



MONEY TALKS:

4YOUTH PERCEPTIONS OF THE MONETISATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA

THE RESEARCH

// RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

To understand 4Youth's perception of monetising social media platforms with a specific focus on:

- Preference for advertisements vs paying for ad-free content
- Whether they would subscribe to social media, and what they would hope to get from a subscription
- What they think specifically of the current conversations around Musk's plans to monetise Twitter

//METHDOLOGY

10-minute qual & quant community survey to 104 x 16-24 year olds exploring their perceptions of the monetisation of social media

SAMPLE:

104 x 16-24 year olds

AGE

16-18	15
19-21	56
22-24	33

GENDER

Female	79
Male	23
Female/Non-binary	1
Other	1

01

**EXECUTIVE
SUMMARY**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1

Ads are a great way for platforms and creators to **make money, at no actual cost to the user**, unlike subscriptions which have the potential to be divisive; 4Youth would prefer to have ads than pay for ad-free content.

2

4Youth are opposed to paying for access to social media, and with platforms finding more and more ways to capitalise on their users, **88%** feel that subscription-based content causes exclusivity and prevents genuine social networking.

- 4Youth's disdain for paying for social media is manifest in their opposition to Elon Musk's introduction of Twitter Blue; to 16-24 year olds, it feels like an additional way for him to capitalise regardless of the user experience.

3

For subscription services to land, they would need to **offer something genuinely exclusive** and not impact the free experience.

- Amongst 4Youth, many acknowledge that paying for subscriptions can be beneficial for content creators themselves, which is appealing to those who would like to show support for their favourite creators.

02

SOCIAL MEDIA ADS

Advertising is the preferred method of monetisation in comparison to subscriptions

82% of 4Youth prefer ads on social media to paying for ad-free content. This is because...

CREATORS AND PLATFORMS BENEFIT

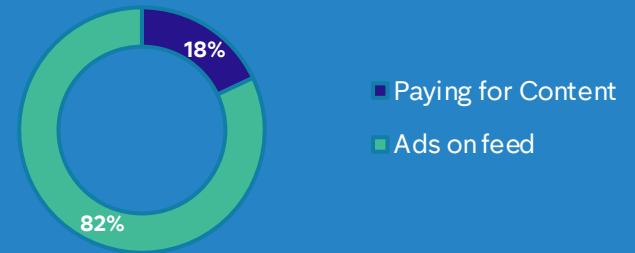
4Youth view ads on social media as a form of monetisation that allows **both platforms and creators** to survive.

USERS BENEFIT

The existence of ads enable social media to remain free, and therefore **accessible, to all**

4YOUTH'S PREFERENCE FOR MONETISATION

Amongst Total



Too many ads can feel irritating to some who feel that brands and sponsors can clog up their feeds. They find it difficult to understand authentic vs fake content from influencers

USERS

**Ads allow 4Youth
to continue to
browse and
connect freely at
no extra cost**

BENEFITS FOR USERS



Advertising enables users of the app to continue to browse free of charge, something that 4Youth value extremely highly as things become more and more expensive during the cost of living crisis.

“

*The best thing about the internet **is that it's free***

- Female, 16

Advertising allows creators to pursue a career in what they love

BENEFITS FOR CREATORS



Advertising permits creators to have income without having to place the financial burden on their fanbase.

Given access is free to all, creators can remain close with **all** of their fanbase whilst earning their keep through payment from brands.

“ It is nice to have spaces where **everyone can access entertainment equally.**
- Female, 20

Advertising also allows social media platforms to thrive through increased usership

BENEFITS FOR PLATFORMS



16-24 year olds are inclined to use social media platforms if they offer relevant and interesting ads (rather than paying for ad-free content) – they are more likely to interact with said ads, and potentially purchase from them, than they are to pay for subscriptions.

“

*I can interact with the content **for a long time if it is of interest to me** and appropriate to the platform I am using*
– Female, 22

03

SUBSCRIPTION- BASED CONTENT

4Youth feel subscriptions would take away from the purpose of social media as a means for socialising *for everyone*



In direct contrast to ads, which enables a free social space **for all** to network, 4Youth believe **subscription-based content creates exclusivity** whilst preventing social networking.



“Social media is where I go for free content, not to pay for experiences”

Amongst Total



■ Disagree [1-2] ■ Neither agree nor disagree [3] ■ Agree [4-5]



EXCLUSIVITY

Subscriptions on social media make it a place where those with more wealth get more benefits; this makes it inaccessible to many (particularly young people).



PROFITING

To 4Youth, subscriptions are unnecessary, and therefore **75%** feel they are simply another way for the rich owners (think Musk and Zuckerberg) to capitalise upon their users for profit.



LACK OF AGENCY

To some, subscription-based content feels like an ultimatum in which 16-24 year olds must pick between spending their money or losing out on content; this takes away their choice from the matter.

“

*It's also exploiting what already and initially was a **free platform**, for people to enjoy, for a capitalist society*
-Male, 19

“

*It brings paying for products and content more into our lives, **which I do not see as a positive thing...***
monetisation of social media could be one step towards more of the internet having paywalls
- Female, 16

“

*It's just more **unnecessary payment for things**, as a society we seem obsessed with creating more things so there's more to buy*
- Female, 24



**There is a risk that
if subscriptions
are pushed,
usership might
diminish amongst
16-24 year olds**



Many 4Youth members don't feel that most social media is *worth* paying for and therefore would consider abandoning platforms or using them less, should payment become the only way to get the best content.

“

'There is not content on there I like enough to warrant paying for it...I wouldn't consider paying/subscribing to a social media platform and I

am not sure there is anything that could change that'

- Female 21

“

*'With the increase of monetisation, social media begins to feel less and less genuine for users. **Locking content behind a pay wall would make me unfollow that creator.'***

- Female, 22

However, if done correctly, with exciting and new content, subscriptions can be appealing to 4Youth

Despite its drawbacks, some feel that subscriptions are a good way to **support creators that they love**, providing direct financial support for their careers.

The incentive must also match the payment; content must offer something new beyond what's already on offer for free.



67%

feel that subscription-based content is a good way to directly support their favourite creators

"Social media monetisation is a good way to support content creators directly through paying them for their work"

Amongst Total



■ Disagree [1-2] ■ Neither agree nor disagree [3] ■ Agree [1-2]

Elon Musk's purchase of Twitter is emblematic of wider negative feelings towards subscriptions, and has spurred conversation and awareness of the topic

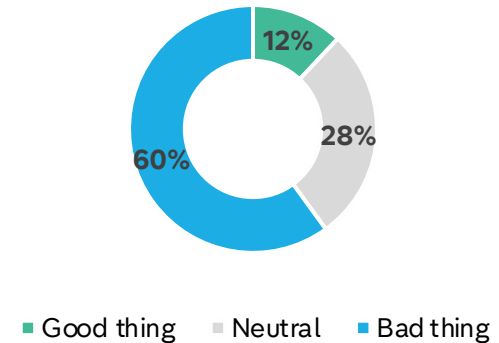
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*I feel he is a very money and business oriented person, which I **don't think is a good mindset** and goal for a platform that is built around opinion sharing and discussion*

- Female, 19

4YOUTH PERCEPTIONS OF MUSK'S ACQUISITION OF TWITTER

Amongst Total



Musk's purchasing of Twitter and introduction of Twitter Blue clearly mirrors 4Youth sentiment towards paying for social media as a whole; it is met with disdain amongst most, **60%** of whom think it was a bad idea.

These negative feelings stem from disdain for both Musk himself and his direct actions



AS A PERSON

4Youth find Elon Musk **too disconnected from the everyday individual** to know what's best for the platform; many see the move as purely a form of wealth flexing from another billionaire with too much power.



DIRECT ACTIONS

Many are left discontented by his move to fire the majority of his workforce, highlighting that he **does not value those around him**; claims of **enabling freedom of speech** and anti-censorship feel meaningless; and Twitter Blue feels like a **cash grab** from an already rich man.

“

***Its about the person AND the situation.** He didn't want twitter in the first place, when he was forced into the deal he then started spouting hateful stuff on the platform, banning people who disagreed or stood up to him and his opinions*

- Female 19

“

*I haven't seen a lot of good press around him buying the platform, I understand his larger goal for free speech **but I don't support the way he's going about it***

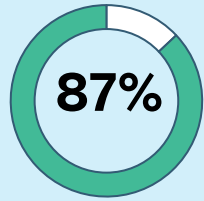
- Female 24

“

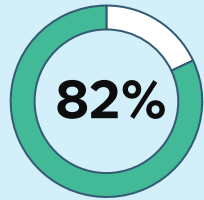
*Giving one man the sole responsibility and ability to make decisions about such a huge and influential platform seems ridiculous to me. **Not least his leadership tactics seem outlandish and radical***

- Female 21

Twitter Blue is unpopular amongst 4Youth, 87% of whom would not consider paying for it



would **never consider paying** for anything on Twitter



feel that paying for Twitter **fundamentally changes the concept** of a free and accessible social space for all

Many feel that paying for the Blue Tick **takes away from its entire point:** authenticating profiles so that users can easily tell who is genuine, and it feels like a simple cash grab to make more money

“

*Twitter Blue's checkmark demonstrates a fundamental lack of understanding of the purpose of the blue checkmark. It was **meant to verify users** as to prevent scams and impersonation, instead being turned into a status symbol despite Elon specifically saying he didn't want it to be a "lords and peasants system" (ironically by creating a divide based on money)*

- Male, 16

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4

LOOKING TO THE
FUTURE



Looking to the future, 4Youth hope there can be some middle-ground

TO FIND THIS MIDDLE GROUND, 4YOUTH FEEL THAT
SOCIAL MEDIA SHOULD DO 3 KEY THINGS...



Remain accessible and free to use at a base level
for all



Continue showing ads in order to make revenue for
the creator and platform



Ensure that subscriptions offer something new and
exciting content from users' favourite creators

04

APPENDICES

Over 1 in 3 4Youth members engage with ads all of the time or some of the time

