Social media & influencer marketing Barometer 2024 | 10 key insights

1. **Belgians are avid users of social media and messaging platforms.**

Among Belgians aged 16 to 39, Instagram stands out as the most popular social media platform, with 69,6% using it at least daily. WhatsApp follows closely behind at 69,4%. Facebook (67,1% daily use), Messenger (59,1% daily use), and YouTube (58,1% daily use) complete the top five. On Instagram, frequent users predominantly use the Instagram feed (79,8% daily use) and Instagram stories (74,8% daily use). The popularity of Instagram reels has increased to 60,2% among daily users, up from 54,3% in 2023. Additionally, it's noteworthy that Instagram serves as a messaging platform, especially among younger demographics (66,1% daily use among 16-24-year-olds). YouTube emerges as the most widely used platform overall, with 92% of Belgians using it at least monthly, followed by WhatsApp (90,5%) Facebook (86,6%), Messenger (84,3%) and Instagram (83,8%). While most mainstream social media platforms experience a decline in usage, the opposite is true for TikTok.

2. **Instagram remains the leading social media platform among Belgian young people (16-24 y.o.), while TikTok gains momentum.**

With a significant 94,2% of young people utilizing it and 81,4% engaging with it daily, Instagram maintains its dominance among 16-24-year-olds. However, this marks a 5,2% decrease compared to 2023. TikTok has emerged as the second most popular platform among Belgian young people with 70,4% using it daily, closely followed by Snapchat (69,6% daily use; -4,7% compared to 2023). Despite a slight decline in daily users for YouTube (-2,4%), it remains the top platform among young people in terms of monthly users (94,9%). Facebook continues its downward trend (-6,2%), yet maintains a usage rate of 77,3% among 16-24-year-olds on a monthly basis.
Among 16-18-year-olds TikTok (79,1% daily usage) and Snapchat (78%) exhibit notably higher daily usage rates compared to older demographics, challenging Instagram's position as the dominant platform (82,8% daily usage). 66,9% of the 16-18-year-olds open Snapchat multiple times a day and 63,1% uses TikTok multiple times a day.
Compared to young males, young females use mainstream social media more intensely, except for YouTube. 89,2% of the female young people use Instagram daily, followed by TikTok (77,2%) and Snapchat (72,6%). YouTube is the most popular daily used social media platform among 16–24-year-old males (77,2% daily usage), while only 51,6% of the 16–24-year-old females use it daily. Other popular platforms among young males are Instagram (74,4% daily usage), Snapchat (67,5% daily use) and TikTok (64% daily usage).

3. **Facebook retains dominance among Belgian adults (25+), messaging apps are important.**

Among individuals aged 25 and older (up to 39), Facebook remains the leader in daily social media usage, with 77,3% engaging with the platform daily. Instagram follows behind with a daily usage rate of 63,3%. While YouTube ranks lower in daily usage, it emerges as the second most important platform after Facebook when looking at monthly use (90,5%). Among 25-year-olds, there is a higher percentage of women (83,6%) compared to men (71,3%) using Facebook daily. Similarly, daily usage of Instagram is higher among women (67,9%) compared to men (58,8%). Conversely, men show higher daily usage of YouTube (65,5%) compared to women (43,8%). Also, the percentage of men daily using TikTok is higher (36,2%) compared to women (26,7%).
Furthermore, messaging apps like WhatsApp and Messenger play a crucial role in communication, with high usage rates both daily and monthly. Messaging apps like WhatsApp (73,2% daily use) and Messenger (61,7% daily use) are widely used among individuals aged 25 and older.

4. **There is a growing concern regarding the extent of social media usage.**

Belgians are heavy social media users, although we noticed a slight decline in daily usage compared to the previous year. 69,4% of the Belgians aged 16 to 39, and even 76,4% (compared to 64,9% in 2023) among 16-24-year-olds, have taken steps to limit their social media usage. Common actions include deleting apps (28,7% of respondents) and turning off notifications (26,8% of respondents). Notably, turning off notifications is particularly popular among women, especially among 16-24-year-olds (41,4%), while men are more inclined towards deleting apps.

5. **Social media are essential for brands to connect with Belgians.**

Instagram emerges as the primary platform for brand interaction, particularly among 16-24-year-olds, where 70,3% follow brands on the platform. However, Facebook remains significant, especially favoured by 25-39-year-olds for brand following (56%), while 44,5% of 16-24-year-olds follow brands on TikTok.
46,2% of Belgians aged 16 to 39 claim to get to know brands or products through Instagram, rising to 56,3% among 16-24-year-olds. Next, it is also popular for searching information about brands or products (29,9%), while 24,7% claims to have clicked through to the brand's website or webshop through Instagram. TikTok, too, plays a significant role, in particular among 16-24-year-olds with 43,2% learning about brands or products and 26,3% searching for brand-related information through the platform. Facebook remains relevant, with 35,6% of Belgians aged 16 to 39 getting to know brands or products through the platform. 23,8% already clicked through to a brand's website or webshop through

Facebook. 23,5% uses the platform to search brand-related information and 21,8% to contact brands or companies. YouTube also proves valuable, as 32,1% of the Belgians (16 up to 39) got to know brands or products through the platform (38,9% among 16-24-year-olds) and 24,9% searched for more information about brands or products on YouTube.

6. **Advertising is inherent to social media according to young Belgians.**

18,3% of the Belgian social media users aged 16 up to 39 are willing to pay for social media platforms if no advertisements are shown in return. Among 16-24-year-olds this is 17,7%. While they acknowledge the disruptive nature of ads on social media, many have grown accustomed to them as part of their online experience. Some even find certain ads tolerable or enjoyable if they align with their interests. However, this sentiment does not translate into a willingness to pay for ad-free platforms. Instead, they view ads as the "price" of accessing social media for free. Additionally, the presence of ad blockers further reduces exposure to ads, reflecting a preference for ad-free content without willing to pay for it.

7. **Influencer marketing remains highly effective, with a growing commercial impact, particularly among young people.**

74% of Belgian social media users aged 16 to 39 actively follow influencers, content creators, or celebrities, with Instagram and TikTok emerging as the primary platforms for doing so. 85,2% of the 16-24-year-olds and 68,1% of the +25-year-olds follow influencers, content creators or celebrities on social media.
+Among 25-year-olds, French speakers exhibit a higher inclination compared to Dutch speakers, with 71,7% and 65,3%, respectively.
Of those who follow influencers, 29,2% has purchased a product or service, 34,6% has started following a brand on social media, and 44,7% has searched for more information about a brand due to influencer endorsements in the past three months. Among 16-24-year-olds, these figures are even higher, with 33,7% purchasing a product or service, 38,5%starting to follow a brand, and 51,3% seeking more information about a brand due to influencer endorsements.

8. **Virtual influencers are not yet gaining traction in Belgium.**

43,4% of the Belgians aged 16 to 39 are familiar with the concept of virtual influencers, with 17,1% actively following them on social media platforms, predominantly Instagram and TikTok. There are no notable differences between young people (16-24) and +25-year-olds. Opinions are divided on the authenticity and innovativeness of brand endorsements by virtual influencers, with more skepticism among older age groups. 53,5% thinks brand endorsements from virtual influencers are lacking in authenticity. Transparent communication regarding the virtual nature of these influencers is crucial. 70,1%

emphasizes the importance of transparent disclosure regarding the virtual nature of influencers, underscoring a desire for clarity.

9. **Podcast advertising is promising.**

More than half (54,8%) of the Belgians aged 16 to 39 listen to podcasts, mostly on Spotify. Among podcast listeners aged 16 to 39, 74,2% encounters brands while listening, with 39,1% encountering them frequently or daily. Podcasts demonstrate their commercial impact, with 34,7% of listeners seeking more information about a brand due to a podcast and 29% making a purchase as a result of podcast advertising in the past three months. 41,6% of podcast listeners have become acquainted with a product, service, or brand through podcasts in the same period, indicating their potential as a marketing channel.

10. **Influencers and podcasts wield significant influence in shaping the behavior and lifestyle choices of Belgians aged 16 to 39.**

71,2% of individuals who follow influencers, content creators, or celebrities online admit to being influenced to change their lifestyles and behaviour. Eating healthier consistently emerges as one of the most influenced areas, with 34,3% of respondents starting to eat more healthily due to influencer content. Additionally, 32,9% report exercising more, while 18,6% have altered their fashion style and 18,5% have become more conscious of their budget. 15,9% pays more attention to mental health, and 12,6% was motivated to seek psychological help.

Podcasts may also influence lifestyle choices, with 31,8% of listeners reporting motivation to eat healthier and 27,1% engaging in more physical activity due to podcast content. 19,6% claims that podcasts motivated them to invest or manage their budget. Notably, podcasts have sparked interest in mental health, with 17,4% expressing willingness to seek psychological help and 15,9% paying more attention to their mental well-being.