



Social platform growth drivers:
elevating the user experience

Social platforms constantly need to identify opportunities to grow and meet the evolving expectations of their key stakeholders: users, creators, and advertisers. While platforms may measure and report on growth differently, the notion of daily active users (DAUs) is a metric used in some capacity by all. Introduced in [our earlier perspective](#), our platform growth equation breaks down DAU growth into direct growth drivers that elevate the user experience and indirect growth drivers that elevate the creator and advertiser experience.

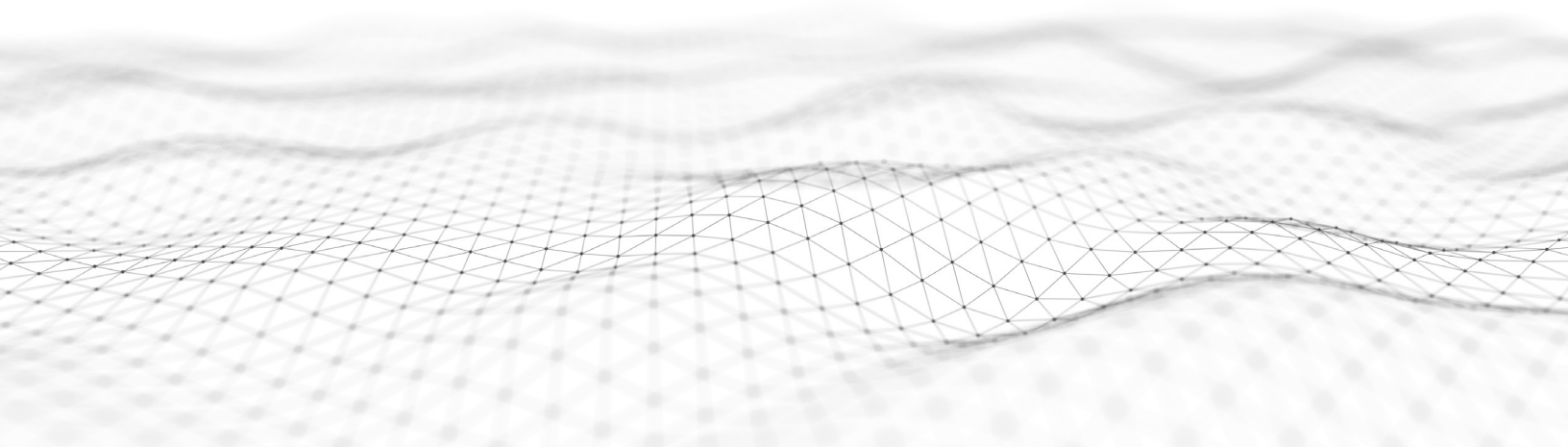
Our platform growth equation:

$$\text{DAU Growth} = \left(\begin{array}{l} \text{Direct Growth Drivers} \\ \text{Elevating the } \textit{User} \text{ Experience} \end{array} + \begin{array}{l} \text{Indirect Growth Drivers} \\ \text{Elevating the } \textit{Creator \& Advertiser} \text{ Experience} \end{array} \right)$$

Our approach

We conducted primary and secondary research to understand what users, creators, and advertisers are seeking from their social platforms as well as what these platforms are prioritizing to improve the experiences of these stakeholders. These research methods included:

- Interviews with former social platform business executives. These executives led teams across creator partnerships, content strategy, product marketing, shopping, mobile partnerships, content partnerships, creator monetization, and strategy and insights.
- Panel discussions with creators who produce and post content across the major social platforms. These creators educate and influence their viewers on topics such as beauty/makeup, fashion/apparel, food, lifestyle, travel, music, comedy, gaming, and more.
- Global surveys aimed at understanding how people cross-generationally are interacting with technology, media, and entertainment in their everyday lives as well as what their expectations are of these services. Additionally, these surveys capture how advertisers and brands are trying to reach their current—and future—consumers across these mediums. Select surveys include [Deloitte's 2023 Digital Media Trends](#), [Creator Economy in 3D](#), and [TMT Predictions 2024](#).
- Publicly available data from platform companies, including investor-day presentations, annual reports, earnings reports, press releases, and other published information noting the strategies and investment areas across each platform.



We identified 12 primary growth drivers that help platforms elevate their stakeholders' experiences. While some drivers specifically address the needs of one stakeholder group, others may help elevate the experiences of two or more groups.



User-Focused Opportunities	Creator-Focused Opportunities	Advertiser-Focused Opportunities
	Accelerate Creator Growth Enabling Creators to be the best version of themselves while maximizing their reach and engagement	Amplify Creator Value Identifying and maximizing the value that each Creator brings to your platform and partners
	Strengthen Creator Support Servicing your Creators' most pressing challenges with speed, intelligence, and humanity	Innovate Content Production Making content creation easy and accessible while innovating new ways for Creators to showcase their ideas and brand
Pioneer Content Experience Unleashing innovation in content consumption across format, experience, and User preference	Deepen Creator Loyalty Making platforms the preferred destination for Creators to share their content with the world	Drive Advertiser Spend Advocating your unique value proposition to Advertisers and Creators through your differentiated User reach and engagement
Increase Content Availability Improving platform engagement by connecting Users with their desired content	Expand Stakeholder Revenue Streams Uncovering, improving, and scaling all revenue drivers for your platform and partners	
Encourage Platform Community Fostering a sense of connection and community among Users and Creators	Confront Shifting Regulation and Standards Meeting a changing world of global governmental influence with intelligence and action	
Foster Platform Trust Building a trusted ecosystem for all platform stakeholders		

In this perspective, we will highlight the four growth plays that elevate the user experience: **pioneer content experience, increase content availability, encourage platform community, and foster platform trust**. While the latter three drivers span multiple stakeholder groups, we will focus on how these drivers specifically elevate the user experience. In subsequent perspectives, we will highlight how these same drivers can indirectly drive growth by addressing the needs of creators and advertisers.



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Overview of growth opportunities

Pioneer content experience: *Unleashing innovation in content consumption across format, experience, and user preference*

Consumer preferences are shifting with the rise of new content consumption formats and experiences. With 73% of consumers preferring to watch short-form content to learn about a product¹ and 61% of shoppers saying they prefer to shop with retailers that offer augmented reality (AR) experiences,² it is crucial that social platforms offer experiences that align with what users are looking for.

Platforms can activate this growth opportunity in multiple ways. First, they can set a clear user content experience ambition and product strategy. By conducting competitive benchmarking and analyzing market trends within the content ecosystem, platforms can identify key shifts in behaviors and actions on platforms, thereby enabling them to set an informed platform ambition around their content experience. Additionally, platforms can co-create with users a preferred, insight-driven content experience. By conducting primary research with users and product leaders and testing and gathering real-time feedback across the users' content journey, platforms can address user pain points to improve how they experience content.

When platforms understand how their users want to consume content, they can ideate and then engineer tailor-made solutions to meet their users where they are. A few short years ago, platforms realized that their users wanted short-form videos, which turned out to be 2.5 times more engaging than their longer-form alternatives.³ By focusing on building what users are looking for and pioneering an innovative content experience, can your platform create what comes next after short-form video?

Increase content availability: *Improving platform engagement by connecting users with their desired content*

Connecting users with their desired content is a key driver in elevating their experience and keeping them on the platform. With 75% of users never scrolling past the first page of search results, leaving large amounts of content unexplored,⁴ and 70% of consumers saying that authenticity and relatability is more important than polished, high-quality content on social media,⁵ it is clear that platforms need to prioritize getting the right content in front of the right users.

Platforms are able to activate this growth opportunity through a set of key activities. Content and customer experience (CX) leaders can leverage user needs to inform their content strategy actions. By conducting research with users around content availability, platforms can set a baseline for the content discovery process. Then, these leaders can generate insights on user preferences and examine platform data to identify content gaps. Once these gaps are identified, platforms can identify either categories of creators—or, in some cases, specific content creators—that can be engaged to increase the platform's library of content within certain verticals. Lastly, platforms should aim to address content discovery challenges for users with improved and personalized content and discovery concepts.

When platforms recognize the content that users want to experience and make it a priority to both increase that content prevalence and users' ability to find it, platforms can expect greater overall engagement rates and time spent on the platform. However, the proliferation of content creation tools is revolutionizing the industry. For example, Generative AI is already showing its potential to enhance content accessibility in areas such as content localization and translation.⁶ How can your platform leverage these tools and others to take a leading position in effectively harnessing technology to make content more accessible and hyper-relevant than ever before?

Encourage platform community: *Fostering a sense of connection and community among users and creators*

Users join—and remain on—social platforms for different reasons. Some want to be inspired by new recipes to cook. Some seek makeup tutorials to try out a new look. Some want to stay informed on their local and national politics. Regardless of what brings and keeps users on a platform, all users have passions, and they appreciate feeling a part of a tribe that shares their passions. With 66% of consumers saying that online communities help them decide which products and brands to buy⁷ and 64% of users saying that they feel connected to other people who like the same content they like—even though they do not know these people in real life,⁸ we can see that users resonate with and are significantly influenced by the communities they find on platforms. It is in the best interest of platforms to encourage these communities and help users find them so as to improve users' experiences and increase their tendency to make informed purchasing decisions.

To activate this growth opportunity, platforms can explore a few options. Platforms should explore on-platform community interactions and identify barriers and motivators to build connection. To accomplish these tasks, platforms can conduct secondary research and social scraping to develop a baseline understanding of users' platform community needs. Additionally, they can conduct community-focused research methods (e.g., focus groups, inclusive interviews, large-scale platform surveys) with users to understand barriers and motivators to build connection. After a baseline is set, platforms should assess community-enhancing opportunities and identify implications across the product ecosystem. By internalizing and creating design principles, platforms can work toward improving desired community connections. Additionally, platforms can invite users to participate in facilitated co-creation sessions to build platform concepts that have community insight and buy-in.

As some platforms are seemingly increasing their focus from connecting users to users to connecting users to brands, some users are seeking out smaller social networks and platforms for a sense of community.⁹ By facilitating and building a positive, connected platform experience that provides users this sense of belonging, can your platform be the one to reinforce this sense of authentic community to encourage continued user engagement?

Foster platform trust: *Building a trusted ecosystem for all platform stakeholders*

In today's landscape, gaining user trust holds greater significance for social platforms than ever before. Companies that have earned the trust of their audience outperform their peers by 400%.¹⁰ On social platforms, users face a variety of concerns that may lead to the reduction in platform trust, such as catfishing, misinformation/disinformation (mis/dis) and mal-information, and bot spamming. Addressing such issues should be a priority for platforms to grow and maintain user trust.

Taking mis/dis and mal-information and the prevalence of bots on platforms as two examples for a user trust gap, platforms can begin by measuring present-user trust data and conducting research to pinpoint user expectations of information and bots on the platform. These results will help establish a shared definition and vision for user trust moving forward. The platform can then match and prioritize trust drivers that address mis/dis and mal-information, such as fact-checking and content moderation abilities, and bot spamming, such as digital verification and bot detection technologies, to drive business value and direct user impact. Finally, these drivers can be formulated into cohesive strategies and interventions, with value exchanges with external partners or services, to address these issues for users. A clear road map and defined key performance indicators, such as content removal rate or user reporting rate, can help platforms manage mis/dis and mal-information and bot spamming to build user trust.

By measuring, predicting, and acting on trust, platforms can meaningfully improve user satisfaction on content and ultimately loyalty to the platform. As mis/dis and mal-information specifically is a leading cause in the decline of users' trust in platforms, many have introduced content moderation and fact-checking policies. While these programs and policies have helped, platforms are far from closing the trust gap with users. Can your platform innovate the content moderation world and be the one to effectively control the spread and posting of mis/dis and mal-information—which can lead to your platform being the most trusted one among users?

At a time when social platforms are fighting each other for user time and attention, it is important for platforms to elevate the experience of their users. Social platform leaders may be wondering how to navigate these complexities effectively, posing questions such as, "What are new and innovative ways that users can interact with content on our platform?" or "How do we measure and enhance consumer trust?" By activating the user-focused growth opportunities, platforms can ensure that they are giving users what they are looking for and what they need by creating personalized and community-oriented experiences.

How Deloitte can help

It is critical for platforms to activate these opportunities and continuously drive direct user growth. As user preferences evolve and remain nuanced, platforms face a unique set of challenges that we are equipped to address. Deloitte has collaborated with leading social platforms to create and implement user-centric strategies, bringing together cross-industry specialists from media and entertainment, technology, retail, consumer products, and more. Whatever your user-centric goals are, Deloitte is here to help.

Endnotes

- 1 Elizabeth Harris, "[7 short-form video trends to watch in 2023 \(+best practices\)](#)," The Leap, June 2, 2023.
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- 3 Belle Wong, "[Top social media statistics and trends of 2023](#)," Forbes Advisor, May 18, 2023.
- 4 Mike Lieberman, "[10 stats about inbound marketing that will make your draw drop](#)," HubSpot, updated September 10, 2023.
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- 6 Intento, "[Getting started with GenAI in localization: Expert advice and practical tips](#)," Medium, July 17, 2023.
- 7 Steven Lai, "[Gen Z, millennials say creators tell the best stories](#)," Influence Orchestration Network (ION), accessed December 10, 2023.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Brian X. Chen, "[The future of social media is a lot less social](#)," New York Times, April 19, 2023.
- 10 Deloitte Digital, "[A blueprint for building trust](#)," accessed December 10, 2023.



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