

YOU ARE WHAT YOU *FEED*:
IDENTITY & CULTURE IN THE DIGITAL AGE

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Abstract

You Are What You Feed: Identity in the Digital Age

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Identity has historically formed through slow, collective cultural processes shaped by lived experience, social interaction, and repeated participation within communities. That said, the rise of digital platforms has significantly changed the pace at which cultural material travels. It is true that social media has expanded access to participation and connection, but it has also accelerated cultural visibility to a speed that often outpaces the human processes through which identity can inherently develop. This thesis introduces the concept of identity lag to describe the growing disconnect between the rapid cycling of cultural signals online and the slower formation of meaningful identity. Drawing on anthropological perspectives of identity, cultural theory, and contemporary critiques of algorithmic media, this research examines how digital systems restructure cultural participation, influence performative identity, and push people to constantly adapt how they present themselves just to stay visible. It also explores how advertising and influencer culture reinforce this dynamic. Finally, the thesis explores experiential design as a potential response to identity lag. By creating environments that encourage participation, presence, and memory, experiential design offers a framework for reintroducing the time and friction historically necessary for cultural meaning and identity to take hold within an increasingly networked world.

Introduction

Culture today moves at a speed that would have been almost unimaginable just a few decades ago. Trends appear overnight, aesthetics spread globally within days, and entire cultural moments can rise and fall within the span of a single scroll. Social media platforms have dramatically expanded access to participation and expression, allowing individuals to publish, share, and connect at an unprecedented scale. Yet alongside this expansion, many people experience a subtle but persistent tension: the feeling that identity itself struggles to keep up with the pace at which culture now travels. Signals of belonging appear, spread, and disappear so quickly that individuals are often left adopting, adjusting, and discarding them before they can meaningfully relate to them.

In this thesis I explore that tension through the concept of identity lag; the growing disconnect between the rapid distribution of culture in digital environments and the slower human processes through which identity and meaning traditionally develop. When cultural signals move faster than lived experience can absorb them, identity risks becoming performative and reactive instead of truly internalized. Understanding this imbalance requires looking not only at how digital platforms shape cultural participation today, but also at how identity and culture historically developed before the feed.

Identity in a Nutshell

In today's society, identity is typically considered to be something very personal, internal, and self-chosen. From an anthropological standpoint, however, identity has never actually been 100% personal, but in fact social at its core. Identity is not something we simply obtain or decide on a whim, but something that is nurtured through relationships, environments, and experiences (Munro 201).

For a very long time, anthropologists have understood identity as stemming through processes of classification and belonging. People come to know who they are through the ways they are "addressed" by others, be it through gender, class, profession, ethnicity, or nationality,

or even more informal cues such as personal style or behavior. These classifications brought together ultimately form the cultural framework that give individuals a place within the social world. In this sense, identity always depends on various factors aside from how we see ourselves, including how people interpret or acknowledge us (van Meijl 63).

Because identity is formed socially, there is a level of performativity that is unavoidable. In no way does this mean identity is artificial, but the external influence causes identity to be enacted through certain repeated behaviors and ‘communal’ expectations. This can include the way we dress, talk, rituals we have, and the overall accordance with norms that are widely recognizable. Over time, these actions merge into what we feel is a natural expression of ourselves, even though in reality they were significantly shaped by cultural context. The fact that what is considered to be appropriate, scandalous, authentic, or respectable varies so much across both time and place ultimately paints identity as a continuous negotiation between individuals and society, more so than it is inherently at our core (Chinn 105).

Rituals play a particularly important role in this process. Across cultures, certain practices of celebration, mourning, work, and interaction, among others serve as mechanisms through which identities are shaped and passed down. These rituals are what connect individuals to family histories, traditions, and values that far precede a single person’s lifetime. This, much like culture, makes identity something that is lived collectively instead of decided upon in isolation. Even the most customary routines, like what we wear to work, how we greet others, and what we consume, serve as small but repeated acts that establish a sense of who belongs where (Munro 210).

Overall, it is important to note that identity has never actually been ‘self-chosen’. While modern Western societies often emphasize individuality and personal freedom, there’s always external influences that impact those personal choices. The whole concept of “being” someone in a social sense will always require some sort of acknowledgement from outside forces, thus making identity something that we actively choose and perform, but within boundaries we did

not create. Historically, these dynamics unfolded at a human pace. The formation of identity was always tied to physical distance, face-to-face interactions, and the slow accumulation of social recognition. The way to become a member of a group was not instant, but through active and gradual participation. Understanding identity, therefore, also requires understanding the cultural environments that shape it.

Culture B.F. (Before the Feed)

As we begin unpacking this relationship, it is helpful to clarify what culture actually is and how it has historically functioned. Culture is often labeled as something people passively consume, like trends, aesthetics, media, or lifestyles that circulate through society. From an anthropological perspective, however, culture is not a product but more so a process. It is something people actively participate in, and indirectly shape through shared meaning and behavior. Culture forms through rituals of belonging, systems of exclusion, and everyday practices that allow individuals to recognize themselves as part of a group. Cultural theorist Raymond Williams described this idea simply, but powerfully: “culture is ordinary”, meaning it is created not by a specialized elite but through the lived experience of everyday people and their common ways of life (Williams 2).

Historically, identity has emerged through these cultural processes. Social groups defined themselves through language, dress, music, values, and customs that developed gradually over time. These indicators of identity were not optimized for visibility or mass appeal, but more so depended on lived experience. Fashion changed due to material availability or for political reasons (Field). Political identities shifted alongside social movements. Music scenes formed locally before spreading outward; like hip-hop, for instance, which began as a block party in the Bronx in the early 1970s. Slang developed within specific communities as a way to signal belonging and distinction. Younger generations pushed against established norms for none other than because it felt culturally necessary (Hsu). In this context, identity was always

shaped through influence, but that kind of influence operated slowly, unevenly, and differently across place, class, and community.

Raymond Williams argued that culture is made through what he called a society's "common meanings and directions", which are continually debated and revised through experience. Culture at the time was never something instantly broadcasted (Williams 2). It had to be lived and shaped into existence. Shared meanings were built through repetition, participation, and adaptability within particular environments. Because of this, culture forms could not simply be copied and pasted across contexts; they were interpreted or adapted depending on local conditions. And thus, identity formation required time, proximity, and social reinforcement.

Given that cultural evolution has always been a defining part of how society is shaped, the issue is not that culture changes. What distinguishes the current moment is the speed, scale, and most significantly the *uniformity* with which these changes now occur. Prior to industrialization, media and communication were slower, more localized, and often controlled by gatekeepers. While this limited access in many ways, it also *allowed variation to exist*. Difference was preserved by distance, by subculture, and by the simple fact that not everything traveled everywhere at once. In Raymond William's terms, culture was still anchored in "ordinary" life, so in specific, local processes of people making meaning through shared routines, relationships, and lived experience. That grounding mattered because it meant new meanings had to be absorbed into real social worlds before they could become 'the norm'.

That is, until industrialization began to alter this balance. Mass production transformed manufacturing by prioritizing efficiency and scale, making objects more accessible but also more standardized. While this shift was not negative in nature, it introduced a new logic that preferred mass production and distribution over uniqueness, and that same logic gradually extended into media and communication. Williams describes this shift not just as technological innovation, but as a "reorganization" of how people lived day to day (14). As work moved people

from farms to factories and villages to cities, older community structures began to break apart, and people were brought into entirely new routines, environments, and relationships. Because culture is formed through those everyday interactions, this shift essentially also changed the conditions under which culture itself was created.

At the same time, improvements in communication created what Williams calls “multiple transmission”, meaning that communication was now sent out to large numbers of unknown people at once, instead of it being exchanged within specific communities. The target audience suddenly changed from neighbors, workers, or locals, to a more generalized “mass”. Interestingly, this is when cultural expression began to adjust to ‘content’ that could reach everyone simultaneously. With the reproduction and distribution efforts of products becoming much easier, and messaging increasingly shaped to be broadly legible rather than locally meaningful, a new pressure toward simplification and standardization emerged (10).

Even then, however, cultural change retained some form of resistance. Messages still moved through local interpretation and social context before they became associated with identity. At this point in time, culture could scale, but it could not yet move faster than the people experiencing it.

Social Media, The Beast That Changed It All

The arrival of social media did not create a new cultural force so much as it removed the final limitations on one already in motion. Industrialization scaled production and mass media accelerated distribution, but digital platforms are what ultimately functioned like a cultural Big Bang—what had at one point expanded gradually and more linearly now exploded outwards, instant, limitless, and replicable.

Social media is commonly viewed as a conglomeration of *channels* that we can use to distribute information. I would argue that this is a misnomer. As opposed to earlier communication channels, which were used solely to send and receive messages, social media acts as such, while also actively shaping what moves through it. Algorithms sort, prioritize, and

disperse content based on engagement predictions, which means that what we see is not only what was shared, but what has been curated for maximum visibility. As a result, instead of a channel or pipeline, social media functions more like an environment that structures interaction, prefers certain behaviors, and quietly guides how culture is expressed and received.

This system becomes somewhat of a new kind of cultural infrastructure. “In place of the human gatekeepers and curators of culture, the editors and DJs, we now have a set of algorithmic gatekeepers” (Chayka 11). Platforms rely now on automated filtering that is determined by engagement (clicks, shares, comments, and watch time) instead of cultural or historical significance. What emerges is a cultural landscape shaped not by human curation, but a system engineered to keep users scrolling—or as kids say, “for the likes”.

Because platforms reward what is most repeatable, cultural visibility itself then begins to function like a filter, in that what spreads fastest becomes what feels most “normal”, regardless of relevance, longevity, or impact. That’s the shift that matters most for identity. Instead of identity forming through lived participation and slow cultural malleability, it becomes something closer to RTO; constant adjustment based on what reads clearly, performs well, and signals ‘belonging’ in the most scalably superficial sense of the word.

Like the domino effect, this shift also inevitably changed the incentives behind participation. Because of the fact that visibility is tied to engagement, user behavior adapts accordingly. Kyle Chayka’s *Filterworld: How Algorithms Flatten Culture* describes how digital platforms encourage the production of content that is easily legible and endlessly reproducible across contexts. Instead of fostering difference and diversity, the system nudges creators towards formats, aesthetics, and tones that prove to be successful and ‘safe’, always in terms of engagement (33).

This incentive structure shapes what people make, but it also reshapes how culture work is valued in the first place. In Scott Timberg’s *Culture Crash: The Killing of the Creative Class*, he argues that the same digital systems that expanded access to publishing and sharing also

dismantled many of the local institutions that once sustained creative life, such as editors, records stores, independent radio stations, and other forms of human curation that helped culture develop within specific communities (53). Visibility increased, but stability did not follow because the slower structures that once supported artistic continuity weakened. Because of this, creatives are now often expected to circulate endlessly online for attention while receiving little of the economic or institutional support that previously allowed cultural identities to be practiced and developed over time (Timberg 73).

One visible effect of this restructuring is what Chayka calls a “convergence” of taste, where geographically distant users tend to come across similar imagery, language, and references at the same time (25). Therefore, variation has less room to take hold, and cultural expression begins to mirror itself across platforms and places, ultimately overshadowing the true diversity and expression that such expansive reach and connectivity could make possible.

On that note, it is a fact that platforms have undeniably expanded access to participation—a lot of which is utilized for significant and culturally beneficial reasons. Social media overall has enabled voices, such as political activists that have been historically excluded from traditional media systems, to reach audiences without needing any sort of approval or mediation. Moreover, creative professionals can publish freely, movements can gain visibility overnight, and individuals can find communities that would have once been inaccessible. It’s a bit ironic that the same mechanisms that flatten culture seem to also democratize entry into it. That said, that same democratization comes with a catch. While it is true that more people can contribute, content is still formatted to appeal to standardization through metrics, templates, and recommendations, causing variation in messaging to actually narrow. Timberg notes that digital platforms tend to operate on winner-take-all dynamics, where attention concentrates around what performs best instead of what is most meaningful, pushing creators to compete inside systems designed for scale over depth (218). This is why emotionally charged material tends to travel farther and faster, as platforms are programmed to ‘blow up’ whatever holds the

most attention, regardless of whether that attention comes from curiosity, outrage, or excitement.

We have always been influenced by others; influence itself is not new. What is new is the scale, speed, and automation of that influence. The truth is that platforms industrialize attention in the same way that factories industrialized production, contradictorily reducing expression into a metric. What begins to dissolve under these conditions is not culture itself, but the time-based processes that once allowed identity to take hold. Earlier cultural systems still moved, changed, and even scaled, but they did so at a pace that people could organically inhabit. Today, cultural material circulates faster than it can be lived through. Trends are encountered, adopted, and replaced before they accumulate meaning through repetition or shared moments. The result is not simply cultural acceleration, but a growing disconnect between how quickly “culture” moves and how slowly identity is actually formed.

Identity Lag, Too Fast to Become

If culture now moves at a speed that outpaces lived experience, the question is no longer whether identity is socially formed, as we already know that it is, but more how a socially formed identity could stabilize in an environment that rarely stays still long enough to live it. This means that the issue is not that people have stopped looking for and caring about meaning. It is that the conditions that once allowed true meaning to form, those being things like time, repetition, and long-term attention, have become increasingly difficult to hold on to in the digital world.

As I’ve mentioned, in earlier cultural environments, this process was unavoidable. One had to actively seek out music, stores, books, or communities. Discovery involved “friction”, and that friction gave choices more weight. Taste formed gradually because exposure itself was gradual. As Kyle Chayka describes in *Filterworld’s* section on *The Disruption of Personal Taste*, cultural engagement once depended on “the slow building of our individual sensibilities”,

shaped through repeated encounters rather than instant responses and reactions to new content (15).

Algorithmic culture interrupts that process. Instead of revising and refining preferences over time, people are continuously presented with new options calculated from predicted engagement. Recommendations do not wait for identity to develop; they anticipate it, simulate it, and feed it back as suggestion. This results in taste becoming something pre-assembled instead of expressed, which is where the so-called lag in identity sets in.

One clear example of identity lag is the rise of instantly recognizable aesthetic categories or “templates” that can be adopted with very little effort. We’ve all heard of “GRWM”, “Day in the Life“, “Van Life”, or the endless variations of “___ core” aesthetics that package identity into easily recognizable formats. To the point that even the voiceovers, humor, and speaking styles influencers use in their videos often sound nearly identical (Fig. 1-3). These are not identities in the anthropological sense discussed earlier; I would personally say they function more like shortcuts that offer the appearance of individuality while in fact being widely tied to a more copy-paste kind of culture. The algorithm reinforces this by grouping users up into behavioral clusters, essentially showing them what people “like them” already engage with. While this might feel personalized, it is actually statistical averaging that significantly narrows down the field of discovery and becomes more of a content loop. Over time, this loop subtly shifts the goals behind participation, and instead of using culture to explore identity, individuals use tacked-on identity to keep up with what’s ‘culturally relevant’ in the moment.



Figure 1 Screenshot of “GRWM Compilation,” Video on YouTube, 2025

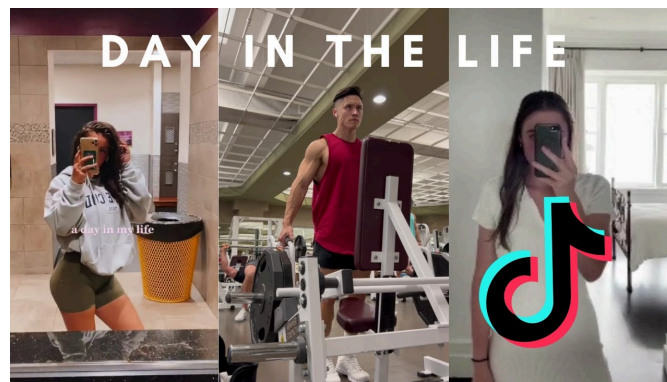


Figure 2 Screenshot of “Day in the Life | TikTok Compilation” Video on YouTube, 2022



Figure 3 Screenshot of “Van Tour | 5+ Years Living on the Road” Video on YouTube, 2024

When every interaction carries the pressure that comes from competing for relevance with the rest of the world, the way people present themselves on social media can begin to feel more like maintenance than self expression. Kyle Chayka also describes how algorithmic environments encourage constant adjustment and adaptation in order to remain visible, which

causes people to have to follow or be nudged to certain preferences that are never fully their own (14). This helps explain a broader cultural unease: the feeling that one is constantly encountering oneself through mirrors built by data instead of human experiences. People may very well consume more “culture” than ever while feeling the least personally connected to it they’ve ever been. Identity, in this context, does not disappear, but it does stall, and becomes caught between the human need for meaning and a technological environment designed for profitable speed (Chyka 6).

Identity for Sale

The cultural condition that is the identity lag did not emerge accidentally. The acceleration of culture has been reinforced, scaled, and monetized for years, turning social media into somewhat of an advertising machine that learned how to profit from the speed and instability of identity.

In *Filterworld*, Kyle Chayka describes how the early internet gradually erased the boundary between self-expression and self-promotion. While posting onto digital platforms was once merely participatory, it quickly became more about visibility, that is, since visibility became measurable, and measurement became profitable (8). Likes, shares, comments, watch time—these are now not just signals of support or appreciation, but behind-the-scenes data points that are turned into advertising value. Thus, what I describe as identity lag in the previous chapter—the inability of individuals to organically adopt cultural signals before they are replaced—turns out to be of high economic value. This is because an identity that never settles is an identity that keeps consuming.

Influencers are often talked about as trendsetters, cultural leaders, curators, etc., but I find that framing to be misleading. Most social media influencers do not generate culture more so than they function as translators between algorithm and audience. Their success depends less on originating taste than on recognizing what the feed rewards and embodying it convincingly. Because they embody what performs well, influencers as a result begin to model a particular

version of life; highly curated, aesthetically fueled, and effortlessly aspirational. Everyday moments are framed as ‘main character’ scenes, homes are staged, coffee is always photogenic, relationships appear polished with the complexity of connection trimmed down to what reads best on camera, and even vulnerability becomes formatted. Advertising integrates seamlessly into this performance. We see skincare products sitting casually on a nightstand. Sponsored outfits appearing mid-vlog as though it were simply part of the day. The goal is not to interrupt life with advertising, but to make advertising look like life.

How do you feel about products being promoted within everyday social media content (such as routines, vlogs, or “day in my life” videos) instead of through traditional advertisements?

48 responses

I actually find it somewhat manipulative because it disguises a commercial interest as a personal moment. As someone who values clear boundaries, I prefer traditional ads where the intent is obvious, rather than having products woven into a kind of "day in the life" video.

It feels as if life is starting to become an advertisement, like in sci-fi movies where ads play in your dreams while you sleep

Figure 4 Diagram of “How do you feel about products being promoted within everyday content?,” Survey on Prolific, 2026.

The result? A subtle romanticization of existence. What performs well is not life in its raw, inconsistent, often uninteresting form, but life edited and filtered for clarity, aspiration, and shearability. This does not necessarily mean influencers are insincere, but it means their presentation is structured by what will reward them and their personal brand. In this way, influencers are not simply selling products, but modeling optimized versions of themselves that will ‘influence’ people into buying the specific lifestyle and all that comes with it (Fig. 4).

This dynamic becomes particularly ironic when placed next to Raymon Williams’ claim discussed in chapter 2 that “culture is ordinary”. For Williams, culture emerged from everyday practices or ordinary life; routines, relationships, and experiences that gradually accumulated meaning within communities (Williams 2). On social media, however, ‘the ordinary’ rarely performs well. What circulates most widely tends to be a version of that appears aestheticized

and aspirational. In this sense, the digital attention economy subtly reshapes cultural visibility, favoring moments that stand out over the mundane routines that culture has historically been grounded in.

In earlier cultural systems, as mentioned, value was shaped by human gatekeepers such as editors, critics, curators, etc. In the digital advertising age, those gatekeepers are replaced by metrics. If a post performs well, it is interpreted as resonant. If it fails, the reach is quietly limited. Over time, creators learn to adjust accordingly, and brands operate under the same logic (Timberg 53). Marketing decisions are increasingly driven by KPIs: click-through rates, engagement percentages, impressions, conversions. Evidently, engagement is much easier to measure than cultural nuance. So, the things that get clicks start to look “authentic”, while anything runs the risk of being lost in the feed. Same as how industrial production favored standardization for efficiency, digital advertising favors standardization for optimal visibility and, therefore, profit.

When visibility becomes the measure of value, identity is pressured to remain visible at all costs. This pressure helps explain why certain types of content dominate feeds. In chapter 3, I touched briefly on how engagement does not distinguish between admiration, humor, relevancy, or outrage. A comment section fueled by anger can register the same as one fueled by agreement because of the fact that intensity is valuable regardless of the emotional triggers behind it. This is why platforms often appear saturated with catastrophic headlines, polarizing commentary, or emotionally charged conflict. The feed prioritizes what keeps attention hooked, and outrage is highly efficient in doing just that. The same dynamic fuels what is often referred to as “rage baiting” or “click baiting”. Some creators intentionally post exaggerated or controversial takes, not because they necessarily believe them deeply, but because they understand this will cause their comment sections to erupt, their shares to multiply, and their visibility to increase (Fig. 5 & 6). In a metric economy, controversy is quite profitable, and I see this as somewhat of a subtle loophole within the system. Just as liking one’s own post artificially increases engagement,

provoking conflict is an artificial amplification of reach because sincerity is not what platforms focus on when evaluating content.



Figure 5 Screenshot of “Rage Bait & Engagement Farming,” Facebook, 2025.



Figure 6 Screenshot of “Why Rage Bait Works,” Facebook, 2025.

This logic extends far beyond individual posts and influencers. It shapes the entire advertising environment. When engagement becomes the primary measure of value, identity itself becomes something that can be adjusted in real time. With cultural signals constantly being tested by the algorithm, what works spreads, while what doesn't fades; meaning that advertising did not create identity lag, but it did make it profitable.

With that said, one thing that I find very interesting and noteworthy is how even within this fast-paced environment, people continue looking for meaning, belonging, and connection. Ultimately, outside of the influencer world, culture has not flattened into one homogenous version of itself. Communities still form. Subcultures still emerge. Movements still take shape in ways that feel lived rather than curated. This suggests that while digital systems can speed up culture, they cannot entirely replace the human process of forming it. It isn't that culture disappears online, but it does circulate in a way that makes it difficult for inherent identities to take root. So, if speed and visibility are not the same as depth, then what actually creates depth? And what happens to culture when the friction that once shaped begins to disappear?

Digital Culture - Everything, Everywhere, All at Once

Digital culture has undeniably expanded access and connectivity. More people can publish, discover, participate, and connect than at any other moment in history. Entire subcultures that once relied on proximity to develop now circulate globally. Obscure genres, niche aesthetics, independent creators... None of them are limited by distribution in the way they once were.

Expansion is real, but it also is not synonymous with formation. In *Filterworld*, Kyle Chyka reflects on what it felt like to step away from algorithmic feeds and rediscover cultural material through slower, more deliberate channels. What he describes is not the disappearance of culture, but the disappearance of the friction that forms it. Without feeds, he had to research, wait, follow threads manually. It was less efficient, but it was also much more *immersive*. The experience of encountering something required effort, and that effort changed the meaning, intention, and lasting impact of what was found. This is the distinction that matters. Visibility can be instant, but formation cannot (51).

As I talked about previously, earlier cultural systems had friction built into the process, shaping culture through material and context accumulating over time. When friction disappears, culture becomes shallow and ambient. Songs auto-play, images refresh, trends appear and

disappear before they can establish a real sense of meaning. Everything is available at once, which means nothing demands commitment or extended attention span. Chayka notes how streaming platforms encourage shorter songs and more immediate hooks, optimizing for skip rates and engagement metrics (54). The structure of the platform subtly reshapes the structure of the art—the concept of art itself being an entirely separate pillar in this subject that would end in the rabbit hole of *value versus mass production*. But, this same logic applies to visual culture, language, and identity signals.

The reality is this: digital systems have expanded cultural access while at the same time diminishing the time required for authentic cultural meaning to develop. We encounter a lot, but inhabit and absorb not even a fraction of the content, ultimately thinning out the actual depth of engagement. This in no way suggests that culture itself is ‘worse’ or ‘different’ than it used to be, especially outside of digital platforms, it just means that the conditions under which it forms have changed. Chayka describes how algorithmic feeds construct an “endless middle”, where adjacent content is similar enough to feel coherent and consistent, but rarely disruptive enough to transform taste (20). That constant overexposure can mistake reflex and habit for personal choice.

Formation—of culture, of taste, of identity, etc., on the other hand, requires resistance, or as I’ve been calling it, friction. Something that takes time to understand and force engagement beyond the average 6-second glance. If friction once shaped identity organically, through scarcity, slowness, and repetition, then could friction be intentionally reintroduced? Not as regression or nostalgia, but as design. Because if identity requires time, then any system that accelerates culture faster than it can be processed or internalized will inevitably produce a lag. And if that lag is structural, then it cannot be solved by individual willpower alone. It requires rethinking how culture is delivered, encountered, and lived.

Designing for Presence in a Networked World

If social friction was what once shaped identity and culture organically, then advertising and design may just be the way to bring some of that back. The goal is not to reject digital platforms. The connectivity they provide is undeniably powerful. More people can participate in cultural conversations than ever before, and ideas can circulate globally in seconds. Thus the issue, as discussed in the previous chapter, is not expansion itself. The issue is that the current digital environment prioritizes circulation at the expense of depth, as digital networks seldom provide the immersive conditions needed for meaning to actually take hold.

This is where experiential design becomes important. Rather than replacing lived experience with digital representation, experiential design creates environments where people can actively participate in a moment. Physical space, sensory interaction, and shared presence introduce a level of human engagement that scrollable, short-form content will never achieve. In *The Experience Economy*, Pine and Gilmore describe these experiences as events that individuals do not simply observe but inhabit, arguing that immersion and participation create stronger emotional and cognitive memory than passive consumption.

Memory is significant because identity forms through moments we resonate with and remember, not just exposure to information. According to Freeman's EventTrack report, immersive brand experiences are significantly more likely to leave lasting impressions and motivate sharing than traditional and digital advertising formats. The key is for participants to not simply see a brand and a call to action, but to encounter the brand within an environment that can easily become part of their own story. What makes experiential design particularly powerful today is that these moments no longer need to remain limited to the location where they occur, because we have digital platforms that allow experiences to travel.

One of my favorite examples of this hybrid structure of experiential design can be seen in BBDO's "Meta Thrillboards" campaign for MetaQuest (Fig. 7). At first glance, the installations appeared to be traditional outdoor posters promoting the headset's VR games. But as visitors

approached, they realized the graphic they were seeing was actually projected onto a wall of water that doubled as an entrance to a physical environment, transforming what looked like a 2D billboard into a fully immersive space. Participants could then move through themed sets inspired by popular franchises like Ghostbusters and The Walking Dead, interacting with props and effects before ultimately trying the Quest 3 headset itself. The design flipped the traditional logic of advertising. Instead of simply showing the product's immersive capabilities, the campaign recreated that immersion in the real world in a way that allowed more people to *live* the brand.



Figure 7 Screenshot of “Meta Thrillboards”, BBDO, 2023

The experience itself then extended beyond the installation through photos, videos, and highlight reels that people could share online. Rather than relying on endless content production and forced reach, the campaign's impact came from the ripple effect of a real multi-sensory moment. Some participants lived the experience, while others encountering it online—such as myself—experienced curiosity, and even the FOMO that came with seeing something they wished could have been a part of.

Instances like these provide a different, and arguably more forward-thinking way of understanding the relationship between experiential design and digital culture. Social media

does not need to function as the place where culture originates. Instead, it can simply operate as the channel through which experiences are shared and amplified across distance. In many ways, this dynamic is also strengthened by the concept of *time* itself. Because experiences like the Meta Thrillboards installation only existed temporarily, they required presence. You just *had to be there* to fully encounter it. That limited availability created a level of attention and excitement that endless digital content would likely never have gotten close to (Fig. 8-10).

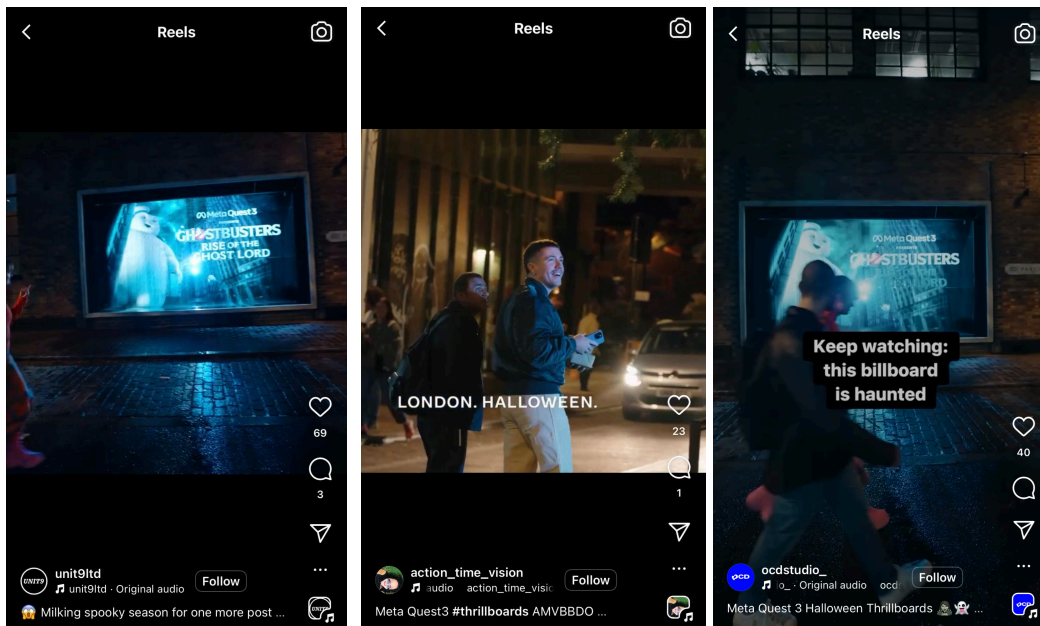


Figure 8 Screenshot of Meta Thrillboard content, Instagram, 2023
Figure 9 Screenshot of Meta Thrillboard content, Instagram, 2023
Figure 10 Screenshot of Meta Thrillboard content, Instagram, 2023

It is worth distinguishing this kind of scarcity from the type that many brands attempt to manufacture online. In digital culture, “limited availability” is often used as a tactic to generate hype around products that trend briefly before disappearing altogether. The exclusivity, in that sense, becomes performative; essentially a signal that someone was able to obtain something others could not. Experiential scarcity, on the other hand, functions differently. When something memorable exists for only a short moment in time, the impact does not come from ownership, but from participation. The fact that it no longer exists does not diminish its value either; if anything, it heightens curiosity around it and the brand itself. What spreads online in

these cases is not simply the want to possess something others do not, but the story of having witnessed—or missed out on—something meaningful and unique.

It is evident that technology can play a significant role in the expansion of what these experiences can look like. Experientiality today is not limited to physical installations or live events. Augmented reality, virtual environment, interactive platforms, and networked installations all create opportunities for immersive encounters that blend physical and digital presence for maximum impact. So, what matters most is not necessarily the medium itself, but the degree of participation it invites. Experiences that require time, effort, or presence naturally carry more weight than content that is always available and endlessly scrollable. Therefore, it becomes clear that designing for presence in a networked world requires prioritizing memory over metrics. Metrics measure visibility, but memory is what measures real impact. And interestingly, when experiences are designed for memory, the desire to share and engage often follows naturally as people love to document what they find meaningful, unique, or emotionally resonant.

This ultimately generates a hybrid model of cultural formation, where experiences create the moments where meaning forms, and digital networks then allow those moments to reach a much wider audience, inspire participation and inspiration elsewhere, and thus accumulate real cultural significance. Not to say that culture needs to slow down in order to regain depth. But it may need intentional moments where people can stop long enough to actually live inside it—and experiential design offers powerful ways to create those moments.

Conclusion

The identity lag described throughout this thesis should in no way be interpreted as cultural failure or downgrade. We can more accurately perceive it as a transitional phase. Every major technological shift has always reshaped how culture comes, travels, and stabilizes over time. Industrialization reorganized production and media expanded distribution. Digital networks have now accelerated circulation to a scale and speed that previous culture systems

were never built to absorb. Knowing how evolution and innovation naturally occur, I truly believe that what we are experiencing is not the disappearance of identity, but a temporary imbalance between the speed at which culture moves and the slower processes through which meaning is actually formed.

It is certainly encouraging that signs of adaptation are already visible. Younger generations, particularly Gen Alpha and young Gen Z, appear increasingly drawn to participatory and tactile forms of engagement. Lots of creative platforms often emphasize making over simply consuming, communities gather around shared hobbies and niche interests, and digital spaces are often used to organize in-person activities and collaborative experiences. Instead of rejecting technology, these patterns suggest a growing desire to interact with it in ways that feel more active, social, and human (Rubin).

This shift also hints at an important fact: technology is not going anywhere. Instead, the future of culture will likely involve technology paired with more international opportunities for lived experience. Digital platforms are such powerful tools for communication, but they are the most meaningful when they are used to extend moments of real human connection. When experiences come first and circulation follows, digital platforms actually amplify meaning instead of replacing it. In this case, experiential design represents more than a marketing strategy. It offers a framework for real impact in how culture might regain depth within highly networked digital environments. By creating these moments that require presence, interaction, and memory, designers and brands have the opportunity to reintroduce the kinds of friction that historically allowed identity and cultural meaning to latch on. As I previously stated, these moments do not slow culture down, but they allow people to evolve alongside it.

All in all, culture has always adapted to new technological conditions. The difference today is that the systems shaping culture are no longer emerging slowly or quietly—quite the opposite. They are designed and optimized in real time. Because of that, adaptation may no

longer be something that happens organically over decades, which means it will require more conscious design choices addressing how experiences are created, shared, and remembered.

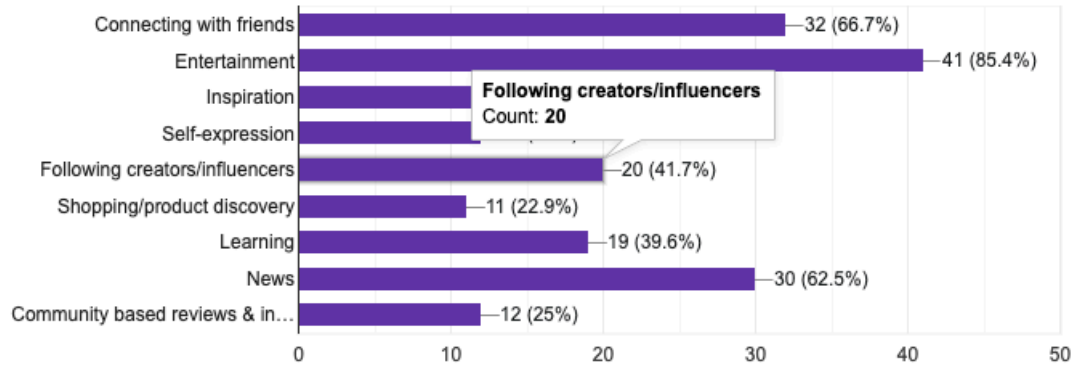
If identity lag reflects a moment where culture has outrun the spaces that once allowed it to form, then the task moving forward is to use every advantage provided by technology to design environments where true connection and meaning have room to develop again. The tools already exist, so what remains is deciding how intentionally we choose to use them.

Appendix

What do you mostly use social media for? (Check all that apply)

[Copy chart](#)

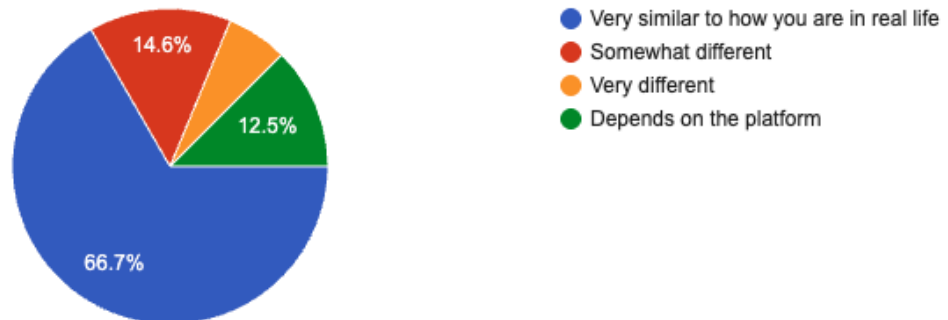
48 responses



Do you feel the way you present yourself online is:

[Copy chart](#)

48 responses



If your above answer was "somewhat different", "very different" or "depends", what tends to change the most?

48 responses

N/A

n/a

Since my online self-presentation is very similar to how I am in real life, there isn't much that changes. If anything, I might share only certain aspects of my life more selectively, but my personality and values stay the same.

More confident in the way i present myself

n\ a

none

I do not use social media in a way that I present myself, i tend to use it to access information or news

Im more sociable in real life.

If your above answer was "somewhat different", "very different" or "depends", what tends to change the most?

48 responses

The intension, purpose, or objective of using that platform.

I would say I present myself in a similar manner. I may choose to not share certain beliefs or actions

I answer very similar to how i am in real life

Some platforms I try to be more polite and professional because I have my coworkers and family there, in other ones I can be more extrovert because I am with my friends.

I wouldn't change a thing.

Slightly more confident online

How vulnerable I am about certain topics or facets of myself.

I don't want my real life to be display online

What type of content it is

If your above answer was "somewhat different", "very different" or "depends", what tends to change the most?

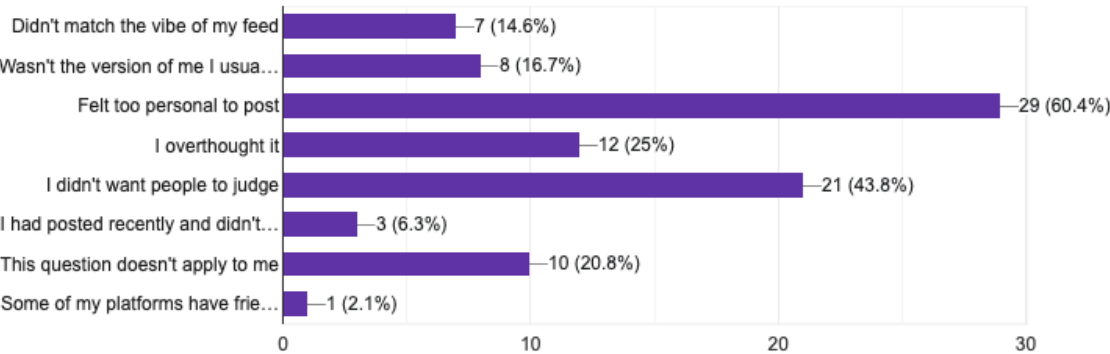
48 responses

How much I socialize
it was very similar
I answered "very different" because on social media I usually limit what I share or write to simple descriptions of what I post, or sometimes I even just share it without any description at all. While I often feel like I want to share more, I think too much about how my followers will see it and I hold back.
I am much quieter and less conversative in real life than I am on social media.
Nothing
In my case, I think what changes most is the level of personal detail; I strictly separate my private life from my actual digital presence. In fact, while I might be open in person, online I do try to maintain a high degree of anonymity, sharing only interests or professional information while keeping my face, location, and personal struggles entirely off-limits.

Have you ever decided not to post something because it didn't feel like it fit how you usually present yourself online? If so, what influenced that decision? (Check all that apply)

 [Copy chart](#)

48 responses



What kinds of advertising trends or tactics do you notice most on social media, if any?

48 responses

Short-form videos/reels.

I mostly notice influencer and sponsored content, especially ads that are integrated into posts or stories so they feel more "authentic" than traditional advertising. I also notice a lot of personalized ads based on my interests and previous searches, as well as short video ads that follow current trends or aesthetics.

Mainly clothing products with big discounts

The one where the brand pretends to be a person in the comments

Quite repetitive posting of similar adverts, and adverts that look like scams

wide appeal ads to catch the most eyes, emotional persuasion tactics, more hedonic product offerings than utilitarian

AI slop advertisements, I have seen many

Beauty routines

What kinds of advertising trends or tactics do you notice most on social media, if any?

48 responses

Getting popular people to try products that they obviously really do not like.

Highly targeted algorithm-based methods that factor in user demographics

reviews from other people

I notice lots of click bait articles with catchy titles.

the couple challenges

I notice that a lot of people use AI influencers now to advertise

Fast paced videos

influencer marketing

In the last years a lot of Bets, like 70%, the other are Beer's and shopping.

What kinds of advertising trends or tactics do you notice most on social media, if any?

48 responses

online betting

AI slop feels disgustingly prevalent

I don't particularly notice many.

Marketing and events

It comes in trends and then vanishes quickly. Like those frog keychains that were popular for like 3 weeks

none

Friend like conversations, less polished adverts

Health supplements and investing ads.

Short videos/reels.

What kinds of advertising trends or tactics do you notice most on social media, if any?

48 responses

Use of generative AI.

N/A

I see recently searched products appear in my feed more often than others

The most common thing, or what I see most frequently, are reels or tiktoks that, imitating memes or funny videos, introduce the presentation of their products and/or services.

I noted a lot of personalized ads and influencer promotions

I see ads for products related to searches I conducted recently

advertising brands usually pay social media influencers or youtubers to insert an ad segment into a video

It is sometimes evident that many people copy others who have created some kind of viral content.

I'm actually very aware of data-tracking and retargeting ads that follow my browsing habits. I must admit I

What kinds of advertising trends or tactics do you notice most on social media, if any?

48 responses

I'm actually very aware of data-tracking and retargeting ads that follow my browsing habits. I must admit I also notice how brands now use "relatable" influencers to bypass our natural skepticism toward traditional ads, trying to make a sale feel more like a friendly suggestion.

Skincare

Reels, IA

AI integrated content

Really aggressive shilling of a product like it's the best thing I've ever seen.

I notice ads that are disguised to not look like ads. They use hyper emotional language to, what I assume, is to hold people's attention for as long as possible.

influencers demonstrating the product/service

If I search for an item my ad feed will become all about that item which I don't appreciate.

What kinds of advertising trends or tactics do you notice most on social media, if any?

48 responses

AI integrated content

Really aggressive shilling of a product like it's the best thing I've ever seen.

I notice ads that are disguised to not look like ads. They use hyper emotional language to, what I assume, is to hold people's attention for as long as possible.

influencers demonstrating the product/service

If I search for an item my ad feed will become all about that item which I don't appreciate.

There are more and more ads or sponsored posts, and less of my feed is people I actually follow and want to see updates for. It has caused me to spend a lot less time on social media because I don't like having to wade through all the ads and sponsored posts.

trends

Have you ever bought something mainly because it was trending? If yes, can you give an example?

48 responses

No
No.
Yes, a hand grip exerciser.
none
Not really. I usually notice trends, but I don't often buy products just because they are popular unless I already needed or liked them.
no
No, never.
N/A
Not unless it was something I was looking for anyway now. not a follower of popularity

Have you ever bought something mainly because it was trending? If yes, can you give an example?

48 responses

Not unless it was something I was looking for anyway now, not a follower of popularity
Not that I can think of
I have bought clothing by a brand that was trending for resale purposes
Yes I bought a stanley cup
Yes, makeup products
No, I don't.
Yes, I bought a phone that was being praised as the best in the market
Yes, said frog keychain
No example

Have you ever bought something mainly because it was trending? If yes, can you give an example?

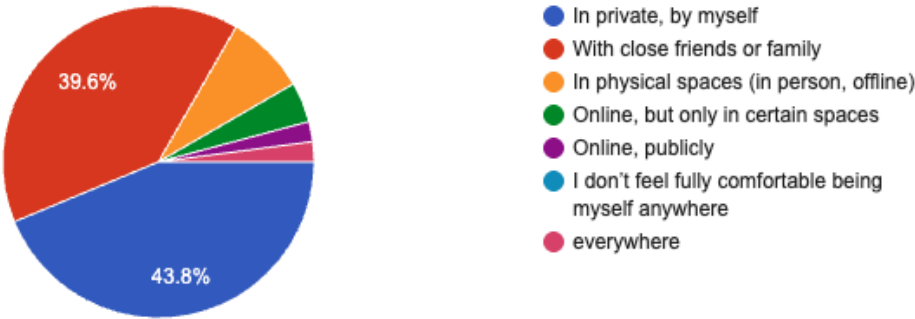
48 responses

Not really, only thing I can think of is the fidget spinner.
Yes, hand grip exerciser.
Yes, Mascara that was trending on facebook
While I don't think I've done it often, I have. A long time ago, when Blackberry phones were all the rage, I bought one. More recently, I could also mention the Stanley thermos and brands that became popular in my country, like The North Face, and since everyone around me had one, I bought one too.
I have bought hair products to try because of their incredible results.
no im not interested in things purely because of trends. I buy things I need.
Yes, I once bought a specific brand of minimalist sneakers because I saw them in every "outfit of the day" video out on Tiktok. I actually felt that owning them would make me part of that specific aesthetic or community.

Where do you feel most comfortable being yourself?

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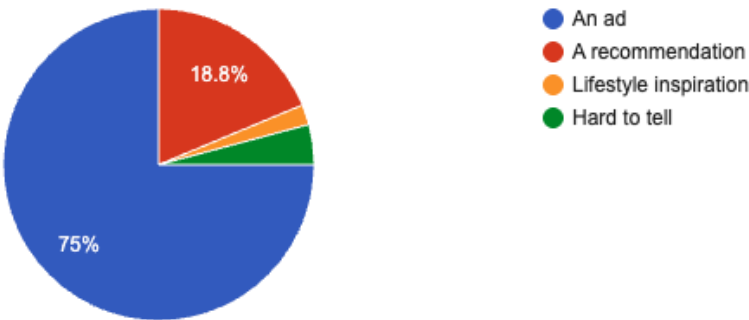
48 responses



When influencers promote products, it feels more like:

 Copy chart

48 responses



How do you feel about products being promoted within everyday social media content (such as routines, vlogs, or “day in my life” videos) instead of through traditional advertisements?

48 responses

I don't like it. Normally influencers don't care about the product quality, only about their payment
I don't like it. It makes the influencer feel fake.
I think it is just how it works in order to access or use social media platforms for free
Clouds the appeal. How you feel about the promoter vastly influences sales probability.
I prefer real use of the product or service.
Overwhelmed
I think it is a great way to really explore new products.
It doesn't speak to me any more than a commercial or ad to be honest. I don't know who this person is so they might as well be a random person on a commercial break tv ad.

How do you feel about products being promoted within everyday social media content (such as routines, vlogs, or "day in my life" videos) instead of through traditional advertisements?

48 responses

It doesn't speak to me any more than a commercial or ad to be honest. I don't know who this person is so they might as well be a random person on a commercial break tv ad.

It boosts the sales of the product.

I think it can be an effective medium to use since so many people are using social media. I so wonder about the influencer being paid.

routines and vlogs

I think it makes it more personal and more suited to your wants to buy something

It makes me less likely to buy them.

I am fine with it as long as its a disclosed advertisement

I think its more natural, if the influencer use the product in his everyday It can be more easy to tell how that product can change someones routine.

How do you feel about products being promoted within everyday social media content (such as routines, vlogs, or "day in my life" videos) instead of through traditional advertisements?

48 responses

shit

Feels the same as an ad, just more contrived

Somewhat uncomfortable and that it has the potential to be misleading.

I see the products being promoted as ads and click baits.

I get it but I think it's gross

I do not think it's ethical.

Annoying

I think it is annoying because it isn't as transparent as it should be.

Forced, annoying.

How do you feel about products being promoted within everyday social media content (such as routines, vlogs, or “day in my life” videos) instead of through traditional advertisements?

48 responses

Preferable. Feels more genuine.

If they are really using them, I could be more interested in the product

i dont usually pay attention

In my case, I'm not interested or I find it boring to know what an influencer does on a typical day, so I generally avoid watching that type of content.

it is natural but sometimes it is hard to see whether it is rel recommendation or just marketing.

I don't like it because it diminishes my trust in the influencer.

It makes the content feel fake, not genuine.

Just the same, it simply changes who promotes it

I actually find it somewhat manipulative because it disguises a commercial interest as a personal moment.

How do you feel about products being promoted within everyday social media content (such as routines, vlogs, or “day in my life” videos) instead of through traditional advertisements?

48 responses

I actually find it somewhat manipulative because it disguises a commercial interest as a personal moment. As someone who values clear boundaries, I prefer traditional ads where the intent is obvious, rather than having products woven into a kind of “day in the life” video.

It feels as if life is starting to become an advertisement, like in sci-fi movies where ads play in your dreams while you sleep

I don't have an opinion on this, but I think it's good and easy to access

I think it can be good. When someone who is appealing and down-to-earth, it is easy to connect to them and accept their recommendations.

I'd prefer they bought it because they like the product, rather than having a sponsor.

I feel bad about it. It feels unethical to me and shows the degeneration of society.

I'm fine with it, it's just the world evolving

Have you ever experienced (or seen online) a brand event, campaign, or interactive experience that really stuck with you? If so, what was it?

48 responses

No
Yes, for a game.
No.
none
Yes, I've seen pop-up events and interactive campaigns shared on social media that felt immersive and engaging, especially when they encouraged participation rather than just promotion.
No never
no
No, I try to avoid it if possible.

Have you ever experienced (or seen online) a brand event, campaign, or interactive experience that really stuck with you? If so, what was it?

48 responses

Am more drawn to local interest. Useful product promotion or games or challenge type offerings are more appealing.
Nothing remarkable to remember.
I tend to remember ads that incorporate intense and real or vivid imagery (ex: interactive(ish)/VR ads where you turn your phone sideways and ride the drone through the sky or swim underwater)
The anthropic super bowl commercial poking fun at openai for adding ads to chatgpt stuck in my head. It's really funny and witty and demonstrates the ludicry of it.
noo
Yes, it was the glasses try on that was able to be done through VR
Not that I can think of
I dont remember right now, but if it happend probably it was about a sport thing.

Have you ever experienced (or seen online) a brand event, campaign, or interactive experience that really stuck with you? If so, what was it?

48 responses

Yes, the Halloween brand event was interactive and it stuck with me because it promoted what I wanted to see.

Not that I can recall

No example

Not really

no, not something that really stuck with me

I don't recall ever having seen or participated in this type of campaign.

no, they all feel like ads or marketing gimmicks.

I cant recall anything that has stuck with me.

I remember the Spotify Wrapped campaigns every year. It's a great example of how a brand uses personal

Have you ever experienced (or seen online) a brand event, campaign, or interactive experience that really stuck with you? If so, what was it?

48 responses

I remember the Spotify Wrapped campaigns every year. It's a great example of how a brand uses personal data to create a shareable, "cool" digital identity that people actually want to post about on their own feeds.

I don't remember anything specifically that struck me

Yes, Ulta. I was suckered in to trying to purchase tickets for the 2026 Ulta Beauty World Convention in Orlando. I actually thought I would be successful with securing tickets.

None I can think of.

I saw a live Ubiquiti brand event where they released their next line of products. The products all felt very futuristic and the upgrade from the previous generation was massive. It was something that I was not expecting.

Not that I can recall

None, I can't remember any.

If social media suddenly disappeared, what emotions or reactions do you think you might experience, if any?

48 responses

Relief

Surprised.

I'd probably feel a mix of curiosity and slight discomfort at first, but also some relief from constant notifications and comparisons. Over time, I think I'd adjust quite well.

Wouldn't have an impact on me

I would feel sad

I think it would be harder to access bias free news at first, but then we might start to communicate more in person again, so it would be positive overall.

I would greatly miss the entertainment value, surprise and loss of connection would also factor.

I would be surprised if that happened, I think I will be happy.

If social media suddenly disappeared, what emotions or reactions do you think you might experience, if any?

48 responses

I would be happy. People spend too much time on it.

I think it would be mixed because I'd lose meaningful personal connections (sometimes the old friend from awhile back is only connected to you through social media)— but I have full confidence that we would push to become more actually social like the days before social media.

I think it might make you feel disconnected to the society, and you wouldn't know what is happening outside your surroundings.

I would feel a void. Scrolling social media is part of my daily routine. I find it comforting

i will be very sad and confused

I would be devastated and scared it would mean I can't connect with people anymore

It would be a relief. I don't like social media.

At first probably anxiety but honestly it might be better if it did go away.

If social media suddenly disappeared, what emotions or reactions do you think you might experience, if any?

48 responses

Surprise and maybe empty for a little time, In my country the president blocked X (Twitter) for a few months and I feel empty and lost, because I use this platform to know the news around the world.

happiness

I'd be distressed

I believe initial distress - I use certain facets of social media as a 'diary' almost, or a community to find others like me - and sadness, but I also think it would be short-lived.

My world would somehow turn into an empty shell; I will always feel I miss something

Oh man that would be great lol

I would not care.

I would be sad and feel lonely.

If social media suddenly disappeared, what emotions or reactions do you think you might experience, if any?

48 responses

Surprise.

Relief.

Boredom

sad missing out on overseas family photos

Perhaps it's anxiety, given that social media is already part of my daily life. I feel that I would need a lot of time to adjust to its disappearance.

I might feel a little disconnected but also more focused and less distracted.

Sad and disconnected

A complete disconnect from the world. I do not leave my house much and interact with the world and get most of my information through social media.

If social media suddenly disappeared, what emotions or reactions do you think you might experience, if any?

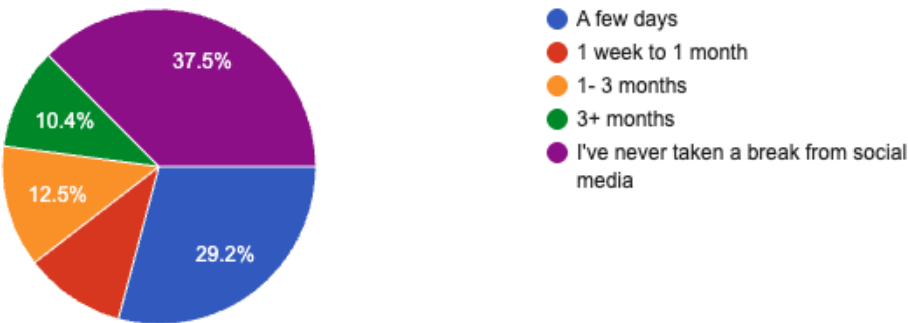
48 responses

- I don't really know. I'll probably miss some of it, but I'm not sure
- I would probably feel a bit of FOMO and social isolation at first, like I'm missing out on a global conversation. However, I actually think that would eventually turn into a sense of relief and a much better attention span in my daily life after all.
- Relax
- Today, social networks are part of our lives... I think the feeling would be as if the internet itself had ended.
- First, I would probably have strong symptoms of withdrawal. However, with what I have learned, I would probably use my gained time for self improvement.
- Dang, good thing I've got their phone numbers, lol
- I would feel relief. I think social media is a massive evil upon society and really causes so many of society's problems.

Have you ever taken a break from social media because it felt overwhelming? If so, how long?

 [Copy chart](#)

48 responses



Do you feel social media makes it easier, harder, or no different for people to express their individuality? Why?

47 responses

Easier, for sure.

It makes it both easier and harder. Social media offers tools for self-expression, but trends and social pressure can limit how different people feel comfortable being.

Harder because most people compare themselves online and want to be like someone else. Their individuality disappears

I think it makes it easier. You can be anyone on the internet with no one judging you.

It is more judgemental online, or more difficult to express yourself without being judged.

I think it is the ideal platform to get to really know individuals, if they use the opportunities of expression.

Harder, today social media is streamlined and homogeneous.

Harder, because there is not much respect

Do you feel social media makes it easier, harder, or no different for people to express their individuality? Why?

47 responses

Both. Sometimes it's the only platform people can use to express themselves at all and their uniqueness. Other times it feels like people hop on a trend and create content for views with no real originality or meaning.

Since you can add visuals and music when posting pictures or videos, I think it has its own advantages of showing your individuality, and deliver the message that you want to inform to people.

I think overall social media has made it easier for people to share their individuality because they can be anonymous

it's depended

I think it makes it easier as you can do it from your own home and you can be less scared to express opinion because you can close phone whenever you feel overwhelmed

It makes it easier to deceive others through social media content.

No different

Do you feel social media makes it easier, harder, or no different for people to express their individuality? Why?

47 responses

Depends, actually harder, with the "cancel" culture it feels really hard to express feelings without have fear about someone cancels you.

They make it easier, as it's a practical way to show off your ego.

Easier in some ways, harder in others. It's easier to curate a version of your self, but harder to be authentic.

Social media makes it easier for some people to express their individuality because they really don't need to be their real self on social media so there's less judgement.

Much harder. Most stuff is the best version of a person, so they're not individual or real at all

It makes no difference for me.

Harder, because there is a lot of comparison that prohibits individuality

Do you feel social media makes it easier, harder, or no different for people to express their individuality? Why?

47 responses

It depends but I do think it makes certain people more extreme in some ways.

It makes it easier to curate how you want to be perceived.

Easier, since they have a certain degree of anonymity

easier through the many different groups available

Today, I feel that social media both facilitates and hinders self-expression.

In some cases, I know people who, in real life, are unable to express themselves or give their opinion, yet on social media they display a confidence and composure they lack in person.

I also feel that online violence has increased excessively, and that simply expressing a political opinion or even commenting on a TV show can lead to attacks, so one ends up limiting oneself to saying nothing.

Easier, since people can share their opinions and personality freely.

It is easier to express their individuality because all views and opinions have their space in social media.

Do you feel social media makes it easier, harder, or no different for people to express their individuality? Why?

47 responses

Makes it much easier. It feels safer to be yourself behind a computer screen. Without anyone physically around you.

Just different, you simply have to emphasize certain traits that you know or believe connect better with people.

In my opinion, it makes it harder because even though we have all the tools to be unique, the algorithm rewards conformity. People end up copying the same "aesthetic" or using the same trending audios just to be seen, which leads to a sea of content that all looks the same.

Harder. They are trying to fit into society's norms

It depends on the person, it's hard to say. In my case, it's a facilitator.

I think it has made it easier for cowards and bullies to express themselves without fear of consequences or repercussions.

Do you feel social media makes it easier, harder, or no different for people to express their individuality? Why?

47 responses

It depends, because some people like pretending to be their ideal selves, while others just put themselves out there.

I think it makes it easier for people to express their individuality but it makes that individuality worth much less than it otherwise would be. It feels like its mostly people yelling into the void.

Easier for those who feel most comfortable online.

Harder because people judge too much these days and people are too quick to criticize.

I think it depends on the person. For some, it's a creative outlet. For others, it makes people feel like they need to conform to expectations when they post.

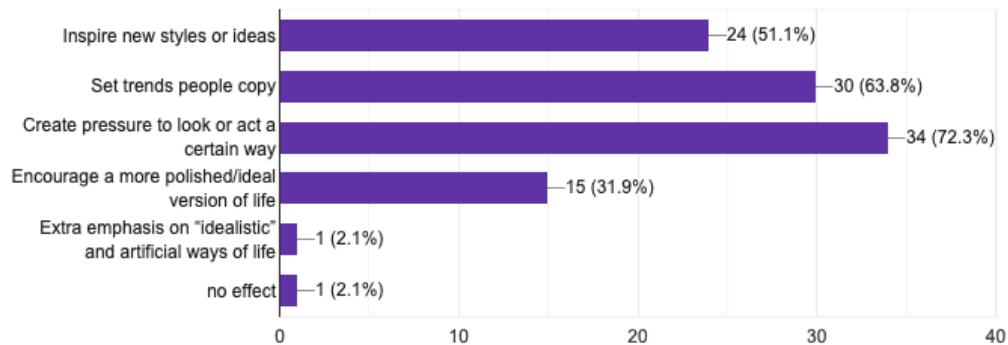
harder

Easier, especially for people who differ from the norm. It allows people who have interests that are not super mainstream to find their peers.

How do you think brands or influencers affect the way people present themselves on social media? (Check all that apply)

[Copy chart](#)

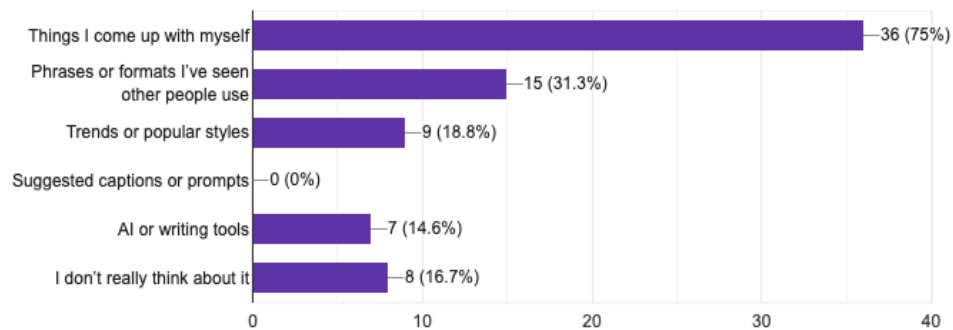
47 responses



When you write captions, bios, or posts online, where do you usually get inspiration from? (Check all that apply)

[Copy chart](#)

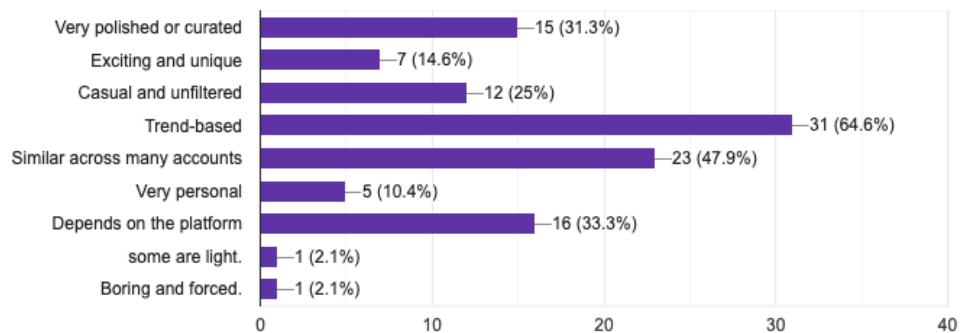
48 responses



How would you describe the overall tone or style of most content you see on social media today? (Check all that apply)

[Copy chart](#)

48 responses



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