

How Instagram, Discord, and other social media platforms balance teen attention with parents' concerns

Article

Last week, **Instagram announced Quiet mode**, which lets users pause notifications to “set boundaries.” The app prompts teens to enable Quiet mode at night. In the same week, Discord bought Gas, adding the teen compliment-giving app into the messaging platform’s fold.

All quiet on the IG front: These are good PR moves for Meta and Discord, especially as the **Biden administration vows to go after Big Tech** for “put[ting] our children at risk.” The functional significance of these sorts of moves is a bit less clear.

- iPhone users already have the capability to silence notifications at night.
- The growth potential for Gas, which is currently not ad-supported and offers fairly narrow functionality, is debatable.

What both moves offer, however, is an olive branch to parents and regulators concerned about kids’ social media safety, while at the same time encouraging platform use from teens.

It’s more than a feeling: All social platforms can sense a new era of accountability, and they’re making active moves to stay on regulators’ good side.

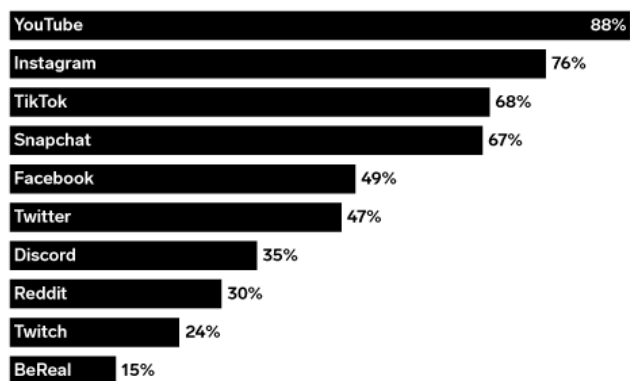
- President Biden made his criticisms crystal clear in a Wall Street Journal opinion piece earlier this month.
- Next month, the US Supreme Court will hear arguments on Section 230. If SCOTUS rules that platforms are liable for content posted by users, the internet will fundamentally change.
- In the UK, the new **Online Safety Bill could saddle tech CEOs with jail time** if they fail to protect children from harm online.

Platforms are still fighting for attention: In the US, 76% of Gen Z uses Instagram, making it more popular than TikTok at 68%, according to Morning Consult.

Meanwhile, 35% of Gen Zers are on Discord. Buying Gas is a play to expand that figure, while shining a complimentary light on Discord.

Social Media Platforms Used by US Gen Z, Nov 2022

% of respondents



Note: n=1,000 ages 13-25

Source: Morning Consult, "National Tracking Poll #2211008," December 12, 2022

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How TikTok factors in: TikTok has Instagram scrambling for users' time across age groups. But Meta has the advantage of being a known player among parents and regulators, while TikTok still feels like the new kid in town.

- US users will average 47 minutes per day on TikTok this year, according to our forecast.
- In comparison, users will only spend an average of 30 minutes per day on Instagram.

If Instagram can't beat TikTok in time spent, it may have to focus on staying on regulators' and parents' good side. **TikTok has been banned** by an increasing number of US institutions due to privacy concerns. The platform has been consistently criticized for promoting **misinformation and disinformation**. Although Instagram fell to the middle in our **2022 digital trust** report, it still beat TikTok.

Digital download: Platforms are balancing the fight for younger users' attention with the prerogative to not be seen as harmful. Instagram's new features and Discord's acquisition of Gas are both moves to grab more of users' attention without falling out of favor with parents and regulators.

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