



# The Business of Comments:

How Comments Influence Trust, Revenue, and AI Discovery



# In this report

Introduction	2
Letter from the CEO	4
<b>PILLAR 1</b>	
Brand Safety	5
<b>PILLAR 2</b>	
Cultural Relevancy	13
<b>PILLAR 3</b>	
Community Engagement	16
<b>PILLAR 4</b>	
AI + Discovery	21
<b>PLAYBOOK</b>	
New Era of Social Engagement	24
Methodology	27
About Respondology	27



# Why Comment Strategy Is Now a Growth and Revenue Lever

## Discovery has changed.

Consumers crowdsource your brand in public comment sections before they click your ad or visit your site. Increasingly, AI tools summarize those conversations as “what the internet thinks.”

The findings in this report are drawn from 168.8 million comments reviewed across millions of social media posts in 2025. Since our founding, Respondology has processed over 1 trillion OpenAI tokens of comment data across hundreds of the world's leading brands, making this one of the most comprehensive looks at social comment behavior available today.

## The Risk

- Spam and bots account for 41.8% of all hidden comments; 1 in 10 contains an active fraud or piracy attempt targeting your audience
- 20% of comments contain spam, bots, and abuse
- Paid media is nearly 2x more toxic than organic; spam, piracy, and bot comments drive conversion and CTR down by 14.7% and 11.3%, respectively
- Only 3.5% of comments get a response from brands
- 47% of consumers associate toxic comments with the brand itself
- 67% of comments happen outside of 9-5

For retail brands, nearly 6 in 10 spam comments link to counterfeit or knockoff seller sites. For sports brands, the majority are ticketing scams and illegal streaming links. Spam and bots don't just damage brand perception, they actively defraud the audiences brands have spent years building. Comment sections are shaping brand perception, whether managed or not.

## The Revenue Opportunity

**78%**

more likely to purchase after a positive brand interaction

**26.4%**

cumulative lift in total sentiment from month 1 to month 12

with an average 2.2% increase per month over the first year of moderation

**68%**

of consumers review a comment prior to making a decision to purchase

Trust, performance, and revenue are directly influenced by what happens below your posts.



# The Executive Imperative: What This Looks Like in Practice

## Winning brands:

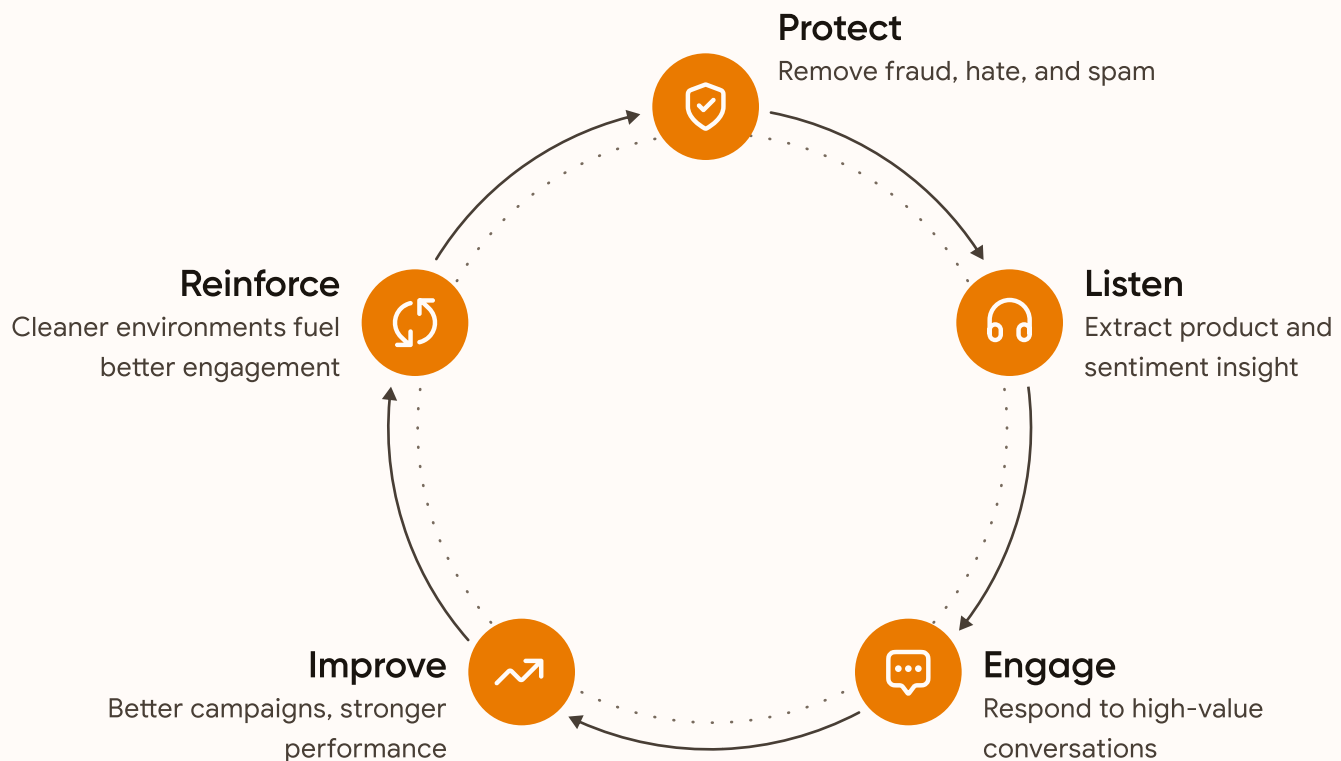
- Automate moderation to protect paid and organic content 24/7
- Prioritize paid comment environments where risk is highest
- Route high-intent comments for response first (purchase intent, product questions)
- Audit how AI systems summarize their brand quarterly
- Use comment data to inform campaign, product, and creative decisions

These strategies mean less work and better systems.

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## The Comment Flywheel

Each step strengthens the next, leading to a safe and engaged community.



# Letter from the CEO

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Historically, social media has been the Wild West—overrun by hate speech, brand attacks, and bots.

At the same time, marketing teams are asked to manage this chaos using manual processes and legacy, seat-based software that simply cannot keep pace with the speed and scale of modern social platforms. This has left brands in a defensive, survival mode posture, hoping to avoid brand damage and/or a PR crisis while simply gathering as many followers and likes as possible.

AI technology is changing all of that, particularly in the comment sections. Brands around the world are converting what was once a chaotic, reactive space into a place of respect, business intelligence, commerce, and utility. Social operations are no longer overworked cost centers but efficient, measurable revenue centers where technology does the work, freeing up teams to focus on content, creativity, and authentic connections with their communities.

In this report, you'll find the data, insights, and playbook to do the same. Learn and act on it, and you will also enjoy harvesting the immense, untapped value of the world's largest communication channel. This is your business case to turn comment streams into a strategic asset for your brand.

All the best,



**Erik Swain**

CEO & CO-FOUNDER, RESPONDOLOGY

# Toxic Comments Get Attributed to Your Brand

Across the 168.8 million total comments reviewed this year, the math is brutal: risk doesn't follow your schedule.

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Behind that figure sits 7.6 million protected posts, with 6.2 million brand new this year. The rest is legacy content that still attracts conversation, because social doesn't stop when campaigns end. Every single one of those comments represents a moment where your brand is being evaluated in real time by potential customers or fans.

"The brands we work with tell us their comment sections went from a liability to an engaging community. They can show up fearlessly with their content in social knowing the spam and toxicity is handled."



**Amy Nutting**

SR. DIRECTOR OF CLIENT SUCCESS & ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT, RESPONDOLGY

So, how do brands protect themselves when discovery happens in public?

As consumers scroll, compare, and evaluate, the comment section becomes part of the brand experience.

Discovery happens in real time, publicly, and at scale. This changes the operational reality for brands. Conversations move faster than manual workflows can keep up with, outpacing traditional social media tools that weren't built for this reality. Keyword filters miss context, sarcasm, and evolving language. And because social never pauses, risk doesn't either.

Managing comments effectively is no longer just about community hygiene. It's about keeping pace with how people discover, assess, and form opinions about brands today.

# The Moderation Breakdown

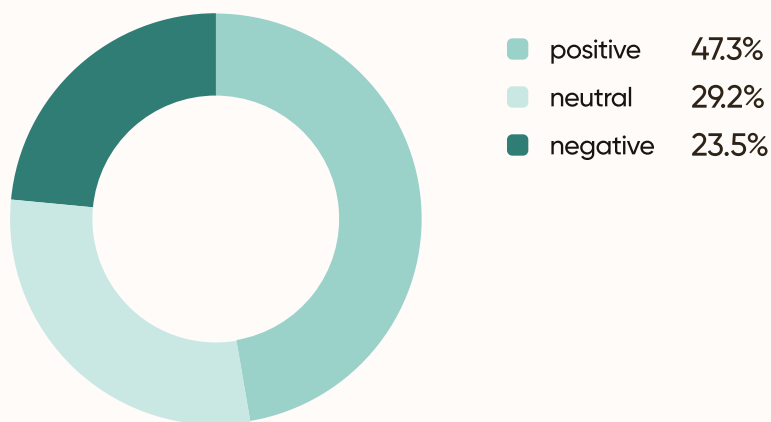
The sentiment picture across comment sections reveals a real gap between what's there and what audiences experience. On average, total comment sentiment sits at 60 out of 100. Fewer than half of all comments (47.3%) register as positive, and nearly 1 in 4 (23.5%) carry some form of negativity. For media brands, the baseline is starker: an average total sentiment of 50, meaning the raw comment environment trends neutral to negative before any action is taken. That's the environment people navigate when they arrive at a brand's posts.

The distance between that baseline and what audiences see is where the stakes come into focus. When the content that depresses sentiment is removed, visible sentiment rises to an average of 74 out of 100, a **22.1% improvement**. That's the difference between a neutral environment and one that feels trustworthy. Among media brands, the gap is wider still, with visible sentiment improving by 30.1%. Retail brands reach an average visible sentiment of 80. Moderation changes the shape of the environment audiences experience, not just what gets removed from it.

## Impact of moderation on visible sentiment



## Comment sentiment breakdown



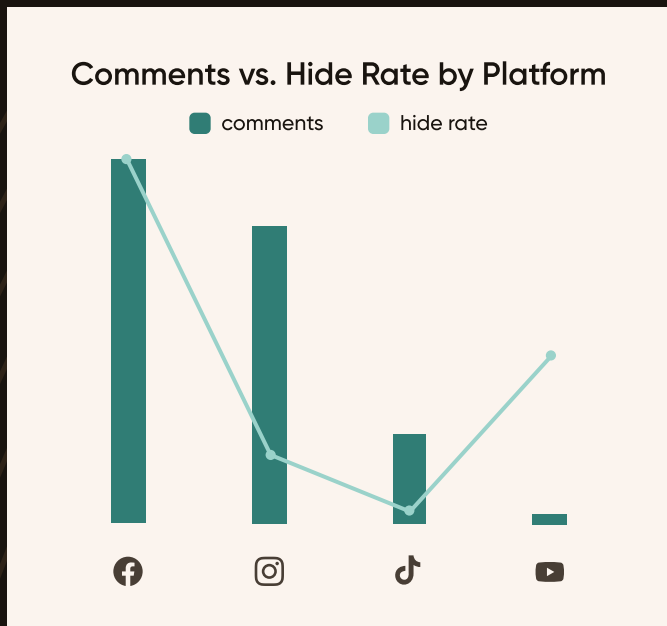
# Platform Shifts and the Toxicity Migration

Here's a trend worth watching: Meta platforms still account for 85% of all comment volume. Out of 168.8 million comments we reviewed this year, Facebook alone generated 78.2 million comments - the single largest source representing 46.3% of all comments.

This shows that, though Facebook is often publicly viewed as an “old school” social media platform, ignoring it isn’t an option.

However, Meta's dominance is eroding. Comment share across Meta platforms dropped 22% year-over-year. Meanwhile, TikTok exploded with 179% growth. YouTube climbed 15.5%. The attention is fragmenting, and with it, the moderation challenge is spreading across a more complex ecosystem.

	Facebook	Instagram	TikTok	YouTube
comments reviewed	78.2m	64.5m	20.3m	3.3m
hide rate organic	25.2% <span>+26.8% YoY</span>	15.2% <span>+33% YoY</span>	13.3% <span>-17.9% YoY</span>	18.7% <span>+28.4% YoY</span>



Notice the year-over-year changes. Meta platform hide rates climbed 27.3% collectively, and this timing isn't coincidental. Meta announced significant rollbacks to native moderation at the beginning of 2025, meaning the responsibility for keeping comment sections safe has shifted decisively to brands themselves.

Comparatively, TikTok tells a different story. Organic TikTok maintains the lowest hide rate of any major platform, and that rate has dropped year-over-year. This shows that when moderation strategies align with platform culture, healthier engagement follows.

# The Paid Social Risk Premium

Respondology found that **paid social comments are nearly twice as toxic as organic**, a key find that should redirect budget conversations.

TikTok Ads and Meta Ads ranked as the most toxic environments in 2025, with hide rates of 38.4% and 34.1%, respectively. This is where brands pour money to drive awareness, consideration, and conversion, and yet, paid placements account for just 1.5–2% of total comment volume. Relative to organic, paid comment volume is low, as ads don't live in a user's feed the way organic posts do. The window to comment is brief, and there's rarely a way back to it.

However, despite being low volume, these comments have a disproportionately large impact on ad performance and require real-time management. Every impression of the ad while spam and hate-filled comments remain visible inhibits performance. In short, every dollar you spend driving traffic to an ad also drives traffic to whatever unwanted content accumulates beneath it.

## Paid social comments are:

1.9x

more toxic than organic

<2%

of total comment volume

We analyzed \$647.6 million in paid spend across Meta and TikTok in 2025. **The average social account spends \$9,200 per month per ad account.**

November and December spike 60.2% higher than any other period; holiday campaigns, Black Friday pushes, year-end promotions. Peak investment collided with peak risk.

## Here's what the correlation data reveals about what spend actually buys:

impressions

0.95

clicks

0.89

ROAS

0.78

CTR

0.65

CPM

0.87

CPC

0.04

CAC

-0.40

## BRAND SAFETY

Spend correlates almost perfectly with impressions and clicks. You're quite literally buying attention. But the relationship weakens dramatically when you look at efficiency metrics, and essentially disappears for CPC. Money buys views and impressions, but it doesn't automatically buy trust, conversions, or healthy engagement.

**The gap between attention and conversion is where moderation enters the ROI conversation.** The trust breakdown happens in the space between the click and the purchase, and toxic comment sections are often the culprit.

### What spend buys

- impressions
- clicks
- attention

### What spend doesn't guarantee

- trust
- conversion efficiency
- healthy engagement

## 2025 Paid Media Statistics

2.1x

ROAS

7%+

ROAS on Meta

17%+

ROAS on TikTok

\$1.3B

in ad spend across 96 brands

Industry performance varies wildly. Retail commands 63.7% of all paid spend and enjoys a 29% lower CAC (\$25.40) than average. Food and Beverage, meanwhile, struggles with a 33.3% lower ROAS and 54.8% higher CAC, inefficiencies that unmanaged comment sections only compound.

"We can see in real time with statistical confidence where toxicity concentrates, how sentiment shifts with moderation, and which platforms are becoming more or less risky."



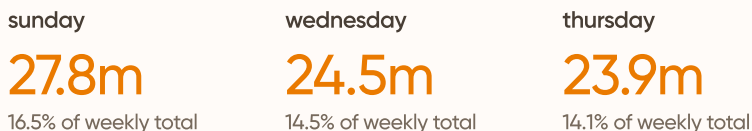
Caleb Serrette

DATA ANALYST, RESPONDOLOGY

# When Risk Shows Up

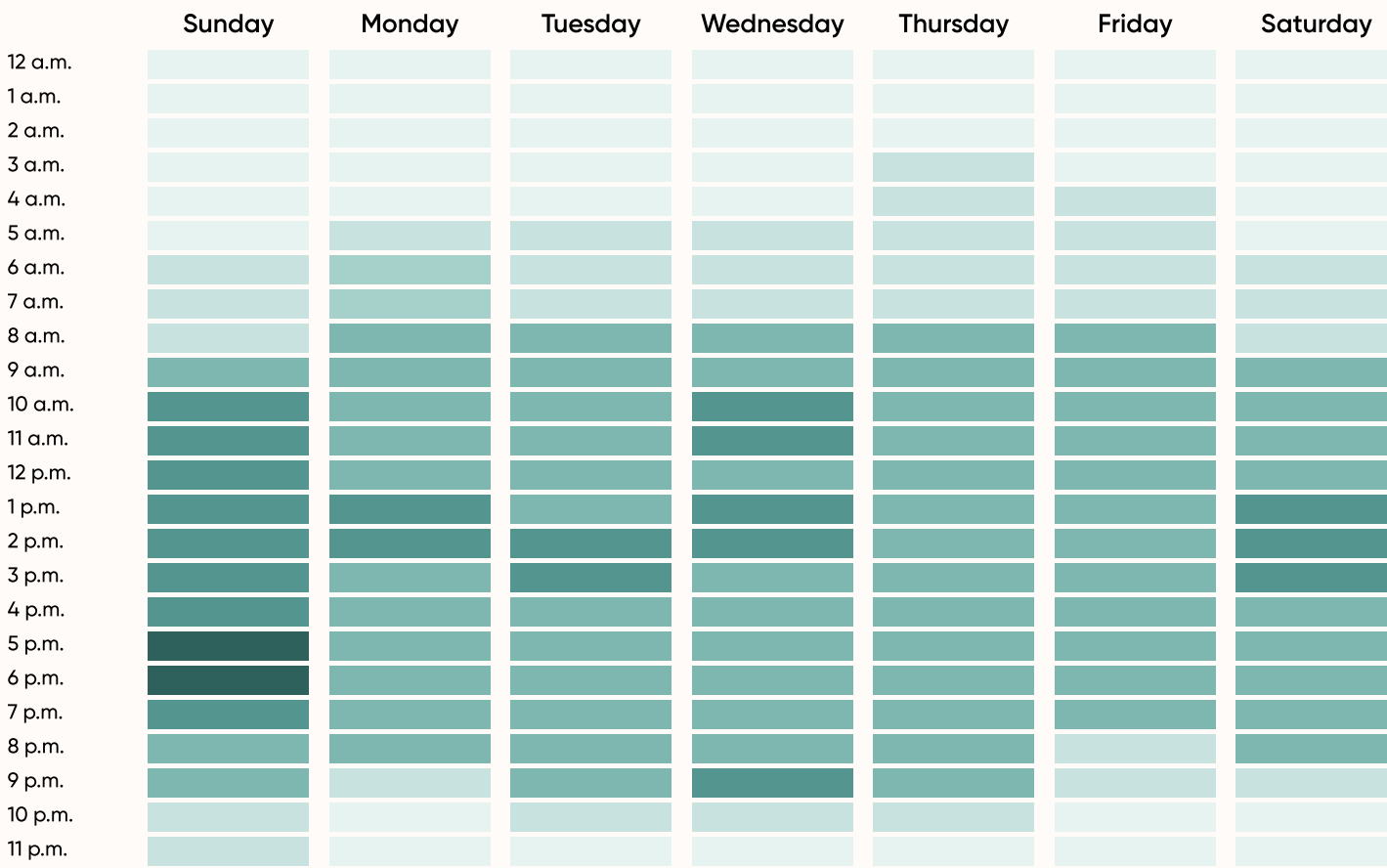
Timing matters as much as platform. The data reveals clear patterns in when spam and fraud spike, and they rarely align with when teams are staffed to handle it.

## Peak days by comment volume



## Spam and fraud breakdown:

- Spam accounts for 41.8% of all hidden comments
- Estimated 1 in 10 spam comments contain a form of fraud or piracy
- 80.9% of sports fraud contain illegal streaming links or ticketing scams
- 59.2% of retail spam associated with knockoff seller websites



## BRAND SAFETY

Live events, fandom energy, and real-time reactions create both massive opportunity and massive exposure. When big moments happen, the comments section becomes a real-time referendum on your brand.

### Top industries by hide rate

minimum 100K comments

Health	38.5%
Technology	37.9%
Nonprofit	34.2%
Food and Beverage	25.1%
Retail	24.0%
Media	23.4%
Sports	17.9%

### Top industries by off-hours comment rate

Sports	Technology	Nonprofit
69.3%	65.4%	65.3%

Sports brands face a particular challenge: nearly 70% of their comments arrive outside business hours. Game-day moderation isn't a nice-to-have. It's the baseline requirement for protecting player safety and mental health, as well as sponsor relationships, while simultaneously protecting against illegal streaming and merch links.

## The Betting Effect

A 2025 peer-reviewed study found that "obsession with betting" was the only significant predictor of increased sports media engagement—not age, not gender, not fandom alone. As sports betting shifts from periodic to continuous, comment sections during games increasingly reflect the emotional volatility of users with money on the line. For sports brands, this adds a new layer of moderation complexity: higher toxicity during momentum shifts, increased scam activity, and engagement that extends well beyond traditional fandom.

**Source:** Yaros, R.A. (2025). "All bets are on: obsession, engagement, and moral tension in sports betting behavior." *Frontiers in Psychology*.

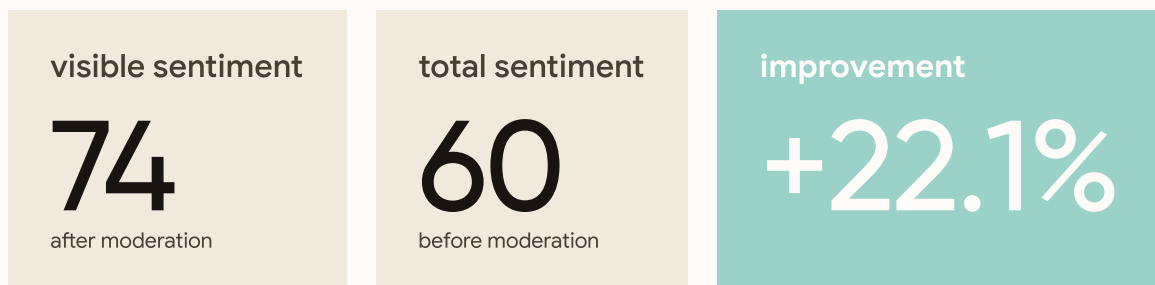


# What This Means

Researchers call this the “moderation paradox.” Customers don’t want censorship; but they also won’t tolerate chaos. And, with Meta stepping back from native moderation, the responsibility has shifted. Your comment section is your virtual storefront and is yours to protect.




Imagine hosting an open event—a product launch, a watch party, a game-day activation—where real customers and fans show up ready to engage, but so do counterfeit sellers and hateful hecklers, all in the same space with no one at the door. That’s an unmanaged comment section.

The truth is that potential customers don’t distinguish between your content and the comments beneath it. They experience your brand holistically. The post and comments are both associated with you. Whatever lives in the content space becomes part of the impression they form. When visible sentiment shifts, the atmosphere around a brand changes. And that atmosphere influences behavior. It shapes whether someone keeps scrolling, or stops to follow, subscribe, or buy.



Twenty-four hour protection isn’t a luxury. It’s the cost of doing business on platforms where risk doesn’t clock out. Unprotected comments are unmanaged reputation.

## BRAND SAFETY | KEY TAKEAWAYS

-  **Scale requires automation** 168.8M comments reviewed
-  **Risk doesn't follow business hours** 67.4% off-hours
-  **Moderation drives perception** +22.1% sentiment lift

# Cultural Moments Cause a Spike in Comments

Cultural moments are a stress test. How does this brand show up? How does it handle the conversation that follows? The answers visible in comment sections during Pride Month, playoff season, or a controversial announcement tell people more about brand values than any mission statement ever could.

Across industries and platforms, cultural moments drive significant comment volume spikes. A case study from 2025 illustrates this pattern.

## CASE STUDY: PRIDE 2025

Pride Month has become a flashpoint for brand participation, and 2025 was no exception. Across the brands protected, hate during Pride Month climbed 1.5x year-over-year. Hide rates increased 5.5% compared to the rest of the year. The rate of anti-LGBTQ+ comments rose 61% versus other months.

**Perhaps most striking: 1 in every 10 toxic comments during Pride Month contained an anti-LGBTQ+ slur.**

### Pride Month 2025

**+1.5x** general toxicity (YoY)

**+5.5%** hide rate vs. other months

**+61%** anti-LGBTQ+ comment rate vs. other months

**1 in 10** toxic comments contained a slur

These numbers represent real comments appearing beneath real brand posts, visible to audiences scrolling through their feeds. Cultural participation without protection turns reach into risk.

## Bad Bunny Super Bowl Halftime Announcement

When Bad Bunny was announced as the Super Bowl halftime performer, comment volume spiked within hours. The reaction played out across major brand accounts, sponsor pages, and league channels, not in fringe threads, but in mainstream conversation.

High-profile cultural moments attract both fans and bad actors. Cultural celebration does not equal cultural safety. For sports brands especially, announcements involving athletes, performers, or partnerships that touch on identity carry predictable backlash patterns. Spam, hate, and piracy will appear. What matters is deploying moderation to catch it before it defines the conversation.

**+36.9%** comment volume spike

**+22.7%** racist comments

**63%** negative sentiment on Bad Bunny mentions

# The Cultural Calendar Approach

## Predictable high-risk moments by vertical

### sports

- playoffs
- championships
- rivalry matchups
- player announcements
- draft selections
- halftime performer reveals

### retail

- Black Friday,
- Cyber Monday
- holiday campaigns
- major sales events
- product launches

### cultural

- Pride Month
- heritage months
- election cycles
- award shows
- viral social moments

### platform-specific

- TikTok trends
- meme cycles
- algorithm-driven surges

Because these moments are predictable, comment moderation technology can handle the preparation automatically, so social teams are already covered when the moment arrives.

Speed matters in cultural moments. Brands that treat cultural relevancy as a year-round discipline are really just keeping the flywheel running between moments, so when a big one hits, they're already in motion.

## The preparation framework

### Listen

Identify upcoming moments 30–60 days out

### Improve

Surface context and likely flashpoints to social teams

### Protect

Apply moderation rules specific to anticipated hate or backlash automatically, around the clock

### Engage

Deploy response frameworks for predictable scenarios automatically

### Reinforce

Establish escalation paths for unexpected collisions

**“Cultural moments amplify everything: reach, engagement, and risk. Audiences watch how brands navigate these moments. The brands that prepare, rather than react, turn cultural participation into connection and trust—rather than crisis and backlash.”**



**LesLeigh Houston**  
CONTENT MARKETING  
MANAGER, RESPONDOLOGY

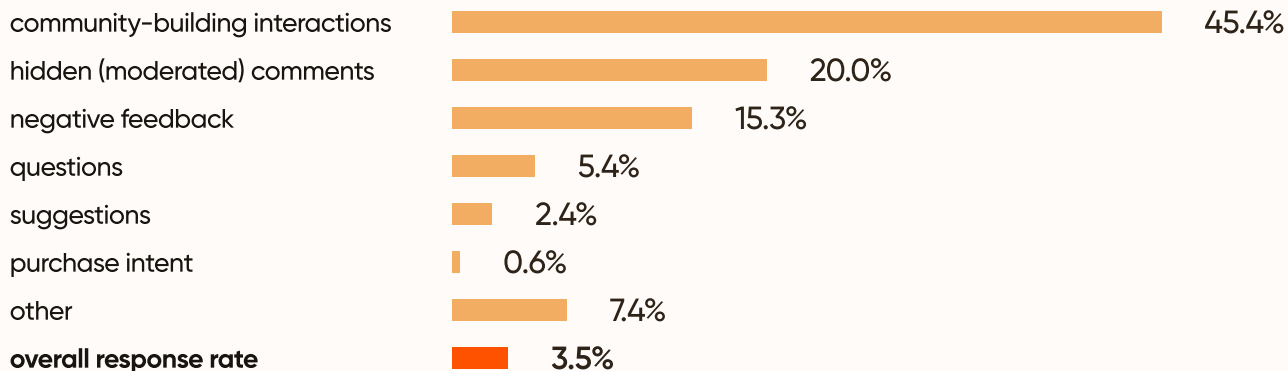
# Brand Responses Show Potential Customers that You're Paying Attention

People scroll through your content, read the comments, and watch how you respond to questions, complaints, and praise. This is all part of discovery, and they're gathering evidence to decide if they should follow, buy, or move on.

Comment sections are where that decision is made, in public, at scale, and they're now measurable revenue channels. The connection between response activity and conversion is no longer theoretical, and the case study later in this section shows exactly what that looks like in practice.

The data tells us exactly what people encounter when they arrive.

## Comment Composition



Digging deeper into what people actually discuss reveals distinct topic clusters: product and service questions, competitive comparisons, customer service inquiries, and content feedback. Each category represents a different need and a different response opportunity. The brands that categorize and prioritize by topic type, rather than treating all comments equally, allocate engagement resources more effectively.

# The Response Gap

The overall response rate across all comments sits at just 3.5%. Even when narrowed to approved comments only, the rate climbs to just 5%, with modest growth of 2.7% in the second half of 2025.

This means people arrive at your comment section, see questions from other users, and find silence from the brand. They see purchase intent go unacknowledged. They see complaints linger without response. And they draw their own conclusions.

## What Changes When Brands Respond

The brands that respond show a measurably different pattern. Active engagement increases response rates and reshapes the entire conversation, with the response rate of approved comments increasing 9 percentage points and improving the overall quality of conversation.

### Respond Client Impact

**+20.8%**

community-building comments

**-10.5pp**

negative feedback

**-11.2%**

noise/off-topic comments

**+738**

purchase intent comments/month

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

As responses increase, comment volume tracks upward. Users notice when brands engage, and they respond to that visibility with more participation. Rates move gradually, but the absolute number of meaningful interactions scales quickly.

More striking is the shift in conversation composition. Brands that respond consistently see their comment sections transform. More community-building. Less negativity. More purchase signals. Less irrelevant noise. Active engagement creates a funnel that pulls conversation toward topics the brand can work with, and away from spam, trolling, and off-topic noise.

### SKIN LAUNDRY

"Our ability to actually see and respond to everything has improved dramatically. The engagement is more consistent, more thorough and more meaningful because we're not constantly distracted by the mechanics of finding the conversations."

SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER, SKIN LAUNDRY

## CASE STUDY: SKIN LAUNDRY

Skin Laundry's experience illustrates what happens when a lean social team gets the right infrastructure: engagement scales dramatically without scaling headcount.

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### Response activity increase

- 175% increase in total responses sent (1,662 responses since November 2025)
- One community manager handling ~4,000 comments/month—same team size, dramatically more engagement
- Previously spending 2–3 hours daily on manual comment management across disconnected tools; now capturing opportunities that were slipping through

### Engagement quality

- Community-building comments grew 5.4 percentage points
- Visible sentiment improved 14.5%
- Hide rate decreased 6.6 percentage points, cleaner comment sections with less noise for consumers to encounter

**Estimated revenue impact:** Skin Laundry's primary conversion signals are booking inquiries and treatment questions, the "*Where can I book?*" moments that previously went unanswered in a manual workflow. With a 175% lift in response activity, the team is now capturing purchase intent comments at scale. Based on the documented 11% conversion rate for responded purchase intent comments and Skin Laundry's average treatment value, increased engagement represents a meaningful incremental revenue stream, achieved with zero additional headcount.

#### Before Moderation

- Lower response volume
- Purchase intent comments often unanswered
- Lower visible sentiment
- Higher hide rate

#### After Moderation

+175% response activity

+175% response activity

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## CASE STUDY: SKIN LAUNDRY

### Before moderation

- One person managing engagement manually
- Up to 4 hours every day on comment management
- Paid/dark post comments were invisible to the team
- Critical conversations missed entirely
- Conversion-ready moments were being lost

### After moderation

**+175%**  
response activity

**-6.6pp**  
hide rate

**+14.5%**  
visible sentiment

**+5.4pp**  
community-building interactions

The efficiency story reinforces the broader thesis: closing the response gap doesn't require a bigger team. It requires better infrastructure.

Skin Laundry's community manager went from spending hours on manual triage—across disconnected tools that couldn't even surface paid comments—to managing a unified, categorized inbox where high-value interactions rise to the top. Research indicates that responding to comments expressing purchase intent can yield an 11% conversion rate. **Customers engaged through responses spend 20–40% more on average.** The booking questions and treatment inquiries that brands ignore represent both missed connections and missed revenue.

### Customers engaged through responses spend

**+20–40%** more on average

Skin Laundry's results demonstrate that the engagement gap is closable, even for lean teams. A 175% increase in responses came from one person using a smarter system, not a larger team. The time saved isn't just operational efficiency, it's capacity redirected toward strategic, outbound engagement that builds community rather than simply maintaining it.



# Platform-Specific Engagement

Audiences behave differently across platforms, and engagement strategies must adapt accordingly.

Caption length optimization by platform

	optimal caption length (words)	engagement impact	avoid
Facebook	100–120	+54.9%	No strong penalty at other lengths
Instagram	0–20	+70.7%	220+ words (-23.8%)
TikTok	140–160	+408.6%	240+ words (-62.0%)
Meta Ads	140–160	+88.1%	Under 140 words (-20.6%)
TikTok Ads	160+	+59.9%	No strong penalty at shorter lengths
LinkedIn	220–240	+155.6%	Under 120 words (-19.3%)
YouTube	300+	+91.7%	No strong penalty at shorter lengths

## Beyond length, platform culture shapes tone expectations:

**Instagram:** Community-building hub; warm, responsive, visually-driven

**TikTok:** Cheeky, unhinged, culturally fluent; humor travels

**LinkedIn:** Professional, story-driven; expertise matters

**Facebook:** Varied; consistency and presence matter more than specific tone

**YouTube:** Informational, creator-style; descriptions carry utility

# Socialized Search is Here and AI is Front and Center

## The Discovery Shift

Nearly 40% of Gen Z bypasses Google entirely for discovery, turning to TikTok, Instagram, and AI assistants instead (even Google's own executives have acknowledged the shift). Most marketing playbooks still optimize for Google page one, which is no longer where discovery starts.

Google still dominates raw search volume, processing 373 times more searches per day than ChatGPT, according to Ahrefs research. But dominance and direction are different things. The trajectory points toward fragmentation.

Consider the signals:

- **TikTok has become a primary discovery platform**, with usage for product and brand research growing significantly year-over-year, according to GWI.
- **60% of all Google searches ended without a click in 2024**, a trend that predates AI Overviews but has accelerated since their introduction.
- **AI Overviews reduce clicks to the #1 ranking page by 34.5%**, per Ahrefs analysis.
- **ChatGPT has grown to 800 million weekly active users**, with people now researching, comparing, and purchasing products directly within AI assistants.

People still use Google, but they also ask ChatGPT for recommendations, scroll TikTok for reviews, browse Reddit for unfiltered opinions, and read Instagram comments for social proof. The search journey has become multi-surface, and brands optimized solely for traditional SEO increasingly miss where discovery happens now.

### Discovery fragmentation

40%	of Gen Z starts search on TikTok/Instagram, not Google
71%	YoY growth in TikTok product research
60%	of Google searches = zero click
800m	weekly active ChatGPT users

"Consumers don't have time to form a fresh opinion about every brand they encounter. Instead, they crowdsource their first impression by quickly scanning what other people are saying in social conversations. That means the real moment of brand discovery often happens in the comments, not the ad or post itself."



**Tim Murphy**  
CO-FOUNDER & CHIEF PRODUCT OFFICER, RESPONDOLOGY

# How AI Systems See Your Brand

"Marketers must adapt by leaning into 'Generative Engine Optimisation'; creating a rich ecosystem of authoritative, people-first content that's helpful for an AI-powered conversational query."

GOOGLE'S 2025 MARKETING GUIDANCE

Research from Ahrefs found that branded web mentions correlate strongly (0.66–0.71) with visibility in AI search results, including ChatGPT, Google's AI Mode, and AI Overviews. Traditional SEO metrics like backlinks and page count showed much weaker correlation.

Comment sections contribute to a "searchable narrative," one that AI systems index, summarize, and surface to consumers. Unmoderated toxicity becomes part of your brand's narrative and digital footprint, and can surface in AI-generated summaries for months or years.

GWJ's 2025 social media research says, "**the comment section could become more important with fact-checkers out of the picture**," pointing to an environment where user-generated content carries more weight in shaping public understanding.



The brands that moderate, listen, and respond strategically are protecting and cultivating today's audience, simultaneously curating the narrative that tomorrow's discovery systems will learn from.

# Auditing Your AI Presence

Most brands haven't checked what AI systems say about them. The exercise takes five minutes and often reveals gaps between intended brand perception and actual AI representation.

## The Audit

1. Query your brand name
2. Ask reputation questions
3. Document the responses
4. Compare it to reality

## Common gaps brands discover

- AI summaries emphasizing complaints that have since been resolved
- Outdated product information persisting in responses
- Competitor mentions appearing in brand queries
- Negative sentiment from unmoderated comment sections surfacing in recommendations
- Spam or scam patterns interpreted as legitimacy concerns

### EXAMPLE

*A national retailer discovered ChatGPT was still surfacing a 2023 product recall in brand queries, despite the issue being resolved 18 months prior.*

The audit provides a baseline. Quarterly repetition tracks whether moderation and engagement efforts translate into improved AI representation over time.

# AI Audit Checklist

## 1. Query your brand name

- in ChatGPT
- in Perplexity
- in Google AI Overview

## 2. Ask reputation questions

- What do people say about [Brand]?
- Is [Brand] trustworthy?

## 3. Document the responses

- What's emphasized?
- What's missing?
- What's wrong?

## 4. Compare it to reality

- Does this reflect current comment sentiment?
- Are resolved issues still showing up?
- Are recent wins or improvements missing?

## 5. Identify sources

- What information is outdated?
- What information is inaccurate?
- Is negative information shaping AI responses?

Repeat quarterly to track perception shift.

# Your Playbook for this New Era of Social Engagement

The data in this report points to a clear conclusion: comment sections are infrastructure.

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They influence discovery, shape trust, and increasingly determine whether someone becomes a customer or fan, or moves on. The brands without a solution are leaving money, reputation, and community on the table.

Investing in comment intelligence is non-negotiable, but if you're unsure what to do, here's where to start:

- BRAND SAFETY**

1. **Build Always-On Protection** Risk doesn't pause for business hours; neither should your defense.

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- CULTURAL RELEVANCY**

2. **Pre-Build Your Cultural Calendar** Predictable moments deserve prepared responses.

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- COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

3. **Close The Response Gap** 97% of comments go unanswered. That silence sends a message.

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- AI + DISCOVERY**

4. **Audit Your AI Presence** Discovery has fragmented. Do you know what AI says about you?

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- CROSS-PILLAR**

5. **Operationalize Comment Intelligence** Turn comment data into competitive advantage.

## play 1 Systemize Protection

Automate moderation across paid and organic environments so protection runs 24/7 without adding headcount. Prioritize paid placements, where spam, bots, and piracy are nearly 2x higher and directly tied to revenue.

**Higher visible sentiment, lower brand risk, stronger performance.**

## play 2 Prepare for Predictable Moments

Map your highest-risk events annually and pre-configure moderation rules before launch. Brands that pre-built for Pride 2025 avoided the 1.5x spike in hate that others absorbed.

**Participation without backlash. Less steps, better outcomes.**

## play 3 Prioritize High-Intent Engagement

Use AI to identify and route purchase intent and product questions first. Increase response rate without increasing team size.

**More community-building, fewer unresolved complaints, and measurable revenue lift. Now it's scalable, not exhausting.**

## play 4 Manage Your AI Narrative

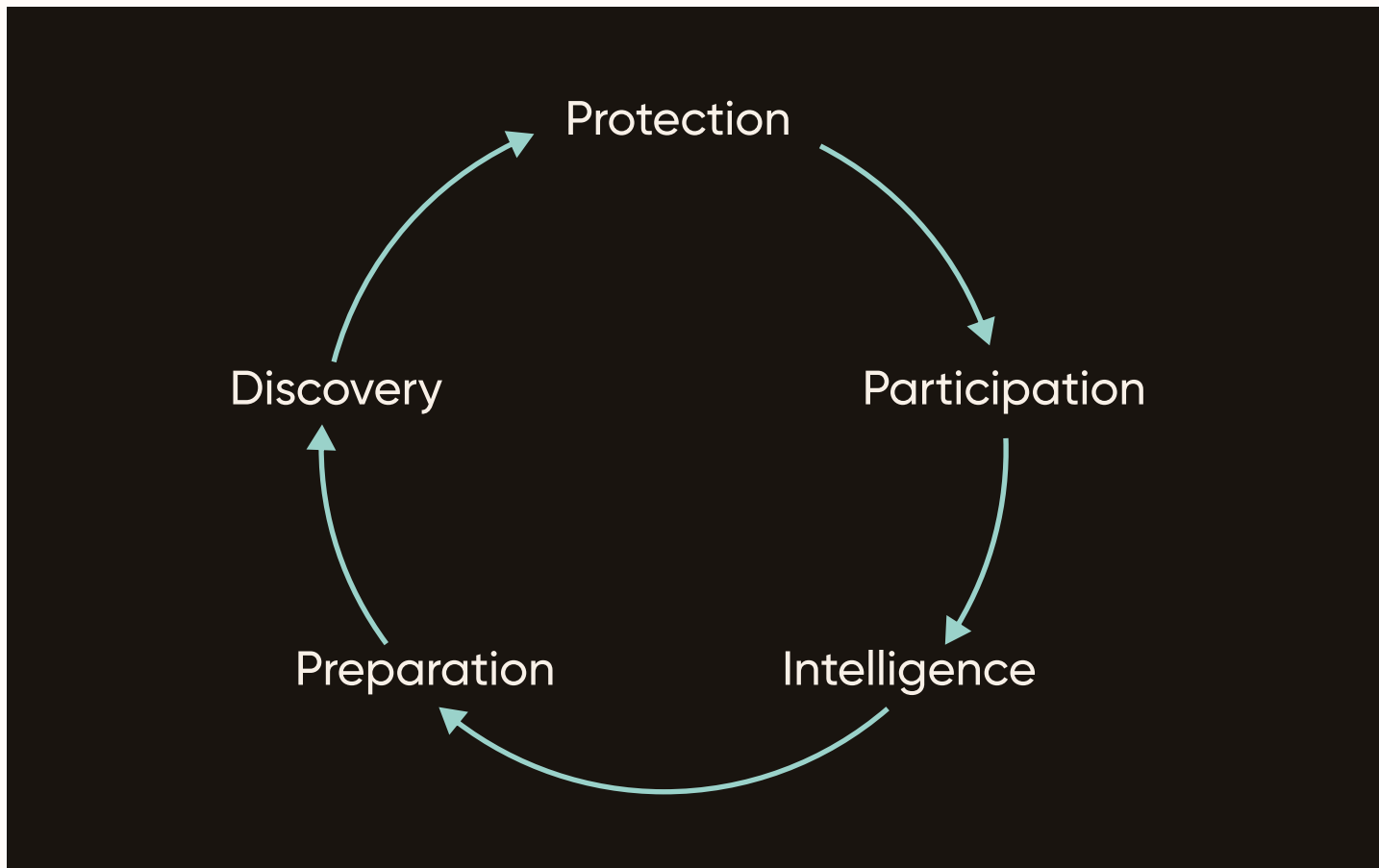
Audit what ChatGPT, Perplexity, and Google AI say about your brand quarterly. Toxic, outdated, or unmoderated content becomes part of your searchable narrative.

**Better AI visibility, fewer legacy perception risks.**

## play 5 Turn Comments Into Insight

Use AI summarization and trend detection to surface patterns automatically, like product feedback, recurring objections, and campaign reactions.

**Comments become a leading indicator, not just noise. No mention of weekly decks or heavy workflows.**



## The Unifying Principle

These five plays share a common thread: comment section management should be an integral part of your social strategy.

The brands succeeding in 2026 are working differently. They utilize ready-made systems that protect their presence around the clock, prepare for predictable moments before they arrive, respond with intention rather than improvisation or silence, monitor new discovery surfaces proactively, and turn comment data into a competitive advantage.

The systems are here. The data is clear. The question is whether you'll treat comment intelligence as infrastructure, or keep treating it as an afterthought.

**The person scrolling through your comments right now is making a decision.**

***What will they find?***

# Methodology

This report draws on data generated through Respondology's comment moderation and engagement platform across the 2025 calendar year. In total, 168.8 million comments were reviewed across 7.6 million social media posts, spanning seven major platforms: Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, LinkedIn, Meta Ads, and TikTok Ads, with early representation from Threads.

The dataset includes approximately 3,400 social accounts across both organic and paid environments. Organic content accounts for 98% of all comments analyzed; paid placements represent 2% of comment volume across 579 ad accounts. Paid media performance metrics are based on \$647.6 million in ad spend analyzed across Meta and TikTok.

	accounts	share of volume of content	
Facebook	~1,100	46.3%	78.2m
Instagram	~1,000	38.2%	64.5m
TikTok	491	12.1%	20.3m
YouTube	174	2.0%	3.3m
Meta Ads	485	1.0%	1.6m
TikTok Ads	94	0.5%	851.7k
LinkedIn	22	0.02%	38.4k
Threads	7	<0.01%	4.0k

Brands included are headquartered across North America (59.7%), EMEA (25.9%), Asia-Pacific (11.0%), and Latin America (3.5%). All geographic classification reflects the location of the brand or agency, rather than the origin of individual comments.

The dataset spans multiple industry verticals. Sports accounts for 67.2% of total comment volume and Media for 26.5%, driven by the high-engagement nature of live events and fan communities. Retail, Nonprofit, Food and Beverage, Technology, Health, and others are also represented. Industry-level findings throughout this report reflect a minimum threshold of 100,000 comments to ensure statistical reliability.

**A note on metrics:** "Total sentiment" reflects the average sentiment score across all comments prior to moderation. "Visible sentiment" reflects the average score across comments that remain publicly visible after moderation. Hide rate refers to the percentage of comments removed or hidden from public view. All year-over-year comparisons reference the equivalent period in 2024.



Respondology is an AI-powered social engagement platform that modernizes how marketers moderate, listen to, and respond to comments at scale. Over six years, the company has built industry-leading technology for social comment moderation and has expanded to address the full spectrum of comment intelligence: protection, listening, and engagement. We partner with hundreds of leading brands across sports, retail, media, and consumer categories. The platform reaches more than 2 billion people per month.

The Business of Comments report is built on data collected through Respondology's platform across the 2025 calendar year, covering 168.8 million comments reviewed across 7.6 million social media posts.

## Three products power that work:



### Moderate

Remove spam, bots, fraud, and brand-damaging content in seconds.



### Discover

Surface comment intelligence across brand, competitor, and influencer handles.



### Respond

Enable brands to engage their communities at scale, in their own brand voice.

