



# Traffic, Engagement, and Loyalty Trends from 2019-2021

Looking back at global audience trends from the past three years to help you look ahead

Content strategies have had to evolve and adapt countless times over the past few years to account for swings in traffic and engagement. To help draw conclusions from the period as a whole and plan for the year ahead, we analyzed monthly traffic, engagement, and loyalty data from 2019, 2020, and 2021.

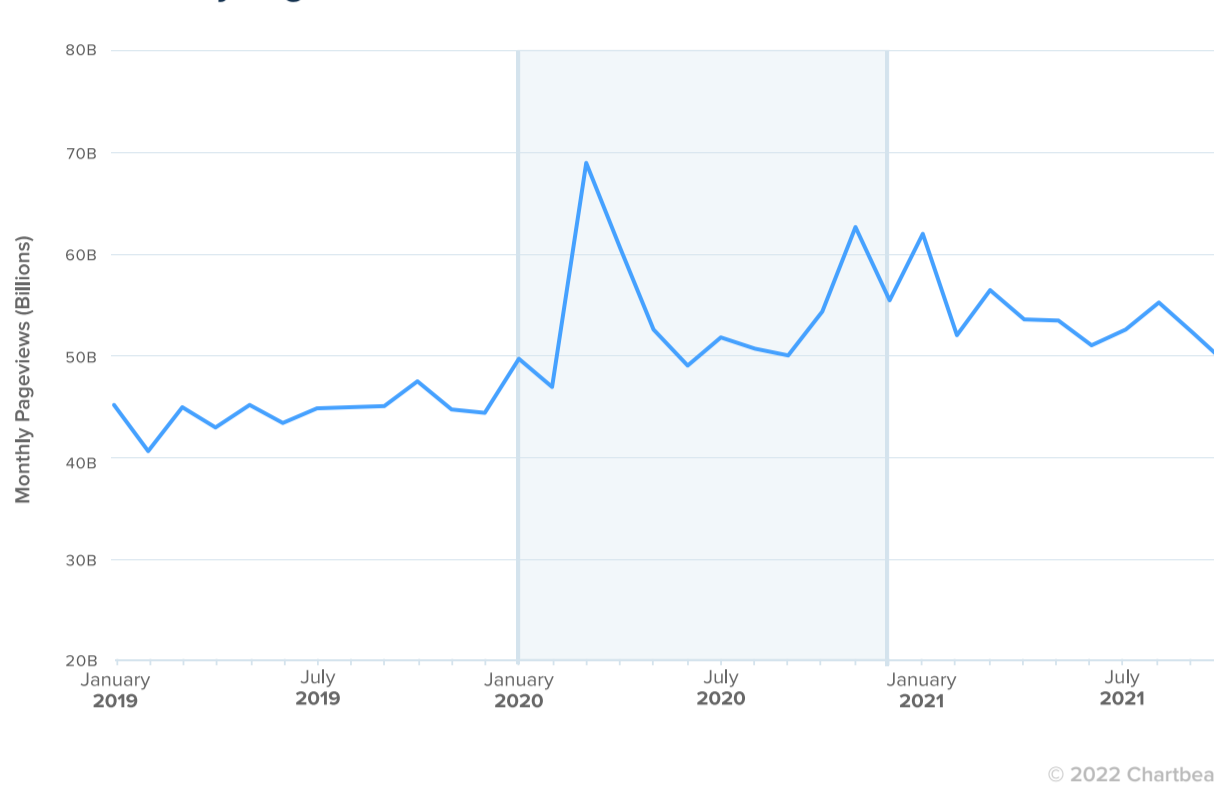
Where do we expect traffic and engagement to go in 2022 and beyond? Read on for 5 takeaways from our multi-year analysis.

## 1 Traffic was lower in 2021 compared to the year before, but it remains notably higher than 2019.

2020 saw massive spikes in both traffic and engagement with the outbreak of COVID-19 at the beginning of the year and the US presidential election at the end of the year. 2021 saw high traffic in January, but, as the year went on, it trended back toward the stability of 2019.

While there's always the possibility of more unforeseen global news like the war in Ukraine, we expect 2022 traffic to return even closer to the stability of 2019 while continuing to retain a portion of the bump from 2020.

Total Monthly Pageviews Across the Chartbeat Network

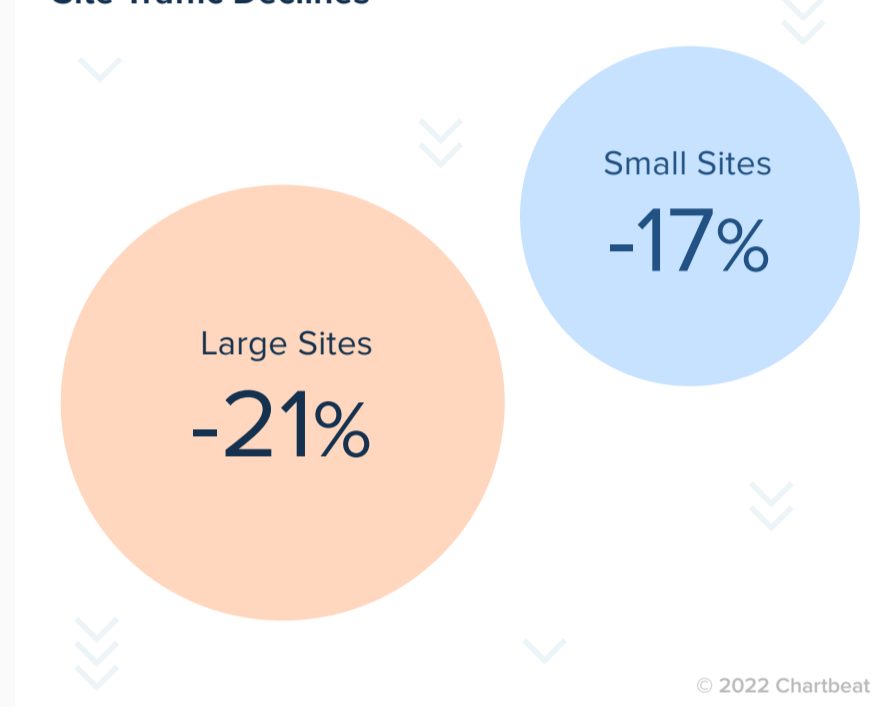


## 2 The largest sites in the world see higher engaged time, loyalty, and mobile readership, but also larger traffic declines.

For this analysis by site size, we created two groups. Any site that recorded more than 100,000 pageviews per day is considered a large site, and anything below that daily average is classified as a small site.

During this period, it's no surprise that large sites accounted for 98% of total traffic. What's interesting is that those sites also experienced a bigger decline in traffic. Large site pageviews fell 21% over the course of 2021, while small sites saw a 17% decrease. So while most of these global patterns are driven by larger sites, it's worth noting that there was more stability in the traffic of sites that register less than 100,000 daily pageviews.

Site Traffic Declines

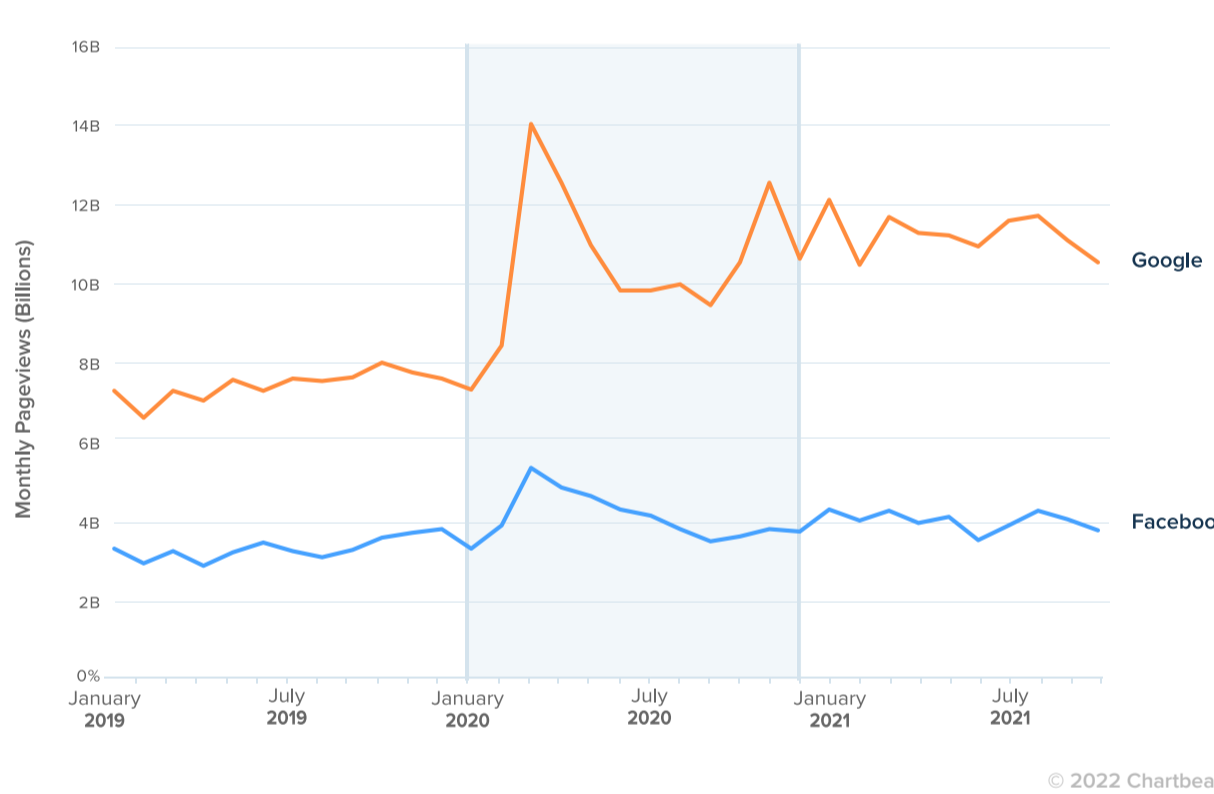


## 3 Search, particularly Google, is the largest external source of traffic and has been growing at a faster rate than other channels.

Search and Social have shown similar monthly traffic patterns since Q2 of 2020, but Search has been growing at a much faster pace. Within Search, Google is responsible for much of the growth, increasing by about 3.5% in 2021, and easily outpacing Facebook.

Across all three years, both Google and Facebook saw traffic increases (particularly in 2020), but average monthly pageviews from Google increased 51% while Facebook only saw a 21% increase. In addition to the difference in traffic, visitors from Google recorded an Average Engaged Time of 41.7 seconds while visitors from Facebook only engaged with content for 34.9 seconds.

Monthly Traffic from Google and Facebook

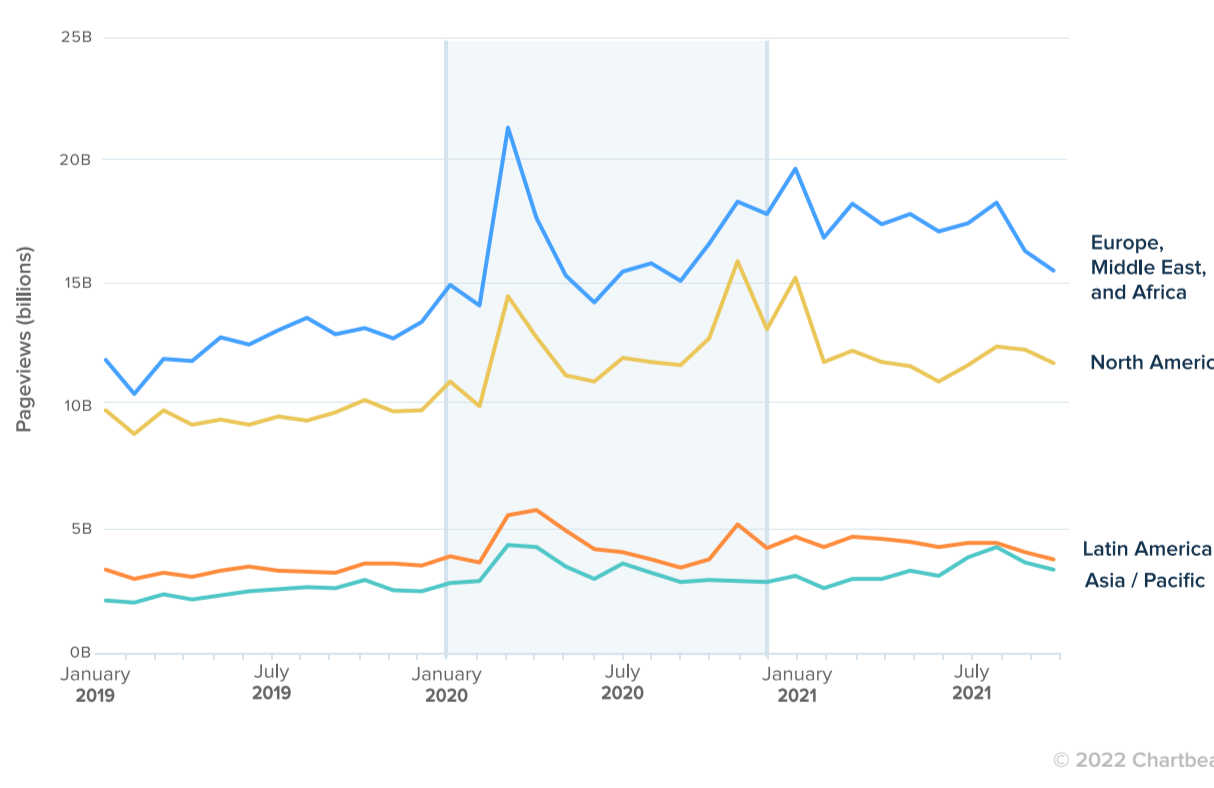


## 4 Readers continue to shift their behaviors toward mobile.

Mobile readership has steadily increased since 2013, even with more people working from home in 2020 and 2021. This indicates a long-term, organic device shift, and if you're not already optimizing for mobile visitors, it's past time to personalize the reader journey for around 70% of the visitors you'll see in 2022.

When we analyzed monthly mobile pageviews during this period, we observed different growth patterns by region. From 2019-2021, Europe, Middle East, and Africa saw the most overall growth with a gain of 33%, and North America saw the least growth at 27%. We expect to see continued mobile adoption across the world in 2022.

Monthly Mobile Pageviews by Region



## 5 Growth in both Direct and Loyal traffic indicates a deeper habit with individual sites.

Since the second half of 2020, loyal traffic has been rising steadily as a proportion of overall traffic, and from 2019-2021, loyal readers, though smaller in actual number, contributed the highest percentage of traffic at around 40%.

By region, we also saw year over year increases in the percentage of traffic from loyal readers. In places like Asia / Pacific and Latin America, we saw a slight rise in the percentage of pageviews from loyal readers and a corresponding decline in pageviews from returning readers, signaling a shift towards greater loyalty.

Percentage of Monthly Pageviews by Loyalty

