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Are resorts' most valuable guests active on social media?

The Goods

For this analysis we divided RFM scores into low, medium, and high groups and then used data from a standardized set of social media survey questions to find the breakdown for each group.

The Results

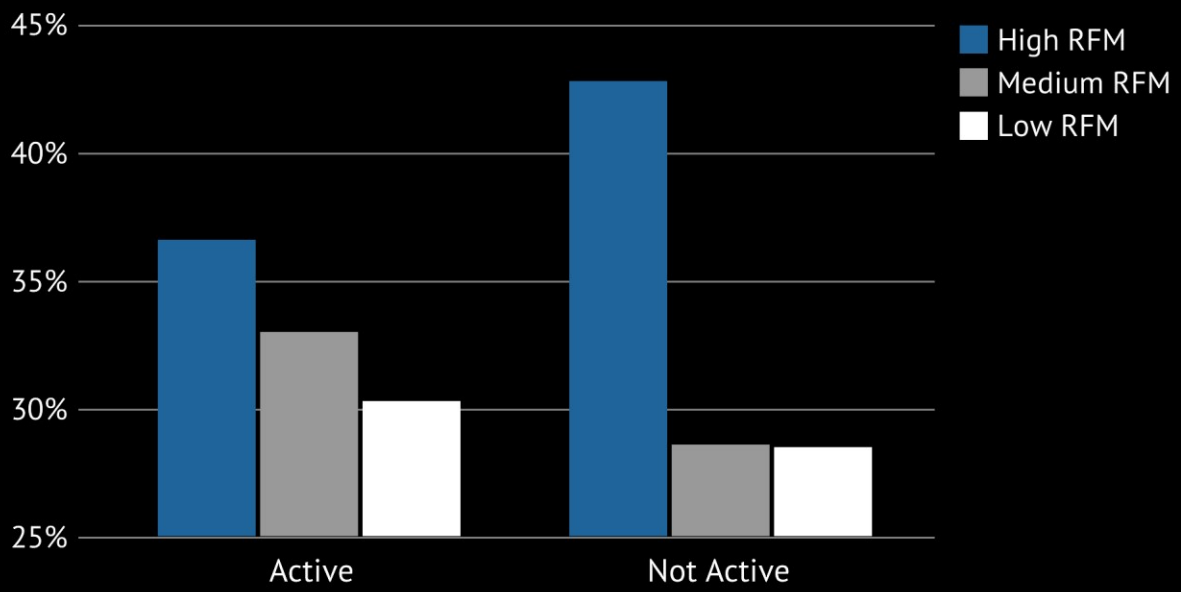
Within the socially active group, 37% had a high RFM score, 33% had a medium RFM score, and 30% were in the low RFM group. Within the *NOT* socially active group, 43% had a high RFM score, 29% had a medium RFM score, and 28% were in the low RFM group.

What This Means

First, if you use social media, your messages have a better chance of reaching your low RFM guests than those with high RFM.

It's also a reminder to use multiple channels. These most valuable guests aren't going to be reached the same way your less frequent and less wealthy skiers are. You **MUST** use other media – print, email, direct – to make sure your offers get in front of their eyes.

Originally published April 24, 2012.



How many of your social media fans were guests in 2011/12?

The Goods

To find our answer we gathered social media survey responses from guests during the 2011/12 season, found the percentage of those who followed that resort on Facebook or Twitter, and used the survey response rate to work backward to estimate the number of total guests who were also fans or followers.

The Results

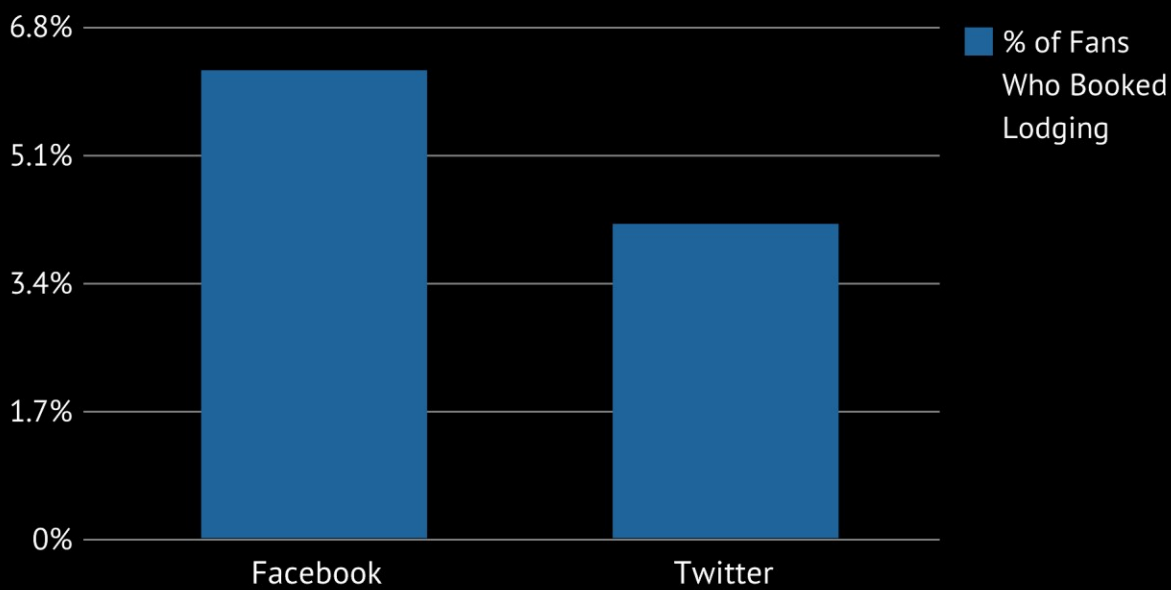
For the sample we looked at, resorts saw an average of 6.2% of their Facebook fans and 4.2% of their Twitter followers book lodging at their resort last season.

What This Means

Let's first remember that we don't know what role, if any, social media played in these travel decisions. While 7.3% of fans' vacation decisions are being influenced by social media, determining whether social is playing a critical or minor role in the process is a riddle we'll solve another day.

However, what we do know is that many of your fans are destination guests. They are spending money at your resort and do have a chance to see your messages.

Originally published June 5, 2012.



How do email click rates compare to rates on social media?

The Goods

This sample is based on resorts that are using the Bit.ly link shortener where click stats are public. Our early sample of 18 resorts included 50 posts that were shared on Facebook, Twitter, or both during the Spring of 2012. Combined, these 50 tweets had the potential to reach 2,637,363 fans/followers.

The Results

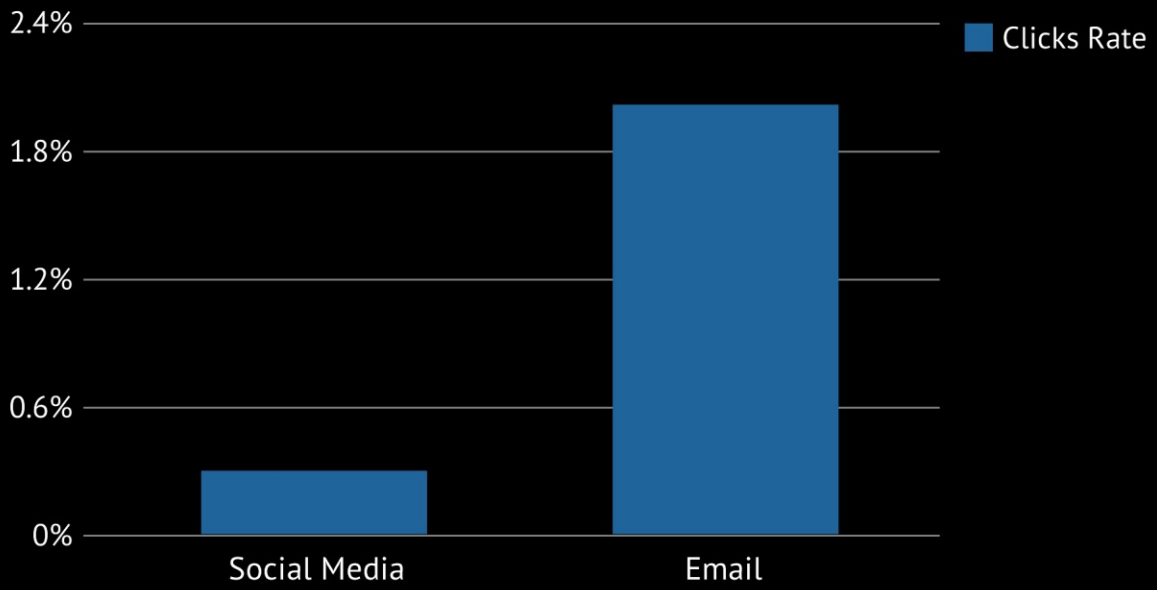
The average click rate for this sample of 50 social posts was 0.29% (clicks/total fans). Email, on the other hand, saw an average click rate of 2.03% (clicks/total recipients) across the entire 2011/12 winter season.

What This Means

Keep in mind that this is a small sample and results may vary during peak winter months. Social media posts are also free to send and may reach people that aren't in your email database or even your fan or follower counts.

This isn't a case of choosing one channel or the other but knowing what to expect from each and how you might allocate resources, budgets, and expectations.

Originally published June 19, 2012.



Does a ski resort Facebook page grow faster during snow storms?

The Goods

We used Weather Underground daily snowfall data for 25 ski resorts throughout the 2011/12 season to find our answer. Combined, these resorts had 535,000 Facebook fans. If snowfall was recorded on any specific day, it was labeled as a “snow day” (and visa-versa) and then daily fan growth was compared.

The Results

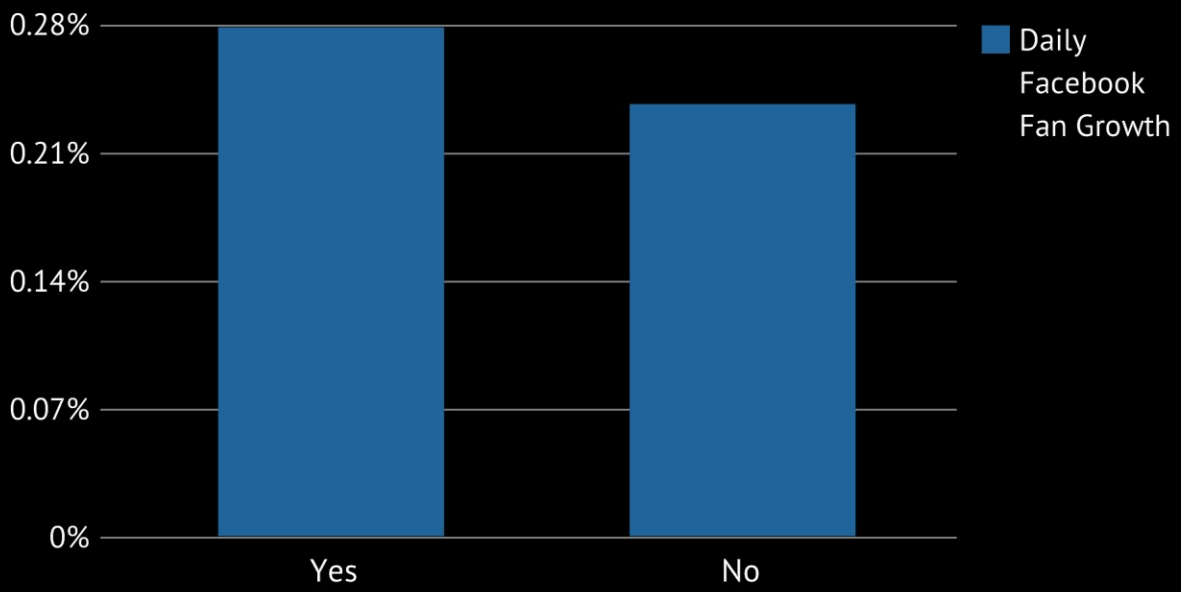
On the days that snow fell, fan counts grew by .279%. On days that no snow fell, fan counts grew by .238%. To compare those two numbers in more clear terms, fan growth was 16.99% higher on days that it snowed.

What This Means

There are two lessons to be learned. First, the results from our past snowfall analyses are now supported by another behavior – this time “liking” a ski resort’s Facebook fan page. Snow falling at your resort makes your message and voice more relevant.

Second, when planning an ad buy or other campaign to get more people to “like” your resort brand, consider that your efforts could be significantly impacted solely by the snow that is or isn’t falling at your resort that day.

Originally published October 9, 2012.



Does social media activity decrease as the age of guests increases?

The Goods

Facebook Insights look only at resort *fans*. We are looking at resort *guests*. So instead of analyzing your fans (who may or may not be active), we're looking at your guests who are active on social media (but may or may not be your fans) and could potentially be reached by *any* social post, not just your own.

The Results

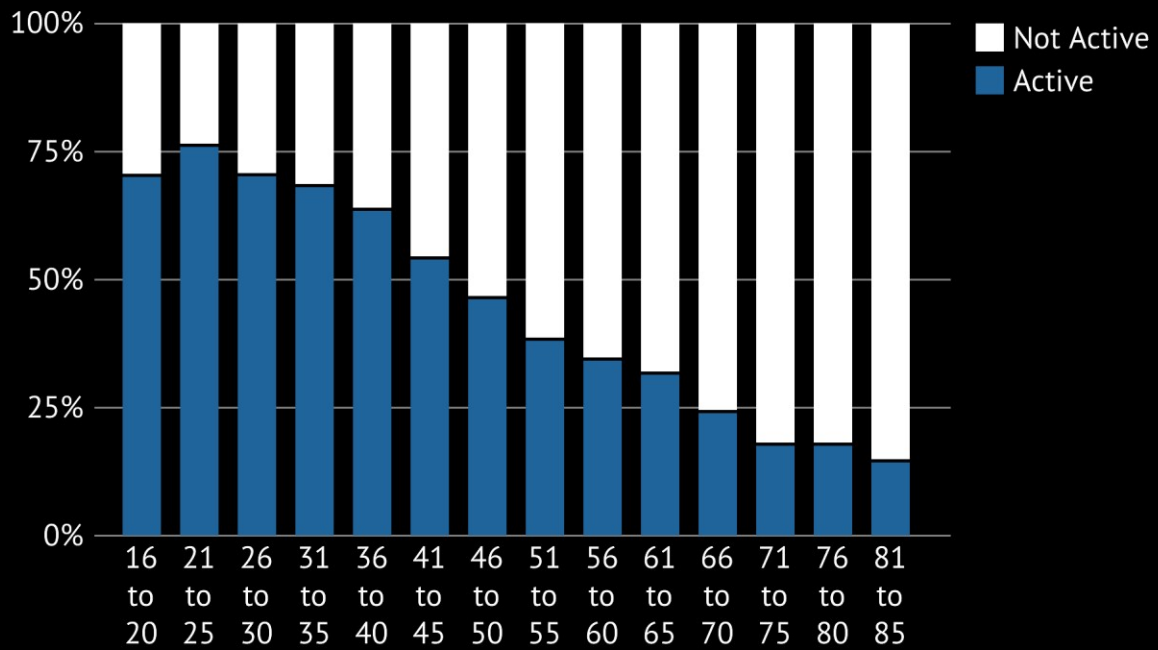
Around 30% of 20-somethings are not active on social media while the same number (about 30%) are active once you hit age 50. After 65, that rate stays well below 25%.

What This Means

The big takeaway is a simple one: Social media simply doesn't have a good chance of reaching older guests. On the flip side, social posts do have a greater chance of reaching younger customers.

Remember, this is looking at social media's reach as a whole, not just your fans. It's a simple lesson, but a critical one to keep in mind as you plan, create, and execute social campaigns. If social media is a marketing medium you choose, adjust your expectations as the target demographic gets older.

Originally published October 30, 2012.



Does a tweet's length impact the number of times it's retweeted?

The Goods

For this analysis, we looked at over 25,000 ski resort tweets posted between late November 2012 and early January 2013. The retweet count of each tweet was divided by the follower count of the resort at the time they posted it. Tweets were then grouped by the length of the message (1-140 characters) and analyzed.

The Results

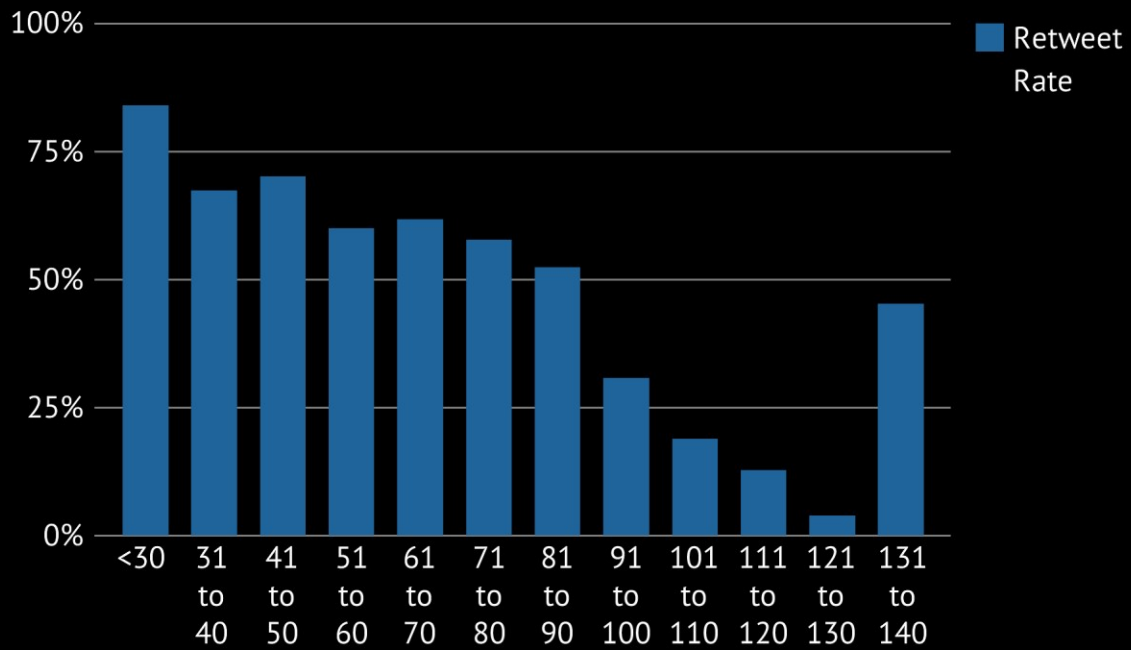
Sure enough, the trend is very similar to that of an email subject line: shorter tweets tend to be retweeted much more frequently than longer tweets right up until the limit – 140 characters – where the retweet rate once again spikes.

What This Means

A common Twitter tactic is to shorten a message by the length of the resort's username plus five. This allows the insertion of "RT @yourusername" before the message for easy retweeting through non-native Twitter applications. Though logical, this appears to be ineffective.

Like subject lines, it also seems there is a dead zone where your message isn't short and to the point but not quite pushing the size limits either. In this area, there is a significant dip in the retweet rate.

Originally published January 15, 2013.



Are older resort guests becoming more active on social media?

The Goods

For this analysis, we took data from 17,000 surveys given to guests at 17 different resorts and looked at responses to the question, “are you active on social media.” We grouped responses by the age of the respondents and compared results from this year to last year.

The Results

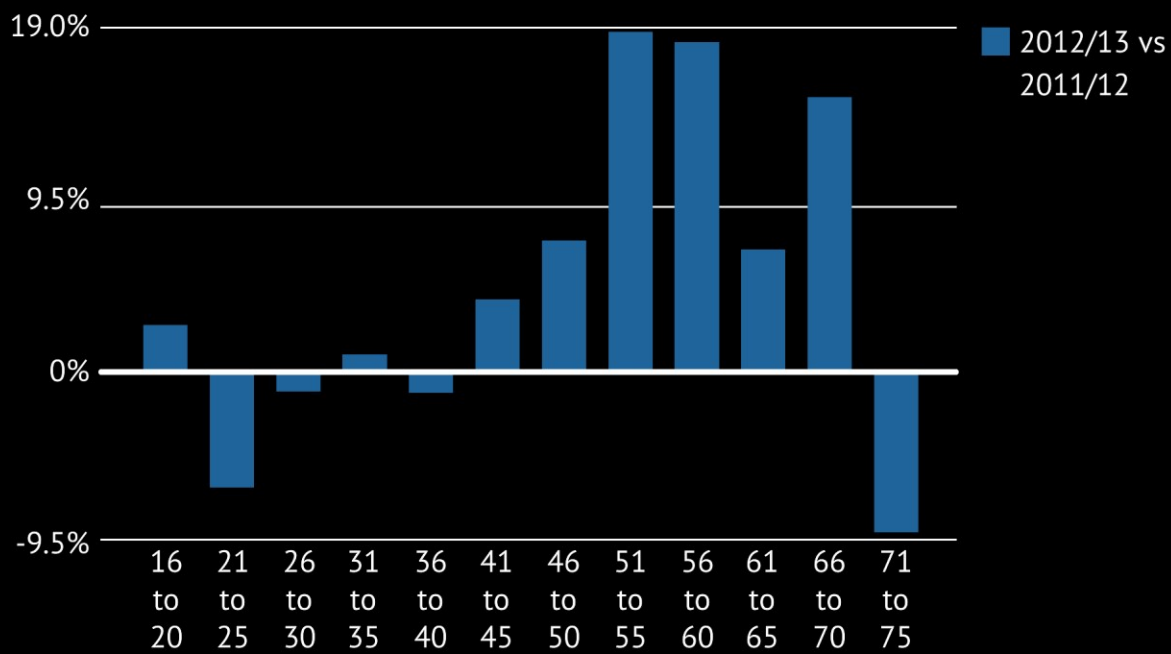
From ages 41-70, each group showed an increase in the percentage of resort guests who said they were active on social media. While most groups below age 40 didn’t change significantly, one group did: 21-25. Whether it’s a sign of social media fatigue in younger users or an anomaly in the data, time will tell.

What This Means

For resorts that are putting significant resources into social media, seeing an increase in usage among older resort guests – the ones who spend more and stay longer – is good news.

And while the overall likelihood of these guests seeing your social content is still much lower than that of a 20- or 30-something, it’s certainly a positive trend.

Originally published October 16, 2012.



For every Twitter follower a resort gains, how many do they lose?

The Goods

For this analysis we took the last three months of follow and unfollow activity for the Twitter accounts of 17 mountain resorts. These resorts had an average of just under 6,000 followers each.

The Results

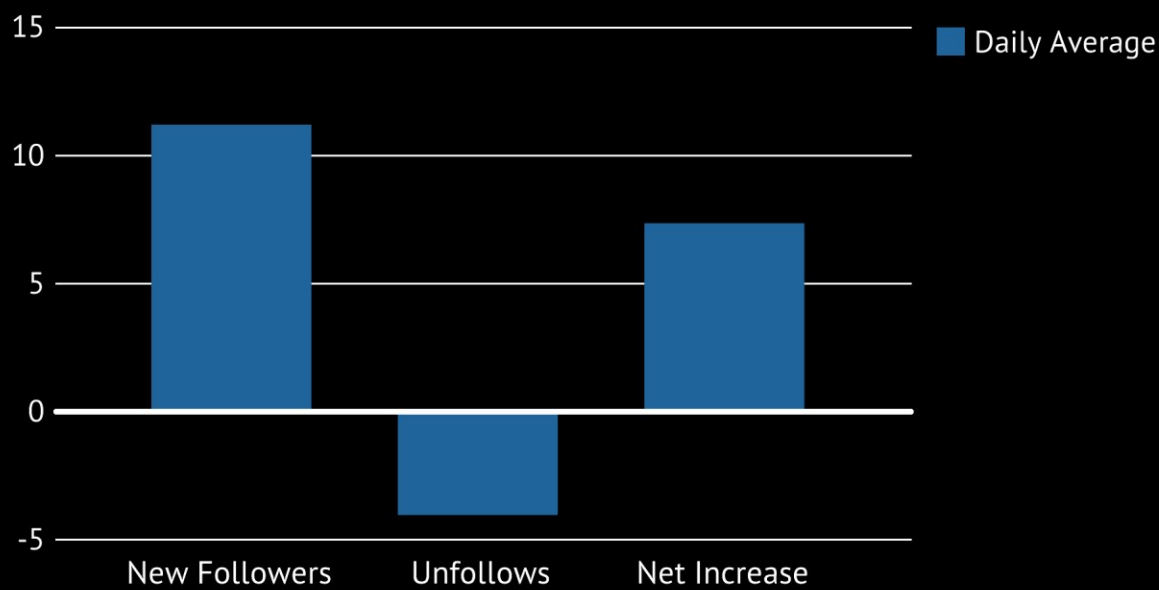
Every day these resorts averaged 11.25 new followers and 3.94 unfollows for a net increase of 7.31 followers. In other words, for every 100 people who followed these resorts' Twitter accounts, about 35 unfollowed.

What This Means

The number of daily unfollows was a little surprising. At the same time, however, we couldn't help but think there may be a big opportunity therein.

It's a case of growing vs. mitigating loss: If a marketer can identify spikes in unfollows, they may be able to pinpoint post types or other activity that is canceling out their efforts. Rather than push for new follows, decreasing unfollows may be an easier path to increased growth.

Originally published October 23, 2012.



Does social engagement follow the same curve as email performance?

The Goods

To find our answer we looked at resort emails sent to 300,000,000 recipients and compared their performance to that of 325,000 resort Facebook posts. Open rate is defined as “unique opens / total sends” and like rate is defined as “post likes / page fans”.

The Results

On the email side, the peak open rate is about 40% higher than the lowest open rate. With Facebook, that difference is 300%.

What This Means

Though the peaks and valleys are similar between the two channels as they ebb and flow throughout the year, those same peaks and valleys are more exaggerated on the social side than they are with email.

In other words, email seems to perform more steadily throughout the year. A site like Facebook can greatly magnify any efforts when the timing and message is right, but it also sees very low engagement during warmer months.

Originally published April 16, 2013.



What kind of ratings do ski resorts have on TripAdvisor?

The Goods

To find an answer we gathered TripAdvisor data for 325 mountain resorts in the United States. For each resort we recorded both the number of reviews that showed up but also the average rating. TripAdvisor ratings range from 0 – 5 at 0.5 point intervals.

The Results

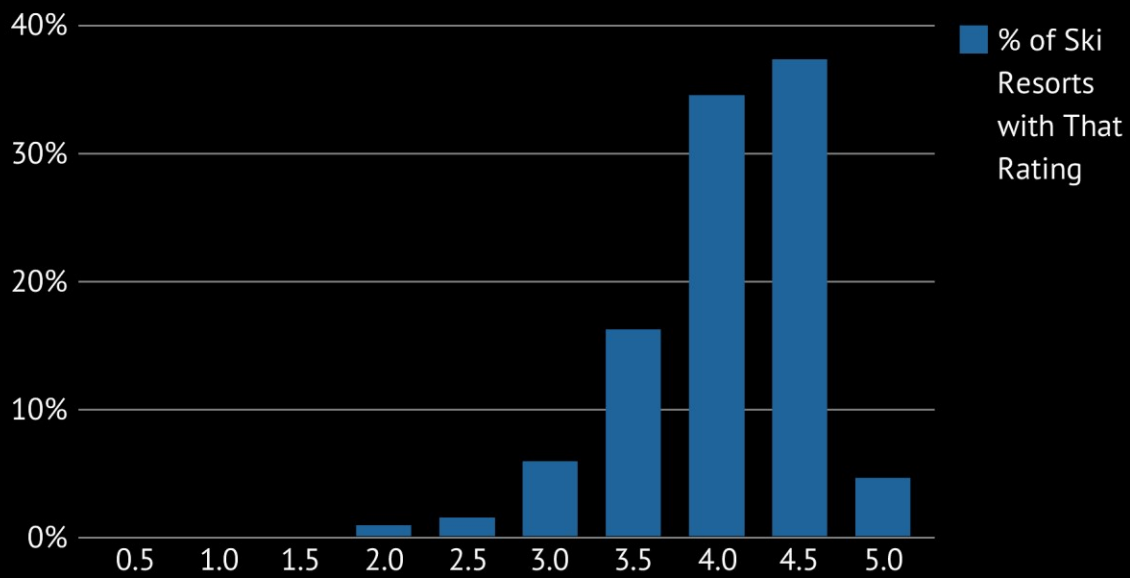
The vast majority of resorts had a rating of 4.0 or 4.5. Though a few did manage a perfect 5.0, even more fell at 3.5 or even 3.0 with just a few scattered at ratings lower than that point.

What This Means

While you may not have control over what people write on these sites, you do have some control over who ends up on these sites with the intent to review.

If someone came to your resort, filled out a survey, and had an NPS of 9 or 10, why not set up an automated email encouraging them to share their experience on TripAdvisor, Yelp, or other review sites? A simple tweak to help keep your resort's rating up.

Originally published May 21, 2013.



When it comes to RFM, who are your resort's Twitter followers?

The Goods

We used a sample of more than 200,000 guests from 10 U.S. resorts for this analysis. Excluded from this sample are leads or Twitter followers who don't have transactions in the database.

The Results

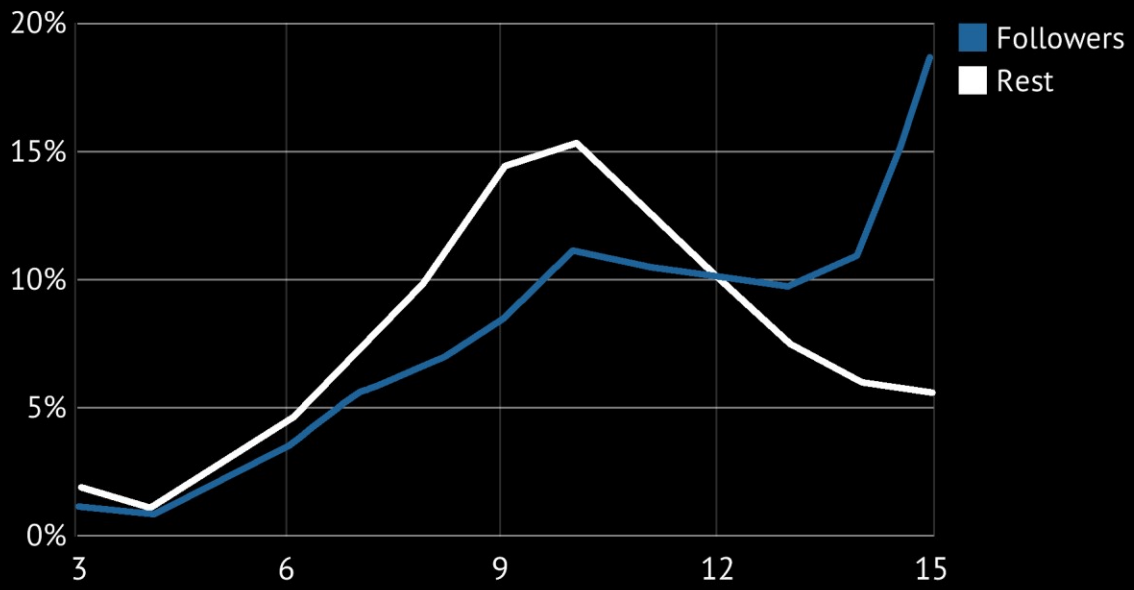
As expected, the RFM curve for the majority of guests followed the bell curve we'd expect from RFM. What's interesting is the curve for Twitter followers. Rather than a bell, the graph sits slightly below the other before turning decidedly upwards after passing 13 on the scale. In other words, a Twitter follower with transactions in your database is more likely to have a high RFM score than other guests.

What This Means

Since social media burst on the scene, there has always been a classic "chicken and the egg" scenario at the center of the measurement and ROI debate.

Because many RFM scores include large numbers of transactions from before the social media era, the data seem to suggest that loyalty among social media followers may be a preexisting condition. It's not to say social media can't generate loyalty, but it does appear that social media has given already-loyal guests another outlet to be involved with a brand they love.

Originally published May 28, 2013.



What are ski resort social followers most influential about?

The Goods

For this analysis we took a random sample of just under 8,000 twitter followers of North American ski resorts. To find topics of influence we used Klout.

The Results

What's perhaps most interesting on first glance is how skiing sits at #8. This is below music, television, and movies and serves as a reminder of where skiing lies in most skiers' priority lists. Going down the chart we see indicators of everything from major ski markets (Boston, Vancouver, Colorado, etc.) to other sports (baseball, football, hockey, etc.).

What This Means

There are many takeaways from this analysis, but let's explore two. First is what your guests are most influential about besides ski related topics. For example, music and journalism aren't necessarily in competition for time on the snow but could act as channels to reach skiers.

The second point is the topics themselves. Looking for new content? Well, 3% of followers are influential about trivia. Over 4% are influential about comedy. The more we learn about resort guests, the better we can reach them.

Originally published July 2, 2013.

1	business	37.25%	26	trivia	3.30%
2	music	23.82%	27	basketball	3.28%
3	television	19.56%	28	colorado	3.20%
4	sports	18.06%	29	education	3.00%
5	movies	17.10%	30	vancouver	2.99%
6	travel	7.22%	31	canada	2.84%
7	journalism	6.92%	32	fashion	2.80%
8	skiing	6.80%	33	ESPN	2.77%
9	social media	6.78%	34	fitness	2.71%
10	books	6.65%	35	politics	2.66%
11	food	6.17%	36	marketing	2.66%
12	snowboarding	5.67%	37	celebrities	2.63%
13	mountains	5.56%	38	british columbia	2.42%
14	hockey	5.33%	39	software	2.29%
15	geography	5.30%	40	NHL	2.27%
16	baseball	5.09%	41	video games	2.24%
17	football	4.67%	42	outdoors	2.21%
18	comedy	4.47%	43	beer	2.03%
19	computers	4.12%	44	boston	1.99%
20	finance	3.87%	45	cars	1.95%
21	health	3.67%	46	blogging	1.93%
22	twitter	3.58%	47	world news	1.73%
23	government	3.57%	48	hotels	1.71%
24	entertainment	3.55%	49	calgary	1.66%
25	religion/ spirituality	3.52%	50	MTB	1.51%

How frequently are resorts uploading YouTube videos now vs 2006?

The Goods

To find our answer, we analyzed over 20,000 ski resort YouTube videos uploaded since July of 2006 (only two videos were uploaded before then). Videos were grouped by the month they were uploaded and counted to get a total number of uploads for each month.

The Results

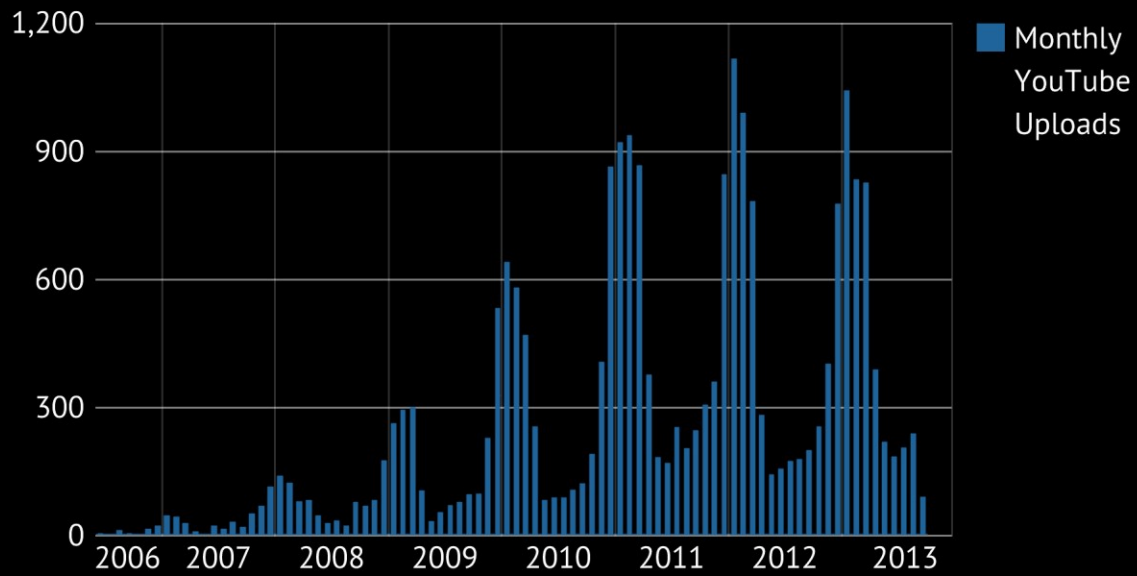
Interestingly enough, it appears the monthly video upload volume in 2012/13 was slightly lower than 2011/12. Looking at annual volume confirms this trend. Between July 1, 2012 and June 30, 2013 there were 5,038 videos uploaded versus 5,224 between July 1, 2011 and June 30, 2012.

What This Means

We now know that the volume of social posts from ski resorts peaked in 2011/12 for both Facebook and YouTube – a trend that likely carried over to other networks as well.

The obvious question is “why”. While that’s a question we’ll hope to answer in a future Stash, we’d guess that the drastic improvement in content quality has come through a “fewer and better” approach where the time saved from posting less frequently is spent making each post more engaging and relevant.

Originally published September 24, 2013.



Some marketers shun asking for engagement, but does it work?

The Goods

To find our answer, we looked at all mountain resort tweets and Facebook posts from July to October of this year. To avoid updates that weren't meant to get engagement, we only included content with at least one interaction. The chart represents interactions (likes, etc.) per thousand fans/followers.

The Results

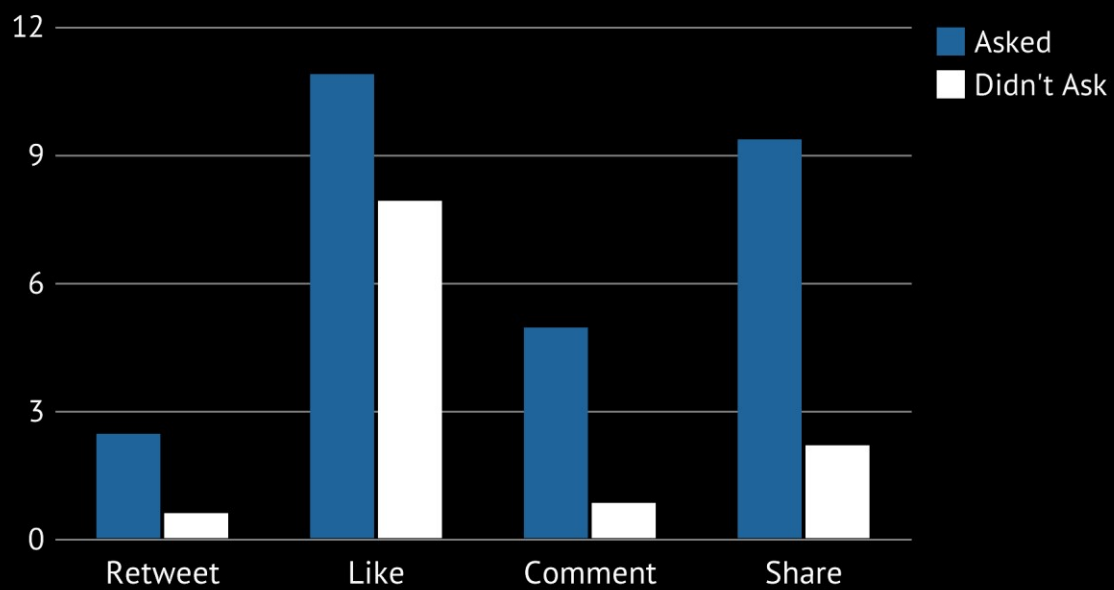
Asking for retweets snagged 2.5 retweets per thousand fans versus 0.6 retweets for tweets that didn't ask (4x as many). Asking for likes got 10.9 per thousand versus 8.0 (1.4x as many). Comments were 5.0 compared to 0.9 (5.8x as many) and shares were 9.4 versus 2.2 (4.2x as many).

What This Means

Bottom line, asking for engagement drives more engagement.

Many marketers will stick to their guns about not asking for engagement. For the rest, however, this is a potentially valuable lesson. While this concept can be abused and Facebook is adjusting their algorithm accordingly, for the occasional bit of content where engagement is important, asking for these actions may be the most effective way to get more of them.

Originally published November 5, 2013.



Are older social users as influential online as younger users?

The Goods

To begin, we aggregated data from 10 mountain resorts for over 55,000 guests whose age and Klout score were both known. We then grouped and averaged scores by age. Age is on the x-axis and average Klout Score (10-100) for each age is on the y-axis.

The Results

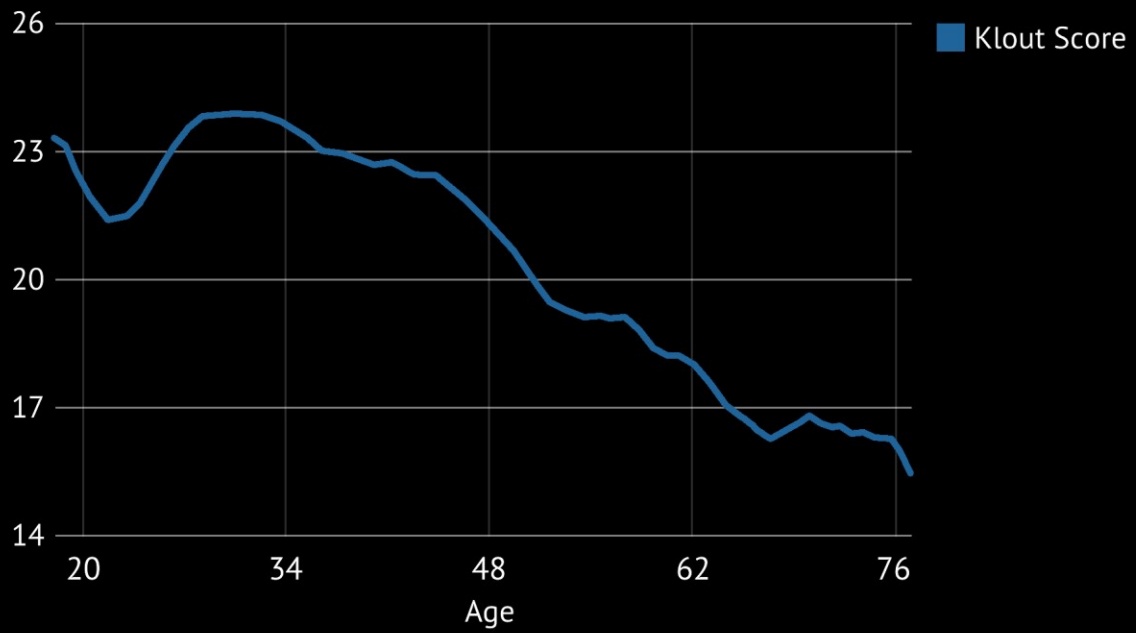
Right off the bat we see a nearly identical trend to social activity based on age. After a dip in the mid 20's, social media influence steadily declines.

What This Means

As far as we can tell, online reach and social influence appears to bear little resemblance to what may be happening offline.

The big takeaway we see is that successful word-of-mouth marketing online may require (and ultimately reach) a very different demographic. The online world appears to be influenced by the same people who use it the most – the younger crowd.

Originally published November 12, 2013.



Are guests who follow your resort on social more likely to return?

The Goods

To find our answer we used social survey data from a half-dozen resorts across two seasons and divided the results into four groups based on the four "are you following this resort" responses they could provide.

The Results

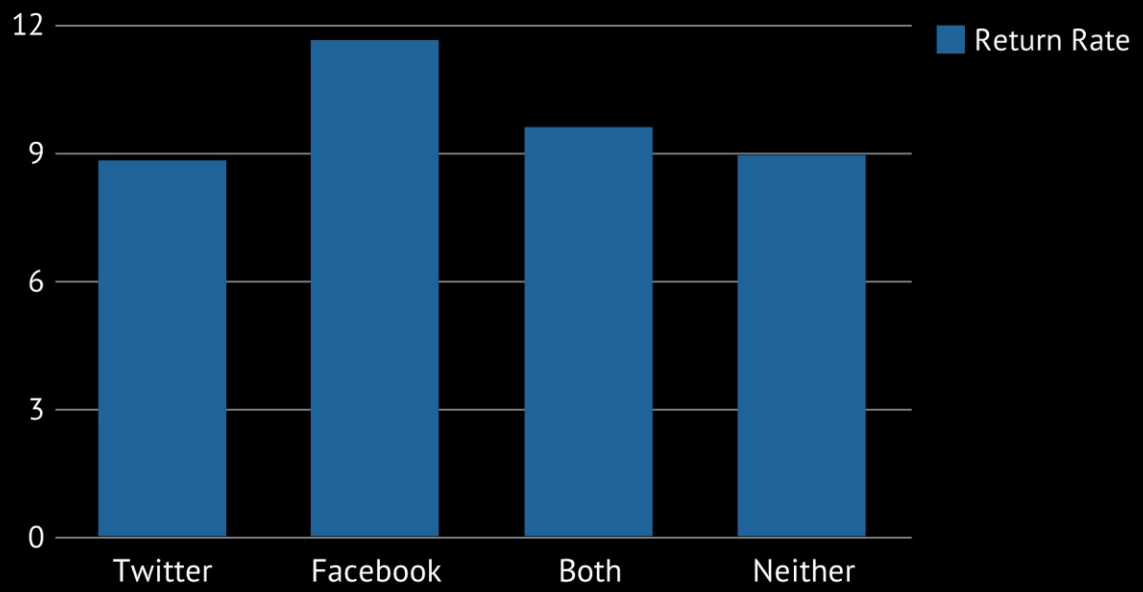
Facebook is the clear winner, with "neither" and "Twitter" nearly even at the bottom. Interestingly, rather than a cumulative effect from following on both Facebook and Twitter, it looks to be more averaged with Twitter pulling down the return rate rather than boosting it higher.

What This Means

While an email analysis along these lines carries similar questions, the chicken-and-the-egg scenario is especially tricky with social due to the organic nature of most "follow" or "like" actions made by users.

So are Facebook fans more likely to return because of the content you share or are they more likely to return because loyal customers are more likely seek out and find your brand on social media? We're guessing it's a little bit of both.

Originally published January 14, 2014.



Do multiple Facebook posts a day lead to less engagement?

The Goods

To find our answer we analyzed over 25,000 Facebook posts from mountain resorts in the United States. Instead of looking at total engagement, we looked at engagement rate in terms of how many fans the page had at the time the content was posted.

The Results

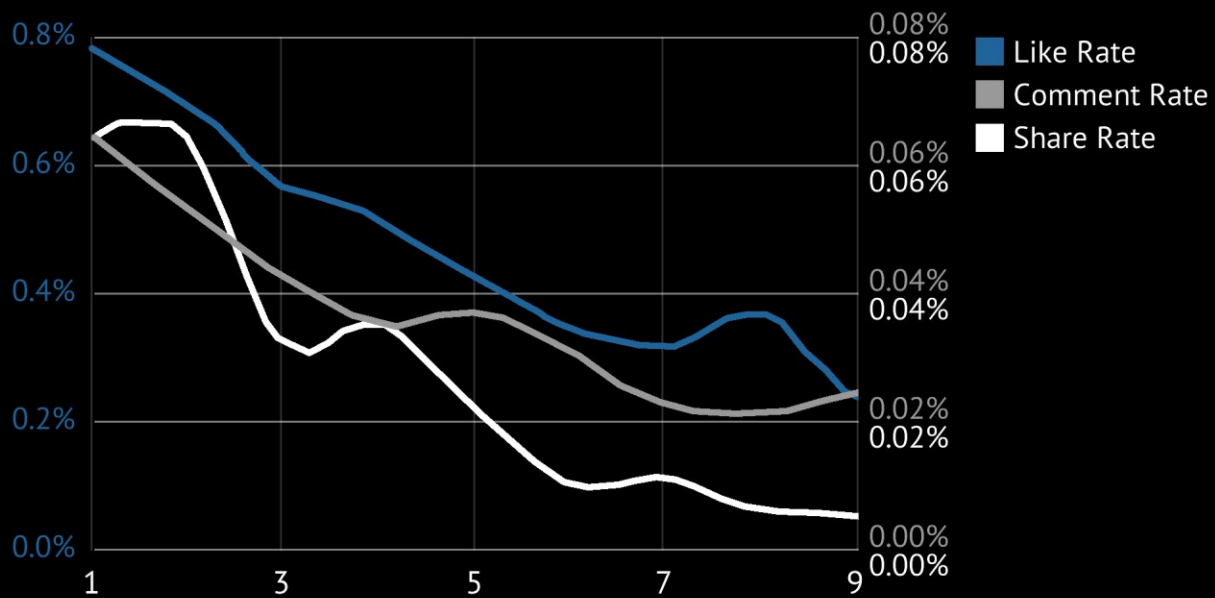
It doesn't take long to see that each incremental Facebook post will get fewer likes, comments, and shares than the previous. Of the three, shares come the closest to zero after 10 posts.

What This Means

It's important to remember that this does reflect a diminishing return, but it's not a negative return. Each additional daily post may get less engagement than its predecessor, but less engagement is still engagement.

Unless you only have enough content for a daily post or other goals or priorities that conflict, there's not much in the data to scare you away from posting more than once a day on Facebook. That said, pacing yourself may be worth considering so you don't post a dozen times one day and only once the next.

Originally published January 21, 2014.



Facebook has a diminishing return, but what about Twitter tweets?

The Goods

For this analysis we looked at over 20,000 tweets posted by mountain resorts between Nov 1, 2013 and Jan 24, 2014. Each tweet was labeled with a number corresponding to the place it held in the resort's daily content lineup: "1" meant the 1st tweet of the day, "2" the 2nd, "3" the 3rd and so on.

The Results

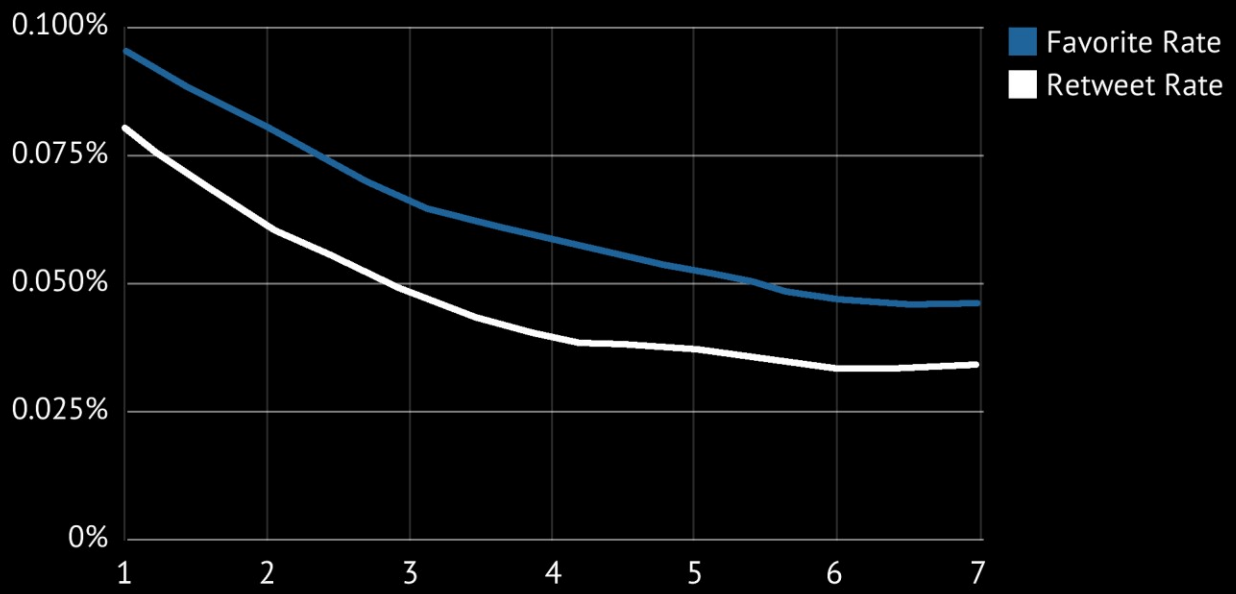
Right off the bat we see a trend similar to Facebook posts. Starting high with the first posts of the day, engagement steadily drops with each subsequent post. Favorites start at 0.10% with the first tweet and sit at about 0.05% with the 7th. Retweets start near 0.08% and drop to 0.04% after 7 posts.

What This Means

Rather than content fatigue, the biggest factors for a non-algorithm feed like Twitter may be content types. Early in the morning is when ski areas excitedly report snow totals and the day's conditions. Likewise, if a picture is also shared, photos are a bit more impressive during early morning light.

Rather than content getting worse or followers getting overwhelmed, the decrease in engagement may simply be a matter of competing with the more exciting topics that occupy the first talking points of the day.

Originally published January 28, 2014.



Does the length of a YouTube video impact its views and ratings?

The Goods

For this analysis we looked at over 22,000 YouTube videos uploaded by 240 North American mountain resorts. Combined, these videos had nearly 50,000,000 views and over 110,000 ratings. We then grouped these videos by their length into one-minute intervals.

The Results

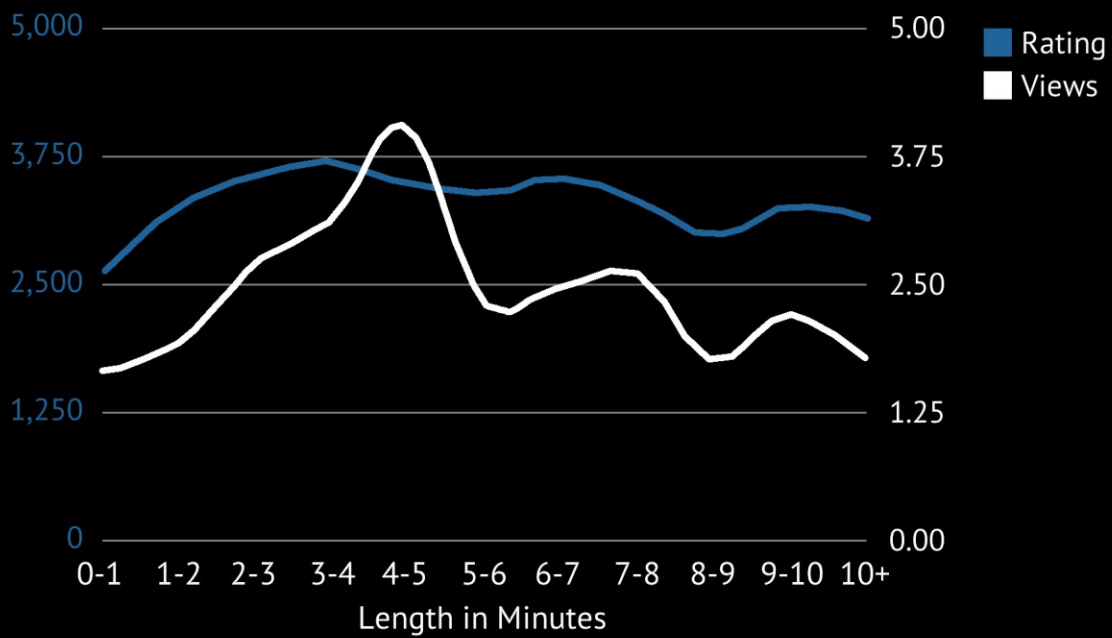
While the variations in view counts aren't as dramatic as with ratings, both curves follow a fairly similar path where their lowest points are for videos under a minute in length and peaking around 3-5 minutes. Videos longer than 5 minutes showed a sporadic, but nonetheless downward, trend all the way to 10 minutes.

What This Means

The short version is, yes, length matters. It shouldn't trump the needs of a specific piece of content, but it does correlate to both the number of views a video receives as well as how users rate it.

What was interesting, however, was the low view and rating results for shorter videos: especially those under one minute. This makes us believe that while videos can certainly be too long, it appears they can also be too short.

Originally published February 25, 2014.



Which words are in titles of highly rated resort YouTube videos?

The Goods

To find our answer we looked at over 125 commonly used keywords in ski resort YouTube video titles. We limited the sample to videos that had at least 1,000 views and words that showed up in at least 20 video titles. For each keyword we found both the average rating and average view count.

The Results

Right off the bat you notice that the majority of the top 10 places are occupied by words about snow or terrain. Weather words are mixed in but most fall in the middle of the list. Especially interesting was the appearance of a specific content type – “GoPro” – in the 5th spot.

What This Means

Keywords, of course, don't guarantee a video will get high ratings or views. But on a discovery-engine like YouTube, they are a key factor that helps videos get seen.

While the view count is an important piece, the real takeaway of this analysis deals with what the ratings say about viewer behavior. While not perfect, they are a good indicator of the types of videos (or topics videos cover) that skiers and mountain resort guests are most likely to not just watch, but enjoy.

Originally published March 4, 2014.

1	storm	4.76 / 4,897	26	inch	4.34 / 6,245
2	groom	4.75 / 3,374	27	pass	4.33 / 5,152
3	deep	4.73 / 5,906	28	resort	4.32 / 4,901
4	experience	4.72 / 7,466	29	best	4.32 / 3,252
5	gopro	4.69 / 6,090	30	winter	4.31 / 4,244
6	opening	4.68 / 4,782	31	snowboard	4.31 / 14,576
7	snowmaking	4.67 / 4,158	32	ice	4.30 / 2,699
8	pond	4.60 / 5,176	33	free	4.28 / 4,399
9	park	4.59 / 5,811	34	first	4.27 / 4,305
10	pow(der)	4.57 / 5,371	35	snow	4.22 / 5,344
11	fast	4.57 / 3,610	36	summer	4.18 / 4,772
12	rail	4.54 / 6,274	37	cat	4.18 / 4,962
13	high	4.54 / 4,179	38	video	4.18 / 3,269
14	film	4.54 / 5,576	39	thank	4.13 / 2,959
15	terrain	4.51 / 7,052	40	ski	4.10 / 5,096
16	learn	4.50 / 4,757	41	big	4.08 / 5,064
17	lift	4.49 / 6,380	42	trick	4.07 / 3,093
18	season	4.48 / 4,351	43	bluebird	4.03 / 2,822
19	dog	4.47 / 15,320	44	spa	3.98 / 12,425
20	feet	4.46 / 8,213	45	contest	3.86 / 10,314
21	sun	4.44 / 4,456	46	report	3.68 / 1,727
22	new	4.43 / 4,768	47	event	3.32 / 3,666
23	wind	4.38 / 4,400	48	kid	3.19 / 5,797
24	mountain	4.36 / 4,893	49	lesson	2.98 / 2,021
25	spring	4.35 / 4,631	50	family	2.97 / 2,103

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