



Music Marketing Report

**Key industry insights from 2022
and looking ahead to 2023**

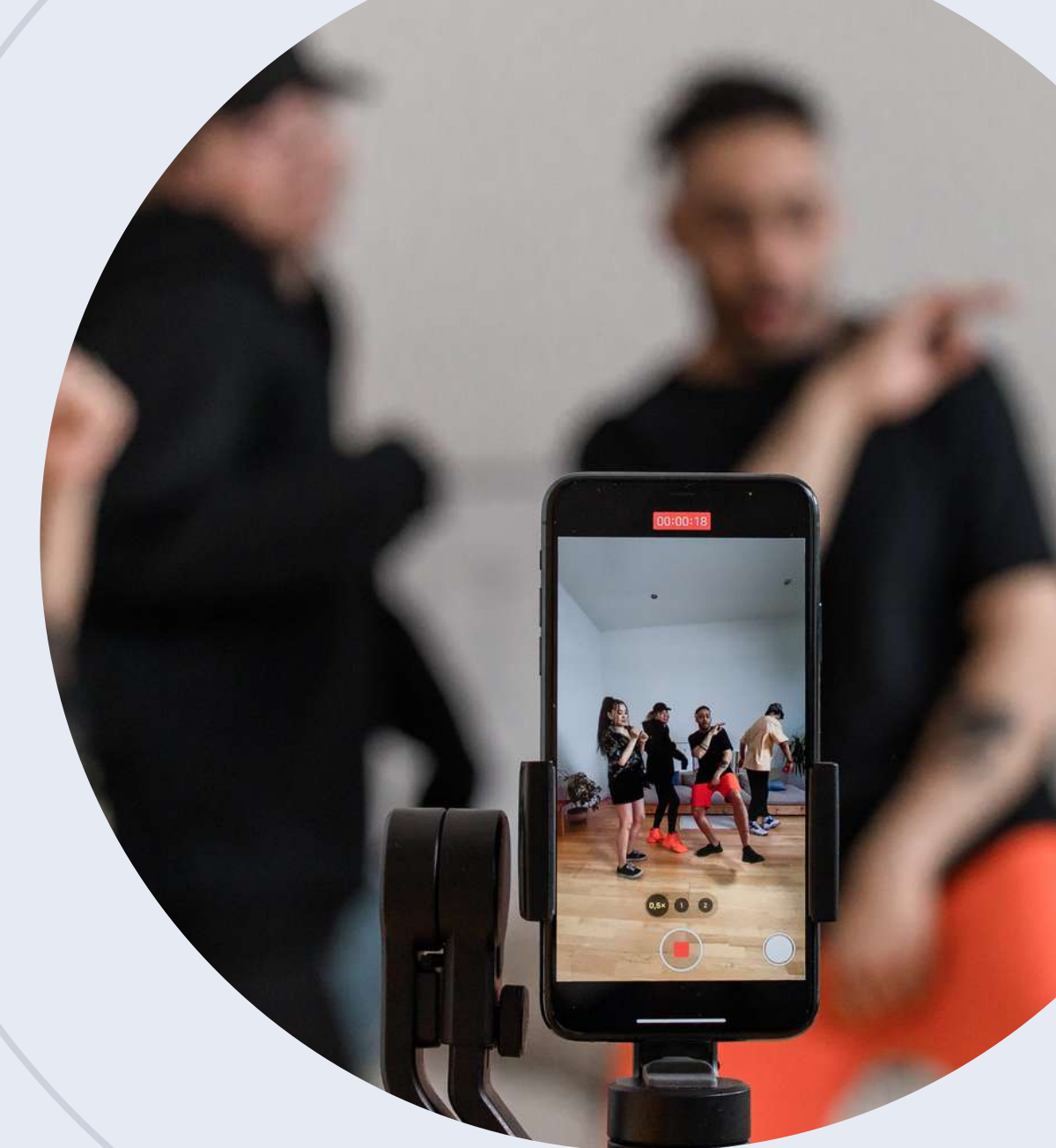


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Foreword from Jeppe Faurfelt, CCO of Linkfire

Over the past few years, we've seen major changes in how music is released, promoted, performed, and sold.

Covid has pushed all musicians and labels to reconsider their approach to marketing music, and some of those adjustments have stayed with us for the long run.

In retrospect, 2022 was an odd mix of more and less. The major milestone of 100,000 songs uploaded daily to DSPs was reached in a year that presented many brands and teams with an unstable macroeconomic environment, reduced budgets, and increased privacy concerns.

It's therefore more important than ever that you get a good grasp of the trends, growing markets, untapped channels, and tools you have available to grow your brand.

As for the Linkfire team, this past year we focused on giving our customers more visibility into their fan journey by expanding on the streaming data from Apple Music, and by introducing QR codes. We've also worked to empower musicians to build first-party audiences by adding email capture to their smart links. And finally, we launched our next-generation bio link to help artists and their teams turn social media attention into meaningful engagement.

Next year, we plan to support, empower, and inspire even more artists, labels, and creators to reach their goals. We can't wait to see what's in store for us all in 2023.

Thanks for being part of the Linkfire community.



Jeppe Faurfelt

Co-founder & CCO of Linkfire

PART 1

Key industry insights from 2022

At Linkfire, we see data and insights as a crucial component when building and measuring the success of music marketing campaigns.

In addition to the diverse data available to our customers within the Linkfire platform, we wanted to zoom out and provide a 2022 industry overview. Here's what we discovered.

Methodology

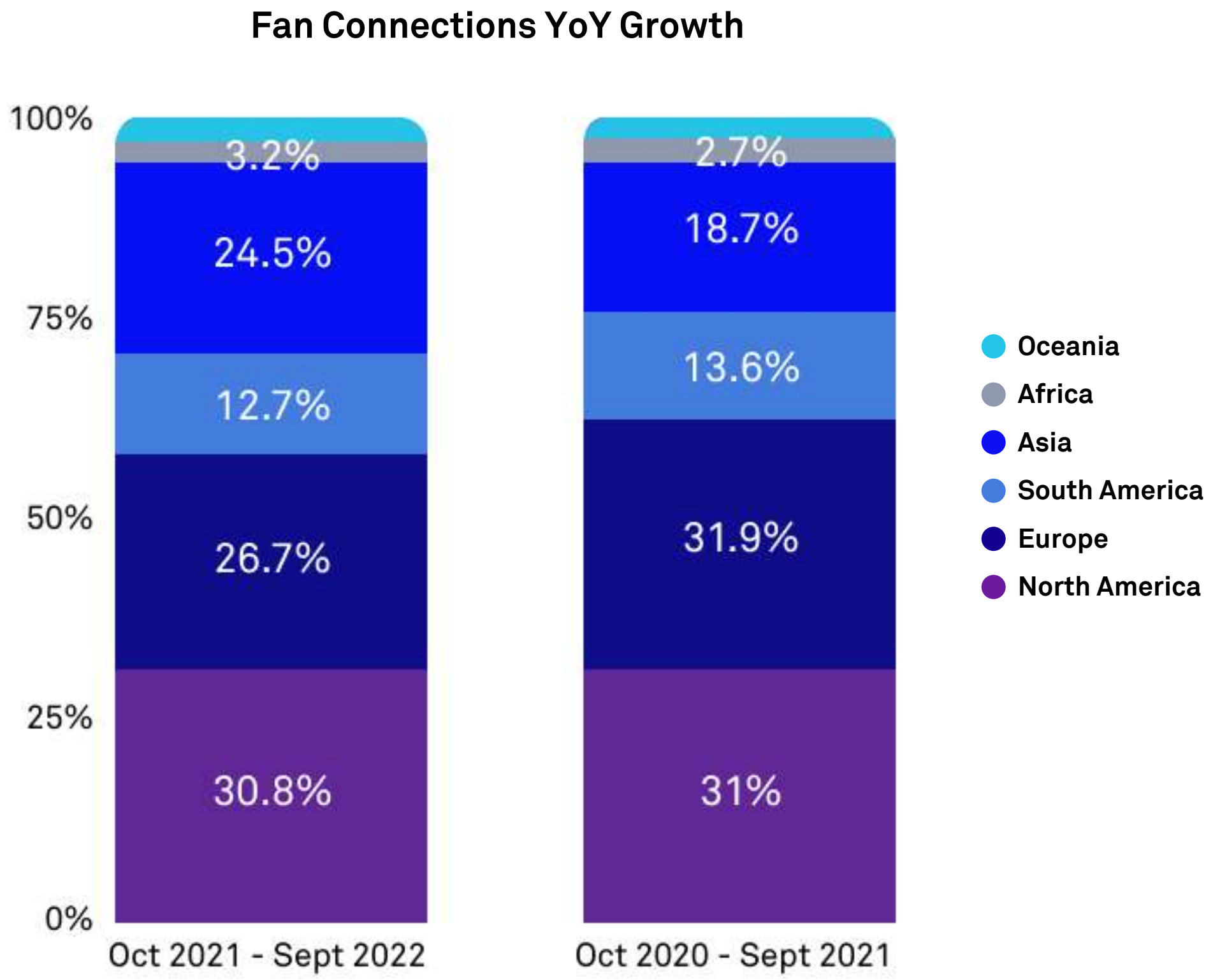
For this report, we analyzed and compared Linkfire traffic and referral events from 2020, 2021, and 2022. For our 2021 vs. 2022 comparisons, our reporting dates were October 1 – September 30 and November 1 – October 31.



Market growth by region

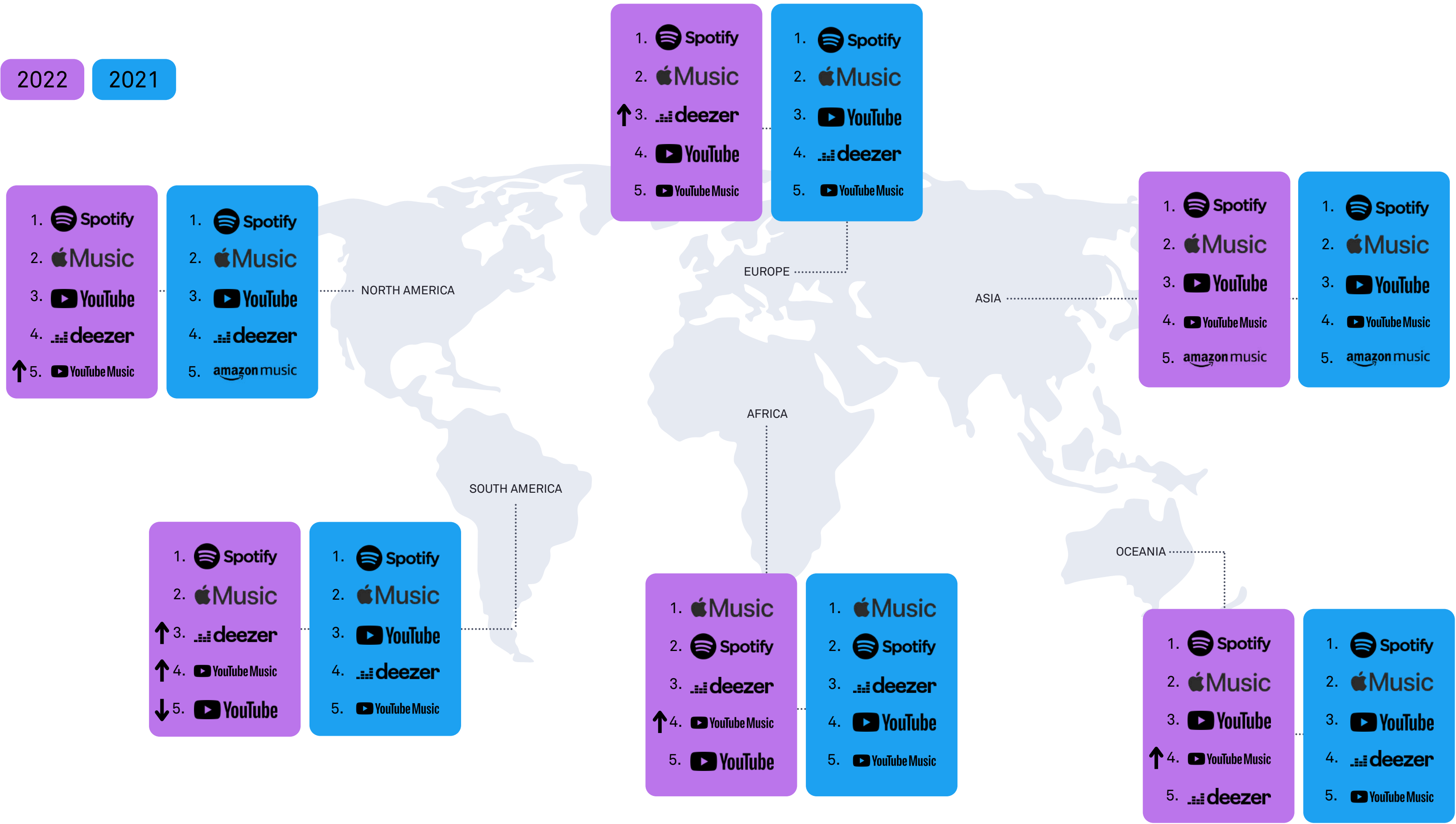
We analyzed our traffic data from both 2021 and 2022 to see which regions are driving the most fan connections, and where we're seeing the most growth.

In 2022, we saw North America overtake Europe as the biggest source of the traffic to Linkfire links. However, the biggest increase in traffic came from the Africa and Asia regions, with approximately 20% and 30% YoY growth respectively.



Top DSPs by region (number of click-throughs)

We analyzed our click-through data from 2022 and compared them to 2021 data to find out which DSPs are the preferred destination in each region, and whether there have been any surprise moves over the past year. Here's what we found:



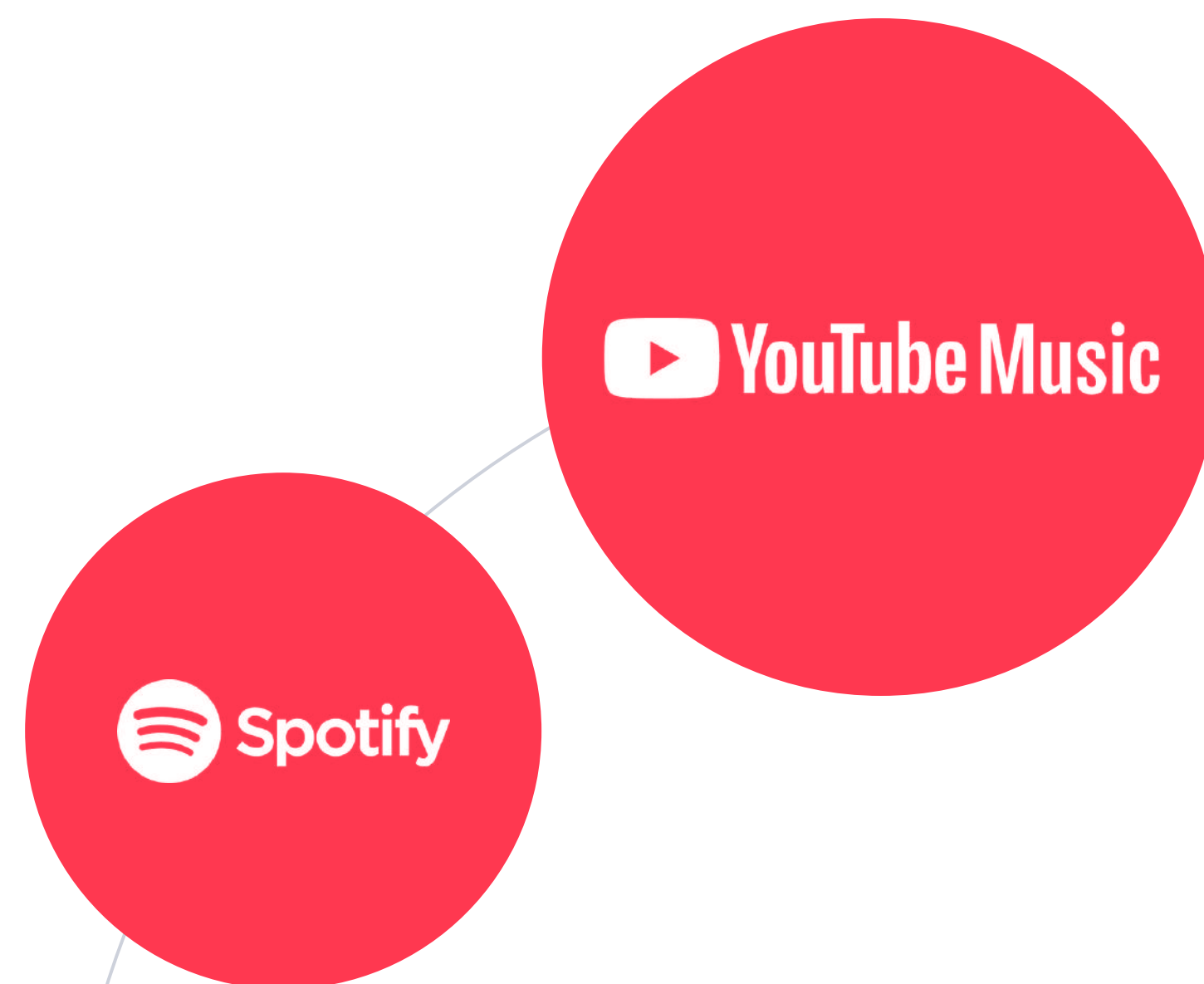
Top DSPs by region (number of click-throughs)

Spotify holds the top spot (with Apple Music on its heels)

According to our click-through traffic data, Spotify reigned supreme this year across all markets, with the exception of Africa, where Apple Music held the top DSP position. Apple Music also consistently held the number-two position across all regions, with the exception of Africa. This is consistent with 2021 trends where Apple Music held the top spot in Africa, while holding the number-two spot across all other regions.

YouTube Music is 2022's biggest mover

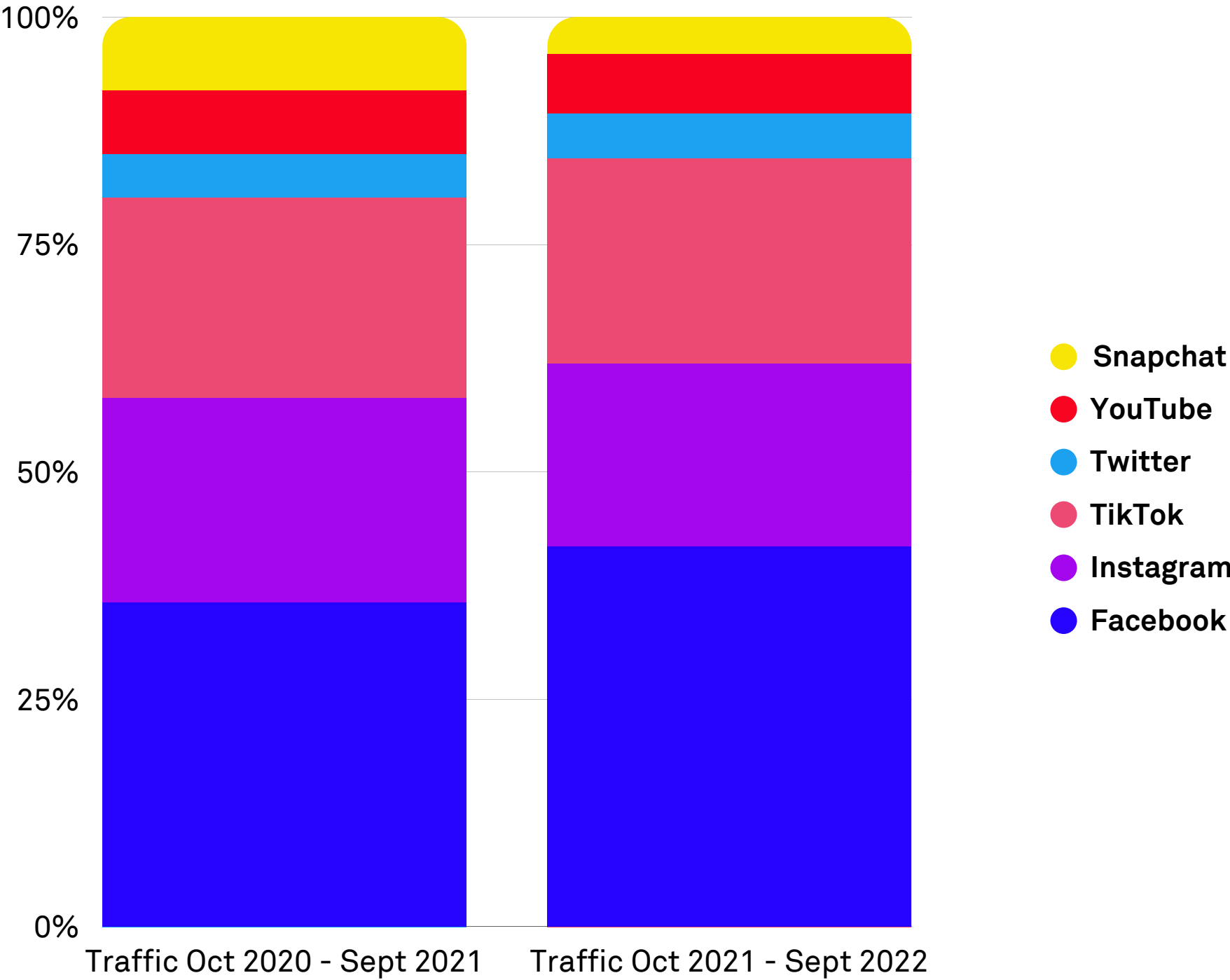
The biggest mover in these rankings was YouTube Music, where in Africa and South America, it even overtook its parent service. YouTube Music is now sitting comfortably in the top five most popular DSPs across all regions.



Social snapshot

Social media channels play a vital role in any artist’s marketing strategy. With many industry players asking which channel is best, we’ve taken a deep dive into our referral data (the source of traffic to Linkfire landing pages) from the top six social channels.

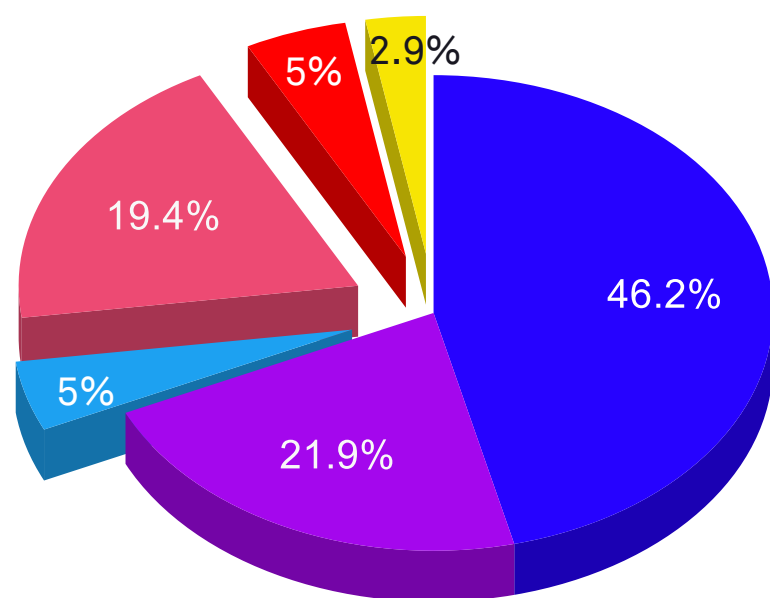
Referral Traffic YoY Change



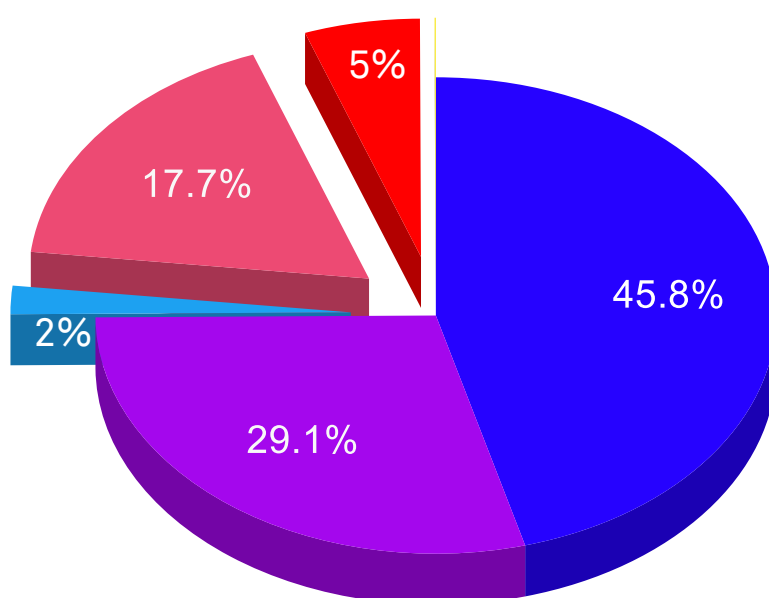
Top referrers by region

We also took a closer look to see how the top referrers differed across regions.

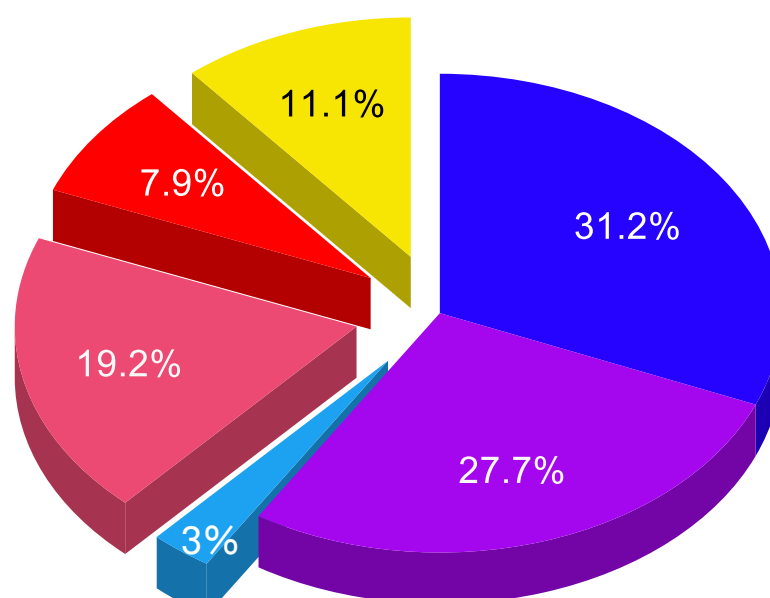
North America



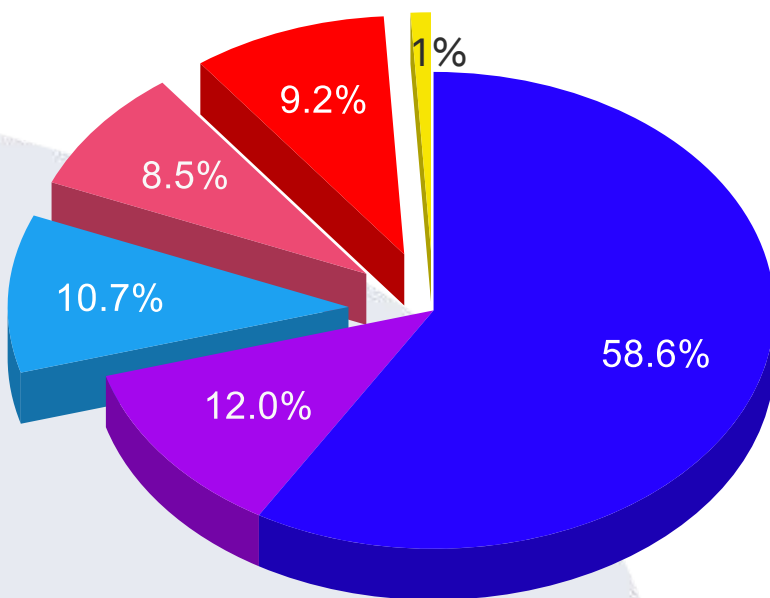
South America



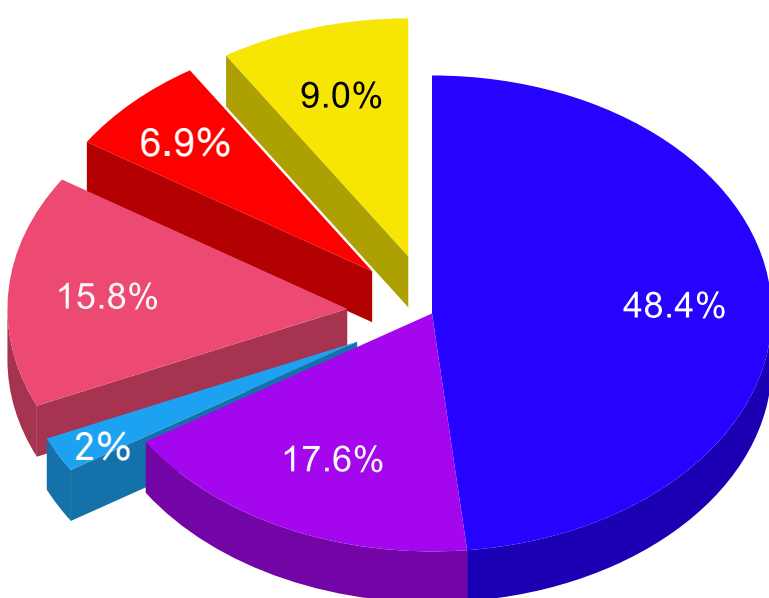
Europe



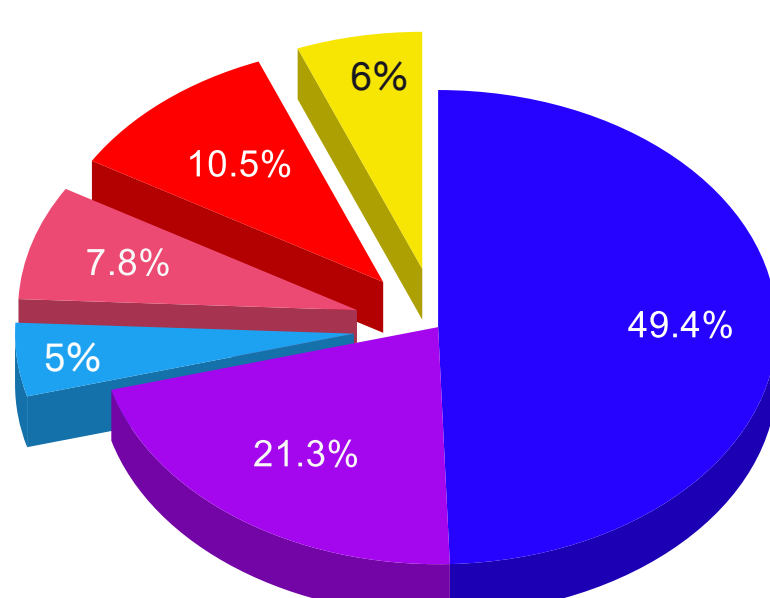
Asia



Oceania



Africa



Key industry insights from 2022

Top referrers by region



Facebook is currently in the driver's seat

Amid stiff competition and changing market conditions, out of the top six social channels, Facebook alone drove over 40% of referral traffic in 2022.



TikTok's influence is growing...

Despite Facebook and Instagram being the biggest drivers of traffic in 2021, TikTok was this year's biggest mover, overtaking Instagram as the second biggest driver of traffic. This comes as no surprise with the social platform's [monthly users sitting around 1 billion.](#)

This growth can also largely be attributed to an increase in traffic coming from TikTok ads, which saw a considerable increase in 2022.



...but not so quickly everywhere

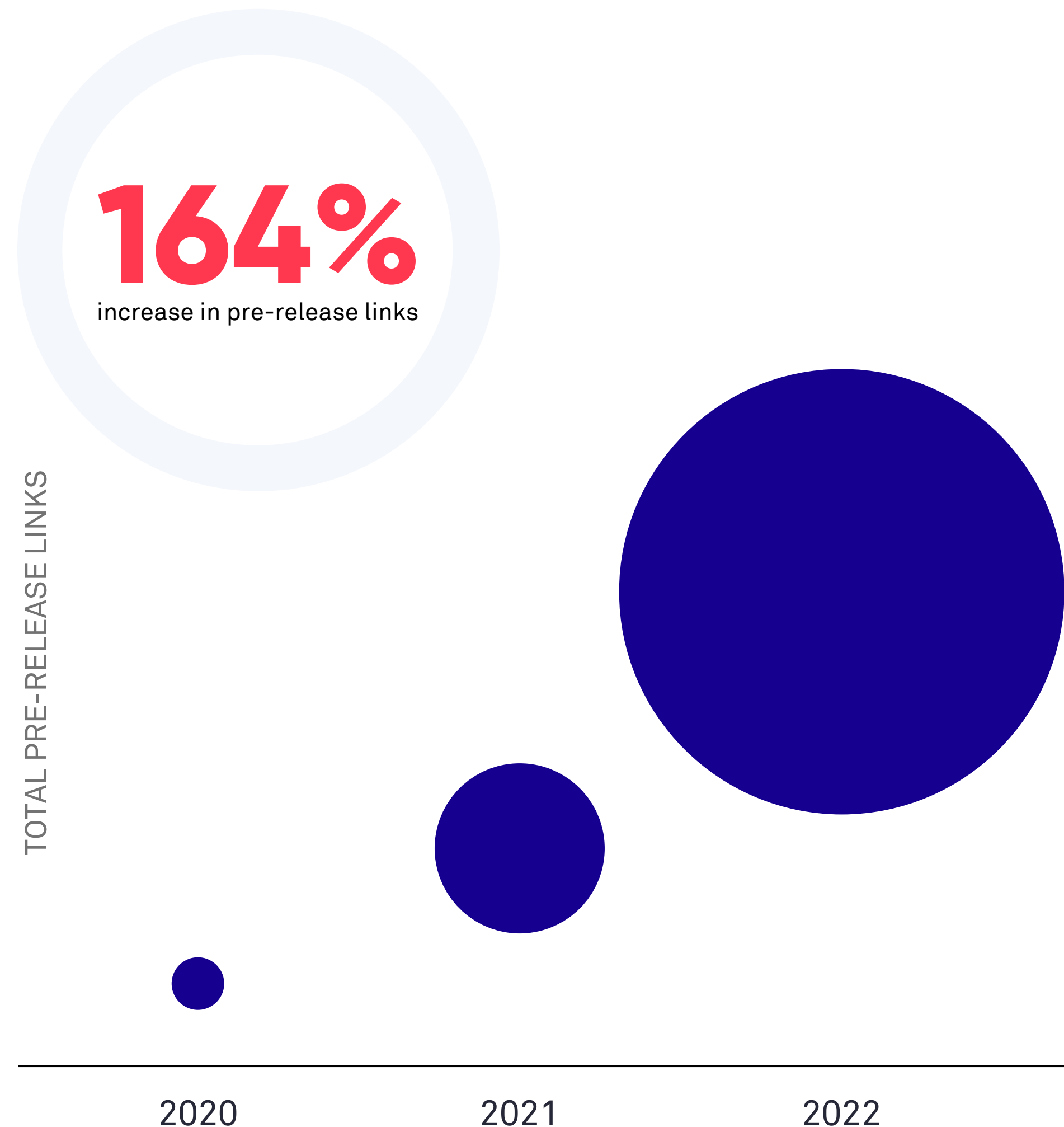
Although its influence is growing rapidly in most markets, TikTok is only the fifth biggest driver of Linkfire traffic in Africa and Asia with 7.5% and 8.5% of traffic respectively, lagging considerably behind other channels.

Making noise: How we promoted music this year

Music promotion does not start on release day

Pre-pandemic, the “surprise” release was still a favored release strategy among some of the world’s biggest artists. From Beyoncé’s *Lemonade* to Taylor Swift’s *Folklore*, it was not uncommon for artists to begin their music promotion on release day.

Yet as we emerge from the pandemic, consumer behavior has changed dramatically, resulting in artists and label marketers rethinking their approach to release strategies. Looking at the number of pre-release links being created, we can clearly see that there’s a trend towards pre-release campaigns and promoting music long before release day.



Key industry insights from 2022

How we promoted music this year

The evergreen campaign

Bio links have also become an increasingly crucial component of artists' marketing mix this year. The evergreen nature of the link and its versatility allows artists to promote past, current, and upcoming releases, as well as merch, social links, tour dates, and more—all in one link.

The fact that bio links can be utilized in multiple settings, from Instagram and TikTok bios to QR codes, has led to an increased uptake. That's not a surprise, given bio links' high lifetime CTR of 63%, and over 70% in the first 7 days (when promoted).

In 2022, we saw twice as many bio links created in comparison to 2021, and approximately a 3.5x increase in fan traffic coming from bio links.

2x

more bio links
created over 2021

3.5x

increase in fan traffic
coming from bio links

63%

CTR



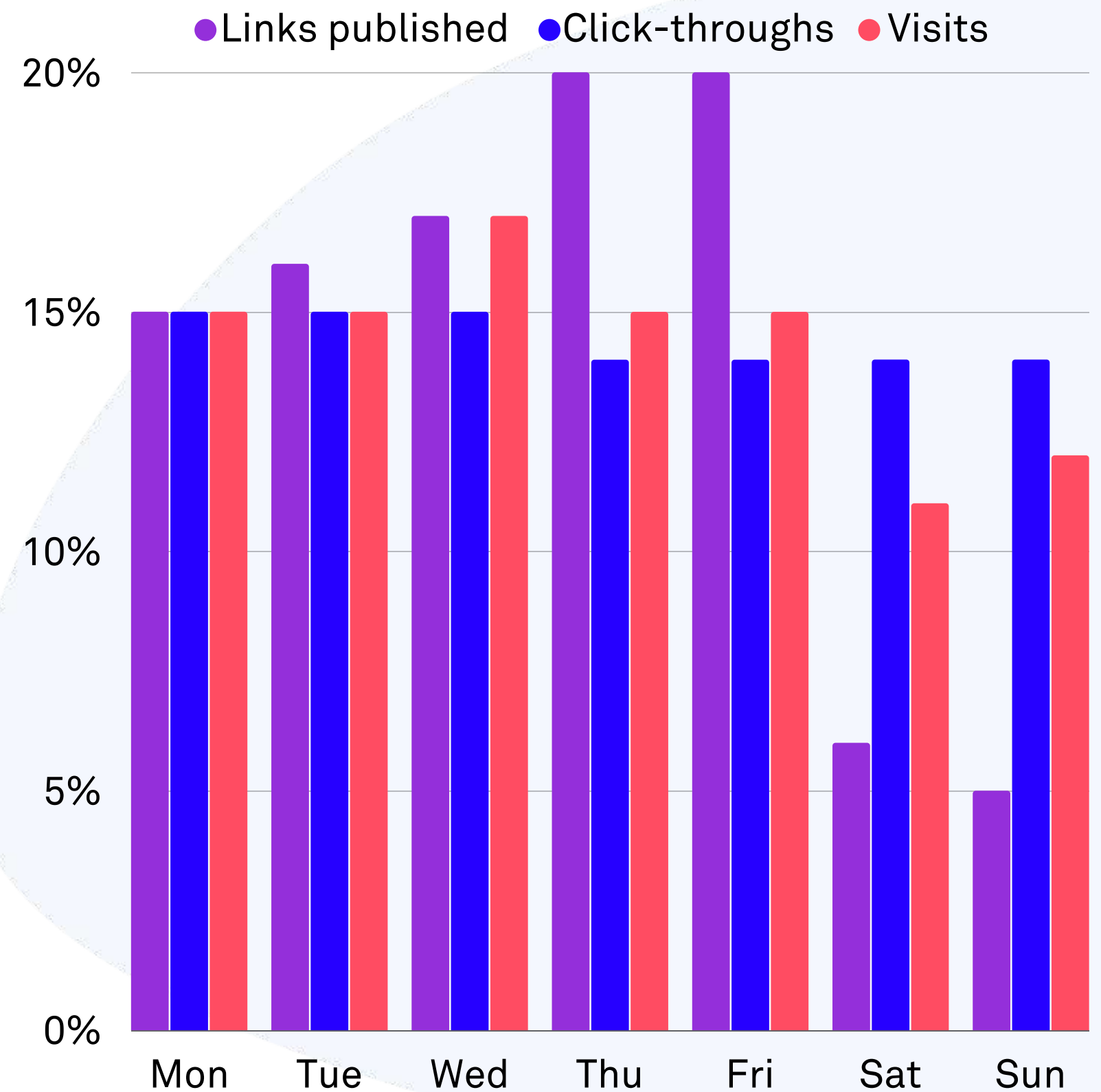
Timing is key

After analyzing over 200,000 links that were created, we found that both the day and month when your links are published can have an impact on performance.

Day of the week

Our data shows that Friday is the most popular day to publish links (pre-release, release, bio, etc.), closely followed by Thursday. This isn't surprising, as Friday allows artists to maximize the chart cycle.

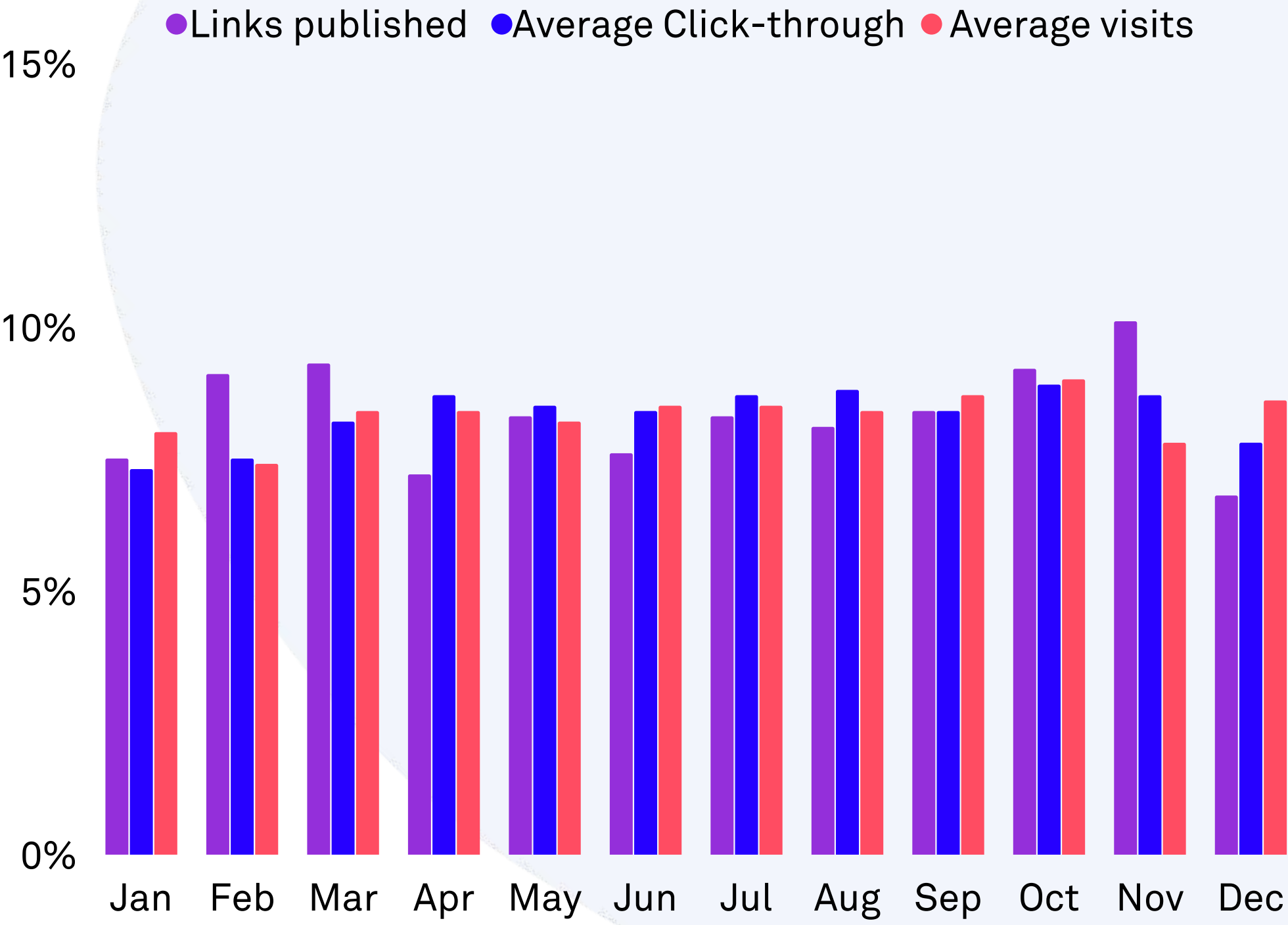
What is interesting to note is that the highest number of link visits is actually on Wednesday. With more people engaging with links on that day, it could therefore be valuable to give your Linkfire links a promotional push on Wednesdays.



Timing is key

Month

Looking at our data, November is the most popular month to publish new smart links, with December being the least popular. However, it was in October when we saw the highest number of visits. Since the market isn't too congested with new releases around this time, there could be a higher chance of your links receiving more traffic.



PART 2:

Looking ahead to 2023

We asked our Linkfire experts and customers—including artists, independent label reps, and major label marketers—what their biggest learning from 2022 was, and what their best prediction for 2023 is.

Here's what they said...



Looking ahead to 2023

The power of social

Artists have to struggle harder to create their platform, of which music is just one part.

“

Derek Hoiem

President of Save the City Records

It's no surprise that social media remains top of mind for many Linkfire users in 2022, and continues to be a focus leading into 2023. Here's what our users think about the future of social.



Looking ahead to 2023

Welcome to the short-form era

TikTok and its short-form content continued to rise at a meteoric rate in 2022, and is only expected to expand its influence in the music industry in 2023 (including talks the platform is about to launch their own music label). With such [high engagement rates of 5.95% on average](#), many artists and labels alike have adopted the social platform as a core pillar of their 2023 marketing strategies.

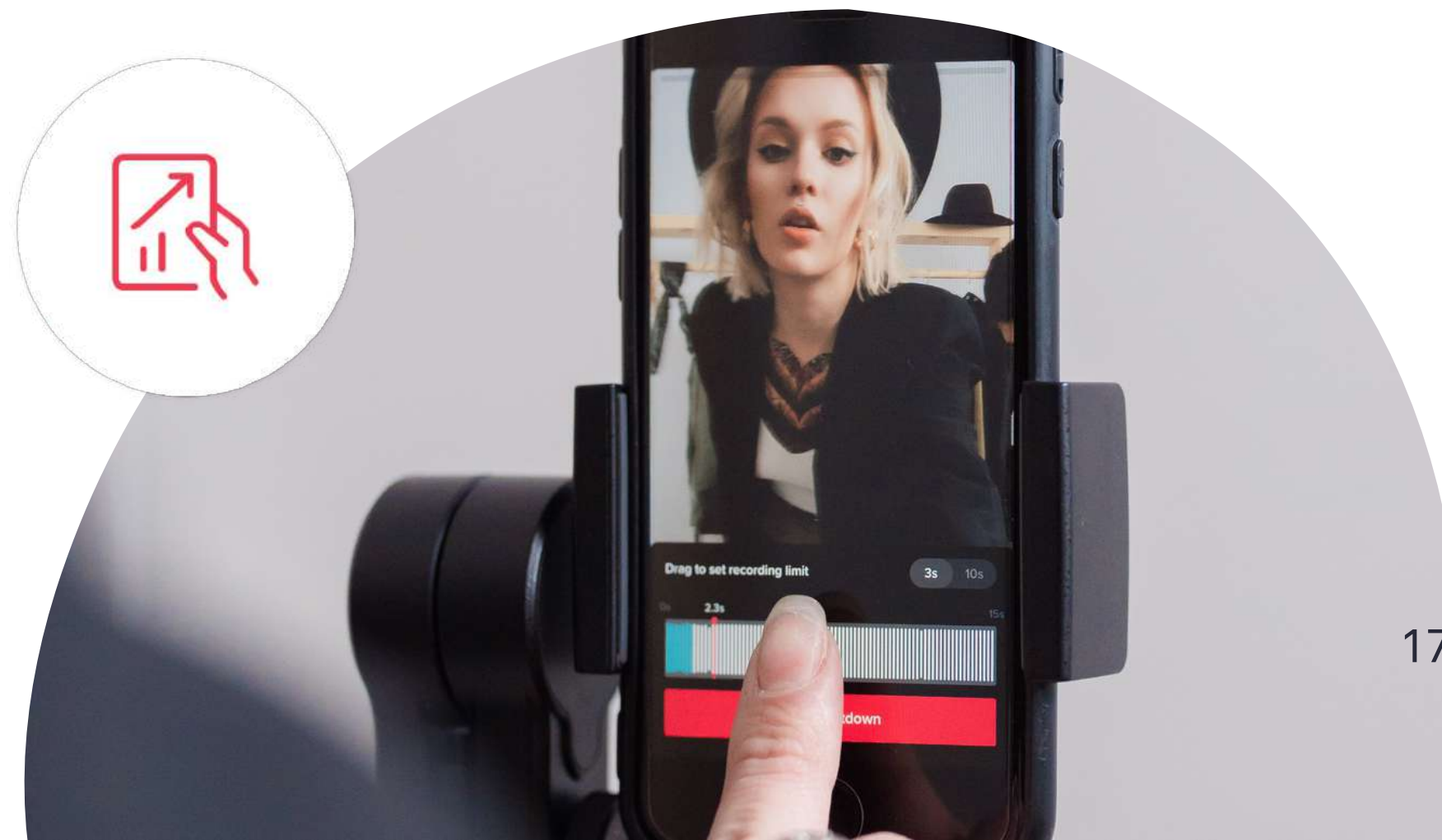
Linkfire users are also leaning into other short-form platforms, such as Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts. The latter in particular gained a lot of momentum in 2022, with approximately [1.5 billion logged-in users monthly](#) (as of June 2022). Comparatively, TikTok announced in [September 2021 that they had reached 1 billion monthly users](#), and was expected to hit 1.5 billion sometime in 2022.



"YouTube Shorts will become the next TikTok."

Holdyn Barder
Artist

Although going viral is often easier said than done, it's expected that many artists, from the world's biggest names to up-and-comers, will increasingly lean into short-form platforms to reach new audiences and increase engagement in the year ahead.



Looking ahead to 2023

Showing the process and involving your fans

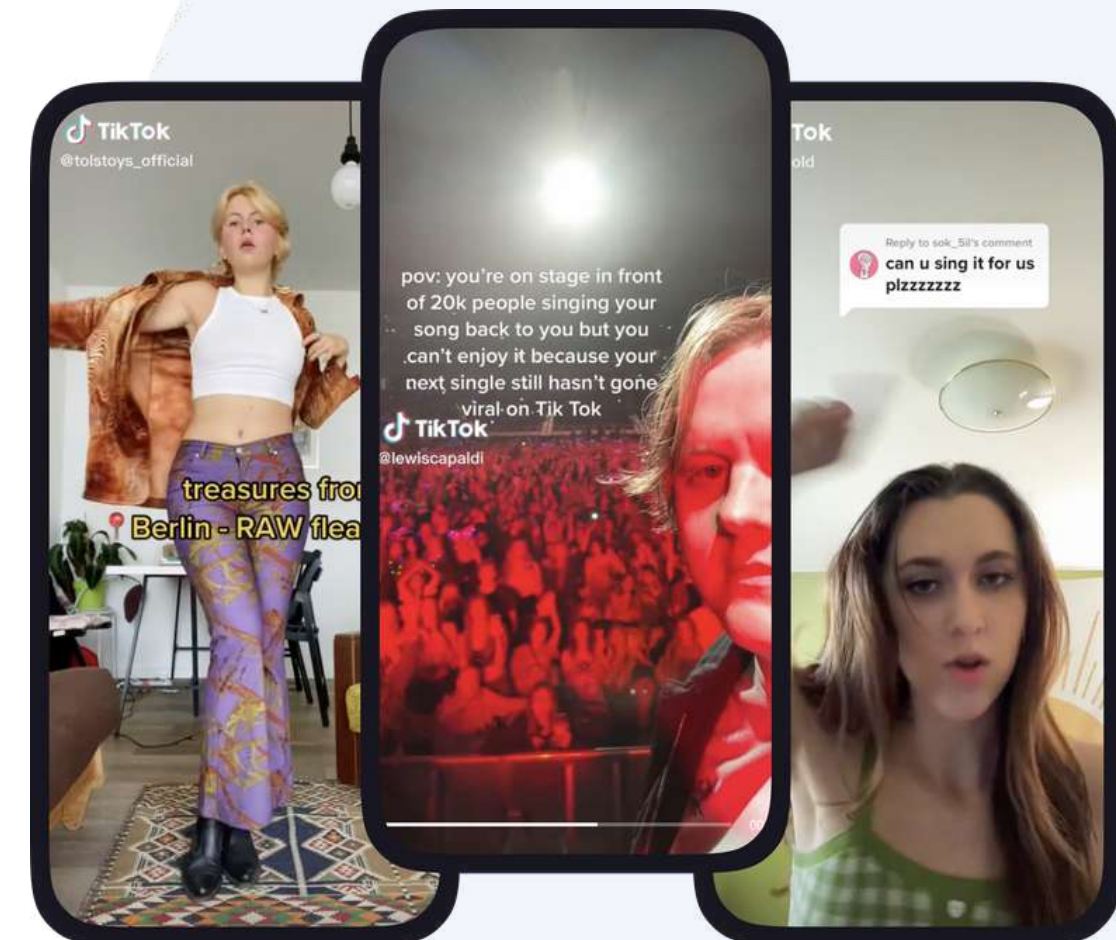
"Artists who promote their music organically have a higher chance of success due to the fact that they show off their unfiltered side."

Camila Camacho

Audience Development Coordinator
at Sony Music Entertainment

This year, fans were eager to see more of the process of making the music, not just the music itself.

Traditionally, artists have presented a very crisp image of themselves online, but since the pandemic, fans have been increasingly wanting to see more of the behind-the-scenes process and even become a part of it.



"We are seeing artists not just as brands, but as people as well. We're seeing an increasing amount of content being shared about artists' careers, the process of music creation—they're taking their fans on every step of the journey, and the fans are loving it!"

Lígia Pereira

Customer Success Manager at Linkfire

Looking ahead to 2023

Showing the process and involving your fans

"Consistency with content > consistency with music. Fans like to see unreleased music on content platforms and then participate in tracklist building for albums or choosing which songs get released first."

Joachim Speidel

Producer at We Are Fury

Providing this additional window into the lives and careers of artists fosters a greater sense of connection between the artist and fan. This not only translates into higher engagement rates, but also stronger fan loyalty.



"I believe that the trend of 'humanizing' artist and entertainment brands will continue. Artists who are focused on activating intentionally and often, and those who succeed in creating sustainable and valuable connections with their fanbases, will continue to increase their leverage and influence in the marketplace."

Louis Pratt

Customer Success Manager at Linkfire

Looking ahead to 2023

Singles vs. albums: Which release strategy is best?

"As product and music releases continue to evolve, I believe that artists and their teams will need to be increasingly intentional and activation-focused moving forward."

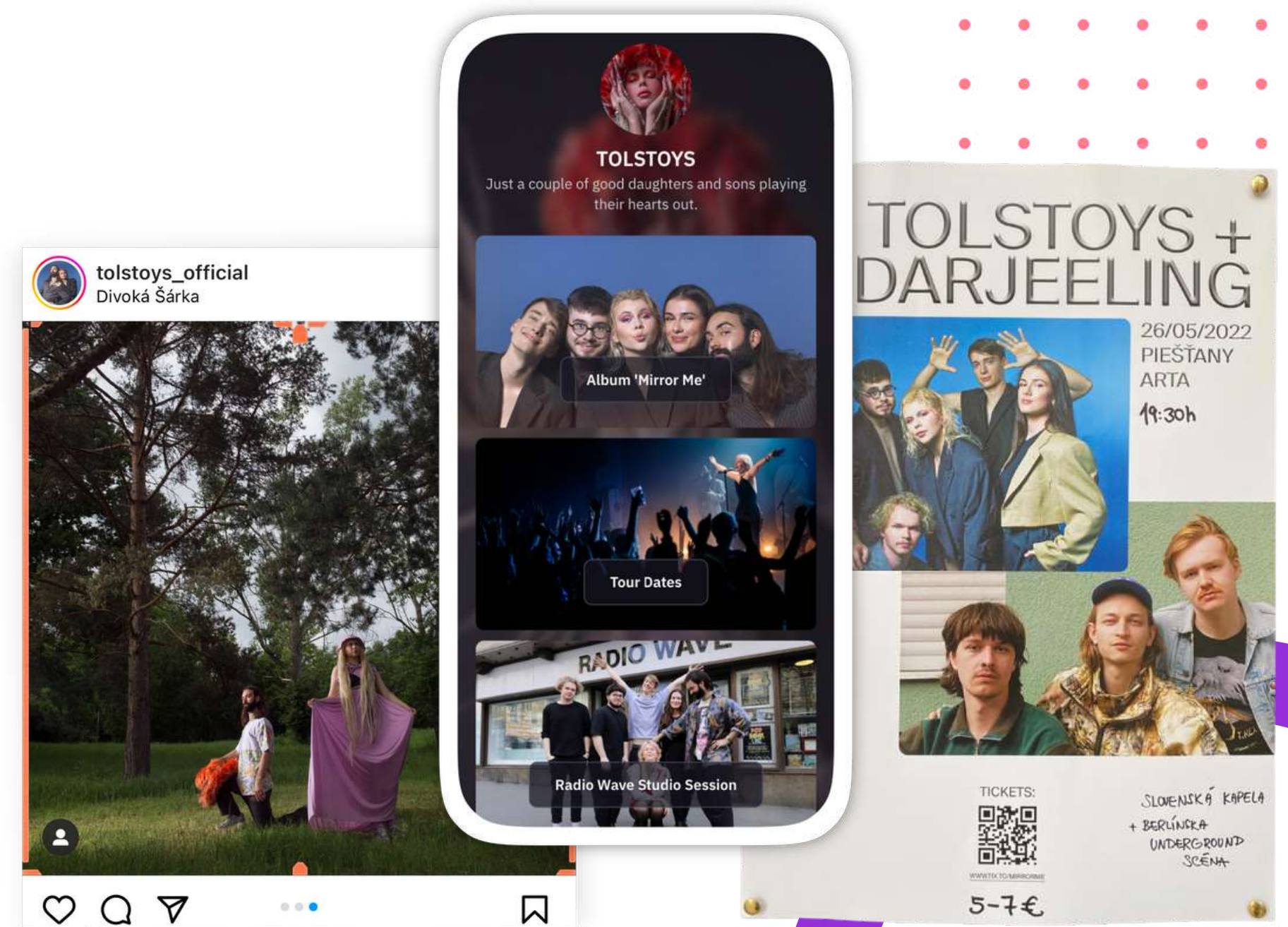
Louis Pratt

Customer Success Manager at Linkfire

The debate between whether it's better to have a singles-focused or album-focused strategy has been around for years, and it certainly hasn't let up in 2022. So, which one drives more success?

Traditionally, album releases have been the go-to strategy, and we saw some of the industry's biggest artists find success using it this year. Taylor Swift's *Midnights* followed an album-first strategy by not releasing any singles until the full album came out in October, while also creating hype ahead of time. The strategy paid off, with the album debuting at No.1 on the Billboard charts and in several markets around the world—breaking a number of records along the way.

That being said, we're starting to also see more creative approaches, especially in a post-Covid world. For example, indie dream pop-quintet [Tolstoys took a more unconventional approach to their 2022 album release](#). Instead of releasing an album all at once, they opted to deliver new songs to their fans over the course of an entire year.



Looking ahead to 2023

Singles vs. albums: Which release strategy is best?

“Releasing a single every month on the same day really worked! Our fans remembered that new music was coming out, and when we released the full album on the 22nd of February 2022, people already had it on their minds.”

“

Ela Tolstova
Lead singer of Tolstoys

The strategy was so successful that it landed them on the Times Square billboard.



Looking ahead to 2023

Singles vs. albums: Which release strategy is best?

Although it seems the jury is still out on which strategy is best (and it can be argued that independent artists have more incentive to think creatively), we expect the debate to continue well into 2023 and beyond. But regardless of whether artists choose to go down the album or single route, the common denominator is that they're not starting their promotion on release day. They're focused on creating hype for their releases well in advance.



Looking ahead to 2023

The battle between physical and digital is heating up

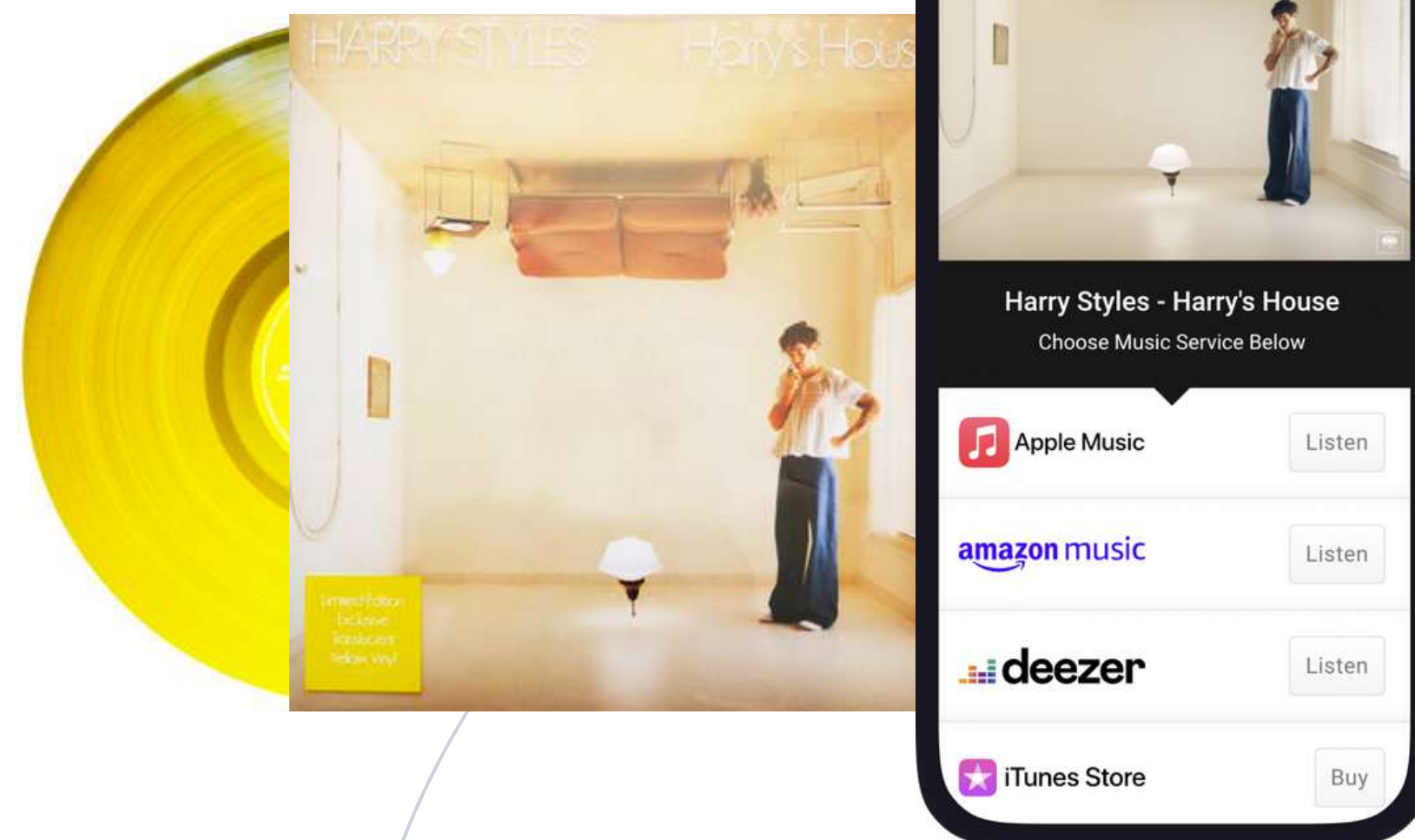
Although digital consumption is still a favorite among artists, labels, and fans, many Linkfire users have commented that physical products, such as the promotion of vinyl records, are becoming an increasingly popular distribution source, even among younger consumers.

Take Harry Styles' 2022 album release, *Harry's House*. The album debuted in May at No.1 on the US Billboard charts with 521,000 sales and 182,000 vinyl units sold—the highest amount of vinyl album sales since 1991. But he didn't hold this record for too long: In November, Taylor Swift's *Midnights* broke the all-time record for single-week vinyl sales, with 575,000 vinyl copies sold. The vinyl sales alone would've placed Swift at No.1 on the US Billboard album charts.

Although digital reigned supreme in 2022, it looks like vinyl and physical units aren't going anywhere in 2023.

"Sales of physical products, such as vinyl records, are increasing worldwide. But we will continue to pay attention to digital distribution, which drives releases, and we consider it to be the core of promotion."

Nakazawa Ryoji
Polystar Records



Looking ahead to 2023

Leverage the platforms you own

There is no doubt that social media plays an important role in how artists and labels promote music and grow fanbases. But this year, we saw Linkfire users focus more on building up channels they own, such as their email lists—a trend that is expected to continue into 2023.

2022 saw Twitter exchange ownership, leaving many artists and labels concerned about the future reliability of one of the world's biggest social platforms. We also saw Instagram outages, which affected many artists' music promotion.

"It is very important to drive fans to the platforms that the artist owns, like email lists and websites."

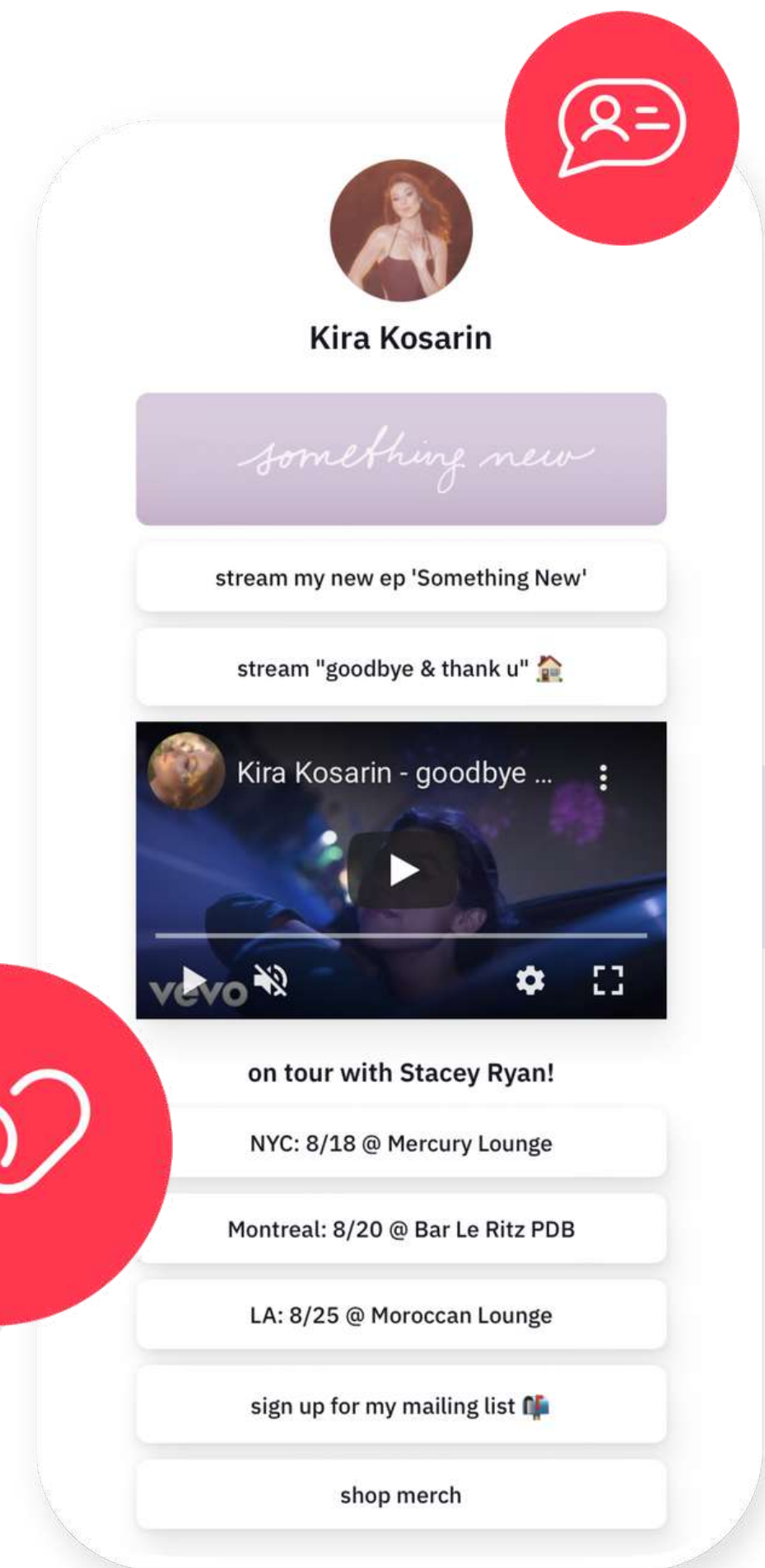
Miss Query

Director of Digital Marketing at Select-O-Hits

"Artists should not solely rely on social media to interact with their fanbase."

Lígia Pereira

Customer Success
Manager at Linkfire



Looking ahead to 2023

Leverage the platforms you own

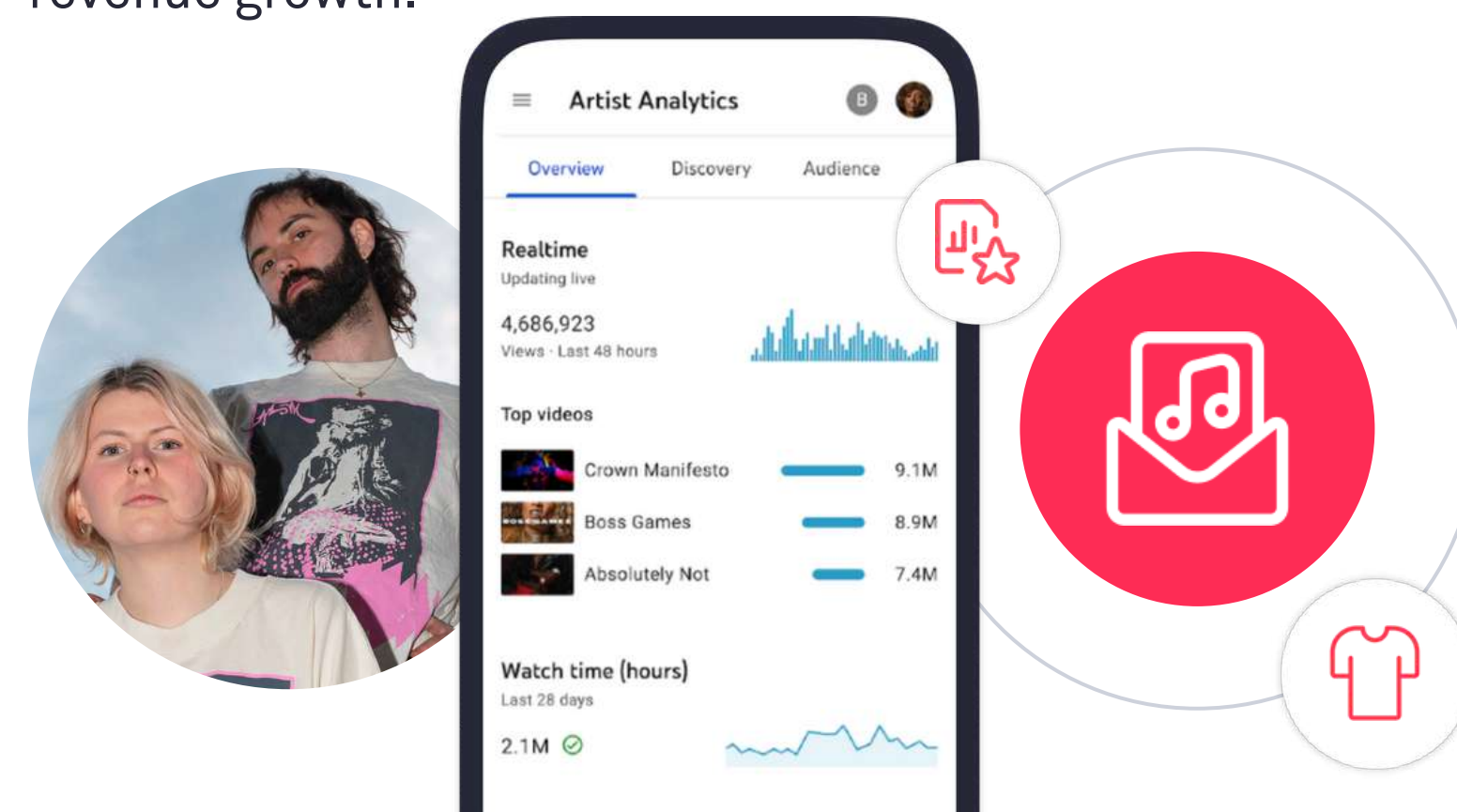
This uncertainty has led to many artists and labels investing in campaigns designed to grow their email databases. Although email marketing has been around a lot longer than today's popular social channels, email is arguably the most effective way to get fans to take action, because anyone who signs up for your list wants to hear from you.

"Through email, you're not relying on social channels to potentially share your content. Instead you know that you're talking to people who are interested in what you have to say."

Lígia Pereira

Customer Success Manager at Linkfire

While social media is great for attracting new fans, email and owned channels seem to be the place where more industry players will be focusing their efforts in the year ahead, solidifying fan relationships and generating revenue growth.



"When you have fans' emails, you have something to work with. We have this database of people who already bought our merch online, so we know it's people who are really interested in our music."

Ela Tolstova

Lead singer of Tolstoys



Conclusion

If this year has taught us anything, it's to prioritize being creative and authentic—not just in the music we create, but in how we promote it. We hope these industry insights will help you develop a marketing strategy that sets you up for success in 2023.

Don't be afraid to try new strategies or test new channels. Just remember to track every step of the way so you can measure what is and isn't resonating with your fans.

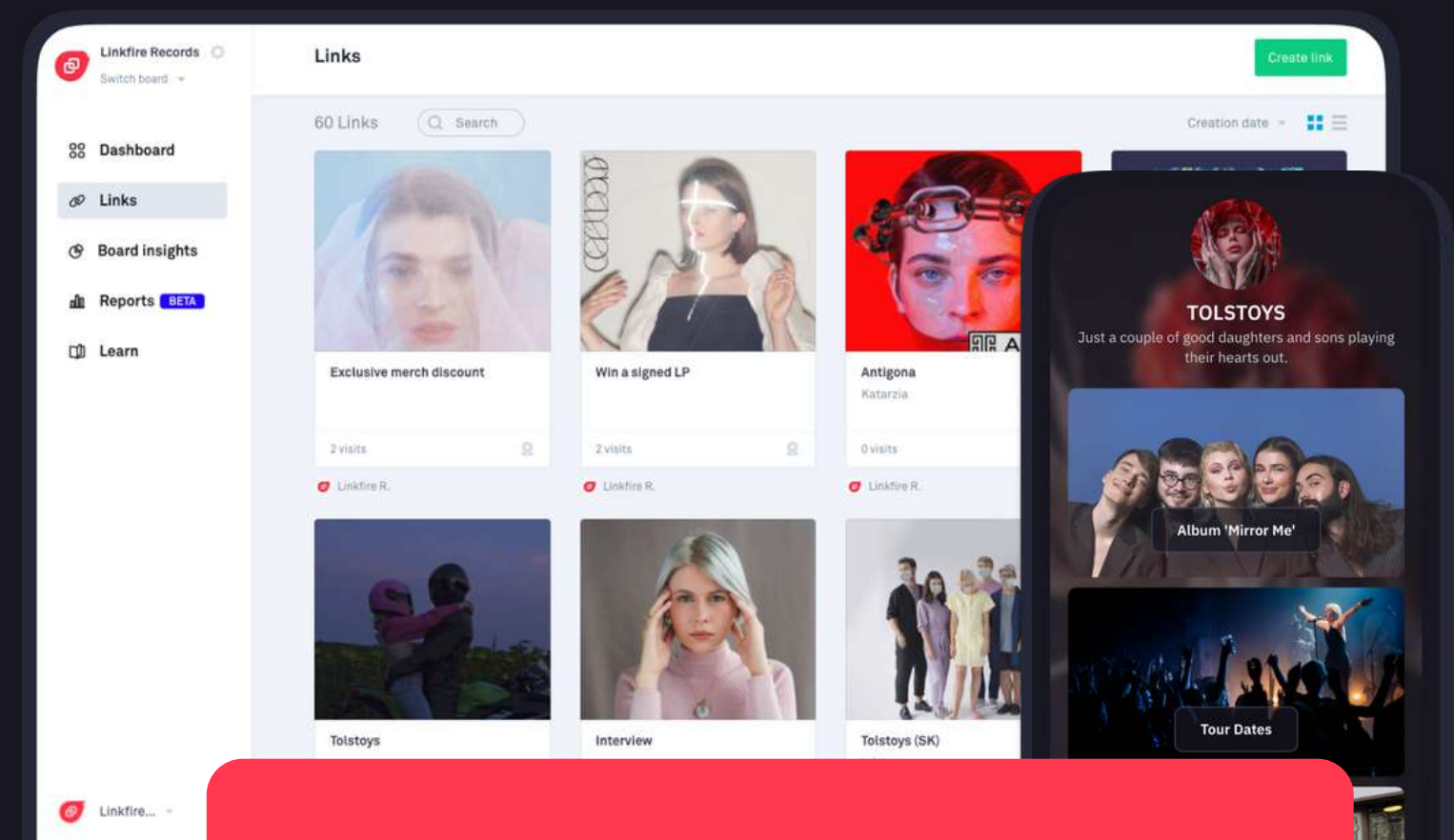
We look forward to supporting your journey in the year ahead.



Empowering entertainment discovery everywhere

Linkfire makes entertainment marketing easy.

Our customers and partners include a majority of artists on Billboard's annual Hot 100, all major music labels, global audio and music streaming services, social media apps, and media publishers.



WHY CHOOSE LINKFIRE



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