

THE CREATOR CODE: CRACKING CROSS-PLATFORM INFLUENCE





BACKGROUND

With an explosion of social platforms and the rise of Creator influence in the media ecosystem, brands are seeking to understand the creative impact of cross-platform engagement. This study illuminates how creativity translates across platforms, reveals how Creators navigate an ever-changing landscape, and uncovers how brands can think about channel planning for both their own and Creator activations.

The big question here is...

**WHAT CAN BRAND
MARKETERS LEARN
FROM THIS?**

METHODOLOGY

The research consisted of three unique phases to deeply understand the Creator-Brand-Consumer ecosystem:

We started with qualitative ethnographies among Social Media Users over 3 days to immerse ourselves in Creator community relationships and desires from brands.

We then followed with an online quantitative survey among Social Media Users featuring a MaxDiff exercise, to identify the nuances of Creator-community-brand preferences at the platform level.

Lastly, we conducted In-Depth Interviews with Creators to capture their unique perspective and expertise.

 **MOBILE
ETHNOGRAPHIES**

n=21
3 Days

*Conducted among US participants

 **ONLINE
SURVEY**

n=802

 **CREATOR
INTERVIEWS**

n=12
45 Minutes

*n=11 US, n=1 UK participants





CREATORS BUILD TRUST, LOYALTY AND INFLUENCE

Creators are a force to be reckoned with. Not only do they represent 250 Billion dollars in revenue, they've formed deeply loyal communities through their authentic and relatable interactions. These interactions foster emotional connections, making Creators critical partners for brands. Brands benefit from the influence of Creators as Social Media Users are more open to advertising from Creators than traditional brand ads. Though brands haven't fully bridged the gap between traditional brand content and Creator brand content, the opportunities are there for brands to seize, read on to learn how and why.

**THE CREATOR
ECONOMY IS
ESTIMATED TO BE
WORTH \$250 BILLION**



**AND IS PROJECTED TO
GROW TO \$500 BILLION
BY 2027.**

IT'S ONLY GETTING BIGGER....

2025

THE YEAR
OF CREATOR
INVESTMENT

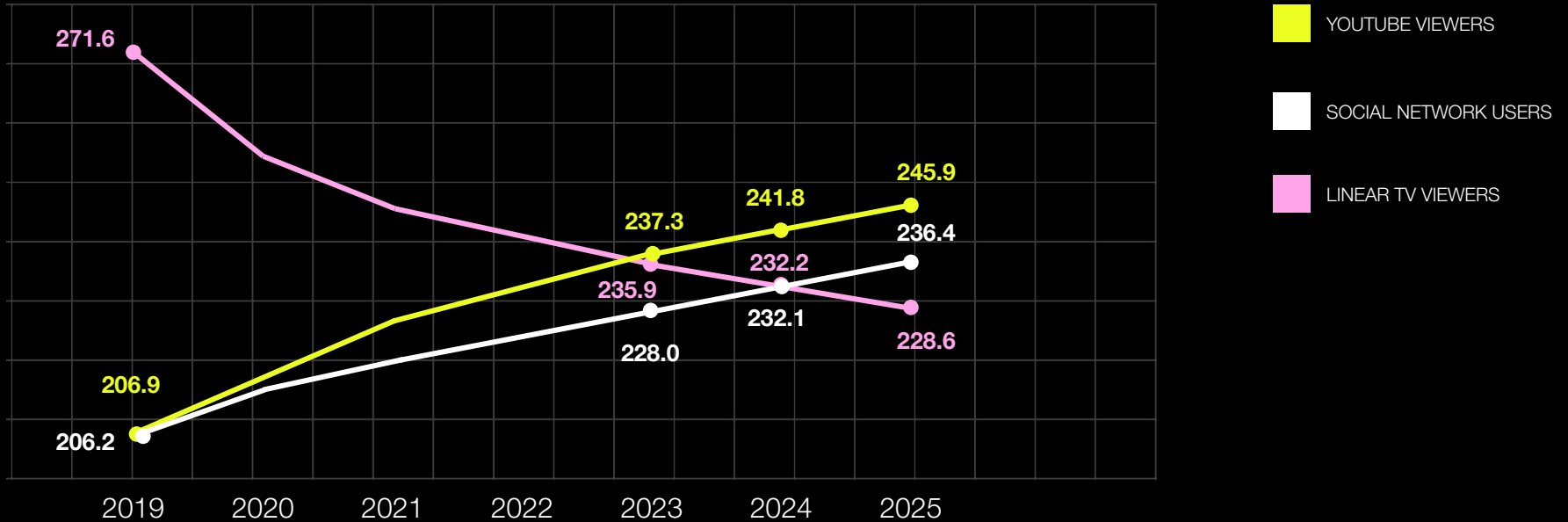
- Brands without a creator strategy will implement one.
- Brands already investing will scale up their budgets.
- Creator-led marketing proves ROI as traditional media declines.

2026

THE YEAR
OF CREATOR
DOMINATION

- Massive brand investment in creators due to proven success.
- Consumer behavior shifts away from traditional media accelerate.

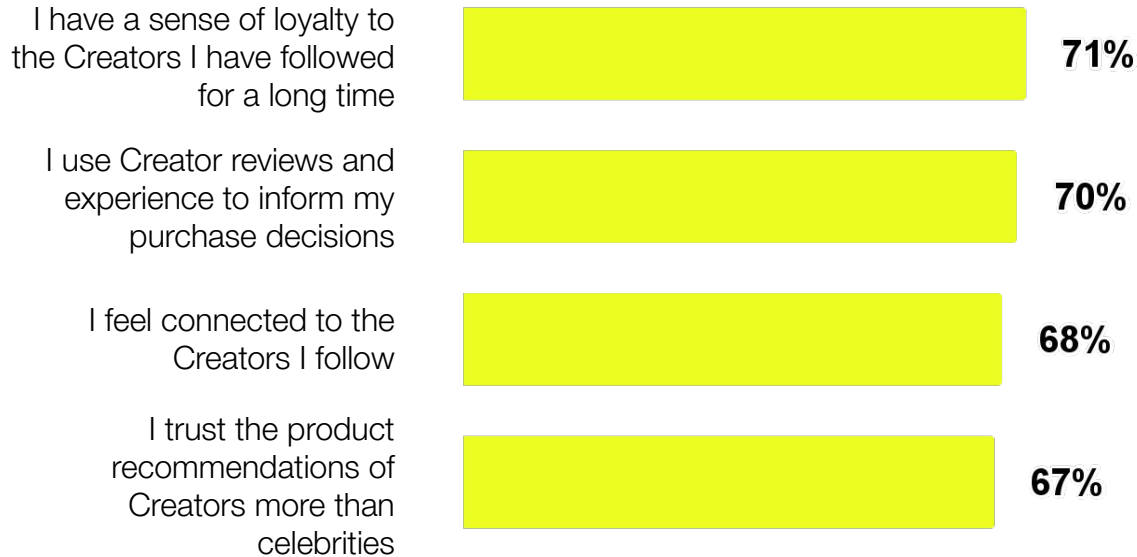
THE SOCIAL MEDIA AUDIENCE HAS OVERTAKEN LINEAR TV



CREATORS ARE A FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH

Followers seek Creators to inform purchase decisions because they are deeply trusted

CREATOR CONNECTION, LOYALTY AND TRUST (STRONGLY/SOMEWHAT AGREE NET)



I would definitely buy something from a link or an ad posted by a Creator. I'm following them because I like their content, and I know that just about all Creators get money from their content.

DINISHA R., 36, WOMAN (FOLLOWER)

BRANDS BENEFIT FROM THE STRONG TRUST CREATORS HAVE BUILT WITH THEIR COMMUNITIES

75%

Followers introduced to new brands by Creators

3 in 4

Followers have purchased products based on trusted Creator recommendation

“

I also really like when the Creator does a style guide, for example, and they'll showcase the products, and they'll link them to the actual [product] websites.

ARTI V., 27, MAN (FOLLOWER)

”

BRAND MARKETERS AND CREATORS HAVE A LOT IN COMMON

They A/B test their content; they have marketing and post production teams; they are creative directors; they are looking to grow their communities and innovate; they constantly evaluate partnerships, seeking to diversify and build stability for their work. And, the same challenges brands face, Creators come up against in the quest to understand the algorithm.





TESTING CONTENT

*I just made a video that started out saying 'let's talk about the brilliant branding of Tate McRae.' That video performs really well, gets a million views and I'm like, okay, **this is my content strategy for the next week.***

COCO MOCOE (CREATOR)



EVALUATING PARTNERSHIPS

I'm conscious about the products that I'm promoting. Whether it's authentic and how it affects the end viewer. I never want to influence someone in the wrong way.

KEVIN BUI (CREATOR)



DIVERSIFYING

We've been diversifying. We have Nonipup, Doug's business, that is all organic dog products for safe ingredients for dogs.

DOUG THE PUG (CREATOR)

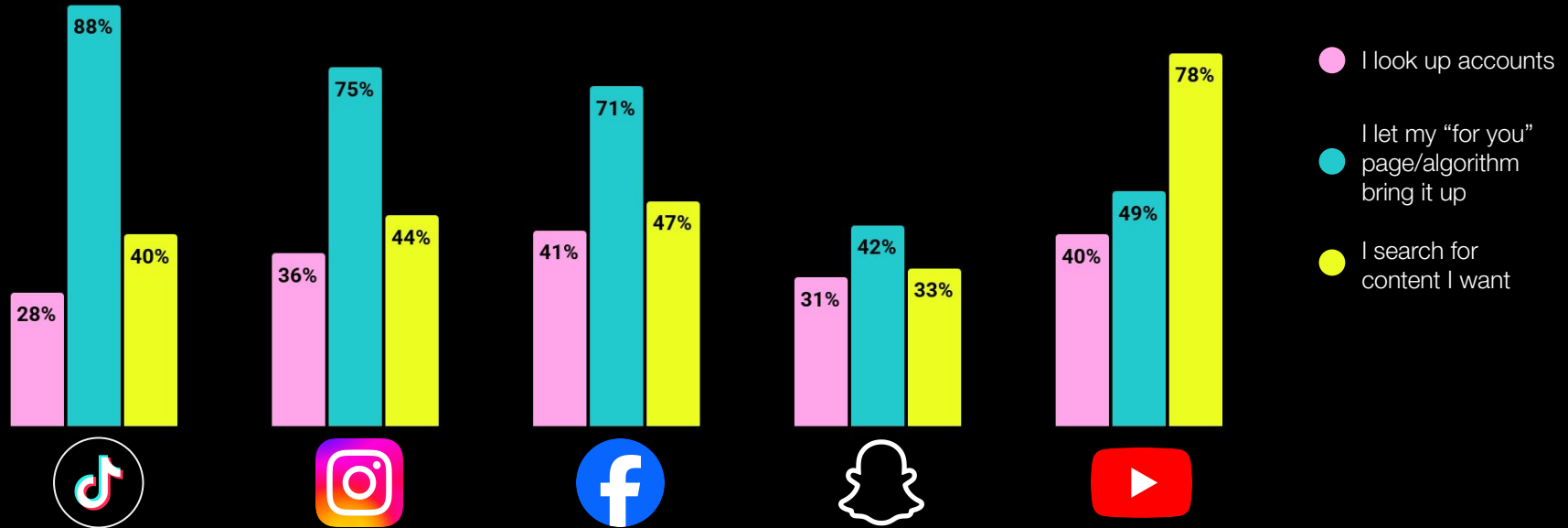


Followers are increasingly reliant on the algorithm, but the algorithm can be tricky for Brand Marketers and Creators

FOLLOWERS RELY ON ALGORITHMS TO SHOW THEM CONTENT

YouTube is the exception, where followers are more likely to search for the content they want

CONTENT DISCOVERY



THE ALGORITHM PRESENTS CHALLENGES FOR CREATORS TOO

FOLLOWER PERSPECTIVE

*These platforms have changed how they push videos to you... I'm usually finding these **Creators through the algorithm.***

FAYE Y. 34, NON-BINARY (FOLLOWER)

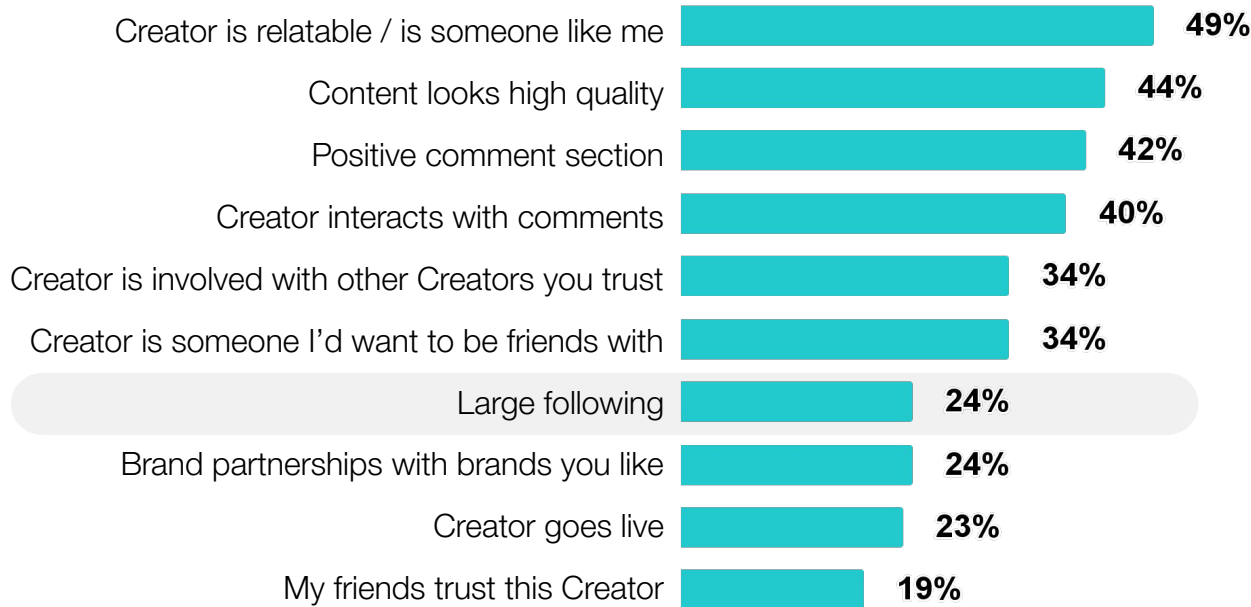
CREATOR PERSPECTIVE

The algorithm is really funky right now and it's very hard to figure it out how we can access our community again because at the end of the day we have over a million followers on that platform.

BLAIR ELEAZER (CREATOR)

FOLLOWER COUNT IS NOT THE END ALL BE ALL, NOR IS IT INDICATIVE OF TRUST

FACTORS THAT MAKE A CREATOR TRUSTWORTHY



As someone that follows you on Instagram or on social media I don't want to feel like I am your end product, I want to feel like I am your audience.

ESTER M., 30, WOMAN (FOLLOWER)

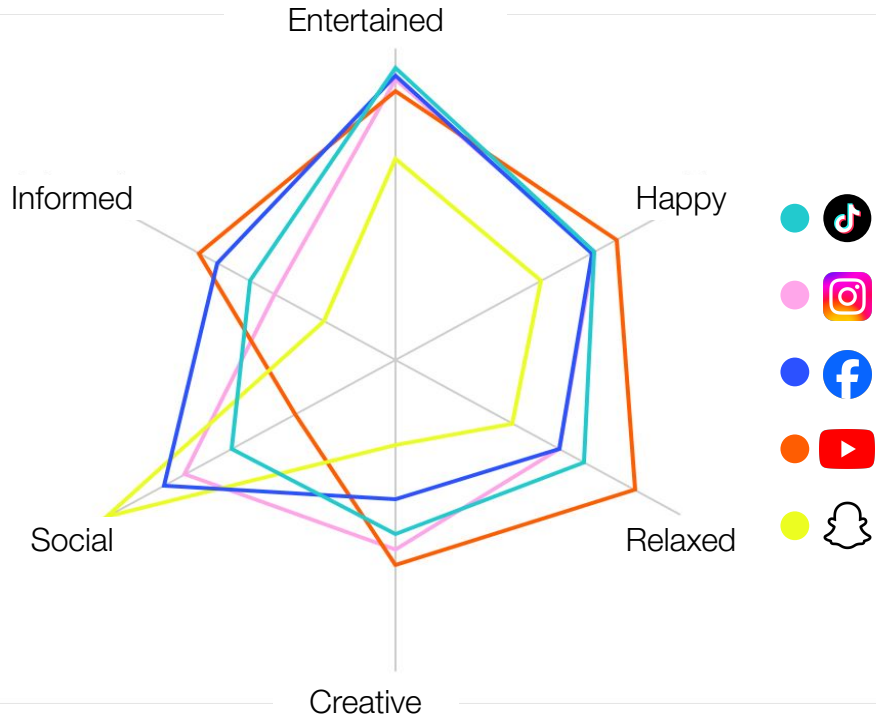


PLATFORM MOTIVATIONS DICTATE CREATOR-BRAND CONTENT EXPECTATIONS

Individual preferences shape platform usage. Some audiences prefer visually driven content, while others engage more with text-based insights. Some seek quick, snackable videos, while others gravitate toward in-depth, long-form storytelling. As a result, different personas naturally align with different platforms based on their content consumption styles. These different motivations also inform their preferences for Creator-Brand content when it shows up within each of these platforms.

EACH PLATFORM FULFILLS UNIQUE NEEDS

PLATFORM DESCRIPTORS



*I would be searching on YouTube to **actually** learn how to do and **apply practically**. I'll have a YouTube video playing while I **actually do the things** so that I can figure it out.*

Rebecca S. 28, Woman (Follower)



*My preferred social media platform is Instagram...I am **constantly sharing things I come across that are interesting to me or others that I am close with**.*

Marc O. 30, Man (Follower)



*I listen to Tik Toks and the funny stories that other people have to tell about their lives. **The stories are fun and funny and so that makes me happy as well**.*

Tamara J. 27, Woman (Follower)



CREATOR-BRAND CONTENT NEEDS ARE DRIVEN BY PLATFORM MOTIVATIONS

HIGH INDEXING AND HIGH RANKING TYPES OF CREATOR BRAND COLLABORATION VIDEOS BY PLATFORM



A Creative Outlet

Authentic
Self-Produced
Trends



Aesthetic Expectations

Reviews / User Experience
Get Ready with Me



Versatility

Detailed Information
Mythbusting
Deals / Promotions



The Center for Education

Tutorials
Reviews
Behind the scenes

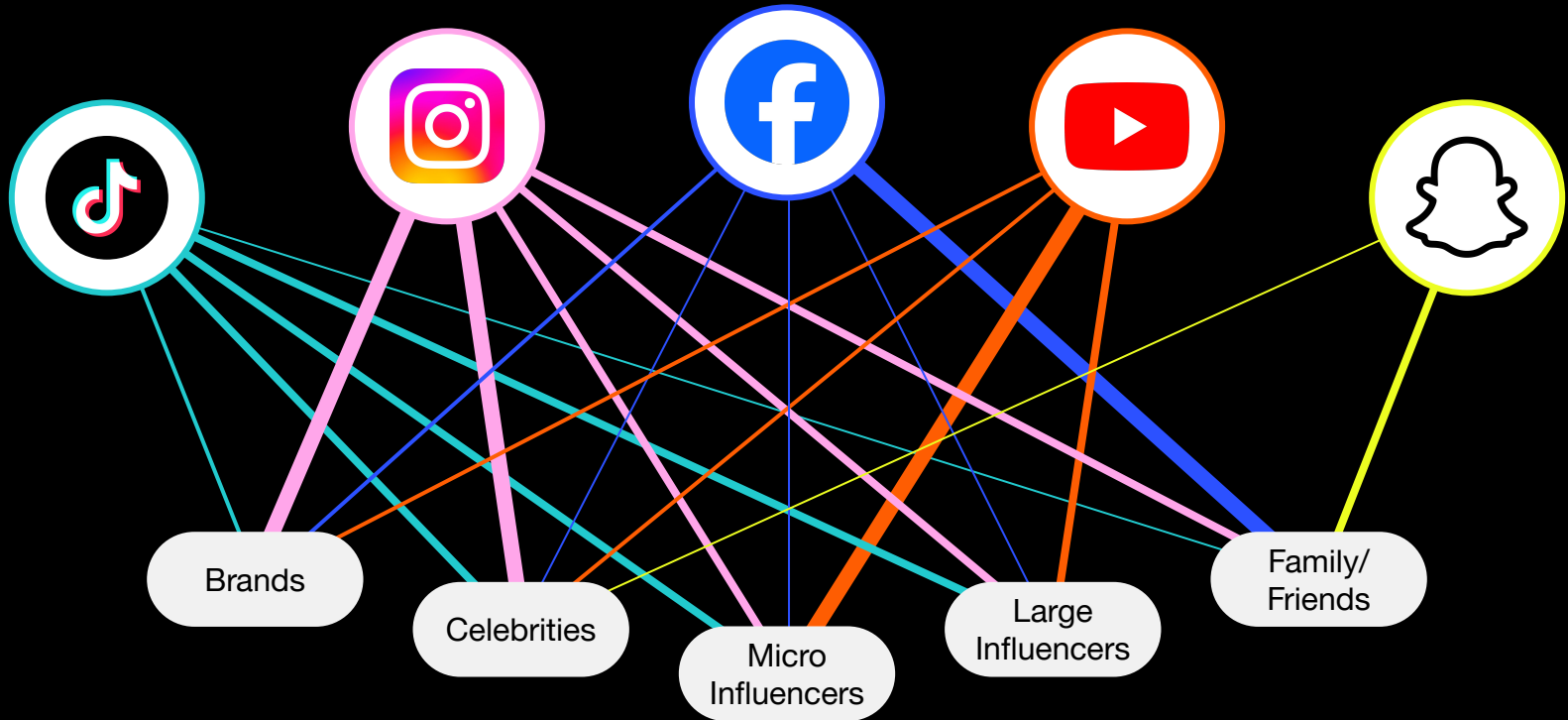


Where Creators are Close Friends

Behind the scenes
Product recommendation

THE CREATOR ECONOMY IS COMPLEX

CONTENT TYPES AND SOURCES



FOMO FUELS DEEPER CREATOR ENGAGEMENT

85%

of Followers follow Creators across
platforms because of FOMO

This provides an opportunity for Brand Marketers
to extend reach and tap into new-to-them
platforms through Creator partnerships.



“

A lot of times I see something that he posts on Instagram and then I go on his YouTube to watch it more completely.

Faye Y. 34, Non-Binary (Follower)

”



IT'S NOT ALL ABOUT ENTERTAINMENT, FOLLOWERS WANT TO LEARN

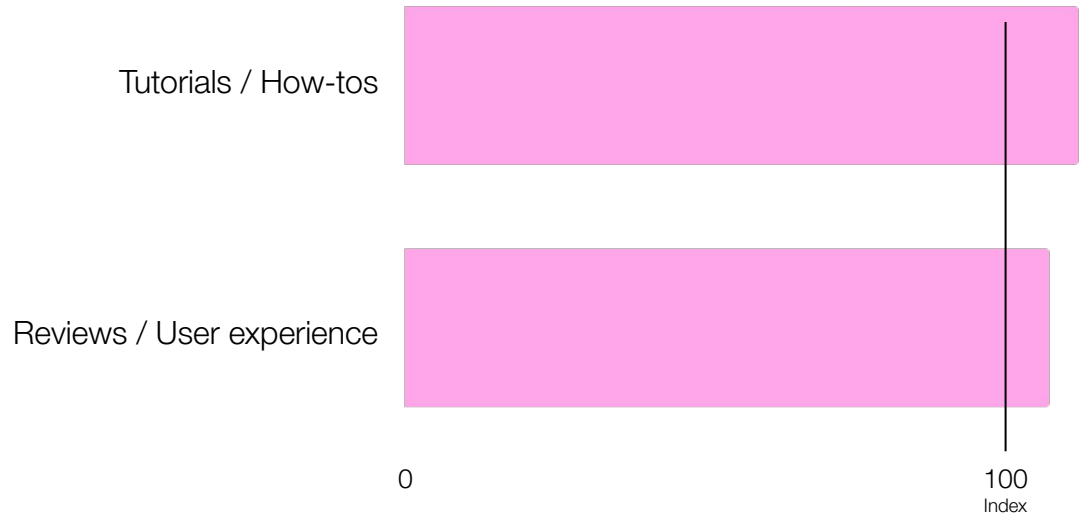
While there are nuances in what type of Creator-Brand Content followers prefer on each platform, there is one type of content that stands out across all categories and platforms tested – Content that educates people about the brand. We saw Tutorials/How-Tos and Reviews/User Experience consistently rank higher than more Entertaining types of Content such as Get Ready with Me or Behind the Scenes. Followers deeply trust Creators and thus Creators are a perfect resource to learn about categories, brands and products in an authentic way.





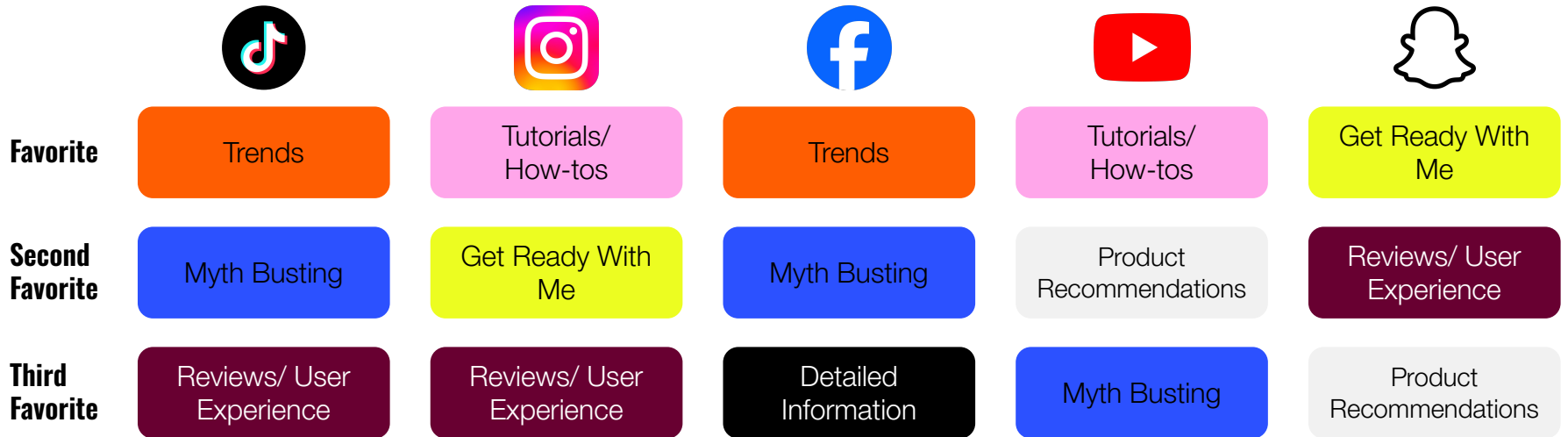
FOLLOWERS ARE LOOKING FOR MORE THAN JUST RECOMMENDATIONS, THEY WANT MORE DETAIL

FAVORITE TYPES OF CREATOR BRAND COLLABORATION VIDEOS



FOLLOWERS HAVE DISTINCT PLATFORM PREFERENCES FOR CREATOR AND BEAUTY BRAND COLLABORATIONS

FAVORITE TYPES OF CREATOR BRAND COLLABORATION VIDEOS BY PLATFORM FOR BEAUTY CONTENT



CLOSING: A MARKETER TUTORIAL

1

Partner with Creators, let them be your co-creative directors

2

Give Creators freedom, but also a tight enough brief to guide them

3

Meet with the Creator team IRL, Creators will reward your brand for this human touch

4

Don't over-think follower count when choosing Creators to partner with

5

Consider matching campaign objectives with platform motivations

6

Lead with information-driven content, capitalize on Creator trust

7

Lean in to authentic, self-produced Creator content

THANK YOU

