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Spiking Engagement: Analyzing Social Media Tactics and Fan Interaction in the Omaha Supernovas

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Spiking Engagement: Analyzing Social Media Tactics and Fan Interaction in the Omaha Supernovas

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Abstract

The available engagement of social media for firms and their target market is unmatched. Now, rather than a one-way communication, it is an open channel. Potential customers can share their thoughts and feelings on the firms' products and services, and firms can connect with their customers and create brand loyalty. This opens opportunities for marketers to look at new ways and strategies to connect with their customers. This is the same for professional sports teams. Just like a traditional firm, professional sports teams rely on being able to connect with and sell to their target market.

The newly established Omaha Supernovas professional volleyball is just getting started on their social media journey. This paper is aimed at giving them background on the importance of social media as a marketing tool, provide them with the research, and give them suggestions on what they could do to better utilize their social media.

This study was conducted to establish a pattern between the selected professional sports teams and their posting habits.

What was discovered during this study was that while there was certainly an average, each team used their own strategy to connect with their audiences. It is necessary for any future teams or new teams to have an understanding of when to post, what will work best for each platform, and who their fans are. The findings also indicated that teams got the best engagement when they posted with regularity, multiple times throughout the week. They also got their best engagement on game days, as that is when fans are most excited to engage with their team.

Introduction

The growing importance and impact of social media in the business sphere has become undeniable. What was once a social platform for the average person has transformed into a powerful marketing tool that must be utilized.

The newly established Omaha Supernovas, a professional volleyball team, is just diving into the complexities of social media. Luckily, they are not the first sports team to brave this realm and they have a veritable feast of examples available to them. This study aims to highlight some of those examples and get a sense of what the industry of professional sports does to engage with viewers on social media. The teams selected for this study are all well-established sports teams in the United States, that each have their own unique fanbase.

This study focuses on what theme, type of post, and day to post worked best on each platform for each team. The Omaha Supernovas media team will be able to leverage these results and improve on their existing ideas.

Literature Review

Social Media Marketing

Social media has come leaps and bounds in the last 20 years and has only been helped by the rapidly increasing speed of technology innovation. Where once a platform like Facebook was only accessible via a desktop computer that required multitudes of additional equipment to work, it is now accessible via a simple tap on a mobile phone. This kind of evolution has required marketers to adjust their strategy.

Santos, Goncalves, and Teles touch on the importance of real-time marketing (RTM), which considers current events and trends with its marketing strategy. RTM is essential to social

media marketing, as information is now able to travel within a split second with technology. This makes consumers inclined to want brands to be more conscious of world events and respond accordingly. Consumers will engage more with companies that are more intensely involved with their social media. Santos, Goncalves, and Teles also note that, "By associating the brand content with timely, top-of-mind moments, brands can increase the topically and relevance of their messages for consumers and enhance the consumers' appreciation of their brand," (2023).

Beyond just consumer engagement on platforms, this translates into equity for the brand. Chen, Wang X., and Wang Z. conducted a study regarding whether or not social media had influence over brand equity. They confirmed that social media is effective for engaging customers and enhancing brand equity, but also found that social media marketing does act as an important driver in enhancing brand equity (2023).

Demographics by platform

Social media is widely used all around the world. To show how many people are on social media, We Are Social, DataReportal, and Melwater engaged in research to show how many people were on the most popular platforms. They report that Facebook is by far the most used social network with 3,049,000,000 users as of January 2024, followed by YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, and TikTok. More importantly, this data shows just how widespread social media is used (See Table 3) (2023). This provides an enormous market to be tapped by firms and a largely effective platform to advertise on.

As with any marketing strategy, the key component to utilizing social media is knowing one's audience. It is vital to understand that each platform that is utilized is going to have a completely different version of what is 'normal' for posting and what is going to reach its

audience better. Khoros, a social media software company, described the demographics for

Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok as follows:

Facebook:

Gender

Gender	Percentage of Users
Male	56%
Female	44%

Age

Age Range	13-17	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Percentage of users	4.6%	22.6%	29.4%	19.10%	11.40%	7.2%	5.7%

Instagram

Gender

Gender	Percentage of Users
Male	52%
Female	48%

Age

Age Range	13-17	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Percentage of users	8%	30.8%	30.3%	15.7%	8.4%	4.3%	2.6%

TikTok:

Gender

Gender	Percentage of Users
Male	51%
Female	49%

Age

Age Range	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64
Percentage of users	37.3%	32.9%	15.7%	8.3%	5.8%

This demonstrates how even going from one platform to another can completely change a firm's strategy. What might work on TikTok, with its largely Generation Z audience, may not work on Facebook, which has a largely Millennial audience. However, it should be noted that while older generations may not make up most users, there are still enough of them on social media that they must be considered when considering posting and audience.

Factors Impact Social Media Marketing Effectiveness

There are many factors that strongly impact social media marketing effectiveness including theme of the post, time of day, day of the week, and type of media.

The theme of the post can be divided up into promotion, entertainment, and education. This metric is certainly open to interpretation. A post that may be intended to be geared towards entertainment but could be interpreted as solely promotion. It can be difficult to nail down exactly what theme is being portrayed, but they are certainly on a spectrum which helps figure out which box they fit best in for auditing purposes.

The time of day and the day of the week also impacts how well a post can do. For example, a post may do better at the end of the day on a weekday as opposed to posting in the middle of the day, as many people are preoccupied with work.

Finally, there is the type of media. For platforms like TikTok, which only allows videos, this is less relevant. However, for platforms like Facebook and Instagram there are multiple types of media available. Facebook allows for posts to be made through texts, graphics, images, stories, reels, and videos. Instagram allows for posts to be made through graphics, images, stories, reels, and videos.

These factors allow us to pinpoint a general feel and time for each of the posts.

Existing Sports Data

Rather than focusing on a traditional firm, this study looks at professional sports teams and how they engage with their audience. In a study done in 2023, Wang discusses the importance of sports teams' engagement with their fans. She emphasizes that fans will want information on both the team and the matches, as well as have the ability to partake in discussions and engage with the team when possible. She notes that:

> "Sport fans engage with teams' social media posts to seek a sense of belonging (Anagnostopoulos *et al*., 2018). However, relationship-building posts encompassing

simple holiday greetings, gratitude expressions, or team community involvement are inadequate for establishing meaningful connections with customers,".

This means that professional sports teams not only have to stay on top of RTM, but also on getting fans to want to discuss the team and its members. When the content invites consumers to participate, it allows the consumer to feel as though they are a part of the team or a part of the experience. A great way to get fans excited is to stir-up feelings of loyalty to the team by playing into rivalries.

Watanabe, Pegoraro, Yan, and Shapiro found that rivalry does increase attention towards the team. More fans want to engage because they are looking forward to a tough match. They also found that the better the teams are and the more established the rivalries are, the more intensely fans want to participate (2019).

Our Study

This study aims to build off all of this information to culminate into what strategy is most effective on Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. There is enough existing data that the Supernovas will be able to create an effective strategy, and now know the best way to engage with their fans.

Objectives

- Discover the patterns of successful sports teams in their social media.
- Discover the patterns of the Omaha Supernova's social media.
- Apply the successful patterns of the national sports teams to a local company.
- Create a strategy to improve the Omaha Supernovas' social media.

Methods

A total of twenty-one audits were conducted and nine hundred posts were recorded. To conduct this study, each of the selected teams' Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok were reviewed. Fifty posts were chosen to pull the numbers from and get a general idea of the brand's success in social media. Then, each post was reviewed, and data such as Media Type, Post Theme, and Day of the Week were recorded.

Each category was added up to get the total for that category. The total was then divided by the total number of posts to get the average for that category (see tables 1 and 2 for examples).

Each platform had their own insights that were pulled to average. For Facebook, the number of reactions, comments, and shares were recorded. For Instagram, the comments and likes were recorded. For TikTok, the likes, comments, shares, and views were recorded.

In addition to individual platform averages for each brand, a new audit was created to average the results of each platform for all five brands and an audit was conducted on the Omaha Supernovas Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok.

Results

In the interest of brevity, the individual results of each firm were not included in this report, nor were the data sheets used to calculate the results. They are available upon request. What is included is the industry average that was derived from the firms' results and the audit of the Supernovas to allow a comparison between the two.

Industry Averages

Facebook

Here are the results for the Facebook portion of the study. The cells that are both highlighted and bolded indicate the highest scoring area of that subject.

	Number of Posts	Total Likes	Avg. # of Likes	Total Shares	Avg. # of Shares	Total Comments	Avg. # of Comments
By Media Type:							
Graphic	45	559,973	12,444	50,625	1,125	28,932	643
Image	119	1,125,350	9,457	71,015	597	49,852	419
Video	85	1,008,196	11,861	60,441	711	28,354	334
By Post Theme:							
Promotion	39	100,018	2,565	11,337	291	6,552	168
Entertainment	146	2,029,923	13,904	125,252	858	69,150	474
Education	65	563,796	8,674	45,518	700	31,456	484
By Day of Week:							
Sunday	39	922,219	23,647	80,310	2,059	29,741	763
Monday	63	882,074	14,001	35,008	556	24,731	393
Tuesday	37	248,208	6,708	19,060	515	12,635	341
Wednesday	31	252,399	8,142	17,546	566	14,237	459
Thursday	25	122,482	4,899	5,331	213	8,390	336
Friday	27	77,234	2,861	7,655	284	7,527	279
Saturday	28	189,121	6,754	17,197	614	9,897	353

Table 1 Averages for Facebook posts

The most posts were images at 119. The highest average of likes, shares, and comments were on graphics at 12,444, 1,125, and 643, respectively.

The most posted theme was entertainment at 146 posts. The highest average of likes and shares were in entertainment at 13,904 and 858. The highest average of comments was in education at 484. The most posted on day was Monday at 63 posts, but Sunday had the highest average likes, shares, and comments at 23,647. 2,059, and 763.

This means that the ideal post on Facebook would be a graphic posted with the theme of entertainment on a Sunday. However, that does not mean that the rest of the data should be thrown out. For example, it could also be said that it would be effective for one to post on a Monday with an educational video. It is not necessarily the ideal time, but it is still likely that the post will do well.

Instagram

Here are the results for the Instagram portion of the study. The cells that are both highlighted and bolded indicate the highest scoring area of that subject. On Instagram, shares are not available publicly, nor are views.

	Number of Posts	Total Likes	Avg. # of Likes	Total Comments	Avg. # of Comments
By Media Type:					
Graphic	35	4,584,644.00	130,989.83	24,014.00	686.11
Image	134	15,246,718.00	113,781.48	41,759.00	311.63
Video	79	7,928,846.00	100,365.14	46,218.00	585.04
By Post Theme:					
Promotion	37	1,260,200.00	34,059.46	7,406.00	200.16
Entertainment	164	22,058,971.00	134,505.92	77,094.00	470.09
Education	49	4,471,157.00	91,248.10	27,568.00	562.61
By Day of Week:					
Sunday	27	4,026,585.00	149,132.78	15,234.00	564.2222222
Monday	31	6,866,346.00	221,495.03	13,800.00	445
Tuesday	60	3,978,147.00	66,302.45	22,758.00	379
Wednesday	21	1,598,662.00	76,126.76	10,403.00	495
Thursday	35	2,082,597.00	59,502.77	9,019.00	258
Friday	35	2,370,652.00	67,732.91	11,062.00	316
Saturday	41	6,867,339.00	167,496.07	29,792.00	727

Table 2 Averages for Instagram posts

A majority of posts on Instagram were images at 134. The highest average likes was on graphics at 130,990 and the highest average of comments was on graphics at 686. Most posts were themed as Entertainment at 164 and the highest average for likes was in entertainment at 134,506. The highest average of comments were in education at 563. Tuesday was the most posted on day at 60 posts, but Monday had the highest average of likes at 221,495. Saturday held the highest average comments at 727.

This means that the ideal post on Instagram would be a graphic posted with a theme of entertainment or education on a Monday if the goal were to maximize likes, but if the goal is to maximize comments, the post may do best if it were a graphic geared towards education and posted on a Saturday.

TikTok

Below are the results for the TikTok part of the study. There is only one media type, which is video, as TikTok is a video only platform.

	Number of Posts	Total Likes	Avg. # of Likes	Total Shares	Avg. # of Shares	Total Comments	Avg. # of Comments	Total Views	Avg. # of Views
By Media Type:									
Video	250	11,461,290	45,845	125,273	501	100,180	401	135,203,544	540,814
By Post Theme:									
Promotion	27	676,993	25,074	4,406	163	11,614	430	10,118,670	374,766
Entertainment	220	10,729,712	48,771	116,704	530	87,736	399	124,441,574	565,644
Education	3	54,585	18,195	4,163	1,388	830	277	643,300	214,433
By Day of Week:									
Sunday	47	5,413,945	115,190	69,314	1,475	51,794	1,102	68,528,800	1,458,060
Monday	40	2,145,962	53,649	12,275	307	19,856	496	22,712,837	567,821
Tuesday	31	900,179	29,038	8,157	263	6,945	224	8,926,770	287,960
Wednesday	35	930,204	26,577	9,962	285	6,110	175	10,982,100	313,774
Thursday	39	1,095,650	28,094	10,321	265	5,236	134	13,319,337	341,521
Friday	33	597,531	18,107	10,961	332	6,979	211	6,857,000	207,788
Saturday	25	377,819	15,113	4,283	171	3,260	130	3,876,700	155,068

Table 3 Averages for TikTok

The total average likes were 45,845, the average shares were at 501, the average comments were at 401, and the average views were at 540,814.

The most posts were in entertainment at 220, the highest average likes were in entertainment at 48,771, the highest average shares were in education at 1,388, the highest average comments were in promotion at 430, the highest average of views were in entertainment at 565,644.

The most posted on day was on Sundays at 47. The highest average of likes, shares, comments, and views were also on Sundays at 1,115,190, 1,475, 1,102, and 1,458,060.

This means that the ideal post on TikTok would be themed in entertainment and posted on a Sunday.

Supernovas

With these results, it is important to keep in mind that this is a brand-new team. They have not yet had the time to establish themselves and these numbers should continue to grow as they gain popularity in the Omaha area.

Facebook

	Number of Posts	Total Likes	Avg. # of Likes	Total Shares	Avg. # of Shares	Total Comments	Avg. # of Comments
By Media Type:							
Graphic	20	4,865	243	312	16	331	17
Image	9	3,916	435	59	7	101	11
Video	21	2,115	101	43	2	62	3
By Post Theme:							
Promotion	9	2,632	292	184	20	201	22
Entertainment	29	6,135	212	116	4	163	6
Education	12	2,129	177	114	10	130	11
By Day of Week:							
Sunday	15	3,997	266	118	8	168	11
Monday	1	57	57	0	0	0	0
Tuesday	6	1,694	282	36	6	27	5
Wednesday	21	4,084	194	199	9	255	12
Thursday	1	288	288	31	31	27	27
Friday	3	227	76	13	4	1	0
Saturday	3	549	183	17	6	16	5

Table 4 Averages for Supernovas' Facebook

The most posts were in video at 21, the most likes came from images at 435, the most shares were in graphic at 16, and the most comments were in graphics at 17.

The most posted theme was in entertainment at 29, the most liked theme was promotion at 292 likes, the most shares were in promotion at 20, and the most comments were in promotion at 22.

The most posted on day was Wednesday at 21 posts, but the most likes, shares, and comments were on Thursday at 288, 31, and 27, respectively. However, it should be noted that there was only one post to average, so it will naturally be higher.

This would mean that the ideal post for the Supernovas' Facebook would be a graphic themed in promotion posted on a Thursday. That being said, its metrics are certainly spread out. This allows the Supernovas some room to experiment and see what works the best for them.

Instagram

	Number of Posts	Total Likes	Avg. # of Likes	Total Comments	Avg. # of Comments
By Media Type:					
Graphic	21	17,891	852	59	3
Image	8	6,674	834	23	3
Video	21	16,833	802	90	4
By Post Theme:					
Promotion	7	3,610	516	12	2
Entertainment	29	23,507	811	113	4
Education	14	14,281	1,020	47	3
By Day of Week:					
Sunday	15	8,231	549	26	2
Monday	1	3,940	3,940	20	20
Tuesday	6	8,767	1,461	41	7
Wednesday	8	5,056	632	27	3
Thursday	14	12,221	873	34	2
Friday	3	673	224	1	0
Saturday	3	2,510	837	23	8

Table 5 Averages for Supernovas' Instagram

A majority of posts were either graphics or videos at 21 posts. The highest average of likes were in graphic at 852, the highest average of comments were on video at 4. The most posts were in entertainment at 29, the most likes were in education at 1,020, the most comments were in entertainment at 4. The most posted on day was Sunday at 15 posts, the highest likes were on Monday at 3,940, the highest number of comments were on Monday at 20.

This would mean that the ideal post for the Supernovas' Instagram would be a graphic themed in education and posted on a Monday.

TikTok

	Number of Posts	Total Likes	Avg. # of Likes	Total Shares	Avg. # of Shares	Total Comments	Avg. # of Comments	Total Views	Avg. # of Views
By Media Type:									
Video	50	9,152	183	108	2	95	2	303,097	6,062
By Post Theme:									
Promotion	9	789	88	27	3	28	3	148,335	16,482
Entertainment	27	6,768	251	62	2	51	2	126,558	4,687
Education	11	1,595	145	19	2	16	1	28,204	2,564
By Day of Week:									
Sunday	6	2,029	338	20	3	15	3	28,895	4,816
Monday	3	89	30	0	0	0	1	7,746	2,582
Tuesday	3	305	102	7	2	3	1	7,313	2,438
Wednesday	13	1,904	146	26	2	8	1	35,549	2,735
Thursday	10	1,383	138	15	2	20	2	36,759	3,676
Friday	5	786	157	17	3	22	4	140,478	28,096
Saturday	7	2,656	379	23	3	24	3	46,357	6,622

Table 6 Averages for Supernovas' TikTok

The most posts were in Entertainment at 27. The highest average of likes was at 251 in entertainment. The highest average of shares were in promotion at 3. The highest average of comments three and the highest average of views were both in promotion at 16,482.

The most posted on day was Wednesday at 13 posts. The highest average of likes was on Saturday at 379. The highest average of shares was at 3 on Sunday. Finally, the highest average of comments at 4 and the highest average of views at 28,096 were both on Friday.

This would make the ideal post themed to entertainment or promotion on a Saturday.

General Discussion

One of the most common themes that was noted throughout this study was the interaction of fans with their team's platform on game day. This also happens to be when teams tend to post the most, as they are trying to excite their fans and get them to watch the game.

Managerial Implications

As is reflected in the data, there is no one right answer for what a manager should instruct their team to do. It will vary wildly from one platform to the next. Even in the averages on the same platform, different days garner different types of engagement. Sundays may get more comments while Tuesdays may get more likes. They might find that information-based posts work better on one platform than the predicted entertainment-based posts. The bottom line is that it is essential for the results to be recorded and for the firm's marketing to shift strategy accordingly.

Managers should note that it is highly likely that the number of their posts' likes, comments, views, and shares will likely shift dramatically from one post to the next. This is all a part of experimenting with what works for the brand's audience, and how they like to engage with the brand.

What was consistently working for engagement was frequent and regular posting. It would be prudent to construct a posting schedule and to post more on game days. The firm should also engage with their audience when possible. This will allow the fans to feel as though they are a part of the team and increase fan loyalty. A similar experience would be when a fan is put on screen during a game for reactions or just to kill time between timeouts and referee discussions. It is an easy way to garner favor with fans.

Suggestions

While they can base it off the averages, each team has a different approach that works for them. The suggestion would be to start with the averages, then do an audit after a month or two to get an idea of the engagement. From there, they can alter their plan for their social media to optimize their audience. The most common themes throughout all the teams was posting on game days

and having very consistent posting. The Supernovas' social media team also needs to consider that their audience will differ on each platform and post accordingly. It is necessary that the team utilizes the tools available to them within the platform, such as Reels rather than just posting a video to their Instagram or Facebook. This will make it easier for the post to get engagement. Authenticity is essential to these posts and the team should utilize real-time marketing to stay on top of current events, trends, and opportunities to connect with their audiences in a new way.

Challenges and Limitations

One of the limitations of this study was breadth. It only looks at 5 teams, and there are so many others that could be considered. Additionally, this is only a snapshot of their social media in time. All of them could have had more prosperous engagement, or less prosperous engagement at other times, i.e., whether a team is in season or not, the Superbowl, etc.. Time was also a constraint, and if given the option to do it again, it would have been more appropriate to keep a log of posts over the course of a year.

Conclusion

Social media has become a powerful marketing tool. It can make or break a company. To utilize it to its full potential, it is absolutely necessary that its wielder understands their audience and will be able to tailor it to their target market. Social media in sports is a given, as it is a way for the team to interact with its fans. While from the outside perspective professional sports may look like simply an entertainment tool, at its core it is a business and operates as such. With a true understanding of who they are selling to and a connection with their audience, the Supernovas will be able to use social media to its full potential and establish a loyal following.
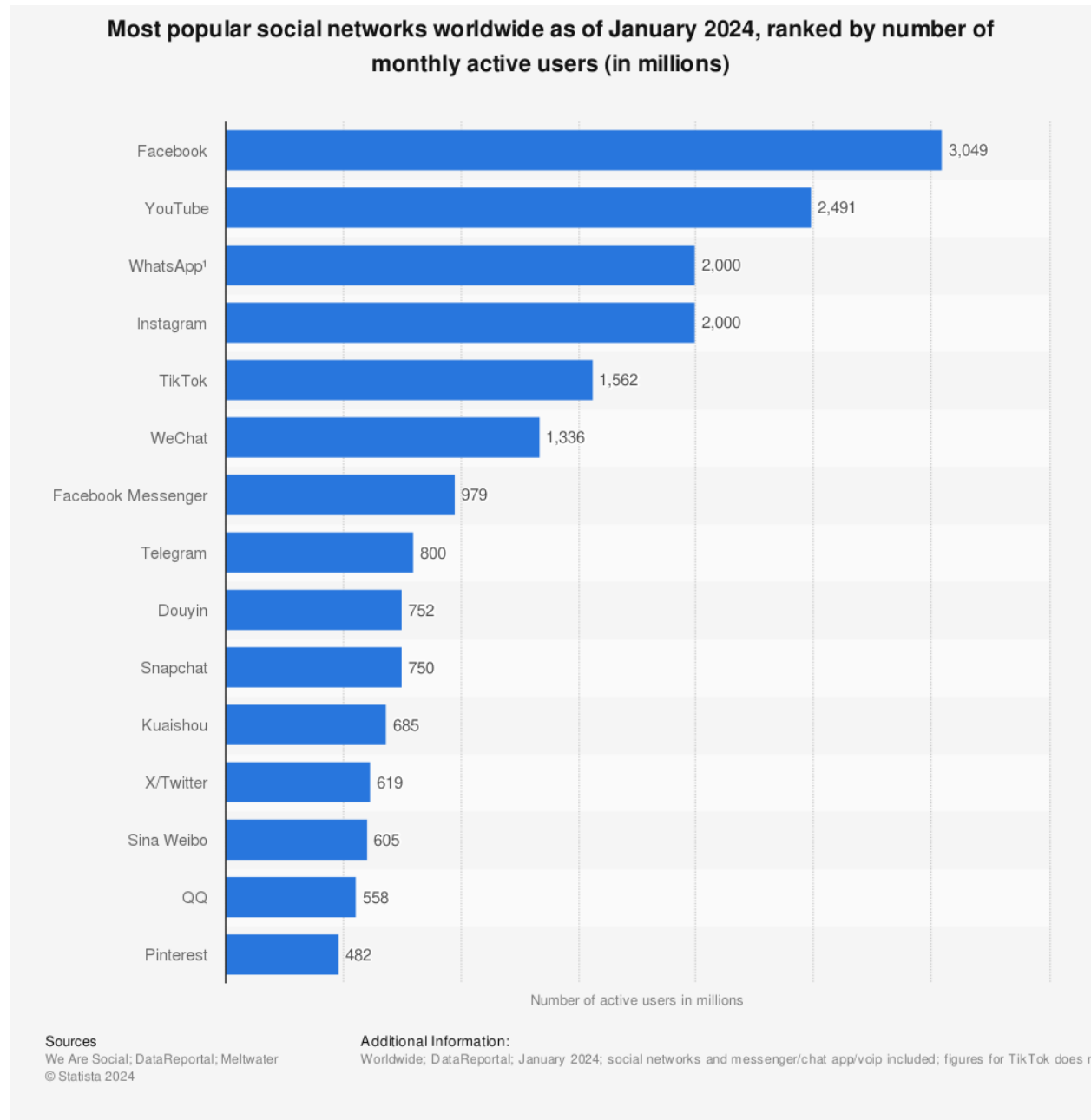
Tables

Media Type	Post Theme	Likes	Shares	Comments	Views	Day of Week
Video	Entertainment	11,700	41	131	406,600	Wednesday
Video	Promotion	57,300	72	263	365,900	Tuesday
Video	Entertainment	21,300	29	213	197,100	Monday
Video	Entertainment	59,300	85	619	636,700	Sunday
Video	Entertainment	21,600	33	96	209,100	Saturday
Video	Entertainment	51,700	93	560	520,000	Friday
Video	Entertainment	37,200	321	256	448,900	Friday
Video	Entertainment	31,900	79	246	248,400	Tuesday
Video	Entertainment	11,200	11	264	137,100	Monday

	Number of Posts	Total Likes	Avg. # of Likes	Total Shares	Avg. # of Shares	Total Comments	Avg. # of Comments	Total Views	Avg. # of Views
By Media Type:									
Video	50	8,620,300	172,406	84,294	1,686	82,051	1,641	107,581,900	2,151,638
By Post Theme:									
Promotion	8	582,000	72750	2956	370	11058	1382	7847300	980,913
Entertainment	42	8,038,300	191388	81338	1937	70993	1690	99734600	2,374,633
By Day of Week:									
Sunday	17	4,810,500	282,971	65,209	3,836	48,748	2,868	63,024,900	3,707,347
Monday	11	1,883,000	171,182	8,552	777	18,354	1,669	20,204,200	1,836,745
Tuesday	7	652,200	93,171	2,532	362	5,611	802	6,928,200	989,743
Wednesday	3	350,300	116,767	1,713	571	3,484	1,161	5,259,300	1,753,100
Thursday	4	556,400	139,100	2,222	556	1,802	451	7,540,600	1,885,150
Friday	5	248,800	49,760	1,871	374	2,262	452	3,122,800	624,560
Saturday	3	119,100	39,700	2,195	732	1,790	597	1,501,900	500,633

Table 9 Most popular social networks worldwide as of October 2023(2024)

Most popular social networks worldwide as of January 2024, ranked by number of monthly active users (in millions)

Social Network	Active users (millions)
Facebook	3,049
YouTube	2,491
WhatsApp[1]	2,000
Instagram	2,000
TikTok	1,562
WeChat	1,336
Facebook Messenger	979
Telegram	800
Douyin	752
Snapchat	750
Kuaishou	685
X/Twitter	619
Sina Weibo	605
QQ	558
Pinterest	482

Number of active users in millions

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