

Brands are embracing ad-free features on social media, like comments and DMs

Article

Brands can no longer solely rely on the feed or Stories to capture users' attention. Marketers are showing up in spaces where users are spending time and where running a traditional ad

isn't an option, like a post's comments section or in group chats.

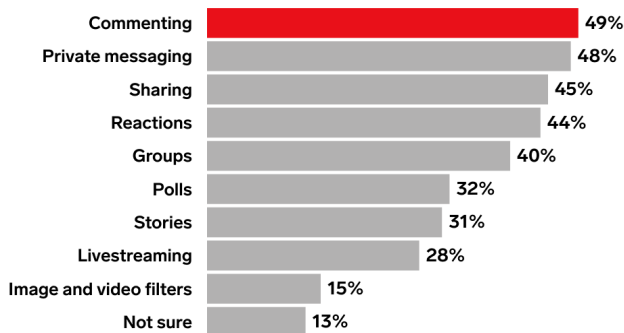
The comments section can't be ignored

- **Users love to comment on videos and engage with others' comments.** For many users, the comments are just as much a part of social scrolling as the posts themselves. Nearly half of US adults (49%) said commenting is one of the features they would most prefer to have available on their ideal social media platform, per a March 2023 YouGov study. And more than half (54.2%) of Gen Zers used social media to like or comment on content, according to our July 2023 US Gen Z Social Media survey.

Commenting Is the Most Preferred Social Feature Among US Adults

% of US adults, March 2023

Q: Thinking about your ideal social media platform, which of the following engagement features would you most prefer to have available? Select all that apply.



Note: n=1,000 US adults
Source: YouGov, "Social Media Preferences," April 18, 2023

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- **Users often ask for product-specific information in the comments section of videos.** Nearly half (45%) of 13- to 39-year-olds had asked an influencer or regular person where a product in their content is from via a comment, according to a February 2024 survey conducted by YPulse. And 75% of those between the ages of 18 and 24 said the comments section on social media posts had the best recommendations.
- **Social marketers are crafting entire strategies around comments.** Brands will often comment on popular videos from users on TikTok and Instagram to get in on a trend, thereby getting in front of a broader audience. This requires both a point person or team of people determining which videos to comment on, and the crafting of the actual comments. These strategies also

require an understanding of online culture and language, paired with a knowledge of the brand's voice.

- **Comments can help with reach and engagement.** It's not uncommon for a brand's comment on another user's video to receive tens of thousands of likes. A comment from Microsoft on a video posted by popular creator Emily Zugay, in which she features a satirical logo for the brand, received more than 70,000 likes and 100 replies. And commenting can have a direct impact on follower count: Marketers at brands ranging from American Eagle Outfitters to Starry recently told Ad Age that their commenting strategies have increased their followings.

Brands also want in on the group chat

- **People are spending more time in group chats and DMs.** Earlier this year, a New York Times Magazine headline declared that "group chats rule the world." Users are spending more time in private messaging spaces such as texts, Instagram DMs, WhatsApp, and platforms like Discord. These spaces are a reprieve from the onslaught of influencer posts, ads, and divisiveness common on social feeds. More than half (53.3%) of Gen Zers use social media for direct messaging, per the US Gen Z Social Media survey we conducted.
- **Social platforms, most notably Meta's, are investing in DMs.** Meta has rolled out a slew of DM-specific features on Instagram over the past few years. Last summer, Instagram head Adam Mosseri said teens spend more time in DMs than Stories or the feed. Meta is also looking to grow and further monetize WhatsApp, which CEO Mark Zuckerberg described as the company's "next chapter" in an interview last year. In Meta's most recent earnings call, Zuckerberg said WhatsApp's number of daily active users and message sends in the US "keeps gaining momentum." We expect WhatsApp to have 67.6 million US users in 2024, up 2.1% YoY.

Read the full report, [Organic Social Strategies That Work](#).

Report by Minda Smiley Jun 05, 2024

Organic Social Strategies That Work

