

The 2026 GB Agency

# social media report



Key trends, platform data & strategic insights for marketers

## DEMOGRAPHICS & USAGE

# who's on social & for how long



**Global scale:** 5.66 billion social media users worldwide — 68% of the world population — with 4.87% annual growth.

**Time spent:** Average daily usage is 2 hours 40 minutes globally. Latin American users lead at 3+ hours per day.

**Platform spread:** Users engage across an average of 6.75 platforms per month, but active engagement remains concentrated on 3–4.

**Fastest growth:** Adults aged 55+ are the fastest-growing demographic across all major platforms. Gen Z leads time-on-app via TikTok and Instagram.

**Gen Z platforms:** YouTube (91%), Instagram (86%), TikTok (79%), and Facebook (77%) are all active — but TikTok and Instagram dominate attention.

# What people are watching, making & trusting

|           |                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|-----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| #1 format | <b>Short-form video</b><br>Reels, Shorts & TikToks dominate every major feed. Platforms now support up to 10–20 min, blending short and long-form in the same strategy.                                 |
| 3.2×      | <b>Authenticity premium</b><br>UGC and 'raw' content still outperforms polished brand production. AI-generated content is increasingly detected — 46% of users are not comfortable with AI influencers. |
| 87%       | <b>AI in creator workflows</b><br>of creators now use AI tools for editing, captions, and ideation. AI-augmented (not AI-generated) content shows no measurable trust penalty.                          |
| 41%       | <b>Social as search engine</b><br>of Gen Z turns to social media first when searching for information. Google now indexes public Instagram content and short-form video.                                |

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

# AI & social media

|                                                                                              |                                                                                                |                                                                                                  |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  Google AI |              |              |
|  Claude   |  Meta AI    |  Midjourney |
|  NovelAI  |  perplexity |  Lovable    |

**AI in creator workflows:** 87% of creators now use AI tools for editing, captions, and ideation — up from a minority just two years ago. Teams using AI produce more content, faster, and at lower cost.

**Authenticity backlash:** 46% of users are not comfortable with AI influencers. Fully AI-generated content faces growing skepticism, while AI-augmented content (human voice, AI-assisted) shows no measurable trust penalty.

**AI content detection:** Audiences are becoming skilled at identifying synthetic content and tuning it out. The defining creative question of 2026–2027 is the distinction between AI-generated and AI-augmented.

**AI-powered discovery:** Platforms are deploying AI to personalize feeds, recommend creators, and power social search. 41% of Gen Z now uses social media as their primary search engine.

**Brand strategy:** 94% of marketers are using AI for ideation, content variants, and optimization. Best practice: use AI for speed and scale, but keep the human voice and strategy at the center.

# Where content meets commerce

**\$1.09T**

social commerce market size in 2026 — 78% of purchases happen without leaving the platform

**\$5.78**

average return per \$1 spent on influencer marketing

**\$234B+**

total creator economy value in 2026, up from \$191.55B in 2025

## Nano-influencer era

- 75.9% of Instagram influencers are nano-tier (1K–10K followers)
- 10.3% avg engagement rate on TikTok for nano-creators
- 50%+ higher engagement vs. micro-influencers
- 92% of consumers trust nano-influencer recommendations over ads
- 73% of brands now prefer micro/mid-tier creators for cost & trust

# Where to play — and how to win

## Instagram

7% YoY growth. Reels dominate reach. 57% of brands prefer it for influencer spend.

## TikTok

Fastest growing for time-on-app. Shop adoption doubled YoY. Nano-creators see 10.3% engagement.

## YouTube

Shorts: 70B+ daily views. 68% of marketing leaders say it drives most business impact.

## LinkedIn

Content consumption up 28%. Video exploding. B2B and non-professional content both growing.

## Facebook

3.07B monthly users. #1 for product discovery (39%) and social customer service (45%).

## Threads / X

Threads: 400M+ monthly users as X alternative. X still strong for news (65% primary use case).

🔑 Key takeaway: Organic reach now averages 2.7%. Brands with dedicated community management see 3.7× higher engagement. Social ad spend hits \$276B in 2026 — but CPMs are up 18% YoY.

# Questions?

— We would be delighted to share more insight.

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