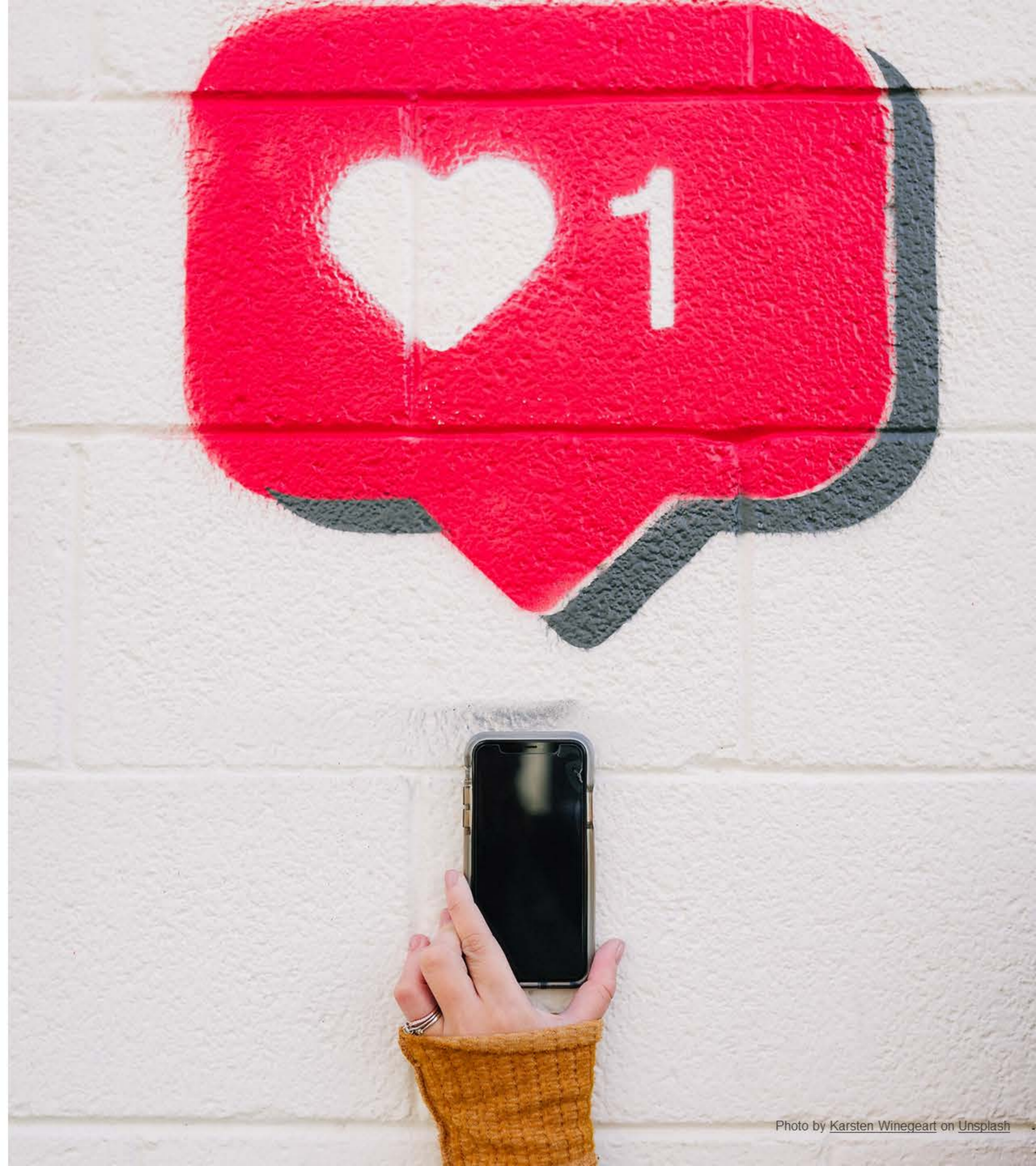


Insights for impact:

Navigating social media algorithms: Essential tips for civil society

By Wanda Sanchez, Digital Research Lead, Comms Hub





This resource dives into the algorithms of Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, looking at the key factors influencing reach, engagement, and visibility on each platform. It provides actionable tips and insights to help you strategically leverage these algorithms to your advantage.

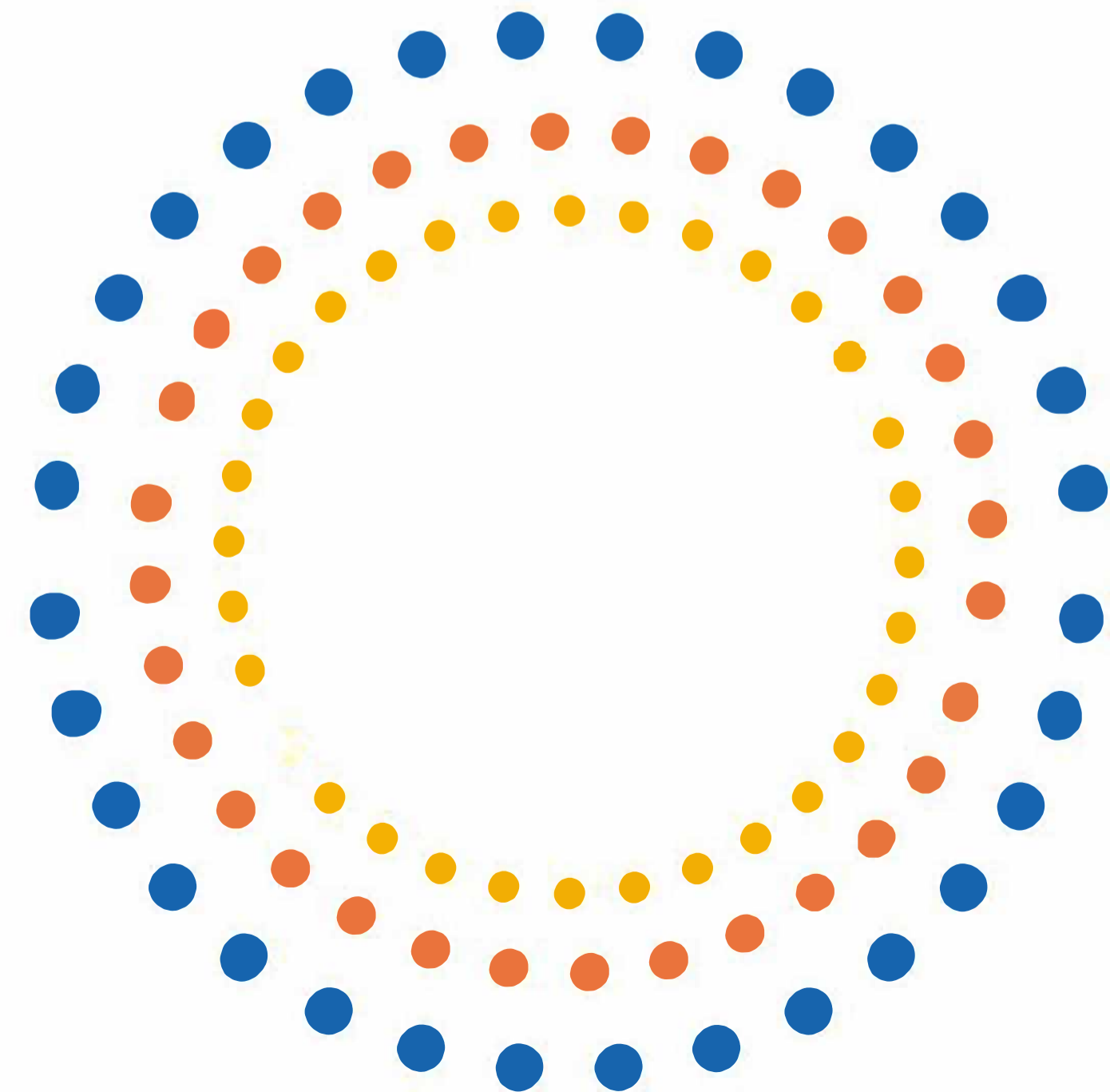
1. Cross-platform tips

2. Twitter algorithm

3. Instagram algorithm

4. Facebook algorithm

Disclaimer: You are welcome to share this resource with your team members. However kindly refrain from sharing it on social media or other public platforms.





1

Cross-platform tips





Encourage discussion but never ask for likes or shares

Pose questions, solicit opinions, and encourage your audience to participate in discussions. Engage with comments promptly and respectfully, fostering a sense of community and making followers feel valued. When you respond to comments, you show that you're interested in what your audience has to say; they're more likely to engage with you in return. **But never ask for likes or shares, as the Facebook algorithm penalizes that by downranking your posts.**

Humanize your content

Humanize your content. Facts prove the information, while stories move the emotions. We need to understand the language people use and navigate their emotional terrain. Capture your audience's attention with a compelling story, and then introduce relevant facts and information to provide a deeper understanding of the subject matter. Make sure not to overload content with facts and statistics. **One to three stats is the maximum!**

Use relevant hashtags

Hashtags are a great way to get your posts seen by more people. Use relevant hashtags that **your target audience is likely to search for**, especially when running campaigns. In fact, if you're running campaigns on different platforms, it also helps to create consistency.



Reactive content

We need more curious diplomats on social media. We need more spokespeople, brands, and creators who bring the fire extinguisher, not the fuel. Here are some tips on how to do that:

- Move past the conflict and focus on educating about nuance and diversity.
- Avoid using dogmatic or preachy language. Respond in an entertaining, curious, and kind manner.
- Avoid taking a side unless one side is highly problematic. In such cases, it's essential to stay true to your values.
- Don't debunk misinformation: When you negate, you strengthen the unhelpful and misleading narratives. Speak about your agenda, what you are for. Use the truth sandwich, if necessary.

Speak about your own agenda. Avoid reactive agendas: Reactive agendas help to increase the visibility of oppositional narratives.



Hate speech

The best defence is to flood social media with positive, empowering, ground-breaking messages.

- **Don't feed the troll:** Support the victims: If you see hate discourse in social media, instead of complaining about it and risking making it viral, use your impulse to spread positive info about the social group or the person under attack.
- **Don't feed the algorithm:** Contents with more interactions get more visibility. If they flood the public debate with their frames and agendas, there will be no space left for ours.
- **Use the platforms options:** Block, silence, report and explore all the settings.
- **Build collective action and support:** Mutual support, coordinated online action and addressing the problem with common tools.

Collaborate with influencers

Partner with influencers or industry experts who have a significant following on Facebook. Their endorsement or collaboration can help expose your brand to a broader audience, resulting in increased engagement and visibility. Remember to mention and tag them when collaborating.



Accessible content

It is not just an act of humanity; this helps both the average reader and people with disabilities to access your information., hence, reaching wider audiences. These guidelines provide an interactive checklist for designers, editors, engineers and more.

Determining the best time to post for each social media channel

You are more likely to get more interactions if you post when more of your followers are connected.

- **Facebook:** Check the page stats (note that time may be displayed in Pacific Time GMT -7).
- **Twitter:** Their native stats don't feature this information. You can use third-party apps, e.g., Audiense.
- **Instagram:** You need to turn your profile into a Business account to view these stats (it's quick and free).
- **TikTok:** You also need a Business account (free).

Check where your followers are: Don't forget time zones. If your followers live in different time zones, post data will be skewed.



Run ads

If you're serious about increasing engagement on Facebook, you can run Facebook ads. Facebook ads can help you reach a wider audience and target your ads to specific demographics.

Optimize formats for phones

Use a variety of post formats, as you do, and keep them short and suitable for mobile devices. The vast majority of people use social media apps on their mobile devices. Additionally, posts with images or videos tend to receive more engagement compared to text-only posts.

- Check sizes, and make sure letters are readable
- Prefer close-up or medium shots
- Contrasting backgrounds
- Easy-to-read, uncomplicated images
- Always add subtitles to the video with copy



2

Twitter algorithm
the more replies, the better





Twitter since Elon Musk took over

- 25% of the US Twitter users (mainly from diverse backgrounds) are preparing to abandon the platform in a year following Pew Research ([link](#)).
- The Twitter algorithm is a set of rules that rank content on the platform, determining each post's value based on a set of rules. Right now:
 - Conversation is everything, meaning replies. Likes and retweets don't matter much anymore. Neither do videos or images.
 - Great long-form content will be prioritized, meaning texts that take more than 2 minutes to read. Consider incorporating threads.
 - Clicks to your profile or on your tweets will be prioritized.

The Twitter algorithm is frequently changing lately. But the most important thing is creating meaningful connections with your audience.

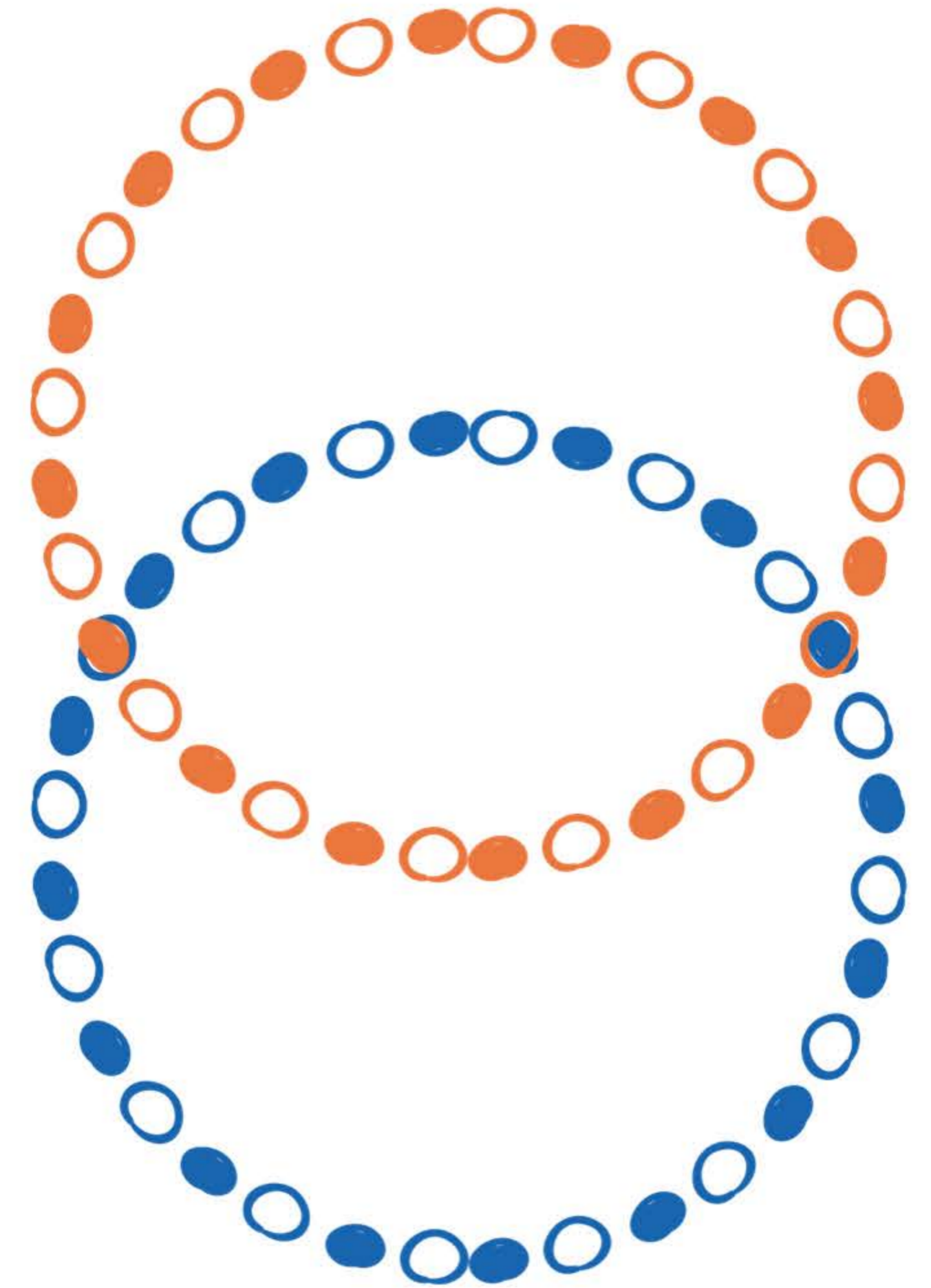
Other news

Meta is developing a new text-based platform called Barcelona (max 500 characters), and it will be decentralized, though it's not entirely clear what that means in Meta content yet).



How the Twitter Algorithm Works

	Old weights	New weights
Likes	30x	0.5x
Retweets	20x	1x
Replies	1x	13.5x // 75x for reply to reply
Images		0
Videos		0.005x
Text		10x long text > 2min reading ()
Clicks to profile		12 x profile
Clicks on Tweets		11x for a click to the conversation and Reply/like

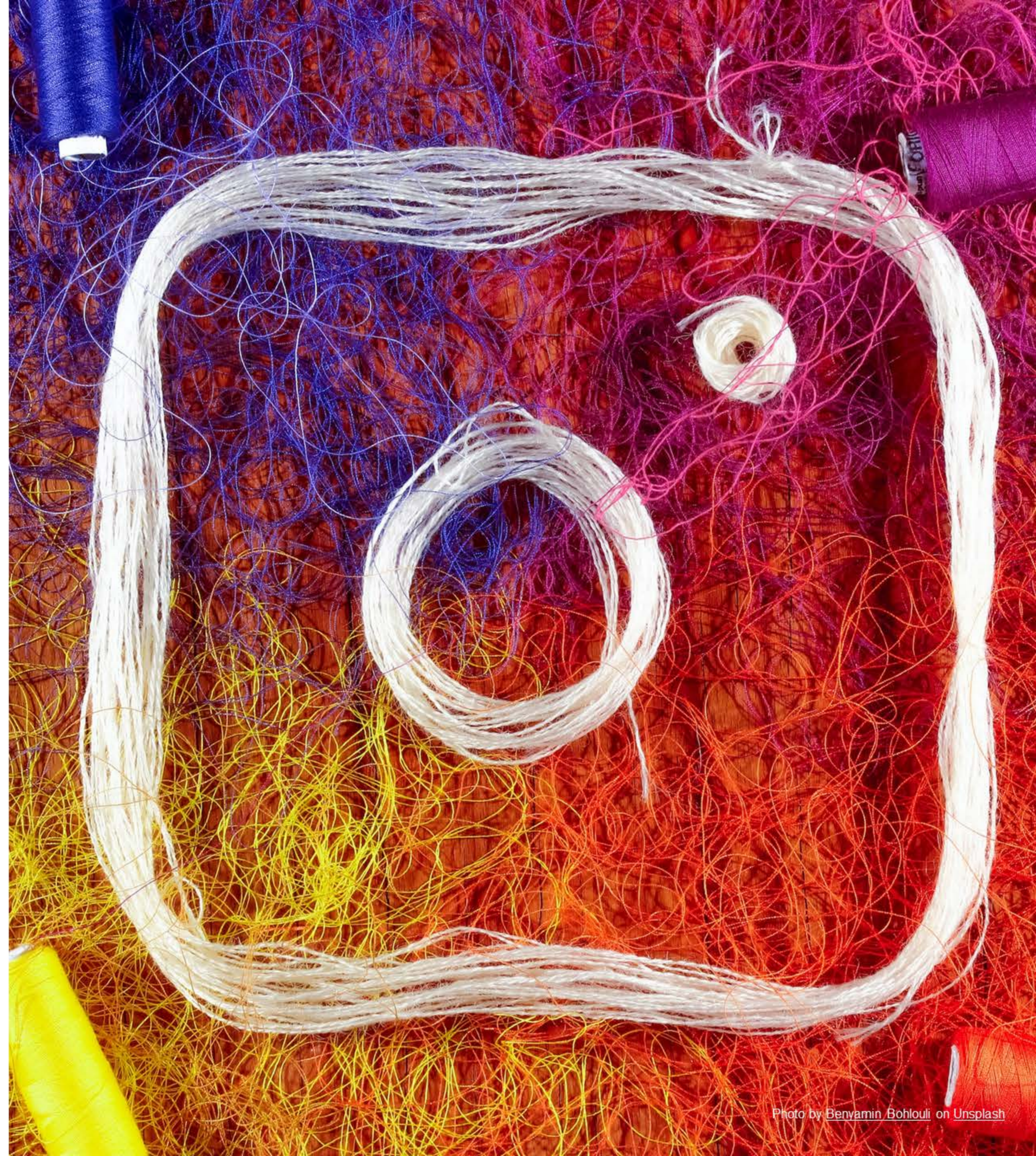




3

Instagram algorithm

*the more comments, the
better*





The Instagram algorithm analyzes every piece of content (reels, feed posts, and stories) posted to the platform.

It takes metadata (including captions and alt text applied to images), hashtags, and engagement metrics into account. Based on this information, it distributes content in a way designed to ensure that users have easy access to what they are most interested in seeing.

It determines which content is most relevant to a particular user based on these three main factors:

- **Relationship between the creator and the viewer:** You're more likely to see content from sources you interact with.
- **Type of content/interest:** When the Instagram algorithm recognizes that a user enjoys a specific content type or format, they show them more of the same.
- **Relevance:** Instagram decides how "relevant" every piece of content is (trending topics as well as recent posts).



As of 2023, the Instagram algorithm will:

- Treat videos and photos more equally (previously, Instagram faced backlash due to prioritizing videos).
- Emphasize showing users something new (know that your content isn't just being pushed to your followers).
- Promote content that inspires conversations, meaning comments.
- Original content will rank higher than reposted or reshared content.

For the Explore tab, the algorithm looks at previous posts you've liked or interacted with and pulls in a collection of photos and videos from related accounts you don't follow (yet). It is basically audience research between people and content that are likely to interact.





4

Facebook algorithm

the more engagement, the better





The Facebook algorithm evaluates every post and ad. It scores content and then arranges it in descending, non-chronological order of interest for each individual user. This process occurs every time a user refreshes their feed.

As of 2023, the Facebook algorithm determines which content is most relevant to a particular user based on three main ranking signals:

- **Who posted it:** You're more likely to see content from sources you interact with, including friends and businesses.
- **Type of content:** If you most often interact with video, you'll see more videos. If you engage with photos, you'll see more photos. You get the idea.
- **Interactions with the post:** The algorithm will prioritize posts with a lot of engagement, especially from people you interact with a lot.

It is important to note that Facebook penalizes posts that ask for likes or shares by downranking them in the algorithm. Instead, we recommend asking for opinions to encourage engagement.



Recommendation: Experiment and analyze!

Regularly analyze your Facebook/Meta Insights to gain insights into the type of content that performs well and resonates with your audience. Adjust your strategy accordingly, focusing on the content formats, topics, and text that generate the most engagement.

Post consistently and at the right time: Not all times of day are equal when it comes to Facebook engagement. Experiment to find out when your audience is most active and be consistent with days and times.

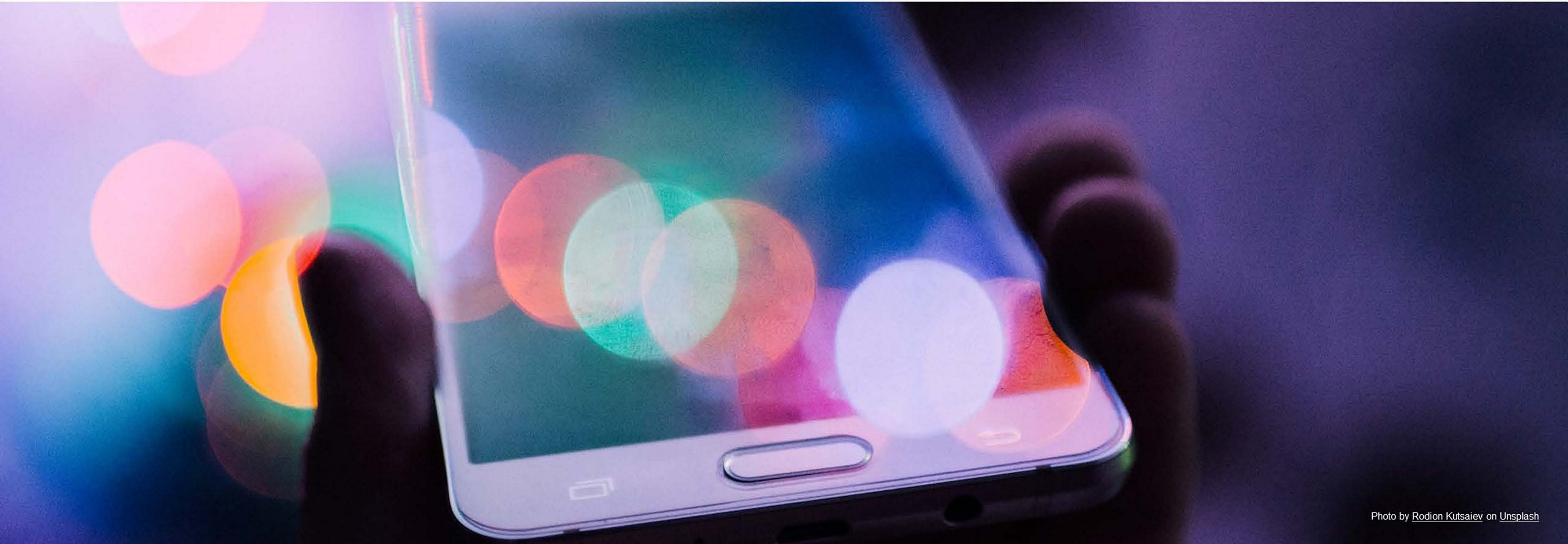
Experiment with different content formats: Analyze and identify which photos or illustrations work best. For example, do photos with faces work better, or are objects like money and coins more effective? Determine whether photos in black and white, similar color palettes or contrasting colors work best. Consider whether it's better to add text or not in the image.

Headlines with/without stories: We recommend testing different informative, interrogative, and meaningful styles. By experimenting with different styles, you can determine which ones resonate best with your audience and lead to higher engagement or click-through rates. You can also consider combining elements from different styles to create unique and compelling headlines. Testing different approaches can help you find the most effective style for your specific goals and target audience.



Tools:

- You can try A/B tests on regular posts at no cost ([link for instructions](#)).
- You can also test messages in focus groups.





About Comms Hub

Comms Hub works to build the power of pro-democracy, social justice movements to shape public discourse, implement data-driven communications strategies and contribute to narrative change. We focus on generating insights for real-life impact and on working with the groups to own and scale effective evidence-based communications.

Comms Hub acts as an accelerator of change by providing research, evidence, expertise, and support to civil society and communities. We work with them to communicate in a way that is collective and based on evidence to promote democracy and social justice. We focus our work on issues and themes that are more heavily polarized or targeted by conservative and reactionary oppositions and autocratic forces: climate justice, gender justice, as well as broader democracy and disinformation.

About Wanda Sanchez, Global Digital Research Lead

Wanda works with pro-democracy civil society to raise awareness about their environments and support them in applying research based on digital platforms and (social) media data to create an evidence base for strategic communications. She is passionate about reducing inequalities and working to accelerate sustainable societies and exploring innovative approaches. Prior to this role, Wanda worked for seven years as a Lead Digital Analyst, assisting international clients' communications and strategy teams in making decisions that come from a good understanding of the dynamics of the communication between users, narratives, and media consumption. Wanda holds a bachelor's degree in sociology from the University of Salamanca and education from the University of Amsterdam (Digital Methods Summer School'17).



**To learn more about our
team and work, join the
Comms Hub community.**

comms-hub.org/contact

