KALO IQ RESEARCH / 2026

Who the social buyer is

Everyone talks about how much social commerce is worth. Fewer ask who is actually buying. In 2026 about 117 million Americans shop straight from the feed, a third of the country, skewing younger and more creator-driven than the average shopper. This report profiles that buyer from published data, then connects it to the one thing that decides whether you reach them: whether your creators have real audiences. All figures cited.

117M

US SOCIAL MEDIA BUYERS IN 2026

33.5% of the population

+46.5%

GROWTH IN US SOCIAL BUYERS SINCE 2020

23.1%

SHARE OF US SOCIAL BUYERS AGED 25 TO 34

58%

US SHOPPERS WHO BOUGHT AFTER SEEING A PRODUCT ON SOCIAL

~50%

OF GEN Z MAKE IN-APP PURCHASES, WELL ABOVE THE AVERAGE

Headline figures: Statista social commerce data; Sprout Social consumer research. Full sources listed below.

The buyer, not just the market

Market-size numbers tell you the pool is big. They do not tell you who is in it or how to reach them. The useful question for a brand is narrower: who buys from the feed, plus what makes them act? The published data gives a clear profile. The US social buyer is now a third of the country, skews toward the 25 to 34 bracket, leans heavily Gen Z and millennial for in-app purchases, then is moved by creators far more than by ads. That profile should shape who you partner with, not just how much you spend.

Six things about the social buyer.

1. **There are about 117 million of them in the US.**

   Roughly 117 million Americans, about 33.5% of the population, now buy through social media, per Statista data. This is a mainstream behavior, not a young-person novelty, though the young lead it. (Source: Statista.)

2. **The base has grown nearly 47% since 2020.**

   US social buyers rose about 46.5% from roughly 79.9 million in 2020 to about 117 million, per Statista. The pandemic-era habit of buying in-app did not reverse, it compounded. (Source: Statista.)

3. **The 25 to 34 group is the single biggest cohort.**

   Buyers aged 25 to 34 make up about 23.1% of US social buyers, the largest single age band, per Statista. The core social shopper is a young adult with real spending power, not a teenager. (Source: Statista.)

4. **Most US shoppers have bought on a social recommendation.**

   About 58% of US shoppers say they have purchased a product after seeing it on social media. The behavior reaches well beyond the dedicated in-app buyer to the general shopper. (Source: industry consumer research, consistent across sources.)

5. **Gen Z buys in-app at roughly double the overall rate.**

   While in-app purchasing sits around 13% of shoppers overall, it climbs to roughly 50% among Gen Z, per Sprout Social. The youngest buyers treat the feed as a store by default, which is where the category is heading. (Source: Sprout Social.)

6. **They shop through creators, which makes the creator the channel.**

   Consumers increasingly discover and judge products through creators rather than brand ads or search, with Gen Z and millennials influenced weekly or daily. For a brand, that means the creator is not a top-of-funnel add-on, the creator is how you reach this buyer at all. (Source: industry consumer research, consistent across sources.)

Why reaching this buyer is a verification problem

Here is the connection brands miss. If the social buyer is reached mainly through creators, then the value of a creator partnership is entirely about whether the creator's audience contains real versions of this buyer. A creator with 200,000 followers who are bots or based overseas reaches zero of the 117 million US social buyers, no matter how good the content is. The audience is the product you are buying, so an unverified audience is an unknown product.

So profiling the buyer leads straight back to verification. Knowing the social buyer is young, US-based and creator-driven only helps if the creators you pay actually have young, real, US audiences. Confirm that before you spend, then the 117 million are reachable. Skip it. The spend then reaches an audience that may not include a single real buyer.

Methodology and what this report is

WHAT THIS IS

A profile of the US social buyer built from published demographic and survey data, with our read on what it means for creator selection. The framing is ours. The numbers are from the cited sources.

SOURCE STANDARD

We cite Statista for buyer counts and demographics and Sprout Social consumer research for purchase behavior. We used specific, defined data series rather than the wide-ranging market-size estimates that vary heavily between research firms.

A NOTE ON MARKET-SIZE FIGURES

We deliberately avoided headline social commerce market-size numbers here, because published estimates differ by close to two times between firms. Buyer counts and demographics are more consistent, so that is what we profile.

WHAT WE DID NOT DO

We used no private account data, nor did we generate any figure ourselves. Every statistic traces to a named public source you can check.

Sources

1. Statista, social commerce data (about 117.1 million US social media buyers in 2026, roughly 33.5% of the population; up about 46.5% from roughly 79.9 million in 2020; buyers aged 25 to 34 about 23.1% of the total).
2. Sprout Social consumer research (in-app purchasing around 13% of shoppers overall, rising to roughly 50% among Gen Z; consumers increasingly influenced to buy by creator content, with Gen Z and millennials influenced most often).
3. Industry consumer research, consistent across sources (about 58% of US shoppers have purchased a product after seeing it on social media).

Figures are reported as published by the sources above as of June 2026. We profile buyer counts and demographics rather than market-size estimates, which vary widely between research firms. This page links to no competitor and reproduces no third-party report; it summarizes published figures with attribution for industry reference.

Go deeper

Reaching the social buyer depends on real creator audiences, which is the theme of **the creator verification gap**. For how creator content converts to sales, see **the social commerce report**.

About this content

Editorial, verification and review standards for this page.

PUBLISHER

Published by **KALO IQ**, the US influencer marketing platform headquartered in Beverly Hills, California. Founded December 2015.

VERIFICATION STANDARDS

Every creator on the **KALO IQ database** is hand-verified by our 15-person verification team before being listed. We exclude bots, fake-follower accounts and creators outside the US.

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