

# Sports were in a league of their own on Instagram in February 2025

March 10, 2025

Written by [Benedict Nicholson](#)



In a similar way to [TikTok](#), Instagram has become a key part of publisher distribution strategies and brand building in 2025. Thanks to research by Pew and others, we now know that a significant percentage of news consumers get their news directly from social media, often without ever going to a news website.

With this in mind, we're starting a new series across platforms to look at what's driving success for publishers on those networks, and today it's Instagram's turn. To do this, we're drawing from our list of 50 publishers that formed the basis of our recent landscape report, and we'll be using that as a benchmark going forward.

Here are some of the key takeaways this month.

- Vogue had the top three posts, all driven by Grammys content
- Sports content dominated the top 1,000 posts this month
- Engagements with the top 1,000 posts topped **213 million**

Let's get into the details.



## What publishers performed best on Instagram in February 2025?

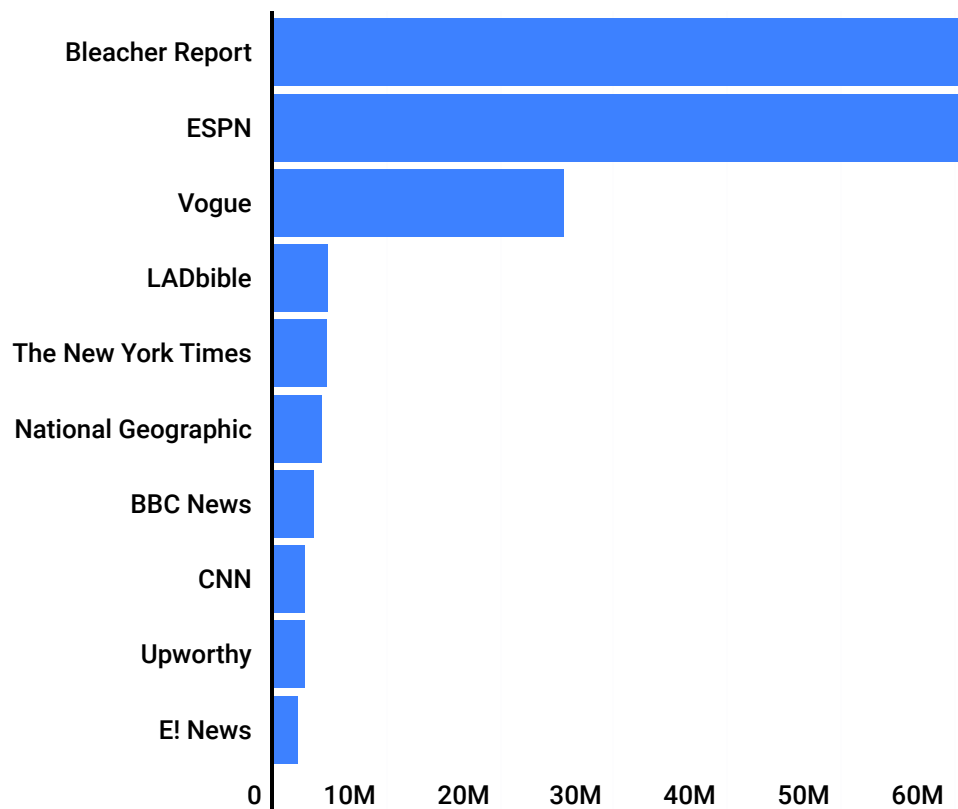


To find out the top performers in terms of engagement, we took the top 1,000 posts from our group of 50 publishers and added up the engagements with each publisher.

By that metric, the sports publishers Bleacher Report and ESPN were clearly the dominant forces, with **82 million** and **70 million** engagements respectively. This should not be surprising, though, given that they were collectively responsible for **682 of the top 1,000 posts** from this group of publishers, barely giving the other 48 a look-in on the top posts front.

## **Top publishers on Instagram by engagement (50-publisher sample)**





Even with this dominance of sports publishers, others still garnered significant engagement, with Vogue, LADbible, and the New York Times rounding out the top five with millions of engagements each.

But where did that engagement come from – what drove success for them and the likes of ESPN and Bleacher Report?

## What publisher posts performed best on Instagram in February 2025?

When it came to the posts themselves, the top three actually came from Vogue, and all focused on the GRAMMYs. This continues the theme that we saw in our TikTok rankings, where E! News had the top post.



When it came to sports, it was basketball that was more dominant, with Luka Doncic's trade to the LA Lakers from the Dallas Mavericks topping even the most engaging content from the Super Bowl. Jalen Hurts and Saquon Barkley did both feature in posts that made the top ten though.

## Top posts on Instagram by engagement (50-publisher sample)

| Account             | Headline  | Total Interactions |
|---------------------|---|--------------------|
| Vogue               | What do Katrina Sharpenter, Serena Carpen-Terra, Christina Barbenter, and Regina Harpenter all have in common (besides their small stature and great hair)?   | 1,233,268          |
| Vogue               | SabrinaCarpenter's "Short n' Sweet" persona is not a created character, but rather a more theatrical version of herself.  | 1,217,245          |
| Vogue               | The 2025 #Grammys are here! Siblings willowsmith and Jaden Smith (c.syresmith) have arrived to celebrate music's biggest night in style.  | 1,179,008          |
| ESPN                | BREAKING: The Dallas Mavericks are trading Luka Doncic, Maxi Kleber and Markieff Morris to the Los Angeles Lakers for Anthony Davis, Max Christie and a 2029 first-round pick, sources tell shamsnba. | 1,060,763          |
| National Geographic | Time is ticking, but this armored catfish is built to beat the clock!   | 976,677            |
| Bleacher Report     | 🔴 The Mavericks are trading Luka Doncic, Maxi Kleber and Markieff Morris to the Lakers for Anthony Davis, Max Christie and a 2029 first-round pick, per shamsnba                                      | 922,275            |
| ESPN                | EVERYONE LOVES A COMEBACK STORY 🔥 SAQUON BARKLEY HELPS LEAD THE EAGLES TO A SUPER BOWL IN HIS FIRST SEASON IN PHILLY 🏆  | 811,366            |
|                     | #Grammys-nominee oliviarodrigo turned to a slinky black archival number from Versace for  |                    |



The only publisher to crack the top ten posts that wasn't one of the top three publishers we've referenced was National Geographic, whose post about an armored catfish drove almost a million interactions with the publisher.

Alongside the rise of TikTok, Instagram Reels have become an increasingly prevalent format on a platform that was once dominated by photos.

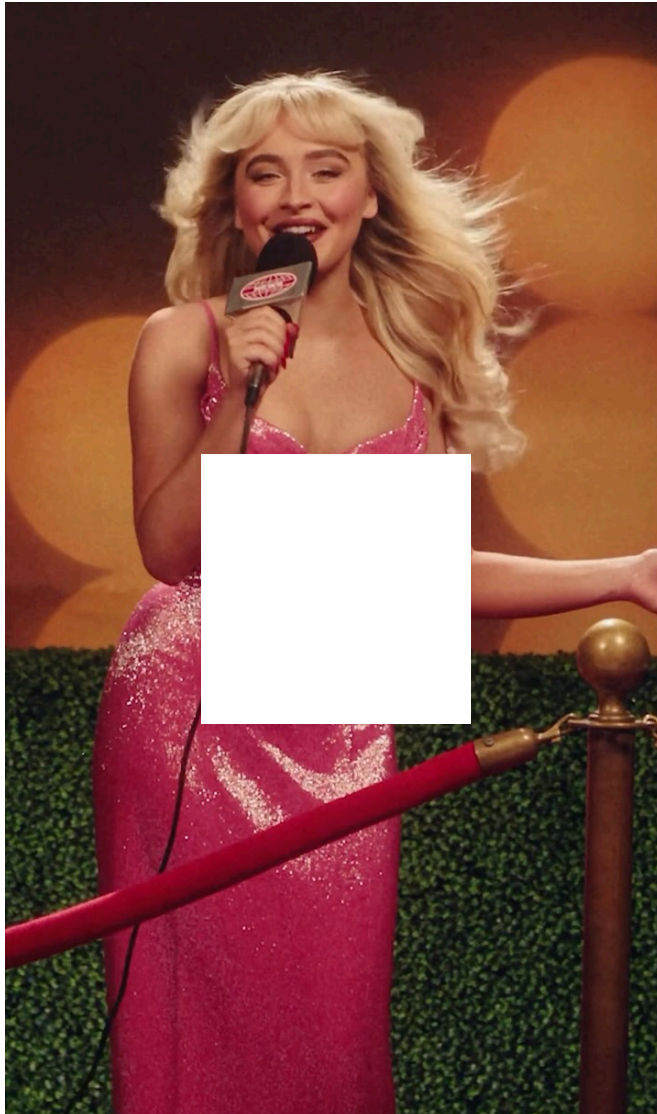
Four of the top ten posts in this analysis came in video form, while photos represented the other six — often with text overlaid to give more context as in the example below.





**voguemagazine**  
Original audio

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espn and sportscenter  
28.0M followers

[View profile](#)





As people click out less to read stories, we'd expect this type of photo sharing on Instagram to continue, helping build awareness for the work publishers are doing and the news they are breaking.

It's not always the case though, as we saw several highly engaging posts from the likes of the New York Times and others, which use [galleries](#) of [photos](#) alongside extended captions to provide the context.

The wide variety shows there is no one-size-fits-all approach to winning engagement on Instagram, even for a fairly narrow set of publishers, and it's about finding what resonates with your audience and building from there.

As social media increasingly becomes a primary news source for many consumers, one challenge for publishers is continuing reporting work while also making the public aware of that reporting as well as the wider work that the organization is doing, all of which Instagram can facilitate.

We'll continue to monitor these trends throughout the year, and we'll have analysis like this across all platforms every month.



**If you'd like to catch up on our recent TikTok study, you can find that [here](#).**









## **Benedict Nicholson**

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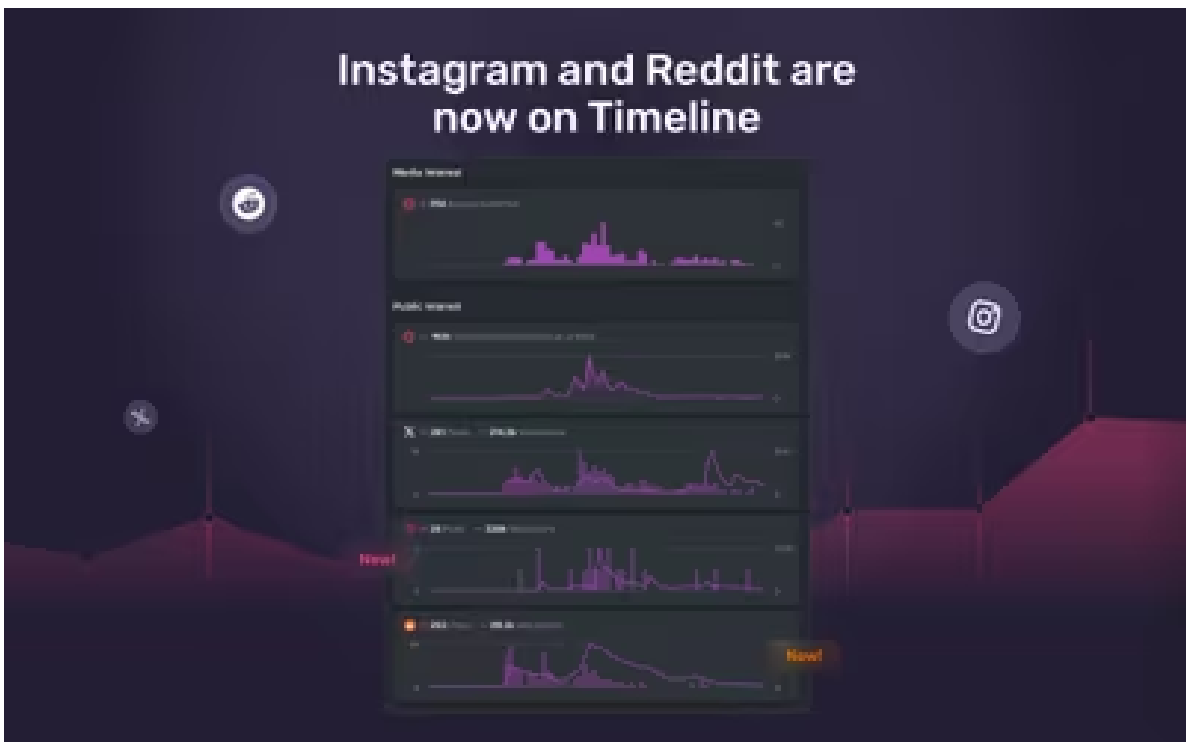
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