



The state of social media and CX

Q3 2021

About the report

In a time when consumers are prioritizing experiences above all else when interacting with brands, reaching them at the right time with the right content is critical. Meeting people's need for instant gratification is challenging, but the right social media programs can help bring a brand's marketing, commerce, and care efforts to new levels.

That requires having the latest data and insights at your disposal. This is the main goal of Emplifi's Social Media and CX Trends reports — to dive into the latest Emplifi data in paid and organic social media data to share insights you can use to get the most from your social media efforts and deliver the stellar experiences your audiences seek.

Highlights of our Q3 2021 report include global ad spend and cost-per-click on Facebook and Instagram matching and surpassing year-high levels, respectively. Emplifi data also shows how Live video remains an underutilized post type for both paid and organic social media content despite seeing higher engagement and CTR rates. This report also looks at how brands in most industries are responding quicker to comments on their Facebook profiles than last year.



“As businesses anticipate a future that is social-first, social media investment is growing faster than ever. Social media has become an essential part of consumers’ lives and brands know they need to be active on the platforms to maintain and nurture their relationships with consumers

In Q3 we’ve seen the formats that support live commerce are highly engaging. According to data from Emplifi, Live video is 3x more engaging than any other content format. Live experiences enable brands to connect in a raw and authentic way with their audiences. They are real-time, conversational and best of all, they can drive sales when integrated into a social commerce strategy. Nevertheless, we’re still seeing that marketers have yet to take full advantage of the potential of Live video.

As customer care becomes more prevalent on social, Emplifi data shows an improvement in brands’ response time quarter on quarter. However many industries still have ways to go. Outstanding community management and social care have become a critical part of successful CX. For consumer-facing brands, marketing, sales, service and care is all happening on social media. Brands need to serve outstanding experiences to better differentiate themselves and increase customer loyalty.”

Zarnaz Arlia
CMO, Emplifi

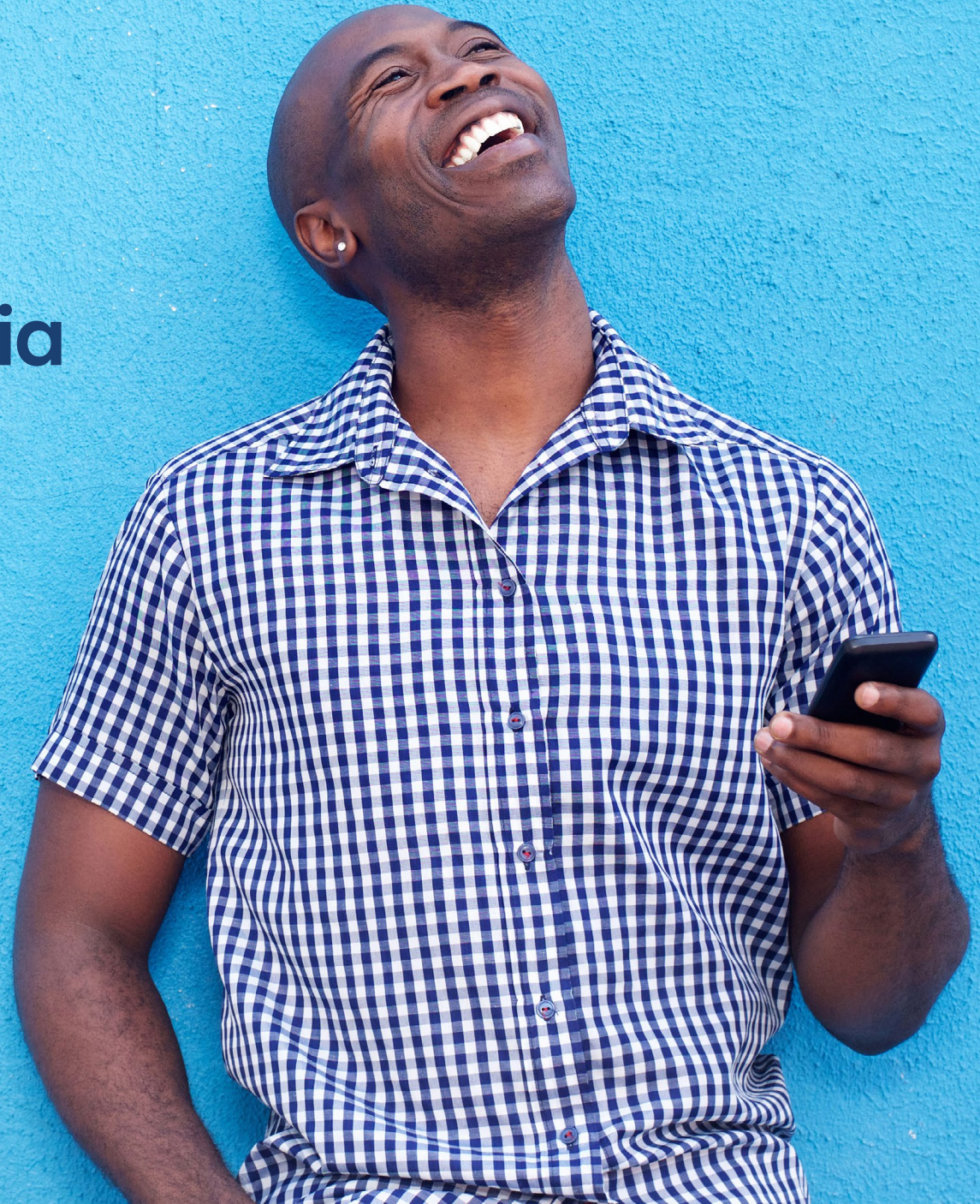


Table of contents

Trends: Paid social media	5
Global social media ad spend	6
Evolution of CPC and CTR	10
Facebook Ads reach	11
Distribution of ad spend by placement	14
Paid takeaways	15
Trends: Organic social media	16
Evolution of relative interactions	17
The engagement gap between Facebook & Instagram	18
Social commerce continues its global rise	19
Performance of post types on Facebook	20
Shares of pages that went live on Facebook	21
Average percent of post interactions in Q3	22
Distribution and performance of post types	23
Median response times	24
Organic takeaways	25
Methodology and glossary	26
Appendix	28



Trends: Paid social media



Global social media ad spend grows 43% YoY, matches year-high

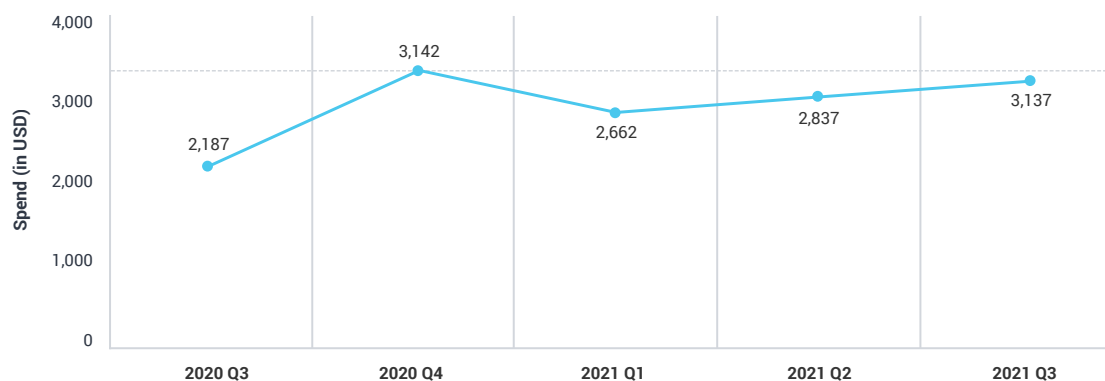
As many regions of the world emerge from the pandemic, Emplifi data shows that marketers are increasingly investing in social media marketing to reach and engage with their audiences.

Fueled by a 10.5% growth between Q2 and Q3 2021, marketers spent **43.4% more on Facebook and Instagram advertising than they did in Q3 2020**. Ad spend matched the year-high mark seen in Q4 2020 – during the holiday season when spending is typically at its highest. If this trend continues, a new year-high is likely coming in Q4 2021.

After seeing a significant drop in early 2020 at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the YoY growth seen in ad spend since 2019 suggests these increases are not simply a bounce back, but an ongoing trend towards brands investing more in paid social media.

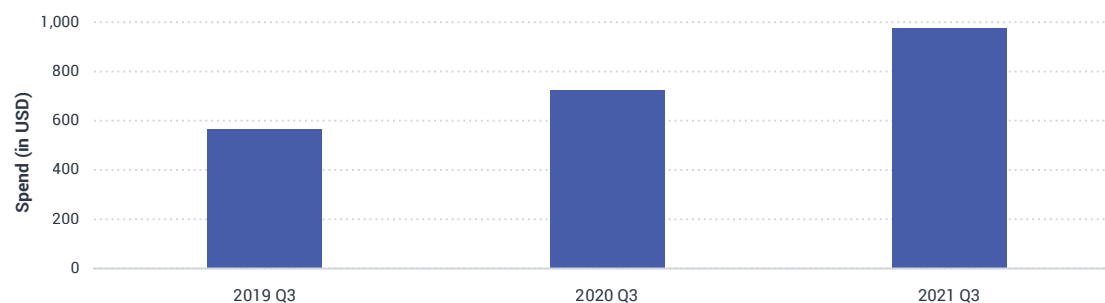
Q3 Year-Over-Year Comparison of Spend (in USD)


Median monthly ad account values



Q3 Year-Over-Year Comparison of Ad Spend (in USD)

Median weekly spends of individual ad accounts



A close-up, side-profile photograph of a woman with blonde hair tied back, wearing a red and black patterned sweater and a small hoop earring. She is looking down at a smartphone held in her hands. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be an outdoor setting with some lights.

Social media spend continues to increase across regions, industries

Diving into how ad spend has been evolving at the regional level (detailed on page 8), the biggest increases YoY were in **Central America** (78.8%) and **North America** (59.5%). North America also saw the largest growth from Q2 to Q3 2021 (34.5%), followed by East Asia (30.2%).

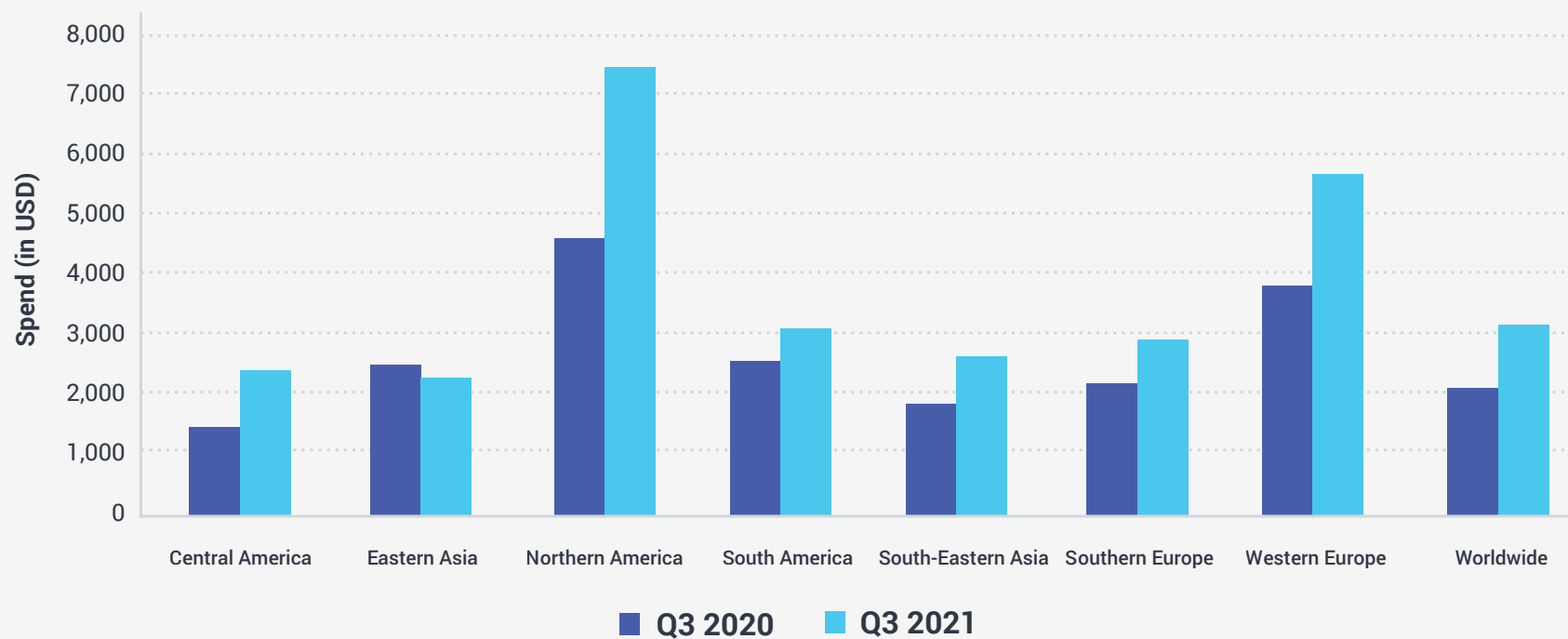
Looking at the industry-level ad spend (detailed on page 9), Ecommerce leads the way with the highest ad spend, seeing the highest growth from Q2 to Q3 across all industries analyzed (51.9%), resulting in a 38% boost YoY.

Q3 2021 saw more countries reopening their borders and travel resuming around the world. As a result, ad spend in the **Accommodation** industry has notably increased YoY (94% growth). The **Alcohol** and **Finance** industries also saw 60%+ increases in ad spend YoY.

For most regions and industries, social media ad spend looks poised to grow into 2022 as marketers adapt their efforts to reach consumers in a growing, digital-first economy.

Spend (in USD) by Region

Median monthly ad account values



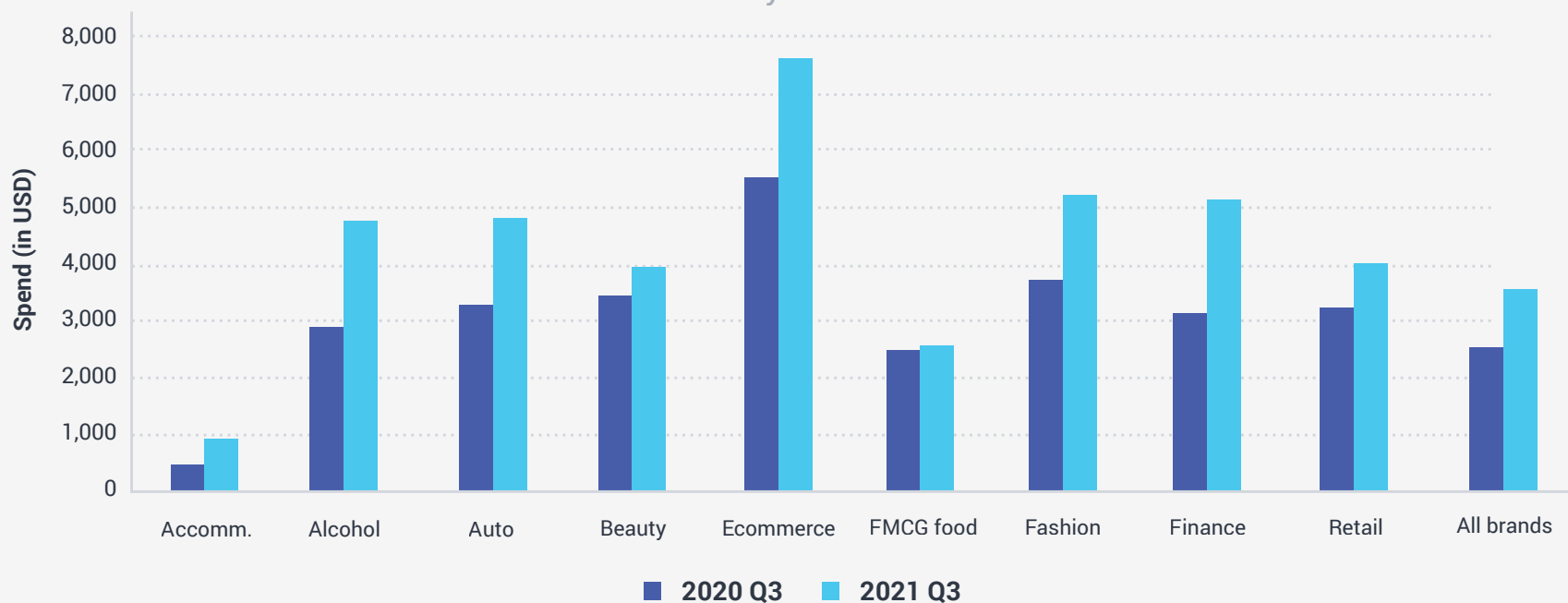
Source: Emplifi data

Date Range: 01 July 2020 - 30 September 2021

Sample: Ad Accounts Benchmarks (FB and IG Aggregated)

Facebook and Instagram Ad Spend (in USD) by Industry

Median monthly ad account values



Source: Emplifi data

Date Range: 01 July 2020 - 30 September 2021

Sample: Ad Accounts Benchmarks (FB and IG Aggregated)

CTR remains stable while advertising costs reach a year high

Advertising costs kept trending upward in Q3 2021, with cost-per-click (CPC) on Facebook and Instagram reaching its highest level since late 2020. At the same time, the click-through rate (CTR) has held mostly steady, with only minor fluctuations.

The stability of CTR points to the resilience of paid social media marketing, which continues to return value despite rising costs. In a competitive environment, companies have ample reason to invest in targeting and engaging with their consumers on social platforms.

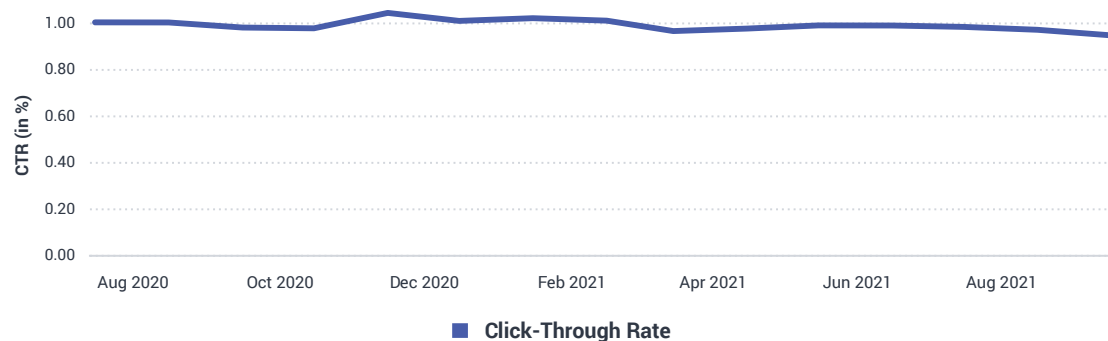
Cost per Click for Facebook and Instagram Ads

Median monthly ad account values



Click-Through Rate for Facebook and Instagram Ads

Median monthly ad account values



Facebook sees modest ads reach increase globally

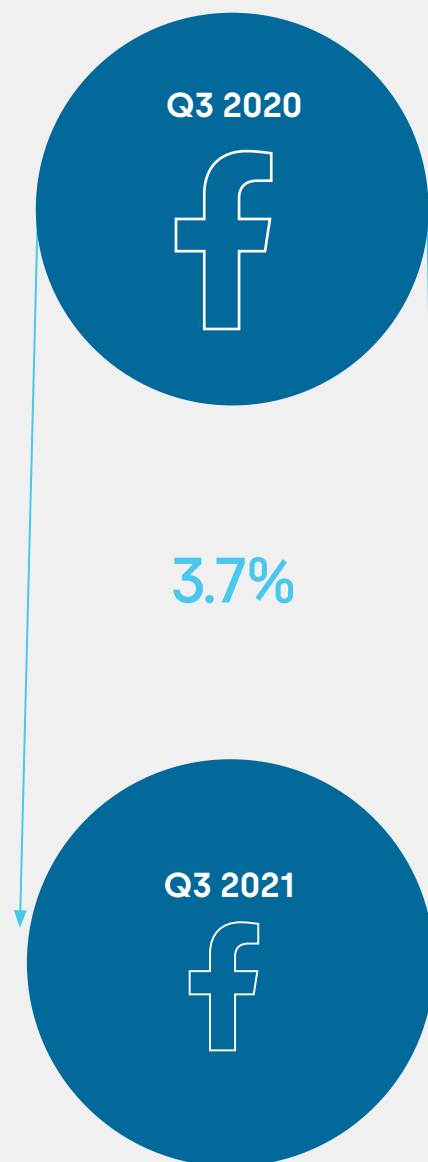
Reach is a critical metric for marketers to monitor, because it helps them measure the impact of their campaigns.

The latest Emplifi data shows a **slight but notable increase in Facebook ads reach since Q3 2020** (3.7%). This is in stark contrast to what was seen in [Emplifi's Q2 2021 Social Media and CX Trends Report](#), when a -12.4% decrease YoY in this metric was reported. All-in-all, Facebook ads reach has been seeing a modest increase throughout 2021, providing an optimistic trend for digital marketers.

At the regional level (see page 12), the most significant increases were seen in Central America (15.2%) and North America (11.0%). On the other hand, while the East Asia region saw the largest decrease YoY (-20.9%), it shows a notable improvement from the 35.0% YoY decrease reported in Q2 2021.

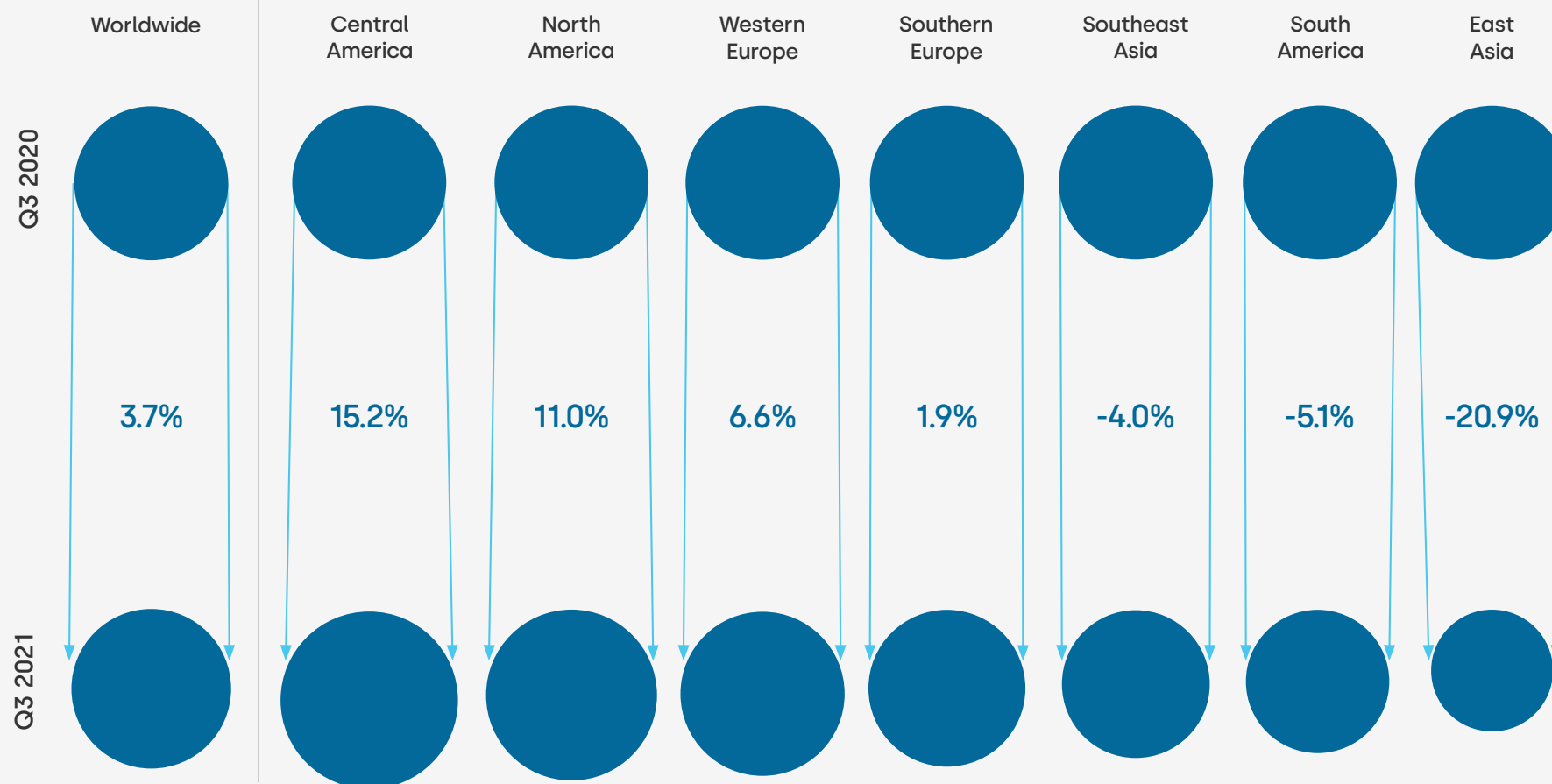
Worldwide Facebook Ads Reach

Median Monthly Facebook Ad Account Reach



Facebook ads reach by region

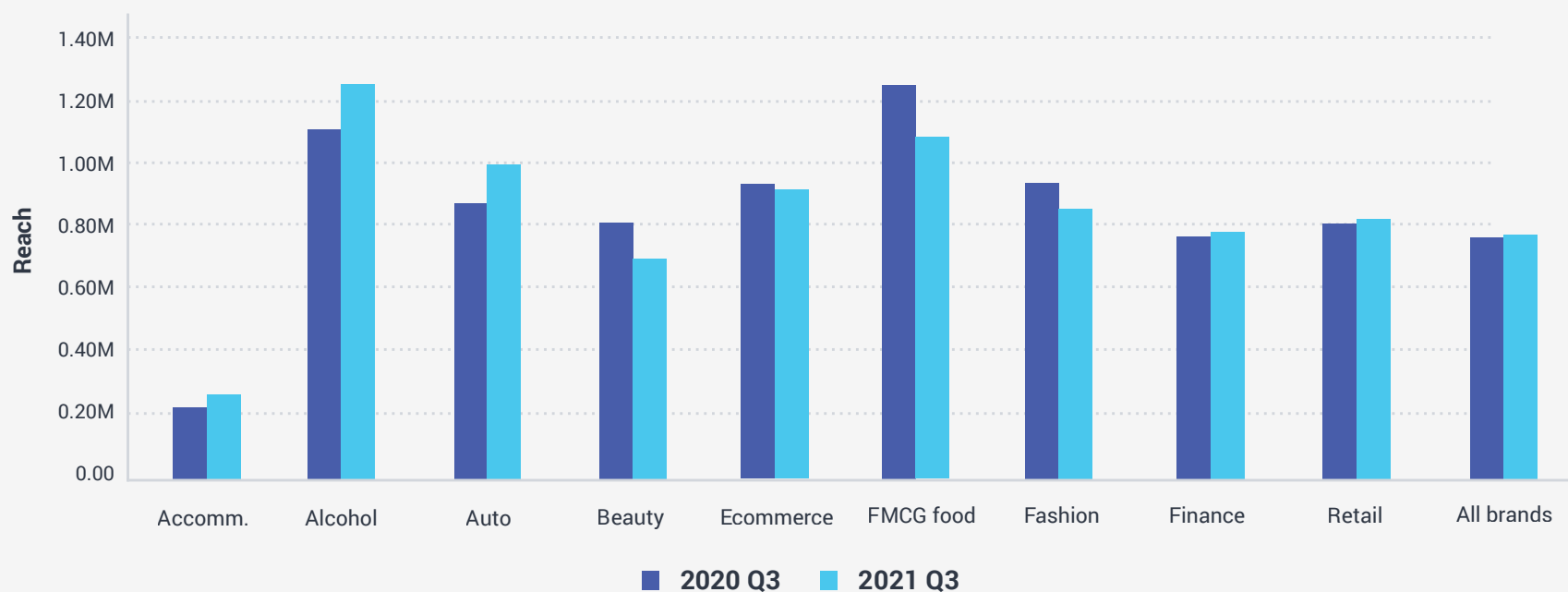
Median Monthly Facebook Ad Account Reach



Source: Emplifi Data • Date range: July 01, 2020 - September 30, 2021 • Sample: Ad Accounts Benchmark (FB)

Facebook ads reach by Industry

Median monthly ad account values



Source: Emplifi data

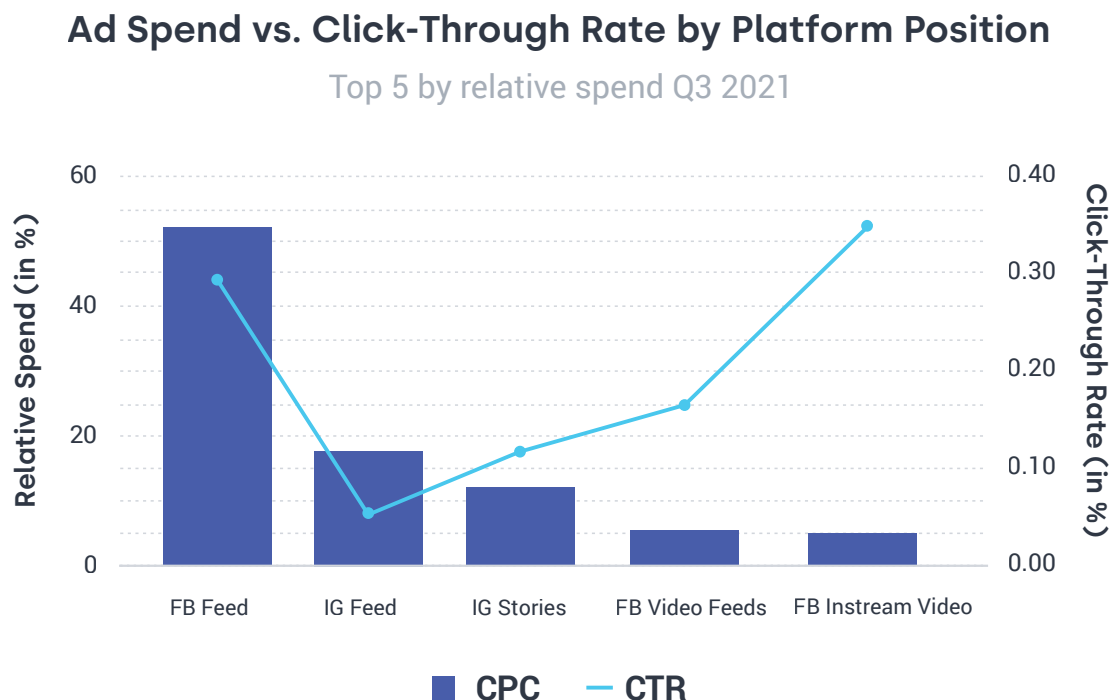
Date Range: 01 July 2020 - 30 September 2021

Sample: Ad Accounts Benchmarks (FB and IG Aggregated)

Facebook Instream Video underutilized, provides the highest CTR for marketers

Emplifi data shows that **Facebook Instream Video** and **Facebook News Feed** lead all ad placements in CTR across Facebook and Instagram. However, Instream Video (0.36%) outperformed News Feed (0.29%) in Q3 2021, demonstrating its ability to drive traffic and engagement.

Despite its higher CTR, Facebook Instream Video attracts only the fifth largest ad spend (4.8%), suggesting that marketers are underutilizing this ad placement, given its effectiveness.





Paid takeaways

Brands are paying more to reach consumers on social media, as CPC for social ads continues to rise. However, CTR has remained stable with minor fluctuations since Q3 2020. These findings suggest that marketers still view paid social media as a key cog in their marketing mix, and are willing to pay the extra costs to reach their audiences.

Under this rising financial pressure, marketing teams need to step up their efforts to maximize the value of their ad spend and make data-driven decisions when allocating their budgets.

To make the most of their paid social dollars, brands need to focus on delivering the right content for the right audiences at the right time. That means knowing what consumers want and need at each stage of their purchase journeys, and crafting content that makes them take the next step. In short, thoughtful attention to CX helps make paid social marketing work.



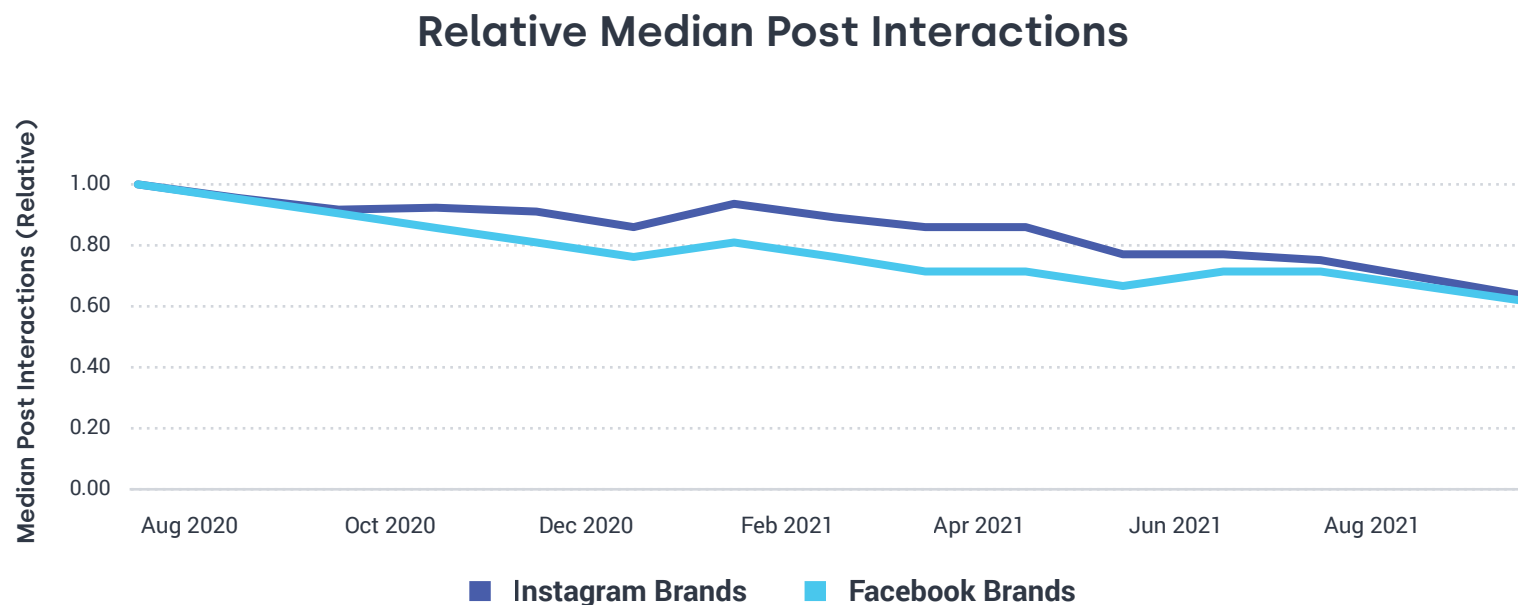
Trends: Organic social media



Relative interactions for Facebook and Instagram posts decrease in 2021

Relative post interactions for Brand accounts on both Facebook and Instagram have been trending down since Q3 2020, with both platforms seeing about 60% of the median post interactions they saw at the time. Compared to Facebook, Instagram interactions had remained relatively steady from the

start of Q3 2020 through the beginning of 2021, creating a gap between the two platforms. However, a sharp downturn for Instagram starting in late Q2 2021, combined with a small bump for Facebook at around the same time, eliminated the gap between the two.

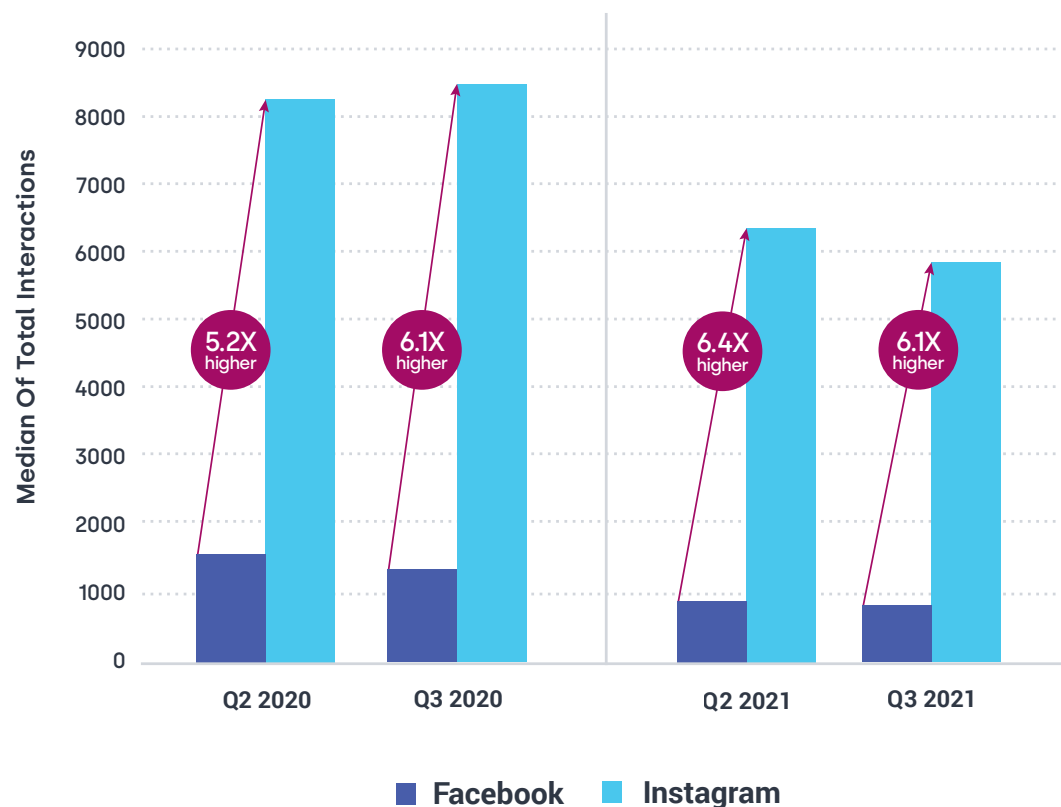


The engagement gap between Facebook and Instagram has stabilized

Data has long shown that engagement is higher on Instagram than on Facebook. However, after earlier Emplifi data had shown a widening engagement gap between the two social media networks, this gap appears to have stabilized — for now.

In Q3 2021, the total number of interactions generated by Instagram profiles (Likes and Comments on posts published by brands on their profiles) was **6.1x higher** than on Facebook profiles, the same gap seen in Q3 2020. By comparison, as reported in [Emplifi's Q2 2021 Social Media and CX Trends report](#), the gap between the two was 5.2x.

Difference in Engagement with Brand Profiles on Facebook and Instagram



Social commerce continues its global rise

Social commerce is booming as more and more people learn to enjoy shopping on social media platforms. The pandemic-driven shift toward online shopping has contributed to this trend, as has the rise of a young generation of social-first consumers.

Revenue from social commerce only continues to rise. **According to eMarketer**, commerce sales are expected to reach around \$350 billion in 2021 in China alone. While U.S. sales will be lower at \$36 billion, eMarketer predicts they will more than double by 2025.

Meanwhile, social shopping has become familiar to a large share of consumers. **According to research from Ipsos**, in 2021, 65% of Americans buy products directly or discover products on social media.

For brands, social commerce offers the chance to deliver seamless, satisfying experiences on the channels their consumers use the most. To succeed, they need to find ways to create engagement among fans, followers, and customers.



Live video sees 3x more interactions than other post types on Facebook

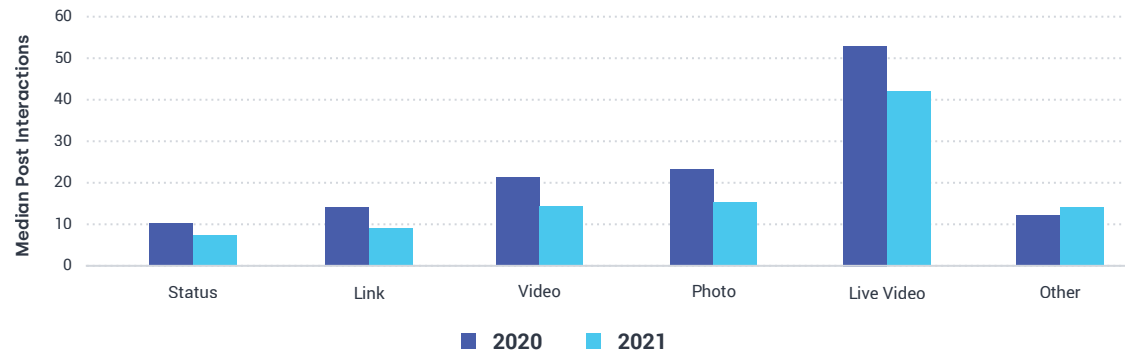
Live video is growing as a tool to generate online engagement and sales, especially when integrated into social commerce. Nevertheless, marketers have yet to take full advantage of its potential.

For brands that use live video, it can have a powerful impact on engagement. Emplifi data shows that, in Q3 2021, fans and followers interacted significantly more with live videos (42 median post interactions) than with other types of posts (Photos: 15, Pre-recorded video: 14).

It's also important to note that the share of Pages globally that went live has been steadily decreasing since Q3 2020 (from 11.7% to 7.7%).

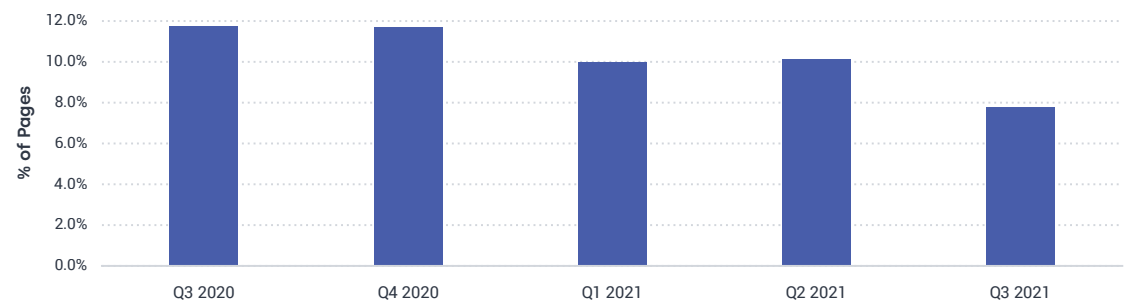
Performance of Post Types on Facebook

Q3 year-over-year difference on Facebook



Share of Pages That Went Live on Facebook

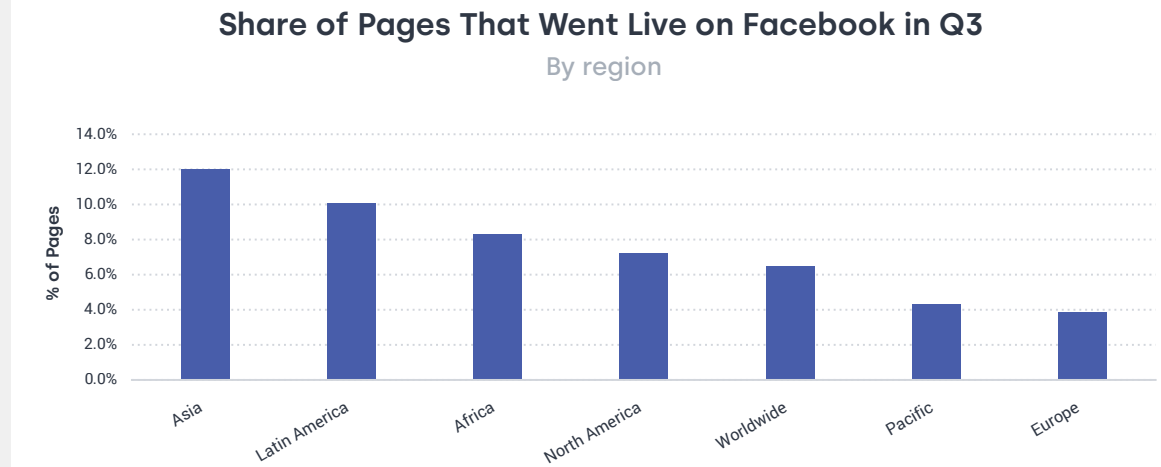
Last 5 quarters



Brands in Asia were the most likely to go Live, ones in Europe least likely

Despite its engagement benefits, live video is only beginning to catch on with many brands around the globe.

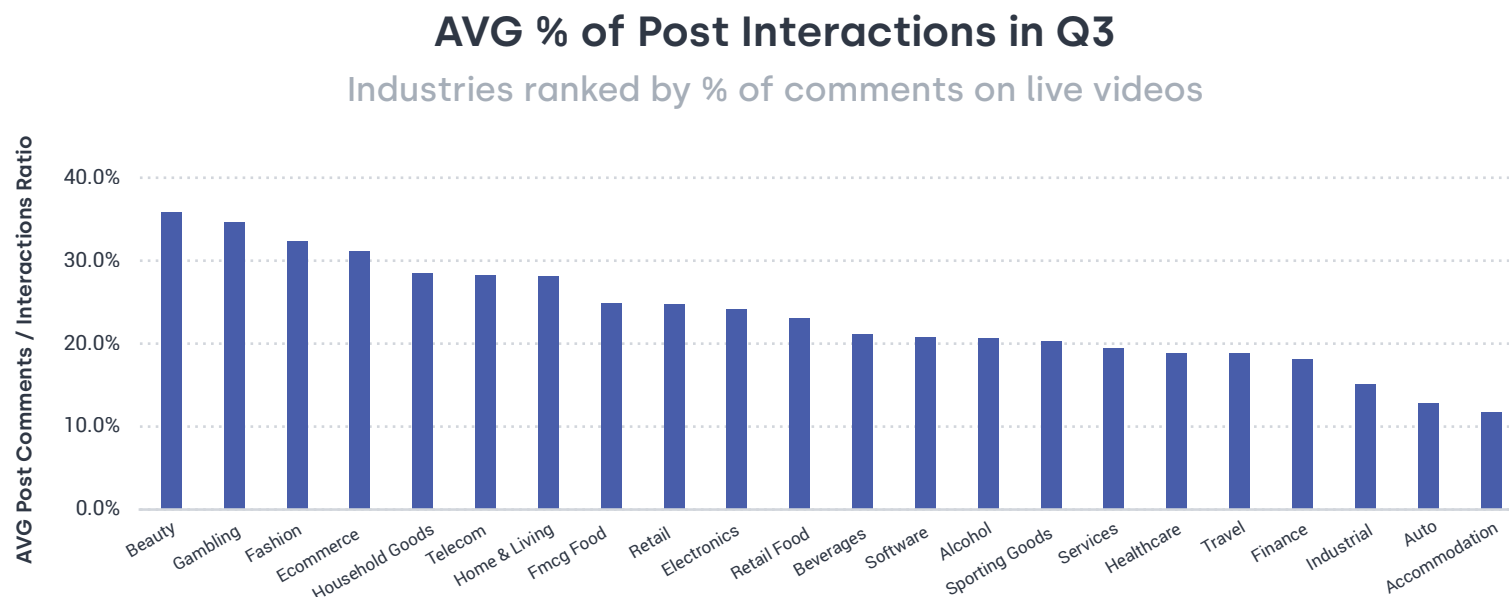
Emplifi data shows the proportion of brands in **Asia** that went live on Facebook in Q3 2021 (12.0%) was the highest across all regions examined, followed by brands in **Latin America** (10.1%). Brands in **Europe**, on the other hand, were the least likely (3.9%).



Beauty, Fashion, Ecommerce brands seeing the most comments on Live Videos

When interacting with content on social media, comments require more effort than liking or reacting to a post. In many cases, commenting on a post can suggest the content engaged them enough to make that extra effort.

Looking at the ratio of comments per interaction for brands that went live on Facebook in Q3 2021, brands in the **Beauty** (35.9%), **Gambling** (34.7%), **Fashion** (32.4%), and **Ecommerce** (21.2%) industries ranked above all other industries examined.



Engagement gap grows between Carousels, other Instagram post types

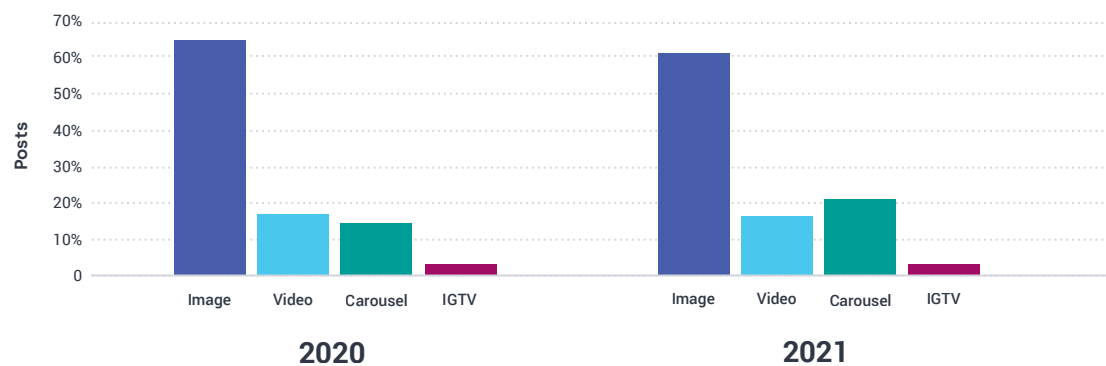
The distribution of different post types on Instagram changed little from Q3 2020 to Q3 2021. **Carousels increased their share of all posts YoY** from 16.2% to 20.8%, although single Image posts easily remain the most common post type for Brands (60.4%).

The growth of Carousels may result from their success in driving engagement. In Q3 2021, **the median number of Carousel interactions (160) was 47% higher than that for images (109)**, the next best performing post type. It's worth noting that this gap was only 27% in Q3 2020.

In comparison, Video and IGTV post types showed lower engagement than image posts, and accounted for fewer than 20% of all Brand posts. It is worth noting that **Instagram is reportedly abandoning IGTV** as a standalone format, converting it into a new format called Instagram Video format.

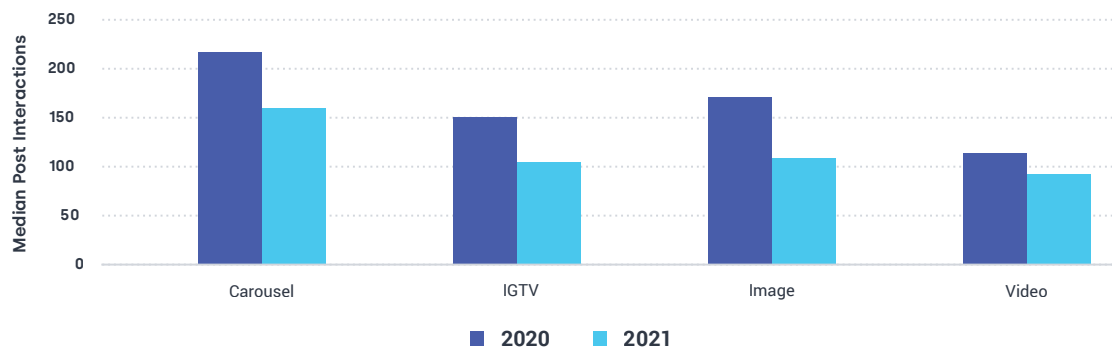
Distribution of Post Types Published by Brands

Q3 Year-Over-Year difference on Instagram



Performance of Post Types on Instagram

Q3 year-over-year difference on Instagram



Response times improving across industries, but room to improve

Social media enables companies to speed up their responses to questions and complaints. This is crucial at a time when customers expect quicker, more convenient experiences than ever before.

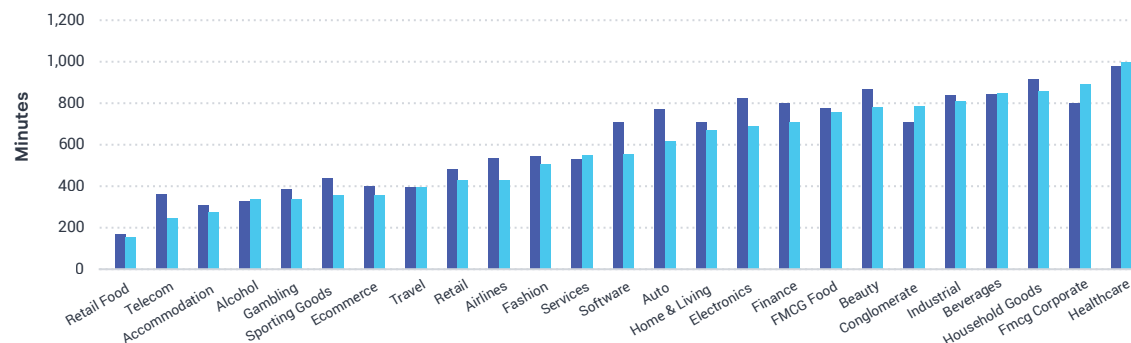
In Q3 2021, multiple industries were able to deliver faster answers to user comments on Facebook. The Telecom industry led the way with one of the shortest overall response times, and saw the biggest drop in response times YoY.

Software, Automotive, Airlines, Sporting Goods, and **Electronics** brands were also able to cut their average response times since last year. **Healthcare** and **Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG)** were exceptions to the trend, as their response times increased since Q3 2020.

Overall, average response times remain more than 3 hours long, leaving considerable room for improvement. One way to help social media users obtain swift resolutions to their questions is to ensure digital self-support options are visible and accessible on your social media profile.

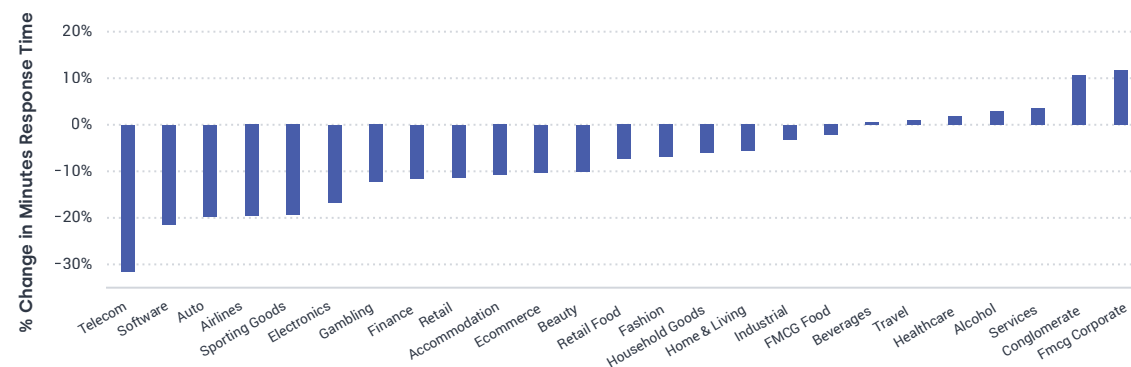
Median Response Time on User Comments, Facebook

Brands responding to user comments, Q3 2021 vs. Q3 2020



Change in Median Response Time on User Comments, Facebook

Change in brands responding to user comments, Q3 2021 vs. Q3 2020



Organic takeaways

Engagement patterns on organic social media are shifting with new formats and changing user behaviors. The engagement gap between Instagram and Facebook remained stable YoY, while live video now outperforms traditional content formats.

With its high engagement rates, live stream video can drive impactful experiences for both social marketing and social commerce. If they are not doing so already, brands need to explore live video's potential to enhance their social media strategies and elevate engagement at key stages of their purchase journeys.

As customer care moves into social platforms, brands should evaluate their existing processes and optimize the experiences they provide. Automated solutions such as AI chatbots and centralized community tools can help agents respond faster and resolve customer queries more efficiently.

In general, an engaging, responsive social media presence has become critical for successful CX. For consumer-facing brands, it is a crucial way to differentiate themselves and build customer loyalty.



Brands need to explore live video's potential to enhance their social media strategies (if they are not doing so already).

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 industry 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: An additional threshold was applied for Internal Ads-Benchmarks (minimum 200 active benchmarks from a region/industry).



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 Socialbakers' 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 McDonald's, rely on Emplifi to provide their customers with outstanding experiences at every touchpoint.

For more information, visit emplifi.io

