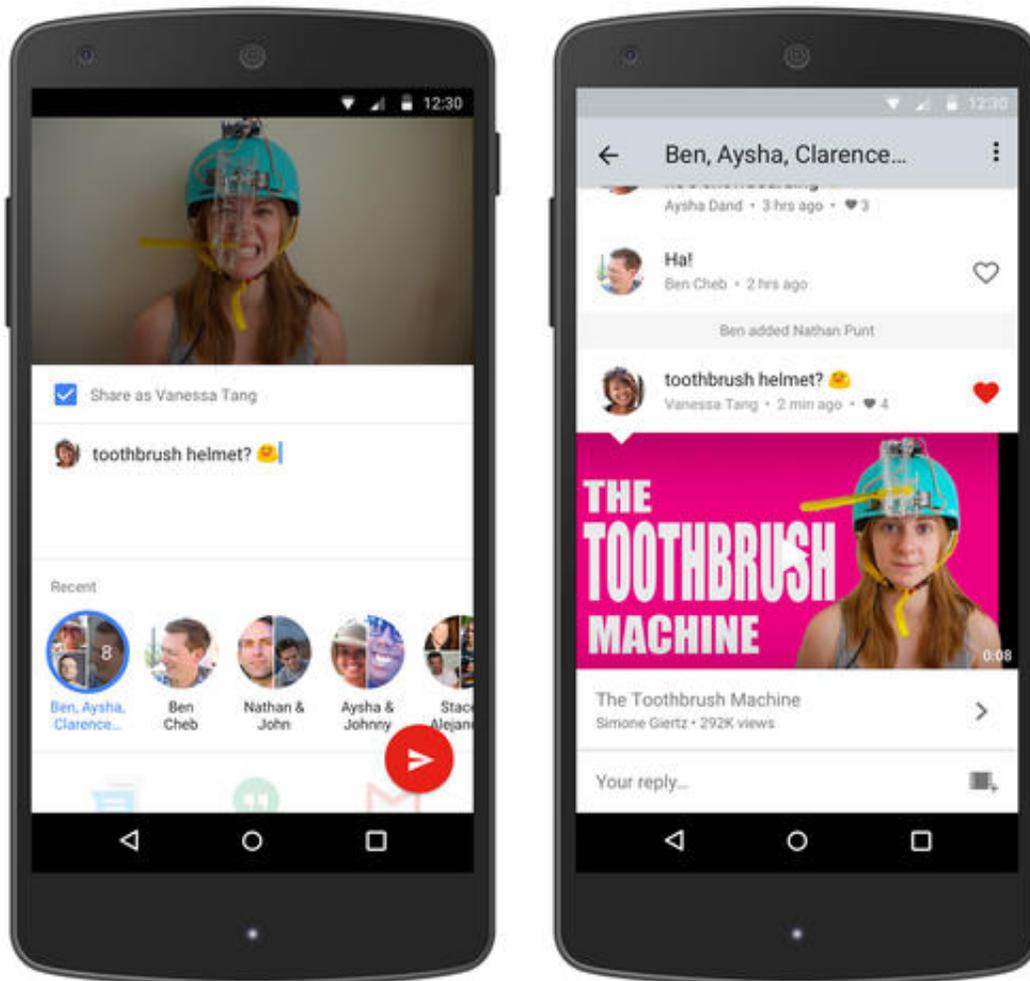


# YouTube tests messaging feature to keep people in its app (Update)

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This photo provided by Google shows a demonstration of YouTube's messaging feature in its smartphone app that allows users to share and discuss videos without resorting to other ways to connect with their friends and family. (Google via AP)

YouTube is testing a messaging feature in its smartphone app so people can share and discuss videos without resorting to other ways to connect with their friends and family.

The messaging option announced Friday initially is only being offered to a small group of people with YouTube's app installed on an iPhone or device running on Google's Android software. If all goes well, messaging will be included in a future app update available to everyone with an iPhone or an Android phone.

YouTube, part of Alphabet Inc.'s Google, is examining whether the messaging feature will encourage its audience to spend even more time inside its popular video app. Currently, people typically copy links to YouTube and paste them into text messages or other messaging apps such as Snapchat, Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp.

By removing a reason for its audience to switch over to another app, YouTube can generate more opportunities to show ads to the more than 1 billion people who watch video on its service.

WhatsApp, owned by Facebook Inc., has more than 1 billion users, while Facebook's own Messenger app has more than 900 million users, posing a threat to other digital services vying for people's attention. Snapchat is smaller, with about 100 million daily users, but growing rapidly, particularly among teenagers and young adults who tend to watch a lot of video on their smartphones.

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