

MaREI's Guide To Social Media

Social media is an extremely important thing to be on in order to promote your research and engage with the public, and relevant stakeholders.

However, it sometimes can be quite difficult to navigate, resulting in poor results and little engagement.

This resource will show you what social site you should be using for your particular research efforts, how you should be using them, and how to build your online presence.

Demographic data is an essential starting point for figuring out which networks and campaigns deserve your attention.

	Twitter	Instagram	Facebook
No. of monthly users	187 Million	1 Billion	2.7 Billion
Largest age group	30 - 49	18 - 34	24 - 46
Gender %'s	32% Female – 68% Male	57% Female – 43% Male	44% Female – 56% Male
Average time spent on app per day	3.53 Minutes Per Session	29 Minutes	38 Minutes

Social Media Tips

- **It is very important to have a plan before diving into any social site.** There is no point in joining a site if you're not sure of what you want to say on it, or how you will address your audience. Knowing this before signing up will ensure you get the most out of having a social presence as possible.
- **Do not over complicate things.** Think about how you word things online. Imagine you are explaining your research / point to someone who knows nothing about it. If you think this person who knows nothing about it couldn't understand, its time to rephrase and simplify your language. You will lose your target audience if you do not make your research accessible on social media.
- **Keep your audience engaged.** Depending on the social site, you do not have much room for long winded paragraphs, or hours' worth of footage in order to relay your research to your audience. You have to keep them interested. The best tip for gaining someone's attention is keeping everything short and to the point, maybe use catchy phrases or striking images.
- **Keep an eye on your stats.** One of the biggest things about social media is that if you are not keeping the audience engaged with relevant information, they wont stick around. This will reflect badly on the engagement with your research across various social platforms. Therefore, knowing your statistics on social sites like Instagram and Facebook and twitter are very important. Checking what % of your following viewed and interacted with your different posts allows you to see what they like seeing and

what formats work best, allowing you to keep it relevant and engaged in the research you are posting.

- **Be consistent.** It is so important to always keep your social media profiles updated frequently. Have a pattern. If you post every day, make sure you stick to that. Your audience will look for your daily post, almost expect it. If you want to post once a month, that is ok too, as long as you consistently post once a month, and so on. It should be noted however, that you stand a better chance of growing on socials and getting your stuff seen if you are posting more and often.
- **Don't join a social site if you don't think it is for you.** It is very tempting to join every single site in order to gain more traction to your research, however, this will probably do more harm than good. Trying to keep on top of various sites can be stressful and overwhelming. Each site has a different demographic and age range, so make sure to know which one will suit best, and maybe think about expanding after a while if it is something you want.
- **Interact with others!** Making contacts is so important on social media. By definition social media is interactive. Becoming part of a larger network within your research area will only benefit you and your research in the long run.
- **Do not give up.** You are not going to gain thousands of followers and likes overnight. You will have a period of having no one see your stuff, which is why it is so important to be consistent and keep going.
- **Always stay professional.** Remember, nothing is ever truly gone off the internet, so make sure you only say things you can stand behind. It is very easy to lose your cool and respond to hate comments and criticism, but it will benefit you to keep your calm and not to respond.

Why use Twitter?

- Twitter's usage, user-base and growth have remained fairly consistent year-to-year. The platform's relatively straightforward, shorter-term interactions signal it as a place to gather quick news or conduct customer service. Twitter's status as a place to discuss events and gather breaking news make it a prime place to share content and drive discussions, but advertising is still tricky.
- Twitter allows you to: **easily promote your research**, for example by providing links to your blog stories, journal articles and news items. reach a large number of people quickly through tweets and retweets. follow the work of other experts in your field.
- **Scientists** and researchers mainly **use Twitter** to follow discussions on research-related issues, comment on research that is relevant to their field, share links to authored content and post work content.

TWITTER CHECKLIST:

Twitter should not really take up too much of your time. On twitter you can only use 280 characters when tweeting, therefore, you will not be sharing big paragraphs. So, if your desire is to share short and simple messages, or to provide links to other sources, twitter is for you.

- Make sure it is worth it. As stated earlier, you should not need to spend too much time on twitter on a given day sharing your research (not including engagement with others), so if you are finding you are spending too much time constructing tweets, it may not be a good use of your time.
- It is very important to know if you are hitting your target audience. If your audience is a twitter audience, and you are spending more time then usual on twitter engaging, this may be worth the extra time spent as you are reaching those that the research is intended.
- Ensure you keep your tweets frequent. At a minimum you should be tweeting once daily. This is to maintain a following and to grow it over time. People will get bored and unfollow if there are not frequent updates.
- Don't be afraid to engage in conversation on twitter. Retweet other researchers or academic institutions, etc, tweets, respond to them and get involved. This only opens up more of an opportunity for growth.
- Make sure to use hashtags. People usually search for certain topics by using #'s on twitter, therefore, including #'s, like #SharingScience in your post will increase drive to your research.
- Keep your followers updated. If you are attending or speaking at an event or conference, make sure to tweet about it, use the relevant #'s for a chance of growth.
- When sharing links to research or articles, use Bitly. This will shorten long URL's to fit in a tweet.

Why use Instagram?

- Instagram is the perfect social site to share images and videos of daily life in the field, classroom, or laboratory. While Instagram does tend to have a younger audience, 18–34-year-olds, it is a very rewarding site, really bringing those people you want to engage in your research along with your everyday journey.
- Instagram's steady growth is well-documented, cementing it as the second largest network after Facebook.
- The fact that Facebook and Instagram share the same ad platform presents many cross-promotional opportunities for your research, which makes using both in conjunction very effective.

INSTAGRAM CHECKLIST:

- It is so important to have a plan when uploading to Instagram. You can share all types of images and video on Instagram, but it is very easy to go off topic and get extremely caught up in what to post. This is why we would highly recommend creating a posting schedule, so you will always be on topic and not over posting.
- Make sure the content within your new schedule is relevant. Does it connect to your teaching? Your message? Your research? If not, you may be wasting valuable time.
- Use hashtags. Just like on twitter, people will often look up topics and areas by using a relevant topic, therefore, if you have these hashtags in your caption, it has more of a chance of being seen. For example, #Sharingscience or #Hydrogen
- Post frequently. It is very important to upload to your feed and stories even every day, or every few days (as long as its consistent). If you are only posting one type of photo once a week, and not changing up the variety of your content often, people will become bored, therefore, will not engage with what it is you are posting, making it harder for you to share your message.
- Sharing links to your work is important on social media, however, with Instagram you cannot share clickable links in your posts. Therefore, it is so important to create a Linktree with all of your relevant links that you can have listed in your Instagram bio.

Why use Facebook?

- People are willing to spend a bit more time on Facebook, reading articles and interacting within comment sections over most social sites. Therefore, sharing your research on Facebook creates a collaborative environment.
- The demographic on Facebook tends to be a lot wider, typically between 20 - 40+, so to reach this demographic it is the perfect social site to share research on.
- It also provides a perfect avenue to direct your audience to other sources.
- Despite ongoing ever-emerging competition, Facebook *still* remains the most-used and engaged-with social platform.

FACEBOOK CHECKLIST:

- Is this the audience you want? Make sure that you are using the best tool for the audience you want to reach. If your Facebook friends are primarily family members or friends from high school, make sure you are tailoring your communication to that group.
- Post often. Try and post at least once a day in order to keep your audience's attention.
- The best way to maintain your audience's attention and to increase engagement, always respond to messages and comments (not including hate messages or comments – ignore these as much as possible).
- Paraphrasing is your friend. Providing a short summary or a few lines of an article in your Facebook post, followed by a link to read the whole article will increase activity on your post, and decrease loss of attention and engagement.