

STYLE  AFRICA

# DIGITAL TRENDS SERIES

SOCIAL MEDIA TRENDS

# 2025

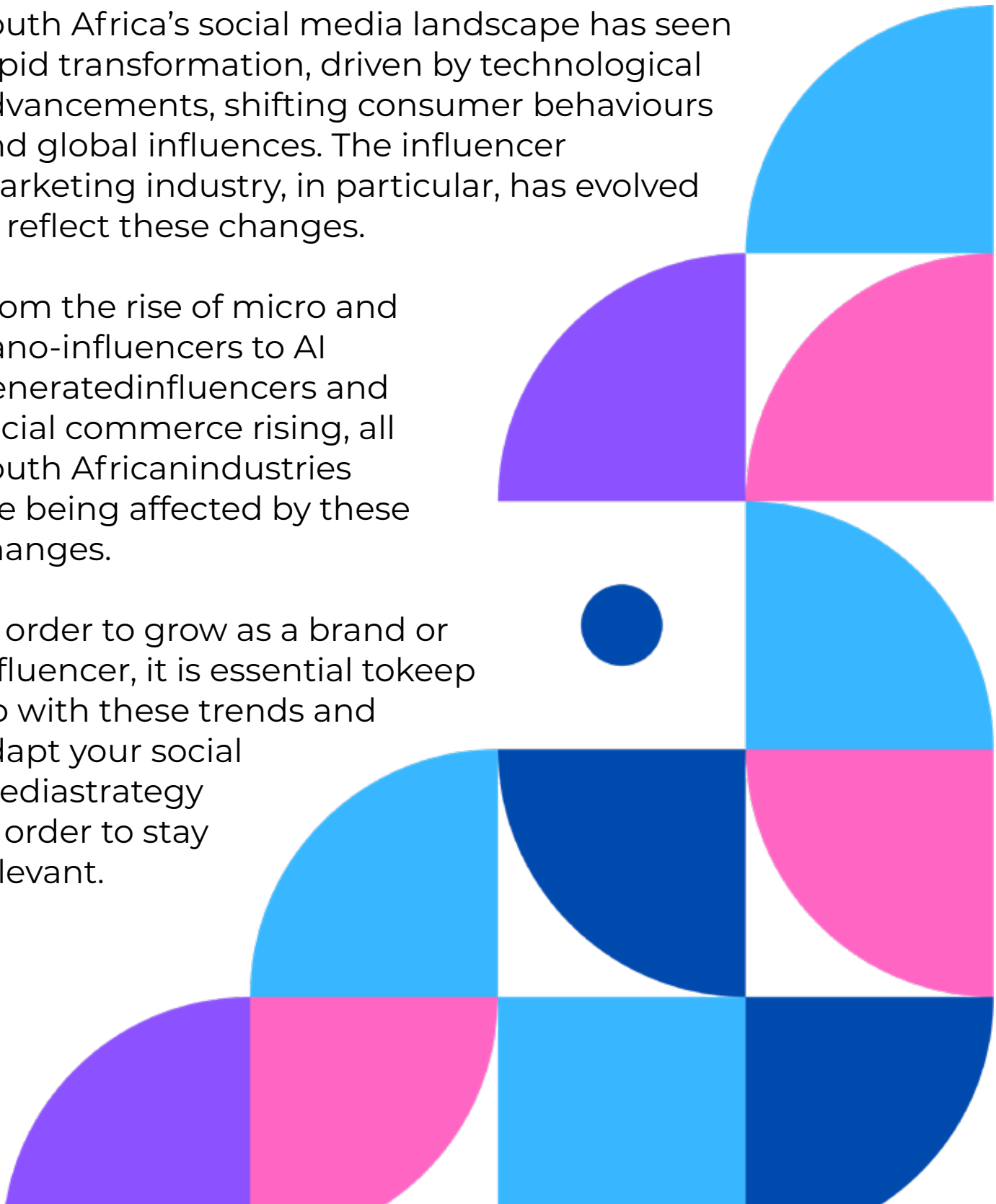


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South Africa's social media landscape has seen rapid transformation, driven by technological advancements, shifting consumer behaviours and global influences. The influencer marketing industry, in particular, has evolved to reflect these changes.

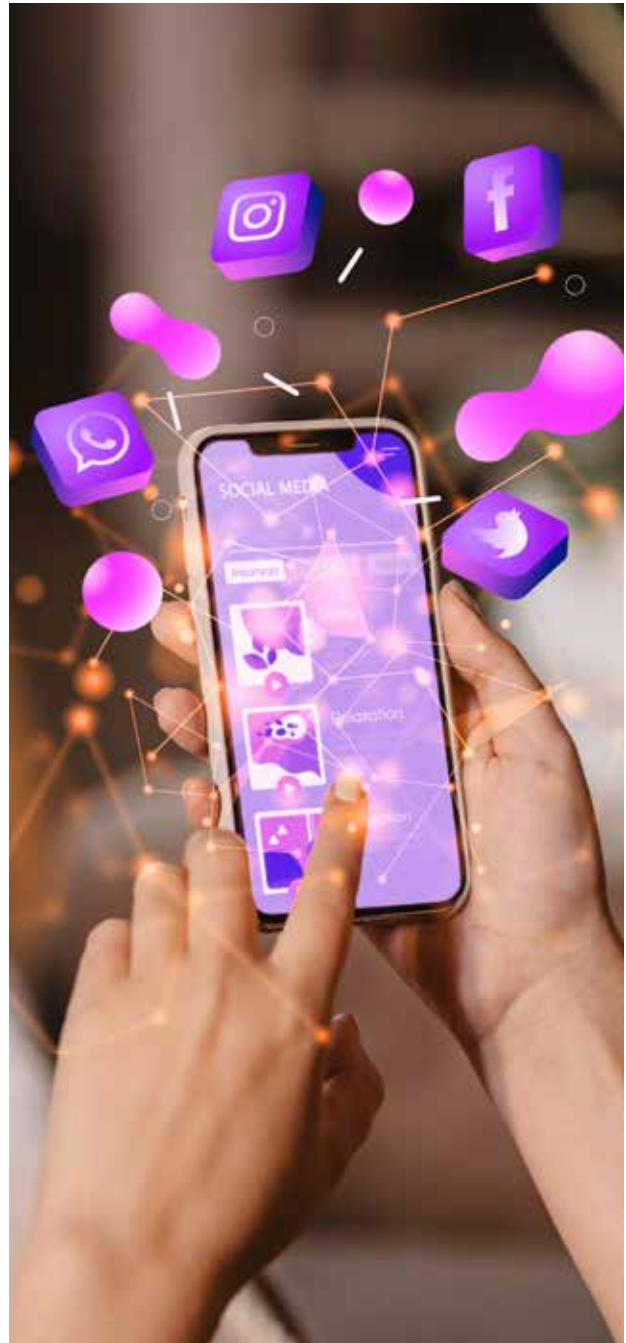
From the rise of micro and nano-influencers to AI generated influencers and social commerce rising, all South African industries are being affected by these changes.

In order to grow as a brand or influencer, it is essential to keep up with these trends and adapt your social media strategy in order to stay relevant.



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# TRENDS IN SOUTH AFRICA GENERALLY FOLLOW A PROCESS BEFORE BECOMING MAINSTREAM IN THE SOCIAL MEDIA SPACE

## 1. Global Influence & Early Adopters

Many trends originate from global platforms like TikTok, Instagram and YouTube, where South African digital creators observe and experiment with emerging content styles. Early adopters, often younger users, test and share these trends within their networks.

## 2. Localisation & Cultural Adaptation

For a trend to take off in South Africa, it must be adapted to local culture, languages, and humour. Influencers who integrate South African slang, music and relatable experiences make the trend more appealing to the masses.

## 3. Mass Adoption by Influencers

Once a trend gains traction among a few popular creators, it spreads rapidly across different influencer tiers. Brands take notice and begin incorporating the trend into their marketing campaigns.

## 4. Brand Collaboration & Sponsored Content

Businesses leverage trending content styles to promote products, often collaborating with influencers who are already using the trend. This further amplifies the trend's reach and cements its popularity.

## 5. Peak Popularity & Saturation

At its peak, a trend becomes widespread across various industries, from fashion to food to finance. Over time, saturation leads to a decline in engagement and creators move on to the next big thing.

## 6. Legacy Impact or Decline

Some trends fade away completely, while others evolve into long-term industry practices. For example, while the "challenge culture" on TikTok may fluctuate, short-form videos as a content style will remain dominant.



# TREND CYCLE CASESTUDY: THE “JERUSALEMA CHALLENGE”



[VIDEO LINK HERE](#)

# THE CYCLE



The song Jerusalema  
featuring Nomcebo  
recognition through S  
bec

## VIRAL CHALLENGE

The hashtag #Jerus  
and Instag  
South African cele  
officials embraced

## GLOBAL RECOGNITION

The challenge boos

It became a sym  
pandemic, showin



by South African DJ and producer Master KG, Nkanyezi Zikode, was released in 2019. It gained local popularity among South African content creators but had not yet become a global phenomenon.

## ORIGIN

In early 2020, a group of Angolan friends recorded themselves dancing to the song and posted it on social media. Their dance routine was simple, fun, and easy to replicate. This video went viral, prompting people from different countries to attempt the dance challenge.

the #ShwetaChallenge started trending on TikTok as more people participated. Celebrities, influencers, and even government officials joined the challenge, further amplifying its reach.

## MASS ADOPTION

The challenge spread worldwide, with participation from healthcare workers, corporate employees, and even government organizations.

International celebrities and institutions like the European Commission joined in, cementing its status as a global trend.

boosted tourism and music streaming numbers for Master KG. It became a symbol of unity and joy during the COVID-19 pandemic, showcasing the power of South African creativity in shaping global trends.

## PEAK POPULARITY

# USER BEHAVIOURAL CHARACTERISTICS BY AGE

## GENERATIONAL COMPARISONS

|                         | <br><b>BOOMERS</b><br>1946-1964 | <br><b>GEN X</b><br>1965-1980 | <br><b>GEN Y</b><br>1981-1996 | <br><b>GEN Z</b><br>1997-2012 | <br><b>GEN ALPHA</b><br>2013-2028 |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| IN PURSUIT OF A         | Stable Life                                                                                                      | Balanced Life                                                                                                  | Interesting Life                                                                                               | Purposeful Life                                                                                                  | Flexible Life                                                                                                        |
| ATTITUDE TOWARDS TECH   | Disengaged                                                                                                       | Curious                                                                                                        | Capable                                                                                                        | Confident                                                                                                        | Adventurous                                                                                                          |
| NUTRITIONAL EXPERIENCES | First Free Meals                                                                                                 | No Restrictions                                                                                                | No Restrictions                                                                                                | Start of Regulations                                                                                             | Strict Regulations                                                                                                   |
| COMMUNICATION PLATFORMS | Print, Radio, TV                                                                                                 | Facebook, LinkedIn                                                                                             | Facebook, Instagram                                                                                            | Twitter, YouTube                                                                                                 | Tik Tok, VR, Instagram                                                                                               |
| MARKETING PREFERENCES   | Traditional Above the Line                                                                                       | Traditional Below the Line                                                                                     | Transition to Viral Media                                                                                      | Interactive Campaigns                                                                                            | Personalized Experiences                                                                                             |
| PURCHASE INFLUENCES     | Brand Loyalty                                                                                                    | Brand Loyalty                                                                                                  | Brand Switching                                                                                                | Brand Evangelism                                                                                                 | Brand Authenticity                                                                                                   |
| DEFINING MOMENTS        | Woodstock<br>Civil Rights<br>Moon Landing                                                                        | Challenger Disaster<br>Dial-Up / Emails<br>Internet Arises                                                     | 9/11<br>Great Recession<br>Obama Election                                                                      | Gay Marriage<br>Climate Crisis<br>Social Justice                                                                 | COVID-19<br>....                                                                                                     |



South African social media users engage with content differently based on their age group. Each generation has distinct preferences, platforms of choice and content consumption habits. Coming up is a breakdown of behavioural trends across different age demographics





# GEN Z | DIGITAL NATIVES & TRENDSETTERS

**Gen Z** primarily engages with TikTok, Instagram, YouTube and Snapchat, favouring short-form videos such as TikTok clips and Instagram Reels for their fast-paced, engaging nature. They seek authentic and relatable content, enjoying unfiltered, behind-the-scenes glimpses into real life.

Popular trends include dance challenges, memes and viral content, while social causes like climate change, mental health and inclusivity also resonate strongly. Additionally, gaming and esports content thrives on platforms like Twitch and YouTube Gaming, alongside aesthetic-driven trends in fashion, beauty and fitness.

Behaviourally, Gen Z prefers interactive content such as polls, Q&As and live streams, and they engage heavily with micro-influencers and influencer-driven brands. They value brand transparency and corporate social responsibility, often discovering and purchasing products through social media reviews.



#GEN Z



# MILLENNIALS | EXPERIENCE - DRIVEN & SOCIAL SHOPPERS

**Millennials** primarily engage with Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn and the emerging TikTok platform, consuming a mix of informative and educational content focused on personal finance, career growth and self-improvement.

They prefer longer-form content, including podcasts, vlogs and in-depth how-to videos, while also embracing e-commerce and social shopping, relying on product reviews and live shopping experiences.

Millennials' interests extend to wellness and work-life balance, engaging with content on fitness, mental health and travel vlogs, as well as parenting and family-related topics from mom and dad influencers. Additionally, they appreciate DIY and home improvement content, such as home hacks, cooking and real estate tips.

Behaviourally, Millennials have higher purchasing power and actively research brands before making a purchase, relying on testimonials and influencer recommendations. They also prioritize career networking on LinkedIn and invest in self-care, personal development, and financial security.



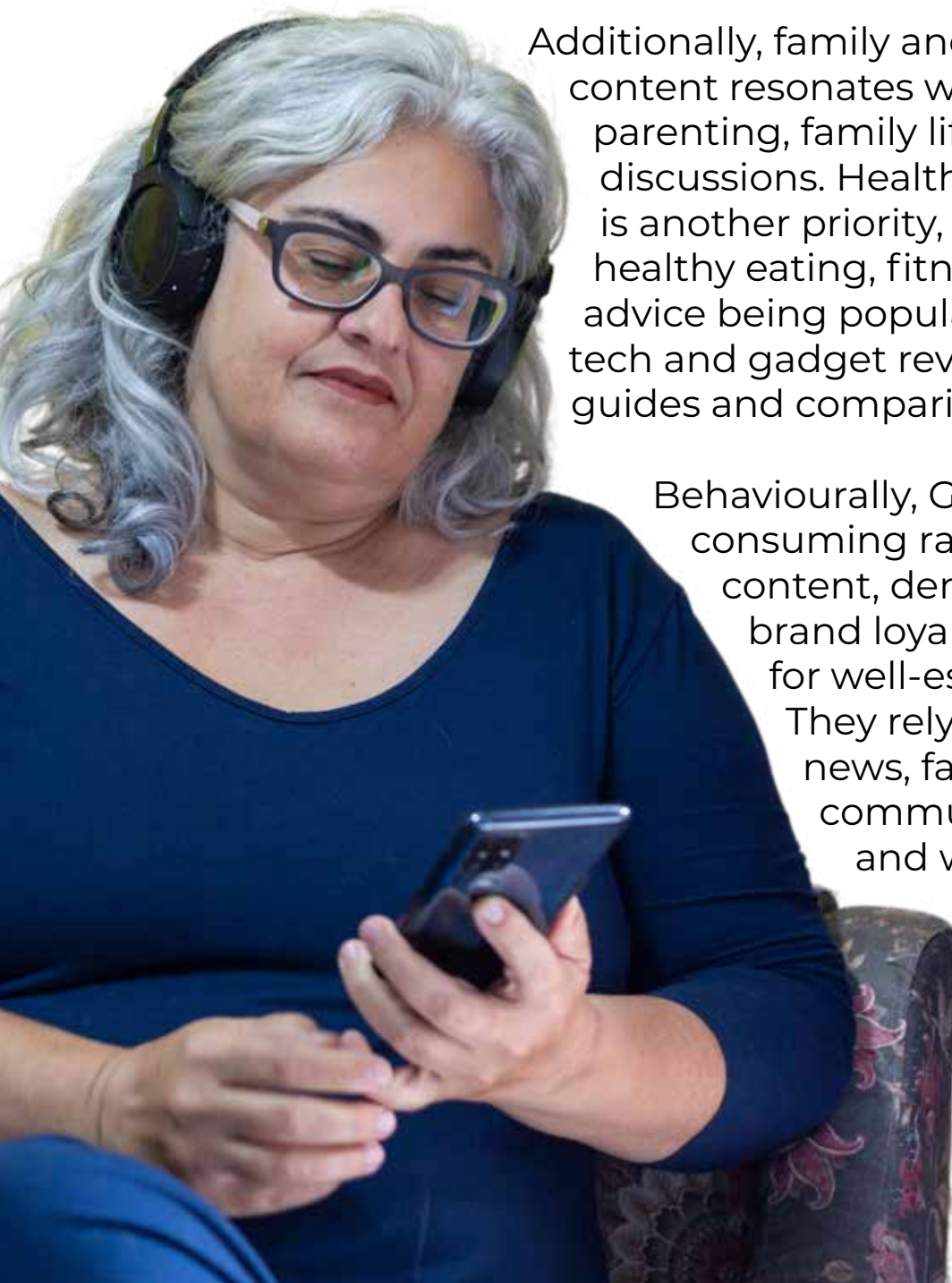


# GEN X | THE DIGITAL ADOPTERS & INFORMATIONAL CONSUMERS

**Gen X** primarily engages with Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, LinkedIn and Twitter, favoring content related to news, current affairs, politics and the economy from reliable sources. They show strong interest in business and investment topics, including financial literacy, side hustles and property investments.

Additionally, family and community-based content resonates with them, covering parenting, family life and faith-based discussions. Health and wellness is another priority, with content on healthy eating, fitness and medical advice being popular. They also follow tech and gadget reviews, product guides and comparisons.

Behaviourally, Gen X prefers consuming rather than creating content, demonstrating strong brand loyalty and a preference for well-established brands. They rely on WhatsApp for news, family updates and community engagement, and while their interest in online shopping is growing, they still value in-store experiences.



# BABY BOOMERS | THE LATE ADOPTERS & TRADITIONAL CONSUMERS

**Baby Boomers** primarily engage with Facebook, WhatsApp and YouTube, favoring traditional news and radio-inspired content on politics, social issues and church services. They have a strong interest in health and medical content, particularly wellness, healthcare tips and aging-related topics.

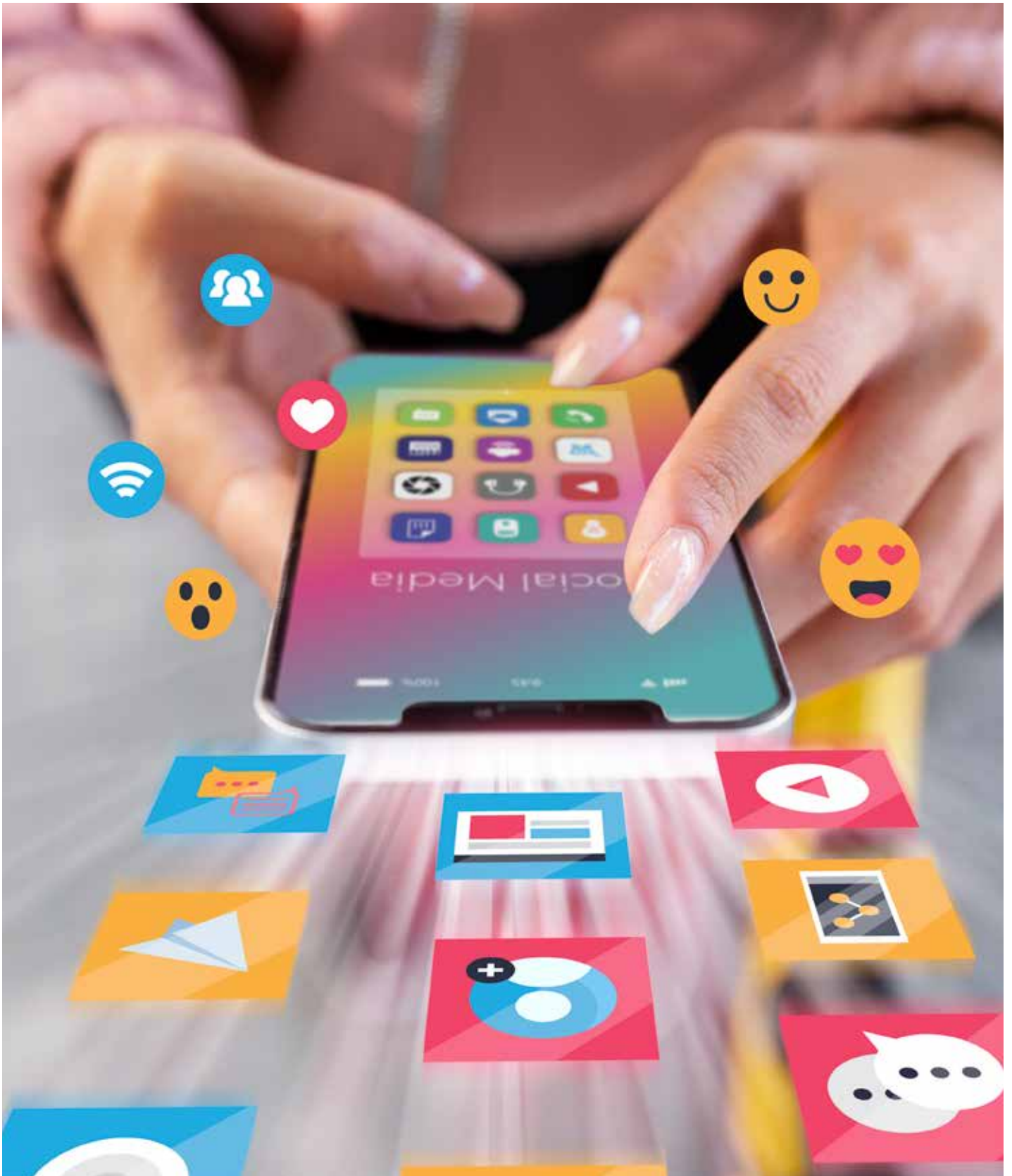
Religious and inspirational content, such as sermons and motivational talks, also resonates deeply with them. Additionally, they consume lifestyle and retirement planning content, including pension advice, gardening and cooking tips. Their entertainment preferences lean toward TV shows and nostalgic content, such as classic entertainment and radio broadcasts.

Behaviourally, Baby Boomers are primarily passive consumers of content rather than creators, using Facebook to stay connected with family and community groups. They tend to be skeptical of new social media trends and online shopping, placing greater value on brand trust and loyalty over influencer marketing.





# PLATFORM SPECIFIC TRENDS IN SOUTH AFRICA





# FACEBOOK

Influencers on Facebook are actively fostering community engagement by creating and managing Facebook Groups, bringing together users with shared interests for deeper discussions.

They also leverage Facebook Live to host real-time events, such as Q&A sessions, tutorials and virtual gatherings, allowing for direct interaction with their audience.

Additionally, the rise of short-form video content has become a key strategy, as influencers share engaging, bite-sized videos to capture attention and maximize reach within Facebook's algorithm.





Influencers on X (formerly Twitter) utilize threaded storytelling to share detailed narratives and insights, enhancing audience engagement through structured discussions.

They also engage in real-time event interactions, live-tweeting during events, TV shows, or major happenings to spark conversations and keep followers actively involved.

Additionally, polls and surveys serve as an interactive tool, allowing influencers to gather opinions, foster engagement and make their audience feel directly involved in content creation.





# INSTAGRAM

Influencers on Instagram leverage Reels to create short, entertaining videos, maximizing visibility by tapping into the platform's viral potential.

Shoppable posts allow influencers to seamlessly integrate e-commerce by tagging products in their posts and stories, making it easier for followers to discover and purchase items directly.

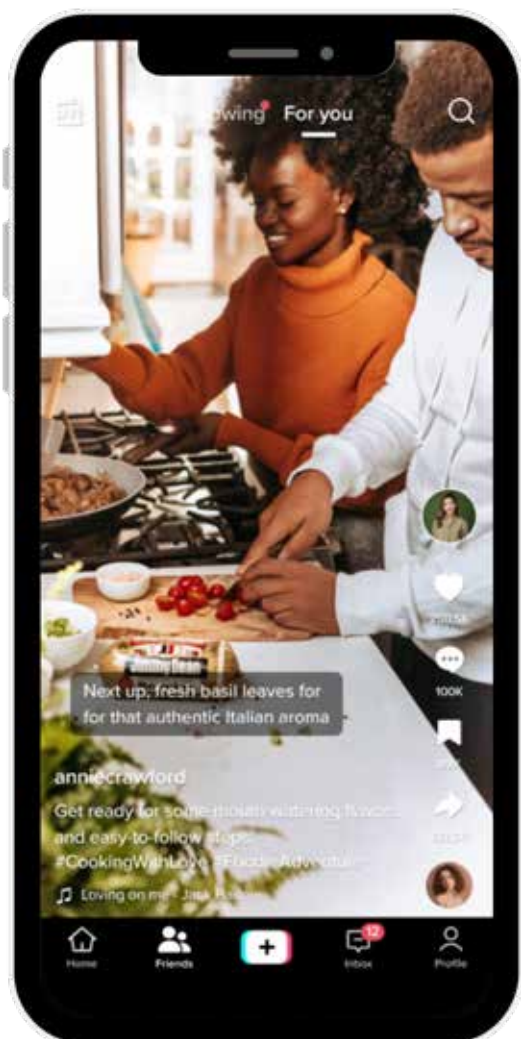
Additionally, Instagram's collaborative features, such as 'Collab' posts, enable influencers to co-create content, expanding their reach by engaging with each other's audiences.



# TIK-TOK

Influencers on TikTok boost their visibility by actively participating in trending challenges, allowing them to connect with broader audiences. Beyond entertainment, many are creating educational content, including tutorials and life hacks, to cater to the platform's diverse user base.

Additionally, influencers play a key role in music promotion, collaborating with artists by featuring new tracks in their videos, driving both engagement and music discovery.

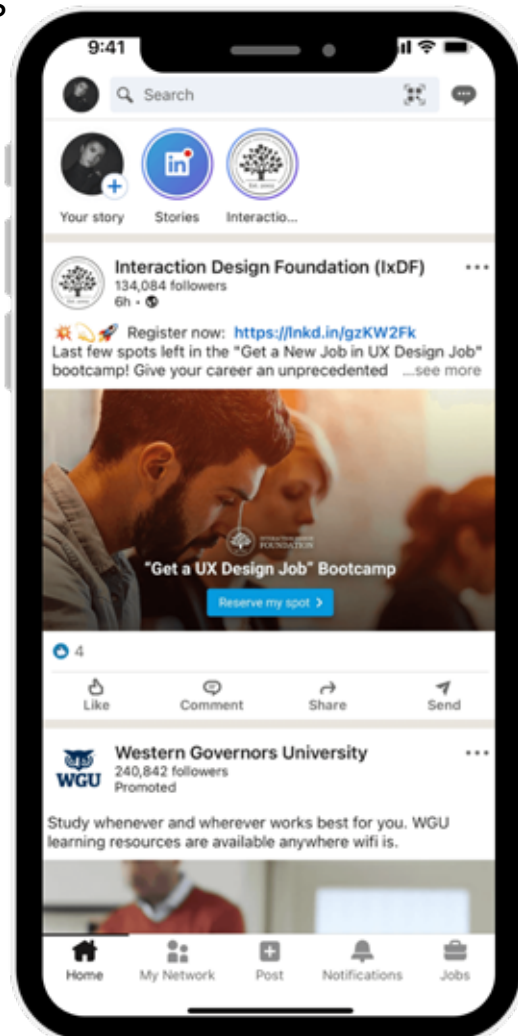


# LINKEDIN

Influencers on LinkedIn establish themselves as industry leaders by publishing thought leadership articles that provide in-depth insights and analysis on key trends, sparking professional discussions.

They also leverage LinkedIn Live to host real-time broadcasts on topics like career development and industry news, fostering direct engagement with their professional network.

Additionally, personal branding plays a crucial role, as influencers share their career journeys and achievements, making their content more relatable and inspiring to their peers.





# TRENDING FEATURES THAT ARE BEING ADDED TO SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS IN SOUTH AFRICA

As of March 2025, social media platforms in South Africa have introduced several trending features to enhance user engagement and adapt to evolving digital behaviors.



## Meta Platforms (Facebook and Instagram)

**Meta AI Integration:** Meta has incorporated an advanced artificial intelligence assistant across Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp and Messenger to enrich user experiences. Key functionalities include AI-generated image creation, chatbot interactions, real-time search integration and voice command responses. This feature has been progressively rolled out globally, reaching 43 countries as of October 2024, with plans to expand further.

### Advertisements on Threads:

Meta plans to introduce advertisements on its Threads app in early 2025. Initially, a select group of advertisers will participate, aiming to leverage the app's rapid growth, which reached 275 million monthly active users since its launch in July of the previous year.

## X (formerly Twitter)

### Prosocial Media Initiatives:

X is part of a broader movement towards "prosocial media," focusing on creating empathetic, inclusive and collaborative online environments. Features like Community Notes aim to enhance mutual understanding and informed discourse by providing contextually enriched information sharing.

## TikTok

### E-Commerce Integration:

TikTok continues to enhance its e-commerce capabilities by integrating shopping features directly into the platform. This allows South African users to discover and purchase products seamlessly while engaging with content, reflecting a global trend towards social commerce.

### Augmented Reality (AR) Effects:

TikTok has expanded its library of AR effects, enabling creators to produce more immersive and interactive content. This feature has gained popularity in South Africa, with influencers leveraging AR to enhance storytelling and audience engagement.

These developments indicate a dynamic social media landscape in South Africa, with platforms continually evolving to meet user preferences and technological advancements.

## LinkedIn

### Enhanced Video Features:

To attract content creators and engage users, LinkedIn has introduced vertical video functionalities, aligning with trends seen on platforms like TikTok. Updates include in-feed design changes, improved video search capabilities, and enhanced video analytics, such as average watch time metrics. This shift positions LinkedIn as a more dynamic content platform, encouraging professionals to share diverse video content.



# THE GROWTH OF EPHEMERAL CONTENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

Ephemeral content—temporary posts that disappear after a set period, like Instagram Stories, Facebook Stories, WhatsApp Status updates and Snapchat Snaps—has seen significant growth in South Africa. This trend has been driven by the demand for authentic, real-time content that fosters a sense of urgency and exclusivity.





## Key Factors Driving Growth:

Increased Mobile Usage – With high smartphone penetration, users prefer quick, easily digestible content.

Shift Toward Authenticity – Consumers resonate more with raw, behind-the-scenes content rather than highly curated posts.

Brand Adoption – Businesses and influencers leverage Stories for limited-time promotions, product teasers and interactive polls.

TikTok & Instagram Reels Influence – The popularity of short-form videos has fueled the demand for real-time, disappearing content.

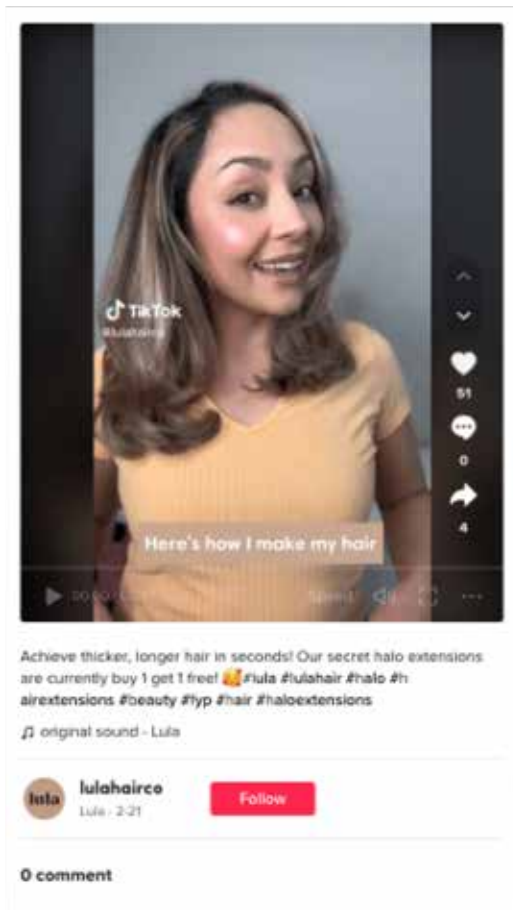
## Platform Insights:

- Instagram & Facebook Stories remain the most widely used, with brands using them for engagement-driven content.
- WhatsApp Status is highly popular for personal updates and informal marketing, especially for small businesses.
- Snapchat & BeReal have niche but growing communities focusing on Gen Z users.

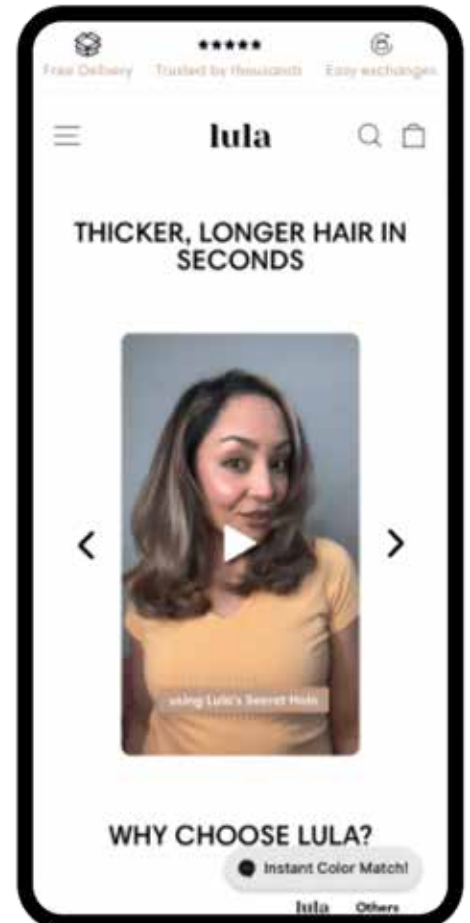
Ephemeral content's rapid growth in South Africa highlights a shift toward more interactive, moment-based, and community-driven digital engagement. Brands and influencers that effectively utilize this trend can boost engagement, increase brand loyalty, and drive real-time interactions with audiences.



# THE RISE OF UGC IN SOUTH AFRICA



From TikTok to  
product pages



User-generated content (UGC) and influencer marketing have significantly reshaped South Africa's digital marketing landscape. Brands increasingly leverage authentic content from consumers and influencers to engage audiences and build trust. Below are insights into this growing trend.

## The Rise of UGC and Influencer Marketing in South Africa

- **Authenticity and Trust:** Consumers tend to trust content created by peers or relatable personalities over traditional advertisements, leading brands to incorporate UGC and influencer collaborations into their strategies.
- **Digital Connectivity:** With increasing internet penetration and smartphone usage, more South Africans actively participate in content creation and social media engagement, amplifying the reach of UGC and influencer campaigns.
- **Cost-Effectiveness:** UGC provides brands with a steady stream of content without extensive production costs, while influencer partnerships often yield higher engagement rates compared to conventional advertising methods.



[VIDEO LINK HERE](#)



# MICRO & NANO INFLUENCERS

## WHY YOU SHOULD WORK WITH THEM?

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Micro and nano-influencers (with 1K–100K followers) are becoming the go-to choice for brands in South Africa due to their high engagement, authenticity and affordability. Unlike celebrity influencers, they have a smaller but more loyal audience, leading to genuine interactions and higher conversion rates.

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From a cost perspective, working with smaller influencers is more budget-friendly for brands. Instead of investing heavily in one celebrity, brands can work with multiple micro-influencers to target niche audiences. Industries like beauty, retail, food and finance are already leveraging this approach to create targeted campaigns.





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One of the key reasons for their popularity is trust and relatability. South African consumers prefer recommendations from influencers who feel like real people, rather than traditional ads or celebrities. This makes brand collaborations with micro and nano-influencers feel more like word-of-mouth marketing, which resonates better with local audiences.

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As South African consumers continue to prioritize authentic, community-driven content, brands will increasingly shift towards micro and nano-influencers. Their ability to foster trust, engagement and meaningful connections makes them an essential part of modern influencer marketing strategies.

# THE END

Social Media Digital Trends

# 2025

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