

Rebranding Social Media: Hello, Scroll Media

Introducing a new industry concept that reframes
how digital behavior should be managed

by Saleh Lzeik

1. Executive Summary

We're not in the social media era anymore.
We're deep in the scroll.

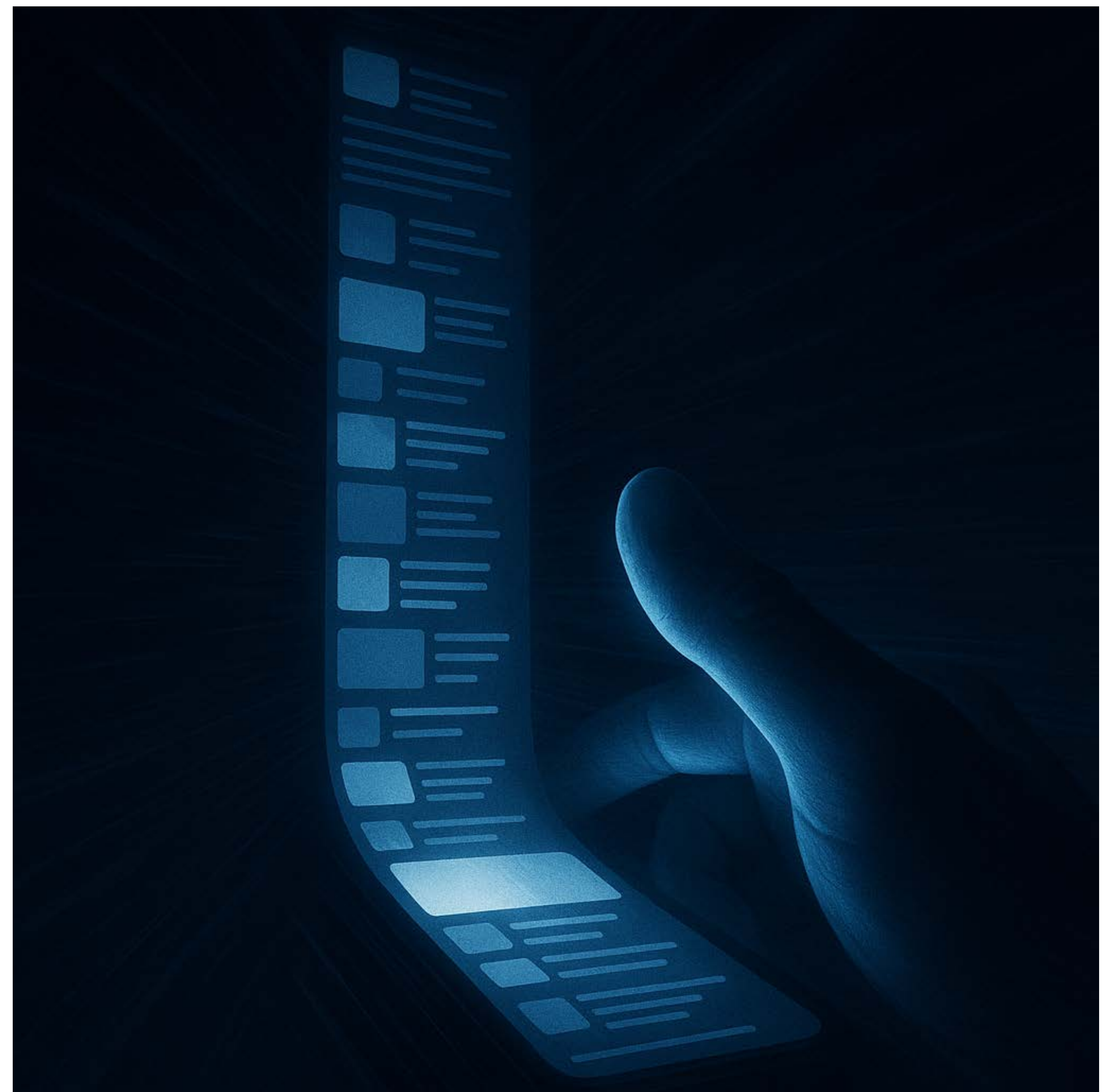
The term “social media” no longer reflects how people use digital platforms today. What started as a place to connect has evolved into an ecosystem of passive consumption. People don't log in to interact. They log in to escape, to numb, to feed an algorithm that's smarter than they are.

Scroll Media is the term I'm coining to define this shift. It's not just a name. It's a necessary correction. When the behavior has changed, the language must too.

This white paper explains why the term “social media” is outdated and how Scroll Media better captures today's dominant digital behavior. It breaks down the anatomy of this shift, offers a full behavioral and advertising metric stack, and presents a strategy reset for creators, brands, and platforms. Each section is grounded in recent data and behavioral science. I wrote this because the marketing world needs to wake up. If we keep planning content for what the internet used to be, we're setting ourselves up for failure.

Let's stop pretending people are here to connect. They're here to scroll.

Scroll on.



2. Introduction: From Social to Scroll

Social media was built on human interaction. At least that was the promise.

We were supposed to connect, comment, converse. We were supposed to build communities. For the first few years, we did. We shared posts, reacted to life events, left meaningful comments. The platforms encouraged it. They were places of expression and discovery.

But somewhere along the way, everything shifted.

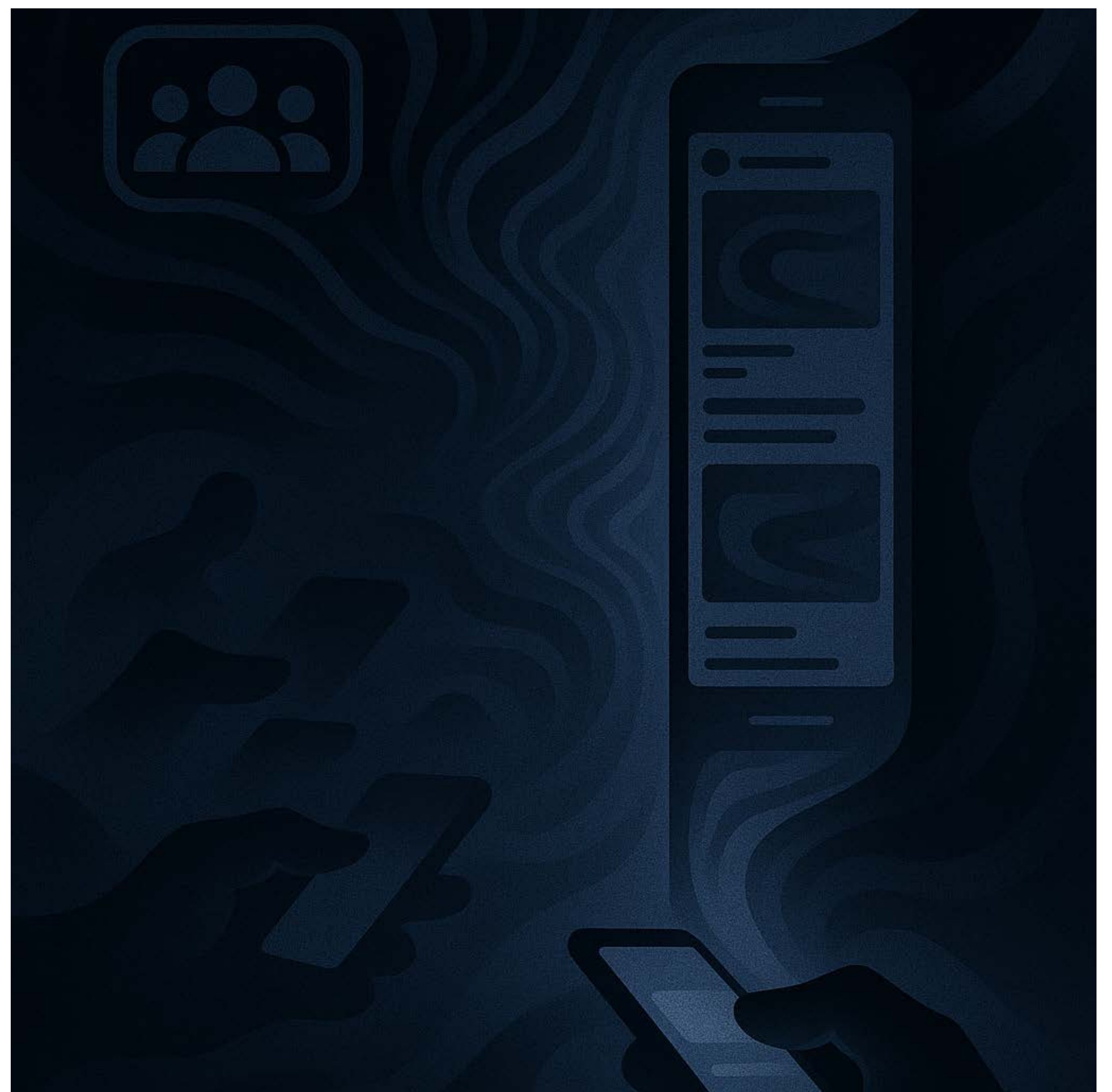
Today, people are not logging in to talk. They are logging in to consume. The behavior has changed quietly, consistently, and at scale. And the platforms have designed around it. The average user spends 2.5 hours a day on social media, but less than 0.3 percent of them post or comment regularly. According to Pew Research, 90 percent of users on most platforms are lurkers. They scroll, they watch, they consume, but they don't engage.

Meanwhile, the platforms have doubled down on the scroll. TikTok, Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts, Facebook Feed, Snapchat Spotlight, even LinkedIn's new interface; every platform is prioritizing infinite motion. Algorithms optimize not for conversation, but for watch time and scroll velocity.

The user is no longer a participant. They are a thumb. They are a data point. They are a set of swipes.

We call this ecosystem "social," but that's a branding error. The interaction is mostly one-way. You could spend two hours on TikTok and never say a word to another person. You'll be shown things. You'll consume things. You'll feel things. But you won't connect.

This is Scroll Media. It's what the platforms are now. It's what the behavior has become. And it's time we call it what it is.



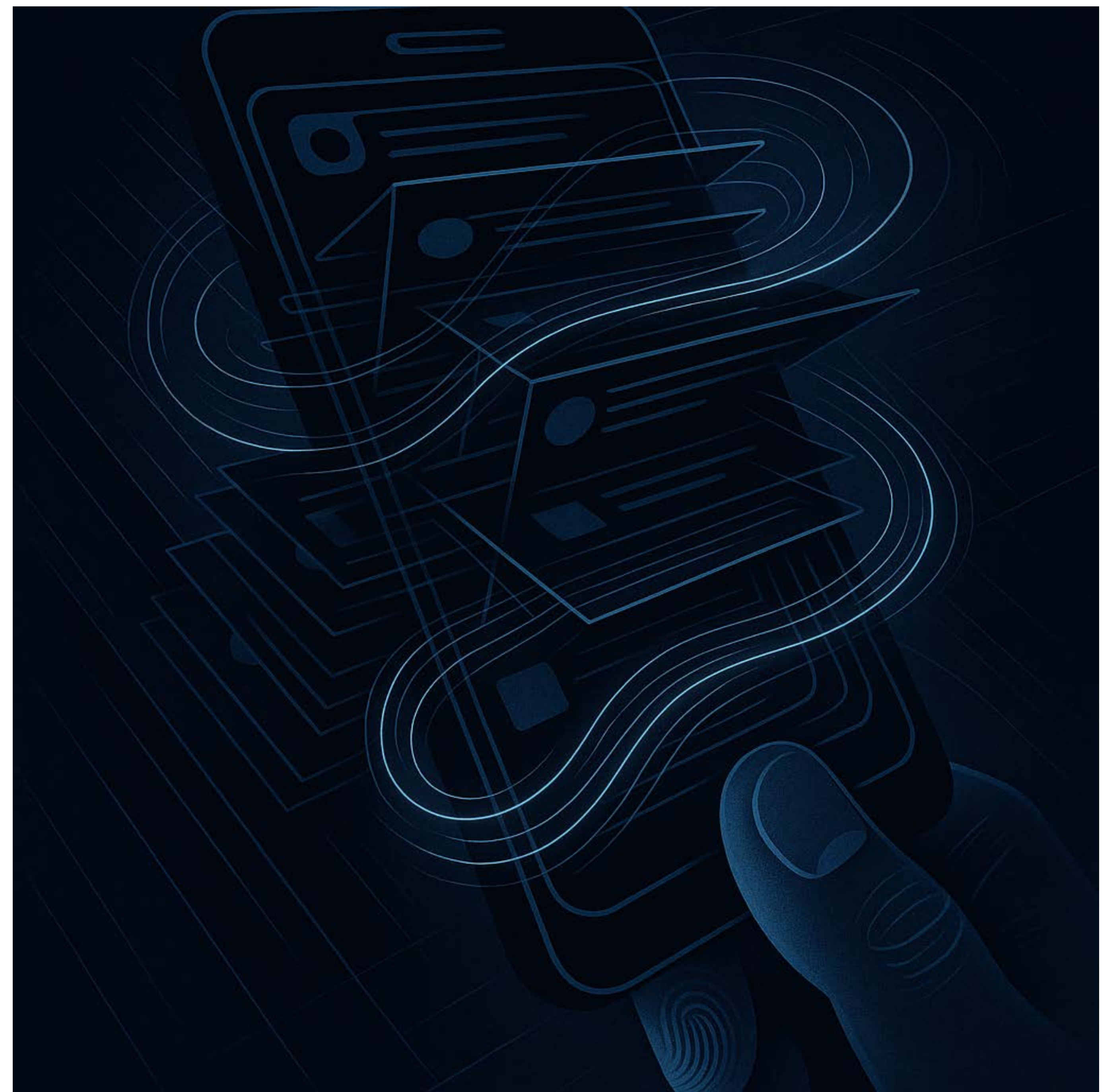
3. The Anatomy of Scroll Media

To understand Scroll Media, you have to understand how today's platforms are built. They are not built for conversation. They are built for continuation. They are built to keep you moving, one frame at a time, deeper into a loop you never meant to enter.

Let's start with the core mechanic: infinite scroll. This design pattern was introduced in 2006 by Aza Raskin, and it changed the internet forever. Today, it is the default experience across nearly every major platform. According to research published in the Journal of Behavioral Addictions, infinite scroll is one of the most effective attention-capture tools ever created. It erodes stopping cues. It removes breaks. It disables the user's natural decision points. You don't choose to keep going. You just do.

Add to that the algorithm. It's no longer just showing you content from your network. It's showing you whatever it thinks will hold you the longest. On TikTok, 90% of time spent is on the For You Page, not the Following tab. Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts, and Facebook Watch operate on similar models. You are watching what the machine believes will optimize your retention, not your relationships.

This is not an accident. It is behavioral design. These platforms use every tool in the arsenal: autoplay, sound triggers, visual contrast, scroll pacing, surprise moments. They measure not your likes, but your watch time. Your velocity. Your dwell time. Your pause duration.



You are not navigating the platform. You are being guided through it.

This is what Scroll Media looks like:

- A feed that never ends
- Content you didn't ask for
- A dopamine hit every 4 to 6 seconds
- Algorithms adapting in real-time to how long your thumb hovers

According to Sensor Tower, average global daily time spent on TikTok has surpassed 95 minutes per user. Compare that with Facebook at 33 minutes, and Instagram at 29 minutes. The platforms with the most aggressive scroll architecture are winning. And they're setting the blueprint for everyone else.

Scroll Media is not a feature. It's the foundation. It's the new default setting for how attention is monetized. And if you're not designing for it, you're designing for the past.

4. The Evolution of Advertising Strategies

Advertising used to be about messaging. Then it became about engagement. Now, it's about interruption. In the scroll era, the brands that win are the ones that break the loop long enough to matter.

Let's start with how traditional social media marketing was structured. Brands created (and still very much do) content calendars. They chased likes, shares, comments. They optimized for community engagement, follower count, sentiment. This made sense in the context of social interaction. But Scroll Media doesn't care about interaction. It cares about frictionless flow. It cares about motion. It rewards what's most watchable, not what's most lovable.

This leads to a new style of advertising: behavioral-first, platform-native, scroll-optimized. It's no longer about publishing to a feed. It's about fitting the rhythm of the scroll itself.

Here's how the two approaches differ:

	Social Media Advertising	Scroll Media Advertising
Objective	Engagement, Community	Attention, Interruption
Creative	Branded posts, carousels, promos	Auto-play videos, loops, hooks
Distribution	Follower-based reach	Algorithmic reach
KPIs	Likes, comments, shares	Watch time, scroll velocity, pause
Measurement	Social listening, engagement rate	Thumb metrics, scroll-based conversions

4. The Evolution of Advertising Strategies

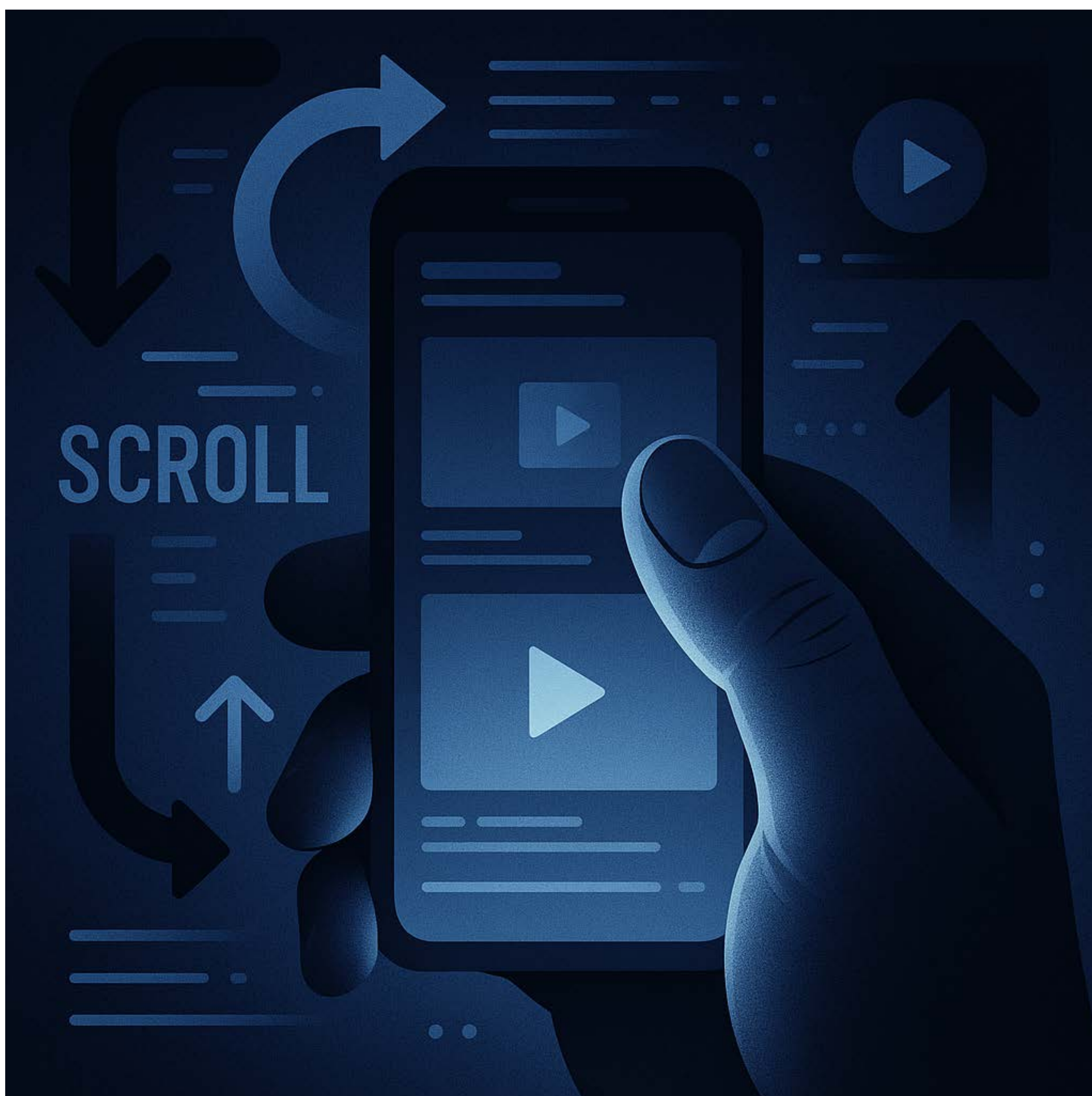
Platforms like TikTok, YouTube Shorts, Snap, and Instagram Reels don't give your content space. They give you a fraction of a second. According to Meta's internal data, 65 percent of users decide whether to keep watching a video within the first 0.7 seconds. You don't have time to build up. You have to land instantly.

This is why static visuals are declining in performance. It's why audio-on creative is risky. It's why traditional calls to action don't convert. The new playbook prioritizes:

- Disruptive first frames
- Bold visual motion
- Native text overlays
- Soundless storytelling
- Loops that feel endless

Even the KPIs have changed. Instead of CPC and CPM, we're entering the age of STR (Scroll-Through Rate), PD (Pause Duration), and FFH (First-Frame Hold). The Scroll Media Metrics Stack now defines success, not vanity metrics.

If you're still building content to earn engagement, you've already lost the audience. In Scroll Media, you don't earn their attention. You steal it. One fraction of a second at a time.



5. Behavioral Insights: The Psychology of the Scroll

Scroll Media is not just a design pattern or a content format. It's a psychological loop. And it works because it hijacks our brain in ways most users aren't even aware of.

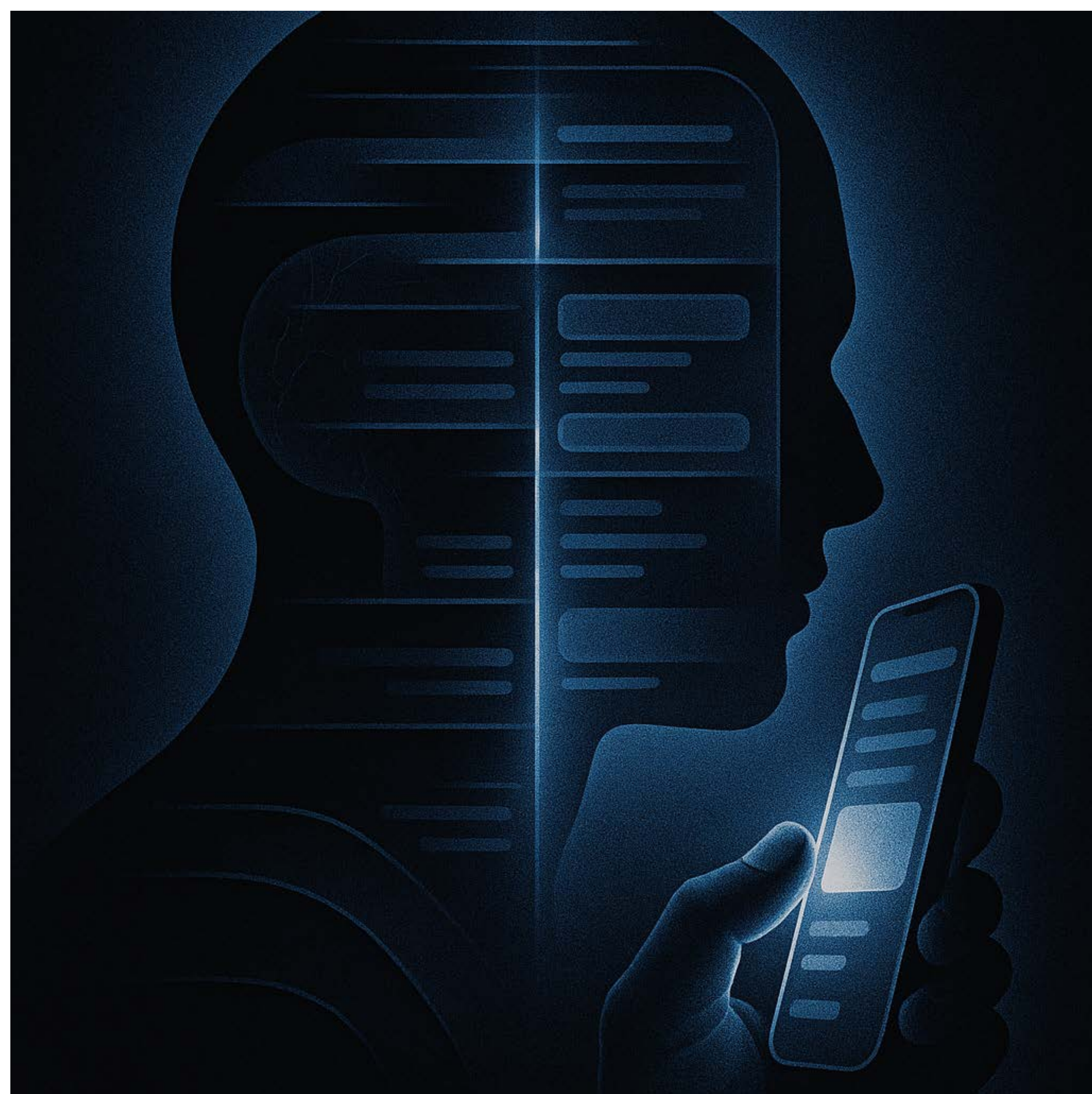
Let's start with attention. A 2022 Microsoft study found that the average human attention span has dropped to just 8.25 seconds; that is lower than a goldfish's. That stat gets thrown around a lot, but here's the truth behind it: our brain isn't losing its ability to focus, it's becoming more selective. We now filter what's worth our attention based on immediate payoff. The scroll trains our brain to expect stimulation every few seconds or lose interest.

Dopamine is a key player here. Every scroll delivers a micro-hit of novelty. Maybe it's a joke, a shock, a face, a beat drop. These hits build what neuroscientists call a "variable reward schedule." You don't know what's coming next, so you keep scrolling. This is the same behavioral loop used in slot machines. And it's by design. Apps like TikTok and Instagram actively test and optimize for "hold and hook" patterns that stimulate reward anticipation.

According to a study published in Nature Communications, dopamine spikes not just when we get a reward, but when we expect one. That's why the scroll is so addictive. It's not about what you see. It's about what you might see next.

Now let's also talk about memory.

Content that appears in fast-scroll environments is often forgotten within seconds. Facebook's own research showed that people can recall mobile feed content after seeing it for just 0.25 seconds, but that recall drops dramatically after 20 minutes. The scroll environment fragments memory and creates overstimulation without retention. It affects our emotions too. Passive consumption is strongly linked to negative mood states. A 2021 paper from the Journal of Experimental Psychology found that people who consumed social feeds passively reported higher levels of sadness, fatigue, and social comparison than those who actively engaged.



We're officially in need of reformed, suitable methods and metrics to measure digital performance and success. Understanding this behavior requires a completely new measurement framework. Traditional metrics like CPC, CPM, and CTR are no longer enough. Scroll Media operates on a different set of micro-behaviors.

5. Behavioral Insights: The Psychology of the Scroll

This is why I'm calling for a brand-new stack of Scroll Metrics that is developed to track what actually matters in today's feed-driven environment:

Metric	Abbreviation	What It Measures
Scroll-Through Rate	STR	% of users who scroll past content before viewing it
Pause Duration	PD	How long a user hovers on content before scrolling again
First-Frame Hold Rate	FFH	% of users who stay for at least 1 second after the first frame loads
Completion Scroll Rate	CSR	% of users who view all slides or video content
Scroll Velocity	SV	Speed at which users move through the feed (scrolls per second)
Content Imprint Score	CIS	Estimated subconscious recall based on scroll behavior
Mute Completion Rate	MCR	% of users who complete a video without unmuting
Loop Retention Rate	LRR	% of users who rewatch a looped video more than once
Scroll-Based Conversion	SBC	% of conversions from content viewed without interaction
Thumb Engagement Rate	TER	% of users who engage after a pause, not a full view
Attention Break Point	ABP	Timestamp where most users disengage or drop off
Reverse Scroll Rate	RSR	% of users who scroll back to revisit content
Preload Skip Rate	PSR	% of users who skip content before it fully loads
Manual Hold Engagement	MHE	% of users who manually pause to read (e.g., tap-and-hold on Stories)
Scroll Exit Velocity	SEV	Speed at which a user exits the platform or session

These aren't vanity numbers. These are the actual behavioral signals that define success in Scroll Media. They tell you if your content stops the thumb, holds the mind, and leaves a trace.

6. Impacts and Opportunities for Stakeholders

Scroll Media doesn't impact everyone equally, but it impacts everyone. The shift has profound consequences for creators, advertisers, and consumers. This is where it gets real. This is where strategies either evolve or get left behind.

Dear Creators,
Make content that moves in motion.



Creators aren't just competing with other creators. They're competing with algorithms, autoplay, and muscle memory. The scroll doesn't pause for anything. That means the content needs to be instantly compelling and built for micro-attention.

Creators who succeed in Scroll Media:

- Lead with motion, not buildup
- Design for silence, not sound
- Hook within 0.5 seconds or disappear
- Build loops, not endings

According to TikTok's own analytics reports, the most successful creators hold attention for just 6 to 10 seconds on average. Those that cross the 15-second mark are statistical anomalies, and often do so by exploiting visual or emotional hooks that trigger curiosity instantly.

The opportunity here is in understanding the psychology of flow. Don't just make good content. Make it scroll-native.

6. Impacts and Opportunities for Stakeholders



Dear Advertisers and Brands,
Shift from community to capture.

The biggest mistake brands make is assuming people care. The truth is, in Scroll Media, your brand is not invited. You're crashing the feed. So if you want to be tolerated, let alone remembered, your content better deliver something: entertainment, emotion, utility, and it must be delivered fast.

This is not the time for brand manifestos. This is the time for creative that hits before the skip.

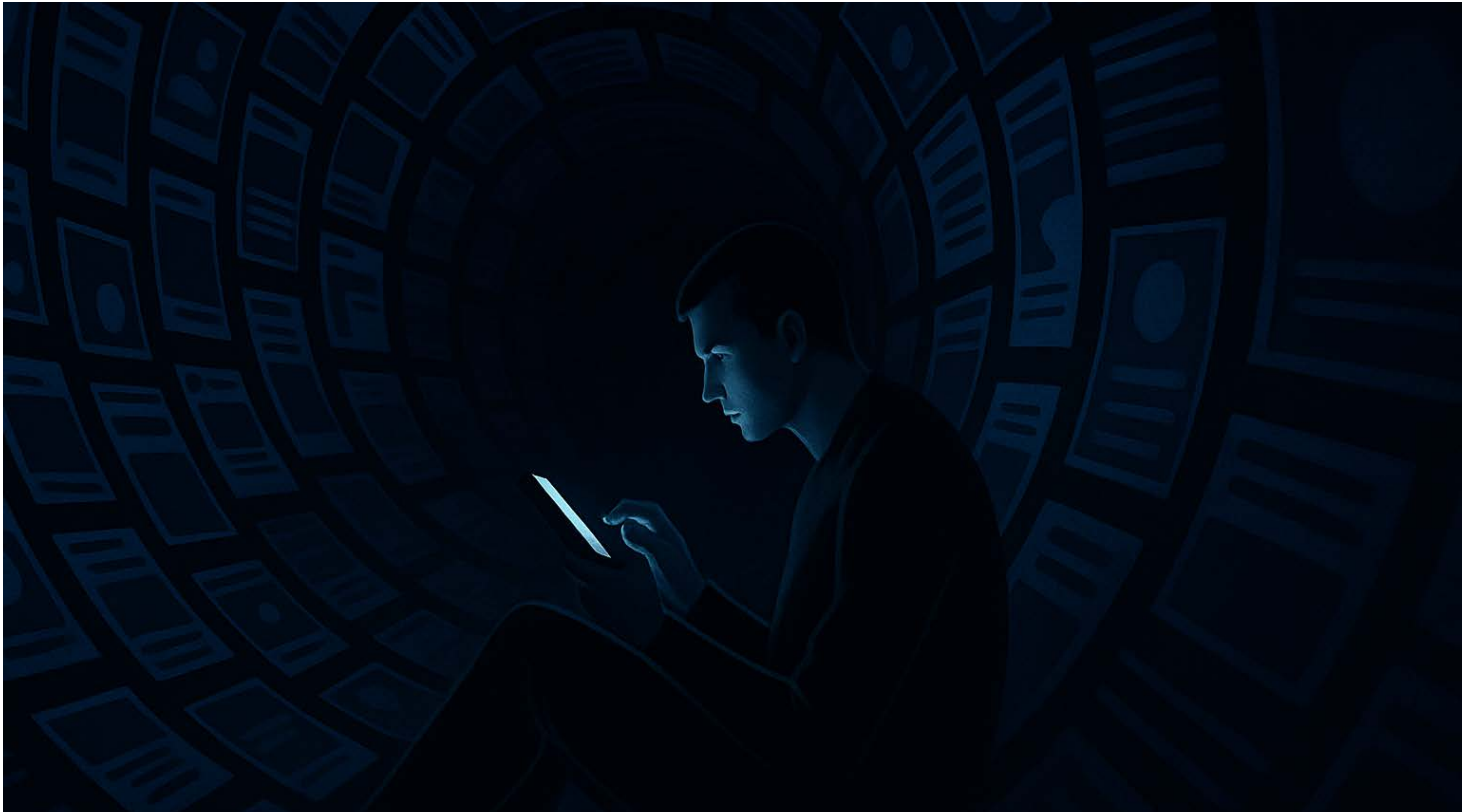
Brands that succeed in Scroll Media:

- Optimize first-frame impact, not post copy
- Design for interruption, not applause
- Prioritize STR and FFH over likes and shares
- Rethink campaign success in terms of scroll KPIs

According to WARC's 2023 report, 72 percent of Gen Z users skip ads by default unless they are surprised in the first second. You don't get loyalty in Scroll Media. You get a sliver of attention. That's the deal.

6. Impacts and Opportunities for Stakeholders

Dear Consumers,
Reclaim your time and awareness.



Consumers are the engine of Scroll Media. They're also the victims of it. Passive use leads to passive thought. Hours disappear. Minds numb. And most users don't even realize how much of their day is dictated by content they never chose to see.

There's an opportunity here for awareness, education, and tools. People want to feel in control again. Products that help users track scroll time, set limits, or curate their own feed experiences will see increasing demand. Mental wellness apps have already begun shifting into the "attention hygiene" space. And they're not wrong to. To name a few apps: Calm and BetterHelp.

Scroll Media gives everyone the content they didn't ask for. But it also creates an opening for creators to rethink formats, for brands to earn relevance, and for users to start making conscious choices again.

This isn't just a media shift. It's a behavior shift. And those who adapt early are the ones who win.

7. The Future of Digital Media: Beyond the Scroll

We're already deep in Scroll Media. The question now is: what is next?

Digital behavior never stays still. What seems like the status quo today could be obsolete tomorrow. But there are clear signals about where things are headed, and we need to pay attention. Platforms are no longer just feeding content. They're moving toward feeding behavior itself. The scroll is becoming predictive. Personalized. Auto-generated. And in some cases, completely detached from user control.

Predictive Scroll Engines

Recommendation systems are now so advanced, they can predict what a user wants before they even know it. TikTok's For You Page has been cited in several behavioral research studies as the most advanced content prediction engine ever deployed at scale. The more you scroll, the smarter it gets. The more you pause, the more it learns. Eventually, it doesn't just respond to your taste. It shapes it.

This is no longer a content platform. It's a behavior engine.

Scroll Commerce and Passive Purchasing

Social commerce is evolving into scroll commerce as well, where frictionless content meets frictionless transactions. Livestream shopping, shoppable videos, and native checkout are merging into formats where users don't even have to stop scrolling to buy. Meta, TikTok Shop, and YouTube are already building for this.

The end goal is clear: keep the user in motion while making money off every pixel they pass.

AI-Generated Scroll Content

AI tools like OpenAI's Sora and Runway are accelerating the rise of synthetic video and imagery. Combined with user preference data, platforms will soon be able to generate content in real time based on your emotional and behavioral patterns. You won't just be served what others made. You'll be served what the machine believes will keep you engaged; generated on the fly, just for you.

This isn't far off. It's happening in beta versions already.

Behavioral Analytics and Ethics

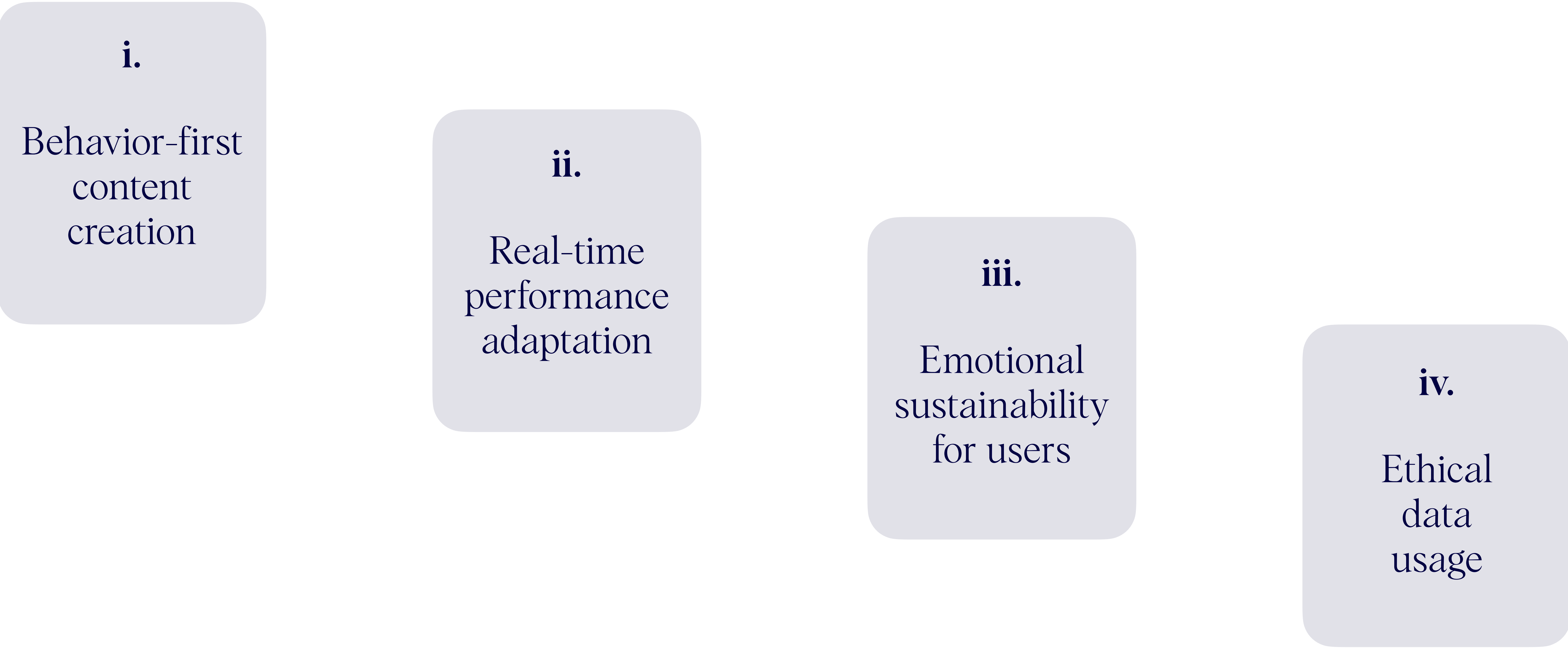
With new metrics come new risks. As platforms harvest more behavioral data (scroll velocity, dwell time, pause triggers), the line between optimization and manipulation gets thinner. Brands and agencies will need to think about how they measure success ethically.

At some point, algorithmic transparency will become a regulatory issue. Users will demand more control. Governments will intervene. The question is whether platforms and marketers will evolve voluntarily or be forced to.

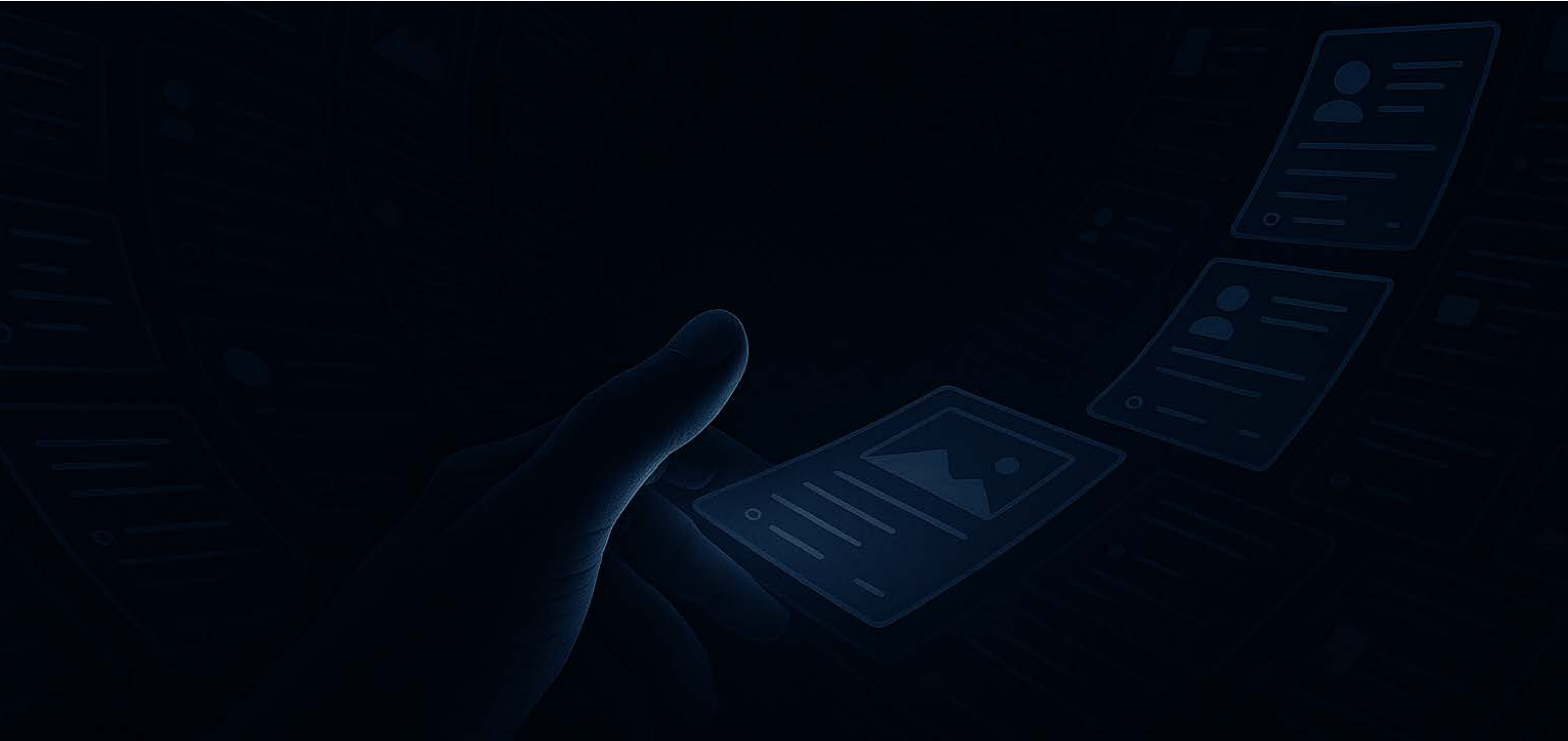
7. The Future of Digital Media: Beyond the Scroll

What does all of this mean?

The future of Scroll Media is not just about better content. It's about understanding the systems beneath the surface. The next era of digital media will be built on:



Scroll Media isn't just a name for what we've become. It's a signal for what we're about to face.

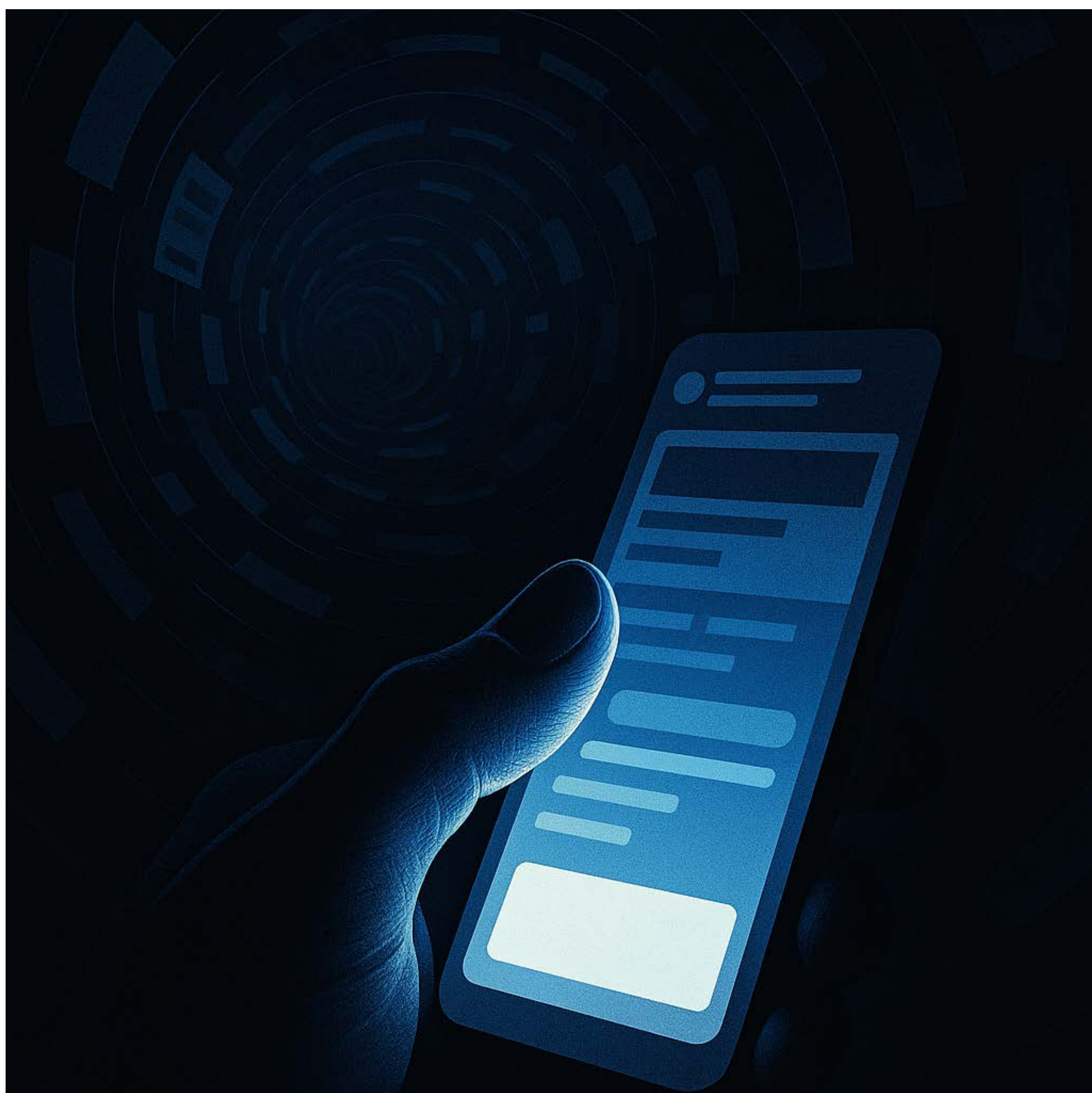


8. Conclusion

If you've made it this far (thank you 🙏), you already know. We're not dealing with social media anymore. We're in the age of Scroll Media. It's not a trend. It's not a passing behavior. It's the new default, and it's shaping everything: how we consume, how we create, how we advertise, and how we define success.

Language matters. And if we keep calling this space "social," we're designing for a ghost. The truth is, people aren't here to connect. They're here to scroll. And if we want to meet them where they are and guide them somewhere better, we have to understand the loop they're in.

This white paper is my way of naming the loop. Not just for the sake of critique, but for the sake of clarity. Scroll Media is a wake-up call. For marketers. For creators. For brands. For platforms. For the people building the future of digital media.



We don't need to reject this new reality. But we do need to build smarter within it. That means:

- Creating with behavioral precision
- Measuring what actually matters
- Understanding the scroll not just as a feed, but as a feedback loop

There's an entire media world being built on micro-movements, passive intent, and algorithmic choices. If we don't rewire how we think, we'll fall behind. Worse, we'll keep pushing strategies that were built for a version of the internet that no longer exists.

Let's stop calling it social media. Let's call it what it is. Scroll Media. And let's build accordingly.

And if you're paying attention, this is your chance to get ahead of it.

Plus, it would be really cool if this blows up / goes viral with my name on it! Vamos!

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All data sources are either public domain, academic research, or official disclosures by platforms and research firms. For inquiries about specific data points or methodologies, kindly contact me directly.

10. About the Author



Saleh Lzeik is a seasoned marketing communications consultant with over 16 years of experience spanning agency leadership and client-side strategy. Throughout his career, he has shaped and delivered integrated campaigns across sectors including government, culture, tourism, sport, entertainment, and corporate brands. Saleh's strength lies in breaking down complex objectives into strategic storytelling that moves people and delivers measurable impact.

He has worked closely with senior stakeholders, ministries, and multinational clients to lead large-scale initiatives from insight to execution, often under high-visibility, high-stakes conditions. His expertise covers brand building, public engagement, campaign direction, and cross-channel communication strategies that align with both business goals and public sentiment.

With a proven track record, Saleh is recognized for his ability to bridge creative vision with business performance; driving returns, relevance, and long-term value.

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