Pendulum

2026 Trend Report:

Are You a Digital Archaeologist or Proactive Brand Commander?

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Text is Dead, Silos are Over, and 'The Life of a Showgirl' is So Last Metric

Stop Doing Digital Archaeology. 2026 is the Year of Brand Authenticity. Learn How to Turn Hidden Brand Mentions Into Customer Spend

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Are you ready for 2026?

It's the year that authenticity is the primary brand currency, consumers thrive on transparency, and human-centric engagement builds brands better than any other approach. These three defining 2026 trends represent a seismic shift in how brands are discovered and discussed. Static text is a relic. We've moved into the era of visual and audio powerhouses (TikTok, YouTube, podcasts, and Instagram Reels). Yes, even for B2B.

Now, you must treat every video, podcast, and livestream as a high-velocity data source and brand indicator. In 2026, if your brand is not listening across audio, video, imagery, and text on these channels, you miss out on increasingly fundamental business intelligence.

We have identified a threefold shift in how brands must operate in 2026 to gain market traction and leverage brand authenticity and multimedia customer sentiment.

The Shifts:
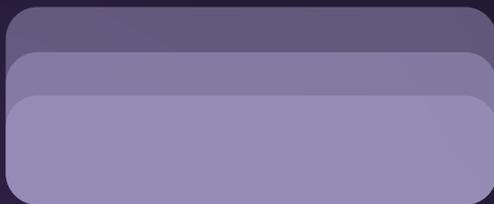
Platform Shift: A pivot from text-dominant feeds such as X (Twitter) to visual and audio powerhouses, including TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram Reels.

Tech Stack Shift: AI—specifically Computer Vision (CV), Optical Character Recognition (OCR), and advanced transcription—is mandatory infrastructure for capturing the multimedia social truth. SEO is necessary, but GEO is ideal.

Value Chain Shift: Social listening must evolve into operational risk mitigation, deep audience analysis, campaign monitoring, and cost-saving insights.

Instead of brand-building focused on text-based social media, SEO stuffing, and treating social listening as a fairly stand-alone 'nice-to-have', it must now encompass all modern, preferred social media formats and deliver direct, measurable value to the brand.

Let's explore these shifts together and help you bring meaningful metrics and brand brilliance back into your corporate wheelhouse. We have analysis, actionable tips, and downloadable assets to help you get your groove back.

Thank you for reading, and please, reach out to us for clarity, questions, or to learn more about what we do.

2025

Is the Year AI Changed the
Rules and the Game

What Happened?	What Died	What Developed
AI search	SEO	GEO
Audio & video social media surged	Text-only social listening	AI-driven social listening that spans text, audio, video, and imagery
AI-generated creative	Traditional brand channels	Genuine customer feedback on dark social, niche community platforms, and alternative channels
PR, Social, & Marketing teams needed a cohesive go-forward plan	Team silos, vanity metrics	Collaborative planning, metrics that matter to growth

You Miss 75% of the Conversations About Your Brand

Let Us Help You Find Your Missing Data

Facebook stopped being 'cool' in 2012 when image-first Instagram emerged. Similarly, Twitter (now X), the other previously most widely used text-based social platform, lost its momentum in 2015. Since then, text-based media has increasingly lost its 'wow' factor, except for niche community-first channels, including Reddit or Tumblr.

Visual and audio channels capture billions of views per day, dwarfing the millions captured by text-based ones such as X. At the end of 2025, TikTok exceeded 1.6 billion monthly active users, Instagram usage climbed to 3 billion monthly active users, and YouTube attracted 2.9 billion monthly active users, with 1 billion hours of video watched daily. What about X (Twitter)? 561 million monthly active users in 2025. In addition, X presents significant barriers to adoption: enterprise API pricing starts at a prohibitive $42,000 per month, and 29% of marketers plan to reduce spend on the platform due to confidence erosion.
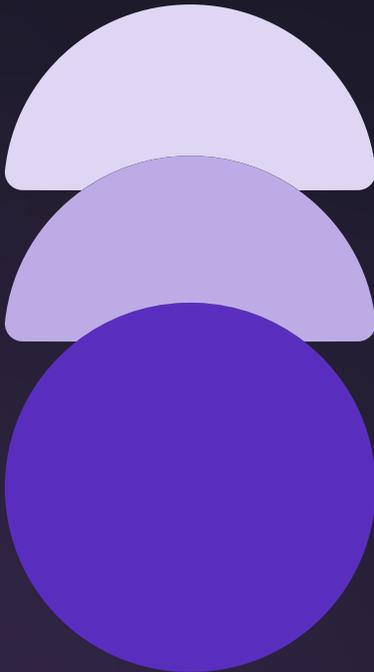
The Numbers

TikTok exceeded

1.6 billion

monthly active users

Instagram usage climbed to

3 billion

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YouTube attracted

2.9 billion

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of video watched daily

X (Twitter)

561 million

monthly active users in 2025

API pricing starts at a prohibitive

$42,000

per month, and 26% of marketers plan to reduce spend due to confidence erosion.

Are You Still Reading Yesterday's Mail?

As you can imagine, the brand cost of not having visibility into the vast repository of untapped, unmined social data is high: it exposes your brand to reputational risk, poor campaign performance, and being left behind the latest viral trend.

Relying on legacy data sources that focus solely on text platforms, captions, hashtags, or metadata is an informational gap that brands can no longer afford to ignore. If you are currently using these legacy systems, your calculated Share of Voice (SoV) is based on only a tiny percentage of the actual measurable conversation.

Monitoring what is written about you is no longer enough; the world has moved on from 2015, and social platforms have exponentially exploded, covering every known media format (and probably some unknown ones too - hello AI!). Brand reputation lies halfway into a podcast, in an AI-generated video, or at the tail end of a YouTube vlog. It is no wonder the social landscape has become complex and practically unmanageable for many brands–you're still reading yesterday's mail.

Multimedia Social Platforms and Social Listening (Or lack of it!)

2025 research found that legacy text-based social listening channels capture less than 25% of brand conversations, and this reputationally dangerous 75% data deficit exposes a flaw in legacy social listening and monitoring. Brands must realize that today they are entirely missing most of their online user-generated brand data.

The surge in multimedia content shifted ideal channels to target, and shifted the basic operation of social listening. However, most social listening platforms remain text-focused and capture only brand mentions in posts, captions, or hashtags. Still stuck in 2015, they rely on text-first capabilities rather than exploring the video and audio-first world that has become the norm.

These legacy text-centric platforms are functionally obsolete. They're the early digital archaeologists still out there scraping their way through the deserts of text, hoping to find the remains of a brand skeleton. Their dusty outputs render your brand management, communications, marketing, or risk mitigation strategies based on their outputs–flawed.

Capturing sentiment across all media formats and public channels has rapidly become a non-negotiable need for any brand seeking accurate competitive intelligence and deep customer understanding. Think of the dollars your teams can save by watching campaign sentiment in real-time, catching a negative mention before it goes viral, or ensuring you have a collection of completely brand-aligned influencers that you know won't be a reputational risk.

By the end of 2025, there was even brighter light in the social listening digital dust. Modern social listening evolved beyond just monitoring text-based mentions.

The landscape became about social listening and intelligence, and developing the ability to detect and preempt conversations across a decentralized, multimedia environment.

The solution? Innovative social listening companies integrated AI. They developed Computer Vision (CV) and advanced transcription services (ASR) as mandatory infrastructure to monitor spoken-word content in podcasts, video, and more. They provided real-time visual brand exposure across formats including video and imagery.

Brands can now see full-color content across all media formats on publicly available social channels in dozens of languages.

So now, let's find your data, preempt conversations, and use it to drive brand excellence.

Use Social Like a Gen Alpha in 2026

Stop Gambling With Your B2B and B2C Brand Dollars. Put Them Where the Audience **ACTUALLY** Lives

Now you know you are missing 75% of your data. But exactly where is it? Well, if you are still only monitoring X (Twitter), chances are it is everywhere but there. Modern multimedia social platforms are a wealth of brand knowledge and mentions. Knowing how to use those channels, drive that data, and pre-empt conversations is key to gaining better brand traction in 2026.

Here is what you need to know.

Core Video & Visual Platforms:

YouTube

Over **2.9 billion** monthly active users as of 2025	Nearly universal among internet users **under 50**	Largest segment is young adults in their mid-20s to early 40 with **40% of users aged 25–44**	Over **40% of shoppers** buy products discovered on the platform.

Content Types:
Long-form lifestyle vlogs
Interactive unboxing, product reviews with integrated purchase links
How-To tutorials
Deep-dive case studies
Visual breakdowns of complex workflows

Instagram (Reels & Stories)

3 billion monthly active users globally	Audience dominated by young adults, **62.3% of users aged 18–34**	Reels are the primary growth engine, and offer **22% higher engagement** than standard video posts

Content Types:
User-generated content (UGC)
Behind-the-scenes day in the life
High-velocity viral hooks
30–90 second expert tips
Satirical industry memes
Meet the expert interviews

TikTok

Estimated to reach

1.67 billion

monthly active users going into 2026

25–34 age group makes up

33–35% of the global audience

It has become a primary discovery engine with

nearly half (46%) of Gen Z

using it as a search tool

Content Types:
Polished Reels showcasing aesthetic product use
Story-based direct sales
Influencer lifestyle collaborations
Personal storytelling from executives
Interactive Q&A in Stories
Direct-message sequences for high-ticket lead nurturing

Community & Niche Platforms: LLMs' Favorite Sources

Reddit

Has over

1 billion

monthly active users

Remains male-dominated globally

(60% male)

has reached gender parity in the US

(50% female)

A primary training ground for

for the AI/LLM models that power GEO

Content Types:
Participate in niche enthusiast groups
Run authentic Ask Me Anything sessions for product feedback
Monitor technical subreddits to provide jargon-free advice on specific industry challenges without overt selling

Telegram & Bitchute

The engines of the

Dark Social frontier

Telegram has reached

1 billion users

These platforms facilitate

high-trust, private communities

that legacy listening platforms cannot scrape, primary source for narrative incubation

Content Types:
Exclusive access to insider deals
Beta-testing groups
High-frequency community chat
Peer-to-peer networks for founders or high-level technical users
to exchange industry insights

Networking & Professional:

LinkedIn

Projected to exceed
1.3 billion members by 2026

The high-income powerhouse, with
54% of US users earning over $100,000 annually

Video content earns
5x more engagement than static posts,
yet many B2B brands still only monitor text-based mentions

Content Types:
Corporate milestones
Employee-focused cultural content
Data-heavy benchmark reports
Personal lessons from founders
Opinionated newsletters addressing market shifts

Broad Reach & Real-Time Updates:

Facebook

Remains the world's most used social network
3.07 billion monthly users

It is the king of retention for older demographics;
users aged 55–64 spend the most time here (45 minutes/day)

In 2026, brands must pivot here;
video content already represents 60% of time spent on Facebook

Content Types:
Large-scale brand groups and local engagement via high-reach Reels
Case study summaries
Video clips targeted at older decision-makers (55+) who utilize the platform for industry news

X (Twitter)

Users dropped to an estimated
561 million
monthly users in July 2025, remains a niche tool for real-time news

(used by 59.7% for this purpose)
but carries a high confidence erosion risk for brands.

Content Types:
Thought leadership threads
Hot takes on viral moments
Polls for news reactions
Quick-strike product drops

What About the Dark Social Frontier? (The **WHAT**?)

To add another layer of complexity to brand management, influential brand conversations no longer occur in public comment sections. They retreat to the dark corners of the web, areas where the fingers of social listening can't reach, where public data becomes private and cannot be mined. This untraceable sharing via private channels including WhatsApp, Signal, Slack, Discord, and DMs, is a fundamental challenge for traditional marketing.

> **Public engagement = visibility. Private sharing = trust and relevance.**

Trust and relevance are far more critical for high-stakes consumer decision-making.

This data retreats into the dark, resulting in significant attribution loss. A report published 10 years ago suggested that 84% of consumer sharing occurs via dark social channels. In 2026? The estimates are closer to 95%.

The challenge is two-fold. Most modern analytics platforms misattribute dark social traffic to direct traffic, creating a significant information gap that prevents your teams from seeing the true source of high-intent leads. Ignoring this deficit ensures your ROI is chronically undervalued. Don't misallocate your budget on a guess.

For risk intelligence teams, the stakes are even higher. Emerging threats—such as corporate conspiracies, boycotts, or disinformation—often incubate in niche, private, or semi-private spaces before exploding into the mainstream.

Don't Panic. Let's Fix This!

There's always a smart solution. While private 1-to-1 messages are encrypted and inaccessible, brand teams must find a social listening tool to monitor adjacent Publicly Available Information (PAI) to bridge the gap. This includes monitoring Reddit threads and niche forums such as Rumble, BitChute, and Telegram, where dark narratives first take root.

In addition, advanced social listening platforms can detect sudden spikes in keyword or visual mentions across these public fringe networks, providing an early warning system for narratives that are being discussed privately.

By using social listening driven by AI to analyze visual sentiment (OCR and Logo Detection) in these semi-private spaces, your teams can identify emerging narratives and track campaign sentiment before they reach a viral tipping point.

2026: Building Deep Intelligence

In 2026, brands cannot stop dark social; they design for it.

Create Share-Worthy PAI:	**Incorporate Qualitative Data:**	**Bridge the Gap with AI:**
Develop high-value social signals–charts, video snippets, or original research—intentionally designed to be screenshotted and shared in private threads.	Use self-reported attribution (e.g., How did you hear about us? forms) to capture what your digital dashboard misses.	Use multimedia AI social listening platforms to see the visual word-of-mouth in screenshots and memes shared across monitorable niche platforms, preempting the risks that hide in the dark.

2026: Proactive Brand Command, That's What's Up

It's Time to Build a Modern, Responsive, Trusted Brand

It's pretty simple. To stay ahead in 2026, upgrade your social listening tech stack to ensure you capture all conversations about your brand. You can no longer afford to sift through channels manually, trace a nugget of truth, waste brand dollars boosting posts on irrelevant channels, or miss the conversation entirely.

Modern social listening and intelligence platforms geared for 2026 provide clear information sources across multimedia channels, enabling brand teams to prioritize genuine earned media engagement over AI-generated noise.

The Modern Social Listening Mandate

Our 10 non-negotiable requirements for a modern social listening and intelligence platform in 2026:

Multimodal AI Integration:
Platforms must process video, audio, text, and images simultaneously to provide a complete data picture.

Linguistic and Global Breadth:
Strong platforms must support monitoring across at least 75 languages to ensure global Share of Voice (SOV) benchmarks are accurate and inclusive.

Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR):
The ability to transcribe spoken words in long-form and short-form video (TikTok, YouTube) and podcasts is essential for capturing 75% of brand mentions that are typically missed by text-only platforms.

Historical Archive:
Because content is often deleted, platforms must maintain a persistent record of publicly available information (PAI) for auditable reference and analysis.

Optical Character Recognition (OCR) and Logo Detection:
Technology must see and extract text from memes, screenshots, and video frames, and identify visual brand exposure when a name isn't typed or spoken.

Automated Executive Summaries:
To reduce team burden and manual research processes, the platform must automatically distill large volumes of data into digestible, executive-ready summaries and reports.

Elimination of the 75% Silence:
Brands must look for platforms that move beyond API-driven data collection, which often misses the majority of conversations occurring in unstructured media formats.

Deep Influencer Due Diligence:
For partner marketing, platforms should provide auditable, multimodal vetting of a creator's content to ensure ongoing brand alignment, and lookalike searches to identify similar content creators.

Access to Decentralized and Niche Channels:
Coverage must extend to specialized channels like Rumble, Telegram, and 4chan, where misinformation often incubates before reaching the mainstream.

Predictive Social Intelligence:
A social listening and intelligence platform should identify the emergence, vector, and velocity of narratives at their earliest stage to allow for proactive leadership rather than reactive damage control.

* Ensure your platform highlights the real signals in the noise. Not bots. Not AI-written and repeated content.

Once you have the right tool, you need to adjust your approach to measurement, SEO, campaign planning, and more to ensure you capture the value you need and drive the right engagement. (Oh, and stop the wrong kind of narratives in their tracks before they become brand panic).

Let's Explore!

Your Metrics Aged Like an 80s Perm. Ditch Them

Another evolution. This time, from the Age of Taylor Swift (Advertising Value Equivalency) to the Age of Bad Bunny (Earned Media Value).

Let me explain.

The evolution of social intelligence and the rise of multimedia social platforms rendered traditional media measurement frameworks completely obsolete for 2026.

For decades, public relations and marketing teams relied on Advertising Value Equivalency (AVE) to justify their impact. This metric estimates the cost of buying an equivalent amount of advertising space, i.e., column inches. However, in a landscape dominated by visual and audio powerhouses such as TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram, AVE is no longer a reliable measure of brand health or impact. It's as obsolete as that 90s shellsuit, the tight perm, and blue eyeshadow (combined).

The Math Ain't Mathing No More: AVE to EMV

We have news for you: Your metrics are bogus, and your measurements are best left in 2025.

In 2026, Earned Media Value (EMV) has replaced AVE as the standard for quantifying brand resonance. While AVE focuses on the cost of space, EMV measures the actual, quantified monetary value of organic engagement and influence across the entire digital ecosystem.

By combining Share of Voice (SoV) with EMV, your brand can finally move beyond simple volume metrics to reveal both the total reach of coverage and its direct financial significance. By capturing the 75% of social media mentions in audio, video, and imagery that legacy social listening platforms cannot, brands gain a complete picture of their spend vs. return.

Modern EMV calculations leverage social mentions, logo displays, and other brand associations identified by AI-driven social listening platforms, featuring video and audio transcription and Optical Character Recognition (OCR). Now, these high-value, previously sidelined non-text impressions are included in your total valuation.

This combination enables your teams to benchmark the strategic effectiveness of their messaging—such as sustainability claims or health benefits—across all media, not just text. Finally! A complete picture without time-consuming manual calculations and guesswork.

Learn how to calculate your EMV here and use our EMV Report Template here to showcase your weekly EMV ROI.

The Definitive Advantage

This AVE-to-EMV shift transforms social listening from a nice-to-have reporting task into a core component of operational risk mitigation, brand analysis, and cost-saving insights.

Reputation ROI: Your brand can now measure its reputation in real time, allowing it to see the financial impact of a social media storm before it escalates into a crisis.

Operational Efficiency: Instead of manual column-inches reporting, automated social listening platforms provide executive-ready insights that save analyst time and accelerate decision-making.

Influencer ROI: EMV provides evidence-based data to demonstrate that influencer partners are a force multiplier rather than a liability, ensuring every dollar spent on a partnership is backed by auditable intelligence.

Your Content is Not a Turkey, Stop Stuffing it With SEO

It's time to state a private thought publicly. Writers (and readers) the world over HATE content written purely for SEO. It's not made for human readers, provides little actual value, and is finally seeing the end of its era. SEO gamed Google's search engine; SEO experts were always trying to stay one step ahead of algorithm updates, keyword stuffing was real, and the resulting awful content became the 'norm' for many marketing blogs.

Enter Generative AI

As LLMs began to define content production, search followed suit, prioritizing high-quality, authentic opinions and conversations that mattered to customers. User-generated content became the lifeblood of GEO search, and niche platforms such as Reddit, Tumblr, and Bitchute became essential sources for these AI-driven search bots to mine. The key point is that Google no longer dominates search, and content must satisfy the brilliant minds behind many LLM search engines to be surfaced.

So, everyone got left behind.

Especially those relying purely on SEO-driven, keyword-stuffed, irrelevant, and bland content. Google has long hammered home the principles of EEAT (experience, expertise, authoritativeness, and trust), and brands that ignored them are scrambling to catch up. This focus on EEAT has spread like peanut butter across all instances of LLM search (Perplexity, Claude, ChatGPT, and Gemini–to name a few).

While trust signals and experience rely on basic SEO principles such as backlinks, schema, and an overall people-first, easy-to-use page experience, expertise and authoritativeness focus on what your content is ABOUT rather than what is IN your content.

We have all seen the rather dramatic surge on LinkedIn with companies searching for 'storytellers', people with journalistic backgrounds who can drive authentic opinion and content. LLMs are the reason why. In 2026, stories are told, opinions are heard, and the voice of the customer takes center stage.

The landscape has shifted from simple keyword collection to using social intelligence to discover and ensure high-signal, authentic conversations that drive brand awareness, customer trust, and ultimately dollar spend.

- The Fundamental Shift: GEO means the public weighs in on your brand across all channels, not just your owned ones. It elevates real conversations and hides keyword stuffing under the carpet where it belongs.

- The High-Quality Defense: Brands with strong PR strategies and customer communities are safe; those relying on surface-level keyword content will face declining visibility and a... challenging transition.

> ## How To Build Your GEO Strategy Essentials
>
> Let us help you shift from link-based visibility (SEO) to citation-based authority (GEO)
>
> Citation is the New Click: Focus on being the source of AI quotes. Even if the user doesn't click through, brand inclusion in the answer drives top-of-mind awareness.
>
> Modular Content: Structure data into Answer Engines—short, declarative paragraphs, bulleted lists, and comparison tables that AI can easily copy-paste into a response.
>
> Third-Party Validation: Your website is 30% of the battle. AI trusts what others say about you (Reddit, reviews, news) more than marketing copy. Make sure you know what is being said.
>
> Technical Semantic Layer: Use Schema.org and llms.txt to provide a machine-readable map of your brand's value.
>
> KPI Shift: Measure brand mentions in LLMs and citation frequency alongside traditional organic traffic, using modern social listening and intelligence.

With a Little Help From My Friends

How do you build the brand engine that drives success in 2026? You end the era of siloed PR, Marketing, and Social teams. There is nothing worse than team silos so rigid that you may as well be working in different companies. 2026 is about convergence, convenience, and cooperation. The merging of these functions is essential to modern mission success. When your teams operate in isolation, they create inconsistent data, conflicting KPIs, and gaps that prevent your brand from seeing the whole story.

Currently, departments are trapped by competing priorities that actively discourage collaboration. To win, align their legacy goals under a unified brand intelligence framework. While teams want to support one another in the modern brand era, they are hindered by legacy KPIs, outdated metrics, and ancient reporting formats. Your entire company needs a reboot.

Here is what needs to change:

1. PR & Corporate Communications

The Legacy Goal: Media mentions and Advertising Value Equivalency (AVE).

The 2026 Shift: Moving from counting clips to narrative vetting and brand alignment.

Converged KPI: Earned Media Value (EMV) and citations in Generative AI results. Instead of just securing a media placement, PR is now responsible for ensuring the brand is the source of truth cited by AI agents.

2. Marketing & Growth

The Legacy Goal: Lead volume, SEO rankings, and vanity engagement.

The 2026 Shift: Moving from SEO stuffing to authenticity and audience resonance.

Converged KPI: Sales lift and operational efficiency. Marketing must now use multimodal social listening signals (such as logo detection and ASR) to demonstrate that high-velocity video content is driving conversions.

3. Social Media & Community

The Legacy Goal: Follower growth, likes, and posting for the sake of posting.

The 2026 Shift: Moving from channel tactician to audience conductor.

Converged KPI: Share of Narrative (SoN) and dark social velocity. Social is a megaphone and the early warning system that identifies trends in transcripts and niche forums to feed PR and Marketing engines.

A straightforward core narrative is essential for trust building in 2026. An integrated team ensures that a single, cohesive brand story is externalized consistently across media outreach (PR), digital campaigns (Marketing), and community engagement (Social). Consistent storytelling, driven by multimodal social listening across all touchpoints, makes a brand 71% more likely to report improved customer loyalty.

In response to this shift, teams must move away from vanity metrics and align on commercial KPIs such as sales lift, Share of Voice (SoV), and stakeholder trust. To begin this corporate change, conduct an initial joint strategy session in which all three teams co-design campaigns. Now, everyone knows their role and how to respond.

Out With the Old: Measurable Metrics for 2026

Metric Name	What You Measure	Why
Follower Growth & Likes	Superficial audience size and passive double-tap interactions	Vanity
Media Mention Volume	The raw count of clips or articles without context of sentiment or reach	Vanity
Advertising Value Equivalency (AVE)	An estimate of what a mention would cost if it were a paid ad; it doesn't reflect actual impact	Vanity
Search Engine Rankings (SEO)	Keyword positions on Google are often gamed by stuffing rather than quality	Vanity
Earned Media Value (EMV)	The quantified monetary value of organic engagement and influence across the digital ecosystem	Essential
Share of Narrative (SoN)	Your brand's dominance and resonance within specific industry storylines across video, audio, imagery, and text	Essential
Generative Engine Citation (GEO)	How often is your brand cited as a source of truth by AI agents like ChatGPT, Claude, and Gemini?	Essential
Multimodal Sentiment	Audience emotional intensity captured from transcripts (ASR) and visual context (OCR), not just text	Essential
Sales Lift & ROI	The direct correlation between narrative shifts and actual revenue generated	Essential

If you unify data from media coverage, social chatter, and search trends, your teams can use AI-driven analytics to forecast emerging topics before they peak. PR performance data should be integrated with sales and marketing metrics to create models that prove how narrative shifts directly drive revenue.

You know what another great result of team collaboration is? Integrated teams can identify risks and opportunities much faster than siloed ones. For example, when a Social team identifies a brand mention in a niche video (via modern AI-driven social listening), the PR team can immediately prepare a proactive response. At the same time, Marketing can adjust its creative strategy to capitalize on the emerging trend. Boom, you have turned a social mention into a dollar-earning initiative.

The 2026 Convergence Strategy & Implementation Checklist

- Shared Asset Libraries: Implement a unified creative library to ensure brand consistency and reduce production waste.
- Joint Strategy Sessions: Instead of separate planning, hold year-long, integrated strategy sessions in which all three teams co-design campaigns.
- The Conductor Role: Move from being channel tacticians to audience-centric conductors who coordinate every touchpoint in the customer journey.

2026 is for Action, Not Reaction

So, Let's Break it Down

To grow your brand, earn customer money, and protect your reputation in 2026, you must move from tracking data to mastering brand intelligence. Follow these mandates:

Solve the 75% Data Deficit	Stop managing your brand based on the small sliver of data found in text. Prioritize multimodal social intelligence platforms, such as Pendulum, that use ASR and OCR to capture the hidden 75% of conversations in video transcripts, podcasts, and visual frames.
Pivot from AVE to Earned Media Value (EMV)	Abandon obsolete Advertising Value Equivalency metrics that fail to account for modern social impact. Use EMV to quantify the true monetary resonance of organic engagement across the entire digital ecosystem, including previously untrackable non-text impressions.
Design for the Dark Social Frontier	Acknowledge that 84% of sharing happens in private channels where traditional attribution fails. Bridge this gap by monitoring adjacent Publicly Available Information (PAI) and niche platforms to preempt narratives before they reach a viral tipping point.
Converge PR, Marketing, & Social	Formally end the era of siloed teams. Implement a unified 'Social Intelligence' hub where all three functions are mutually accountable for a single, cohesive brand story and share a common technical stack for threat diagnosis and trend activation.

To do all this successfully, you need the right social intelligence platform in your corner.

All Talk. Now Action: Our 'How To'

To successfully implement the mandates outlined in this report and bridge the 75% data deficit, your newly converged PR, Marketing, and Social team can follow this 30-day roadmap. This ensures you move from dusty digital archaeology to a shiny new proactive command strategy.

The First 30-Days of Brand Command

Week 1: The Reality Check & Audit

- Audit the Data Gap: Identify the share of your current direct traffic that is actually Dark Social by isolating deep-link clicks with no referral data.
- Legacy Metric Review: Formally retire AVE (Advertising Value Equivalency) and establish your Q1 EMV (Earned Media Value) baseline.
- Infrastructure Check: Audit your current social listening tech stack for Multimodal AI capabilities—specifically ASR for audio and OCR/Logo Detection for video.

Week 2: Breaking the Silos

- Host the First Joint Intelligence Session: Bring PR, Social, and Marketing leads together to co-design a single, cohesive brand story for the quarter, half, and a full-year outline.
- Align Commercial KPIs: Replace vanity metrics with shared accountability for Sales Lift, Share of Voice (SoV), and Stakeholder Trust.
- Define the Conductor Role: Assign a lead responsible for coordinating the narrative across all touchpoints, moving from channel tacticians to audience-centric leaders.

Week 3: Designing for the Frontier

- Create Pocket-Sized PAI: Develop high-value original research or video snippets, specifically formatted for sharing and screensharing in private Slack or WhatsApp threads.
- GEO Content Pivot: Audit your top-performing blog posts and restructure them into answer engine formats—using short, declarative paragraphs and bulleted lists that AI can easily cite.
- Niche Channel Ingestion: Identify 3-5 decentralized platforms (e.g., Reddit, Bitchute, Telegram) where your core audience or emerging narratives are active, and begin monitoring them.

Week 4: Proactive Command

- Influencer Vetting: Perform a deep, multimodal audit of your top 10 influencer partners to ensure there are no untagged brand-safety violations in their audio/video. Search for lookalike influencers to determine whether you can add value.
- Set the GEO Benchmark: Measure how often your brand is currently cited by major LLMs (ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude) to establish a baseline for authority.
- Executive Intelligence Briefing: Present the first unified report to the C-suite, demonstrating the quantified value of the 75% of data previously missing from your reports.

Your Social Listening Needs to Turn Into Social Intelligence... Fast

Because it's the only thing that works in 2026 and beyond.

The solution?

Pendulum is the essential, strategic, and comprehensive alternative for capturing the majority of global brand impressions, directly from audio, video, images, and embedded text, addressing the market pullback from text-centric platforms. We set ourselves apart by offering real-time analytics, AI-driven insights, executive reporting, and an adaptive interface that streamlines integration across marketing strategies. With cutting-edge technology, we outperform competitors by providing unmatched accuracy in identifying brand impressions and optimizing campaign performance.

Our focus is on measurable business outcomes:

- Reducing customer churn by detecting product failures in real time.
- Vetting and monitoring influencers from the moment you begin tracking them, to the moment they part ways with your brand, and beyond.
- Seeing real-time reactions to marketing campaigns enabling strategic adjustments based on audience feedback.
- Catching that viral moment as it emerges, so your brand can hop on board (sensibly - let's not Coca-Cola Christmas Ad it!).
- Seeing negative sentiment, or brand risk, before it becomes mainstream.

The future of modern marketing and communications belongs to professionals who can separate signals from noise and translate audience behavior into measurable brand outcomes.

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"Look, for too long, brand strategy meant activating and listening to only Twitter. It's time to stop operating like it's 2008 and start living in the modern era. YouTube and TikTok are the world's most popular platforms; if you can't detect, protect, and promote your brand in them, you can't even understand your core audience, let alone stay relevant with them. The reality is that 75% of online brand conversations now occur through video, audio, and images. That's because that's where people live online. That's not a minor oversight. That's three-quarters of the conversation about your brand that you're missing entirely. We built Pendulum to close that gap."

— **Mark Listes, CEO, Pendulum**

So, if you're tired of your campaigns showing low ROI, lagging behind the viral moments, or have hired influencers who threaten your brand reputation, let us help you boost your rankings in the eyes of the world— and your competitors!
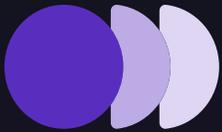
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