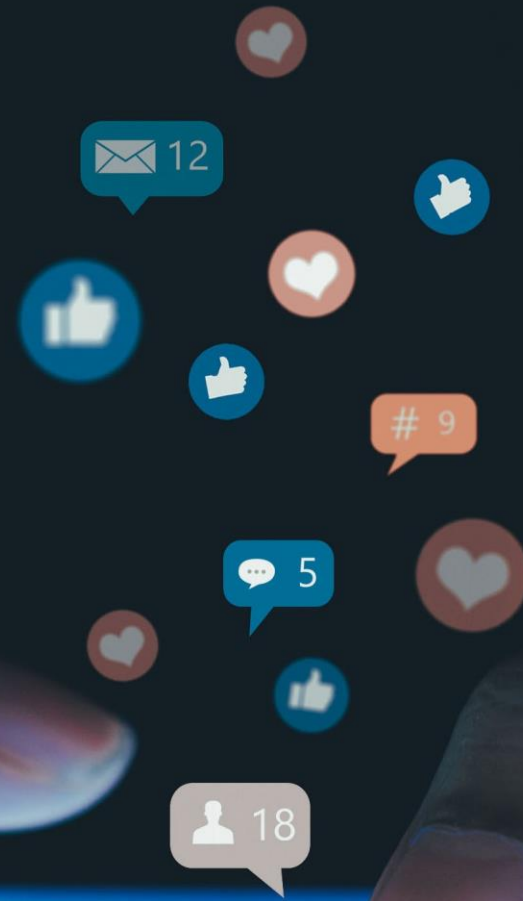


Savanta:

FEBRUARY 2022

# Are you on the right platform?

A Northern Ireland perspective



The digital revolution has forever changed the way that businesses attract and retain customers and social media is awash with campaigns aiming to capture the attention of fickle consumers, but can the same approach be taken for business customers?

To get a better understanding of digital platform usage for business purposes, Savanta asked nearly 300 businesses in **Northern Ireland (NI)** with a turnover of £0-1 billion: Which of the following platforms have you used in the last month for any business-related purposes, e.g. to communicate with customers or suppliers, to find out about business products or services etc? (Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest, Snapchat, Reddit, TikTok)



# Facebook has the highest level of business usage

%

Over half of NI businesses (52%) have used Facebook for business purposes in the last month (much higher compared to GB 44%).

This compares to 25% for LinkedIn, 25% for YouTube and 20% for Instagram. Twitter and Pinterest have been used by 13% and 11% respectively, whilst other platforms have minimal usage.

Notably, 35% said they had used none of the 9 platforms tested (similar levels for GB businesses 37%), suggesting that whilst digital marketing has become an important tool within the business world it is essential to consider other more traditional approaches beyond the main social media and business platforms.

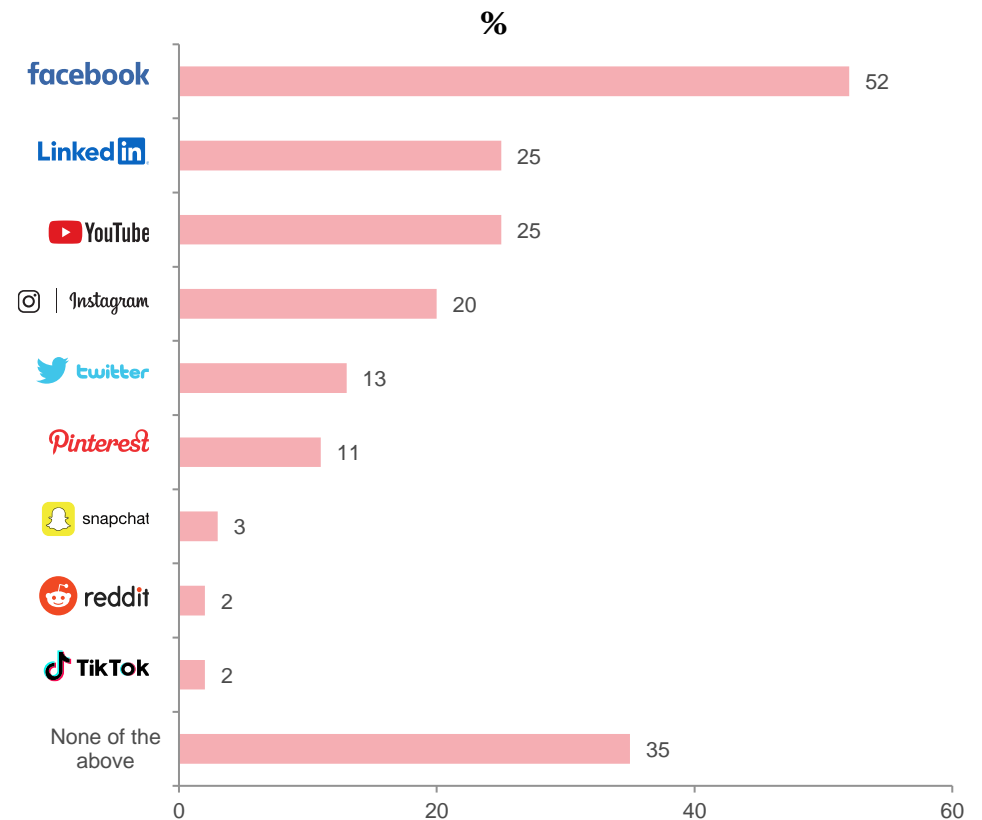
Over half of NI businesses have used Facebook for business purposes in the last month



## Platform usage for business purposes



Which of the following platforms have you used in the last month for any business-related purposes, e.g. to communicate with customers or suppliers, to find out about business products or services etc?



## Perhaps unsurprisingly, firmographic factors have an influence on usage

We looked at this amongst start-up businesses and established businesses with under £2m turnover and found:

### Younger business owners were more likely to use digital platforms

Only 62% of the 55 and overs said they had used one of the nine digital platforms for business in the last month, compared to 70% for 54 and under. Facebook and YouTube were the two main platforms used by the over 55s (44% and 25%), whereas the 54 and unders predominantly used Facebook (61%), alongside Instagram (32%), LinkedIn (31%) and YouTube (26%). Instagram has the largest difference by age with 32% usage amongst 54 and unders compared to only 11% for over 55s.

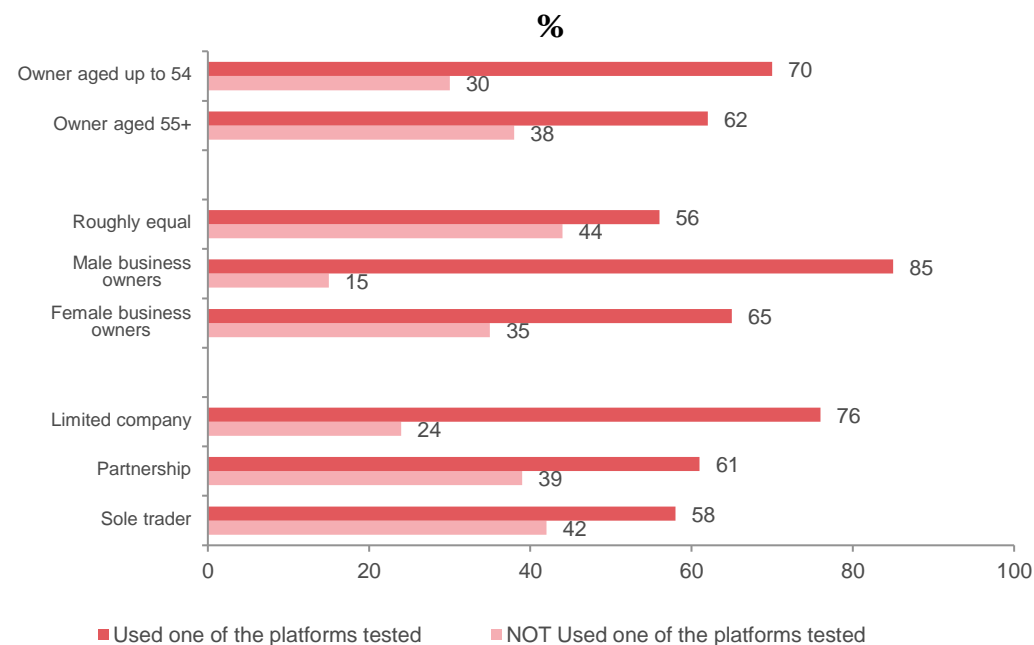
### Female business owners were more likely to use digital platforms

More female owners had used one of the six platforms compared to male business owners, 85% vs 65% respectively. Facebook (80%), Instagram (60%) and LinkedIn (54%) were the three main platforms female business owners used.

### Limited companies were also more likely to use digital platforms

76% of limited companies said they had used one of the 6 platforms for business in the past month, 61% of partnerships and 58% of sole traders. Facebook was the main platform used regardless of legal status, but for limited companies it was especially high, 67%, compared to 44% and 42% for partnerships and self-employed/sole traders/proprietors respectively. Pinterest was of particular importance to partnerships (25%) compared to 13% for limited companies and only 5% for self-employed/sole traders/proprietors.

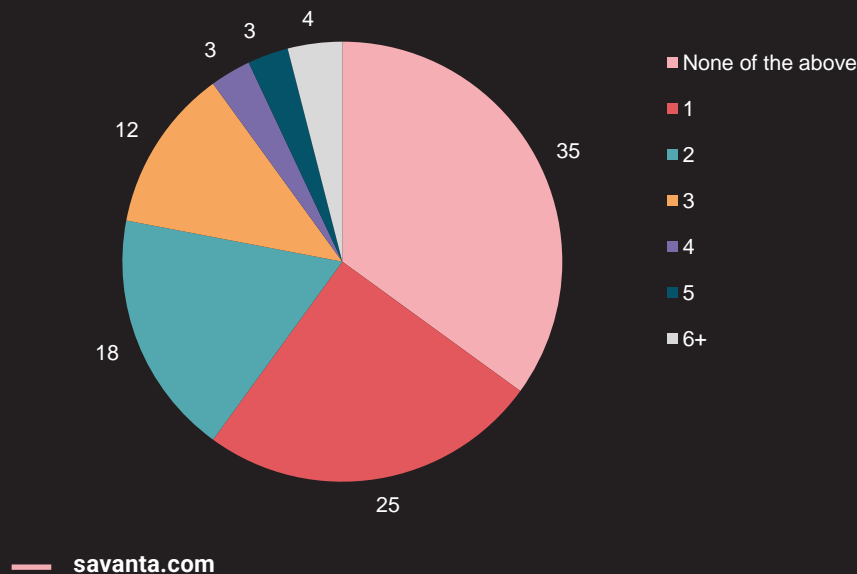
### Platform usage for business purposes amongst start-ups and established small businesses



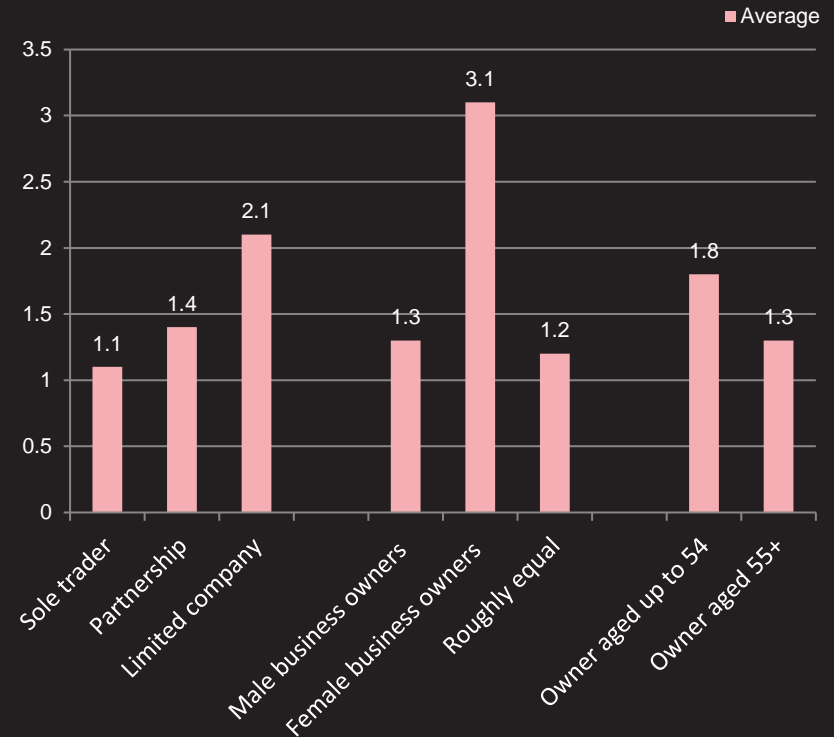
## Multiple platform usage is surprisingly low averaging at only 1.5 overall (same as GB)

35% had not used any of the 9 platforms in the past month for business purposes. 1 in 4 (25%) had just used one platform and 1 in 3 (33%) had used 2, 3 or 4 of the platforms with heavy multi-usage (5 or more) limited to just 8% as most businesses prefer to be more selective.

### Platform usage for business purposes – number used (of 9 key platforms)



### Platform usage for business purposes – average number used (amongst start-ups and established small businesses)



There are notable differences by age of business, with an average of 1.8 platforms used in the last month for 54 and under and 1.3 for those aged 55+. Legal status of businesses also varies with an average of 2.1 platforms for limited companies, 1.4 for partnerships and 1.1 for self sole traders. Usage amongst female-owned businesses is high, with an average of 3.1 of the 9 platforms used in last month compared to just 1.3 for male-owned businesses.

# Platform usage for social purposes is generally higher

With the exception of LinkedIn, all the platforms we considered were originally designed for social purposes. Savanta therefore also asked the following question for comparative purposes: Have you used any of the same platforms in the last month for personal reasons, e.g. to communicate with friends, to find out what's happening around the world etc?

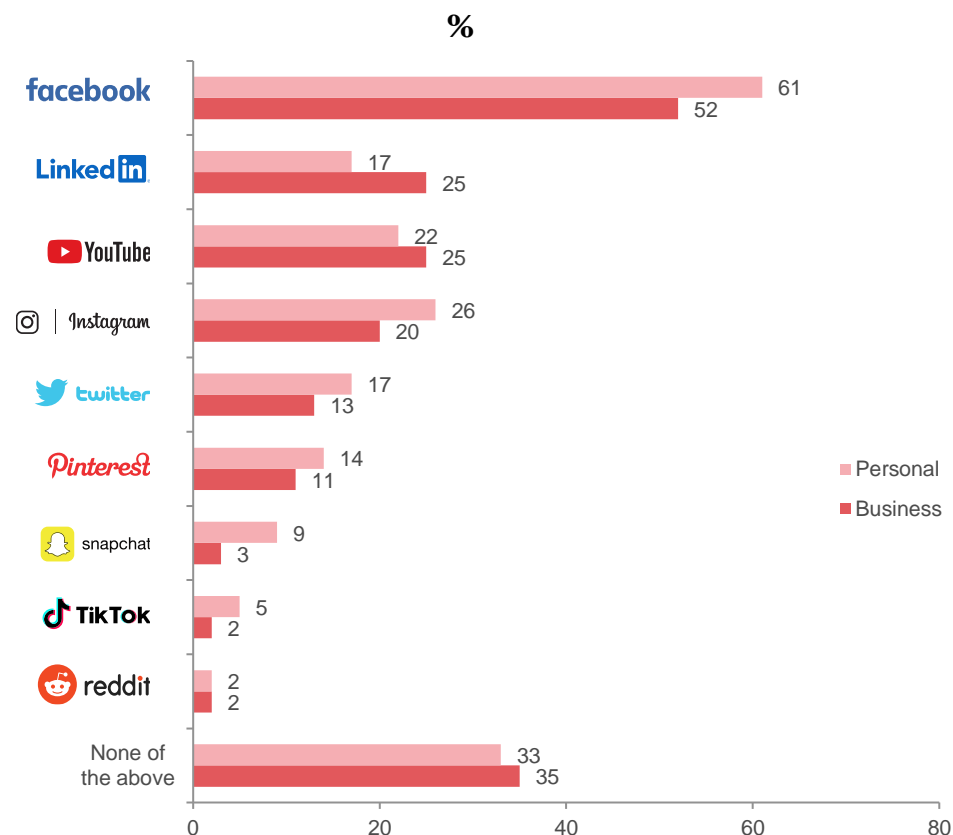
More digital platforms are used for personal purposes than business purposes - on average 1.7 of the 9 platforms were used for personal vs 1.5 for business - but the difference is not huge due to our business research audience. 35% do not use any of the 9 platforms for business, 33% for personal, but only 20% said they had used none of the above for either business or personal reasons.

Facebook personal usage has the largest absolute difference when compared to business usage (9 percentage points higher at 61% compared to 52%). However, Snapchat personal usage is proportionally higher than business usage (3 times higher, with 9% personal usage compared to 3% business). LinkedIn has higher business usage than personal (25% compared to 17%) as does YouTube (25% vs 22%).

## Platform usage - business purposes vs personal



Which of the following platforms have you used in the last month for any business-related purposes, e.g. to communicate with customers or suppliers, to find out about business products or services etc? And have you used any of the same platforms in the last month for personal reasons, e.g. to communicate with friends, to find out what's happening around the world etc?





## More than 4 out of 5 businesses (80%) used at least one digital platform in the last month for business or personal reasons

Most businesses have used at least one digital platform recently, even if not necessarily for business purposes, clearly indicating the importance of this communication channel.

However, business usage penetration for each individual platform tends to be comparatively low, suggesting that a multi-platform approach is needed to maximise reach. Business legal status, owner age and gender all influence platform usage and it is of course essential to consider the target audience when developing a digital marketing strategy and to stay open-minded about newer platforms that look set to grow in popularity as start-up businesses mature and develop.

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### Data attribution:

Source: Savanta MVBC Q2 2021 SU EST £0-1bn NI. Base: 295, Survey Period: 30th March 2021 - 18th June 2021.



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Savanta is one of the fastest-growing data, market research and advisory companies, born when eight best-in-class agencies, all specialists in their fields, joined forces to offer big agency benefits, while retaining a refreshingly boutique mindset.

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“

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# Meet the team



**Stephen Palmer**  
EVP, Financial Services

Stephen has 25 years' research experience across financial services and tech and leads the financial services team at Savanta. Prior to Savanta, Stephen was Head of Insight at Kantar Financial Services & Technology and responsible for delivering customer experience, brand and segmentation research. Stephen is a certified member of the MRS and has sat on the standards board.

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**Helen Davey**  
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Helen has more than 20 years' research experience gained agency side and has worked in the MarketVue Business Banking team for the past 5 years. Helen has considerable experience in managing large scale complicated syndicated research.

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**Craig Tandy**  
Account Director, Financial Services

Craig has worked in a variety of roles across the financial services sector, including working directly with SMEs at Close Brothers Bank. More recently Craig worked for IBISWorld supporting banks across their credit approval process and relationship management capabilities, before moving to Savanta to support the wider financial services research team.

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**Philippa Whitham**  
Senior Director, Financial Services

Philippa has more than 20 years' research experience gained agency side and has worked in the MarketVue Business Banking team for the past 7 years. Philippa has considerable experience in managing large, complex continuous research programmes, with particular expertise in customer satisfaction.

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Savanta is the full-service global market research and data insight company that helps businesses make better decisions.

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