

16.6: Instagram



Figure 16.6.1: Instagram logo Adapted From Instagram, 2017

Introduction and stats

Instagram (instagram.com) is a mobile-based photo app that allows you to take a picture with your phone camera, and then add an interesting artistic filter to make it look polished and beautiful. This can then be shared on Instagram itself and on other social networks for followers to view and comment on.

People love to share photos, images, art and funny pictures online. Images tend to attract higher engagement than text-only posts.



Figure 16.6.2: Instagram sign in Adapted From Screenshot, Instagram, 2017

Some statistics on Instagram as of 2016:

- 700 million monthly users
- 400 million daily active users
- 32% of people online use Instagram
- Over 40 billion photos shared.
- 59% of internet users between 18 and 29 use Instagram, compared to only 33% of internet users aged between 30 and 49 years.

(Omnicores, 2017a)

Features

Users have a profile and a unique username. On their profile, users post images or videos. They can include hashtags and tag other users who may appear in the image or video or who they think the post would particularly appeal to and who might wish to engage with it. Instagram also provides for direct posts, which are posts sent directly to up to 15 specific users. This is a useful feature for businesses to engage with key influencers, who may in turn share the post with all their followers.

Note

Hashtags are key means of tracking relevant subjects, categories and trends. As on Twitter, hashtags help users find and give context to your post. For example, your post about a dog could have the hashtag #DogsOfInstagram or #dogstagram.

Users follow other users or brand pages that they find interesting. Posts can be liked, by double tapping the picture or tapping the heart icon, and commented on. Each user has an activity feed which provides the recent activity of the users they follow, as well as how people have engaged with what they have posted (Kirschner, 2015).

Instagram also offers Shopping on Instagram. Users will be able to tap on item to find a larger image, a description of the product and how much the product costs.

There will also be a link that takes users directly to the website where they can purchase that specific product. (Facebook, 2017b).

Note

You can watch a video on how shopping on Instagram works here: vimeo.com/209655799.

Marketing and advertising with Instagram

With over 400 million daily users, Instagram is one of the world's largest mobile social media platforms. Its benefit lies in boosting brand relevance through eyecatching visual content and potential large audiences. Business pages and posts cost nothing to set up, but like other social media platforms, Instagram is becoming a pay to play space. Brands need to use promoted posts to reach a more extensive audience than they would with simple organic reach. Brands can promote posts without a business page, but do not have access to analytics and data about their users and their engagement with posts and ads.

The large number of potential followers and the analytics data provided for business accounts provides marketers with key information about potential customers. To benefit from Instagram's analytics tool, Follower Insights, brands need a business profile, which can automatically be linked to their Facebook Page. Their contact information will be imported directly and any Instagram followers will be able to contact the brand through Instagram. Because Instagram is owned by Facebook, it integrates with Facebook's advertising interface, making posting across these channels seamless.

Note

Read more about this in the [Social media advertising](#) chapter.

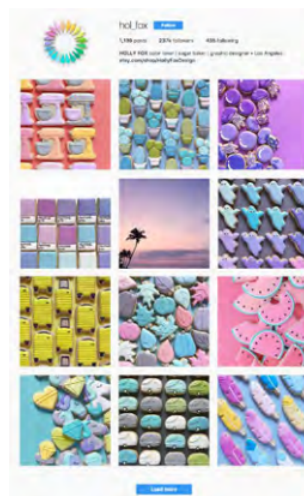


Figure 16.6.3: Holly Fox, a baker and graphic designer, uses beautiful and brand relevant imagery on her Instagram page, which has given her a strong and engaged following *Adapted From Screenshot, Instagram, 2017*

Brands need to ensure they connect with the right communities so that they reach the right followers, but also need to monitor competitors and their posts and followers. Brands should use hashtags in every post, preferably those that are popular and actually used by their audience. Hashtags enable tracking of mentions and shares and tends to make content discoverable. Rare hashtags can make content less easy for potential customers or users to find. But, only using popular hashtags means your content could get lost among a million other posts. A more unique hashtag, marketed and publicised well, can make your content easier to find. For example, #food renders millions of results, while #vegan will narrow these results. Hashtags are also good for SEO. Understanding your audience is crucial as a brand, and monitoring their engagement is necessary to ensure that your posts are relevant.

Note

For more details on marketing with Instagram, see <https://www.forbes.com/sites/ajagrawal/2016/03/25/the-101-of-marketing-oninstagram/#5e87f4be5db3>

Business profiles can promote posts directly and can specify the business objective and call to action. Budgets and time periods for the promotion can also be tailored to the brand.

Note

For more information on the features of Instagram, see <http://sproutsocial.com/insights/instagramfeatures>

Instagram Analytics

If your Instagram account is tied to your Facebook account, then you will have access to Instagram Insights. Instagram insights tracks followers and what they like. Information on posts such how many followers saw a specific post and how many engagements and views it received as well as total number of followers can all be tracked. Follower activity is also monitored, with insights into demographic details, competitor posts they have engaged with, time of day they are most likely to engage, and what trends your followers are following. Individual promoted posts can also be tracked.



Figure 16.6.4: Instagram Insights Adapted From LinkedIn, 2016

Marketers can use this information to improve their posts, increase engagement by planning a strategy that will ensure posts occur at optimal times, and include correct hashtags.

Instagram summary

Instagram is a great platform for brands that have a strong visual identity, or who are able to tap into this visual audience with beautiful and eye-catching content. Instagram can be managed through Facebook's Ad manager, meaning you can share content and manage ads and promotions seamlessly across both platforms from one place.

Instagram is constantly updating its features, integrating Snapchat like features, such as Stories and filters, and providing a pin board type feature for brands to collect and showcase their content and products. With the addition of Shopping on Instagram, there are new exciting eCommerce opportunities for retail based brands. Instagram is a popular mobile platform and should be considered by any brand that wishes to engage with a mobile, millennial audience.

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