

SOCIAL BRANDS **100** 2014

*the youth ranking*



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



socialbakers

&



VOXBURNER



## *Foreword*

**This report is a cross reference between the brands young people say they love, and the brands they actually engage with through social media. Our research provides fascinating insight into the mindset of an always-connected new generation of young people who are ready to listen and engage with brands, providing they have something of value to offer.**

Via in-depth case studies with the marketing teams responsible for social media activity, we are able to understand exactly how marketers are dealing with this challenging but exciting channel, where effective engagement with a youth audience boils down to 'real-time' and 'contextually relevant' content.

So what do the report findings tell us?

Interestingly, the top 3 brands from last year's Voxburner Youth 100 (2013) – Amazon, YouTube and Google, do not rank in the top 50 within this report. Despite providing a platform for the majority of brands within the top 100, they themselves are not seen as successful with their own social media efforts. Perhaps this is due to the fact they already play an important and relevant part in 18-24s lives that they feel social engagement is not a priority.

In contrast, brands such as Play.com and Waterstones - competitors to Amazon, and popular youth brands such as Pepsi Max and Krispy Kreme, which are consumed daily (similar to Google and YouTube) prove that social media activity has an influence on overall youth sentiment.

What is clear is that 18-24s like to engage directly with brands, and that social media is helping them to remain relevant, enabling them to compete against dominant brands.

It is evident that social media appears to be entering a new era for 18-24s. It's a period in which well-established platforms like Facebook and Twitter have grown up to become reliable, familiar staples that are ingrained in a youth audience's daily habits, while new platforms and apps are now positioned to create a new wave of behaviours.

The features and benefits of the big, established social platforms are fully understood. Their traditions and etiquette are accepted. For these platforms to remain relevant, they will need to offer a youth audience something more to experiment with. Although frequently reported that a youth audience is declining on sites such as Facebook, usage on these large platforms at present is not experiencing rapid decline as the platforms are fundamental to digital survival.

Young people have committed so much of themselves – photos, videos, contacts, messages, third party apps – it's often hard not to use them. Drawing alongside the well established social media sites are a new raft of innovative social media platforms such as Snapchat, Vine, Tinder and WhatsApp to name a few.

Young people interviewed by Voxburner in their recent research on social media, speak of how their interest in social has been rejuvenated as they see more uses from these new sites and apps.

How many of these new platforms will win a more permanent position in young people's lives, making a play for marketing spend and attention from the larger more established platforms, remains to be seen. At the moment marketers should experiment, but not get too distracted from the larger, dominant platforms where a social youth audience can be reached on a personal level.

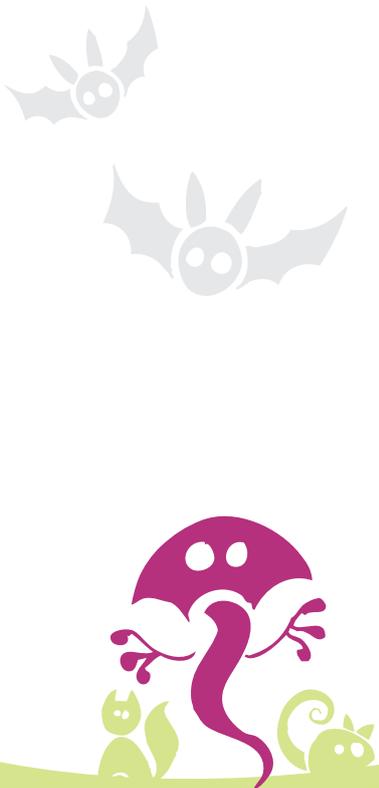
What is certain, is that for brands to experience success with a youth audience, they need to offer content with significant value - something that makes their day better, easier or more fun. 'Bring Value' is the mantra of the new generation, and it is evident those brands ranked highly within this report have truly grasped this mantra.

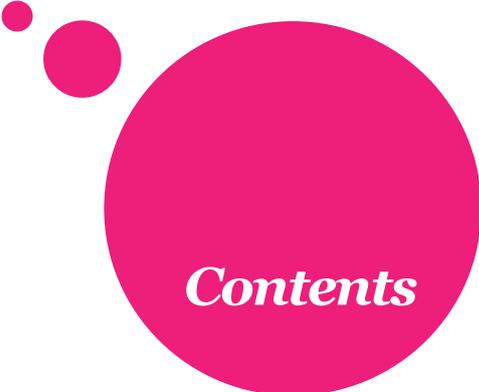
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## About Social Brands 100

Headstream created Social Brands 100 in 2011, and it is the leading benchmark for performance in social spaces, identifying the dominant brands and providing a snapshot of social media's evolution year on year.

Three years on, Social Brands 100 has evolved, to not just look at brand behaviours in terms of engagement, but to also analyse and provide insight around social reputation and customer service, too. 2014 will be the first year that sees Social Brands 100 take the shape of a series of niche rankings, focusing on specific areas. To be the first to find out about future rankings, follow @socialbrands100.

For this first ranking on Youth Brands, Headstream has partnered with insight company Voxburner, which provided our source list of 100 Youth Brands. This report aims to;

- Identify the Youth Brands building and maintaining great relationships with their consumers
- Understand and compare which Youth Brands are fully engaged with their audiences
- Identify how they're engaging and what factors make compelling content for the youth market.

To ensure an independent and fair analysis, Socialbakers has provided the data which has enabled us to monitor the Youth Brand's engagement on social platforms.





## Methodolgy

The Social Brands 100 KPIs are designed to measure the effects of how brands are adopting social brand principles.

This report is focused specifically on engagement within the youth market – looking at brands and their communities, on three social media platforms; Facebook, Twitter and Google+.

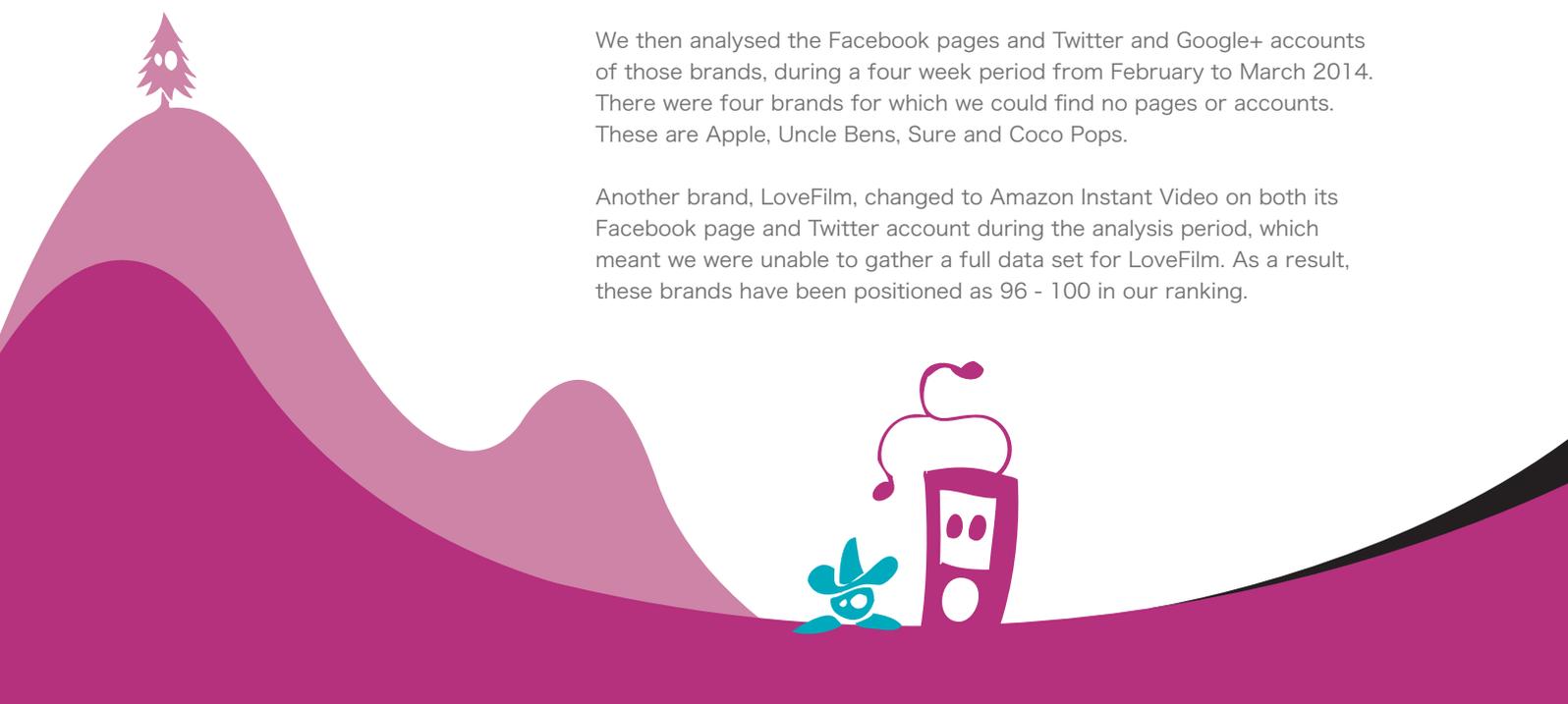
These platforms were selected to be monitored due to the fact that they are the platforms that had the most engagement on them.

The brands for this year's report were sourced from our official list provider - and report partner, Voxburner. The list was compiled by surveying 2,569 young people in the UK (18-24s). Respondents were invited to rate their sentiment towards a shortlist of over 250 brands that had been identified as relevant to the everyday lives of young people. Respondents were presented with the brand name and its category, for example 'Boots' and 'Health & Beauty' and able to say whether they love, like, dislike, hate or have no feeling towards the brand. Follow up focus groups dug deeper into the quantitative results.

We provided Socialbakers, our data partner for this report, with the list of 100 Youth Brands with their corresponding URLs. Where possible, we provided the URL of the UK based page or account for the three social networks.

We then analysed the Facebook pages and Twitter and Google+ accounts of those brands, during a four week period from February to March 2014. There were four brands for which we could find no pages or accounts. These are Apple, Uncle Bens, Sure and Coco Pops.

Another brand, LoveFilm, changed to Amazon Instant Video on both its Facebook page and Twitter account during the analysis period, which meant we were unable to gather a full data set for LoveFilm. As a result, these brands have been positioned as 96 - 100 in our ranking.



The metrics were calculated as follows (Figure 1):



$$\frac{\text{LIKES} + \text{COMMENTS} + \text{SHARES}}{\text{NUMBER OF WALL POSTS}} \\ \div \\ \text{NUMBER OF FANS OF THE PAGE}$$



$$\frac{\text{REPLIES} + \text{TWEETS}}{\text{NUMBERS OF TWEETS}} \\ \div \\ \text{NUMBER OF FOLLOWERS}$$

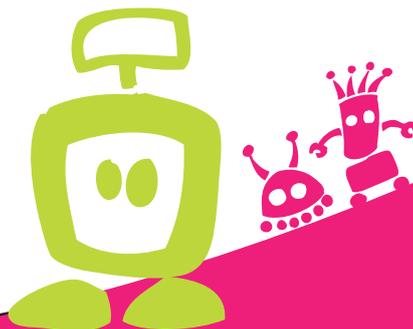


(The metrics for these platforms are in line with previous Social Brands 100 reports, in terms of engagement measurement.)

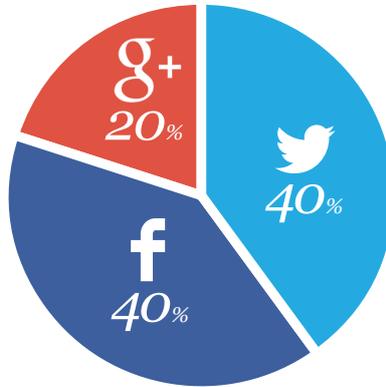


$$\frac{+ 1S + \text{SHARES} + \text{COMMENTS}}{\text{NUMBERS OF POSTS}} \\ \div \\ \text{NUMBER OF FOLLOWERS}$$

(Analysed manually by Headstream, which followed the same principle.)



These three platforms have been assigned a weighting (Figure 2) reflecting the relative level of consumer adoption and both brand and user activity on each platform.



We have applied industry categories to the brands in the list, based on the categories from last year's Social Brands 100.

We have also compared the brand's positions based on the engagement metrics results to those from Voxburner's source list.





The  
Ranking



RANK	COMPANY	RANK	COMPANY	RANK	COMPANY
1	Pizza Hut	35	IKEA	69	National Rail Enquiries
2	Greggs	36	Innocent	70	National Union of Students
3	Play.com	37	Morrisons	71	Special K
4	Waterstones	38	EA	72	Vue Cinemas
5	Krispy Kreme	39	KFC	73	McDonald's
6	Pepsi Max	40	National Express	74	Samsung
7	Comic Relief	41	Schuh	75	Coca-Cola
8	Warburtons	42	Domino's Pizza	76	BBC
9	Starbucks	43	Oxfam	77	eBay
10	McCain	44	Vaseline	78	River Island
11	Sony	45	Kopparberg	79	Wikipedia
12	Movember	46	McCoy's	80	Converse
13	Walkers	47	Zara	81	New Look
14	Costa Coffee	48	Alton Towers	82	ASOS
15	Dove	49	TK Maxx	83	Andrex
16	E4	50	Odeon Cinemas	84	H&M
17	Kettle Chips	51	Primark	85	Heinz
18	Doritos	52	WHSmith	86	Vans
19	Wetherspoon	53	Ticketmaster	87	Topshop
20	Adobe	54	Absolut	88	Twitter
21	Spotify	55	PayPal	89	Cathedral City
22	Ben & Jerry's	56	Argos	90	Google
23	Thorpe Park	57	Microsoft	91	Dell
24	Millie's Cookies	58	Durex	92	HMV
25	Facebook	59	Cineworld	93	Kingsmill
26	The Body Shop	60	Amazon	94	YouTube
27	PizzaExpress	61	Pringles	95	Skype
28	Waitrose	62	Subway	96	Apple
29	Visa	63	Red Bull	97	Coco Pops
30	Cancer Research UK	64	Channel 4	98	LoveFilm
31	Cadbury	65	Boots	99	Sure
32	Gillette	66	Haribo	100	Uncle Ben's
33	Hovis	67	Nando's		
34	Smirnoff	68	Lucozade Sport		





## Demographic overview

Young people are important. On an economic level, they are key to numerous markets; from mobile, fashion and technology to alcohol, snack foods and entertainment. Imagine the British high street without them and you'll picture many more empty shops; the youth audience spends money. In the case of students alone, who account for around half the UK youth population, they contribute an estimated £20 billion to the UK economy every year.

On a cultural level, 18-24s are influential. Highly social, open-minded, aspirational and ambitious. Young people are full of energy and enthusiasm, exploring a life that surprises them every day. Do you remember the first time you bought a car, gained entry to a casino or went on your first date in a 'proper' restaurant? Life is full of novelty when you're 18. Young people are taking the first hit of adult life and sharing their experiences through word-of-mouth and expression. They have the capacity to propel ideas into the mainstream.

The majority of young people in the UK are identified as 'mainstreamers' – aspirational young people who hold moderate views. They are more likely to be found routing through jumpers in Primark than browsing coffee-table books in Urban Outfitters. This is reflected in the brands they identify with both in Voxburner's 'Youth 100 Report' and through those they engage with in social media.

### **Luke Mitchell**

Head of Insight, Voxburner



## Key findings

### Overview

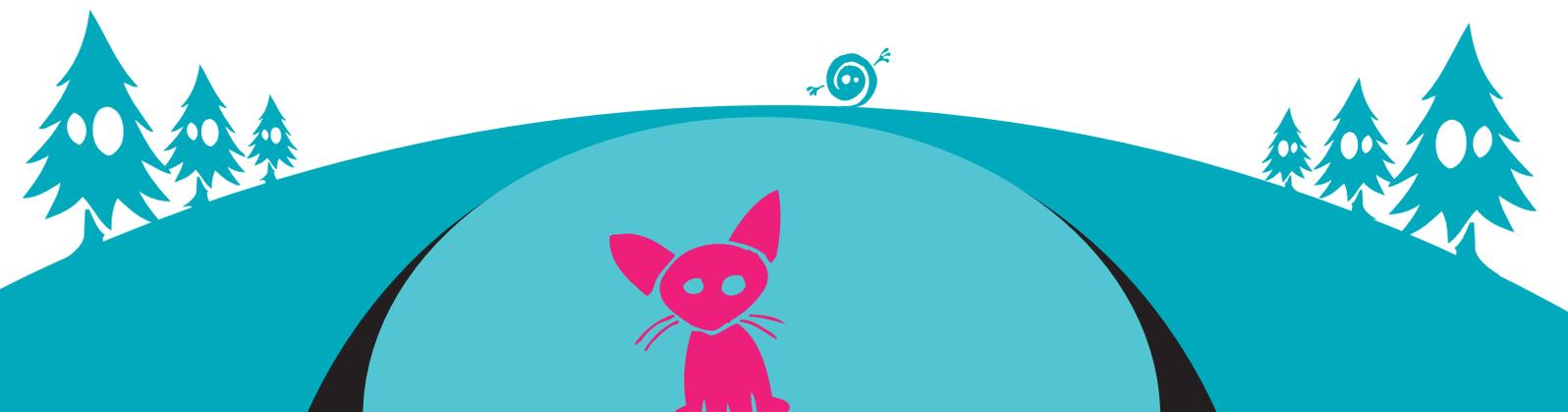
As we have partnered with Voxburner to provide the original source list for this ranking, it is interesting to see the differences between which brands are most popular and resonate best within this market, versus how engaged these brands are with their communities through social platforms.

In terms of the popularity of these brands compared to how well engaged they are with their core consumers, it is worth noting that five of the top ten brands in our ranking (play.com, Krispy Kreme, Pepsi Max, Starbucks and McCain), appeared below 50th position in Voxburner's research.

In contrast, seven of the brands that appeared in Voxburner's top ten brands (YouTube, Amazon, Google, BBC, Pringles, Wikipedia and Channel 4), appeared in 60th place or lower when examined in regards to their social engagement.

The number one brand from our source list – YouTube, came 94th in terms of their social engagement performance. It is worth noting that engagement on this platform tends to be simple video views, and that YouTube themselves that aren't responding to comments on the platform.

- 95% of brands have a Facebook profile
- 87% of brands have an active Twitter account
- 53% of brands have a Google+ page



## Brand performance by industry

Top 100 industry breakdown (Figure 3):



SECTOR	%	TOP BRAND
FMCG	33%	Krispy Kreme
Retail	22%	Play.com
Hospitality	11%	Pizza Hut
Technology	11%	Adobe
Leisure	6%	Thorpe Park
Charity	4%	Comic Relief
Publishing & media	4%	E4
Consumer electronics	2%	Sony
Financial Services	2%	Visa
Travel	2%	National Express
Cosmetics, Beauty, Education, Entertainment	1%	The Body Shop, NUS & LoveFilm



## Results by platform

### Facebook

Facebook continues to be the largest social platform for consumers, but with the platform's growth slowing down at the start of 2014 to a user base of 31 million accounts (1.5 million less than at the start of 2013), brands are now beginning to look elsewhere to target the youth generation\*.



Facebook was the most widely adopted platform of all the Youth Brands, although not all were active at only 95% take up.

The highest performing brands on Facebook were those who fully engaged their audiences in all of their social communications; from joining in with relevant conversations to inviting feedback and discussions within their communities.

Content was a big factor, with the most engaged brands creating value-added content which consumers felt they could relate to and want to share with their peers. This content added value through a variety of ways that differed from entertainment based content to content that informed or made the consumer's life easier/ better.

In addition to top brands employing a focused content marketing strategy, having the flexibility to react spontaneously, making the most of timely and relevant topics and news stories related to their brand/ messaging, all helped create increasingly relevant content with high engagement.

Tone of voice was also a key factor here, with brands who adopted an informal and relevant tone of voice for their consumers, achieving increased levels of engagement.

The highest performing brands embraced both positive and negative conversation, ensuring an engaged and valued community was created.

The results showed that Pepsi Max was the top brand for engaging with its community on Facebook. Next came three of the four Charity brands; Comic Relief, Movember and Cancer Research UK in 2nd, 3rd and 4th on Facebook.



The charities used the platform effectively to assist in all aspects of fundraising, providing support to groups and individuals involved in fundraising activities and generate awareness for their cause.

Interestingly, the highest scoring brand from Voxburner's research (7th) was in fact, Facebook who came 6th in terms of its score on its own platform.

Although technology is clearly important to the youth audience, it would appear from our results, that technology brands still have a lot to do in terms of their engagement on Facebook.

\*Source: Facebook.com



## Twitter

Twitter continues to grow as a platform for brands to communicate with their consumers, and is known for its strength as a customer service communication tool.

With 40% of users worldwide using Twitter as a 'curated newsfeed of updates that reflect their passions' it is no surprise that the majority of users prefer to read, rather than broadcast tweets\*.

This might be something to do with the fact that 80% of Twitter accounts are active on Smartphone devices\*.

With 87% of the brands we analysed having an active Twitter account, WHSmith was the top performing brand on the platform.

There were five FMCG brands in the top ten in terms of engagement on Twitter: Warburton's, Gillette, Pepsi Max, Hovis and McCain.

Warburton's (8th), Play.com (3rd), Pizza Hut (1st) and Pepsi Max (6th) all appeared in the top ten for Twitter and the top ten overall for engagement. This shows how well this industry uses Twitter as an engagement tool.

\*Source: Twitter.com



### Google+ (G+)

Of all our brands, only 53% have a G+ account. It is clear that it continues to remain a secondary channel compared to Facebook. G+ continues to keep it's usage statistics close to it's chest.

With Greggs being our top performing G+ brand, it is interesting that the four brands that performed best on G+, also appeared in the top ten overall ranking. In addition to Greggs, we saw Krispy Kreme, Waterstones and Pizza Hut in the top ten.

The highest placed brand from our ranking that also came first overall on G+ was Pizza Hut, who was 15th on the source list and 11th for engagement.

There were three hospitality brands in the top ten for G+ and two technology brands.

Those brands that had a G+ page generally performed well overall.





## Observations

What's clear from our research is that what this youth audience want, is to engage with content that's honest, relevant and true to the brand.

True, the above can be said of many audience groups, however it is particularly relevant for this demographic, where these social platforms are so well established, that they form part of 18-24s daily habits. Young people have invested a lot of themselves in these platforms – their photos, status updates, videos; they are emotionally and personally involved. It's worth recognising that the youth market are savvy when it comes to brand engagement through social, and will only engage with brands if they believe in the above. They might be quick to 'like' a brand but will be quick to 'unlike' too if they feel the value isn't there.

For brands, this means that they often feel privileged to be allowed into these personal spaces. Our case study insights reveal that often brands believe it is their customers' space; they own it and brands should respect that when developing engagement and content strategies.

It is also worth noting that, because these platforms are so well established, they are now standard channels in marketing and communications strategies for many brands. They are not seen as new anymore, just part of the media mix in the same way we consider other marketing channels, including TV, radio, print etc.



What's important, is how brands decide to use these platforms. It's about creating engaging content - content which is relevant and means something to the consumer. Using this content to form valuable conversations; both for the brand and the consumer. Conversations will then drive community - a key goal for many of our brands.

We've acknowledged that brands need to develop long term content strategies for these social channels, in the same way any marketing campaigns are planned; however, recognition and resource must be given to the real-time nature of these channels. Having the flexibility and autonomy to react to and post timely content, which might interrupt the pre-planned content plan, is key to the top performing brand's success in our ranking.

Ultimately, it is clear that those brands which engage well in the youth market are ones that really understand their customer - their interest, behaviours, tone of voice, rituals and considerations. This is vital for the success of any social brand.

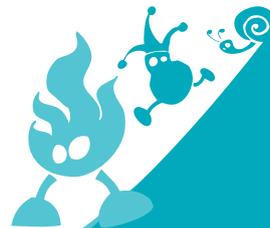
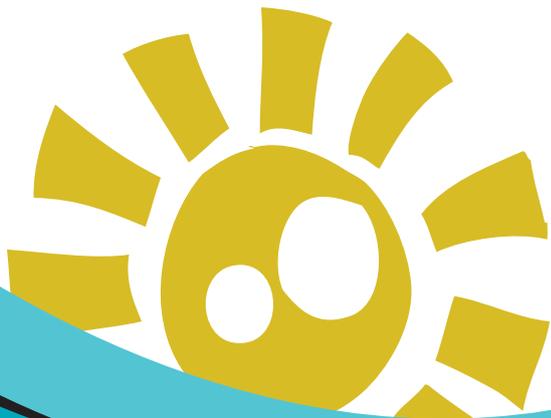


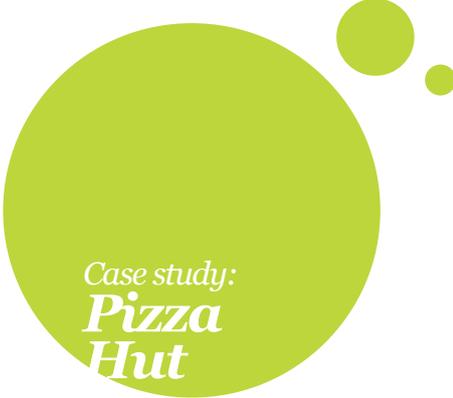


## Case studies

Thank you to all of the brands who have given up their time to talk to us about why they've been so successful in the Social Brands 100 Youth Ranking.

Hearing from the brands that have done well, provides real and practical insight into their social approach and behaviours.





Case study:  
**Pizza  
Hut**



Casual dining businesses dominate Social Brands 100 Youth ranking 2014, appearing 11 times in the ranking. After serving us pizza in the UK for over 40 years, Pizza Hut continues to prosper, ranking at no. 1. With over 600 restaurants dotted across the nation, Pizza Hut UK claims the balance of increasing its fan base and driving engagement with a great sense of humour is a winning formula enabling it to outshine its competitors.

Ranking #1 in our Social Brands 100 Youth ranking, it's not surprising that social media is extremely important to Pizza Hut. Amy Mahalla, the brand's Digital Marketing Manager says 'It is a means for communicating and listening to consumers, testing new product ideas and offering consumers added value.' Pizza Hut aims to keep its platforms as social as the pastime of ordering pizza with friends.

The brand says that 'It's sharing moments that we want to enhance for our customers, as people get together to share their pizza and their stories with friends and family. We want to ensure that we are creating memorable, happy pizza moments for our customers.'

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**IT'S SHARING MOMENTS  
THAT WE WANT TO  
ENHANCE FOR OUR  
CUSTOMERS**

*Amy Mahalla*

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Pizza Hut's social footprint has grown rapidly in a short space of time, with its Facebook page seeing an increase in likes from 500k to one million in just one year, which Amy adds 'is more fans in the last year than most other UK pizza brands have in total.' Its Twitter fan base has also grown organically, with over 15,000 followers in just two years. Some fans even take on the role of becoming Pizza Hut Brand Ambassadors.

Pizza Hut's main priority is to get pizza fans on board with its social networks and let them have a say in what the business is doing. Amy adds that 'social enables consumers to interact with and communicate with our brand. Often, consumers provide us with key insights that we use to build on new ideas that ultimately fulfil their needs, particularly in regards to new product development and menu changes.'



Pizza Hut has an 'integrated approach to social media' and has adapted its channels to keep in line with evolving social trends to market its products to consumers. Amy explains how the brand has 'explored new areas of social, developing even richer, more valuable campaigns for our customers.'



Pizza Hut is also working on a series of digital initiatives which has put "localised content" at the heart of its brand building activity on social networks, in-store and online.

Facebook, Twitter and Google+ location-based promotions serve fans restaurant-specific content including targeted discounts and promotions. Activity featuring comedian and TV personality Paddy McGuinness has also run across the brand's social media channels as part of a wider advertising push to celebrate its 40th anniversary.

Pizza Hut's website was also relaunched last year to provide a content-heavy, more personalised customer experience. Victoria Clarke, Head of Digital Marketing at Pizza Hut, says 'Localised content is at the heart of our brand building activity through online and social - it's key to communicating our vibrant, upbeat brand personality and ensuring that we're being targeted and strategic with all our communications. 'We've always prided ourselves on our innovation and our digital marketing strategy is no exception - the technology and platforms we're using are at the forefront of localised and geo-targeting, which ensures that we stay relevant to our core customer.'

“

**LOCALISED CONTENT  
IS AT THE HEART  
OF OUR BRAND  
BUILDING ACTIVITY**

*Victoria Clarke*

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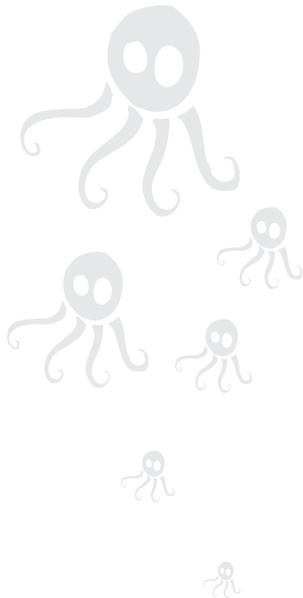
According to Pizza Hut, 'social has become a vital cog in our activity; in fact, it is often the starting point for a campaign and the responses we receive from our fan base significantly impact business decisions.'

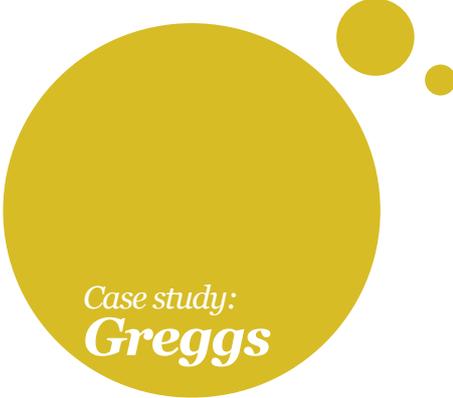
Pizza Hut has grown its followers and kept them engaged, by making content social and shareable from viral videos, some of which have been viewed over one million times! As a reward for the fans helping the brand achieve one million likes, Pizza Hut offered free pizza to fans and passers-by in the street.



Pizza Hut has also kept its audience engaged by creating exciting new campaigns including partnering with Microsoft and Blippar on the launch of Xbox One and Forza 5 Motorsport game. Amy spoke about how working with such popular gaming brands was a 'natural fit and together we were able to give consumers an extra slice of content when enjoying their pizza moments. 'We created a unique augmented reality box that came to life when customers hovered over it with their smart phone. We created a delicious Forza 5 five cheese pizza crust that contained 10 irresistible golden pockets of melted cheese that mimicked the outline of a car wheel, which was an absolute winner with our customers. We also ran a competition in association with Microsoft giving away legendary money can't buy prizes. Customers really appreciated the added value we were able to offer them.'

Pizza Hut's social tone of voice comes across as approachable, funny and relevant, which is why it is so popular with the youth market. Making sure that it puts the followers first has been a successful strategy in building and maintaining an engaged community for the brand. To finish, we asked Pizza Hut if it has any mottos or mantras it lives by on maintaining successful social platforms, and it seems that simple is the way forward. Victoria Clarke, its head of Digital adds 'For us, social is all about targeting the right people, in the right places, in the right way.'





Case study:  
**Greggs**



Greggs have found that changing their social priorities has had a positive effect on accelerating the brand up in the rankings, closely being pipped to the top spot and being ranked the no. 2 brand in the Social Brands 100 Youth Ranking for 2014. The fast-food outlet's story is one of customer service, engagement and personality.

Discussing the importance of social to Greggs as a brand, Digital Brand Manager Neil Knowles says, 'it's definitely a main factor in anything we do as it is one of, if not the most important channels we have in reaching out to our customers. We want to make sure our content is as engaging as possible, that's probably the first step for our audience'.

They reflect this by dividing up activity between responding to the community, content creation and media. Knowles comments, 'there's great value in having these huge audience numbers and being able to broadcast to them, whether it's exclusive deals or the first point of information'.

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**WE WANT TO MAKE  
SURE OUR CONTENT  
IS AS ENGAGING  
AS POSSIBLE**

*Neil Knowles*

”



Greggs' social footprint has grown quickly and their playful tone of voice and humorous content has a large part to play in that success, particularly within the youth market. Knowles comments, 'we are very focussed on what our personality is. There's a lot of heritage in our brand and we aim to be a familiar friend to our audiences. It's really important to us that we make sure our tone of voice is appropriate that way. We're there to be friendly and informative to people, not to be corporate and cold'.

With regards to social, Greggs' focal point used to centre on broadcasting messages across its various channels. But now that has taken a backburner, with the focus shifting to the view that the value of social is in reactive messaging and engagement. Knowles adds, 'we've grown our social footprint by not putting content out there for the sake of putting it out there. We try to be as current as we can be, we like to be in the conversations that our audiences are having. For example, when thinking of Valentines, we'd look to see if there's a way Greggs can join those conversations without shoehorning the brand into a topic it shouldn't'.



With attempts to tick all the relevant boxes when creating engaging content, Knowles goes through various thought processes: 'so with Valentines, our first thought was that there is a lot of love for Greggs and our products, so a customer's love for a sausage roll... that's the right message for us, not a product push'.

When it comes to social media, in the past Greggs' focused on social reach, however the focus has now moved towards engagement. Content planning is an important part of what Greggs do, but having the capacity to respond quickly to timely events is also important. Content is planned around a calendar, but the team aim to be as responsive as possible and consider what is going on in the wider social scene, asking questions on a daily basis such as; what is trending on Twitter? Is there a big news story to become involved in? These questions were both the catalysts for the spontaneous contextually relevant content created to celebrate the anniversary of Doctor Who. Here Greggs were quick to jump onto the back of the trending TV show, claiming that they were releasing fish custard inspired by the popular programme. Notably, this was one of Knowles' social highlights from the year.

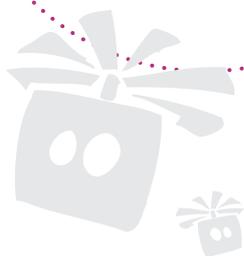
A further personal social highlight of Knowles' that received large levels of engagement was #PastySanta. This seasonal campaign saw changes to the brand's product packaging and introduced an image of Santa's beard, subsequently alluding to the customer having a beard when eating the product. The campaign was simple and effective, as Knowles reports, 'We saw so much unprompted traffic coming through with that hashtag which we pulled through to a microsite where people could win prizes and competitions'.

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**CONTENT IS PLANNED  
AROUND A CALENDAR,  
BUT THE TEAM AIM TO  
BE AS RESPONSIVE  
AS POSSIBLE.**

*Neil Knowles*

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In terms of Greggs' social team structure, all proactive content is developed by Greggs themselves, but also in partnership with their digital agency. All reactive messaging on Facebook is the responsibility of the customer care team. Knowles, himself, is accountable for all reactive messaging across all other social channels.

To track trends and sentiment, Greggs' becomes an active listener. By following different search streams on Twitter, they are able to join conversations that are already popular, 'we ensure we follow non-brand terms like lunch, sausage rolls and pasties so we can pick up on what people are saying about issues that could be related to us. On a wider level we use social listening tools to get a holistic view of our social landscape', says Knowles.

When asked about choosing content, Knowles says 'to us, it's about real simple messages which hit the right note with our audience and is really clear and easy to understand. The simpler the better is our motto'.



Case study:  
**Play.com**



Founded in 1998, Rakuten's Play.com is the UK's third largest e-commerce marketplace, with a customer base of over 17 million. In 2011, Play.com was acquired by Rakuten, which in 2012 was selected by Forbes as 7th among the World's Most Innovative Companies. Rakuten is expanding globally and currently has operations throughout Asia, Western Europe, and the Americas. In the UK, the company has ranked no. 3 in the Social Brands 100 Youth Ranking 2014, and credits their understanding of engagement for its achievement.

Research the brand undertook over Q4 last year found that customer visits to their website from Facebook were worth 40% more than the average site visit. Carol Dray, Marketing Director at Rakuten's Play.com attributes this figure to their "understanding that engagement breeds revenue and tailoring our social media strategy accordingly". This approach resulted in social media delivering over £1m of GMS last year.

“  
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STRATEGY ACCORDINGLY.

*Carol Dray*

”

The team believes that fostering a community's loyalty is all down to content. They achieve this by posting a mix of relevant and entertaining content with competitions. Dray says, "we know people don't want to be obviously sold to – so we treat our community as we would our friends. Rather than making it a sales channel, social is a place to showcase our brand's personality". She adds, "we make posts visual and exciting; funny photos or videos are much more likely to be shared amongst their wider network than content which is just a sales plug. We make sure all content is worthy of sharing and don't post it if it's not".



The brand's social footprint has grown by capitalising on social platforms, employing a mix of campaign tools, paid search and analytics reporting. Their objectives of driving community size and engagement rates are regarded of equal importance to Rakuten's Play.com. Because of this, they employ a two-fold audience reach strategy: firstly, keeping the existing loyal fan base engaged, and secondly, Dray points out, "reaching out to new audiences, to tie in with the exciting new categories being launched onsite. This is a test-and-learn approach, and we're working closely with some of our key retailers and agencies on some really exciting activity".

“

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ALL DOWN TO CONTENT**

*Carol Dray*

”

The fluidity of social has resulted in Rakuten's Play.com adopting a certain degree of spontaneity in their approach. Their competitions are pre-planned as they run for weeks at a time, however, Dray says, "tweets and posts are often spontaneous, reacting to trends/news and last minute deals that we have on site". This need to stay agile is a priority of the brand, always eager to keep up if not ahead, coinciding with its social mantra: "whatever you're doing, you're going to have to change".



## Case study: Comic Relief



**COMIC  
RELIEF**

Launched on Christmas Day in 1985, Comic Relief has dominated our TV screens ever since in the form of both Red Nose Day and Sport Relief. This year, Comic Relief ranked no. 7 in the Social Brands 100 - The Youth Ranking and their social story is one of humour, exclusive content and trying not to go on too much!

Comic Relief uses social as a medium to allow their community to access content, much of which, including their coverage of celebrity challenges and 'two screening' the organisations hugely popular TV content is delivered to social audiences exclusively.

“

**IT'S ALL ABOUT GENUINE  
REAL NEWS; STUFF  
THAT PEOPLE WILL BE  
INTERESTED IN, MOVED  
BY OR ENTERTAINED  
AS A RESULT OF.**

*Mark Woods*

”

Mark Woods, Social Media Editor at Comic Relief comes from a journalistic background and sees social as an ideal channel for delivering news about what they do. While their primary focus is for social to drive engagement in its own right it also increasingly drives a huge amount of traditional press coverage for the brand too, with online news outlets regularly running stories based on the social feeds output.

While this analysis focussed solely on their core Comic Relief social accounts, the organisation also operates separate feeds for their two major fundraising campaigns Red Nose Day and Sport Relief.

“Social at its best is a news and content phenomenon rather than a marketing or advertising one. It's all about genuine real relevant news; stuff that people will be interested in, moved by or entertained as a result of. Try to sell your wares too hard too often and unfollows will surely follow.” says Woods.



The charity has teams in journalism, creative, filmmaking, PR and photography as well as the output it creates jointly with the BBC and all elements come together to feature on social platforms as well as elsewhere across the campaigns.

Woods emphasises the importance of having a consistent tone of voice when engaging with their audience across platforms to thread all that content together - and there's no missing that humour runs right through that tone 'We're very lucky that comedy, humour and entertainment is in our DNA and that we have a fabulous group of celebrity supporters, many of whom have attracted huge social followings themselves.'

As a former newswire journalist, Woods firmly believes that 'you're only as good as your last tweet.' but as the ultimate decision-maker and can carrier behind each post he also feels passionately about not just posting content for the sake of seeing your feed tick over, 'it's best not to fear saying nothing at all; silence is infinitely preferable to posting content which is neither valuable nor engaging.

Comic Relief's approach can be summarised succinctly by Woods' closing statement, 'When we first joined Twitter in 2008 followers seemed to come thick and fast. It was new with far fewer outlets to choose from. Nowadays though a follow or a like is incredibly hard won and very easily lost. People are discerning and smart and if you listen hard enough you can hear them saying, enough of the flannel, make us laugh, make us cry, tell us something we don't know, or get off.

That's the joy of social media, the real power lies with those doing the listening rather than the talking.

“  
**YOU'RE ONLY AS  
GOOD AS YOUR  
LAST TWEET.**

*Mark Woods*

”



## Case study: Cancer Research UK



With one of the biggest social phenomena of 2014; the #NoMakeUpSelfie being attributed towards Cancer Research UK, the charity's use of social cannot go unnoticed. Ranking at 30 in the source list, but coming in at a respectable no. 3 for their activity on Facebook, Cancer Research UK tribute engaging and relevant content to their ranking.

Describing CR UK's growing social footprint, Senior Social Media Manager Aaron Eccles says the charity's use of social is managed by the conviction; 'audience led, content first.' He comments, 'content is the most important thing for us and we want to make sure the content we create is going to be relevant and engaging for our communities'.

With this in mind, it poses the question as to how CR UK continue to produce relevant and valuable content to continually seed out to their communities, a question to which Eccles replies, 'we work with teams across the charity to decide what objectives we want to meet with content. Once we know our objectives, we create appropriate engaging content that will resonate with a social media audience. We often do this a month in advance to ensure we always have something to use'.

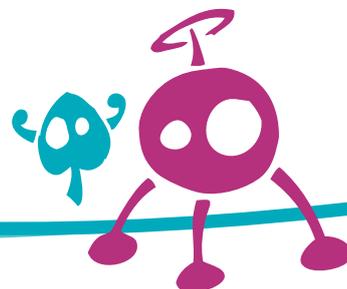
However, a lot of the growth is organic, 'we've grown so much because we are lucky enough to have supporters that are willing to let us share stories on their behalf via social media and their stories are so powerful and emotional at times that they help us reach a large amount of people'.

“  
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Aaron Eccles

”

Due to the fact one in three people will be diagnosed with cancer at some point in their lifetime, the content defies age barriers and relates to all. This is one reason why Eccles thinks the brand is particularly well-received by the youth market; 'I think we have all been affected by cancer in some way, whether it be a loved one or a friend or somebody that we know that has been diagnosed. These stories are something [the youth market] can relate to'.



“

**I THINK IT IS JUST THE  
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BEING ABLE TO BE  
REALLY REACTIVE AND  
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SOMETHING IMPORTANT  
WE CAN TALK ABOUT**

*Aaron Eccles*

”

He adds, 'I think that because there are so many different ways to get involved with our work, whether it be taking part in the Race For Life, doing the Dryathlon and giving up alcohol in January or posting a selfie to raise awareness and have fun. I think there are a lot of ways for young people to get involved and take the stories we are sharing and make them relevant to their own lives and share within their own social groups'.

The #NoMakeUpSelfie is an example of this and also an example where CR UK had to relinquish a lot of the control over the campaign to their communities rallying behind the cause. He comments on the #NoMakeUpSelfie saying, 'it wasn't our campaign to start with. It was like we had to give up control of that because then the public took that image of the text domain code and shared it far and wide, so it spread without us even asking them to do it and it really took off'.

Campaigns like this require a high degree of flexibility in order to be a huge success. Eccles says, 'I think it is just the need to be agile. Being able to be really reactive and seeing when there is something important we can talk about, and being able to we say are going to ditch our plans for the week to do something different and see where it takes us'. CR UK's out of hours teams also aid the team's reactivity.

With Cancer Research UK's use of Facebook ranking high in the Youth Ranking, we asked Eccles if the charity was going to adapt their method of using the platform as a result of its changing approach towards media spend. Eccles answered, 'we do have a budget for Facebook advertising but we almost always test posts organically before putting spend behind them. That way we can see if a post is grabbing people's attention before we use our (often tight) budgets on extending our reach'.





## Getting started

As identified in the report findings, for Youth Brands to be successful on social platforms it is essential they have a focused content strategy. A carefully planned strategy should be agile, allowing for real-time content marketing.

Brands, if they have not already done so, should consider:

### The customer content journey

Youth Brands must understand how their content can take a prospect through the customer journey. At Headstream, we work with our clients using a bespoke framework to simulate each customer journey from the discovery phase, through to purchase, loyalty and advocacy. This framework enables brands to map out a process of highly targeted, multi-touch content marketing campaigns that meet both business and marketing objectives.

Find out more at [www.headstream.com/contentmarketingstrategy](http://www.headstream.com/contentmarketingstrategy)

### Understanding content value

We all know how easy it is to dump content out there in social spaces and hope for the best. The challenge for Youth Brands is delivering relevant, valuable content to the target audience. For each and every piece of content a brand puts out there, we should know exactly what value it is delivering to our target audience. At Headstream, we refer to the social currency wheel, whereby content value can be identified as entertainment, information, monetary, personal or useful content. Once identified, brands can ensure that content is tailored precisely to meet the target audience to accomplish a specific goal.

While all the developments above require significant time investment, they will greatly assist Youth Brands in producing hard working content. Great content is simply what your customer cares about, coupled with what makes you stand out from your competitors; today this is essential when communicating amongst a smart, dynamic youth audience.





## About Headstream

Headstream has been helping organisations build social brands since 2005.

We offer the following services to our clients:

### Creative and content:

- Content marketing strategy
- Creative campaigns
- Content calendars
- Social, mobile and tablet apps

### Influencer and community relations:

- Community management
- Influencer outreach and relations
- Advocacy programmes
- Crisis management

### Data and insights:

- Social media monitoring
- Sentiment analysis
- Measurement and ROI
- Research and insight

### Training and education:

- The Connected World
- Content marketing
- Emerging social media platforms
- Social customer care



IF YOU'D LIKE TO CHAT  
ABOUT HOW WE CAN HELP  
YOU MEET YOUR CONTENT  
AND SOCIAL OBJECTIVES,  
WE'D LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU.

CONTACT  
TOM.CHAPMAN@HEADSTREAM.COM  
OR CALL 023 8082 8575





## Credits

We'd like to say a massive thanks to all those involved in this year's Social Brands 100 Youth Ranking.

Please contact us with any questions or thoughts at @SocialBrands100 or socialbrands100@headstream.com.

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