team5pm

the social shift

Consumer behaviors and platform trends in the Netherlands & Sweden



2025

introduction

Social media never stands still. Platforms evolve, consumer behaviors shift, and new technologies, like AI, redefine how we connect and engage. What does this mean for brands operating in 2025? Social media is no longer just a tool for connection. It's a discovery engine, a shopping destination, and a platform for storytelling.

In this report, we explore the unique preferences and behaviors of audiences in the Netherlands 🇳🇱 and Sweden 🇸🇪, two leaders in digital adoption, offering a comparative lens into their social media habits.

Key questions answered:

- → How are different generations engaging with social media platforms, and which platforms hold the most cross-generational reach?
- → What drives consumers to follow, engage with, or unfollow brands, and how can businesses stay relevant to their audiences?
- → How is social media shaping brand discovery, shopping, and consumer decision-making across demographics?



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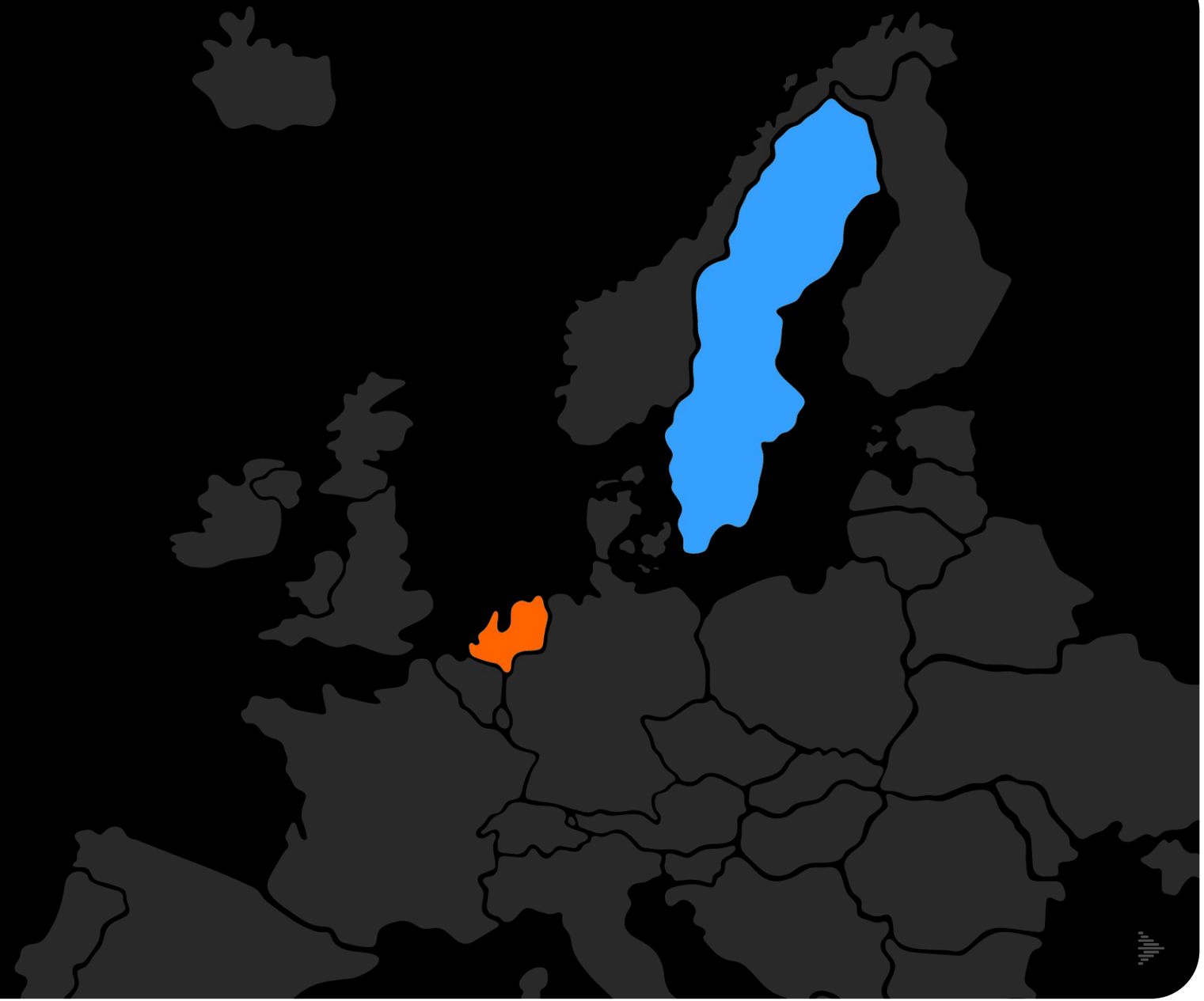
01

survey overview about the data

The study collected data from respondents in both the **Netherlands** 🇳🇱 and **Sweden** 🇸🇪, with a total of **397** survey participants representing the Dutch demographic, and **402** respondents representing the Swedish demographic.

The survey was conducted online in March 2025, ensuring anonymous participation and the inclusion of diverse generational behaviors.

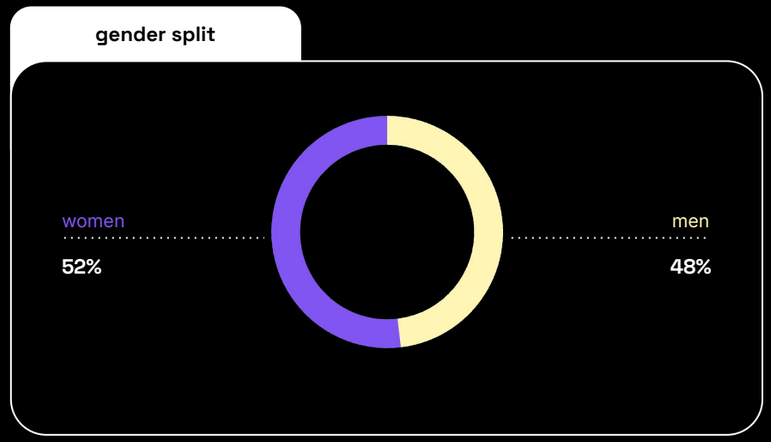


01 overview about the data

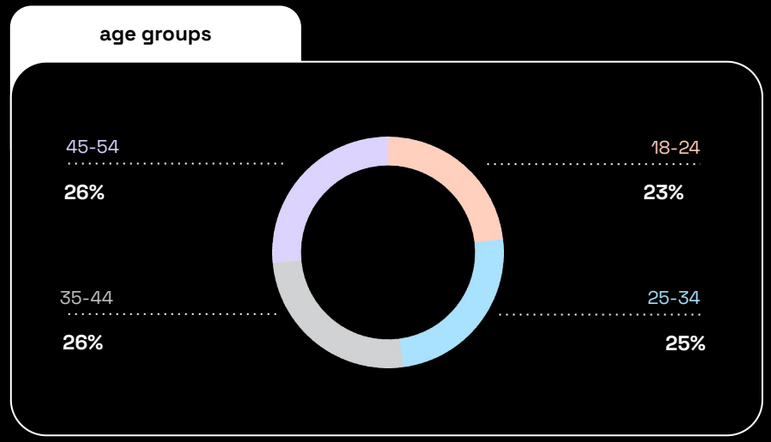
demographic breakdown

Netherlands 🇳🇱

gender split

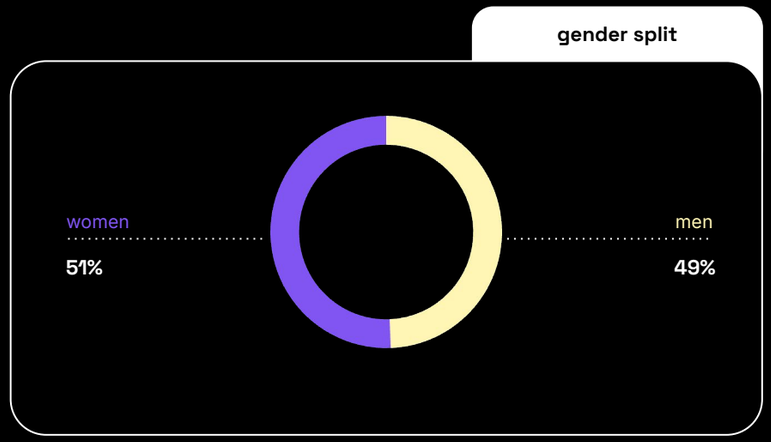


age groups

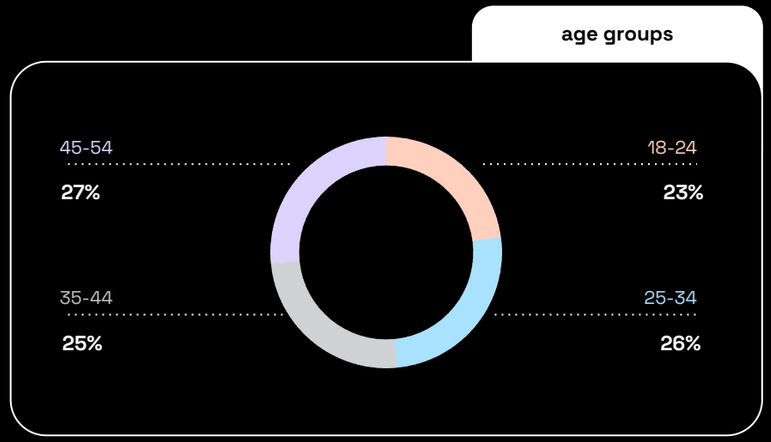


Sweden 🇸🇪

gender split



age groups



02

results
platform usage



02 platform usage

platforms for brand following

▶️ YouTube stands out as a cross-generational platform

In the Netherlands and Sweden, YouTube is the most inclusive platform for following brands, attracting audiences of all ages. Swedish users are slightly more engaged in following brands on YouTube than Dutch users.

🇸🇪Swedish users follow brands more

Sweden's top 5 platforms show higher percentages of users following brands compared to the Netherlands. Snapchat stands out, with 40% of Swedish youth following brands versus 27% in the Netherlands.

Generational divide for Instagram & TikTok

Both platforms thrive with younger users but drop sharply among older generations. In Sweden, TikTok has 70% engagement among 18–24-year-olds but only 12% for ages 45–54. The Dutch numbers are similar (46% vs. 9%).

🇳🇱The Dutch "active non-followers"

In the Netherlands, 19% of active social media users don't follow brands on any platform. This highlights the need for engaging, creative content to convert these audiences.

On which platforms do you actively follow brands?



'Actively following' refers to actions like following or subscribing to a brand's account, as well as engaging with their content—whether it's through liking posts, leaving comments, or sharing their content with others.

02 platform usage

reasons for brand following ✅

Dutch and Swedish audiences report similar motivations for following brands on social media:

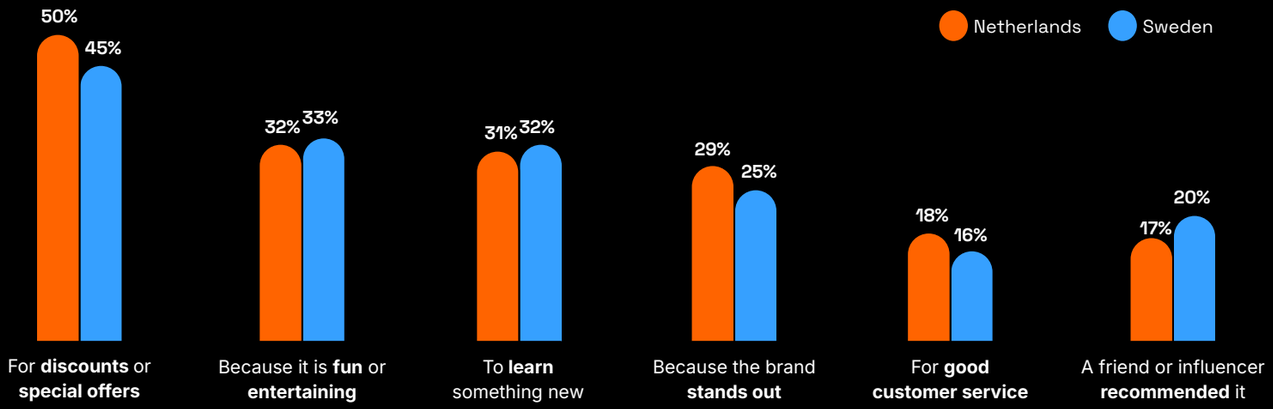
Discounts
are the top driver, motivating 50% of users in the Netherlands and 45% in Sweden to follow brands.

Entertainment & learning
are both highly valued, with around 31–33% of users in both regions following brands for entertainment or to learn something new.

Recommendations
from friends or influencers play a slightly bigger role in Sweden, where 20% of users follow brands for this reason, compared to 17% in the Netherlands.

Customer service
has minimal impact, with only 18% of Dutch users and 16% of Swedish users citing it as a reason to follow brands.

What are the main reasons for you to *follow* a brand on social media?

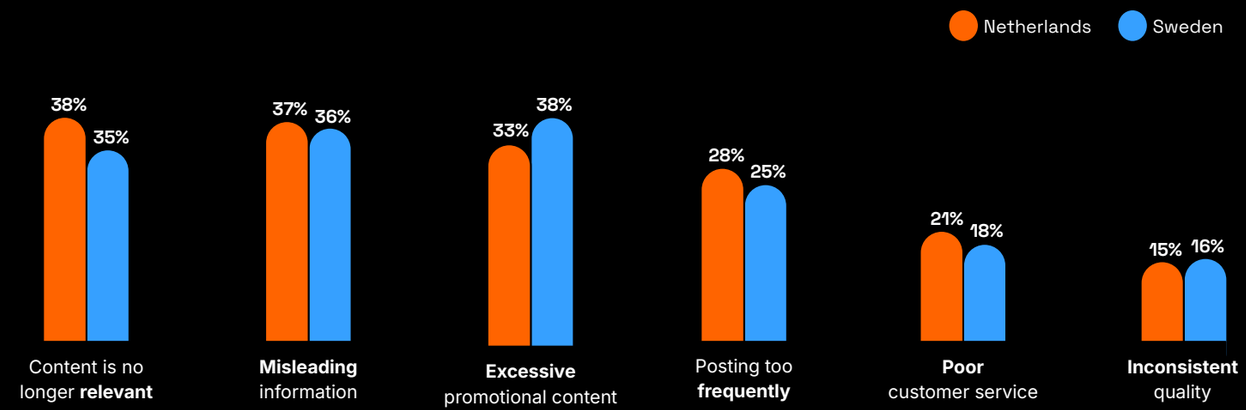


reasons consumers unfollow brands ❌

In the Netherlands and Sweden, users primarily unfollow brands due to issues with content relevance and trust:

- In the Netherlands, content no longer relevant is the top reason, reported by 38% of users, including 55% of 18–24-year-olds.
- In Sweden, too much promotional content is the most common reason, reported by 38% of users.
- Misleading information is another issue, reported by 37% of users in the Netherlands and 36% in Sweden.
- Other reasons include posting too frequently, reported by 25% of users in Sweden and 28% in the Netherlands, as well as poor customer service, reported by 18% in Sweden and 21% in the Netherlands.

What are the main reasons for you to *unfollow* a brand on social media?



Do you discover new brands on social media?

This includes Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Facebook, Google, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Twitter/X, Snapchat, Online shopping platforms (e.g. Amazon).





02 platform usage

platforms for brand discovery across generations

Social media drives brand discovery

Social media plays a key role in brand discovery, with 88% of users in the Netherlands and 93% in Sweden finding new brands on social media, meaning its importance is near universal.

Instagram is the #1 discovery platform

Instagram is the leading platform for brand discovery in both regions. 37% of users in the Netherlands and 43% in Sweden use Instagram for this purpose, with the platform performing strongest among 18 to 24-year-olds. 54% of Dutch and 55% of Swedish users in this age group discover brands on Instagram, making it essential for reaching Gen Z and Millennials.

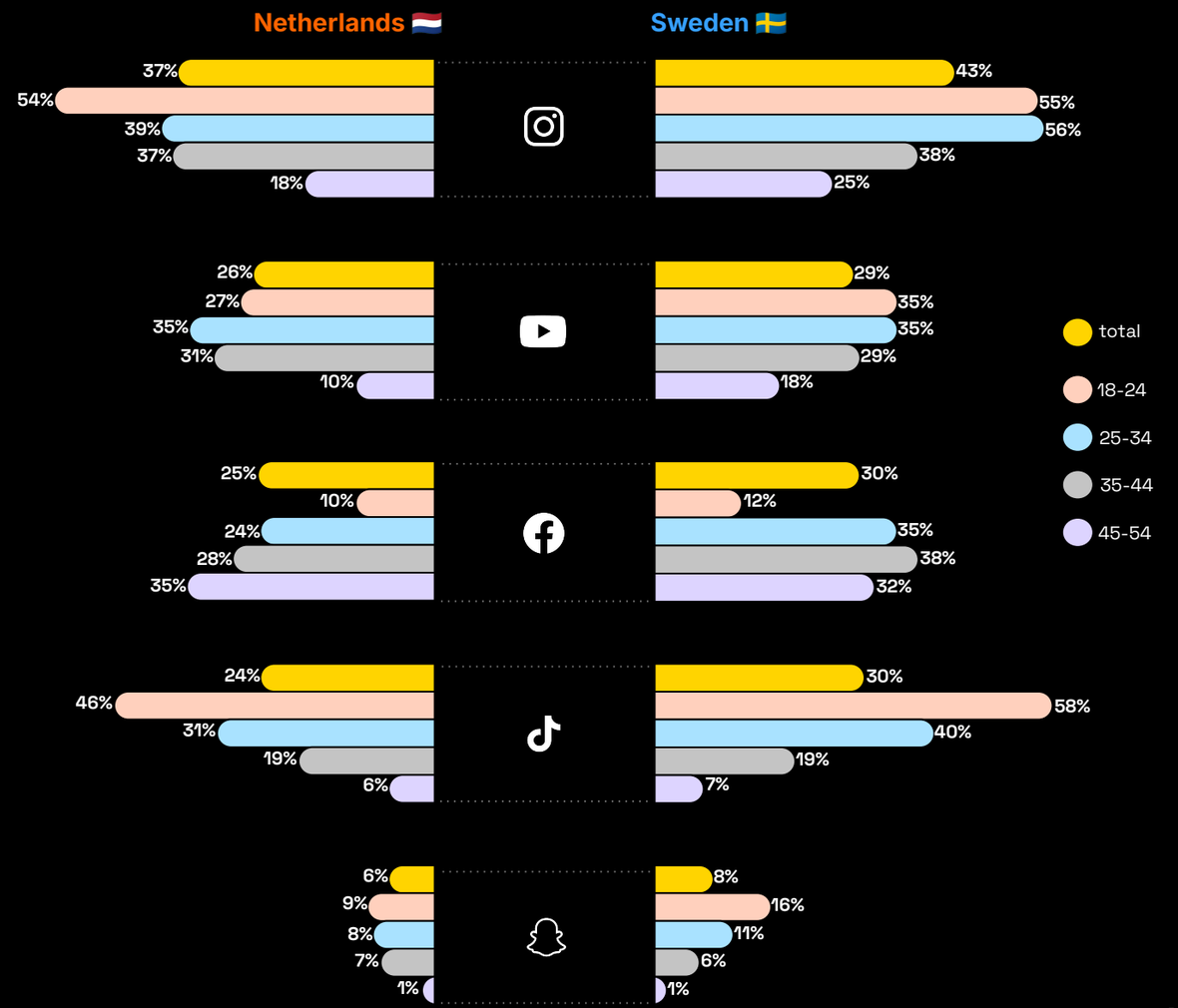
TikTok dominates Gen Z discovery

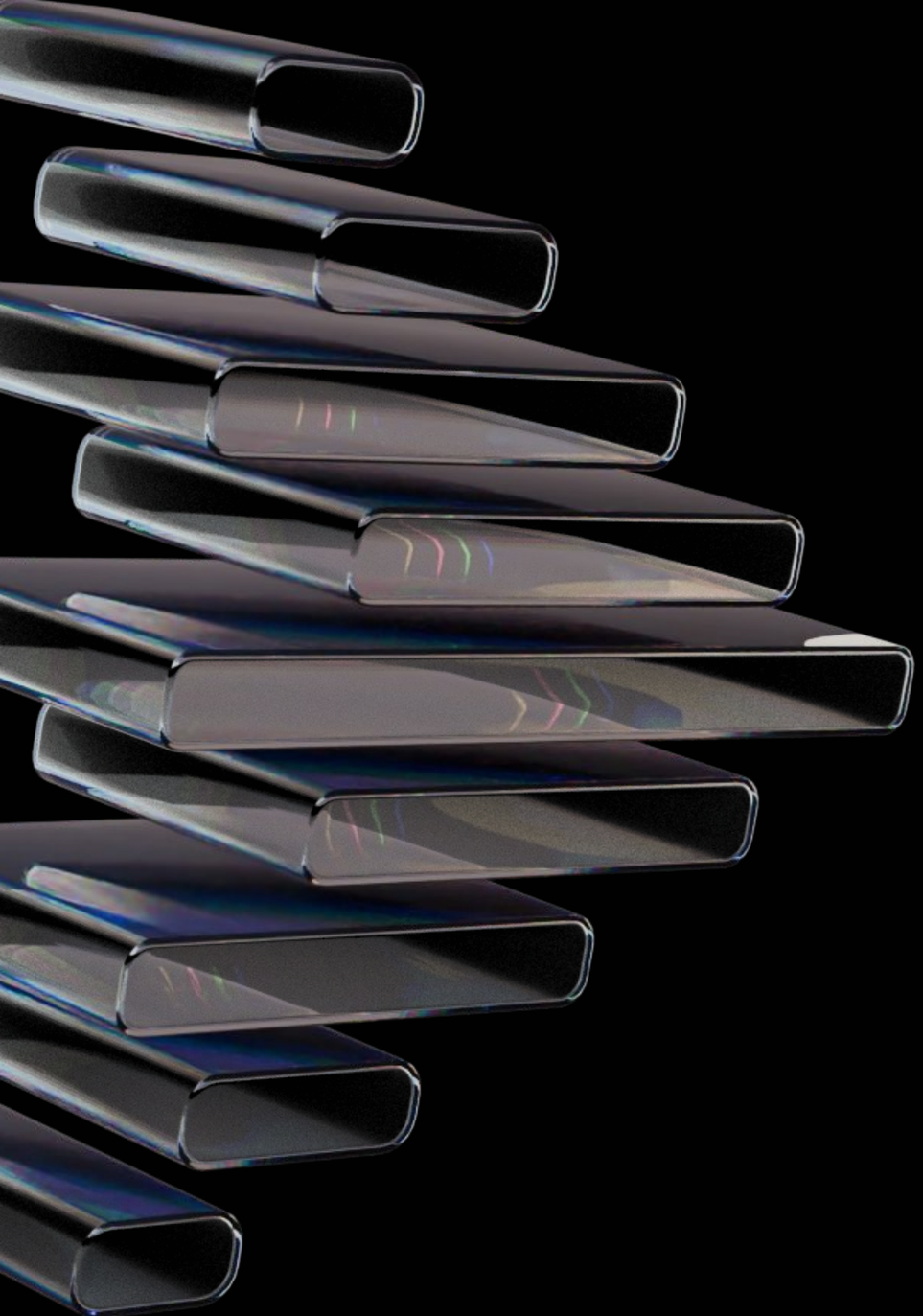
TikTok is a powerhouse for younger users, with 46% of Dutch and 58% of Swedish 18 to 24-year-olds using it to discover brands. However, TikTok's appeal drops sharply with older users, with only 6% in the Netherlands and 7% in Sweden among the 45 to 54 age group.

YouTube bridges generations

YouTube is a key platform for brand discovery, with strong engagement among 18- to 44-year-olds in the Netherlands ranging from 27% to 35% and in Sweden from 29% to 35%. It also attracts 10% of 45- to 54-year-olds in the Netherlands and 18% in Sweden, highlighting a slightly broader appeal in Sweden across age groups.

On which platforms do you usually discover new brands?





“social media is an important source to discover new brands.”

A majority of users agree that social media plays a critical role in brand discovery, with **62%** in the Netherlands 🇳🇱 and **59%** in Sweden 🇸🇪 supporting this statement.


03
results
brand interaction & content

brand engagement frequency

Most users engage with brands frequently
In both the Netherlands and Sweden, a majority of users engage with brand content weekly or more — 60% in the Netherlands and 64% in Sweden. Even more impressively, 23% of users in the Netherlands and 26% in Sweden engage daily, emphasizing the importance of consistent content from brands.

Younger generations lead in activity
Younger users are the most active, with 99% of Swedish and 96% of Dutch 18-to-24-year-olds regularly interacting with brands on social media.

Older generations engage less overall
Older users are generally less likely to interact with brands on social media. In the Netherlands, 31% of users aged 45 to 54 report never engaging with brands, compared to 21% in Sweden, highlighting lower interaction levels in this age group across both regions.



How often do you engage with content from brands on social media?

By liking, commenting, sharing, or engaging with posts in other ways.

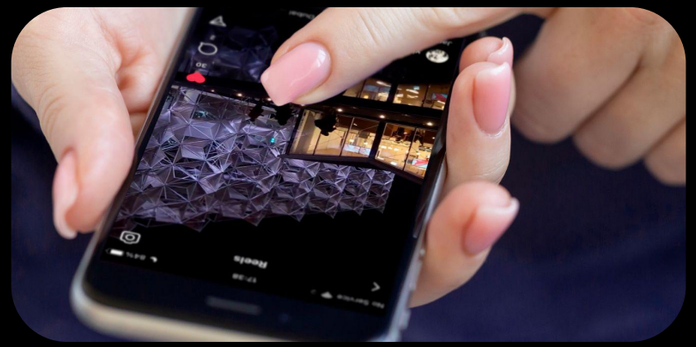


preferred types of brand interaction

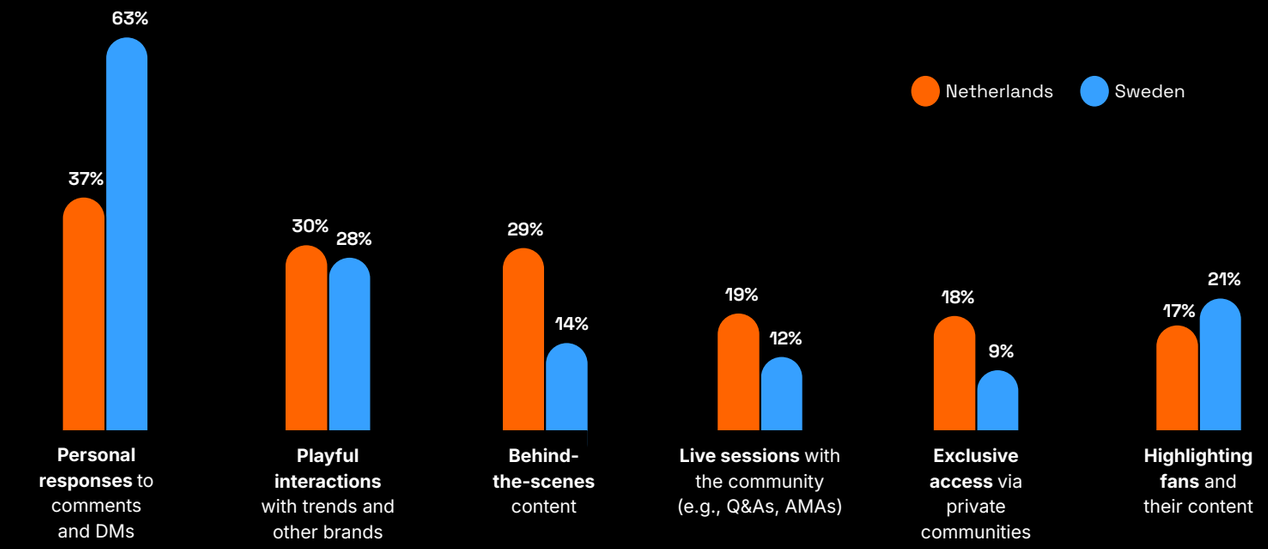
Personal responses matter more in Sweden
Responding to DMs and comments is highly valued in both countries but more so in Sweden, where 63% of users prioritize it, compared to 37% in the Netherlands. In Sweden, all age groups value this highly, while only 27% of younger Dutch users aged 18 to 24 feel the same.

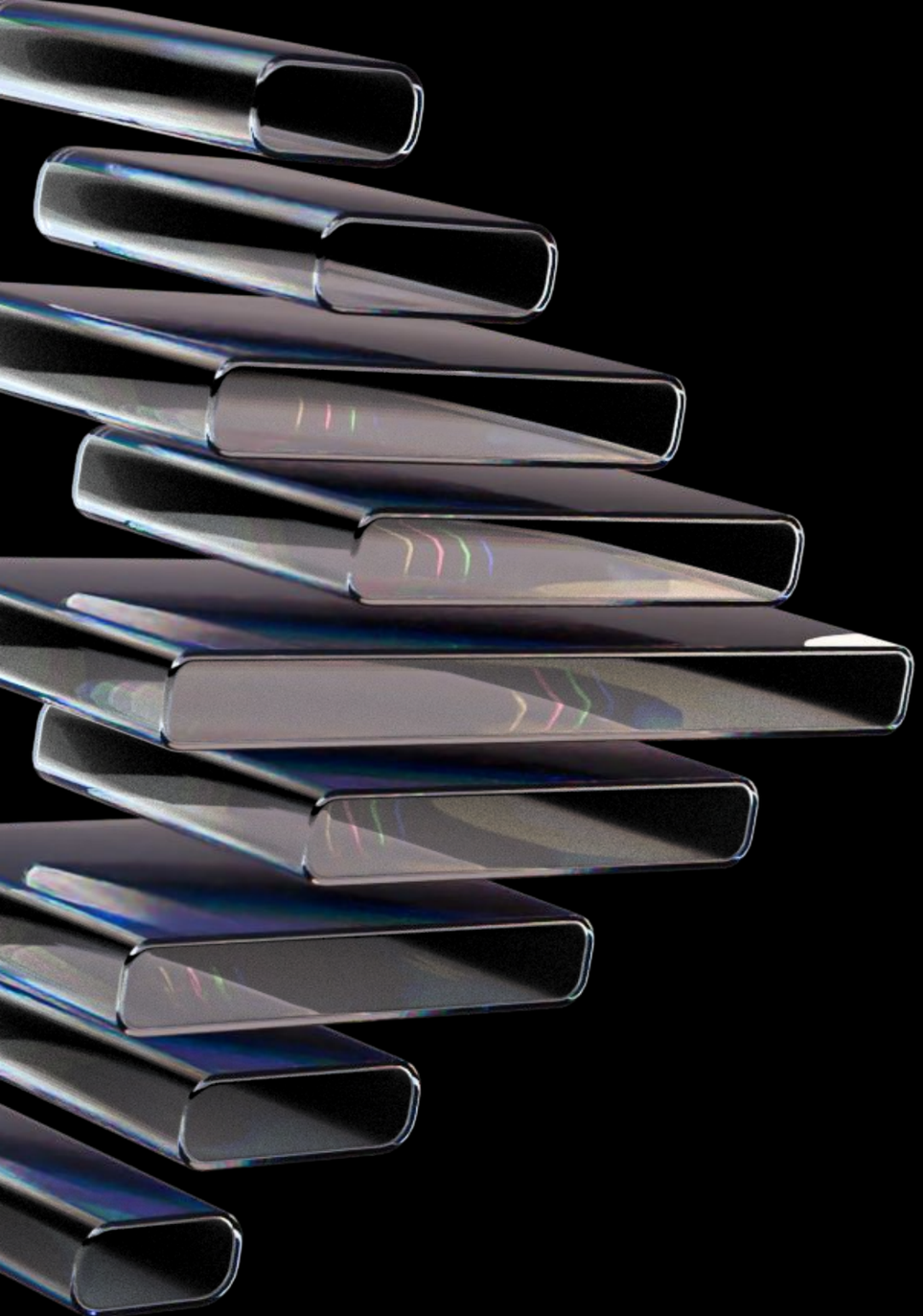
Behind-the-scenes content is popular in the Netherlands
In the Netherlands, 29% of users appreciate behind-the-scenes content. Interest is highest among those aged 25 to 34 at 36%. In Sweden, only 14% of users value this, showing Dutch audiences' stronger preference for transparency and storytelling.

Playful interactions are popular in both regions
Playful interactions with trends or other brands appeal to 30% of users in the Netherlands and 28% in Sweden. This is a fun and engaging approach that works in both regions.



What types of interactions with brands do you value most on social media?





“brands that don’t interact with followers risk losing trust and interest.” 💔

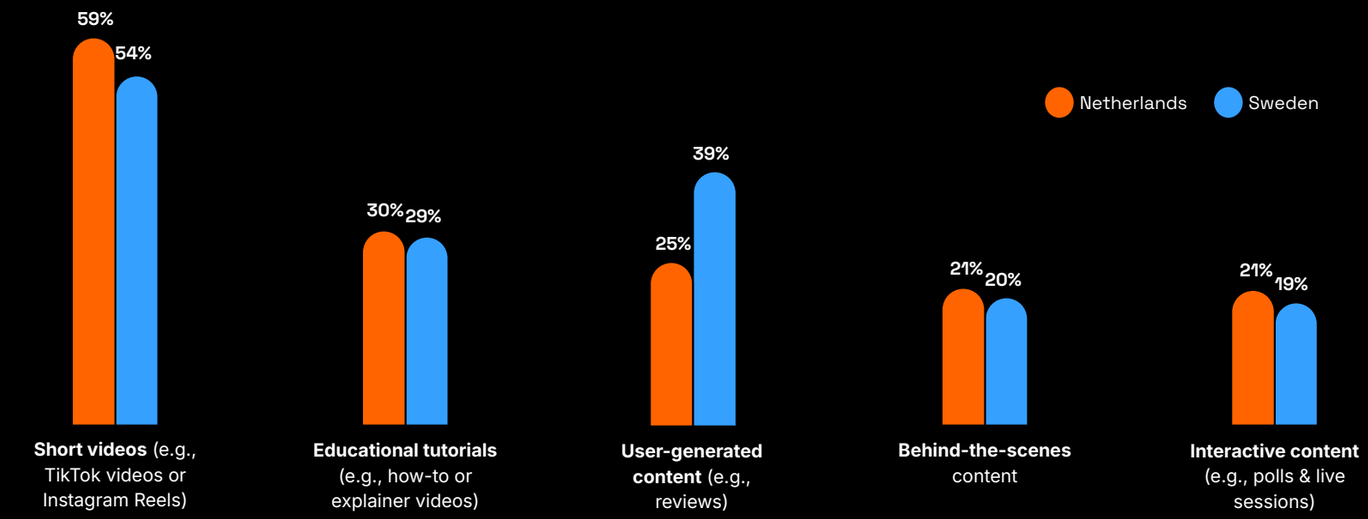
With **64%** of Swedes 🇸🇪 and **57%** of Dutch 🇳🇱 users agreeing, this highlights why personal responses to comments/DMs rank as the most important interaction type.

attention-grabbing content 🤩

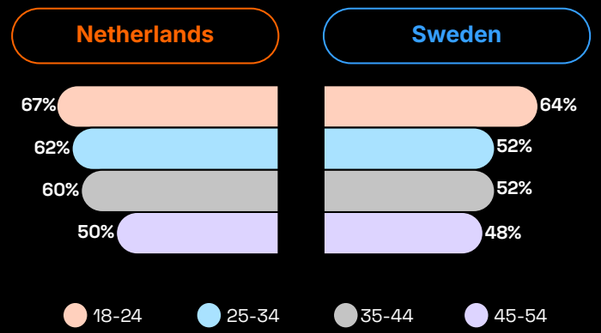
Short-form videos dominate across regions
Short videos are the most popular content type in both the Netherlands and Sweden, preferred by 59% of users in the Netherlands and 54% in Sweden. Younger users drive this trend, with 67% of Dutch and 64% of Swedish 18 to 24-year-olds favoring this format. While short videos appeal across generations, preferences decline slightly with age.

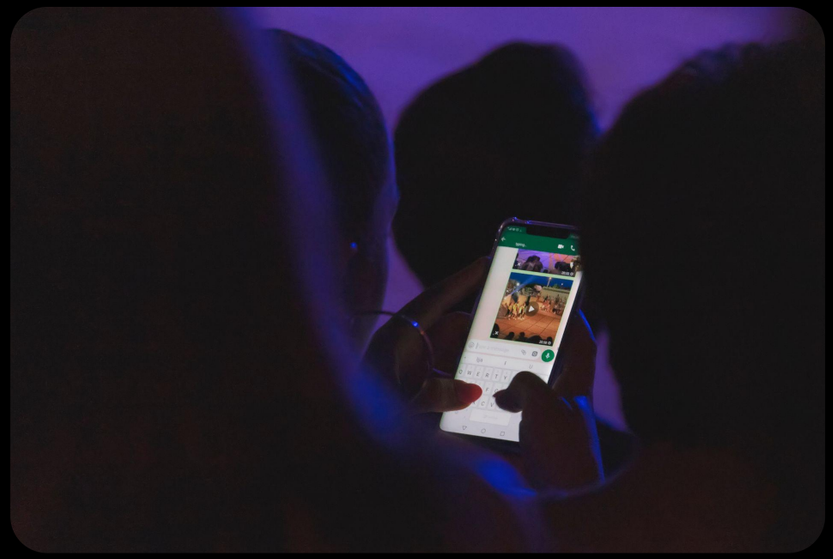
User-generated content excels in Sweden
UGC, such as reviews and testimonials, is far more popular in Sweden, where 39% of users prefer it, compared to 25% in the Netherlands. Among Swedes aged 35 to 44, this preference rises to 45%, compared to 25% in the Netherlands.

What type of content from brands catches your attention on social media?



Short-form video preference per age group





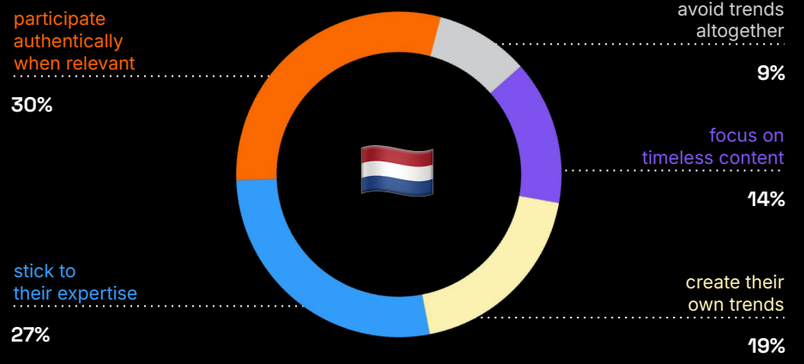
brand engagement with trends

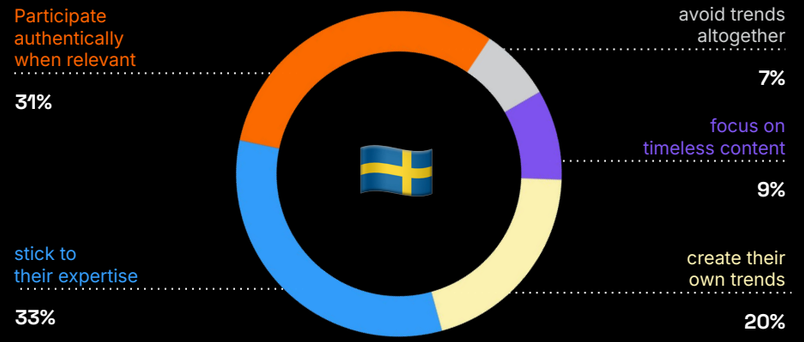
Authentic participation is most preferred
In both regions, most users prefer brands to participate authentically when relevant, with around 30% of users in both the Netherlands and Sweden favoring this approach. Authenticity is valued across all age groups and ranks highest among younger users aged 18 to 24.

Younger users want brands to create trends
In the Netherlands, 29% of 18 to 24-year-olds prefer brands to create their own trends, compared to 25% in Sweden. This preference drops with age, with only 11 to 15% of Dutch respective Swedish users aged 45 to 54 supporting brands taking a more creative and trend-setting approach.

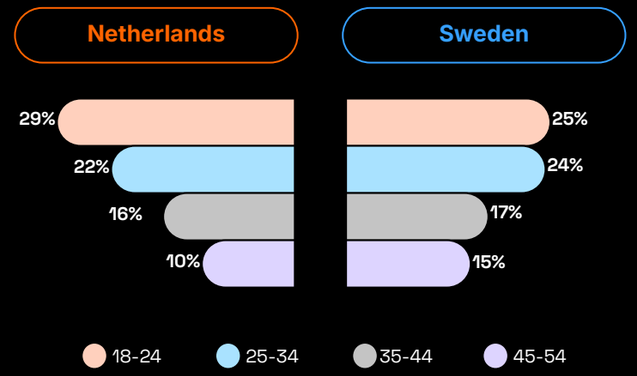
How do you want brands to respond to trends?

By trends, we mean popular topics, viral challenges, or behaviors that gain a lot of attention on social media.





Preference for brands creating their own trends by age group




04
results
social commerce

04 social commerce

social media shopping preferences

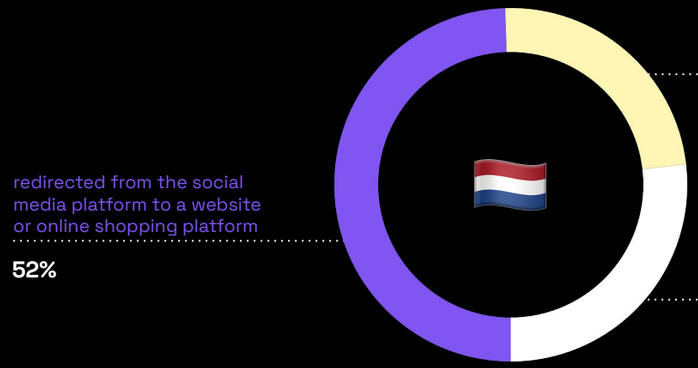
Consumers in the Netherlands and Sweden share similar preferences for completing purchases on social media, but direct in-platform purchasing still shows room for improvement.

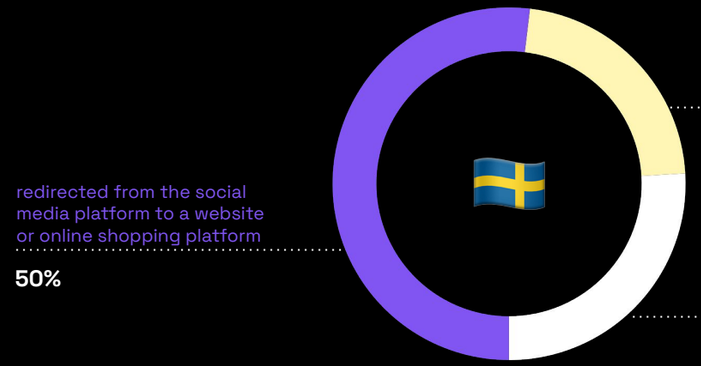
External websites are preferred
Around 50% of users in both the Netherlands and Sweden prefer being redirected to an external website or shop, where trust is higher, and the checkout process is clearer.

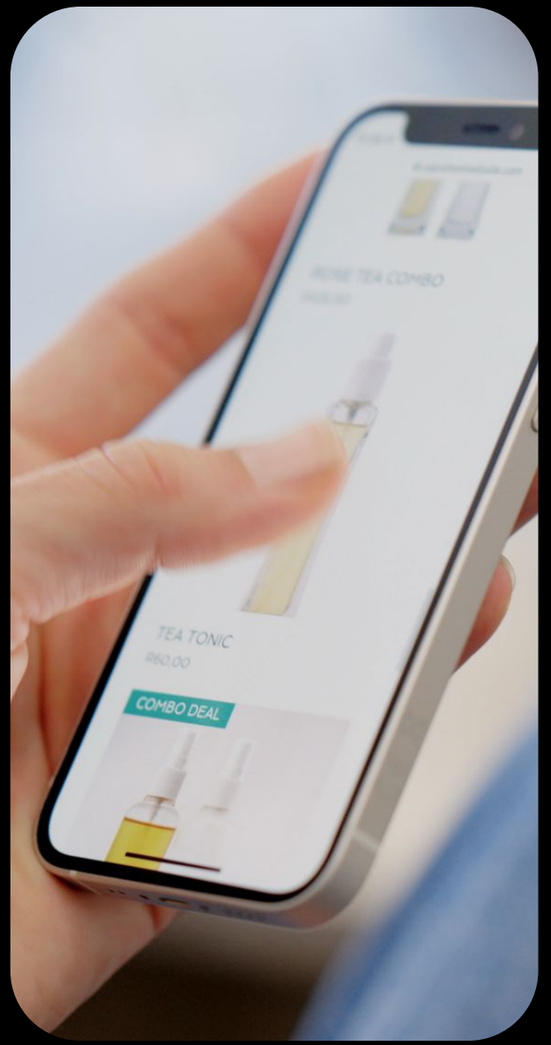
Security and convenience matter
Between 26% and 27% of users prioritize security and convenience, highlighting an opportunity for platforms to build trust and simplify shopping experiences.

In-platform purchases face challenges
Direct in-platform purchases are the least popular method, chosen by 22% of users in the Netherlands and 24% in Sweden, due to trust gaps and poor usability. Addressing these issues could boost adoption of native social commerce.

If you were to purchase a product through social media, how would you prefer to complete the transaction?





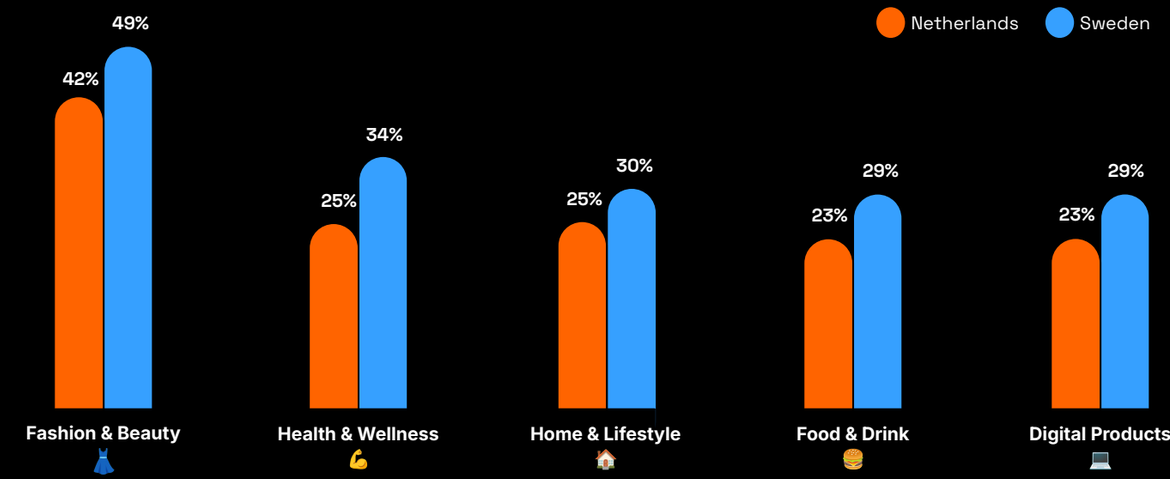


04 social commerce

top categories for social media shopping

🏆Fashion & Beauty lead the way
Fashion & Beauty are the top categories for social commerce, chosen by 42% of users in the Netherlands and 49% in Sweden. Other categories, including Health & Wellness, Home & Lifestyle, and Technology & Gadgets, show consistent interest across both regions, with most categories receiving between 23% and 34% of consumer preference. These results highlight opportunities for brands to capture attention in areas beyond Fashion & Beauty.

Which product categories would you consider purchasing via social media?



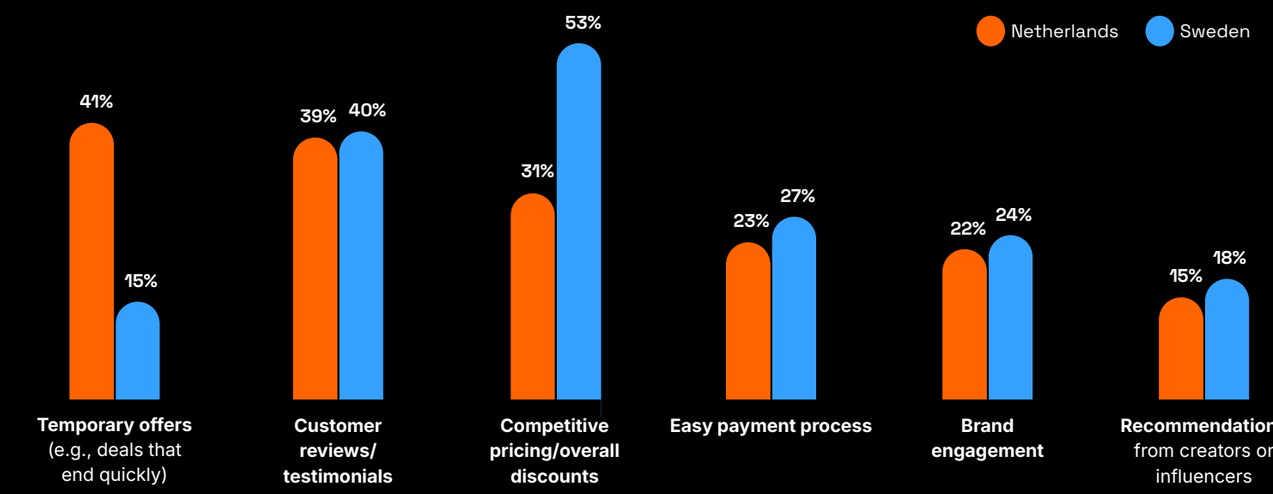
social shopping drivers

Shopping drivers differ between Dutch and Swedish consumers

Dutch users prioritize temporary offers, with 41% citing them as the most important factor, followed by customer reviews at 39%. Competitive pricing is less important in the Netherlands, selected by 31%.

In Sweden, competitive pricing is the top factor, valued by 53% of users, followed by customer reviews at 40%. Temporary offers are less significant, with only 15% of Swedish users prioritizing them.

What is most important to you when using social media for shopping?





05

results
influence & trust

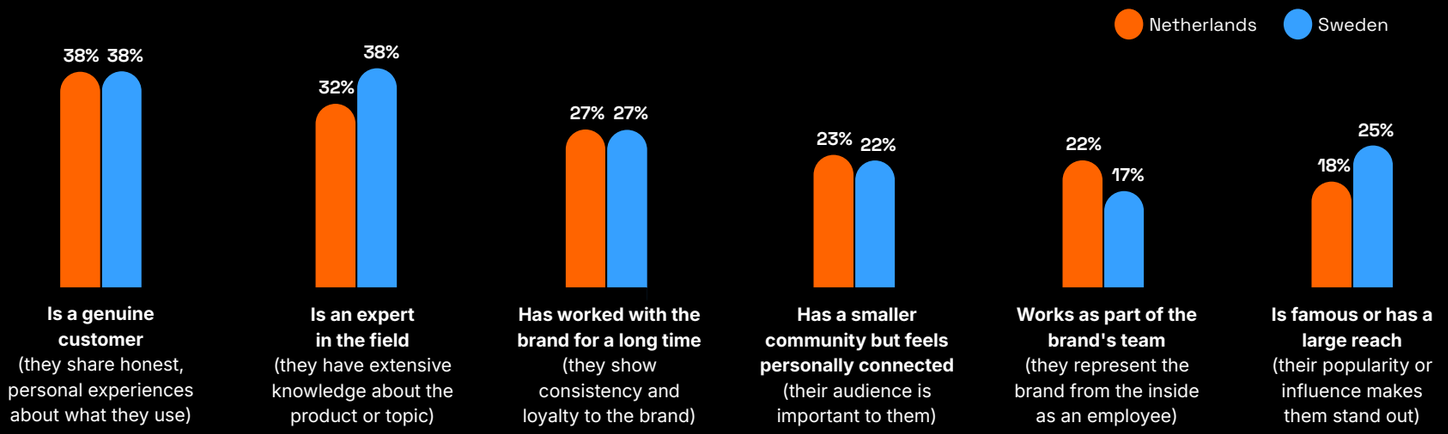
traits consumers value in influencers

Consumers value authenticity and expertise in influencers
In both the Netherlands and Sweden, authenticity and expertise are the top traits consumers value in influencers. In each region, 38% of users value influencers who are genuine customers, while 38% of Swedish and 32% of Dutch consumers prioritize expertise in the field.

Sweden values high-reach influencers
Swedish audiences are more likely to value influencers with fame or large followings, at 25% compared to 18% in the Netherlands, showing broader acceptance of high-reach creators in Sweden.

What makes a creator's or influencer's content appealing to you when they collaborate with a brand on social media?

The following is about social media creators and influencers, and how they collaborate with brands to create content.



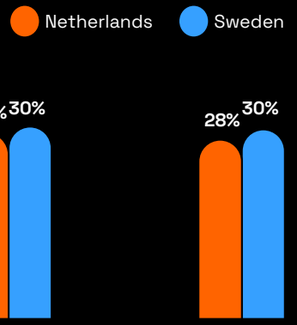


factors driving trust in creators

Trust factors are equally important across markets

Consumers in both the Netherlands and Sweden value a range of qualities in creators, with all key trust factors ranked at around 30%. Expertise, detailed product reviews, transparency in partnerships, authentic content, and consistent, long-term product use are all seen as equally important to building trust in both markets.

What makes you trust a creator's recommendation about a brand on social media?



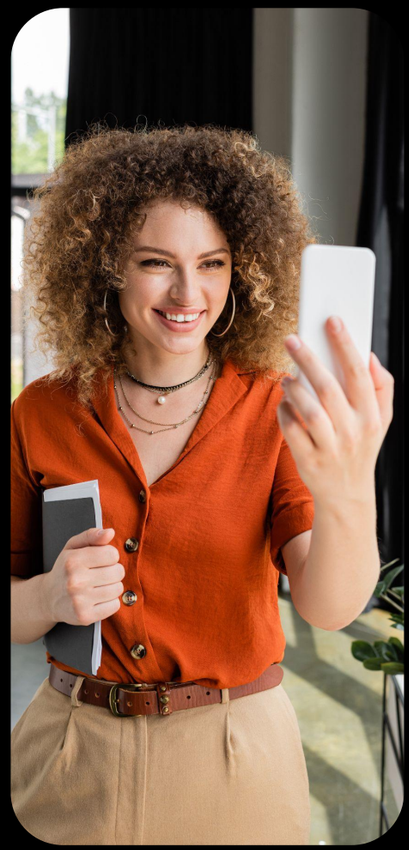
Expertise in the field (the creator has credible knowledge or experience related to the product/topic)

Transparent partnership disclosure (the creator clearly states whether the content is sponsored or a paid collaboration)

Detailed product reviews (the creator provides clear pros and cons and in-depth explanations about the product)

Authentic content style (the creator's content feels genuine, honest, and relatable)

Consistent use over a longer period (the creator uses and promotes the product regularly and for an extended period)



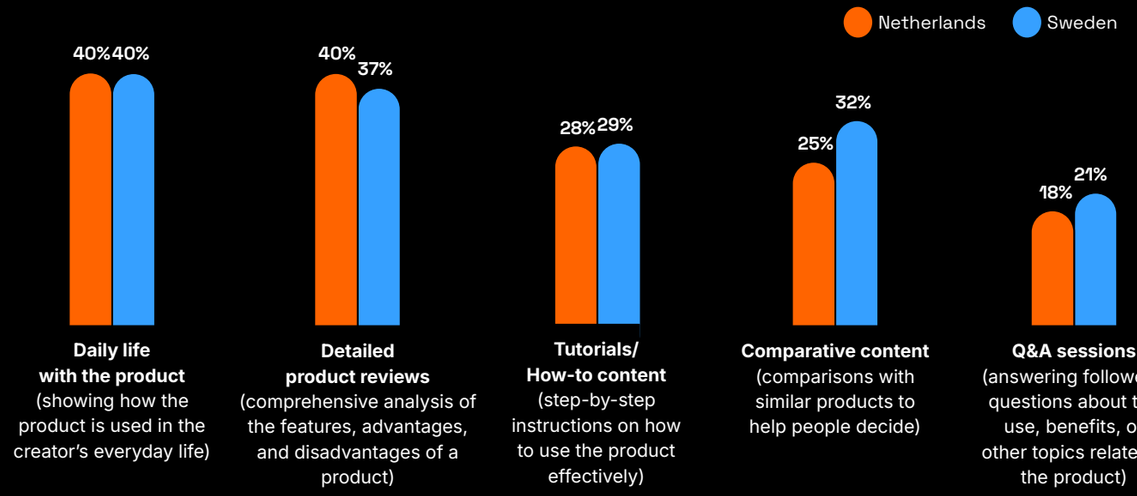
top creator & influencer content formats

Daily life content and reviews lead
Daily life content showing how products are used is the most valued format, chosen by 40% of users in both the Netherlands and Sweden. Detailed product reviews follow closely, preferred by 40% in the Netherlands and 37% in Sweden.

Comparative content appeals to Swedish audiences
Content comparing products to similar alternatives resonates more in Sweden, preferred by 32% of users compared to 25% in the Netherlands. This highlights Swedish consumers' stronger interest in critical evaluations to support decision-making.

Tutorials resonate universally
How-to tutorials are appreciated in both regions, with 28% of Dutch users and 29% of Swedish users expressing interest in educational and instructional content.

What type of content from a creator is most valuable to you when they collaborate with a brand?







06

results
AI & content

06 AI & content

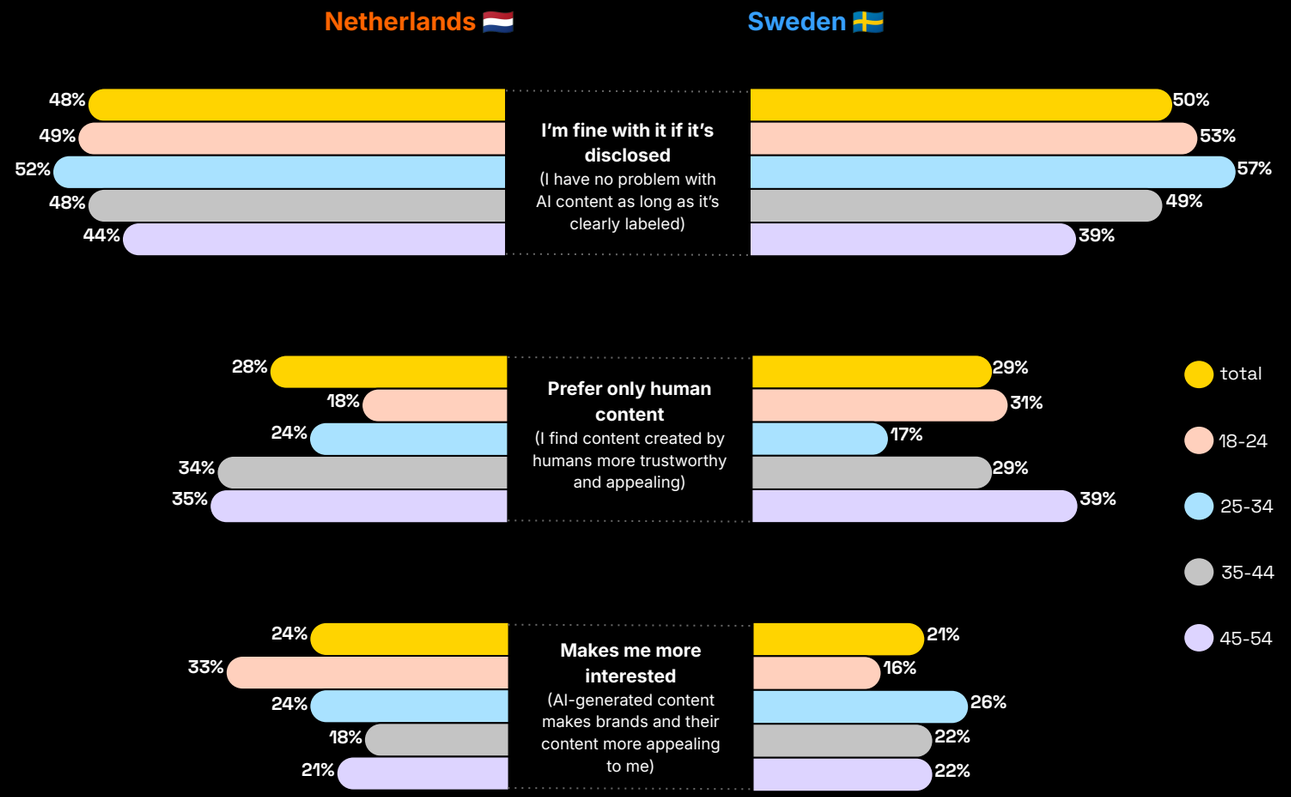
attitudes toward AI content

Most accept AI-generated content if clearly labeled
A large share of users in both the Netherlands and Sweden are fine with AI-generated content from brands as long as it is clearly labeled. This sentiment is shared by 48% of users in the Netherlands and 50% in Sweden.

Younger Dutch users find AI content engaging
In the Netherlands, younger users are more open to AI-generated content from brands, but enthusiasm decreases with age. Among 18–24-year-olds, 33% say AI content makes brands more interesting, compared to just 21% of users aged 45–54. Older Dutch users are also more likely to prefer human-created content: 35% of those aged 45–54 find it more reliable and appealing, compared to 18% of 18–24-year-olds.

What are your thoughts on AI-generated content from brands on social media?

For example, text, images, or videos created by Artificial Intelligence instead of humans.



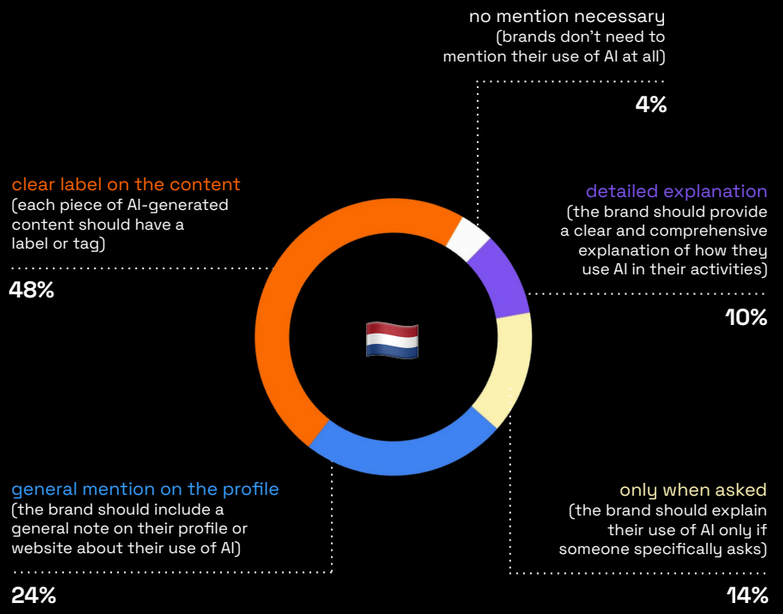
AI disclosure by brands

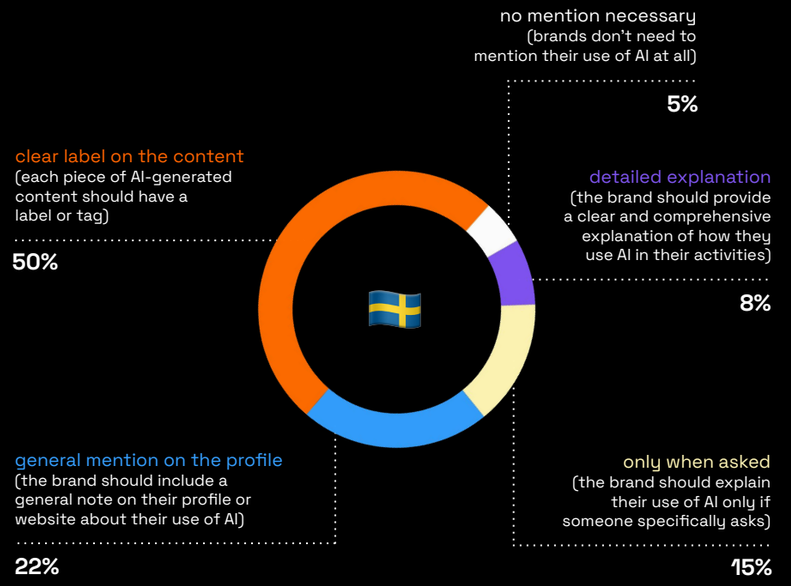
Clear AI labeling on every post is the preferred approach

The majority of users in both the Netherlands and Sweden prefer brands to clearly label each post generated using AI, with 50% in Sweden and 48% in the Netherlands favoring this. Other approaches rank much lower. Only 22-24% of users in both countries prefer general information in the brand's profile. Even fewer support options such as explaining AI use only when asked, chosen by 14-15%, providing a detailed explanation, preferred by 8-10%, or not disclosing AI use at all, selected by 4-5%. This shows a strong demand for transparency, with clear labeling on every AI-generated post being the gold standard for building consumer trust.

How do you think brands should disclose their use of AI?

For example, the use of Artificial Intelligence to create content or assist with customer interactions.





07

results
social search



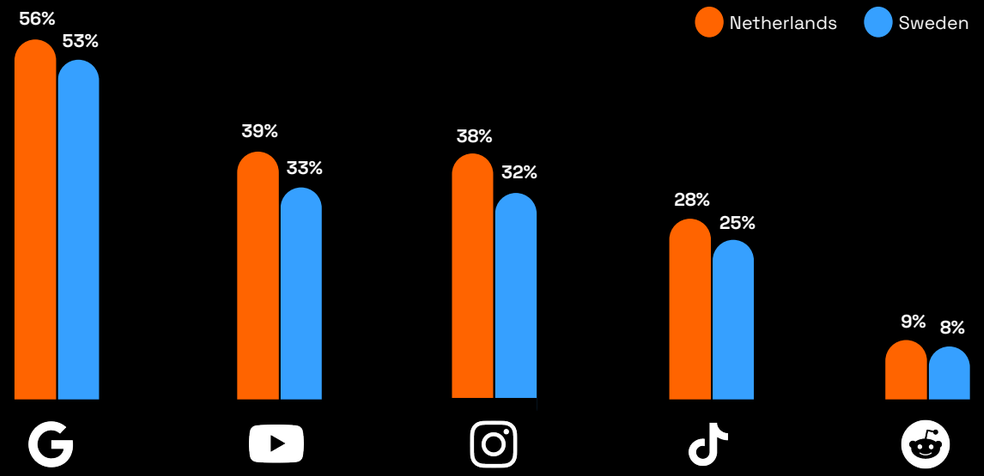
platforms for social search

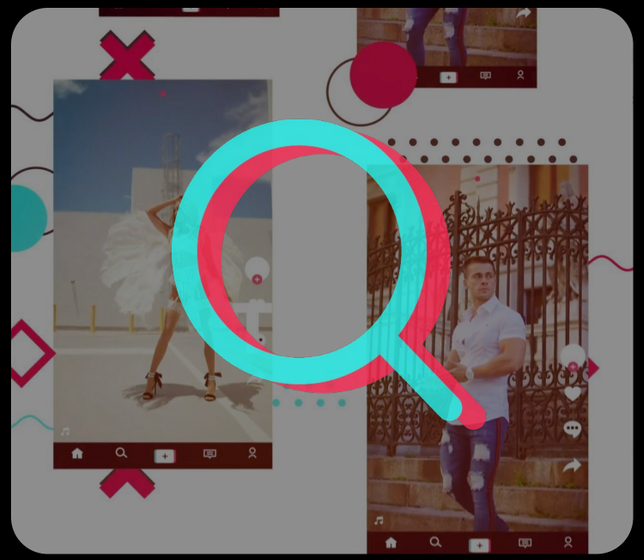
Google leads, but YouTube Is catching up
Google remains the most-used search engine in both the Netherlands and Sweden, with daily usage at 56% and 53%, respectively. YouTube is gaining ground, used daily by 39% of Dutch users and 33% of Swedish users. Its growth is driven by younger audiences, with 49% of Dutch users aged 18 to 24 and 41% of Swedes in the same age group using it daily.

Instagram is key for younger searchers
In the Netherlands, 38% of users rely on Instagram daily for search, compared to 32% in Sweden. Among younger audiences, 50% of Dutch users aged 18 to 24 and 34% of Swedes use Instagram daily for discovery.

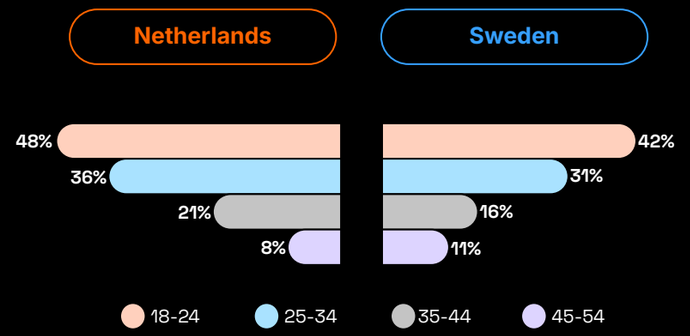
TikTok emerges as a search platform
TikTok is used daily for search by 28% of Dutch users and 25% of Swedish users. While younger users dominate, TikTok is increasingly used by older age groups, showing potential as a wider discovery tool.

Which social media platforms do you use daily to look for information, advice, or recommendations?





Daily TikTok usage as a search platform by age group



social media search topics

Recipes are a top search in Sweden
Recipe inspiration ranks highest in Sweden, with 45% of users searching for it on social platforms, compared to 33% in the Netherlands, where it ranks fourth. Engagement is highest among 25 to 34-year-olds, with 52% in Sweden and 34% in the Netherlands showing interest.

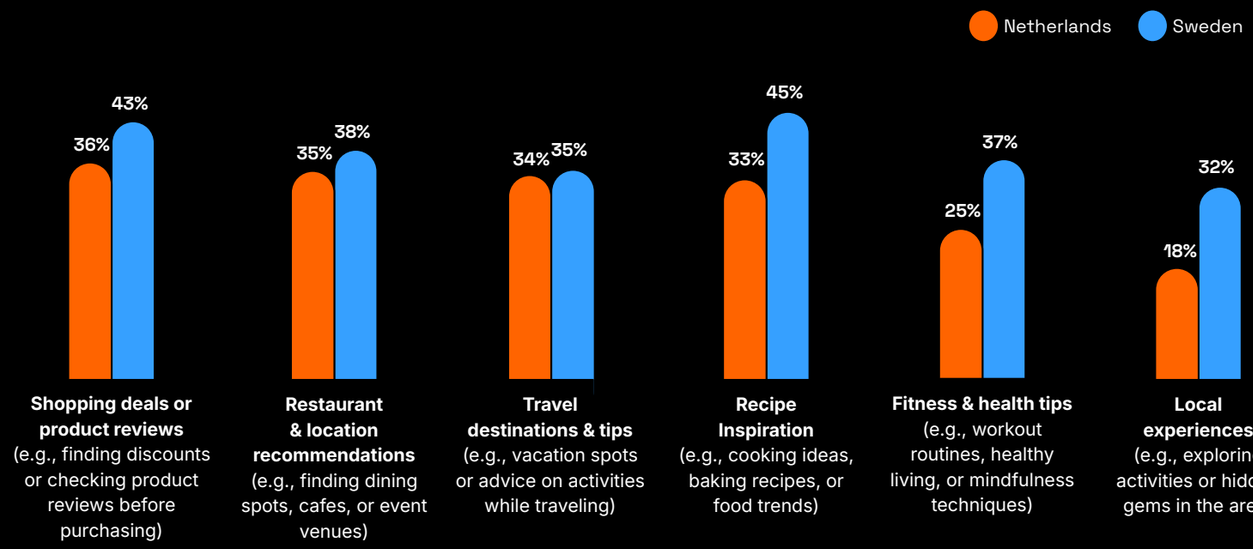
Shopping deals and reviews are popular everywhere
Shopping deals and reviews are leading topics in both countries, ranking first in the Netherlands at 36% and second in Sweden at 43%. Younger users, especially 18 to 24-year-olds in Sweden, show strong interest at 54%, compared to 35% in the Netherlands.

Swedes search for local activities and hidden gems
Content about local experiences such as nearby activities is more popular to search for in Sweden at 32% than in the Netherlands at 18%. This trend is driven by Swedish users aged 45 to 54, with 44% searching for localized recommendations on social platforms.

Dutch search for restaurants and vacation tips
After shopping deals, the most common topics Dutch users search for on social platforms are restaurant recommendations and vacation tips—each chosen by around 35% of users.

Fitness and wellness are a focus for Sweden
Fitness and health tips are more popular in Sweden, with 37% of users searching for this content compared to 25% in the Netherlands. Engagement is particularly high among Swedish users aged 35 to 44, at 41%.

What type of information do you usually look for on social media?



click drivers vs. frustrations in social search

Top factors for clicking on search results:

Trust matters most

A trustworthy creator or brand is the top factor for Swedish users at 37% and ranks second in the Netherlands at 35%.

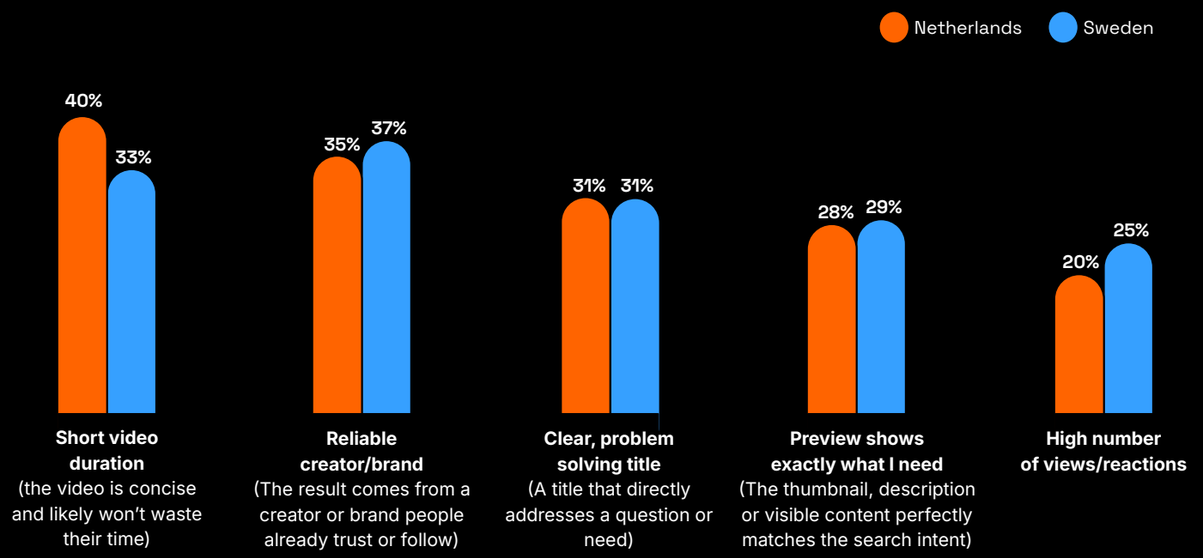
Short content Is important

Short video duration is key for 40% of Dutch users and 33% of Swedish users.

Clear value drives clicks

Problem-solving titles and previews that match user intent are critical for around 31% in both regions.

What factors make you *click* on a search result on video platforms like TikTok or YouTube?



click drivers vs. frustrations in social search

Common frustrations with searching on social:

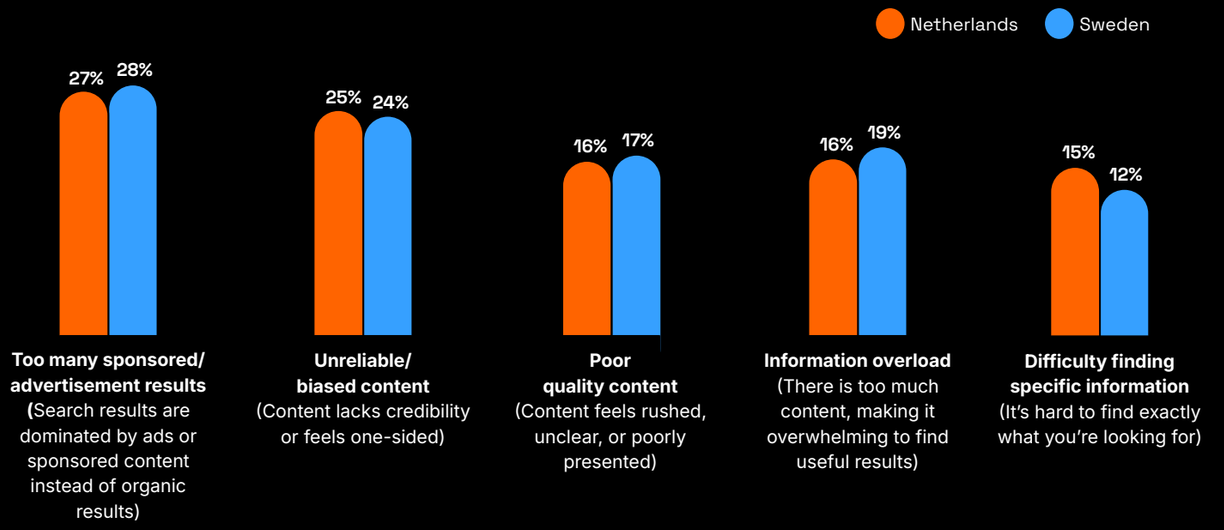
Too many ads

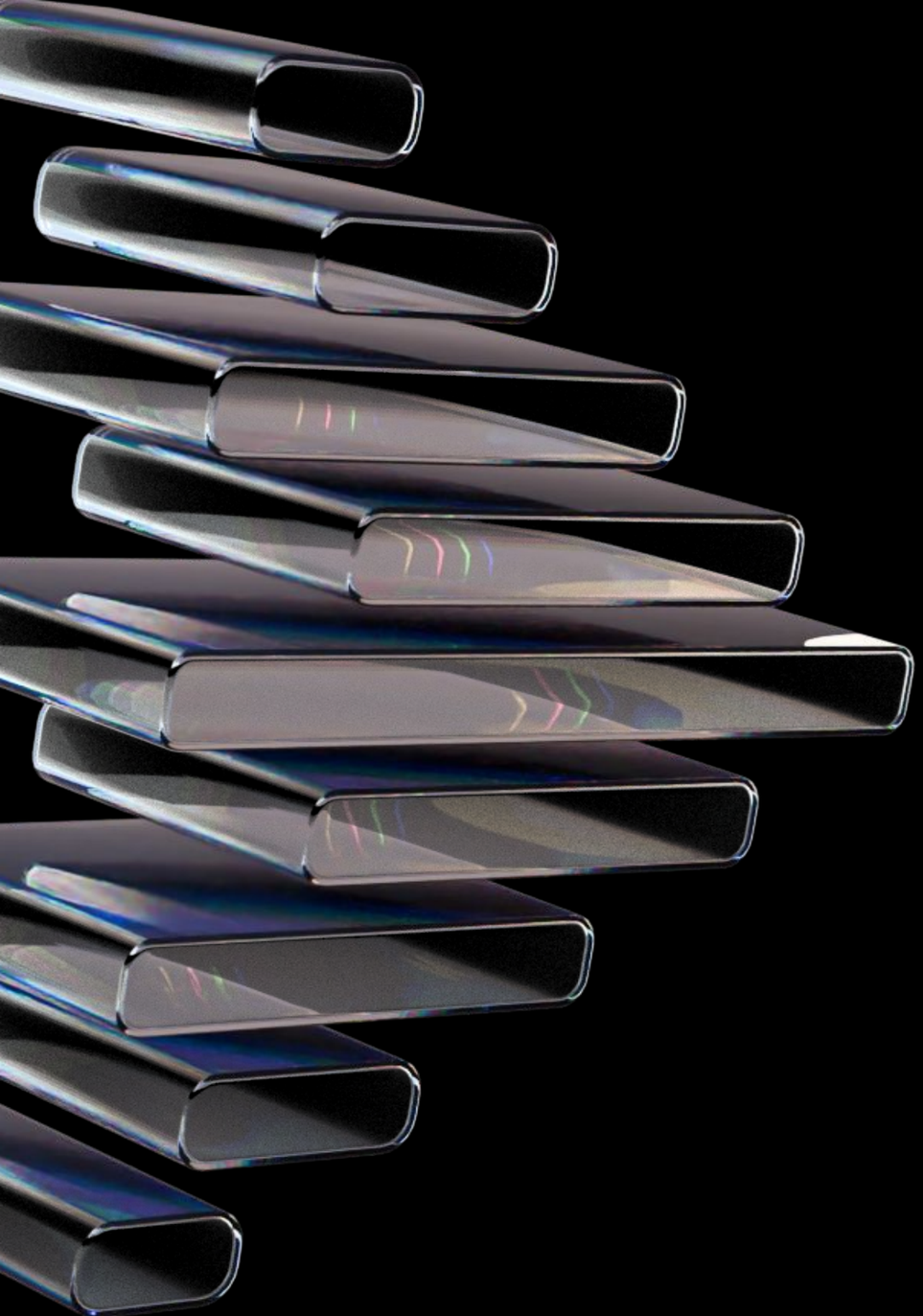
Excessive sponsored or promotional content is the biggest frustration, cited by 27% of users in the Netherlands and 28% in Sweden.

Unreliable content

Unreliable or one-sided content is a close second to the top frustration, reported by 25% of users in the Netherlands and 24% in Sweden.

What *frustrates* 😩 you the most when searching for information on social media?





“social media platforms are preferred for searching information over traditional search engines.”

While Google is still the most used search engine, overall, **43%** of Dutch 🇳🇱 users and **41%** of Swedish 🇸🇪 users agree with the statement that social media platforms are preferred for searching for information over traditional search engines.



08

results improvement areas

08 improvement areas

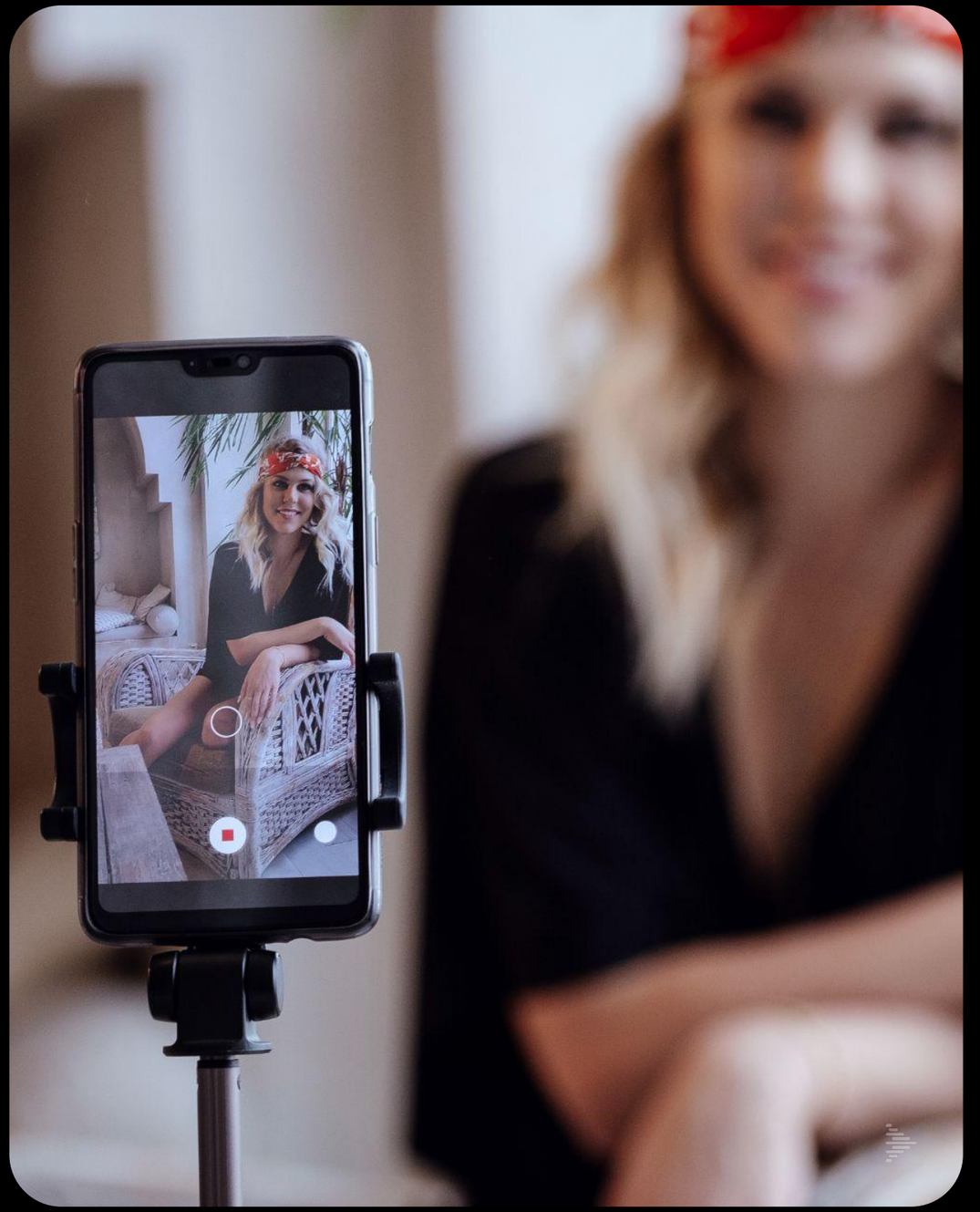
improvements for brands on social

Honesty and transparency are non-negotiable
Across both Sweden and the Netherlands, the loudest call from consumers is for unwavering honesty and transparency. Audiences expect brands to be upfront about their products, services, and any collaborations (like with influencers). They value when brands share authentic stories, admit imperfections, and clearly explain both the benefits and potential downsides of what they offer. This was the most dominant theme, mentioned by approximately 30-35% of all respondents.

Personal and relatable communication is key
Consumers in both regions are pushing back against impersonal interactions. They crave personalized communication that makes them feel seen and heard. This means thoughtful responses to comments and DMs, content tailored to their interests, and an overall more human touch. This desire for genuine, relatable engagement was highlighted by roughly 20-25% of participants.

Responsiveness builds trust
Audiences expect brands to be present and engaged. Faster, more consistent, and genuinely helpful responses to questions, comments, and complaints on social media are key. Whether it's a quick DM reply or active participation in live sessions, timely and quality interaction is essential for retaining engagement and building trust. Around 18-22% of respondents emphasized the need for improved responsiveness and customer service.

”honesty and transparency were the most commonly mentioned themes, cited by approximately 30-35% of all respondents.”



conclusion

Social media in 2025 is the heartbeat of brand discovery, engagement, and search in the Netherlands and Sweden - but the game has changed: people scroll faster, expect transparency, and reward brands that act human.

So, what should brands actually do to stay ahead? ➡️

Go platform-first
Each platform has its own role. YouTube is your long game for big audiences and deep storytelling. Instagram and TikTok dominate among younger users. Snapchat? That's Swedish Gen Z territory. Create content people actually want—tailored for each channel.

Lead with transparency
Whether you're using AI, partnering with influencers, or testing new formats: say it, show it, and explain it. Dutch and Swedish users expect clear labeling, honest collaborations, and real stories. Ditch the smoke and mirrors—authenticity and openness drive loyalty.

Make social commerce seamless and secure
Social commerce is growing in the Netherlands and Sweden, especially in categories like fashion and beauty. However, trust and usability issues mean most consumers still prefer to complete purchases on external websites rather than within social platforms. Security, convenience, and clear information are key factors for success.

Get found: Social Search is booming
Younger audiences aren't just searching on Google—they're searching on social platforms. Think in topics, not just keywords. Show up with content that makes you the next logical click: short, relevant, and trustworthy.

Move now with the use of data
It's not enough to just show up—success in 2025 means staying sharp, acting on real-time insights, and anticipating what your audience wants to see next. Social is where it all happens, and the bar is higher than ever. The brands that are personal, honest, and adaptable will thrive. Social-first isn't a trend—it's the path to growth.



team5pm

At team5pm, we help brands grow on social. By combining data-driven insights with creative strategies, we craft content that resonates with audiences and builds lasting brand value.

Whether you're planning a TikTok campaign, YouTube strategy, or fully integrated approach, our social-first mindset ensures your brand gets attention where it matters most.

want to
connect with your audience and grow your brand in a social-first world?
let’s talk! 🤩



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