

# Beyond the Feed:

## Adapting to the Modern Social Playbook





# Social isn't just a feed.

## It's your brand's digital footprint.

Today's most successful brands aren't just posting; they are omnipresent. Brands need to show up everywhere their audience spends time, across platforms, formats, creators and comment sections to remain top-of-mind and compete in this emerging attention economy.

Follower counts don't matter like they used to. Today, shareability and reach are stronger indicators of brand impact. This report outlines what is important on social media right now and how brands need to rethink their measures of success to keep up.

From the rise of social entertainment and the infinite scroll, to the shift toward shareable content, creator partnerships and personal messaging, these are the trends redefining what effective brand building looks like in 2025.

**The playbook has changed. This is your guide to keeping up.**

URBAN OUTFITTERS *ADWEEK*

"The era of the follower is dead, right now — we are living in the time of the algorithm. Creators help us be in the algorithm, not just in the platform."



Cyntia Leo,  
Head of Brand Marketing and Communications  
at Urban Outfitters

Based on the conversation with Dash Social at [AdWeek 2025](#).

# What's Inside

## **Trend 1 Entertainment Drives Explosive Reach on TikTok and Instagram**

Discover how high-entertainment posts earn up to 4.5x more reach on TikTok and 13x on Instagram with Rhode and Bubble leading the charge.

## **Trend 2 As Follower Growth Slows, Shares Emerge as a Key KPI**

Learn why shares now outpace follower gains and how One/Size and Taco Bell turn relevance into record share rates.

## **Trend 3 DMs Are the Front Line of Brand Trust**

See why quick replies in DMs, not public comments, win loyalty and how Loop Earplugs keeps response rates above 95%.

## **Trend 4 Creators Power Brand Strategy With 6x More Engagement**

Find out how creator content sparks more engagement than brand posts and fuels measurable gains for partners like Breeze Airways.

## **Trend 5 Predictive AI is Key for Content Optimization**

Explore how AI ranked content lifts engagement while cutting creative waste by identifying content most likely to succeed before it's posted.

Trend 1

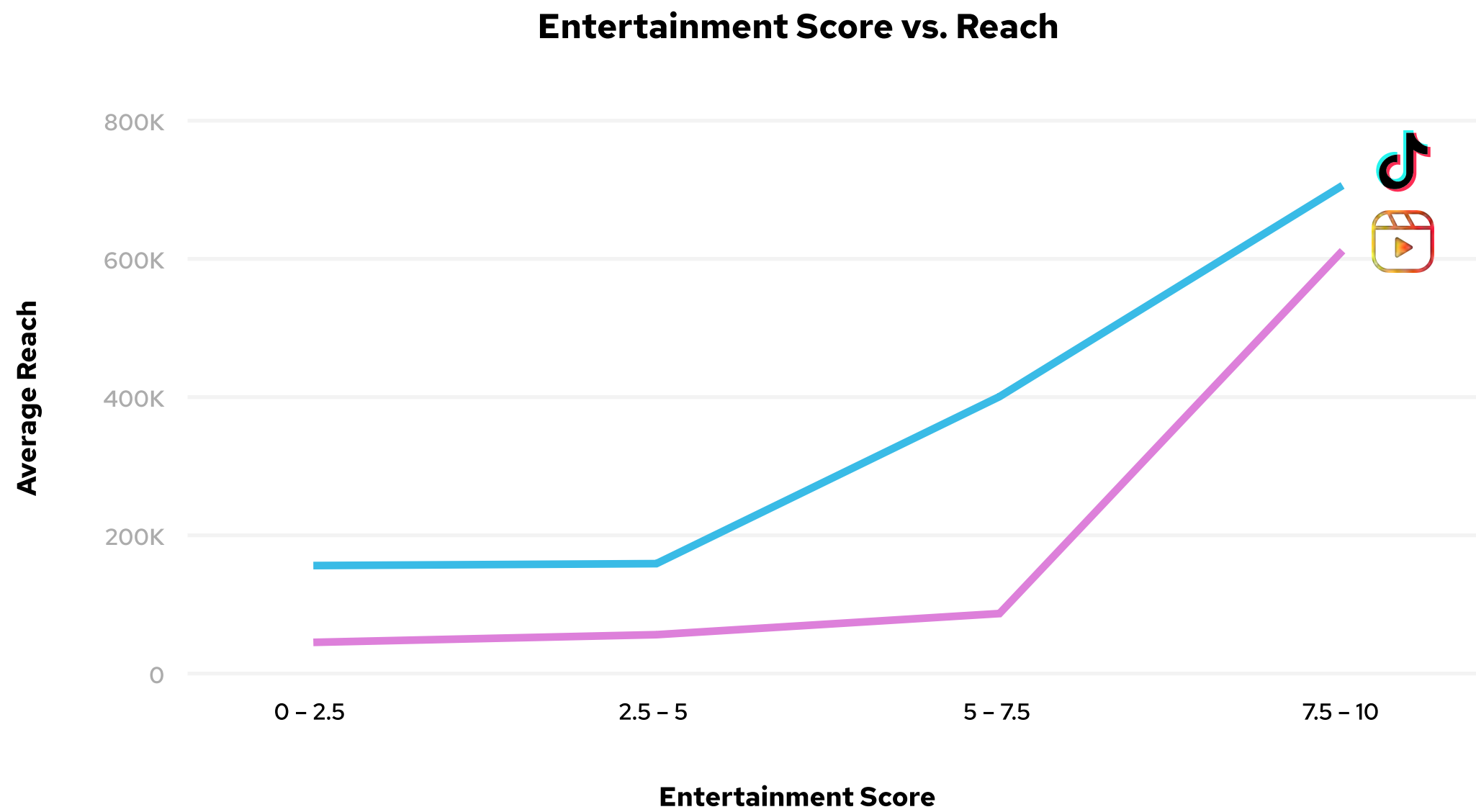
# Entertainment Drives Explosive Reach on TikTok and Instagram

Posting for the sake of posting is over. To stand out, content needs to captivate quickly and hold attention long enough to spark shares, saves and repeat views.

Dash Social’s proprietary Entertainment Score, measured on a 10-point scale, helps brands measure how much of an impact their content really makes. The data shows that content scoring 7.5 or higher on the scale performs significantly better on TikTok and Instagram, reaching wider audiences.

## Entertaining Content Wins the Algorithm

Posts with a 7.5+ Entertainment Score reached 4.5x more people on TikTok and 13x more on Instagram.




**Methodology**  
For this analysis, we evaluated Reels (n=276K) and TikTok videos (n=264K) posted between June 1, 2024 and June 1, 2025, using the Entertainment Score. Each post was grouped into one of four score buckets (0-2.5, 2.5-5, 5-7.5, 7.5-10). We then calculated the average reach for each bucket.



# Leading Brands in Social Entertainment

rhode

 **8.2** Entertainment Score on Instagram vs. 4.5 industry average


In May 2025, e.l.f. Beauty announced its acquisition of Rhode in a deal valued at up to \$1 billion. Rhode’s three-year rise reflects the modern social playbook: create content that aligns with how people browse and share, fuel community through creators and optimize for discovery in the scroll.



BUBBLE  
SKINCARE

 **6.5** Entertainment Score on TikTok vs. 2.6 industry average

“Bubble’s industry-leading Entertainment Score isn’t just a vanity metric – it reflects our unparalleled ability to connect because we deeply understand our community’s lives, needs and modes of self-expression well beyond effective, affordable skincare. By refusing to chase fleeting trends and staying rooted in our authentic, joyful identity, we’ve built a community-first brand that drives meaningful engagement, unwavering loyalty and tangible business results.”



Aubrey Bohn,  
Senior Director, Brand Marketing



Trend 2

# As Follower Growth Slows, Shares Emerge as a Key KPI

Many brands are seeing follower growth plateau as audiences engage with content and participate in communities without the need to follow. The brands leading in share rate, like ONE/SIZE (6.8%) on Instagram or Huda Beauty (1.4%) on TikTok, are tapping into content that feels highly relevant and worth sending to peers.

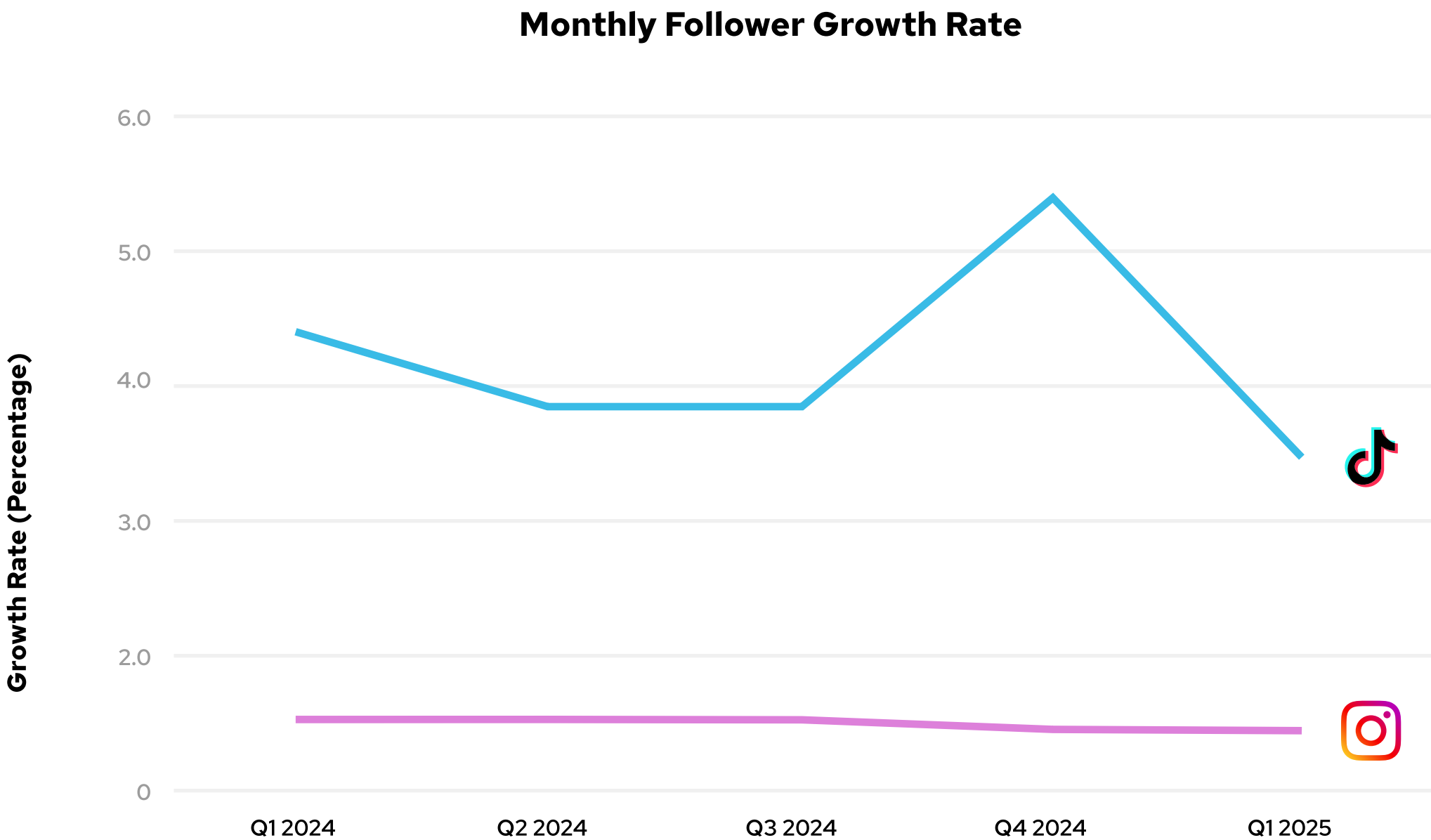
Methodology

For this analysis, we examined the average number of shares and the average growth rate brands experienced on TikTok and Instagram since Q1 2024. The dataset includes over 900 TikTok brands and 2,800 Instagram brands.

Additionally, we analyzed share rate among a sample of Dash Social customers (n1,300) using data based on content from June 1, 2024, to June 1, 2025.

## Monthly Follower Growth Rate Has Plateaued

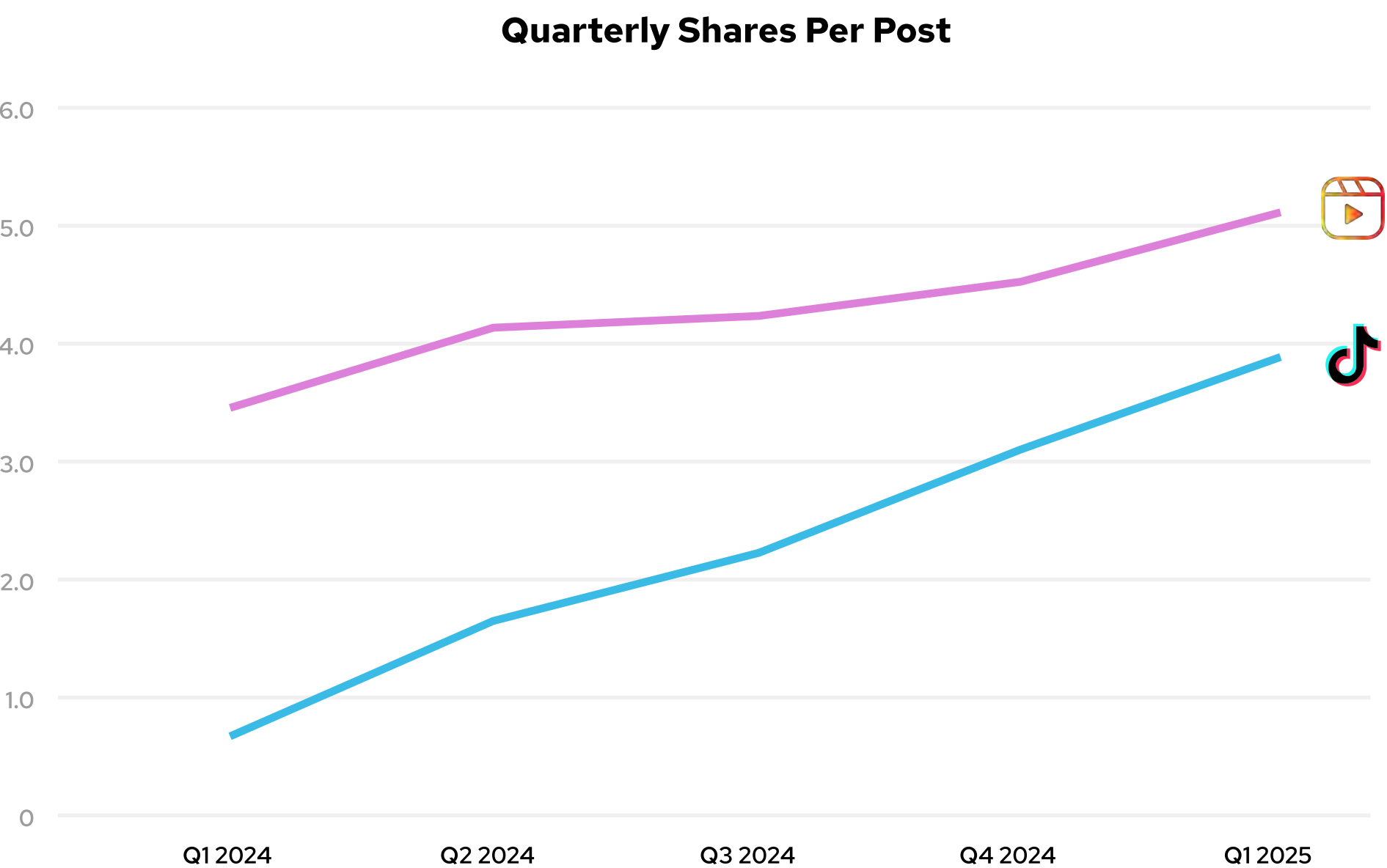
Compared to a year ago, average monthly follower growth has dropped 27% on TikTok and 14% on Instagram.




\*Measured as Q1 2024 vs Q1 2025

# Brand Content Is Being Shared More

On average, shares have increased quarterly by 60% on TikTok and 10% on Instagram Reels, reflecting the ongoing trend of brand content being shared more by audiences.



**1.5%** share rate vs. 0.3% industry average

**“We believe the highest compliment someone can pay your brand is to talk about it or share it. We design our content using our comment section as the brief so that our community feels seen and enticed to share something hyper relevant and reflective of them.”**



Christina Massari,  
Brand Social Lead, Taco Bell



ONE / SIZE

 **6.8%** share rate vs. 0.3% industry average

“As social platforms evolve, shares have become one of the clearest signals of what truly resonates. We’ve shifted our approach to prioritize content that sparks connection, the kind people feel compelled to pass along. **Follower growth still matters, but shareability is now our leading indicator of emotional impact.** Our team focuses on creating moments that feel personal and relatable, always asking: would someone send this to a friend, and what specific feeling would trigger that share?”



Julia Cornell,  
Social Media Director, ONE/SIZE

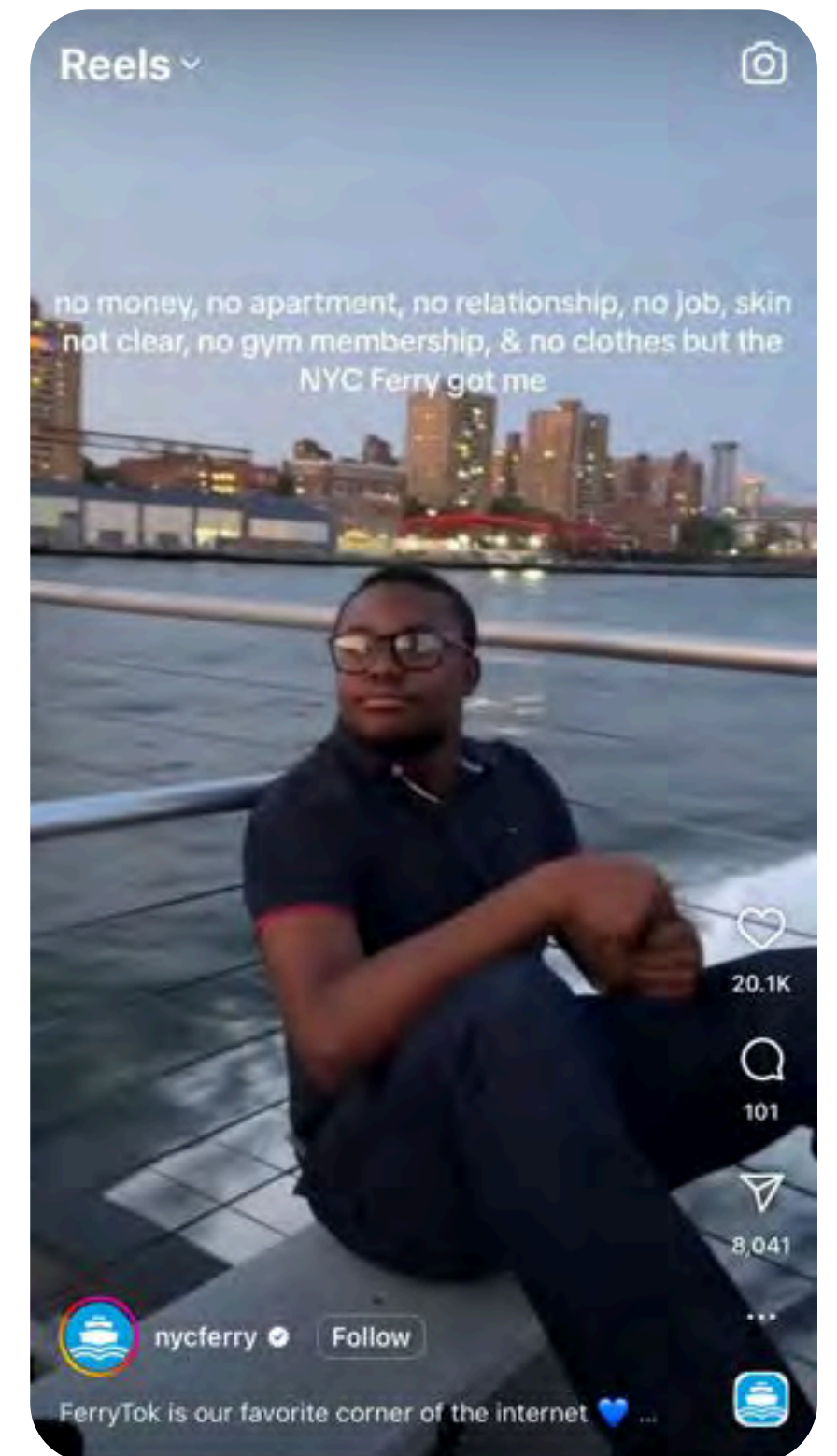


 **1.1%** share rate vs. 0.3% industry average

“Shares are the starting point towards moving your other metrics upward – because more shares mean more reach, channel growth and broadened awareness. Shares are also an important tool towards understanding how your message is resonating. However, above all, it’s important to remain authentic: know what you’re going to say, avoid ambiguity, and stand wholeheartedly behind it as if no one was sharing it.”



Franky Ponce,  
Sr. Creative Strategist & Social Media  
Manager, NYC Ferry





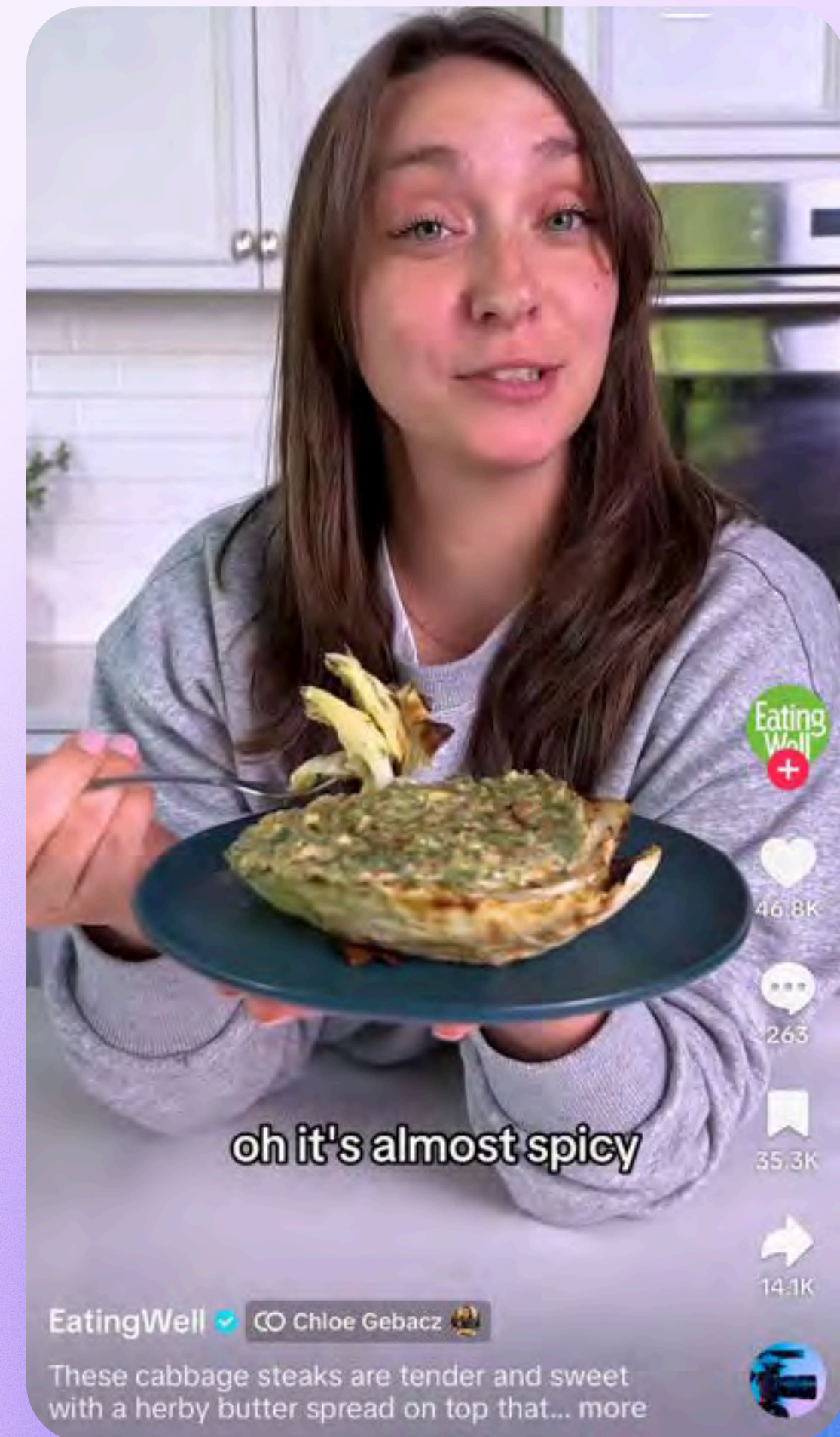
# EatingWell

 **0.7%** share rate vs. 0.2% industry average

"Our TikTok strategy is built around what truly resonates with our audience — simple, veggie-forward recipes that are easy to share and spark everyday inspiration. Instead of planning content months ahead, we take a responsive, audience-driven approach — developing ideas weekly based on what's trending and performing well. **It's a process that works because it combines real-time insights with engaging, high-quality video production.**"



Sophie Johnson,  
Associate Social Media Director, EatingWell





Trend 3

# DMs Are the Front Line of Brand Trust

DMs are evolving beyond a service channel into a new layer of connection where brands build one-to-one trust. As private sharing grows across social, DMs create a personal touchpoint that complements the public role of comments, which drive broader conversations and community building.

## loop earplugs

**Loop Earplugs replies to 95% of DMs on Instagram.**

“For many people, DM’ing feels more natural than sending an email. The back-end is just as important as our feed. We know this is where trust is built and where we can win hearts and fix problems at the same time.”

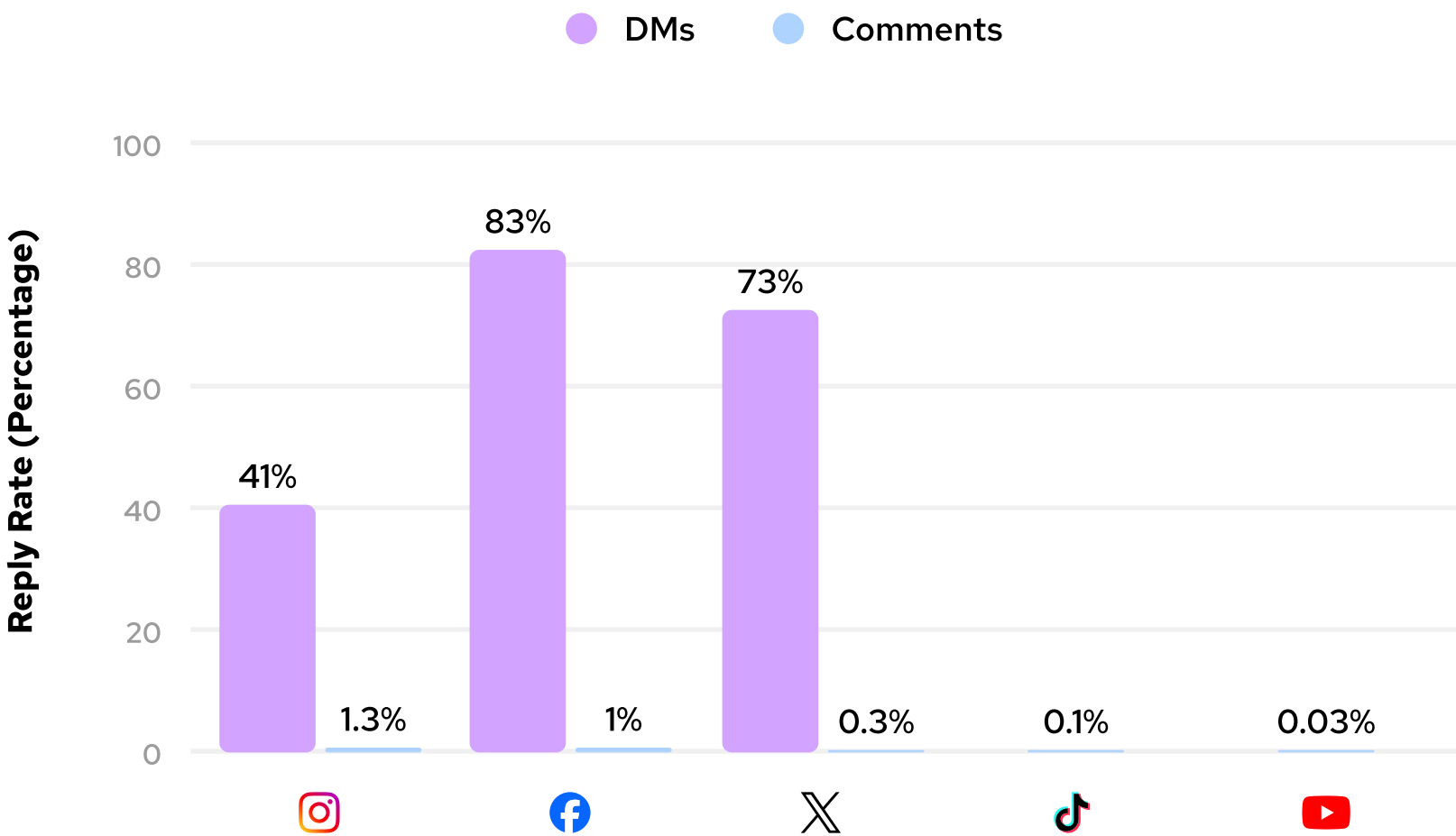


Monica Ho,  
Senior Social Media Specialist, Loop Earplugs



Facebook and Instagram DMs have reply rates of 83% and 41% respectively.

Average Reply Rate by Platform



\*Access to DMs and comments is limited by API restrictions.

Methodology

This analysis examines a sample of 1,253 Dash Social customers to determine the average reply rate of messages, including Comments, Ad Comments, Mentions, Direct Messages, Quote Posts and Reposts. Channels include TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, Pinterest and YouTube. The time frame for this analysis was June 1, 2024 to June 1, 2025.



Trend 4

# Creators Power Brand Strategy With 6x More Engagement

The numbers underline a simple truth: there is no social without creators. Their content sparks more interaction, helping brands that leverage creators in distribution stay visible in algorithms that prioritize engagement. As social platforms double down on participation, creators give brands a faster way to build relevance, reach and community.

**Creators drive 6x higher engagement than brands on Instagram and 3x more video views on TikTok.**



“Creators are an essential extension of our marketing strategy. They are able to showcase our premium experience in ways that are authentic and help Guests feel the Breeze difference. We've successfully seen a 96% increase in TikTok reach and a 162% rise in Instagram impressions since working with creators, and are excited to continue this growth and momentum with this strategy.”



James Bleyeu,  
Partnerships and Content Senior Manager  
at Breeze Airways



# Creator and Brand Performance

## Creator Content Lifts Engagement

Creator posts earn higher engagement, giving brand partners clear momentum.

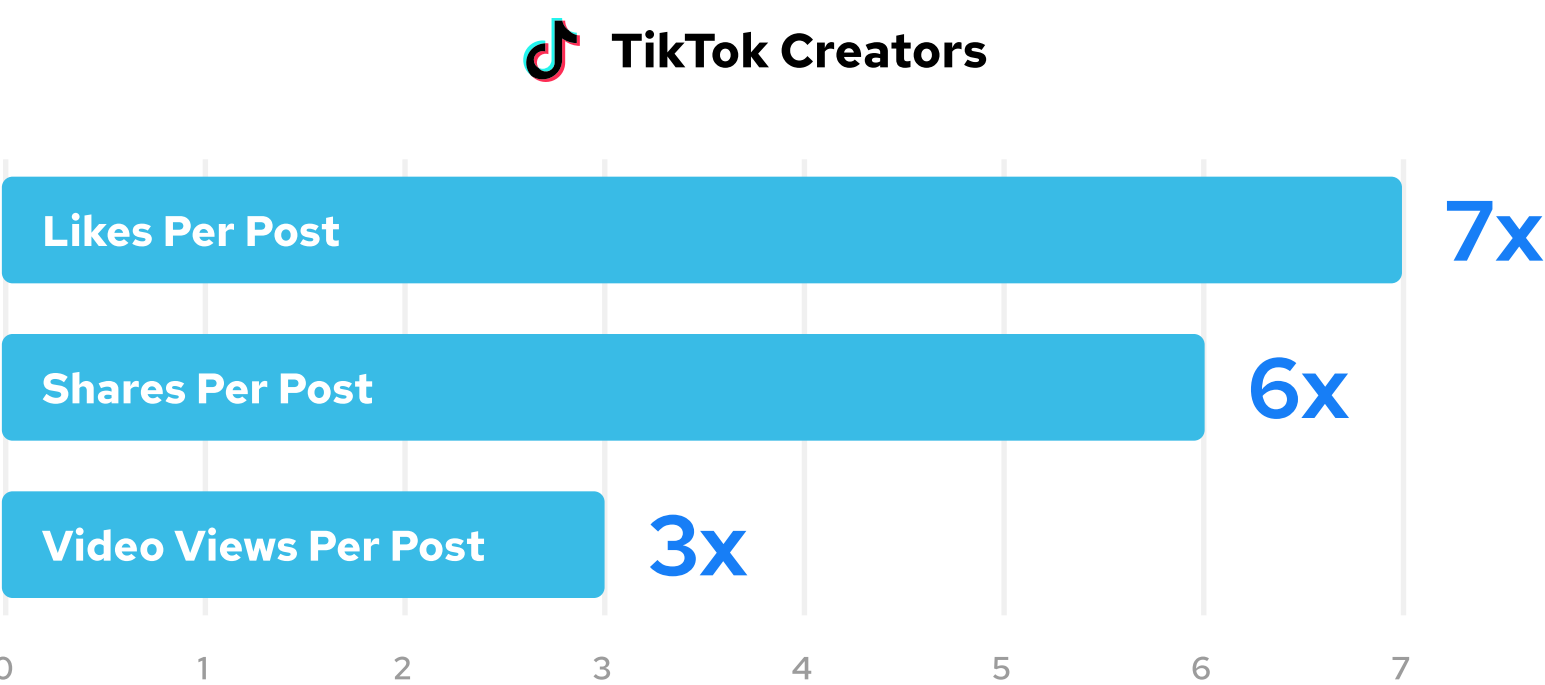
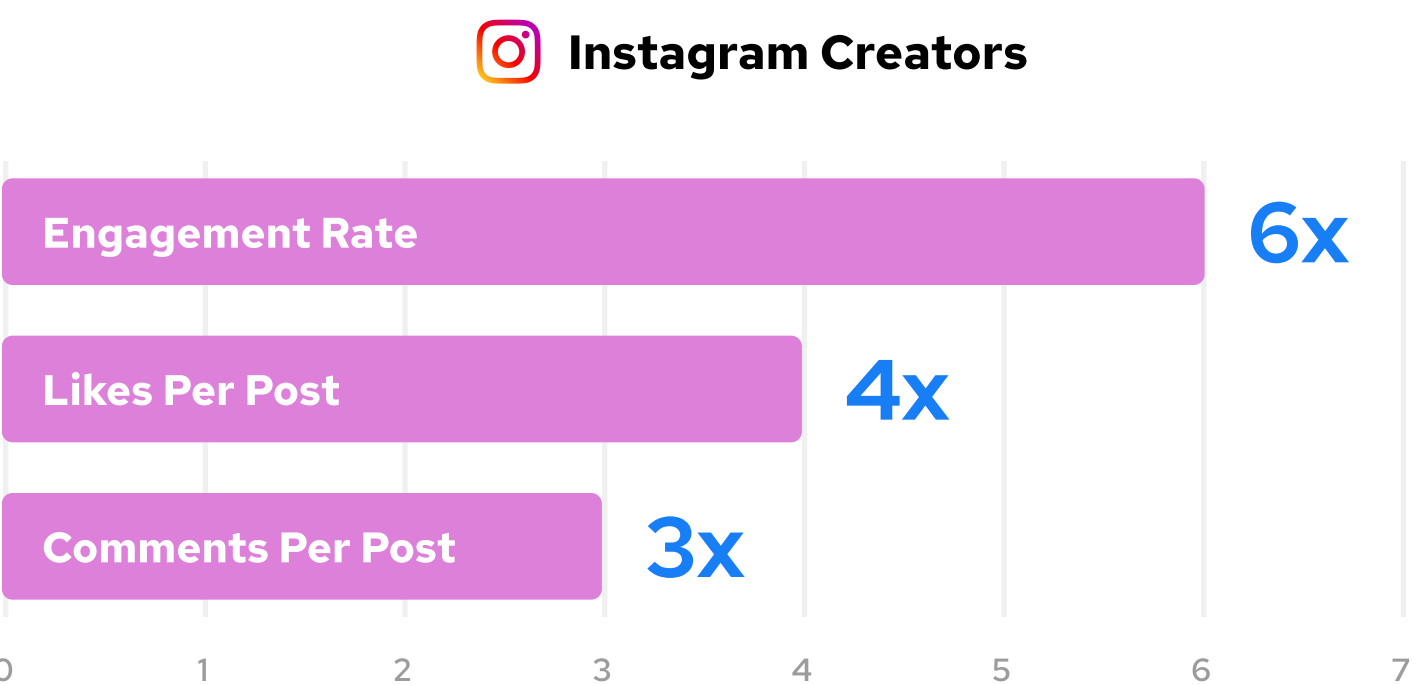
## Authentic Voices Spark Deeper Community Interaction

Creators generate more comments and shares per post, turning content into conversation and signaling stronger community connection.

## Higher Views and Shares Amplify Discovery

With higher video views and share rates, creators outperform brands in feed visibility and discovery.

## Average Performance of Creators' Feed vs. Brand Feed





# Creator Benchmarks

## TikTok Creators Drive Higher Engagement

TikTok’s audience is more responsive to native creator content, while Instagram creators receive more comments on average.

## Engagement Rates Drop as Follower Count Increases

Smaller creators drive higher engagement rates than larger creators, making them strong partners for brands focused on building authenticity and trust.

## Reach and EMV Scale Exponentially with Creator Size

Larger creators bring scale, exposure and commercial value; lower engagement is the trade-off for substantial brand awareness.

# Average Creator Performance Per Post

### Instagram Creators

	Engagement Rate <small>(Likes+Comments)/ Followers</small>	EMV	Likes	Comments
Nano (1K-10K)	3.8%	\$691	177	18
Micro (10K-100K)	2.4%	\$2.1K	964	38
Macro (100K-1M)	1.6%	\$9.9K	5.4K	124
Mega (1M+)	1.7%	\$149.4K	95.4K	1K

### TikTok Creators

	Engagement Rate <small>(Likes+Comments)/ Followers</small>	EMV	Video Views	Shares	Likes	Comments
Nano (1K-10K)	12.5%	\$1.1K	25.8K	43	523	11
Micro (10K-100K)	8.5%	\$5.6K	67.9K	312	3.5K	30
Macro (100K-1M)	4.5%	\$23.6K	251K	792	15.1K	81
Mega (1M+)	2.7%	\$288.8K	2.1M	6.1K	163.5K	1K

#### Methodology

This analysis compares the average performance of creators and brands on TikTok and Instagram between June 1, 2024, and June 1, 2025. It includes 1,968 TikTok creators, 1,322 Instagram creators, 900 TikTok brands, and 1,302 Instagram brands. The sample spans a range of industries and follower sizes, from 1,000 to over 1 million.

Trend 5

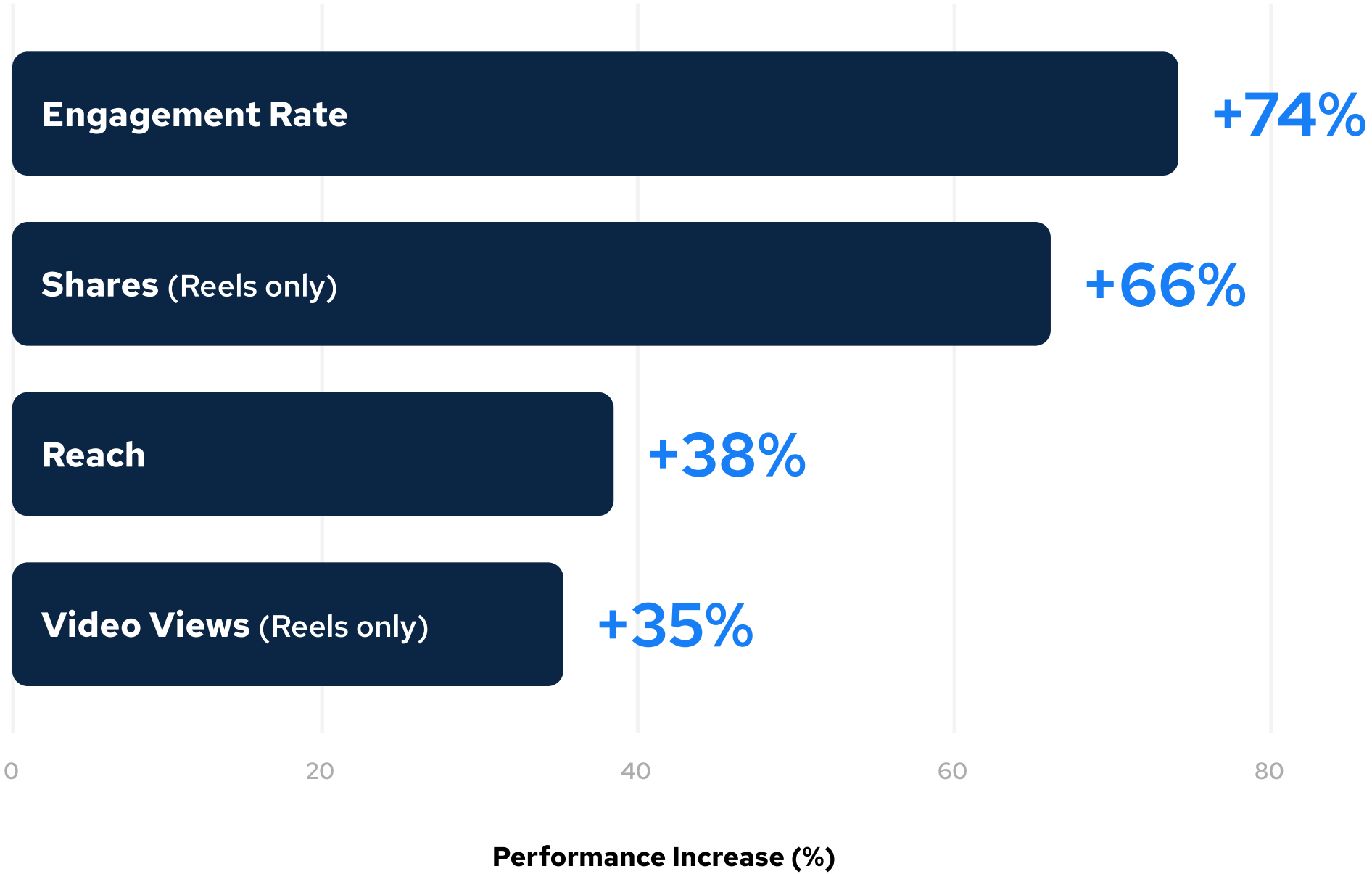
# Predictive AI is Key for Content Optimization

As content demands grow, marketers are looking for practical, brand-safe ways to apply AI in workflows. Predictive analytics tools blend brand-led creative with performance predictions, giving teams a clearer view of what’s likely to resonate. Data shows that content ranked highly by Vision AI consistently outperforms lower-ranked content.

Methodology

We analyzed brands’ owned in-feed Instagram content posted in 2024-2025 (between June 1, 2024 and June 1, 2025). We calculated the median engagement rate, video views, reach and shares for top-predicted performers and low-predicted performers.

## How Vision Top-Predicted Content Performs Compared to Low-Predicted



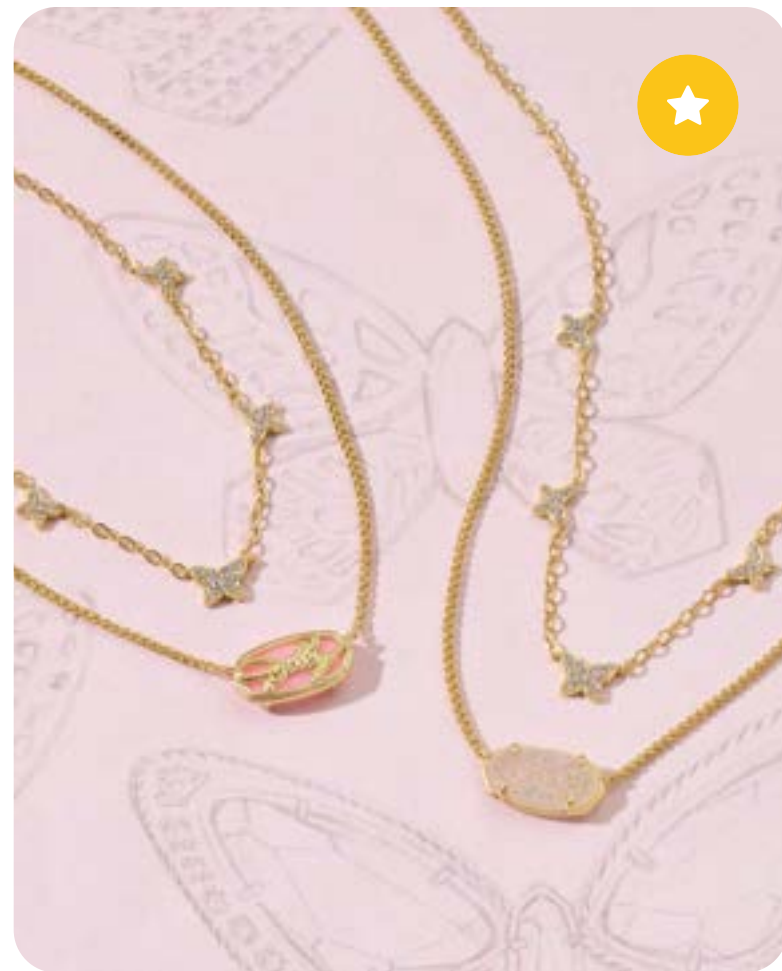


# Vision AI Identifies What Works for Your Audience



Vision AI's top-predicted content earns **85%** more shares.

Top-Predicted



Low-Predicted



## COTTON:ON

Vision AI's top-predicted content earns **51%** higher reach

Top-Predicted



Low-Predicted





# Conclusion

Social is your brand's digital footprint, so every post has to work hard to stand out. Entertaining, share-worthy content reaches the farthest, and follower count doesn't matter as much anymore. Follow this new playbook to stay visible and ready to take on the algorithm.

## Key Takeaways

- Brands prioritizing entertainment see the most success.
- Follower growth has plateaued, while audiences are sharing more content than ever.
- DMs are the priority channel for one-to-one engagement from brands.
- Creators generate the engagement brands count on to stay visible.
- Brands are using AI to make better decisions and earn higher engagement.





# Outsmart Social

A social media management platform built for how social works today – uniting your full footprint across owned, creator, and paid with real-time intelligence and streamlined workflows.

- ✓ Always know your best move
- ✓ Performance you can prove
- ✓ Work smarter, scale faster

Get a Demo

