

Social Media Preferences and Usage Behaviour Among Indonesians Aged 18-64 Insights and Implications for Business Strategies

Abstract

This study explores social media preferences among Indonesian users aged 18 to 64 from August to September 2024. A sample of 156 respondents was surveyed to understand platform usage patterns, content preferences, and ad receptivity. The findings highlight key social media habits, which have significant implications for businesses aiming to optimize their digital marketing strategies. By identifying trends in platform usage, user behavior, and content engagement, businesses can refine their outreach and advertising efforts in the Indonesian market.

By studying consumer, preferences, and engagement patterns on social media, companies can more effectively tailor their marketing strategies, enhance brand visibility, and foster customer loyalty.

Keywords: social media preferences, Indonesia, digital marketing, platform usage, ad receptivity

Introduction

In the contemporary digital era, social media platforms have become central to human interaction, influencing how people communicate, share information, and engage with brands. For companies, these platforms offer not only opportunities but also challenges, as understanding and leveraging social media behavior is critical for success, looking to connect with their audience. Indonesia, a rapidly growing market for digital platforms, has seen significant shifts in how users engage with social media. This research focuses on the social media habits of Indonesian users aged 18 to 64, with the goal of providing insights that will benefit companies seeking to enhance their online presence, boost engagement, and improve marketing efforts.

Methodology

A total of 156 respondents participated in the study, during August-September 2024, with the sample demographics as follows:

- **Age Distribution:** 56% of respondents were aged 18-24, 30% aged 25-34, and the remaining 14% were aged over 35.
- **Occupation:** 41% were college students, 33% employees, 20.5% unemployed, with the rest being housewives, freelancers, or business owners.

Respondents' social media platform ownership, frequency of use, and behavior patterns were analyzed using structured questionnaires.

1. Social Media Platform Ownership

Social media has a near-universal presence among the respondents, with **none of the participants being without a social media account**. Among the platforms, **Instagram** dominated the landscape, with an overwhelming **94% of respondents** having an account. This clearly reflects Instagram's strong appeal across multiple demographics, especially the younger age group, given its visual and interactive nature.

In terms of other social platforms:

- **YouTube** is the second most owned platform, with **52% of respondents** having an account. This suggests a significant interest in video-based content, although it tends to be used for longer-form viewing compared to other social platforms.
- **Facebook** remains relevant, with **48% of respondents** maintaining an account. Despite the platform's reputation for having an older user base, nearly half of the participants are still active users.
- **TikTok** closely follows with **50%** of respondents holding accounts, underscoring the platform's rapid rise in popularity, particularly among younger users.
- **X (formerly Twitter)** accounts were held by **32%**, reflecting its importance for news and real-time updates, though it ranks lower in terms of overall ownership compared to other platforms.
- **LinkedIn**, primarily used for professional networking, accounted for **29.5%** of respondents, indicating a more specialized use for career-oriented purposes.

Interestingly, **12.2%** of respondents reported having accounts on all these major platforms, indicating a small but significant segment of highly connected individuals who engage with a broad spectrum of social media.

2. Platform Usage Frequency

Among the surveyed platforms, **Instagram** emerged as the most frequently used, with a notable **92.3%** of respondents identifying it as the platform they access most often. This highlights Instagram's role as a primary hub for social interaction, content consumption, and self-expression.

- **TikTok** follows as the second most frequently accessed platform, with **41.7%** of users reporting it as one of their top-used apps. TikTok's appeal is largely due to its engaging, short-form video content, which resonates particularly with younger audiences.
- **YouTube** is accessed by **33.3%** of respondents regularly, though the platform is likely used for longer-form content consumption, such as watching tutorials, educational videos, or entertainment.
- Usage of other platforms such as **Facebook**, **X**, and **LinkedIn** is less frequent, reflecting their more niche purposes, such as professional networking or casual browsing.

When examining overall social media engagement:

- **39.7%** of respondents reported opening social media **1-5 times a day**, indicating a moderate level of engagement.
- **34%** of users access their accounts **more than 10 times a day**, highlighting a substantial segment of highly active users who engage frequently.
- **26.3%** access social media **5-10 times daily**, suggesting a diverse range of engagement levels, with a significant portion being moderate-to-high frequency users.

3. When Respondents Use Social Media

Respondents reported accessing social media platforms during various times throughout the day, reflecting how integrated these platforms are into their daily routines:

- **76.3%** of respondents reported opening social media during **free time**, suggesting that these platforms serve as a form of entertainment and relaxation.
- **63.5%** access social media during their **break time**, indicating that many users turn to their social apps for quick escapes or micro-breaks during work or study.
- **46.8%** browse social media **before sleep at night**, showing a strong tendency for bedtime scrolling, which has become a habitual routine for many.
- **34.6%** access social media **upon waking in the morning**, reinforcing the idea that social media is among the first things people engage with to start their day.
- Other times when respondents browse social media include during **meal times** (28.2%), **in the middle of their activities** (22.2%), and **while commuting or in transportation** (21.8%).

4. Reasons for Social Media Use

Social media serves multiple purposes for Indonesian users, with respondents citing various motivations for their frequent usage:

- **85.9%** of respondents access social media to see **updates or news from relatives**, emphasizing the importance of social connection and personal interaction.
- **71.8%** use social media to seek out **educational content**, showing that platforms are increasingly being used for self-improvement, learning, and professional development.
- **71.8%** also use social media for **entertainment**, indicating that it remains a major source of leisure activity, with users seeking engaging, fun, and distracting content.
- **45.5%** use social media to **interact with relatives**, further reinforcing its role in maintaining interpersonal connections.
- **30.1%** use the platforms to **update their own accounts**, suggesting that while many users are passive consumers of content, a significant portion also actively participate by sharing their own updates.
- **23.7%** use social media for **online shopping**, illustrating the platforms' evolving role as a marketplace, particularly through features like Instagram Shopping and Facebook Marketplace.

5. Content Preferences

When it comes to content preferences, respondents expressed a clear interest in a variety of topics, with **entertainment** being the most popular category (**50%**). This underscores the significance of fun, engaging content, such as memes, short videos, and viral trends.

Other areas of interest include:

- **Career-related content** (27.6%) and **business** (26.9%), highlighting the growing importance of professional development and entrepreneurship among users.
- **Culinary content** is also popular, with **26.9%** of respondents engaging in food-related posts, reflecting the Indonesian love for food and the rise of food influencers.
- **Education** is another high-interest topic for **26.3%** of users, further confirming social media's role as a learning tool.
- Health topics resonate with **21.8%** of respondents, indicating rising health consciousness, likely influenced by post-pandemic concerns.
- Other areas of interest include **news** (19.9%), **beauty and fashion** (14.1%), **traveling** (11.5%), and **politics** (10.9%).

In terms of content format, **short videos** are preferred by **60.9%** of respondents, showing that bite-sized, visually engaging content has the most traction among users. **Stories** are the second most preferred format (**19.2%**), followed by **posts in feeds** (**14.7%**), while a minority of users prefer **long videos** or **live streams**.

6. Advertisement Engagement

Advertisements on social media garnered mixed responses from users. While **34%** of respondents said they would not watch ads, a significant portion (**41.7%**) were undecided and might watch an ad if it was relevant or interesting. **24.4%** of users indicated they would watch ads, revealing a small but engaged group of potential consumers for targeted campaigns.

When it comes to the type of ad content users are more likely to engage with:

- **41%** preferred **social ads** (ads that are linked to causes, societal issues, or public service announcements), indicating a strong preference for purpose-driven or meaningful content.
- **21.2%** favored **commercial ads**, which highlights the opportunity for well-crafted, brand-centric campaigns to capture attention.
- The remaining **37.8%** preferred other forms of advertising, such as promotional deals or influencer endorsements.

Instagram is the most preferred platform for viewing ads (**50.6%**), followed by **YouTube** (**30.1%**), and **TikTok** (**12.8%**), suggesting these platforms hold the greatest potential for effective ad delivery.

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Discussion

The findings suggest that Instagram is the dominant social media platform among Indonesians aged 18-64, particularly among younger users. Businesses targeting this demographic should prioritize Instagram for both organic and paid content strategies. The high engagement on TikTok and YouTube, especially with short-form videos, highlights the importance of multimedia content in maintaining user attention.

Moreover, the study reveals that educational and entertainment content is highly sought after by Indonesian users, offering a clear opportunity for businesses to align their content marketing strategies with these preferences. Short videos are the preferred content format, making platforms like Instagram Reels and TikTok ideal for delivering concise and engaging messages.

In terms of advertising, businesses should consider focusing on social causes and relatable commercial content, as these resonate most with users. Additionally, while Instagram remains the top platform for ad consumption, YouTube and TikTok also present valuable opportunities for reaching users, especially through creative, engaging video ads.

This study offers actionable insights for businesses aiming to optimize their digital marketing efforts in Indonesia. It highlights key social media platforms and content types that resonate with Indonesian users, particularly younger audiences. By understanding platform usage patterns and content preferences, businesses can tailor their strategies to improve engagement, brand visibility, and customer loyalty in this dynamic market.

Based on the research findings on social media preferences in Indonesia, several strategies can be recommended for the business world to effectively reach and engage their target audience:

1. Prioritize Instagram as the Primary Marketing Channel

- **Why:** With **94%** of respondents owning an Instagram account and **92.3%** using it frequently, Instagram is the most dominant platform for this audience.
- **Strategy:** Businesses should focus their marketing efforts on Instagram by creating visually appealing and engaging content such as posts, stories, and short videos (Reels). Instagram's shopping features can also be leveraged to promote products and services directly.
- **Action:** Invest in influencer collaborations, Instagram ads, and user-generated content to increase brand visibility. Use Instagram Reels to deliver bite-sized, engaging content that resonates with users.

2. Utilize TikTok for Viral, Entertaining Content

- **Why:** With **50%** of respondents having a TikTok account and **41.7%** of them accessing it regularly, TikTok is rapidly becoming a key platform for engagement, especially among younger audiences.
- **Strategy:** TikTok's short, dynamic video format is ideal for viral marketing. Brands should create entertaining, trendy, and authentic content that aligns with TikTok's culture. Challenges, duets, and hashtag campaigns are particularly effective at increasing reach.
- **Action:** Experiment with user-driven content, influencer partnerships, and TikTok ads to engage this highly active audience. Focus on creating fun, shareable content that has the potential to go viral.

3. Capitalize on YouTube for Long-Form Content and Tutorials

- **Why:** YouTube is used by **52%** of respondents, with **33.3%** accessing it frequently, making it the go-to platform for longer-form content such as tutorials, how-tos, and educational videos.
- **Strategy:** For businesses that provide products or services that require detailed explanations (such as technology, health, or education), YouTube is ideal for creating in-depth, informative content. Use this platform for product demonstrations, how-to guides, and customer testimonials.
- **Action:** Invest in quality video production for educational and entertaining content that keeps users engaged. YouTube ads can be used to target specific audiences with longer attention spans.

4. Leverage Facebook for a Multi-Generational Audience

- **Why:** Although only **48%** of respondents have Facebook accounts, this platform remains valuable for reaching older and more diverse user segments.
- **Strategy:** Facebook is still relevant for community building and group interactions. Businesses targeting a wider demographic (including older generations) should utilize Facebook Groups and Pages for discussions, events, and community-driven engagement.
- **Action:** Create Facebook-specific ads that appeal to users looking for information, product recommendations, and social connections. Use Facebook's sophisticated targeting tools to reach niche audiences.

5. Engage Users with Short Video Content

- **Why:** **60.9%** of respondents prefer short videos, making them the most popular content format.
- **Strategy:** Businesses should prioritize creating short, engaging videos across all platforms, especially Instagram Reels, TikTok, and YouTube Shorts. These videos should be concise, entertaining, and deliver the brand message quickly and effectively.
- **Action:** Create a content calendar with a focus on short videos that can be repurposed across multiple platforms. Ensure that these videos are optimized for mobile viewing and reflect the interests of your audience, such as entertainment, education, and business.

6. Use Influencer Marketing for Increased Reach and Credibility

- **Why:** Social media influencers are key in shaping opinions, especially on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube.
- **Strategy:** Partner with influencers who resonate with your target demographic to build trust and reach new audiences. Micro-influencers (with smaller, more engaged audiences) can be particularly effective for niche markets.
- **Action:** Develop long-term partnerships with influencers who align with your brand values and who can authentically promote your products or services to their followers.

7. Optimize Content for Different Times of Day

- **Why:** Users access social media during specific times of the day—**76.3%** during free time, **63.5%** during breaks, and **46.8%** before bed.

- **Strategy:** Schedule posts and advertisements to align with the times when users are most active, such as during lunch breaks, after work, or late at night.
- **Action:** Use analytics tools to identify peak engagement times and optimize posting schedules accordingly. Consider using push notifications, stories, or ads that target users during their most active hours.

8. Promote Educational and Entertaining Content

- **Why:** The two most common reasons respondents access social media are to stay updated with **relatives (85.9%)**, followed by **education (71.8%)** and **entertainment (71.8%)**.
- **Strategy:** To engage users, businesses should create a mix of educational and entertaining content. For example, companies in the finance, health, or tech sectors can post informative content, while lifestyle brands can focus on entertaining, fun content.
- **Action:** Develop campaigns that mix educational material with entertaining content to create well-rounded engagement. Offer free resources, tips, or tutorials that align with user interests in career development, health, and business.

9. Consider Advertising Strategies on Instagram and YouTube

- **Why:** When asked about where they prefer to see ads, **50.6%** of respondents chose Instagram, and **30.1%** chose YouTube.
- **Strategy:** Focus advertising efforts on these two platforms, especially with visually compelling, short-form ads on Instagram and more detailed, narrative-driven ads on YouTube.
- **Action:** Use Instagram Stories and Reels ads for quick, impactful messages, while YouTube should be used for more in-depth product showcases or tutorials. Ensure that ads are visually engaging and relevant to users' interests, such as entertainment, education, and lifestyle.

10. Tailor Ad Content to User Preferences

- **Why:** **41%** of respondents said they prefer **social ads** (related to social causes), while **21.2%** are open to **commercial ads**.
- **Strategy:** Create ad campaigns that focus on purpose-driven content, such as sustainability, community impact, or social responsibility, while balancing this with commercial promotions.
- **Action:** Invest in cause-based marketing initiatives and integrate social responsibility into your brand messaging. For commercial ads, ensure they are relevant, engaging, and tied to the interests of your target audience.

11. Explore LinkedIn for Career and Business-Oriented Content

- **Why:** **29.5%** of respondents have LinkedIn accounts, and **27.6%** are interested in career content.
- **Strategy:** For businesses offering career development services, B2B products, or business-related content, LinkedIn remains a vital platform for targeting professionals and job seekers.

- **Action:** Publish thought leadership articles, career advice, and professional development content to engage the LinkedIn community. Consider using LinkedIn ads to promote business services to a career-focused audience.

By adopting these strategies, businesses can effectively tap into the social media habits and preferences of Indonesian users aged 18 to 64, ensuring they reach the right audiences with the right content at the right times.

Conclusion

This research provides valuable insights for businesses looking to refine their digital marketing strategies in Indonesia. The dominance of Instagram and the growing influence of TikTok and YouTube underscore the need for a multi-platform approach to social media marketing. By catering to the preferences for short-form content and educational or entertaining topics, businesses can enhance engagement and drive more meaningful interactions with their target audience.

Furthermore, with significant ad receptivity on social media platforms, businesses can optimize their advertising strategies by focusing on social and commercial ads, particularly on Instagram and YouTube. The findings suggest that businesses that align their content with user preferences and maximize platform-specific strengths will have a competitive advantage in Indonesia's evolving digital landscape.

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