Emerging Media Buying Guide 2026 — 10 Platforms Compared

Every figure below is a platform-published number or an officially attributed case. Full source-checked guides for each platform: waytoglobal.ai/insights/emerging-media-buying-guide-2026 · Compiled 2026-10-29.

Platform	Best for	Official numbers / proof	Entry notes
AppLovin (AXON)	Second performance channel after Meta; needs proven creative + purchase events	Q1 2026 revenue $1.84B (+59% YoY); company-shared new-customer ROAS +50.1%	Self-serve opened to non-gaming June 2026. Optimize to purchases/ROAS; $50-100/day for 2-4 weeks; scale only if backend CPA ≤ ~110% of Meta's.
Reddit	Niche communities; brands that show up like members, not ads	2025 ad revenue $2.1B (+74%); official case: CTR +80%, engagement time +184%	Dynamic Product Ads + community interest targeting. Community-first creative; CPMs climbing as brands arrive — early window narrowing.
Pinterest	Visual categories with shopping intent — home, fashion, beauty, DIY	$3.65B retailer ecommerce revenue (2025); Top of Search efficiency +48%; case: Castlery ROAS 2x	Performance+ automates buying; shopping suite ROAS +15%, conversion 2.6x vs. standard. Bring a real catalog.
Snapchat	Under-34 cohorts; try-on categories (eyewear, beauty, apparel)	850M MAU; shoppable AR lenses live since Sep 2026	Sponsored Snaps land in the Chat tab; AR lenses carry buy buttons inside try-on. Smart Bidding for automation.
Netflix	High-AOV brand building inside premium content	94M ad-tier users; ~$3B 2026 ad revenue target	Brand-safe streaming inventory; buy programmatically via Netflix Ads Suite + partner DSPs. Not a last-click channel.
Spotify	Brand recall with promo-code measurement; podcast reach	Official MMM case: +28% sales lift (Euronics)	Ad Exchange full auction with UID2.0; AI audio ads push production cost toward zero. Pair with codes / dedicated landing pages.
Roku × Amazon DSP	US scale with closed-loop attribution; strongest with an Amazon storefront	~80M US households (~80% of CTV homes)	Logged-in targeting + closed-loop measurement via Amazon DSP bidding. CTV that behaves like performance marketing.
Moloco	Open-web ML bidding beyond the Meta/Google walled gardens	Display performance +30% (Jun 2026); official case: Bucketplace GMV 2x	ML engine bids a trillion daily auctions toward ROAS. Fits when Meta/Google plateau and conversion data exists to feed it.
Twitch	Gaming-adjacent, male-skewed categories via streamer voices	Side-by-side format in 2026 trials; streamer sponsorships remain the main form	Hard sells backfire; streamer sponsorships lead, platform ads second. Vet streamers; keep a brand-safety pause plan.
X (Grok era)	Early movers while the rebuilt auction is thin	Ads platform rebuilt from Apr 2026; Grok generates campaigns from a product URL	Grok outputs copy + creative + CTA from a URL; ads moving into Grok answers. Reset targeting/measurement — early accounts accumulate data advantage.

Four questions that narrow the list

1. **Goal?** Direct response first: AppLovin, Reddit, Moloco, Pinterest. Brand building with measurement: Roku CTV, Netflix, Spotify. Community trust: Twitch sponsorships, Reddit.
2. **Audience?** Under-34: Snapchat, Twitch. US households at scale: Roku. Podcast listeners: Spotify. Premium streaming: Netflix.
3. **What you already have?** Proven Meta creative transfers to AppLovin and Moloco. A catalog powers Reddit DPAs and Pinterest. An Amazon storefront makes Roku × Amazon DSP measurable.
4. **Which measurement will you accept?** Closed-loop attribution (Roku × Amazon, Reddit, Pinterest) vs. brand lift + promo codes (Netflix, Spotify, Twitch). Decide before budget.

One operating rule: test one platform at a time, in a fixed 2-4 week window, with a kill criterion written before launch.