

Instagram

"Create, share and connect."



Product Requirements Document [PRD]

Owner: Deepika Ramani

Title/Initiative	Improving DM feature to reduce Platform Switching
Date & Version	18.02.2026
Product - Point of Contact (POC)	Deepika Ramani
Design POC	Teja
Tech POC	Arun
Marketing POC	Sruthi

Overview

Instagram is a visual storytelling platform that connects the users with other users and content of their interest. But gradually Instagram has expanded the product into an ecosystem which also serves as a marketplace for businesses to connect with customers. Owing to this, Instagram Direct Messages (DM) has evolved from a simple chat tool into a primary communication channel for several businesses. However, users most often switch to other platforms (E.g. WhatsApp) for specific tasks like searching for previously shared information, saving important messages or sharing documents.

This PRD acts as a guideline to build the features determined from Product Discovery, User Research and multiple analysis to reduce platform switching and strengthen the DM functionality.

Why?

Frequent DM users (users from both casual and creator segments) on Instagram, experience friction during conversations due to the inability to search for specific information and move their important conversations involving access to previously shared information to other platforms which provide those features, resulting in increased churn rate.

Objectives

1. Reduce Platform Switching

Currently, users leave the app to search for past messages, retrieve files, or store important content in other competitor apps which provide these features. By enabling search, save, and attach files within DMs, Instagram reduces switching to external apps (Email, Drive, WhatsApp, etc.), increasing in-app retention.

2. Increase Engagement

Search and Save increase content revisit behaviour in users, while file attach increases usability within conversations. This drives deeper session engagement rather than just message exchanges.

3. Strengthen DM

DMs are growing to be the primary communication channel to users (creators, small businesses, communities). These features position DMs not just as a chat tool but as a complete ecosystem for communication.

4. Improve Retention for Power Users

Creators, business accounts, and high-frequency users require message retrieval and file exchange capabilities. Providing these reduces churn risk among high-value cohorts.

5. Increase Competitive Edge

Many competitors offer structured search and file sharing. These enhancements reduce feature gaps and improve competitive positioning.

6. Supporting Future Monetization Potential

Enhanced DM capabilities can support future premium features such as Advanced search filters, Business collaboration tools, etc.

For Users

1. Faster Information Retrieval

Users can find past messages instantly instead of manual scrolling, reducing frustration and time spent.

2. Reduced Cognitive Load

Saving important messages eliminates the need to remember where key information was shared.

3. Seamless File Sharing

Users can share documents directly without switching apps, improving conversation flow.

4. Greater Productivity

These features help users manage logistics (addresses, documents, plans) directly within chat.

5. Better Conversation Continuity

Users can revisit saved content and continue conversations more effectively without context loss.

Competitors & Product Inspiration

- WhatsApp
- Snapchat
- LinkedIn

How do we measure success?

Associated OKR/Goal

KR1: Increase DM Engagement

- Increase % of DM sessions with at least one high-intent action (search result click, save, file upload, saved revisit) by +15–20% vs control.
- Achieve $\geq 60\%$ Search Click Through Rate ($\text{result_click} / \text{query}$).
- Achieve $\geq 25\%$ Save adoption among exposed frequent DM users.

Why it matters: This validates that users are actively using the features in meaningful ways.

KR2: Reduce Platform Switching Behaviour

- Reduce external link exits post-search by 10%.
- Increase in-session task completion rate (search $\rightarrow$ result click without leaving app).

Why it matters: Confirms we are solving the core problem of workflow fragmentation.

KR3: Improve Retention Among High-Frequency DM Users

- Increase in 7-day retention for exposed high-frequency DM users by +2–3%.
- Increase in MAU retention by measurable positive delta vs control.
- Maintain or increase session depth after feature usage.

Why it matters: Ensures long-term business impact, not just a short term adoption.

KR4: Maintain Core Messaging Health (Guardrails)

- No decline in message send rate.
- No increase in crash rate.
- No significant increase in latency.
- No measurable drop in DM satisfaction score.

Why it matters: The feature must not compromise the core messaging experience.

Success Metrics, Guardrail Metrics

Metric Type	Metric Name	Definition	Why it matters
Key Metric	Search Click Through Rate	% of users clicking through the resulting messages of the search function within DMs	To understand whether improving the utilities of DMs help in reducing platform switching
Secondary Metric	Session Retention Time	Average time users stay on the session after finding the information in DMs	To understand the improvement in session time after introducing the search function
Secondary Metric	File Attach Rate	% of users attaching files for sharing in DMs	To understand whether improving the utilities of DMs help in increasing engagement
Secondary Metric	Message Save Rate	% of users saving messages within DMs for future reference	Measures the engagement of users within DMs
Guardrail Metric	DM Latency	The time taken to load search results after using the search function in DM	Introducing additional feature in DM should not affect the core messaging functionality

Who are the users:

1. User Persona

The users are categorized primarily into Casual users and Creators.

Casual Users:

- Explorers (search and discover on feed)
- Primary messaging (DM with friends and family)
- Shoppers (engaging with brands to shop on the platform)
- Power Users (Heavy consumption of reels and other content)
- Updates Viewer (viewing stories of friends, family, brands, trends, etc. regularly)

- Infrequent users (rarely consumes or engages with any content).

Creators:

- Individuals (Educators, Professionals, Entertainers, etc.)
- Businesses (local and global brands)
- Public figures (celebrities of different industries, global leaders, etc.)

2. Problems we are solving [Needs, Problems, Jobs to be done]

A. Search (Inability to Retrieve information)

Need

Users need to quickly retrieve previously shared information.

Problem

Users manually scroll through long threads to find messages.

Job-to-Be-Done

“When I need something that was previously shared, I want to find it instantly without frustration.”

Current Behaviour

- Manual scrolling.
- Asking the sender to resend.
- Leaving the app to check notes/screenshots.

B. Save (Access to important messages for future reference)

Need

Users need quick access to important messages within DMs.

Problem

There is no structured way to bookmark important messages.

Job-to-Be-Done

“When something important is shared, help me store it safely for future use.”

Current Behaviour

- Screenshots.
- Forwarding to self.

- Switching to other apps.

C. File Attach (Lack of Document Sharing Option)

Need

Users want seamless document sharing.

Problem

File sharing requires switching apps or limited formats.

Job-to-Be-Done

“When I need to send a document, let me do it instantly within the conversation.”

Current Behaviour

- Upload to Drive → Share link.
- Send via email.
- Switching to other apps.

D. Platform Switching

Need

Users want fewer app transitions.

Problem

Users break flow by switching apps for search, saving, or file management.

Job-to-Be-Done

“Let me complete my task without leaving this conversation.”

3. How do we know these problems exist?

These problems were identified by performing:

- User interviews (Qualitative)
- User surveys (Quantitative)
- Competitive Benchmarking
- Observing user behaviour patterns

Solution:

1. Search option within a DM (FAB)

Provides fast retrieval of previously shared messages within a conversation.

Impact:

- Reduces scroll time.
- Reduces frustration.
- Improves task completion speed.

2. Save Messages

Allows users to save/bookmark important messages within a DM.

Impact:

- Reduces need for screenshots.
- Increases revisit behaviour.
- Creates lightweight organization.

3. File Attach

Enables direct document sharing inside DMs.

Impact:

- Reduces app switching.
- Improves collaboration.
- Strengthens the utility of DM.

Product flow (Details of the feature/product):

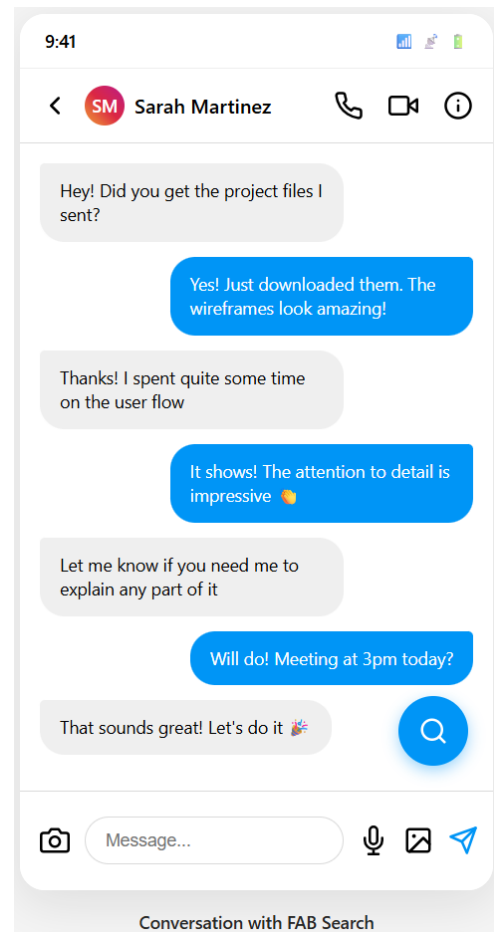
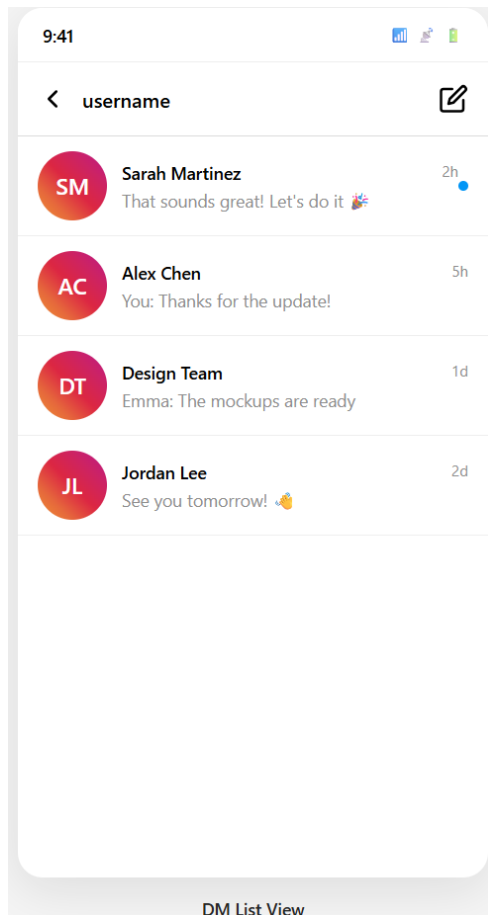
1. Customer Journey

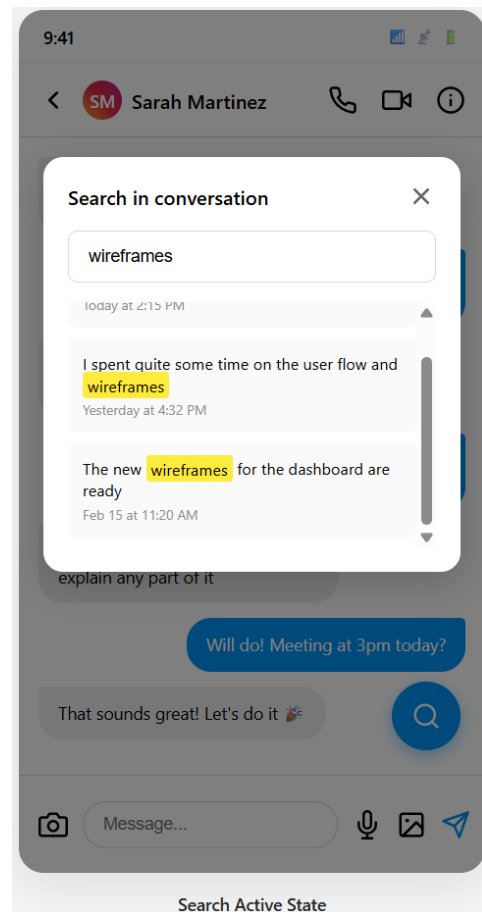
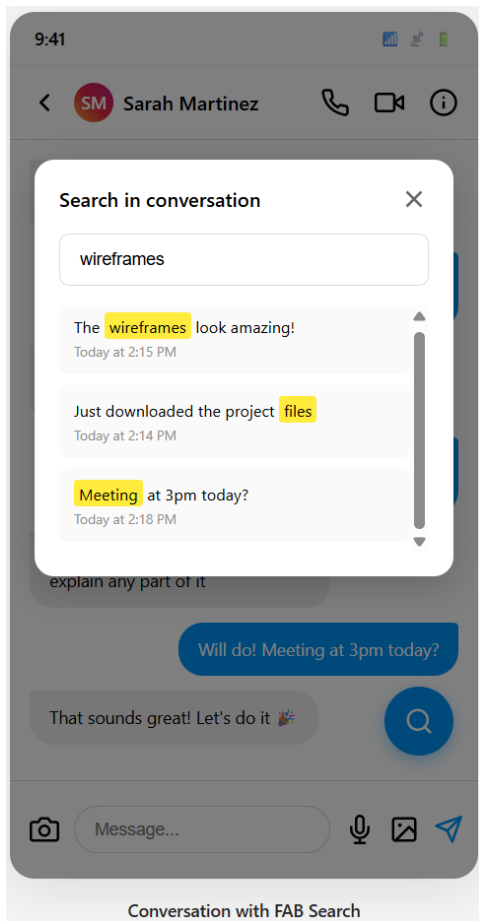
Stage	User Goal	Feature Used	Success Metrics
Trigger	Find / Save / Share	Entry points	Feature exposure
Discovery	Try feature	Search / Save / Attach	First usage rate
Aha Moment	Experience speed	Result click / Save revisit	Success rate
Habit	Repeat behaviour	Repeated actions	Weekly usage
Behaviour Shift	Stop switching apps	All features	Switching proxy reduction
Retention	Stay engaged	All features	Retention rate

2. Wireframes

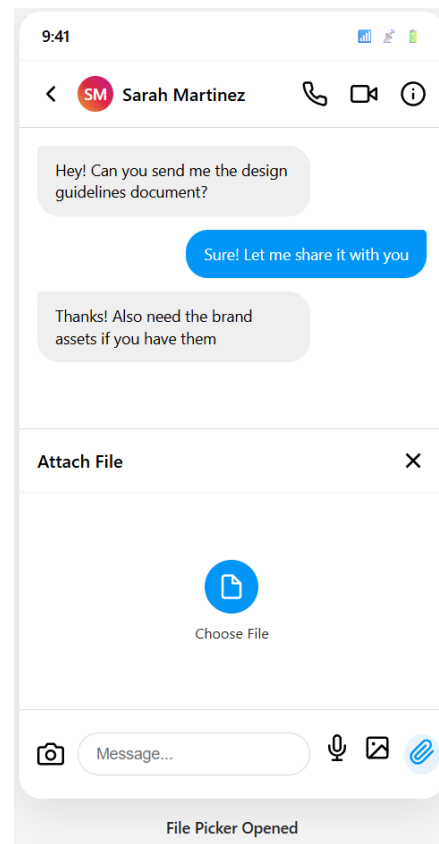
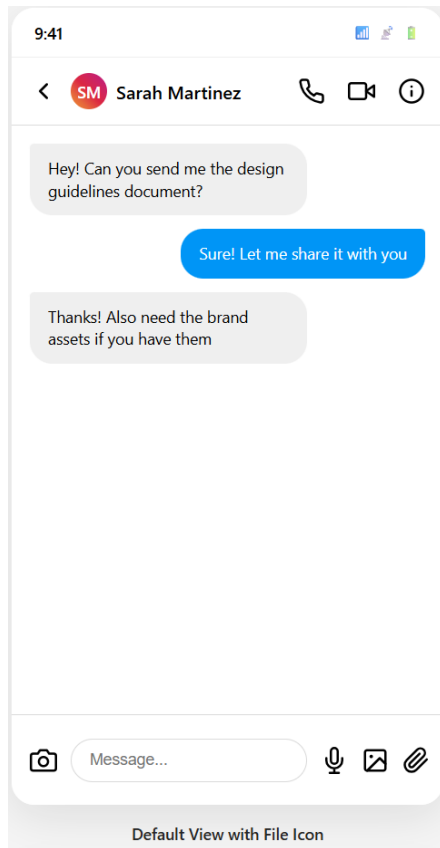
1. Search option within a DM

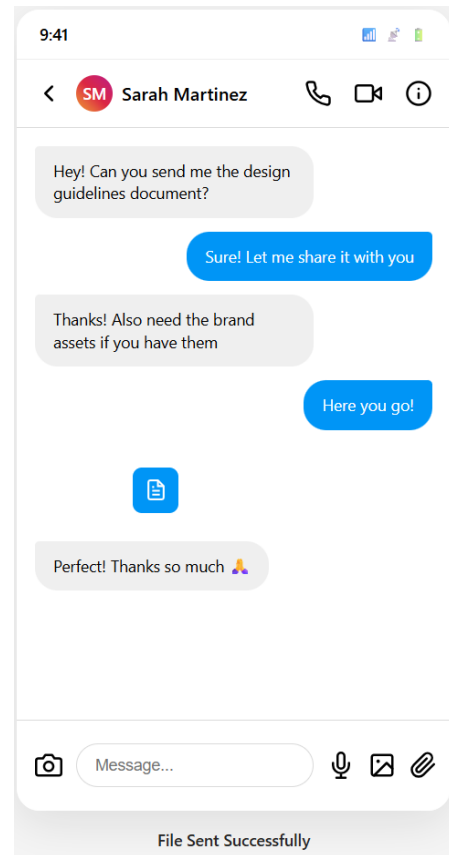
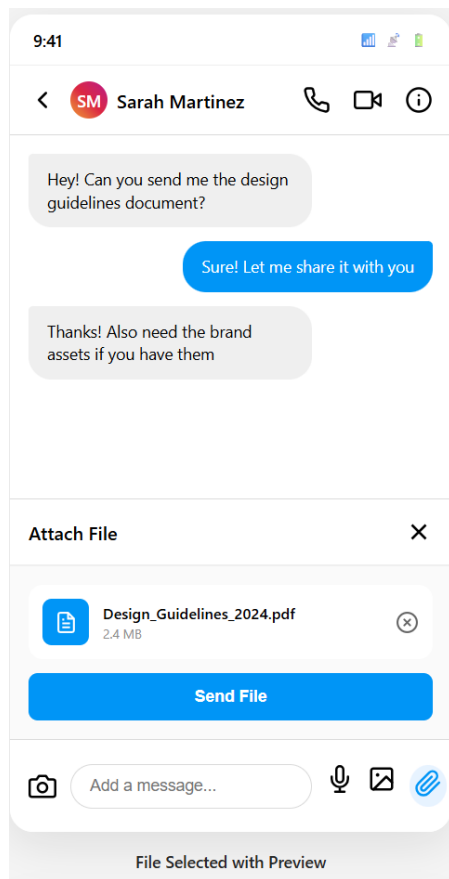
Introducing a Floating Action Button (FAB) search option in the conversation thread considering the better visibility and quick access for users.





2. Attach files/documents feature

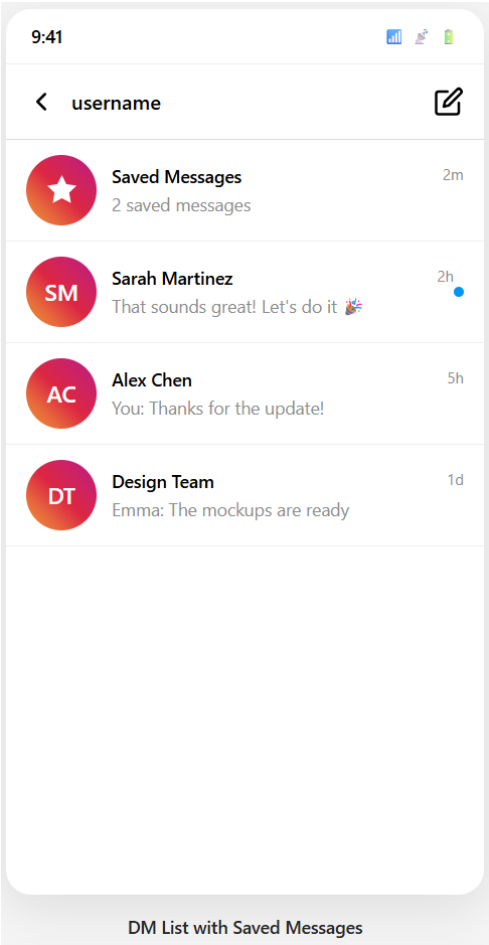
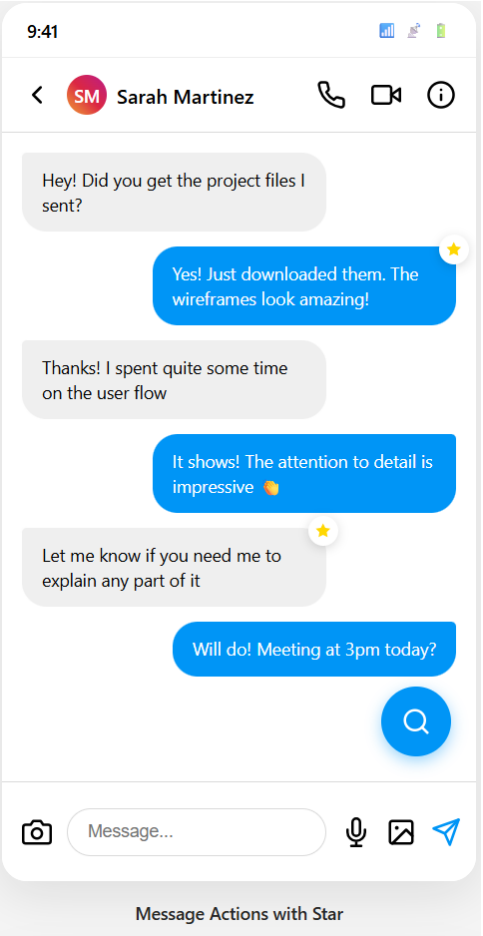


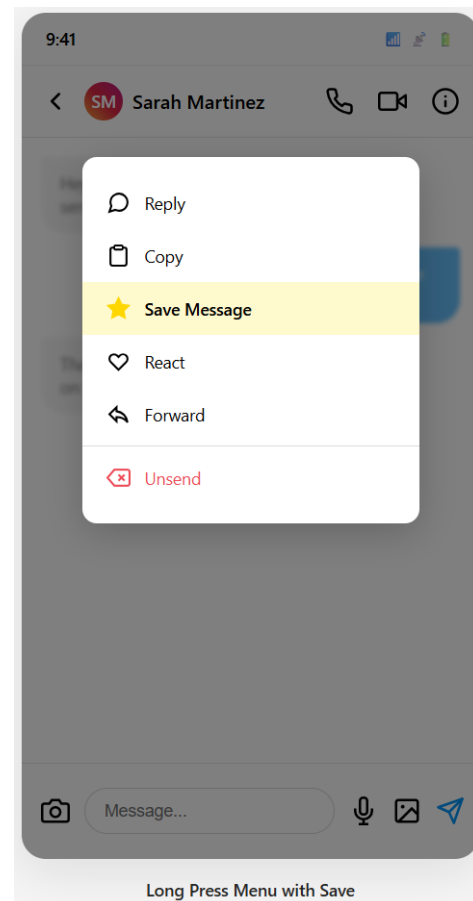
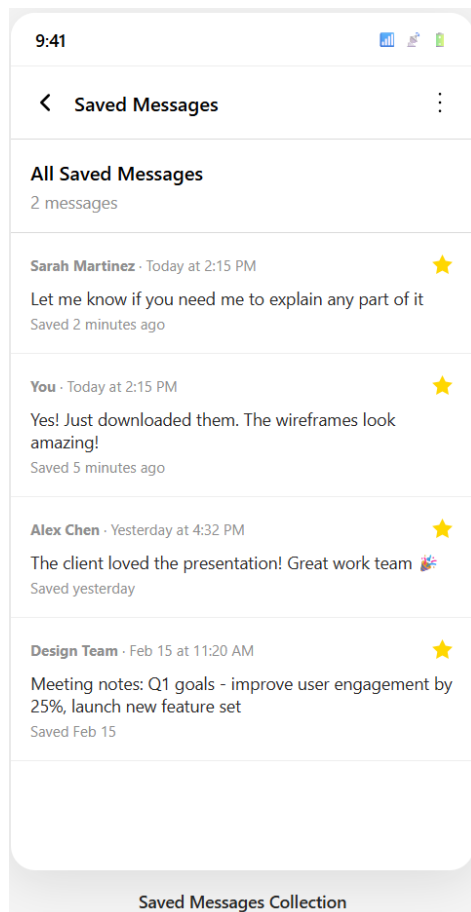


This feature reduces drop off by not having to move onto other platforms to share important documents.

3. Save option in DM

Important messages within conversations can be saved for future reference.





3. User Stories

Feature 1: In-Thread Search (FAB)

Core Stories

- 1) As a user, I want to search within a conversation so I can quickly find specific messages.
- 2) As a user, I want to filter search results (media, links, files, date) so I can narrow results.
- 3) As a user, I want to tap a search result and jump directly to that message in context.
- 4) As a user, I want to exit search mode and return to my conversation easily.
- 5) As a user, I want search to work quickly even in long conversations.

Feature 2: Save Messages

- 1) As a user, I want to save important messages for later reference.
- 2) As a user, I want visual confirmation when I save a message.
- 3) As a user, I want to view all saved messages within a conversation.
- 4) As a user, I want saved messages to remain available across devices.
- 5) As a user, I want to remove a message from saved items.

Feature 3: File Attach

- 1) As a user, I want to attach files directly in chat without switching apps.
- 2) As a user, I want to see upload progress when sharing files.
- 3) As a user, I want to preview files before sending.
- 4) As a user, I want to retry uploading if attaching a file fails.
- 5) As a user, I want clear feedback if a file type is unsupported.

Behavioural / Strategic Stories

- 1) As a user, I want these tools to feel seamless and not clutter the interface.
- 2) As a user, I want core messaging (sending messages) to remain fast and unaffected.
- 3) As a user, I want my saved messages to remain private.
- 4) As a user, I want performance to remain smooth even with these features enabled.
- 5) As a user, I want these features to reduce my need to switch to other apps.

4. User acceptance criteria

In-Thread Search Option - Acceptance Criteria

AC1: Search Activation

- Given I am inside a DM thread
- When I tap the search FAB
- Then a search input appears within 250ms

AC2: Real-Time Results

- Given I type a keyword
- When the system processes the query
- Then matching messages appear in <200ms for threads under 10k messages

AC3: Jump to Message

- Given search results are displayed
- When I tap a result
- Then the conversation scrolls to the exact message and highlights it

AC4: Filters

- Given filters are enabled
- When I select "Media only"
- Then only messages containing media are displayed

AC5: Exit Search

- Given I am in search mode
- When I tap close

- Then the full conversation is restored

Save Messages – Acceptance Criteria

AC6: Save Message

- Given I long-press a message
- When I tap “Save”
- Then the message icon changes state and a confirmation appears

AC7: View Saved Messages

- Given I access “Saved in this chat”
- When the screen loads
- Then all saved messages are listed chronologically

AC8: Cross-Device Sync

- Given I save a message on Device A
- When I open the same chat on Device B
- Then the message appears in saved items

AC9: Unsave

- Given a message is saved
- When I tap “Unsave”
- Then it is removed from saved list immediately

AC10: Privacy

- Given I save a message
- Then only I can see that saved state

File Attach – Acceptance Criteria

AC11: File Picker

- Given I tap attach
- When the file picker opens
- Then I can browse supported file types

AC12: Upload Progress

- Given I send a file
- When it uploads
- Then I see a progress indicator

AC13: Upload Failure

- Given upload fails
- When failure occurs
- Then I see a retry option

AC14: File Size Validation

- Given I attempt to upload unsupported file size
- When file exceeds limit
- Then I see an error message

AC15: Performance Guardrail

- Given features are enabled
- When sending a text message

The message sent latency remains unchanged.

Cross-Feature Acceptance Criteria

AC16: No Messaging Regression

Message send rate does not decline vs control.

AC17: Crash Rate

Crash rate does not increase vs baseline.

AC18: UI Clutter

User satisfaction score remains stable.

5. Edge cases

Search

- Search in extremely large conversations may cause delayed or partial result loading.
- Search is unavailable in Disappearing Messages mode conversations.
- Search performed while offline may return only locally cached results.

Save Messages

- A saved message may no longer be available if the original message is deleted.
- Saved messages may not sync immediately across devices due to network delays.
- Excessive saved messages in a thread may impact loading performance.

File Attach

- Uploading unsupported file types will trigger a validation error.
- Files exceeding the maximum size limit will be blocked from uploading.

- File uploads may fail or pause if network connectivity is lost.

6. Event tracking sheet

Search Events

Event Name	Trigger	Properties	Purpose
dm_search_fab_impression	FAB becomes visible in thread	user_id, thread_id, thread_type (1:1/group), message_count	Measure exposure
dm_search_fab_click	User taps FAB	user_id, thread_id, thread_type	Measure entry CTR
dm_search_query_submitted	User submits search query	query_length, thread_id, result_count	Measure search usage
dm_search_result_click	User taps a search result	result_rank, message_age, thread_id	Measure successful retrieval
dm_search_no_result	Search returns zero results	query_length, thread_id	Identify search gaps
dm_search_filter_applied	User applies filter (media/docs/date)	filter_type, thread_id	Feature depth usage
dm_search_exit	User exits search mode	time_spent_in_search	Measure session depth

Save Message Events

Event Name	Trigger	Properties	Purpose
dm_message_save_click	User taps Save in long-press menu	message_type (text/media/file), thread_type	Track adoption
dm_message_saved_success	Save completes successfully	message_age, device_type	Confirm successful action
dm_message_unsave	User removes saved state	message_type	Measure churn
dm_saved_view_open	User opens Saved section	saved_count, thread_id	Measure revisit behavior

dm_saved_item_click	User taps a saved item	message_type, message_age	Measure engagement depth
dm_saved_sync_delay	Save sync delayed > threshold	device_type, latency_ms	Monitor sync reliability

File Attach Events

Event Name	Trigger	Properties	Purpose
dm_attach_icon_click	User taps attach icon	thread_type	Measure entry rate
dm_file_selected	File chosen from picker	file_type, file_size_mb	Track file mix
dm_file_upload_start	Upload begins	file_type, file_size_mb	Monitor throughput
dm_file_upload_success	Upload completes	upload_time_ms, file_type	Measure performance
dm_file_upload_fail	Upload fails	error_type (network/size/type) , file_size_mb	Failure diagnostics
dm_file_retry_click	User retries upload	error_type	Resilience tracking

Platform Switching Proxy Events

Event Name	Trigger	Properties	Purpose
dm_app_background_after_search	User leaves app within 10s of search	thread_id	Detect switching
dm_app_background_after_attach	App minimized during file flow	thread_id	Switching signal
dm_external_link_open_after_search	User taps external link post search	link_domain	Intent signal
dm_session_end_after_feature_use	Session ends after feature usage	feature_type	Drop-off analysis

Guardrail Monitoring Events

Event Name	Trigger	Properties	Purpose
dm_message_send	Message sent	thread_type	Core behavior stability
dm_crash_event	App crash	feature_active (Y/N)	Stability

dm_latency_spike	Search > 300ms	latency_ms, thread_size	Performance regression
dm_ui_overlap_issue	UI layout error detected	device_type	UX stability

Derived Metrics

From these events, the following metrics can be determined:

- Search Click Through Rate (CTR)
- Search Success Rate (result_click / query_submitted)
- Save Adoption Rate
- Saved Revisit Rate
- File Attach Rate
- Upload Failure Rate
- Platform Switching Proxy Rate
- Feature Retention Impact
- Latency Percentiles (P50 / P90 / P99)

Experimentation Tags (For A/B Testing)

Each event should include:

- experiment_id
- variant_id (Control / Search Only / Search+Save / Full Bundle)
- rollout_percentage
- cohort_type

Privacy & Compliance Notes

- Do not log raw search query text unless approved.
- Do not log message content.
- Anonymize user identifiers for analytics layer.
- Respect encrypted conversation policies.

Tentative Timelines:

Task	Date
Leadership approval	20.02.2026
Design ready	27.02.2026
Prototype testing	2.03.2026
Development starts	9.03.2026
Beta Launch	30.03.2026

Dependencies:

1. Open Questions (Strategic & Product-Level Dependencies)

These must be resolved before full rollout.

Search

- Should search index the entire chat history or only recent messages?
- Should search work in encrypted / vanish mode chats?
- Should filters (media/docs/date) ship in V1?

Save

- Are saved messages private per user or visible to both participants?
- Should 'saved' messages sync across devices?
- Is there a limit to the number of saved items per thread?

File Attach

- What is the maximum allowed file size?
- Are there restrictions by region?
- Should previews be shown for all file types?

Platform Strategy

- What exact metric defines "platform switching"?
- Do we target specific user segments (creators, business accounts, casual power users)?
- Are we positioning this as productivity or casual enhancement?

2. Infrastructure Requirements

These are backend and system-level dependencies.

Search Infrastructure

- Message indexing service (local + server-side)
- Efficient retrieval layer (<200ms latency target)
- Scalable storage for large thread indexing
- Query caching layer
- Monitoring & latency alert system

Save Infrastructure

- Bookmark storage schema
- Sync across devices (cloud-backed state)
- Access control logic (private vs shared saves)
- Backup & retention policies

File Attach Infrastructure

- File storage scaling (cloud storage)

- Content Delivery Network (CDN) integration for download speed
- Malware scanning system
- Uploads retry handling
- File type validation service
- Increased storage cost forecasting

Analytics & Experimentation

- Event tracking instrumentation
- A/B testing framework
- Guardrail monitoring dashboard
- Platform-switch tracking signals

3. Budget Approvals

Budget dependencies may include:

Engineering

- Backend indexing optimization work
- Mobile client engineering bandwidth
- QA automation resources

Infrastructure Cost

- Storage expansion for file uploads
- Additional compute for indexing
- CDN cost increases
- Data retention cost for saved messages

Experimentation

- A/B testing allocation
- Monitoring tooling upgrades
- Estimated Cost Drivers
- High-volume file uploads
- Long-term storage of saved items
- Indexing load for large conversations

Finance approval required before scaling rollout after pilot run.

4. Partner Support (APIs, Partnerships)

External integrations may include:

File Storage Providers

- Cloud storage vendors
- CDN providers
- Malware detection services

Mobile OS APIs

- iOS file picker APIs
- Android file access APIs
- Background upload handling

Encryption & Security Partners

- E2E encryption compliance review
- Security audit vendors

Analytics Vendors

- If using third-party experimentation frameworks

5. Internal Dependencies

Cross-functional alignment required.

Engineering Teams

- Backend infrastructure
- Mobile iOS team
- Mobile Android team
- Performance optimization team
- Security team

Design Team

- UI layout adjustments
- Iconography decisions
- Motion & micro-interactions
- Accessibility compliance
- Design system updates

Data Science / Analytics

- Metric definition (platform switching proxy)
- Cohort segmentation
- A/B experiment analysis
- Latency performance benchmarking

Privacy & Legal

- Saved content retention policies
- Data storage regulations by region
- File-sharing compliance review

Trust & Safety

- File upload moderation
- Content scanning
- Abuse detection

Marketing / Growth

- Positioning strategy
- Feature communication
- Onboarding nudges

Related documents:

1. Tech planning document
2. Design planning document
3. Go to market planning