



COCKTAIL VERTICAL

TREND REPORT

April–May 2026

What the data reveals about what actually drives engagement in cocktail content

About this report.

This report analyzes **80 Instagram posts** from **5 cocktail creators** — ranging from 120K to 650K+ followers — manually tagged across 40+ creative dimensions over a 30-day window. Every post cross-referenced with real engagement data across three metrics to surface the patterns that separate high-performing content from the rest. Think of this as a preview of how Keyframe analyzes content, not a final verdict — the paid reports run the same process against far larger datasets and across more dimensions.

80	5	30	44
Posts analyzed	Creators	Day window	Creative tags

The Detail: How this report was built.

Data collection	80 posts from 5 public Instagram accounts published April 10–May 10, 2026. Data pulled manually from each creator's public profile capturing likes, comments, reposts, shares, views (Reels only), and full caption text.
Tagging framework	Each post manually tagged across 40+ creative dimensions: Format, Setting & Visual, Creative Elements, Occasion, and Caption & CTA (Call-to-action). Applied consistently using defined decision rules to ensure comparability across creators.
Extended Engagement Rate	$(\text{Likes} + \text{Comments} + \text{Reposts} + \text{Shares}) / \text{Followers} \times 100$. Primary metric — captures the full sharing and amplification behavior of a post.
Reach Rate	$(\text{Likes} + \text{Comments} + \text{Reposts} + \text{Shares}) / \text{Views} \times 100$. Secondary metric for Reels with public view data. Measures engagement relative to who actually saw the content — not just followers. Not available for static and carousel posts.
Multipliers	Average engagement metric for posts where tag = Yes divided by average for tag = No. Values above 1.0 indicate the tag is associated with higher engagement.
Limitations	80 posts across 5 creators is directionally meaningful but not statistically definitive. The 30-day window captured Cinco de Mayo, skewing content toward tequila-forward recipes. All findings are strong directional signals.

Key Topline Findings

80 posts. 44 tags. Five patterns that kept showing up.

01

Ask the question

Question CTAs showed a big lift in this small sample — worth testing, not yet proven.

02

Dark outperforms bright

Moody aesthetics drive 1.8x more engagement — but equal Reach Rate

03

Angle matters more than you think

One creative choice that moves both metrics at once

04

Smaller accounts, bigger engagement

Growth creators dramatically outperform large accounts on follower-based ER

05

Two metrics, two different stories

When follower engagement and Explore reach tell completely opposite stories

01

Ask the question.

Question CTAs showed a real lift in this small sample — but the size is likely overstated, and it hasn't necessarily held up as our data has grown.

3.1x

More engagement

2.7x

More shares

8.80%

Avg Ext ER with Q CTA

Posts that directly ask the audience a question in the caption — "Team spicy or fruity?" "Which one are you making this weekend?" — outperformed every other content type in the dataset. Question CTA posts averaged **8.80% Extended Engagement Rate** compared to **2.81%** for posts without one. Shares were **2.7x higher** on average. This pattern is based on only a couple of posts in this 80-post sample, so the size of that lift is likely overstated. As our dataset has grown, this pattern has gotten less clear — in our largest sample (444 posts), asking a question performs about the same as not having a call-to-action at all. Worth testing on your own content, but not something to build a strategy around.

02

Dark outperforms bright.

Moody aesthetics drive 1.8x more Extended Engagement Rate — with nearly equal Reach Rate.

5.56%

Moody/dark Ext ER

3.05%

Bright/airy Ext ER

1.8x

Engagement lift

Bright, natural, airy content dominates the cocktail feed — nearly two-thirds of all posts in this dataset used a bright or airy aesthetic. But it is not the highest-performing style. Posts with a moody, dark aesthetic averaged **5.56% Extended ER** compared to **3.05%** for bright content. Critically, Reach Rate is nearly equal between the two styles (**4.99% vs 4.78%**) — meaning dark content is not reaching more people via Explore, but when they see it, they engage more. This is an **audience quality signal**, not a volume signal.

03

Angle matters more than you think.

Elevated framing wins on BOTH Extended ER and Reach Rate — a rare double signal.

4.30%

Elevated Ext ER

5.68%

Elevated Reach Rate

1.6x

Wins on BOTH metrics

How you frame the drink matters as much as what's in it. Posts shot from an elevated angle — not necessarily a strict bird's-eye overhead, but a diagonal above-eye-level framing that captures depth and dimension — averaged **4.30% Extended ER** vs **2.76%** for eye-level shots. The Reach Rate data makes this finding even stronger: elevated framing also outperforms on Reach Rate (**5.68% vs 3.90%**). This is the only creative element in the dataset that consistently wins on both metrics — meaning it engages existing followers AND reaches new viewers via Explore/Share more effectively.

04

Smaller accounts, bigger engagement.

Follower-based ER favors small accounts, but Reach rate equalizes the playing field.

4.42%

Growth tier avg ER

1.74%

Large account avg ER

5.24%

Large account Reach Rate

Follower count and engagement rate have an inverse relationship — and the gap in this dataset is significant. Growth-tier creators averaged **3–4% Engagement Rate**. The largest account (685K) averaged **1.74%**. But Reach Rate tells a more nuanced story: the largest account achieves **5.24% Reach Rate** — competitive with growth accounts — suggesting large accounts reach new audiences effectively via Explore even when follower-based ER is lower. **Large accounts are discovery engines. Small accounts are relationship engines.** They serve different purposes.

05

Two metrics. Two different stories.

Extended Engagement Rate measures depth. Reach Rate measures breadth. Sometimes they agree — sometimes they don't.

Extended Engagement Rate tells you how well content performs with your existing audience — the followers who already know you. Reach Rate (views-based, Reels only) tells you how well content spreads **beyond** that audience via Explore Page or Shares. The most powerful creative choices win on both. Here's where they agree — and where they diverge:

Creative choice	Extended ER	Reach Rate	What it means
Hands only (no face)	4.57% ↑↑	4.23% ↓	Deep follower engagement, less Explore reach
Face on camera	1.22% ↓↓	6.94% ↑↑	Grows audience, converts less of existing followers
Question CTA	8.80% ↑↑↑	3.83% ↓	Max follower engagement, stays within audience
Elevated angle ★	4.30% ↑↑	5.68% ↑↑	Wins on BOTH — rare double signal
Technique focused ★	4.10% ↑↑	5.16% ↑↑	How-to content also wins on both

★ Starred rows win on BOTH metrics — the most powerful creative signals in the dataset.

READY TO GO DEEPER?

This is just the keyframe.

This free report is a glimpse of the process. The paid reports go much further — more posts, more creators, more creative tags, full visual breakdowns of every finding, and detail this free version doesn't include.

The Cocktail Vertical Playbook — \$79

316 posts, 7 creators, 3 months, 62 creative tags, 9 findings with clear takeaways.

- ◆ What's actually working across follower tiers, from emerging to established
- ◆ Camera angle and lighting — the two clearest engagement signals in the entire report
- ◆ Instagram vs. TikTok — reach vs. retention, broken down

The Caption Analysis — \$29

A focused deep-dive into caption text — word choice, structure, punctuation, and hashtags — across 444 Reels.

- ◆ Why most creators' hashtag habits are working against them
- ◆ What actually makes a caption's opening line work, with real examples

The Virality Analysis — \$29

What separates a true breakout post from an everyday one, built on 68 real viral posts vs. 458 everyday ones.

- ◆ Whether CTAs, sponsorship, and trending audio actually move the needle for virality
- ◆ Which spirits show up more (and less) often in your most-shared content

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Working on a specific account? Custom creator audits are also available at keyframeinsights.com.