

# A LOOK BACK & LOOKING AHEAD

## 2021 IN REVIEW & PREDICTIONS FOR SOCIAL MEDIA IN 2022

With 2021 officially in the rear-view mirror, we're taking a look at some of the major highlights in trends, new developments, and bold frontiers in social media. Over the past year, social media became the number one source for all connections and content, and brands had to quickly find ways to stay relevant and not become lost in the oversaturation of social content. From short-form videos to e-commerce to amplifying messaging and services on various channels, social media has fully opened the door for brands to become completely accessible by users. For brands to establish brand longevity, they must take steps to become more than what they seem to be. As the digital landscape rapidly shifts, brands need to emerge as leaders in their field and become more accessible and relevant to new and existing consumers.



## 2021 YEAR IN REVIEW

### BIGGEST TRENDS

**Short-Form Videos:** TikTok really shifted the landscape in 2021 with its short video approach and more localized algorithm, leading to more organic growth and engagement for brands. Its algorithm made other platforms take quick notice. Since Instagram (IG) announced the shift of its platform from photo sharing to video sharing, we can expect more algorithm changes as the platform looks to push IG Reels to compete with players like TikTok.

**Augmented Reality (AR):** AR continues to evolve within social media platforms, with opportunities for brands to leverage technologies from face filters to gamification, 3D objective integration, immersive backgrounds, and more. We can expect more AR activations on social media among big brands, while simultaneously tracking whether smaller and niche brands catch up and more consistently enter the space.

### BIGGEST SURPRISE IN 2021

**Audio Social:** With the COVID-19 landscape, audio social gave consumers and users a new way to connect, creating a surprising increase in Clubhouse usage and new audio social features on platforms like Twitter. As we look back at 2021 and look to the year ahead, it's hard to say how much audio social will remain a long-term usage behavior (beyond COVID restrictions), but we'll have to watch how the big players will figure out the best way to showcase audio content to individual users.

## 2022 TREND PREDICTIONS

### CONTINUING TRENDS

**Integration of AR on Social:** Social AR will continue to be included in brands' overall marketing strategy. As interaction and immersion continue to become important parts of the customer/online experience, AR will take the driver's seat with a 43.8% annual growth over the next seven years. We will start to see non-traditional approaches from brands on how they incorporate AR into their marketing and content plans in the future. Brands who are willing to take risks with their content will be pivotal to how AR starts to make its way into mainstream marketing. With the continued expansion of Spark's AR studio, smaller/niche brands should be looking to social AR to continue to bring their brand message to life.

**Shopping on Social Platforms:** In May 2020, Facebook launched Facebook and Instagram Shops, and since then we've continued to see an uptick in e-commerce and direct in-app social media shopping experiences. Twitter is also now testing in-feed shopping. As brands continue to make products more accessible to customers, we'll continue to watch how platforms will increase their e-commerce shopping features on social. E-commerce officially made its way onto social platforms during 2021, and brands quickly took to sharing shoppable posts to make their products more accessible to customers.

**Newly-Crowned Leader of Social Organic Growth:** Last year, Instagram was predicted as the leading channel for marketing spend, and TikTok fell lower on the spectrum, behind channels like WhatsApp & Pinterest. As we saw in 2021, TikTok saw the fastest growth of any social media platform during the year. As it continues to set its mark and user growth steadily increases, it will be interesting to see how companies and individuals start to use the platform and if there will be a shift from organic content to sponsored content.

### SAY GOODBYE TO

**The Great Race of Quick Content:** Platforms raced to compete with each other to increase user growth and engagement. With this, we saw the launch of Twitter Fleets and LinkedIn Stories. As of July 2021, Fleets have been removed and LinkedIn is now looking to move away from Stories. We'll continue to see platform changes/experiments; however, TikTok and Instagram will be the ones to watch as they continue to set the tone for video and immersive platform changes.

