



2026 REPORT

Social media benchmarks

The definitive overview of how brands are using social media today, based on Emplifi's exclusive data





INTRODUCTION

Social media benchmarks 2026: Key insights and strategies for your brand

Social media is entering 2026 with sharper divides between platforms than ever before. Audience growth, engagement behaviors, and paid performance are no longer moving in sync, forcing brands to rethink where and how they show up. TikTok continues to accelerate, with rapid follower growth and an algorithm that pushes content far beyond existing audiences. Instagram remains a key channel, but its engagement mix is shifting as shares emerge as the strongest signal of reach. Meanwhile, Meta platforms retain scale and stability, while X sees minimal growth and declining advertiser focus.

These changes highlight a simple truth: success now depends on understanding the unique dynamics of each network. This report brings those differences into focus, offering clear benchmarks on platform growth, content performance, and paid trends. With these insights, brands can prioritize the channels, formats, and investments that will matter most in 2026, and navigate a landscape where strategic clarity is increasingly essential.





What you will find in this report

This report highlights some of the most interesting and impactful findings from our examination of exclusive internal data from Emplifi's thousands of clients, and offers actionable strategic guidance for brands based upon this information.

Methodology

This report is based on an extensive analysis of brand activity across major social media platforms in Jan 01, 2025 - December 31, 2025. The dataset includes content and performance data from 200,737 Facebook, 87,154 Instagram, 16,879 X (formerly Twitter), 3,050 TikTok, 19,627 YouTube, and 3,035 LinkedIn profiles.

Coverage varies by platform depending on data availability and account activity. As a result, some charts reflect a smaller sample size.



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FOLLOWER GROWTH

Platform growth and momentum: TikTok leads in growth, Facebook and Instagram lead in scale

Year-over-year follower data reveals a clear split between platforms driving rapid growth momentum and those delivering established, predictable scale. TikTok stands out as the fastest-growing platform, with median brand follower counts increasing by over 200% year-over-year, reflecting strong discovery dynamics and accelerating brand visibility — particularly among younger, creator-driven audiences.

- Facebook and Instagram continue to anchor overall audience scale for brands. Instagram shows steady, mid-single-digit median follower growth, while Facebook remains largely flat, reinforcing both platforms' roles as reliable reach drivers rather than primary growth accelerators.
- LinkedIn demonstrates strong, targeted growth, with double-digit median follower gains aligned to professional, employer branding, and thought leadership use cases.
- YouTube posts moderate, consistent growth, supporting its role in long-form content and sustained audience building.
- By contrast, X (formerly Twitter) shows flat to slightly negative median follower growth, suggesting its greatest value lies in real-time engagement, conversation, and specific tactical use cases rather than broad audience expansion.

Strategic implications for social media leaders

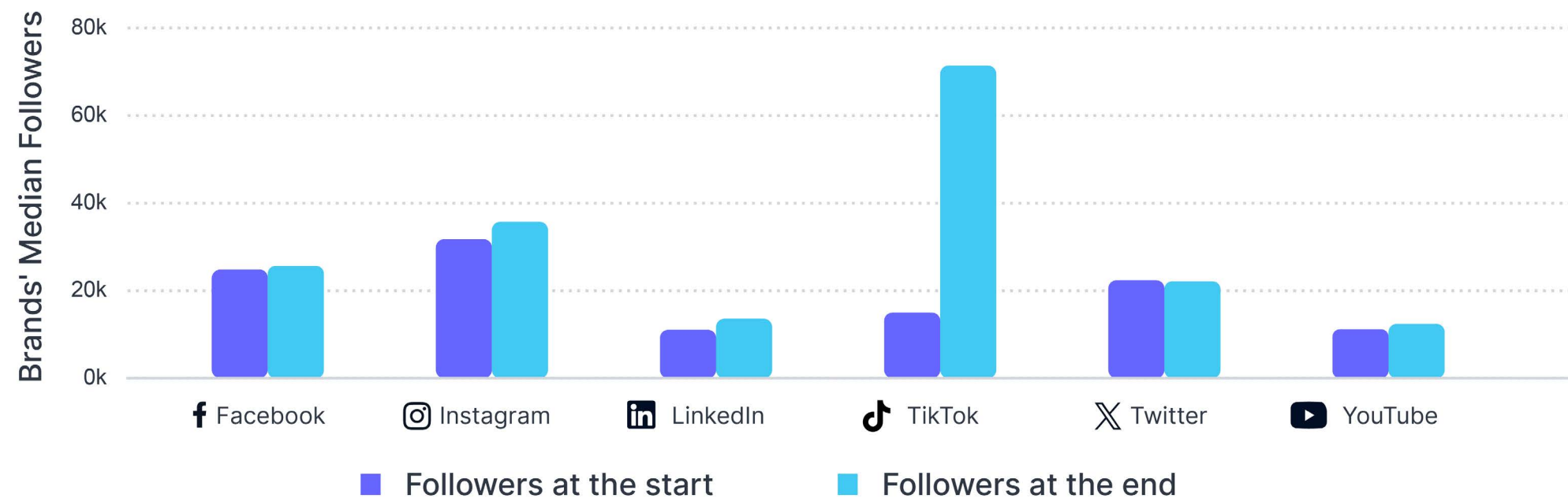
- **Maintain Facebook & Instagram for scale:** They remain essential for consistent, predictable reach.
- **Increase investment in TikTok for growth when targeting younger audiences:** Its momentum delivers the highest upside for brands that commit to short-form, creator-led strategies.
- **Use LinkedIn and YouTube selectively:** Best suited for specific objectives like thought leadership, B2B marketing, employer branding, and long-form engagement.
- **Clarify X's strategic role:** Flat follower growth suggests X delivers the most value when used for real-time engagement, conversation, and specific use cases rather than broad reach.



FOLLOWER GROWTH

Brand followers change in 2025 (by platform)

Only active brands included

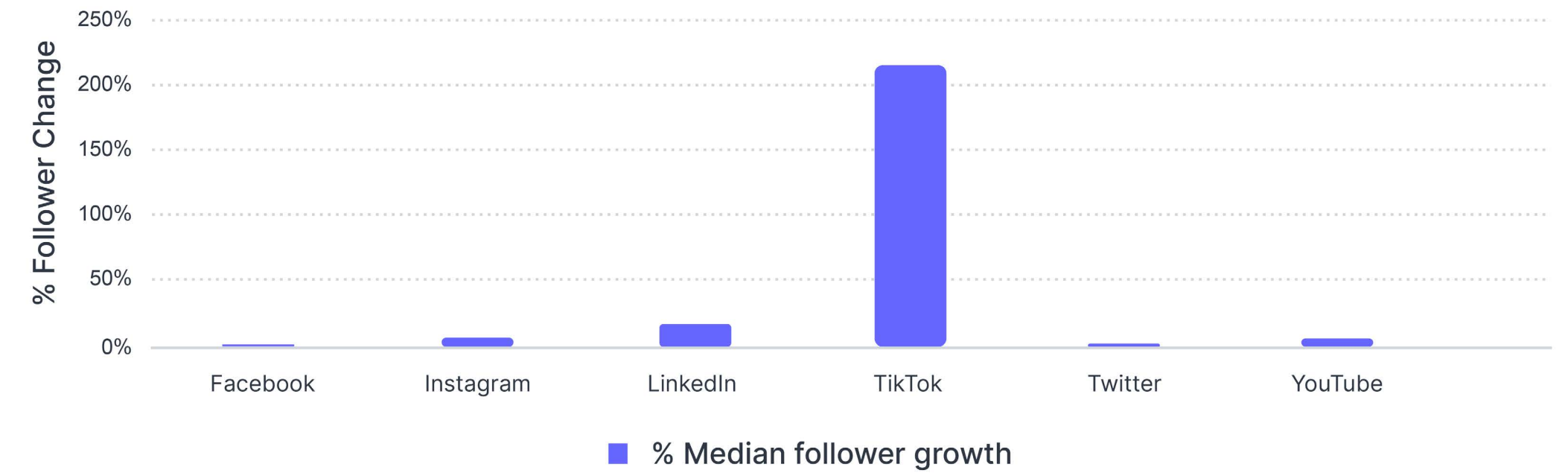


Source: Emplifi data
Date Range: 01 January 2025 - 31 December 2025
Sample: 19627 YouTube, 3050 TikTok, 84167 Instagram, 15948 Twitter, 3035 LinkedIn, 167595 Facebook Profiles



Brand median follower change in 2025 (by platform)

Only active brands included



Source: Emplifi data
Date Range: 01 January 2025 - 31 December 2025
Sample: 19627 YouTube, 3050 TikTok, 84167 Instagram, 15948 Twitter, 3035 LinkedIn, 167595 Facebook Profiles





ENGAGEMENT ACROSS PLATFORMS

Engagement across platforms: TikTok leads as platform engagement dynamics shift

Across 2024 and into early 2025, TikTok delivered the highest median engagement rates worldwide, consistently outperforming other platforms. Engagement remained strong throughout 2024, ranging from 32% in Q1 2024 to 30.2% in Q3 2024, before climbing to a peak of 35.9% in Q3 2025. While engagement eased to 27.6% in Q4 2025, TikTok continued to lead in overall engagement rate performance.

By comparison, Instagram saw a gradual decline in median engagement rates, decreasing from 16.9% in Q1 2024 to 9.7% by Q4 2025. Facebook engagement remained relatively stable over time, with median rates consistently ranging between 1.4% and 2.4% across quarters, reflecting steady audience interaction levels throughout the period.

As audiences scale, TikTok outperforms all other platforms

While engagement grows with audience size across platforms, TikTok gains compound far more quickly. At the large-brand level, TikTok generates more than twice the median interactions of Instagram and over 20x those of Facebook, underscoring its unique ability to convert scale into meaningful engagement.

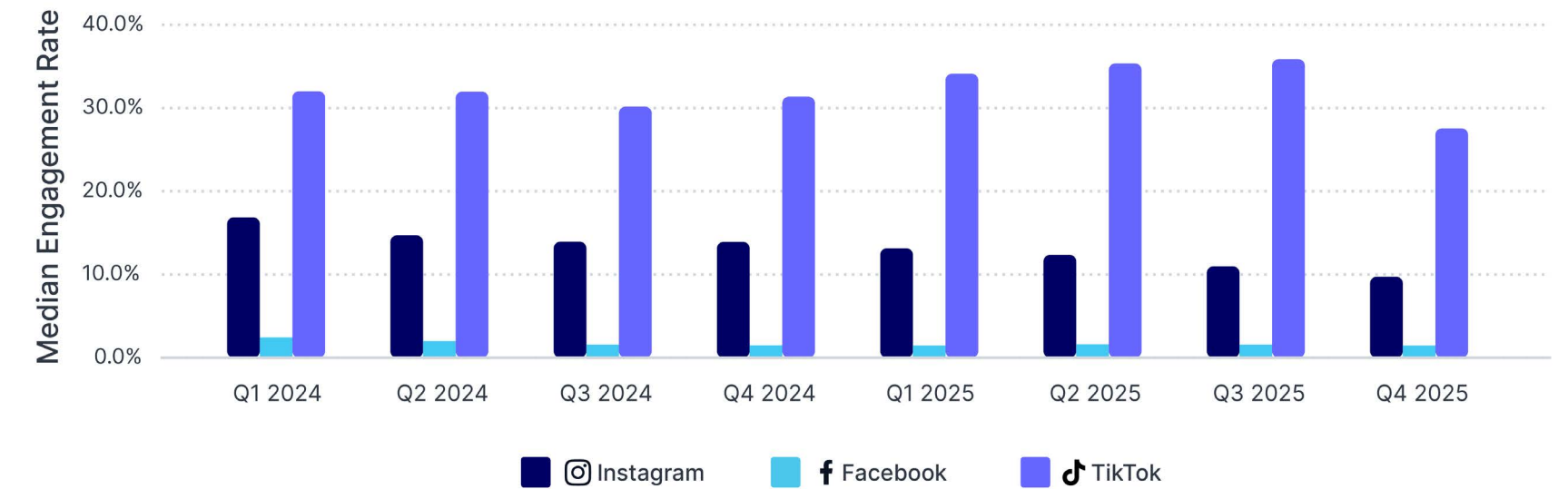
How does your engagement compare?

Benchmark your performance with Emplifi insights.

[Get a free assessment](#)

Engagement rate evolution across platforms

Median engagement rate (Worldwide)

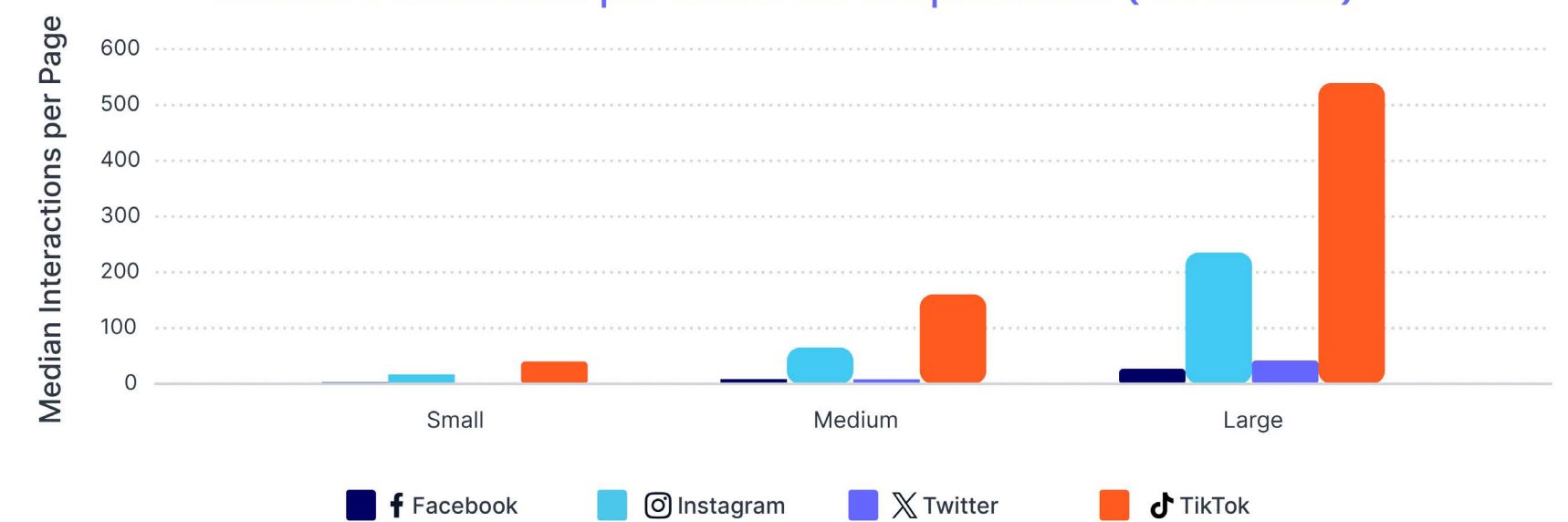


Source: Emplifi data
 Date Range: 01 January 2024 - 31 December 2025
 Sample: Unique IG Profiles: 93,733, FB Profiles: 221,052, TT Profiles: 2,478



Engagement by follower size

Median interactions per brand across platforms (Worldwide)



Source: Emplifi data
 Date Range: 01 January 2025 - 31 December 2025
 Sample: Unique FB Profiles: 200,737, IG Profiles: 87,154, X Profiles: 16,879, TT Profiles: 2,124



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ENGAGEMENT ACROSS PLATFORMS

Key actions for social media marketers



Prioritize TikTok for engagement growth

The short-form video platform consistently delivers the highest interaction rates, especially as audiences grow.



Refine Instagram content for shareability

As interactions soften, performance increasingly depends on content that drives saves, shares, and secondary distribution.



Focus efforts where engagement is efficient

Streamline activity on lower-performing platforms like Facebook and X, particularly when engagement is a primary KPI.

As audience expectations evolve and discovery algorithms continue to shift, prioritizing platforms that reliably convert reach into interaction will be critical for sustaining visibility and impact.

Validate your platform strategy with real engagement benchmarks.

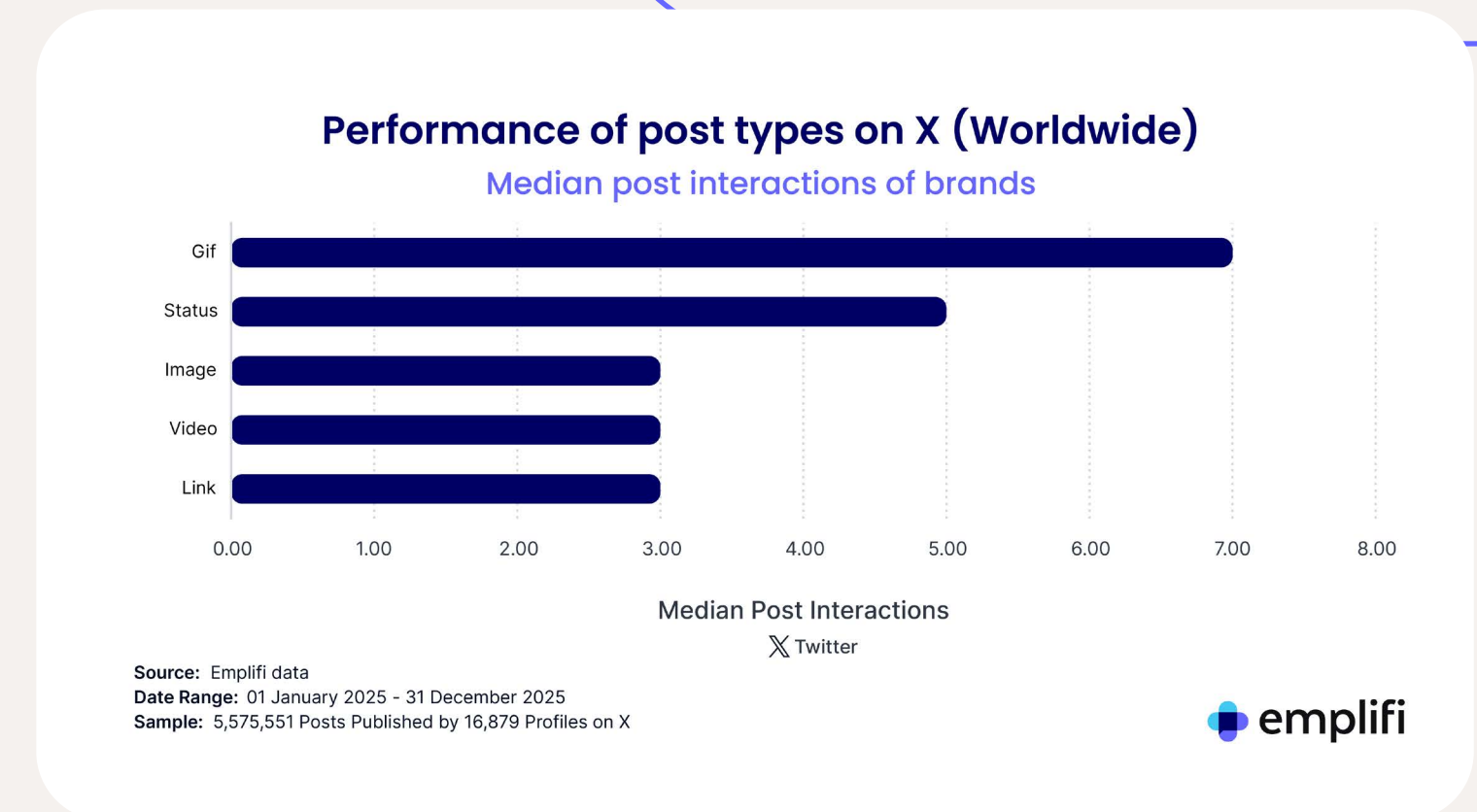
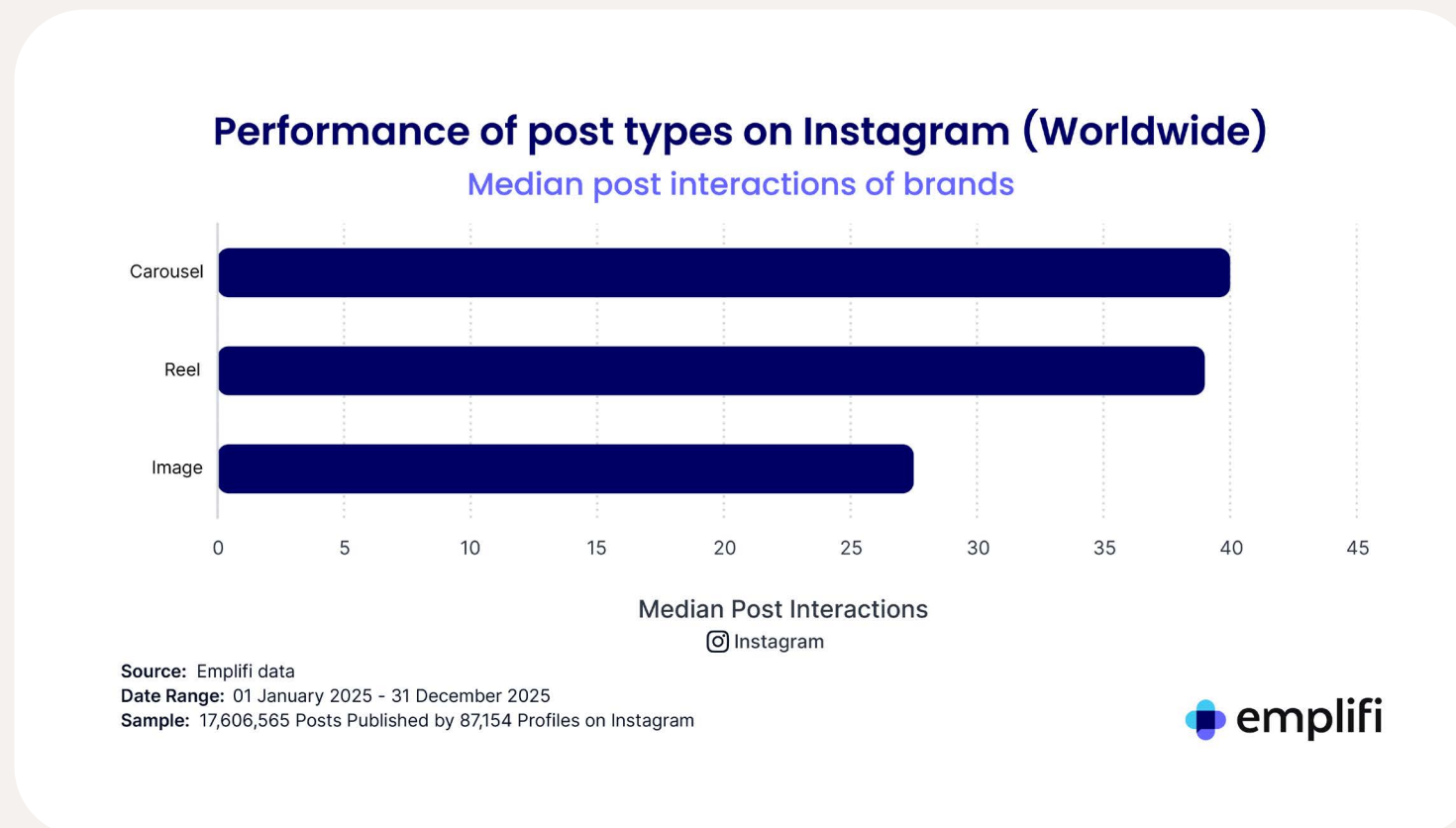
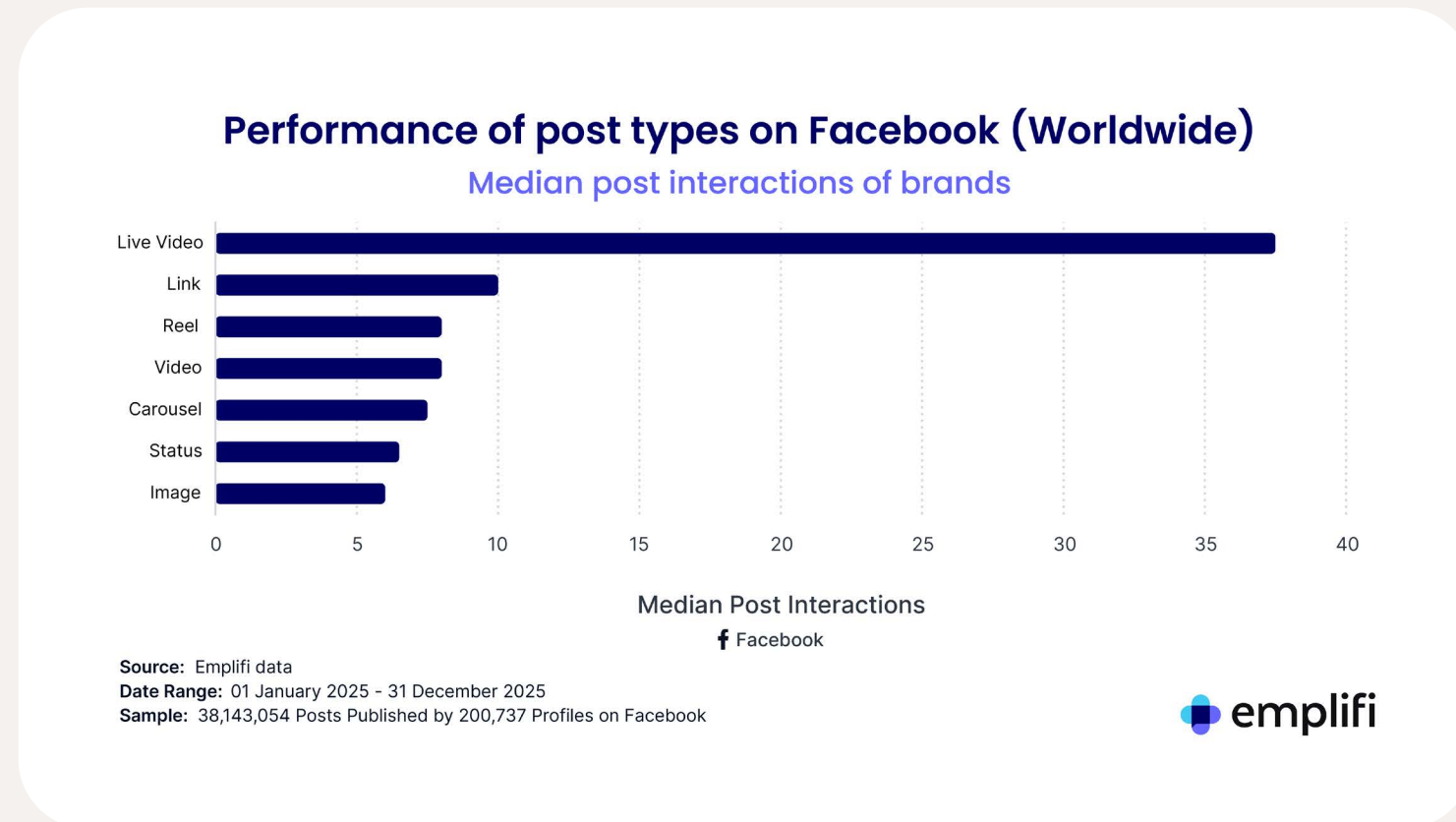
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CONTENT FORMAT PERFORMANCE

Post performance by platform and format



f Live video drives outsized engagement

Live video continues to generate significantly more interactions than any other format on Facebook, standing apart from the rest of the content mix. **With a median of 37.5 interactions per post, live video delivers nearly four times the engagement of links and more than six times that of image posts.** By comparison, all other formats including links, standard video, Reels, and carousels cluster within a much narrower engagement range, reinforcing that Facebook's strongest interaction gains come from formats that encourage real-time participation and sustained attention.

📷 Carousels and Reels lead engagement

On Instagram, carousels and Reels deliver the strongest median interactions, performing at near parity and setting the engagement pace for brands. **Together, these formats generate approximately 44% more median interactions than image posts, underscoring the platform's growing reward for immersive, swipe- and watch-driven content.** Images remain an important part of the mix, continuing to deliver meaningful engagement and reinforcing Instagram's visual-first foundation even as video and multi-frame formats gain prominence.

X Simple formats perform best

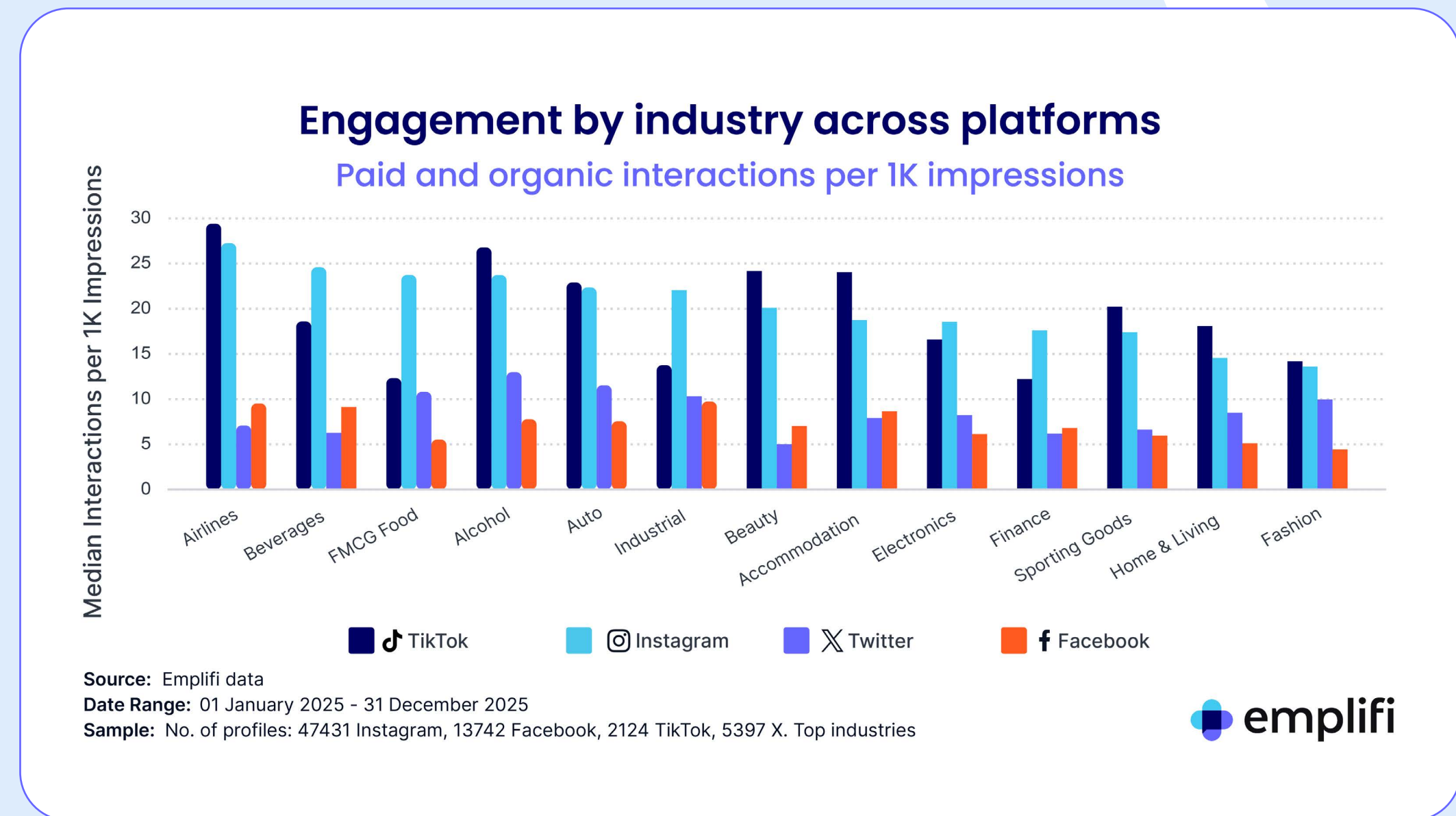
On X, lightweight, fast-consumption formats deliver the strongest engagement. **GIFs lead all post types with a median of 7 interactions per post, generating more than twice the engagement of links, videos, and images.** Status updates follow closely, delivering approximately 67% more interactions than richer media formats. By contrast, videos, links, and images all perform at the same low baseline, reinforcing that X rewards immediacy and conversational content over production-heavy formats.



ENGAGEMENT BY INDUSTRIES

Industry engagement performance across platforms

Industry engagement varies widely across platforms, reflecting how audience behaviors and content expectations shape performance. Aligning industry strengths to the right channel is critical for maximizing engagement.



Tips for social media marketers

Go where your industry wins

Prioritize the platforms where your sector consistently delivers the strongest engagement.

Create for the channel, not the feed

Tailor content formats and storytelling styles to match each platform's top-performing behaviors.

Shift resources with confidence

Use Emplifi insights to identify underperforming channels and reinvest where engagement efficiency and ROI are highest.



ENGAGEMENT BY INDUSTRIES



Facebook: Utility-driven industries perform best

On Facebook, service-oriented and informational industries deliver the strongest engagement, reflecting the platform's role in updates, announcements, and relationship-driven communication.

Industrial (9.73), Airlines (9.51), and Beverages (9.12) generate the highest median interactions per 1K impressions among all industries. These categories outperform others by consistently delivering timely and utility-focused content.



TikTok: Transformation and personality-led industries lead

TikTok engagement is strongest for industries that translate well to discovery, narrative, and creator-led content. **Airlines lead TikTok with 29.42 median interactions per 1K impressions, followed by Alcohol (26.79). Beauty (24.17) and Accommodation (24.04) also perform strongly, with Auto (22.91) and Sporting Goods (20.24) generating solid engagement through visually dynamic and transformation-oriented content.**



Instagram: Lifestyle and visual-first industries dominate

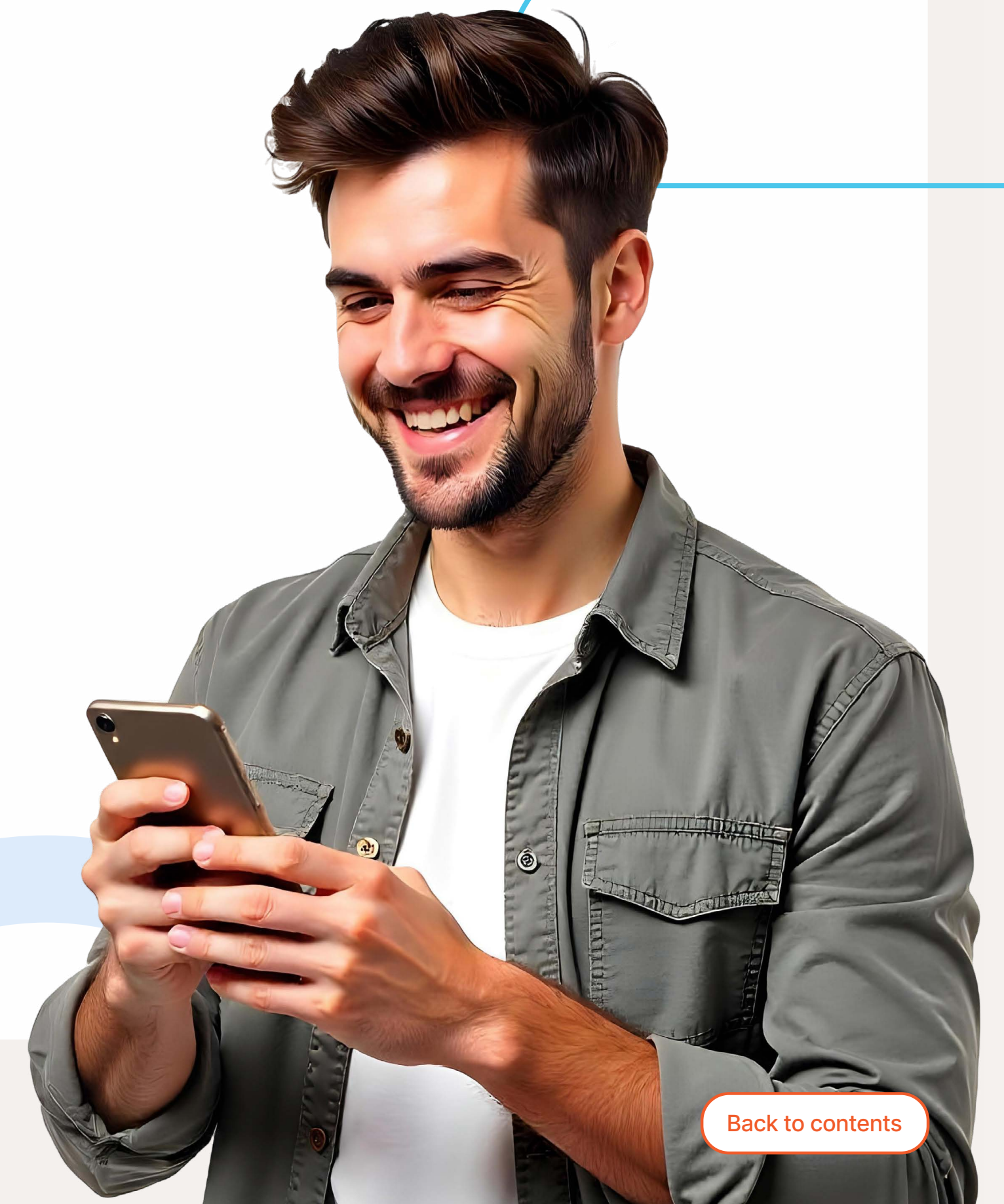
Instagram engagement is led by visually rich and lifestyle-oriented industries, where aspirational and design-led storytelling performs best.

Airlines deliver the highest engagement on Instagram with 27.26 median interactions per 1K impressions. This is followed by Beverages (24.59), FMCG Food (23.74), and Alcohol (23.73), all of which benefit from strong visual identity and content suited to immersive consumption.



X: Conversation-driven industries see the strongest engagement

Engagement on X favors industries aligned with timely discussion, commentary, and conversational relevance. **Alcohol leads engagement on X with 12.99 median interactions per 1K impressions, followed by Auto (11.53) and FMCG Food (10.81).** These industries benefit from relevance to cultural moments and real-time conversation.



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SHARES

Instagram engagement is shifting: Shares are becoming the platform's most powerful signal

Across 2025, Instagram users changed how they interact with branded content. While likes per reach remained flat and comments stayed minimal, **shares per reach increased by more than 150%**, making shares the fastest-growing engagement action on the platform.

At the same time, organic reach declined across every post format. Median reach fell by 30–40% across Carousels, Images, and Reels, intensifying competition for visibility. Even Reels, the highest-reach format, saw sustained declines through the second half of the year.

Together, these trends point to a clear shift in how Instagram rewards content. As reach becomes harder to earn organically, shares are emerging as the strongest signal for broader distribution, helping posts travel beyond a brand's existing audience.

For brands in 2026, success on Instagram increasingly depends on creating content people actively want to pass along.

Request a free Instagram assessment

Benchmark your performance and uncover actionable opportunities for growth.

[Talk to an expert](#)

Quick tips to boost Instagram reach



Optimize for shares over passive engagement:

As organic reach tightens, content that audiences actively pass along is most likely to earn broader distribution.



Design for redistribution: Prioritize utility, emotion, and timeliness - traits that motivate people to share content beyond their own feeds.



Let value lead, not format: While Reels and carousels still support reach, visibility increasingly depends on whether content is worth amplifying.

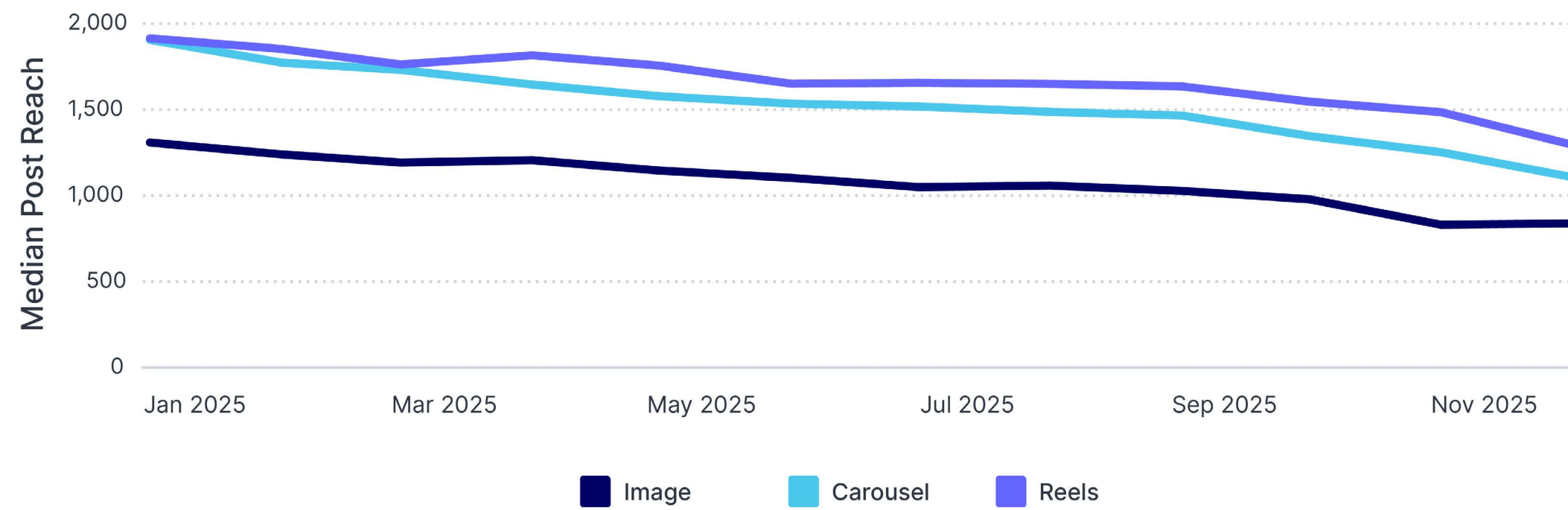


Follow the signals that matter: Track and learn from high-share posts to guide creative strategy and content planning.



SHARES

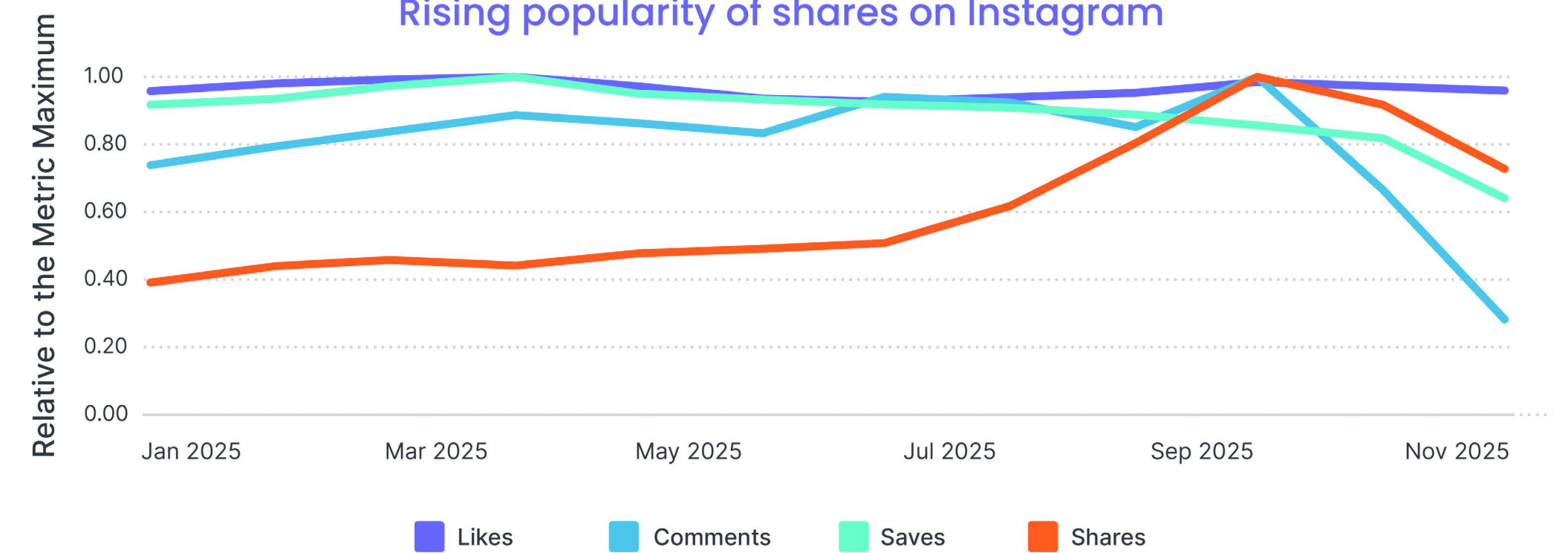
Evolution of organic reach on Instagram Brands compete for attention on Instagram



Source: Emplifi data
 Date Range: 01 January 2025 - 31 December 2025
 Sample: 1,925,204 Instagram posts published by 9,678 brands



Evolution of metrics per post reach Rising popularity of shares on Instagram



Source: Emplifi data
 Date Range: 01 January 2025 - 31 December 2025
 Sample: 1,925,204 Instagram posts published by 9,678 brands





VIDEO

Video engagement trends across networks

Video remains a defining format across social platforms, but performance continues to diverge sharply by network. In 2025, TikTok further strengthened its position as the most effective platform for video engagement, increasing median video engagement rate by approximately 4% year-over-year and delivering nearly double the engagement rate of Instagram.

Instagram remains the second-strongest environment for video, but engagement declined by roughly 18% compared to 2024, reflecting intensified competition and a more saturated Reels ecosystem. Even with this softening, Instagram video still generates over 30x more engagement than Facebook.

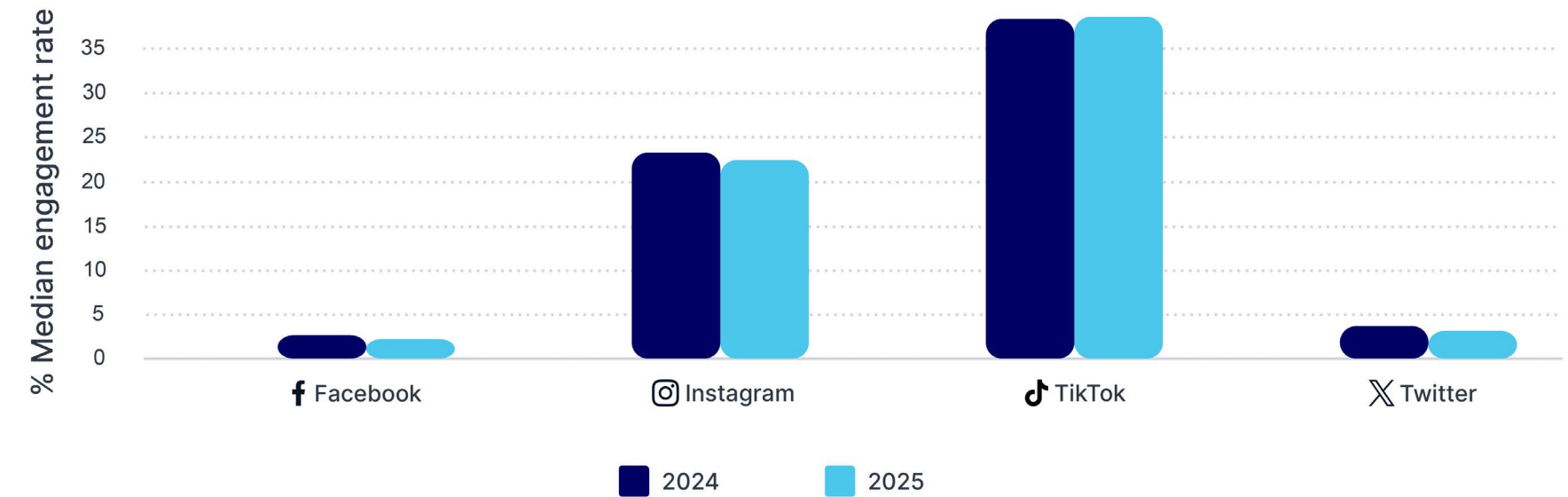
How audiences discover TikTok content is changing

TikTok's discovery engine continues to concentrate around the 'For You' feed, reinforcing the platform's algorithm-first model. Throughout 2024 and into 2025, 'For You' traffic consistently accounts for the majority of video views, climbing from the mid-50% range in early 2024 to to above 70% by the end of 2025.

At the same time, follower-based and intent-driven sources are steadily declining. Traffic from Follow, Profile, and Search continues to erode, signaling that personal networks and deliberate lookups play a diminishing role in content discovery on TikTok.

This shift reinforces a critical reality for brands: reach on TikTok is driven far more by content resonance than by audience size. Videos that quickly capture attention, spark engagement, and perform well against early signals are increasingly rewarded with broader distribution, regardless of follower count.

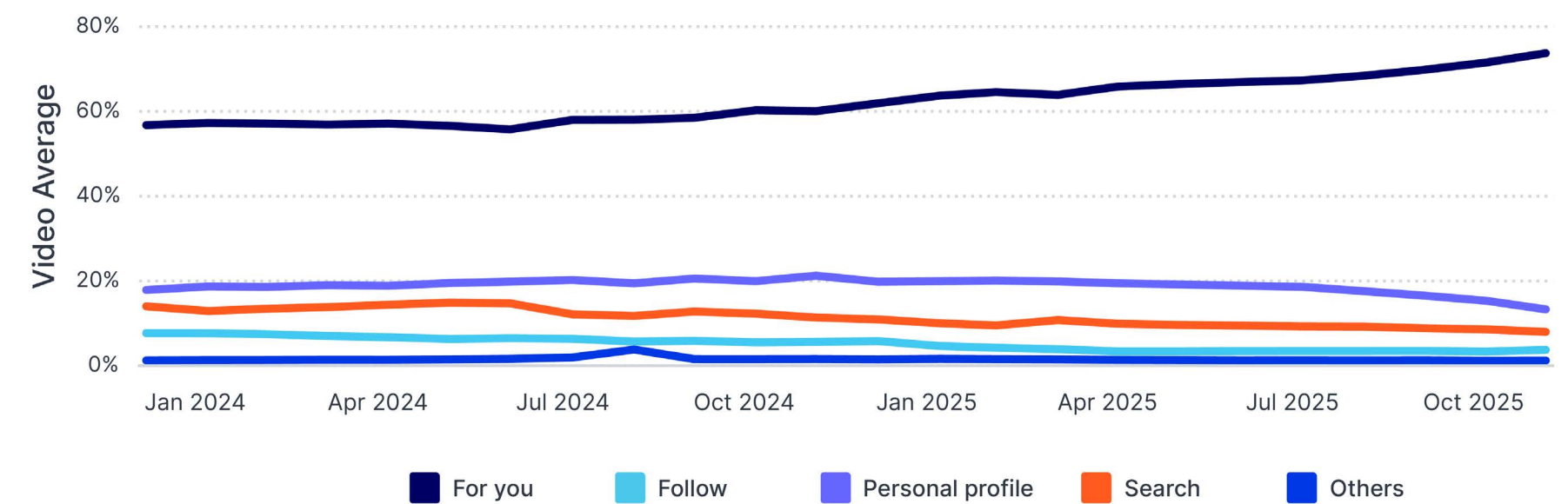
Video engagement rates across platform
Median engagement rates (worldwide)



Source: Emplifi data
Date Range: 01 January 2024 - 31 December 2025
Sample: Instagram: 93,733 pages, Facebook: 221,096 pages, X: 21,404 pages, TikTok: 2,478 pages



Traffic sources on TikTok videos
Growth of the For You feed over time



Source: Emplifi data
Date Range: 01 Jan 2024 - 31 Dec 2025
Sample: 2,960,261 videos Published by 4,619 Profiles on TikTok. Only Profiles created before Jan 2024 included.





VIDEO

Quick video strategy checklist



Double down where video works hardest

TikTok remains the most efficient platform for video engagement; Instagram is still critical, but more competitive.



Expect diminishing returns on legacy networks

Use Facebook and X more selectively for video, aligned to specific goals or audiences.



Design for discovery, not followers

On TikTok especially, reach is driven by algorithmic signals; not audience size.



Win the first seconds

Strong hooks, pacing, and clarity are essential in crowded feeds.



Track performance by platform

Video success looks different on each network, measure and optimize accordingly.

See how your video strategy stacks up across platforms.

[Get a free assessment](#)

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PAID CROSS PLATFORM

Ad spend and CPM trends reveal diverging platform economics

Quarterly ad investment across 2024 and 2025 highlights clear differences in how brands allocate budgets across platforms. TikTok consistently commands the highest median ad spend per account, reinforcing strong advertiser confidence in its performance at scale.



TikTok

Highest spend intensity

\$14.9K

Paid media spend in Q4 2025.



Facebook

Stable, seasonal investment

~\$8.5K–\$11.2K

with predictable Q4 lifts.



Instagram

Lower overall spend, strong seasonality

\$5.1K

Rising steadily in Q4 2025.



X

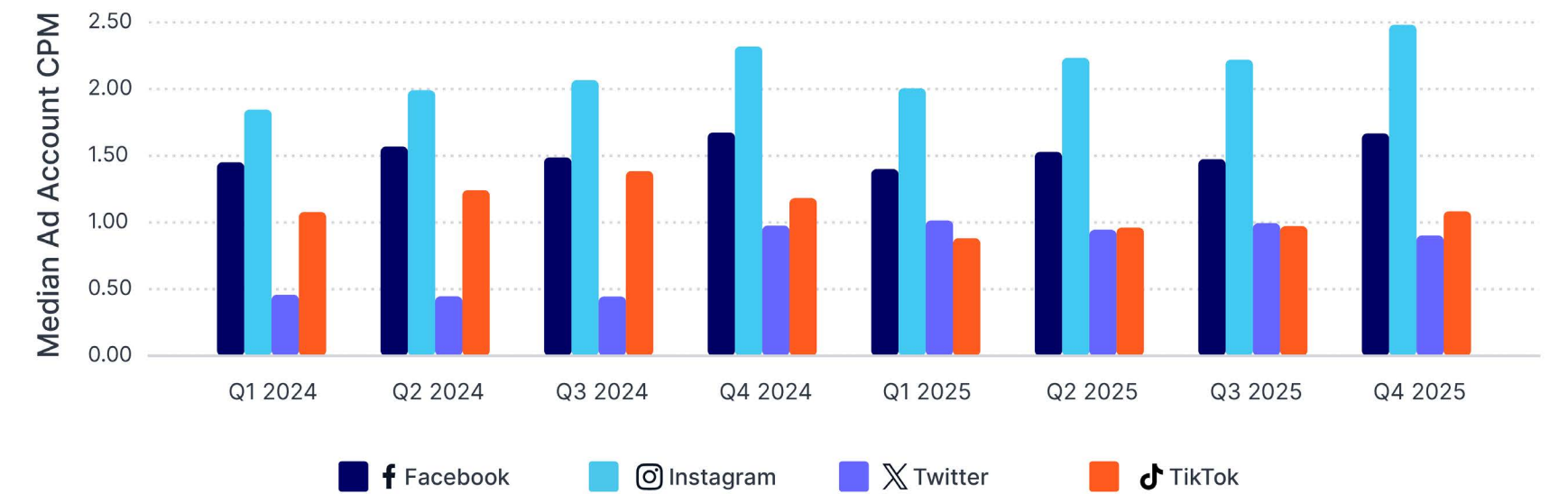
More tactical & volatile spend

Investment fluctuates sharply quarter to quarter.

Note on X data: Results for X are based on a smaller advertiser sample compared to Meta and TikTok. Findings should be interpreted as directional indicators rather than definitive benchmarks.

Quarterly comparison of ads CPM (USD)

Worldwide brands

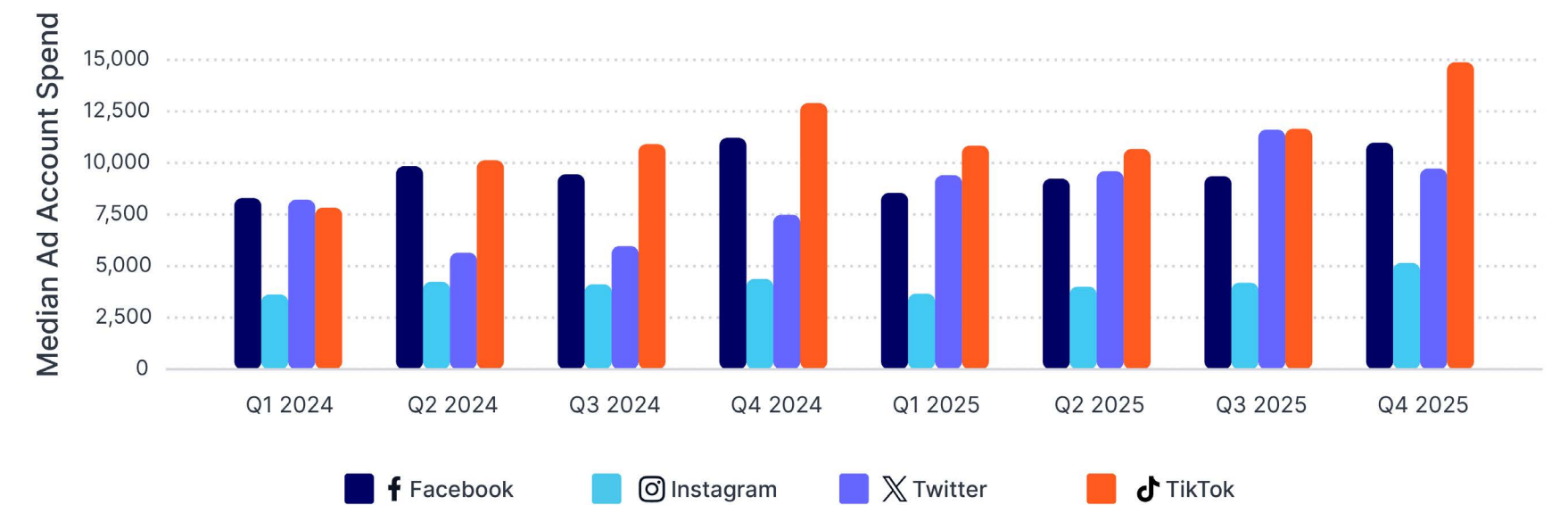


Source: Emplifi data
 Date Range: 01 January 2024 - 31 December 2025
 Sample: 7,330 Facebook Ad Accounts, 7,474 Instagram Ad Accounts, 1,297 TikTok Ad Accounts, 207 X Ad Accounts



Quarterly comparison of ad account spend (USD)

Worldwide brands



Source: Emplifi data
 Date Range: 01 January 2024 - 31 December 2025
 Sample: 7,330 Facebook Ad Accounts, 7,474 Instagram Ad Accounts, 1,297 TikTok Ad Accounts, 207 X Ad Accounts





PAID CROSS PLATFORM

CPM trends add important context. Instagram consistently carries the highest CPMs, reflecting intense competition for impressions, while Facebook offers comparatively more efficient reach. TikTok stands out for combining scale with cost efficiency.



Instagram

Highest CPMs
~\$2.50
peak in Q4 2025




Facebook

Moderate CPMs
~\$1.40–\$1.70
typically across quarters



TikTok

Lower CPMs than Meta
~\$1.00–\$1.30
varies by quarter



X

Lowest CPMs
~\$0.90–\$1.00
across 2025

What this means: Advertisers accept higher CPMs on Meta in exchange for performance stability, while TikTok's ability to scale spend efficiently strengthens its position as a discovery-first platform. X appears to play a supporting role.



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PAID CONTENT FORMATS

Meta placement strategies diverge: Facebook remains feed-heavy while Instagram spreads investment across formats

Meta placement data shows a clear split in strategy. Facebook remains Feed-dominated, with the majority of spend consistently concentrated in Feed, reinforcing its role as a scale-driven performance channel.

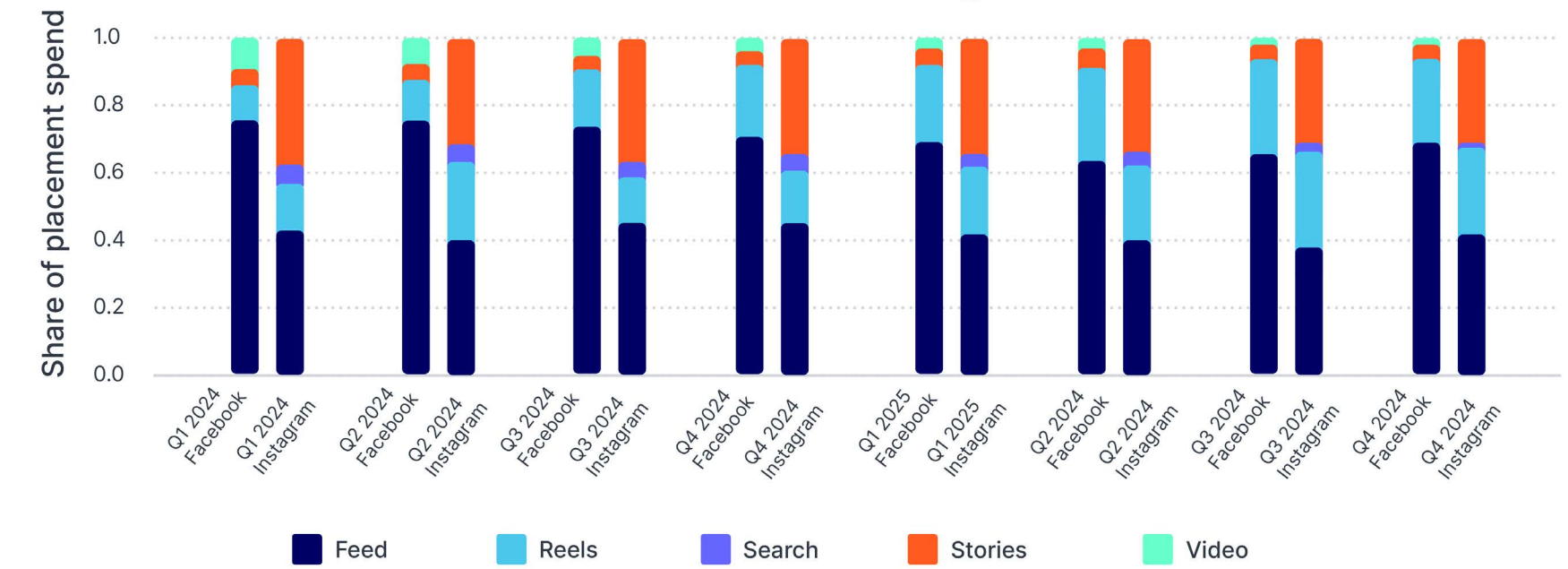
Instagram distributes spend far more evenly across Feed, Stories, and Reels, with Reels nearly tripling in investment from early 2024 to late 2025.

The takeaway is clear: Facebook rewards focused, Feed-first execution, while Instagram requires a multi-placement approach aligned to evolving consumption behaviors.

Key points

- Facebook Feed captures roughly 70% to 80% of placement spend every quarter, despite gradual Reels growth.
- Instagram Reels investment nearly triples from Q1 2024 to Q4 2025, signaling rising confidence in short-form video.
- Stories consistently approach Feed on Instagram, reinforcing the platform's multi-surface engagement model.

Placement share of ad spend on Facebook and Instagram



Source: Emplifi data
 Date Range: 01 January 2024 - 31 December 2025
 Sample: 7,330 Facebook Ad Accounts, 7,474 Instagram Ad Accounts, 1,297 TikTok Ad Accounts, 207 X Ad Accounts



Actionable guidance for marketers



- **Diversify placements on Instagram:** Stories and Reels command a significant share of spend — lean into both with creative built for vertical video.
- **Don't rely solely on Feed on Facebook:** While Feed dominates, testing Reels and Stories can unlock incremental efficiencies.
- **Match creative to user behavior:** Instagram users increasingly engage with motion-first formats; prioritize short-form video and episodic storytelling.
- **Monitor placement performance quarterly:** Reels growth signals where competition and opportunity are shifting — stay agile with budget allocation.



PAID CONTENT FORMATS

CPM trends rise across Meta platforms, with Stories and Reels seeing the strongest competition

Across both Facebook and Instagram, CPMs trended mostly upward through 2024 and 2025, reflecting intensifying competition for high-impact placements.

Facebook maintains a cost-efficient profile, with Feed CPMs generally around or below \$2.00, reinforcing its role as a scalable performance channel. Stories are the clear premium exception, climbing above \$3.40 by late 2025 as demand for vertical, full-screen inventory increases.

Instagram shows structurally higher CPMs across placements, led by Feed, which exceeds \$3.00 by Q4 2025, Stories rising toward the upper \$2.00 range. Rising Reels CPMs signal growing advertiser competition for short-form video as brands shift toward creator-style, immersive formats.

Together, the data highlights two dynamics: Facebook prioritizes efficient scale, while Instagram concentrates competition across multiple premium surfaces.

Key actions for marketers:

Use Stories & Reels selectively for high-impact objectives; budget for premium CPMs.

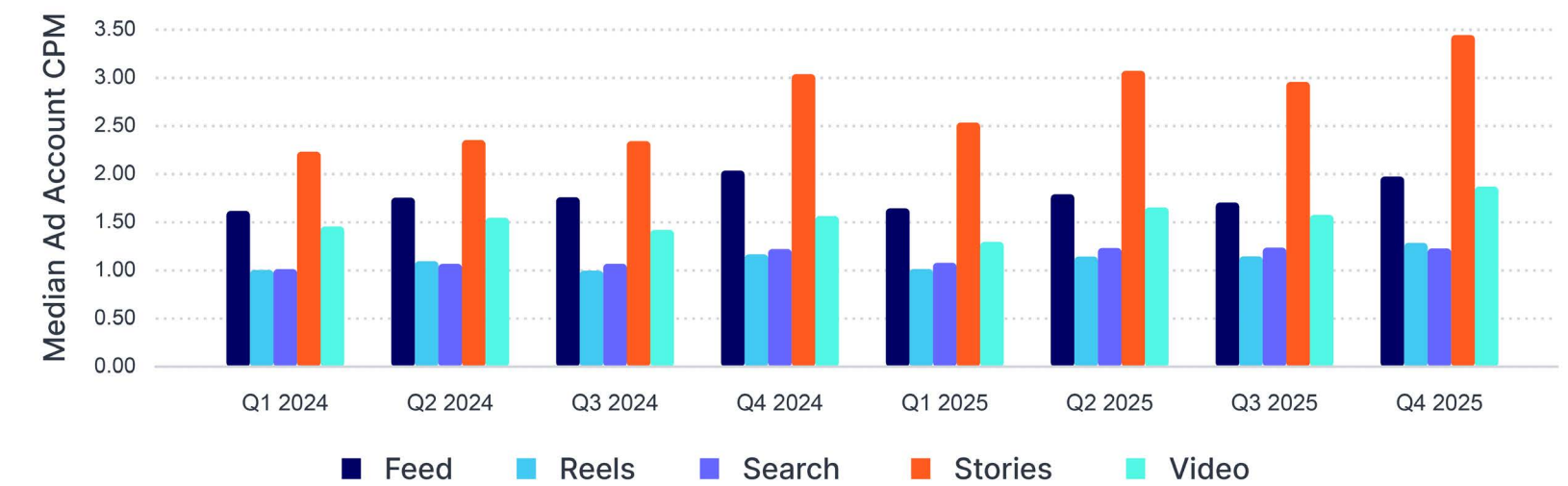
Anchor scale in Facebook Feed, where CPMs remain more stable.

Offset rising costs with creative strength, not just budget increases.

Evaluate success beyond CPM, especially on Instagram where competition is structurally higher.

QoQ Comparison of ads CPM (USD)

Worldwide brands on Facebook

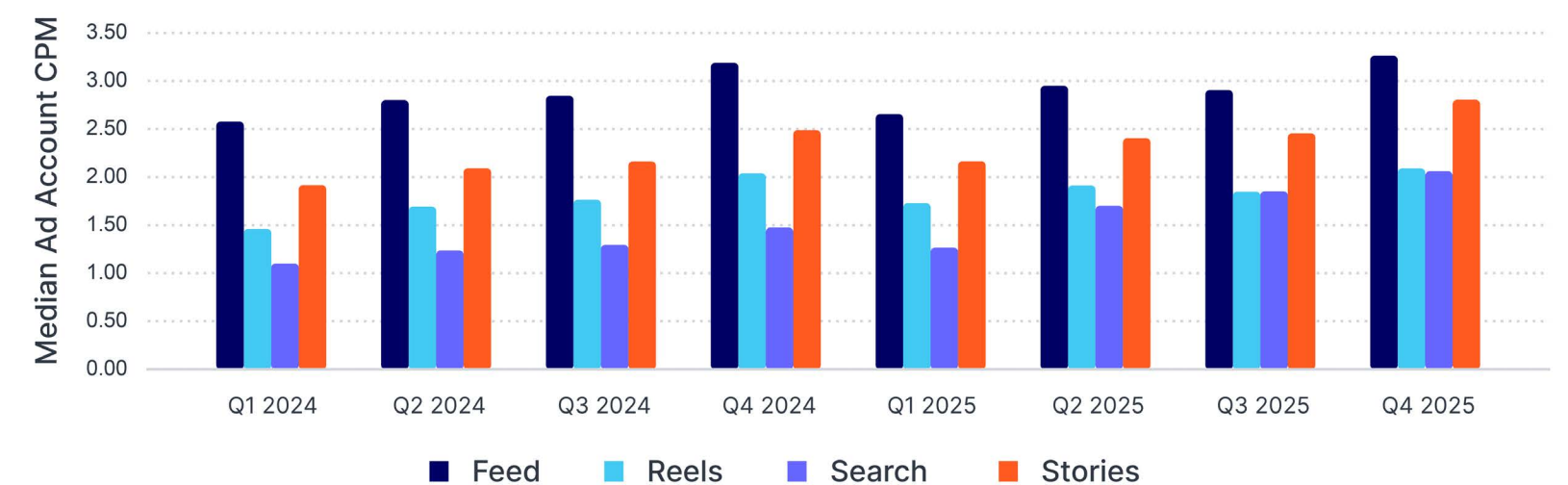


Source: Emplifi data
Date Range: 01 January 2024 - 31 December 2025
Sample: 7,330 Facebook Ad Accounts



QoQ Comparison of ads CPM (USD)

Worldwide brands on Instagram



Source: Emplifi data
Date Range: 01 January 2024 - 31 December 2025
Sample: 7,474 Instagram Ad Accounts





PAID TIKTOK

TikTok ad investment and outcomes: Top performers spend more and earn far greater reach

Across 2024 and 2025, TikTok advertisers showed a clear divide in both investment levels and outcomes. Top-performing ad accounts consistently spent 2–3× more per month than the average advertiser, scaling budgets during key seasonal periods while most brands maintained steady monthly spend around \$200–\$250. This pattern suggests that stronger results on TikTok are closely associated with sustained and more aggressive investment.

The impressions data reinforces this trend. Median impression volumes for top performers were significantly higher — often 3× or more than the broader market — showing that increased spend is closely linked to greater reach on TikTok. While impressions for all advertisers remained relatively stable, top performers saw pronounced lifts during major campaign windows, indicating more strategic and effective scaling.

Together, these charts highlight a consistent takeaway: Advertisers who treat TikTok as a core channel, rather than an experimental one, achieve markedly better reach and visibility.

Key tips for marketers on TikTok



Commit meaningful budget to win reach

Top performers spend 2–3× more than average advertisers and consistently achieve greater reach.



Treat TikTok as a core channel, not a test

Sustained investment is associated with significantly higher impressions and visibility.



Scale during peak moments

Strategic budget increases during seasonal or campaign windows unlock outsized reach.

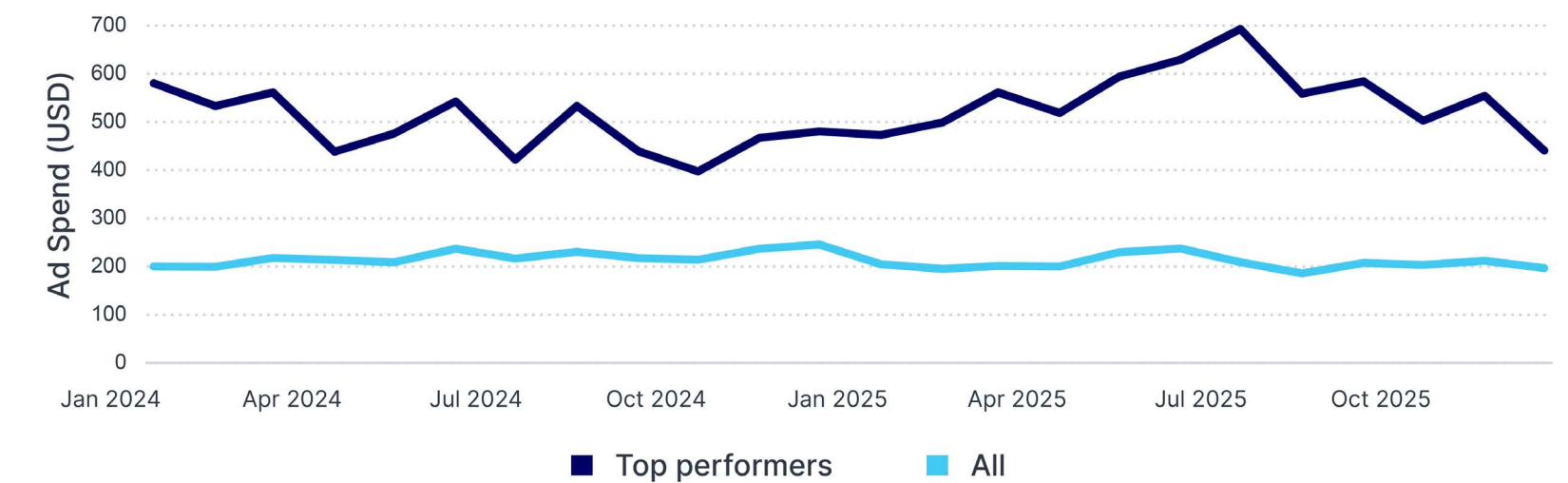


Avoid “always-low” spend strategies

Flat, minimal budgets limit delivery and keep brands from breaking through.

Evolution of TikTok ad spend (USD)

Median ad spend

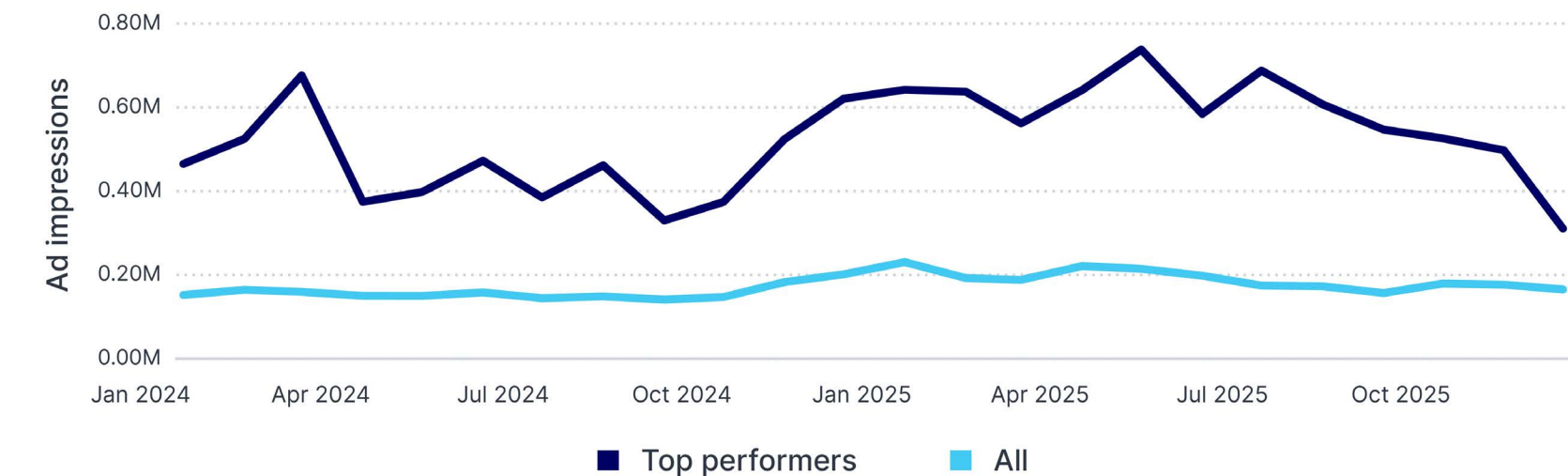


Source: Emplifi data
Date Range: 1 January 2024 - 31 December 2025
Sample: 293,092 ads run by 1,304 TikTok ad accounts. Top Performers = top 10% of ad accounts by total Ad Video Views



Evolution of TikTok ad impressions

Median ad impressions



Source: Emplifi data
Date Range: 1 January 2024 - 31 December 2025
Sample: 293,092 ads run by 1,304 TikTok ad accounts. Top Performers = top 10% of ad accounts by total Ad Video Views





TAKEAWAY

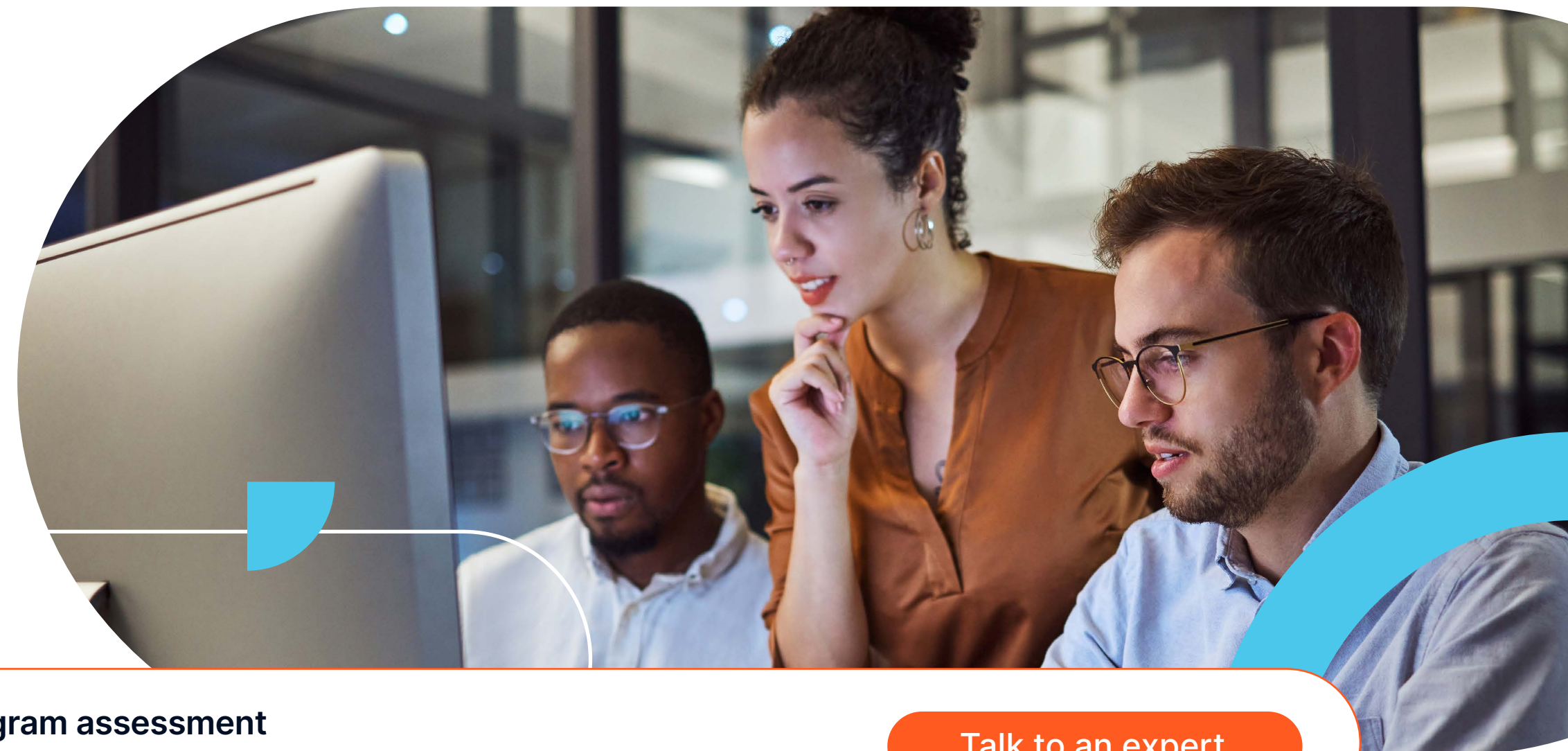
Winning in 2026 requires platform-specific precision

Heading into 2026, social media performance is defined by divergence, not uniformity. Platforms are evolving in different directions, and brands can no longer rely on a single playbook to drive growth, engagement, and efficiency. TikTok continues to set the pace for audience expansion and interaction, rewarding brands that invest consistently and scale with intent.

Instagram remains a cornerstone channel, but success increasingly depends on creating shareable, vertical-first content and navigating rising competition in premium placements. Meta platforms overall continue to deliver scale and predictable outcomes, justifying sustained advertiser investment, while X's limited growth and lower engagement position it as a secondary or tactical channel.

Across organic and paid strategies, the data reinforces a clear message: where you invest, how you create, and when you scale matter more than ever. Short-form video, Stories, Reels, and algorithm-driven discovery now drive visibility across platforms, while flat budgets and generic content struggle to break through.

The benchmarks in this report offer a framework for smarter prioritization, helping brands focus resources on the platforms, formats, and moments that deliver the strongest return. Those that act on these insights with clarity and confidence will be best positioned to compete and grow in 2026.



Request a free Instagram assessment
 Benchmark your performance and uncover actionable opportunities for growth.

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Key takeaways for 2026

Growth

TikTok leads audience growth and engagement when treated as a core channel.

Distribution

Instagram reach is increasingly driven by shares, Reels, and Stories — not likes alone.

Investment

Meta platforms justify higher spend through scale and predictable performance.

Prioritization

X serves a more focused, tactical role within the channel mix.



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