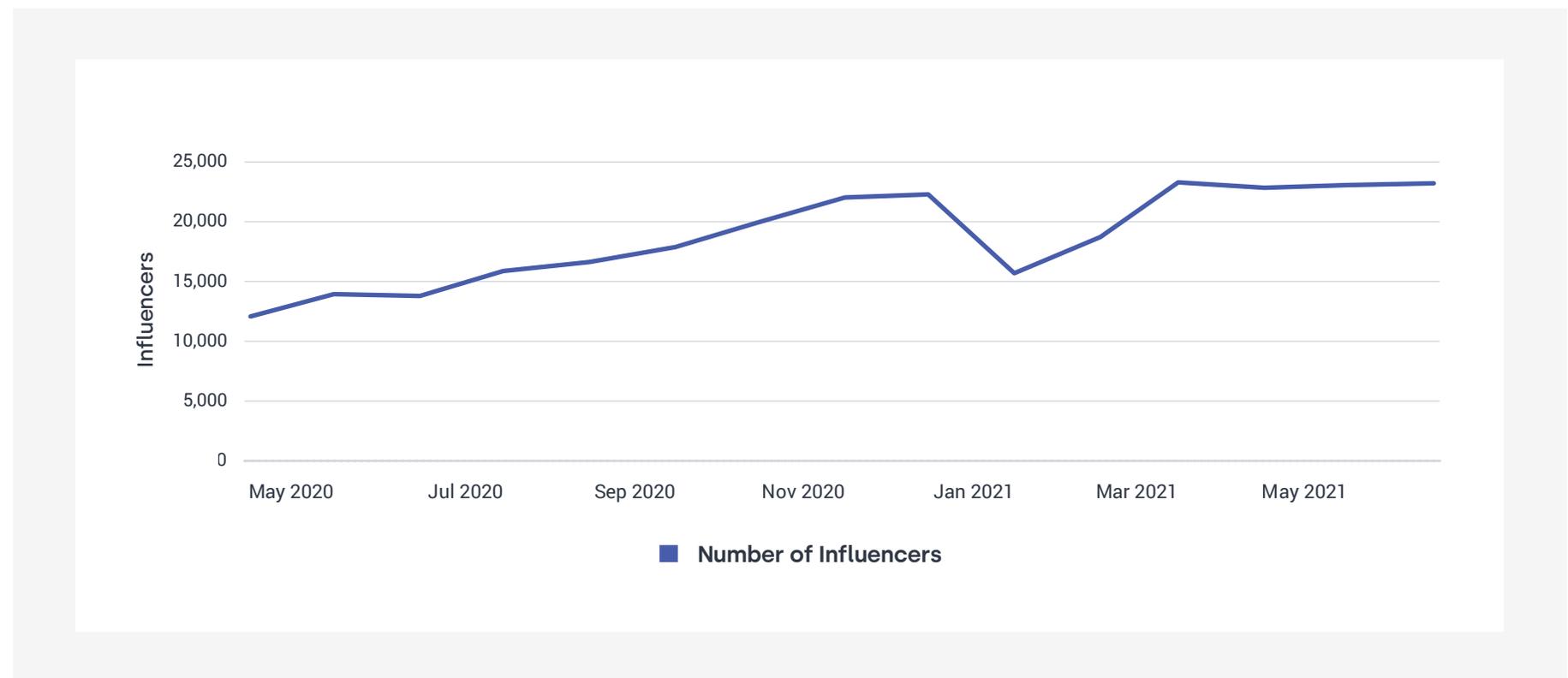
Influencer activity stabilizes in Q2 2021

As expected, the annual decrease in influencer activity seen during the holidays and early Q1 has recovered. Although, the upward trend seen in the second half of 2020 has plateaued in the first half of 2021.

This upward trend signified a recovery in influencer activity after the number of sponsored posts dropped dramatically during the beginning of the pandemic.

This recent plateau could potentially signify the end of the recovery period and stabilization of influencer marketing spend. However, whether this plateau remains during the second half of 2021 will be a key trend to monitor.

Note: Emplifi data factors in regional and other sponsored hashtags, including #sp, #paid, and #promo, as well as #ad usage.



Posts mentioning #pride, #pridemonth nearly triple in 2021

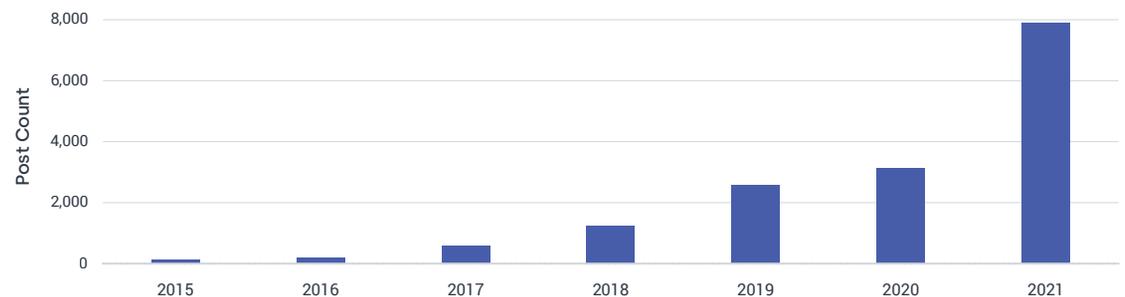
The number of posts coming from brands that mention #pride or #pridemonth has been steadily increasing since 2016. However, a significant jump was seen in Q2 2021, especially on Facebook where posts mentioning either hashtag more than doubled year-over-year.

Brands are realizing that more of their audiences are expecting them to take a stance on important social issues. This continued in 2021 when looking at data surrounding posted content related to pride month and LGBTQ issues.

While many social causes may not seem to have a direct relationship to a business, a brand's values matter more and more to the audience. Because of that, brands must ensure their social media strategy considers how they will approach - and communicate - where they stand on social issues.

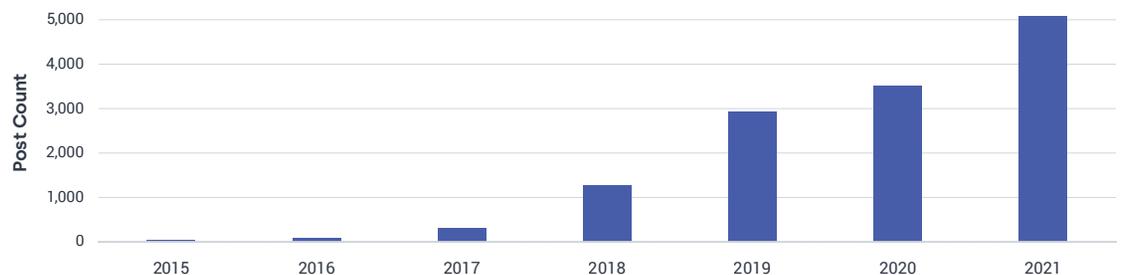
Number of Posts Mentioning #pride or #pridemonth

Number of Facebook posts in Each year by Brands pages



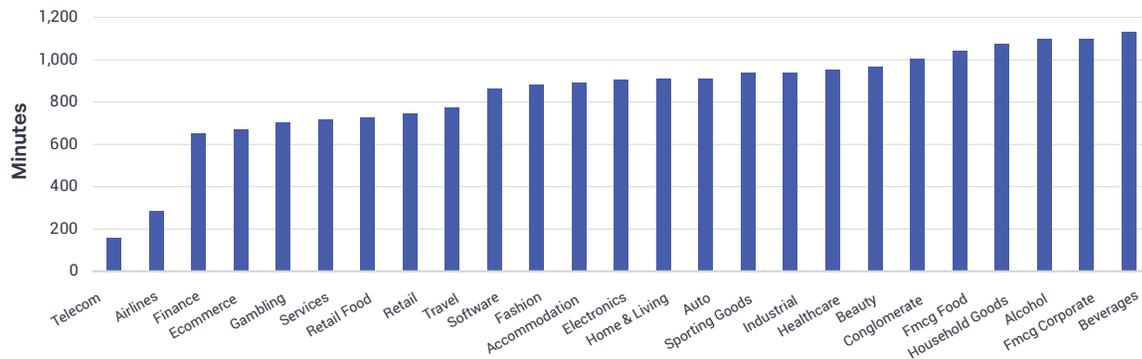
Number of Posts Mentioning #pride or #pridemonth

Number of Instagram posts in Each year by Brand profiles



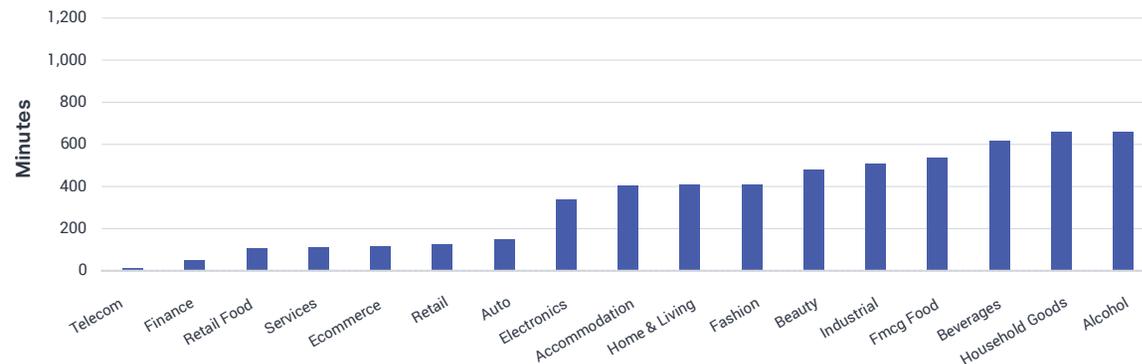
Median Response Time on User Comments

Brands responding to user comments



Median Response Time to Direct Messages

Brands responding to user messages on Facebook



Telecom provides fastest responses to Facebook comments

When it comes to interacting with comments on Facebook, Emplifi data showed that one industry went above and beyond for its customers in Q2 2021: Telecom.

- Fastest median response time to comments (2 hours, 40 minutes)
- Fastest median response time to direct messages* (14 minutes)
- Highest percentage of comments that were responded to (35.1%) - see next page

This data suggests that Telecom companies responded to more of their comments at a faster rate than any other industry.

Other industries that boasted quick response times include the Airline, Finance, and Ecommerce industries (*continue on the next page*).

*DM sample size is smaller because of the extra permissions required for analysis.

(continued from page 30)

It's critical to note that these industries are all mainly service-based, which tells us that they are adapting to the modern consumer and providing customer support and customer service through social media platforms. While Ecommerce is not a service-based industry, the nature of Ecommerce and social commerce means customer support requests often take place on social channels.

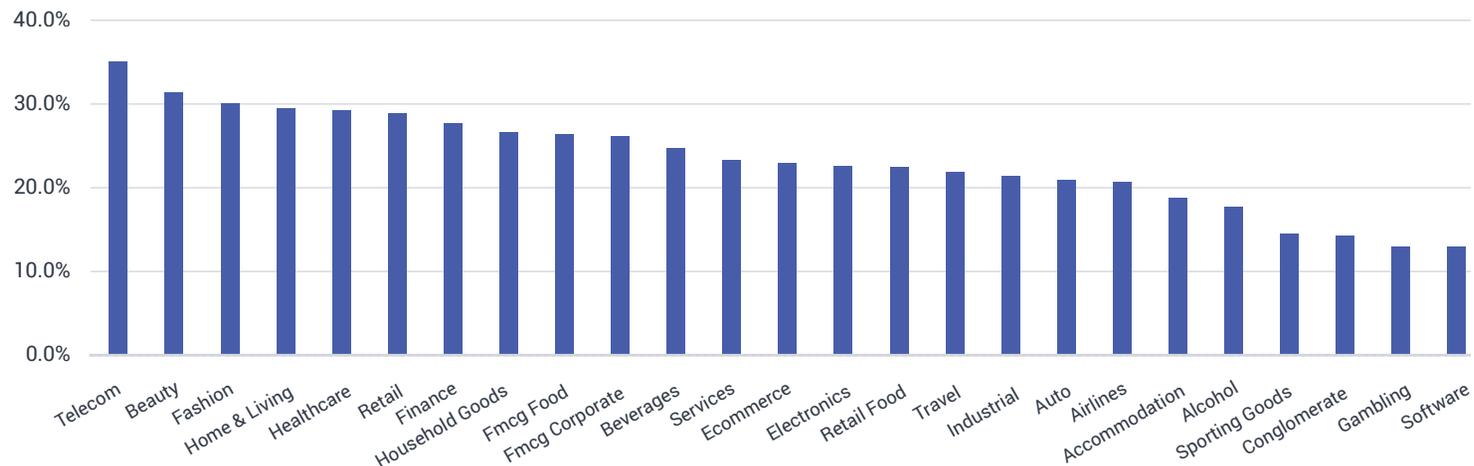
More and more industries will begin to catch up when it comes to the digital CX they provide customers. Although, as it stands, there is room for

improvement in most industries to ensure they can meet the ever-growing needs and expectations of the modern consumer.

With CX being a key differentiator among brands across industries today, the need to continually evaluate and improve social care processes is a must, at the risk of potentially losing market share.

Average of User Comments Responded by the Brand

Average Post Response Rate on Facebook Pages



Organic takeaways

The engagement gap between Instagram and Facebook continues to grow, while fans and followers are engaging far more with live video than traditional content formats. If they are not doing so already, brands must explore live video and streaming as a key component of their social media strategy as a way to create engaging and impactful social marketing and commerce experiences.

At the same time, with more consumers turning to social media for customer support and care, brands must also continue evaluating their existing processes to ensure fast responses and resolutions. This could be through automated means like AI chatbots or centralized community management tools that help agents improve social care.

An engaging and responsive social media presence is no longer a “nice-to-have” for consumer-facing brands, it’s a key point of differentiation.



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Methodology and glossary

Quarterly Industry Reports reflect the state of Emplifi's database starting with the beginning of the previous quarter through the end of the previous quarter for the report. The data is pulled only once and is not updated between releases.

Minimum threshold for the report to be generated is 50 Profiles on Instagram and 50 Pages on Facebook for the given region and category combination. When the combination for a specific slide does not meet the threshold, if possible, data for a broader area is provided instead.

In Q3 2020, the scope of our Instagram database was narrowed, thus resulting in possible discrepancies between the new and older reports in the reporting of long term trends. However, data shown in individual reports are consistent in time.

Note: additional thresholds may be applied for specific slides:

- Total Interactions Distribution at a minimum of 300
- Internal Ads-Benchmarks at a minimum 200 active benchmarks from a region/industry
- #AD hashtags at a minimum of 10 #AD hashtags per month in the influencers section, etc



Median weekly value: Calculated as median weekly ad account spend. Per each account we look at weekly spend value and from all of these ad accounts in one category we calculate median value.

Cost per click (CPC) by platform position: Median for all available Ad accounts. Platform positions are different for Facebook and Instagram. The chart shows only the top 5 positions by relative spend (see below).

Relative spend by platform position: Identifies on which positions the highest budget was allocated. The data is normalized (%) and shows the average distribution of an account's spend.

Click-through rate (CTR) by platform position: CTR median values of the top 5 positions by relative spend. Aggregated on ad level first.

CPC and Spend metrics are in USD.

Paid Reach: The number of people who had any content from your page or about your page enter their screen through paid distribution such as an ad. (unique users)

Ad Benchmarks Regions:

Western Europe: Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Monaco, Netherlands, and Switzerland.

Central America: Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Panama.

Northern America: Bermuda, Canada, Greenland, Saint Pierre, Miquelon, and the United States.

Southern Europe: Albania, Andorra, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Gibraltar, Greece, Vatican City State, Italy, Macedonia, Malta, Montenegro, Portugal, San Marino, Serbia, Slovenia, and Spain.

South America: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Falkland Islands, French Guiana, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

East Asia: China, Hong Kong, Japan, North Korea, South Korea, Macao, Mongolia, and Taiwan

Southeast Asia: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor, and Vietnam.

Interactions: Interactions on Facebook are calculated as a sum of all Reactions, Comments and Shares on posts published by a Page. Interactions on Instagram are calculated as a sum of Likes and Comments on posts published by a Profile.

Median post interactions in time: The middle page when ranking Pages (Profiles) by median monthly post interactions. Median post by interactions is the page's middle post published in given month ranked by interactions.

Relative median interactions in time: Same as Median Interactions in time, but the values are the ratios of the maximum value in the given time period (separately for each platform).

Audience size: Median of pages Fans (Followers) count at the end of the quarter.

Posts: Median of total posts published in the quarter, aggregated on Page level. Stories are not included.

Interactions: Sum of all interactions on posts published in a given time period. The bubble sizes are calculated for each metric separately in order to compare each pair of metrics between platforms

Organic means not promoted (not paid to be shown in the feed). We use Emplifi's internal algorithm that detects with almost 100% accuracy whether a post has been promoted or not.

Influencer: Instagram business profile of a person followed by more than 1000 profiles.

Evolution of #AD Usage: The total number of distinct Influencers who have posted #AD (or available local equivalent) aggregated by month. To be included, the post must contain both the #AD hashtag and a mention of a profile from the given region and category.

Appendix

% Comments: the percentage of total interactions on comments

% Reactions: the percentage of total interactions on reactions

% Shares: the percentage of total interactions on shares

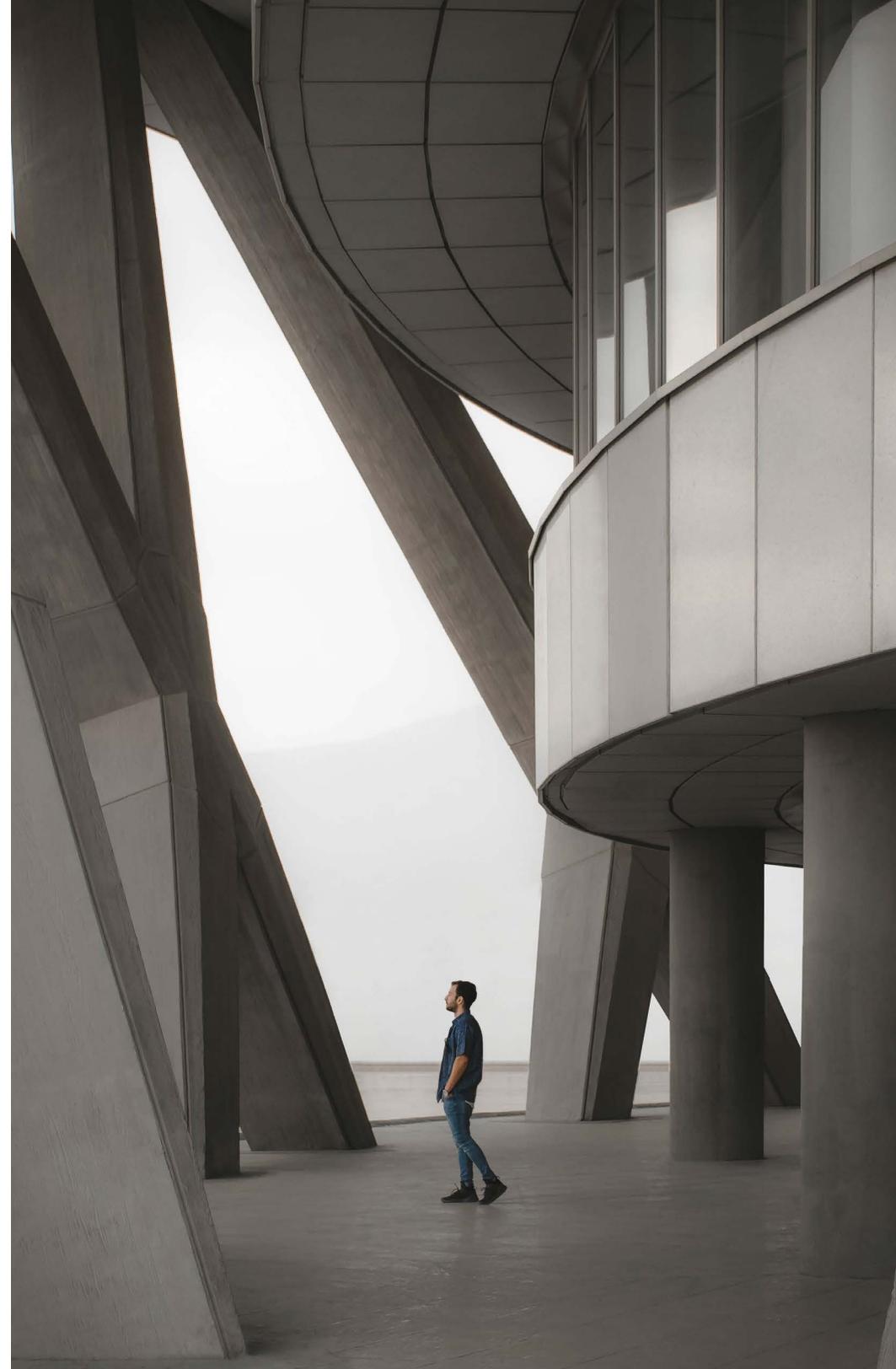
Activity: Median posts published by a profile on the platform in a given time period.

Community size: Median Fans/Followers/Subscribers count on the platform

Interactions: Median Interactions per page received on posts published in the given time period

#AD usage: The total number of influencers who used #AD (or available local equivalent) in Instagram posts

Extended glossary available on the website for [Socialbakers](#) (now part of Emplifi). All data (unless specified differently) is first normalized on Profile/Page/Channel.



About Emplifi

Emplifi is the leading unified CX platform that brings marketing, care and commerce together to help businesses close the customer experience gap. More than 7,000 brands, such as Delta Air Lines, Ford Motor Company and McDonalds, rely on Emplifi to provide their customers with outstanding experiences at every touchpoint.

For more information, visit emplifi.io

