



New Data Shows Millennials Ask, Gen X Buys and Baby Boomers Observe on Social Media

February 22, 2017

The Q1 2017 Sprout Social Index uncovers what consumers want from brands on social media

We all know that social media is not just for millennials anymore—Generation X and baby boomers are just as tied to their social media accounts. However, habits and preference vary widely by generation. The latest [Sprout Social Index](#) reveals how social behavior differs by generation and platform and delves into how brands should adjust to make the most of customer engagement.

The [social media management company](#) found each generation has a unique identity as to how it used social media to interact with brands. Millennials embrace the ability to communicate directly, as 30 percent engage with a brand at least once per month. Conversely, baby boomers are more likely to observe silently with only 14 percent regularly initiating a dialogue with a brand on social. Meanwhile, Gen Xers have obvious shopping ambitions in following brands; nearly 7 in 10 will likely purchase something from a brand they follow—more than any other generation surveyed.

Other insights from the report include:

- Millennials are twice as likely than other generation to turn to social, rather than phone or email, to communicate with a brand.
- Facebook is the most popular network for 43 percent of respondents.
- Millennials and Gen Xers are nearly twice as likely to follow a brand on social media than baby boomers.
- Only one in 10 social messages actually get a response from a brand.
- Gen Xers are twice as likely to unfollow a brand that says something offensive or in opposition to their personal beliefs than any other generation.

“Social media holds great promise for reaching your audience since multiple generations are now reliably all in the same place,” said Scott Brandt, CMO of [Sprout Social](#). “The effort doesn’t end there for brands, however. The data shows that while these people of all different ages may be reachable via the same platform, they can use it in drastically different ways. Strategies should be adjusted to support individual customer needs, and brands that don’t talk to their customers—directly or via social media—won’t see the best possible results.”

For more information and the full data report visit sproutsocial.com/index.

About the Data

The Sprout Social Index is a report compiled and released by Sprout Social. All referenced data is based on 280,000 public social profiles (135,000 Facebook; 114,000 Twitter; 31,000 Instagram) of continually active accounts between Q4 2015 and Q4 2016. More than 3.8 billion messages sent and received during that time were analyzed for the purposes of this report.

Some data may have shifted from the last Sprout Social Index report due to a shift in the social profiles analyzed; however, all overarching trends remain consistent. Industry classifications were based on LinkedIn industry categories. In some cases, closely-related industries were merged into a single overarching industry. All messages analyzed that were considered casual mentions or not in need of a response were excluded from engagement, response rate and response time calculations with the intention of eliminating noise. Analysis of which messages required attention was done using Sprout’s proprietary technologies. Response time and response rate calculations were done using Sprout’s Engagement Reporting technology found in the Sprout Social product.

This survey was conducted by Survata, an independent research firm in San Francisco. Survata interviewed 1000 online respondents between January 24, 2017 and January 30, 2017. Respondents were reached across the Survata publisher network, where they take a survey to unlock premium content, like articles and ebooks. Respondents received no cash compensation for their participation. More information on Survata’s methodology can be found at survata.com/methodology.

About Sprout Social

Sprout Social offers social media engagement, advocacy and analytics solutions for leading agencies and brands, including Hyatt, GrubHub, Microsoft, Uber and Zendesk. Available via web browser, iOS and Android apps, Sprout’s engagement platform enables brands to more effectively communicate on social channels, collaborate across teams and provide an exceptional customer experience. Bambu by Sprout Social, a platform for advocacy, empowers employees to share curated content across their social networks to further amplify a brand’s reach and engagement. Headquartered in Chicago, Sprout is a Twitter Official Partner, Facebook Marketing Partner, Instagram Partner Program Member, LinkedIn Company Page Partner and Google+ Pages API Partner. Learn more at sproutsocial.com and getbambu.com.

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