IntEdge AI

AI-POWERED INTELLIGENCE

2026

State of Social Media Report, 2026

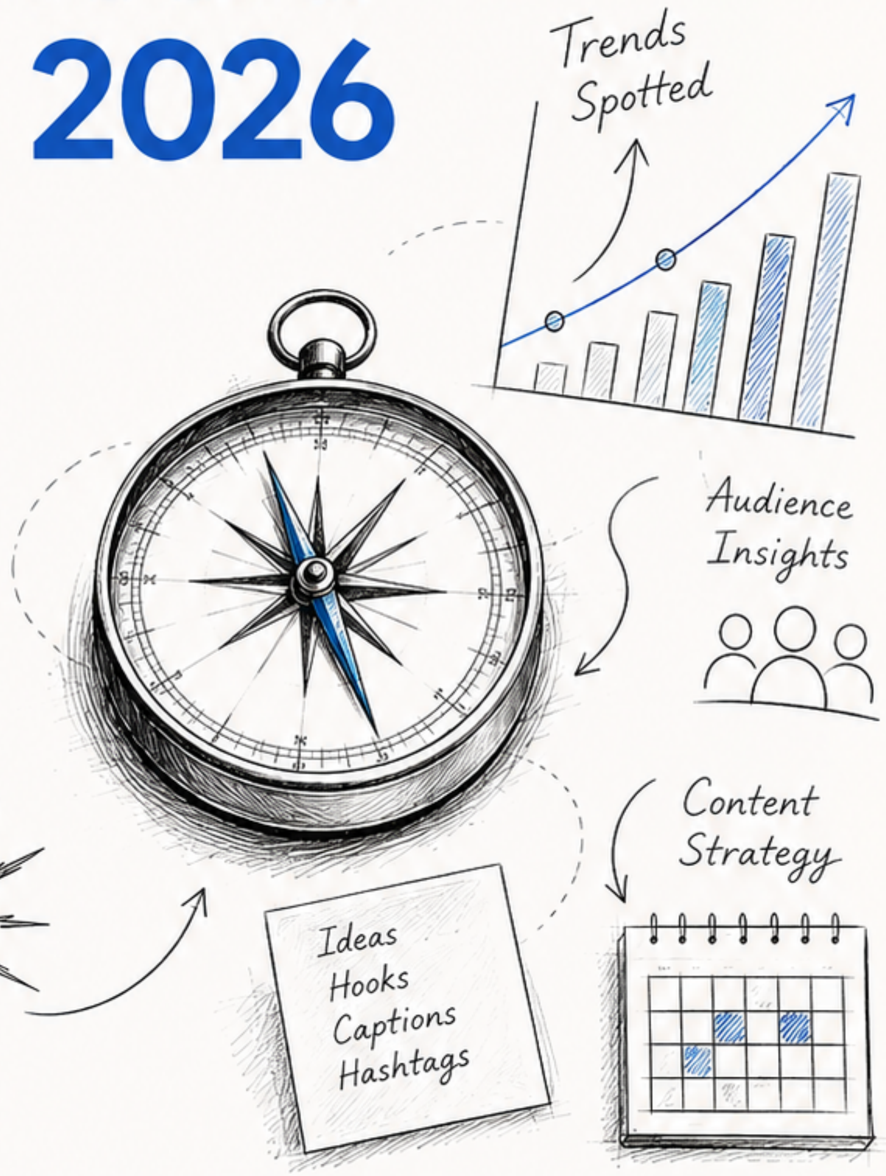
Insights. Trends. Sentiment.
Strategies for What's Next.

THE CREATOR ECONOMY

The new engine of influence and growth.

BRANDS ARE SHIFTING TO MINI & MICRO CREATORS

Smaller influencers.
Bigger impact. Better ROI.



DATA-DRIVEN

Real signals.
Real insights.

AI-POWERED

Smarter analysis.
Better decisions.

AUDIENCE-FIRST

Understand.
Engage. Grow.

FUTURE-READY

Anticipate trends.
Stay ahead.

PREPARED FOR

CMOs, marketers and creators building what's next in social.

State of Social Media Report, 2026

The global social media market continues to expand at a strong pace in 2026, driven by rising digital consumption, short-form video adoption, and the growing role of creator-led content in brand marketing. Recent market research indicates that the social media market is expected to reach $389.36 billion by 2030, growing at a compound annual growth rate of 13.5%. That growth reflects not just more users on platforms, but deeper monetisation through AI powered social media trends tracking, advertising, subscriptions, commerce, and creator partnerships.

A major theme in 2026 is the convergence of social media and the creator economy. The creator economy is now estimated to be a $500+ billion market, up from around $250 billion in 2023. This is more than a size story; it signals a structural shift in how media is produced, distributed, and monetised. Creators are no longer treated as promotional add-ons. They are increasingly operating as media businesses, with diversified income streams that include sponsored content, affiliate sales, product lines, events, licensing, and equity-based partnerships.

For brands, this shift is changing budget allocation. According to recent 2026 reporting, U.S. creator economy ad spend is projected to reach $43.9 billion this year, up 18% from $37.1 billion in 2025. At the same time, 59% of brands globally plan to increase influencer marketing budgets in 2026, while paid amplification of creator content is expected to rise sharply as marketers scale what already performs organically. In practical terms, creator marketing has moved from experimental spend to a core line item in the media mix.

The budget migration is also coming from legacy channels. Recent industry data shows that 60% of brand leaders are cutting print advertising investment, while 50% are reducing linear TV spend as they redirect money toward creator-driven strategies. This does not mean traditional media has disappeared, but it does mean that performance, targeting, and authenticity are taking priority over broad-reach formats. Brands increasingly see creators as a way to reach audiences that actively ignore or skip conventional ads.

What makes creator-led marketing especially attractive in 2026 is its hybrid performance potential. Brands are not only buying creator posts; they are paying to amplify high-performing creator content across social and beyond. One report estimates $13.2 billion will be spent on paid amplification of creator content on social media, $11.6 billion on direct creator partnerships, and $11.1 billion on amplification beyond social platforms. This suggests the most valuable creator campaigns are now built for repurposing, scale, and measurable outcomes.

Measurement remains the biggest constraint. Roughly half of marketing leaders still cite ROI attribution as their top challenge in creator marketing. That said, measurement tools have improved enough that many brands now report stronger confidence in creator-led performance than in older digital formats. This is one reason creators are increasingly treated as a must-buy channel alongside search and paid social.

The industry is moving from vanity metrics toward conversion-focused, hybrid compensation models that combine fixed fees with performance bonuses.

Another important development is the shift in creator mix. Marketers are moving away from celebrity-only strategies and leaning more heavily into macro and micro creators, who often deliver stronger engagement and more authentic audience trust. Mid-tier creators are especially attractive because they combine meaningful reach with high engagement and lower cost efficiency. For brands, this supports broader testing, better content variety, and more localised or niche audience penetration.

Overall, the 2026 market picture is clear: social media growth is being powered by creator monetisation, while brands are reallocating ad budgets toward creator-led content because it delivers authenticity, performance, and flexibility. The winners in this market will be platforms that deepen monetisation, brands that build long-term creator partnerships, and creators who can operate like scalable media businesses rather than one-off influencers.

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