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Customer Satisfaction with Social Media and Digital News Falters Despite Traffic Surge, ACSI Data Show

ANN ARBOR, Mich., (August 4, 2020) – When the COVID-19 pandemic ramped up in the United States in March 2020, visits to general news websites skyrocketed and social media usage surged. Yet, even before the pandemic sent traffic soaring across the e-business segment, customer satisfaction overall was weakening.

Customer satisfaction in all three e-business categories – social media, search engines and information, and news and opinion – falters year over year, according to the [American Customer Satisfaction Index \(ACSI®\) E-Business Report 2019-2020](#).

“The pandemic merely amplified the downward trend that was already evident in the social media and internet news and opinion industries,” says David VanAmburg, Managing Director at the ACSI. “The spike in user numbers did nothing to improve satisfaction in these categories. In fact, both experienced additional small dips during the latter part of the ACSI interview period, which coincided with COVID-19 stay-at-home orders.”

Pinterest’s social media lead shrinks; YouTube’s tumble opens door for Wikipedia

Social media continues its slow but persistent downward satisfaction trend, falling 2.8% overall to an ACSI score of 70 (out of 100). Once again, the category places in the bottom five among 46 ACSI industries.

User satisfaction varies widely across individual platforms, with a 13-point gap separating the top from the bottom.

After two years of stability, Pinterest retreats 4% to a score of 77. While it remains the social media standard, ACSI data show that Pinterest’s overall site performance has eroded compared to last year.

Like Pinterest, YouTube suffers a 4% drop but stays in second place at 75, leaving it in a three-way tie with Wikipedia (up 1%) and the smaller group of social media sites (up 1%), which includes Reddit and TikTok.

Snapchat (up 1% to 72) and Instagram (down 1% to 71) swap places. For Instagram, this year

marks its lowest level of satisfaction since its first ACSI measure in 2015.

The remaining sites all score below the industry average of 70. Twitter dips 1% to 68, while LinkedIn slides 3% to 67. Tumblr climbs 3% to 66 but ranks worst in class for site navigation. Despite inching up 2% to 64, Facebook remains anchored to the industry's bottom.

Online news faces perception and trust issues

After hitting a high point in 2019, user satisfaction with news and opinion websites slumps 3.9% to an ACSI score of 74. The decline is widespread, with nearly all online news outlets losing ground regardless of the political leanings of their audiences. ACSI data show that reader expectations overall have fallen significantly this year, dropping to the lowest level in six years.

While the group of smaller news and opinion sites tops the industry, it's less appealing to readers this year, with satisfaction plummeting 5% to 76. FOXNews.com holds its lead among individually measured sites, yet falls 4% to a record-low score of 75.

ABCNews.com and NBCNews.com follow suit, both slipping 1% to 72. USATODAY.com experiences a steeper slide, plunging 4% to 71.

NYTimes.com suffers the largest decline across all three e-business categories, with user satisfaction plummeting 8% to 70. For NYTimes.com, loyalty is at its lowest point in 15 years.

CNN.com is the only news site to buck the trend of declining satisfaction, moving up 1% to tie NYTimes.com. While CNN.com improves for the second year, satisfaction remains below its historic average.

HuffPost finishes in last place after inching back 1% to 69. Despite minor improvement, readers find advertising on HuffPost more intrusive than on other news sites.

Google maintains lead, while Yahoo! rises from the ashes

User satisfaction with search engines and information sites continues to fall, sliding 1.3% to an ACSI score of 76.

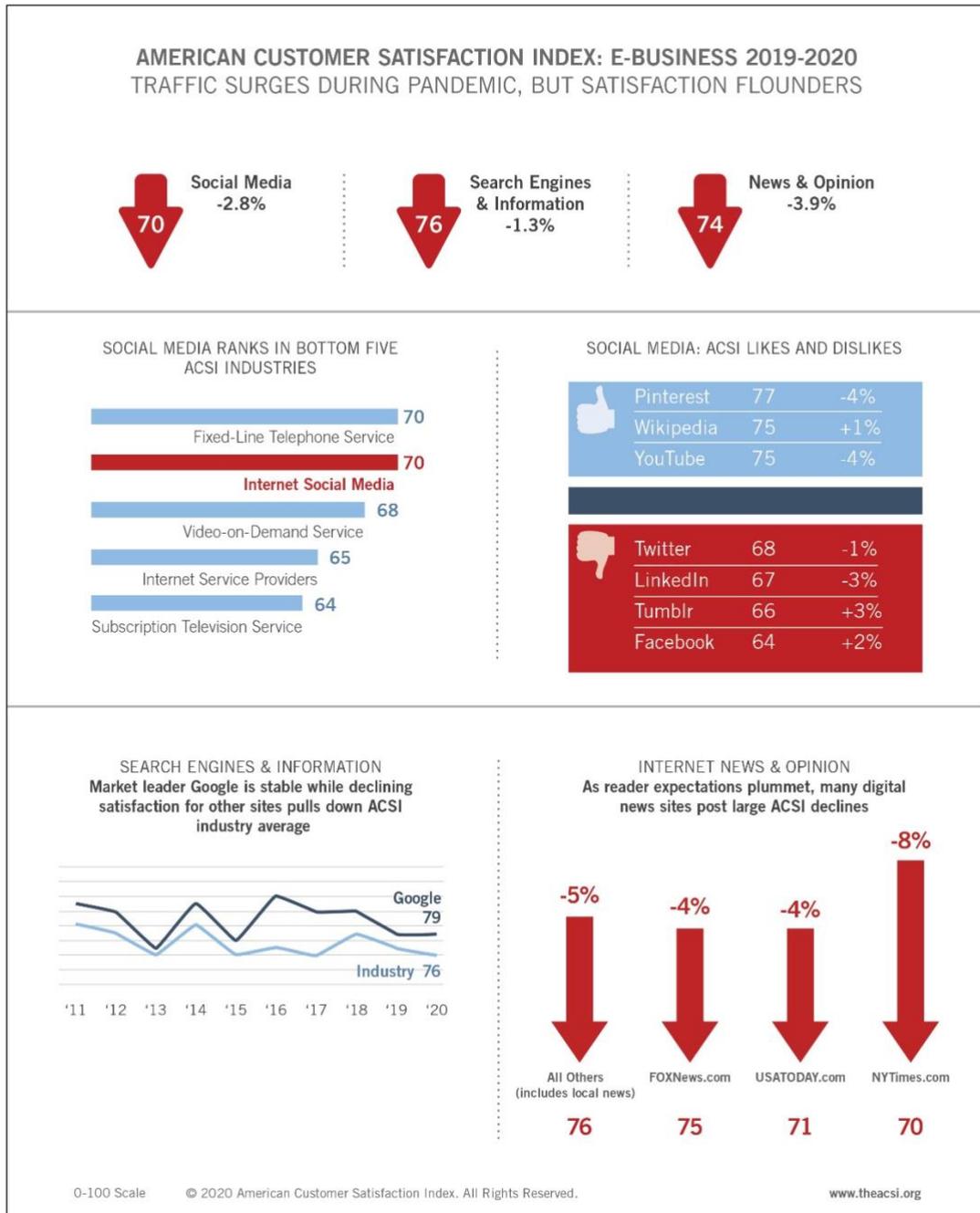
After a 4% drop last year, Google remains atop the industry with a steady score of 79. The group of smaller search engines places second, down 1% to 76.

Unlike the rest of the industry – and much of the e-business segment overall – Yahoo! moves in a positive direction, rising 3% to 72. Following last year's last-place showing, Yahoo! is the only search engine to post a gain.

Several search and information sites cluster together with scores of 71, and all show downturns in user satisfaction. AOL plunges the most, down 4%, while Ask.com retreats 3%. The two

Microsoft sites, Bing and MSN, each dip 1%. Answers.com finishes in last place with a 1% slip to 70.

The ACSI E-Business Report 2019-2020 on internet social media, search engines and information, and news and opinion is based on interviews with 16,487 customers between July 2019 and June 2020. [Download the full report](#), and follow the ACSI on [LinkedIn](#) and Twitter at [@theACSI](#).



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About the ACSI

The [American Customer Satisfaction Index](http://www.theacsi.org) (ACSI®) has been a national economic indicator for 25 years. It measures and analyzes customer satisfaction with more than 400 companies in 46 industries and 10 economic sectors, including various services of federal and local government agencies. Reported on a scale of 0 to 100, scores are based on data from interviews with roughly 500,000 customers annually. For more information, visit www.theacsi.org.

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