THE SOCIAL DOWNLOAD

A monthly guide to evolving social platforms, trends & opportunities for brands

Victoria's Take
A word from our Social Director

This month, every major platform has been quietly reshaping how we create, discover and connect. The pattern is clear: smarter tools and richer communities that feels more human with every update.

Feeds and discovery are becoming more intelligent and intent driven. From Facebook's revamped experience and default ad automation to X's AI-ranked timelines and LinkedIn's natural-language search, relevance is beginning to outweigh simple recency. For brands, the shift is from producing more, to producing what matters, focusing on content that resonates with specific audiences, moments and needs.

At the same time, creative formats are expanding. Longer Reels, easier livestreaming on Substack and YouTube, and improved video and Go Live features on Discord make it far simpler to run ongoing shows rather than one-off campaigns. Brands that adopt a

broadcaster's mindset - delivering regular, human, and genuinely useful content - will build more engaged communities and a deeper library of assets over time.

Commerce is also edging closer to the moment of inspiration. Snapchat's AR shopping tools, enhanced Marketplace visibility on Facebook and smarter experimentation features on YouTube all help bring the journey from discovery to purchase directly into the content. Experience and performance no longer sit on separate paths; the strongest work now blends both simultaneously.

Taken as a whole, these changes reveal a clear direction: platforms are aiming for user experiences that feel seamless and for journeys that marketers can easily measure. For brands, the opportunity lies in leaning into this shift by letting automation handle the foundations while focusing their energy on standout ideas, real value, and a genuine presence within their communities.

My Platform to Watch
BEAMS

Beams is a collaborative, voice led social app where people create "audio collections" together. Think of it as crowdsourced voice notes built around a theme, moment or question. It sits somewhere between podcasting, group chats and TikTok, but without the pressure of being perfectly polished.

Real people, Real voices 🎙️

Our top 11

Social Media Updates

& what they mean for brands

01. TikTok

Shared Feeds, Rising TikTok Shop Sse & New AI controls

TikTok has introduced a shared feed for two users and a nearby feed focused on local recommendations, reshaping how content is discovered. TikTok Shop usage surged over Black Friday, with more people treating it as a primary shopping channel. At the same time, TikTok has added controls to limit AI content, rolled out new generative tools, and launched Bulletin Boards for broadcast-style updates.

What it means:

- Discovery favours "watch-together" content that's fun and easy to react to.
- Local brands and locations gain prominence as TikTok behaves more like discovery plus maps.
- Overly synthetic creative risks being filtered out; AI is best as a production helper, not the brand look.

Actionable tips:

- Make simple, watch-together formats with clear hooks and prompts to share (e.g. Which one are you?).
- Turn on local targeting and use local landmarks, neighbourhoods and store info in captions and overlays.
- Treat TikTok Shop as a focused test with 1–2 hero offers and clear creator/affiliate incentives.

02. Instagram

Public Stories Reshared, and Longer (& more exclusive) Reels

Instagram now lets any user reshare public Stories, regardless of whether they were tagged. The platform has extended Reels recording to 20 minutes, allowing for much longer videos. It is also testing early access Reels, where content is initially available only to followers before being opened up to everyone.

What it means:

- Story content can travel further via organic resharing, especially if it feels UGC-style.
- Longer Reels allow for deeper storytelling while simplifying capture and edit.
- Early access Reels add a new "members first" mechanic for nurturing followers.

Actionable tips:

- Assume Stories can spread widely; give each one clear branding and a strong CTA to owned channels.
- Use longer Reels sparingly and aim for under three minutes to maximise ranking and completion.
- Use early access Reels as a follower incentive with genuinely valuable early reveals or deals.

03. Facebook

A New look, Advantage+ as the Default & Marketplace at Centre-Stage

Facebook has rolled out a redesigned Feed, search and navigation to make creating and discovering content easier. Marketplace is being moved into the bottom navigation bar, giving it much greater visibility. On the ad side, Meta now makes its automated ad-tools (Advantage+) the default for new ad campaigns.

What it means:

- It's easier to reach existing communities and new audiences, particularly via Marketplace.
- Automation can improve baseline ad performance, but reduces manual control.
- "Chat on WhatsApp" enables direct, conversational lead flows from ads.

Actionable tips:

- Audit campaign settings so you know where Advantage+ is helping and where you need manual control.
- Test "Chat on WhatsApp" for lead-gen, quotes or consultations with clear scripts and follow-up.
- If you sell products, list and optimise for Marketplace, treating it as a serious acquisition channel.

04. Snapchat

Seasonal AR Shopping Hub & Smarter, Conversion-Focused Ad Tools

Snapchat has launched the Snapchat Winter Village, an AR shopping hub running from 1–31 December that hosts brands like Chopard, BOSS and Lancôme. It has expanded its AI-driven ad tools, including Sponsored Snaps, Smart Budgets and Smart Targeting. Early results show Smart Targeting is delivering an average 8.8% uplift in conversions.

What it means:

- AR is now a practical path to commerce, not just a novelty effect.
- Automated tools make Snapchat more compelling for performance-minded advertisers.
- Retail and luxury brands in particular can blend storytelling and direct conversion in one experience.

Actionable tips:

- Identify clear AR use cases (try-ons, guided gifting, product demos) tied to measurable outcomes.
- Test Sponsored Snaps and AI-optimised campaigns during high-intent moments like holidays.
- Monitor performance closely and iterate creative and audiences as automation learns.

05. YouTube

Title & Thumbnail Testing, Smarter Shorts editing, & Richer Live Tools

YouTube has expanded its A/B testing tools so creators can now test titles as well as thumbnails for performance. Shorts production has been upgraded with AI-assisted dubbing, cutting and auto-editing features to reduce manual effort. Livestreaming has also been improved, with better dual-streaming performance and richer interaction tools such as polls, Q&As and enhanced moderation.

What it means:

- Makes it easier to optimise click-through by learning which title–thumbnail pairs win.
- Reduces production time for short-form vertical content, encouraging higher output.
- Strengthens YouTube as a live and community platform, not just on-demand video.

Actionable tips:

- Run regular title and thumbnail tests and document winning patterns in your guidelines.
- Use AI tools to speed up Shorts production while keeping a consistent look and tone.
- Trial focused live sessions for launches or Q&As, using polls and questions to drive interaction.

06. X

Feeds Ranked by Interest, with Grok Reshaping Following & For You

X has started using its Grok AI to rank the Following feed based on predicted engagement and relevance, moving away from a purely chronological view. The platform is also increasingly defaulting users to the For You feed, even when they previously closed the app on Following. Together, these changes mean both main feeds are now more algorithmic and interest-based.

What it means:

- The platform is shifting away from purely real-time visibility toward ranked, interest-led discovery.
- Well-performing posts may see more amplification via "For You", if they align with user interests.
- Live updates still matter, but virality and engagement signals carry more weight.

Actionable tips:

- Optimise content for strong hooks, opinions and shareability, not just speed.
- Track engagement trends closely and be ready to adjust cadence, formats and topics.
- If performance drops sharply, reassess your X strategy before cutting it on headline reach alone.

07. Substack

Desktop Live Video, Auto-Edited Clips & strong subscriber growth loops

Substack now supports desktop livestreaming with a preview room and co-hosts, including mobile co-hosts. It has significantly upgraded clips with automatic editing, title cards and instant availability after each live. These clips are already driving growth, with hundreds of thousands of free subscriptions and daily external views via auto-publishing to platforms like YouTube and LinkedIn.

What it means:

- Lowers the barrier to running regular live shows without a full production stack.
- Turns every live into a bank of short, platform-ready clips for social distribution.
- Positions Substack as a central content hub across video, email and social.

Actionable tips:

- Design a recurring live format (briefing, Q&A, interviews) and run from desktop.
- Plan 3–5 "clip moments" before each live so highlights are easy to pull.
- Share clips across major platforms with clear CTAs back to Substack or lead capture and track performance with UTM links.

08. Twitch

Major Changes to Clip Views

On 19 November, Twitch changed how clip views are counted so that bot activity and passive lurkers are filtered out. This update means view numbers will often appear lower, even when real audiences have not declined. The change follows a year of creators reporting falls in viewers and ad revenue and is intended to give a more accurate picture of engagement.

What it means:

- Campaign reports will show lower views on paper, risking misinterpretation.
- ROI conversations may become more tense if the methodology shift isn't understood.
- Optimisation becomes more accurate, with clearer differences between creators and creative.

Actionable tips:

- Annotate all November/December Twitch reports to flag the 19 Nov metric change.
- Rebase KPIs using post-change data and prioritise watch time, clicks and conversions over raw views.
- Adjust creator deals toward blended metrics (unique viewers, engagement, off-Twitch impact) rather than pure view guarantees.

09. LinkedIn

AI People Search, Upgraded Events & More Powerful Event Promotion

LinkedIn has launched an AI-powered people search tool that lets users describe who they want to find in natural language and receive highly relevant matches. The platform has also upgraded LinkedIn Events with deeper integrations into ON24, Cvent and Integrate and improved lead-generation options for Event Ads. Event boosting is now available globally, enabling marketers to increase visibility before, during and after events.

What it means:

- Makes it easier to find high-value prospects and partners you might otherwise miss.
- Connects event planning, promotion and lead capture into a clearer system.
- Enables better retargeting using registrant and attendee data in Campaign Manager.

Actionable tips:

- Use natural-language prompts to build more precise prospect lists.
- Create Event Pages early and plan boosts around key registration windows.
- Sync event data into Campaign Manager and retarget viewers and attendees with tailored follow-ups.

10. Reddit

Verification Arrives as r/popular Fades & Commerce Tools Grow

Reddit has begun piloting verified profiles with a grey checkmark for selected users and businesses, replacing the old "Official" label. For new users, the long-standing r/popular feed is being removed in favour of more personalised feeds. At the same time, Reddit is winding down its NFT avatar programme by January 2026, while continuing to advance interactive ad formats and rolling out new SMB commerce integrations such as WooCommerce.

What it means:

- Verification will help signal official presence and reduce confusion in key communities.
- Discovery will rely more on community-specific relevance than front-page luck.
- Interactive ads and commerce tools make Reddit more viable for engagement and direct sales, not just awareness.

Actionable tips:

- Build subreddit-specific campaigns (e.g., r/fitness, r/gaming) that respect each community's tone and norms.
- Test interactive ad formats for richer engagement instead of only static units.
- Align your commerce stack and Reddit activity, connecting relevant threads to clear product journeys.

11. Discord

Reliable Uploads, Smoother Video & Easier Day-to-Day Moderation

Discord has improved large file uploads and delivery, particularly on mobile, so big assets are faster and less likely to fail. Video embeds and Go Live performance have been upgraded to reduce friction when people click through to watch or join a stream. Alongside this, Discord has refreshed its settings and moderation UX to make managing roles, events, invites and profiles simpler for teams.

What it means:

- Safer to rely on Discord for big content drops like trailers and asset packs.
- Better video and live performance reduces drop-off during key moments.
- Easier admin means less operational drag on community teams.

Actionable tips:

- Scale up video and live activity: watch parties, AMAs, product walk-throughs inside your server.
- Test sharing large downloadable assets (wallpapers, kits, behind-the-scenes packs) and watch what drives engagement.
- Update internal moderation and admin playbooks to match the new UX and keep teams efficient.

Key takeaways

AI is now the default layer, not the headline
Platforms are using AI to rank feeds, power search, optimise ads and simplify editing. Use it for speed and precision, but keep your creative human and distinctive.

Discovery is getting more personal and more local
From TikTok's nearby feed to Reddit's personalised front pages and LinkedIn's AI search, relevance now beats reach. Local nuance and community fluency are non-negotiable.

Experience-led commerce is going mainstream
Snapchat AR, TikTok Shop, Reddit commerce integrations and Substack live+clips all point to a world where discovery, storytelling and purchase sit in the same flow.

Live and community formats are long-term bets
Substack livestreams, YouTube Live, Discord events and Twitch (despite measurement changes) all reward brands that show up regularly, not just when they have a campaign.

Measurement is maturing – and more honest
Twitch's view changes and YouTube's testing tools mean you'll see clearer, sometimes harsher numbers. Embrace this. It's the route to smarter creative and media decisions.

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