



A MARKETER'S GUIDE TO INSTAGRAM



CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
ABOUT INSTAGRAM	4
BUILDING A WINNING STRATEGY	5
TYPES OF POST	6
FILTERS AND IMAGE SIZES	9
THE RISE OF THE STORY	11
IGTV	14
HIGH PERFORMING POSTS	15
POWER OF THE HASHTAG	18
PAID SOCIAL FOR INSTAGRAM	19
HUBSPOT - RESEARCH	21

INTRODUCTION

We should all know the benefits of using social media to expand your audience and to promote services and products by now. We should also understand the countless nuances of the various platforms, the audiences they allow us to communicate with, and market to. Over the years, we have covered many of these in our other social media resources and box sets.

One area we haven't touched on, however, is Instagram. We haven't done this on purpose, it's just that we wanted to give the most comprehensive look at the platform and show brands and businesses the best ways to use it in order to get the most from their marketing efforts.

In short, Instagram is so big we just can't ignore it anymore. Lets' begin.



ABOUT INSTAGRAM

Instagram launched back in 2010, and is a photo and video-sharing social networking service owned by Facebook, Inc.

Thanks largely to the rise of the smartphone, and the quality of the cameras we have access to, the number of users has rocketed in recent years, seeing off its main competitor Snapchat and indeed its parent company (Facebook). In a piece of research by TechCrunch it has been reported that it reached one billion active monthly users in 2018 (aided, no doubt, by the Facebook acquisition), also becoming more popular than other social media giants such as Twitter and LinkedIn.

There are a few main reasons for this growth, and we can tie them into some of the trends that we see from a search and digital marketing perspective. The design of the platform is visually appealing, something that is proven to lead to increased activity.

Another key point to note on the popularity of Instagram is the fact that there has been growing focus on user experience, something that also translates into our industry. More than ever we are seeing businesses expand their audience by tailoring their offering to all for the best user experience. This is partly due to the technology that we have and the understanding of it, partly to do with the fact that Google tells us to focus on UX and partly because, well, it's common sense. A happy customer, who is satisfied and fulfilled by their online experience, is more likely to return as a user, make a purchase, become a brand ambassador and, share their knowledge of your business to others.

The report found that, with UX and data being so vital to users, Instagram has decided to focus on its eCommerce and conversion abilities, making it easier for brands to show the return on investment (ROI) for their efforts.

BUILDING A WINNING STRATEGY

Before you can decide what kind of content to post in Instagram, you need to think about who's going to see it, where and when. We constantly talk about the need to understand your audience but as well as this, you need to understand the average audience for the platform.

According to Hootsuite: "The vast majority of Instagram users are under the age of 35, with a fairly close split between male and female users. The United States has the largest number of Instagram users, closely followed by India, Brazil, and Indonesia."

With over a billion users, the split in terms of age is startling in comparison to other social networks, and as you can see from the numbers below 86% of all users are aged between 13 and 44.

- Ages 13–17: 57 million (7%)
- Ages 18–24: 270 million (32%)
- Ages 25–34: 270 million (32%)
- Ages 35–44: 131 million (15%)

They suggest that you harness this information, and build out your audience by doing the following four things:

- Determine who already buys from you.
- Check the analytics on your other social media channels to learn who follows you there.
- Do some thorough competitor research.
- Create a clear value statement for your brand.

Building an engaged audience is just a small part of the strategy; brands and businesses need to be able to identify which posts work, when to place ads, which hashtags to use, how to design eye-catching posts and when to implement video. We'll look at some of these now...



TYPES OF POST

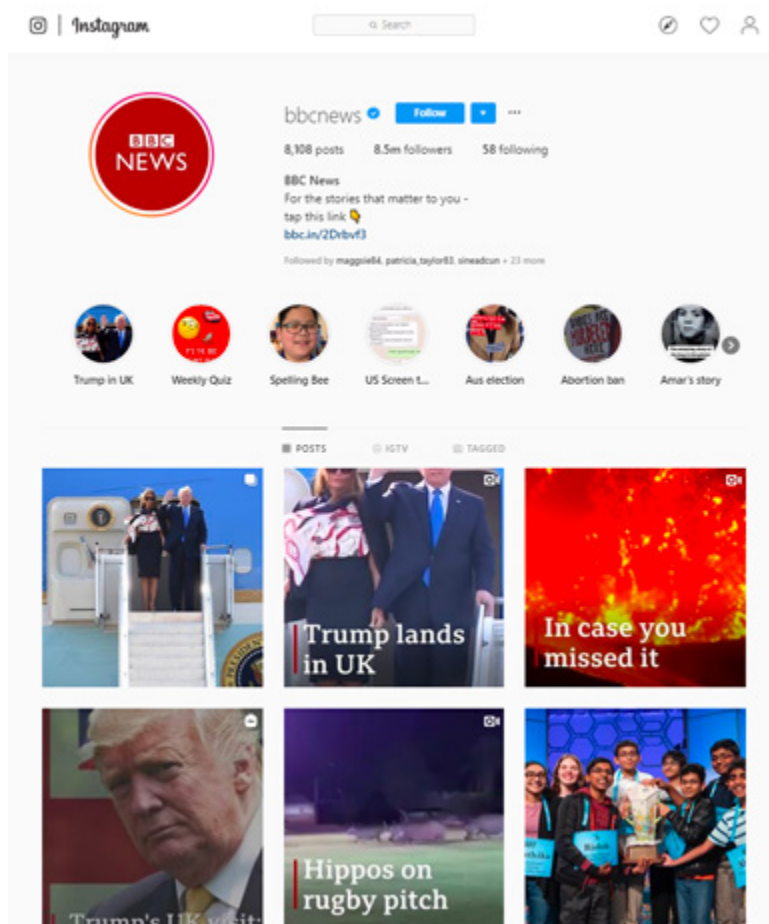
When it comes to the different types of post that there are available on Instagram, you have to make sure that you are not only well versed in their formats, whether or not they are suitable for your business objectives.

The reality, knowing that you have set up an Instagram account, is that you will benefit from the platform. So, which posts are available and how can you use them?

There are four main types of post on Instagram: the single picture, the carousel of more than one image which users can 'swipe', paid ads and video posts.

Of course there is also additional functionality in terms of IGTV and Stories both of which we will cover a little later.

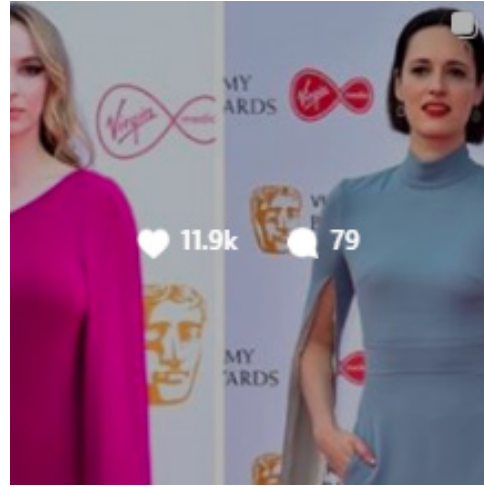
All of these posts (apart from stories and IGTV) find themselves a home on 'the grid', a nickname given to individual posts that form the user profile. The top right hand corner of the image will tell you the type of post. You can see some of them on the example from BBC news below:



Here is the key to the type of posts seen on a small sample of the BBC News posts:

No symbol (top right) = standard image


Layered image = multiple images for the same post





Note that the layered image expands to the same post content with a carousel of related images as seen below:



 **bbcnews** • Follow
Royal Albert Hall

 **bbcnews** • Some photos from the @bafta's at the Royal Festival Hall in London. (1) @killingeve star @jodiemcomer and writer and star of @bbcthree's Fleabag Phoebe Waller-Bridge [PA] (2) Ant and Dec from Britain's Got Talent and I'm A Celebrity [EPA] (3) This country's Daisy May Cooper wore a dress made from bin bags [PA]

Click the link in our bio to find out


   

11,946 likes



MAY 12



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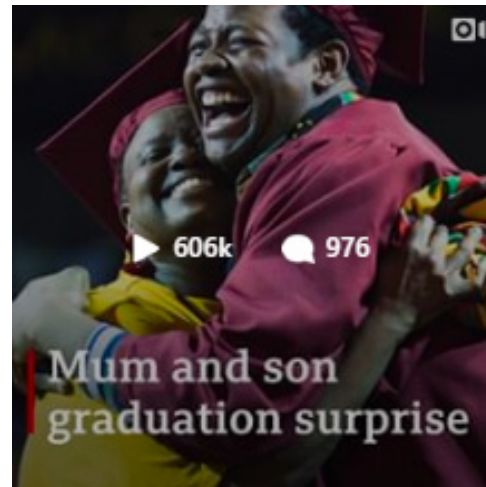
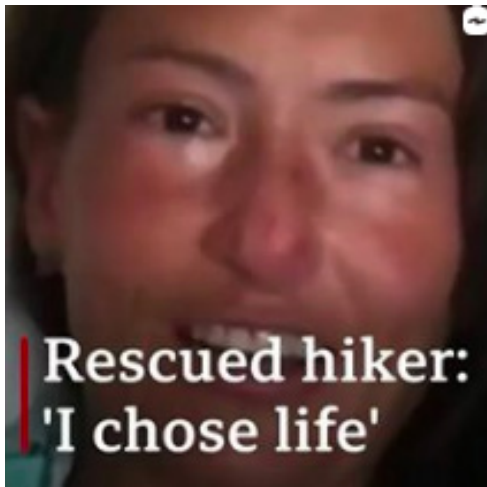
   

11,946 likes

MAY 12

TV with lightening bold = IGTV

Video camera = video



STANDARD POSTS

When using Instagram, the most popular type of post is a standard image post, (note: ads are included in this as many appear in this format). Here the user/account holder can choose to add a single post. Many businesses will use this space for product shots (See the example from Jack Daniels below) as it is a nice way to highlight a full range or partial range of products.



FILTERS AND IMAGE SIZES

Instagram allows users the facility to edit their images in the app, and to make them look even more appealing regardless of the content. One of the key reasons that users flock to the site, is that the editing functionality is both easy to use and diverse. According to the official help centre on Instagram, there are a wide range of filters available, and a suite of built in tools allow you to further tweak an image.

In the help centre Instagram says that you can edit photos you take or upload from your smartphone's library. Once you've taken or uploaded a photo, simply tap 'Next' then, 'Edit' at the bottom of the screen to begin the edit.

Here are the effects that can be created:

- Tap Adjust to change the photo's vertical or horizontal perspective.
- Tap Brightness to make your photo brighter or darker.
- Tap Contrast to make the bright areas of your photo brighter and the dark areas darker.
- Tap Structure to bring out the detail and texture in your photo.
- Tap Warmth to shift the colours of your photo toward warmer orange tones or cooler blue tones.
- Tap Saturation to increase or decrease the colour intensity of the image (example: adjust up to make the red redder).
- Tap Colour to add a colour (yellow, orange, red, pink, purple, blue, cyan or green) to either the shadows or highlights of your photo. Tap the colour you want to use twice to adjust the strength of the colour.
- Tap Fade to give your photo an aged look.
- Tap Highlights to adjust the focus on the bright areas of the image.
- Tap Shadows to adjust focus on the dark areas of the image.
- Tap Vignette to darken the edges of the photo. Adding a vignette can direct the attention away from the edges towards the centre of the photo.
- Tap Sharpen to add crispness to your photo and make the photo appear clearer.
- Tap Tilt Shift to give the appearance of a shallow depth of field, or placing the focus on a subject in the background while blurring out the foreground and vice versa.

When it comes to the size of the images and the resolution to get the best possible results, here are the official sizes:

Profile picture size

- Optimum size : 110px x 110px
- Max resolution: 180px x 180px.

Photos

- Instagram square image: 1080px x 1080px but the maximum of 2048px x 2048px should be used where possible
- Instagram landscape image: 1080px x 566px.
- Instagram portrait image: 1080px x 1350px

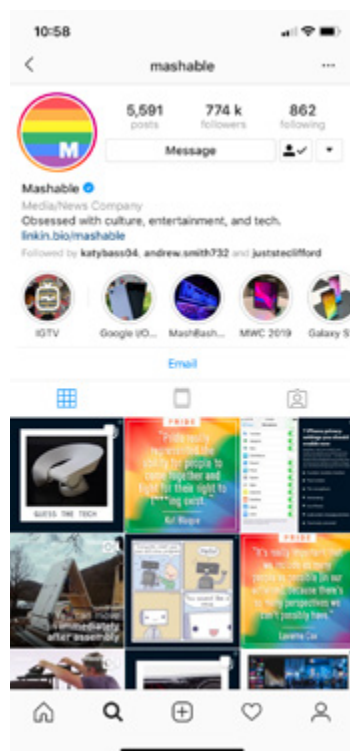
Videos and Instagram Stories

- Video to timeline: 640px x 640px
- Video to Instagram stories: 750px x 1334px

Ads

- Square ad: 1080px x 1080px.
- Landscape ad: 1080px x 566px.

LINKED POSTS



One of the latest features and, in truth, best for marketers is the linked post. This is where a business uses a link in their bio to take users to a separate grid displaying articles or products that they can then read/buy. This is how it works using a nice example from Mashable.



Businesses choose to edit their bios and add in a link like the one in the first image. Clicking through to the link takes the user to the following screen which is a separate grid of posts. All of these posts expand and take the user away from Instagram to a place where they may become a conversion.



Clicking on one of the posts means that the user will see something like the below post which is a full length article. The main benefits of this are that you are not only getting a potential customer to your actual URL, but you are also giving them extra content, in a longerform and therefore ultimately building further trust and authority.

THE RISE OF THE STORY

One of the key features of Instagram is the Story tab that appears at the top of the page/app. Stories lets users post photos and videos that vanish after 24 hours and which can be updated regularly to almost catalogue a full day's activities.

These have become increasingly popular especially for those who are attending live events. If a user attended a music festival, for example, they would be able to upload different videos and pictures as the acts changes, as they ate and drank, as they danced and shopped, helping the audience feel immersed in the event themselves.

Instagram's version of Snapchat which has now surpassed the platform with over 420 million daily active users, is an essential part of your Instagram marketing strategy. While Instagram advertising will continue to grow in 2019, the real winners will be the early adopters who find success on Instagram Stories.

So what are stories?

Instagram Stories appear in a bar at the top of your feed — and all Instagram accounts will be able to share stories, from your best friends to your favourite popular accounts. When there's something new to see, their profile photo will have a colourful ring around it.

To view someone's story, you simply need to tap on their profile photo, and their story will appear full-screen, showing you all of the content they've posted in the last 24 hours, the content will play in chronological order from oldest to newest.

Once you're viewing a story, you can tap to go back and forward or swipe to jump to another person's story. Unlike regular posts, there are no likes or public comments.

In a piece by Buffer, who conducted their annual 'State of Social Report' said: "Stories are vital for the modern marketer but many don't even use them. This is something that has to change if transactions, impressions and conversions are to rise."

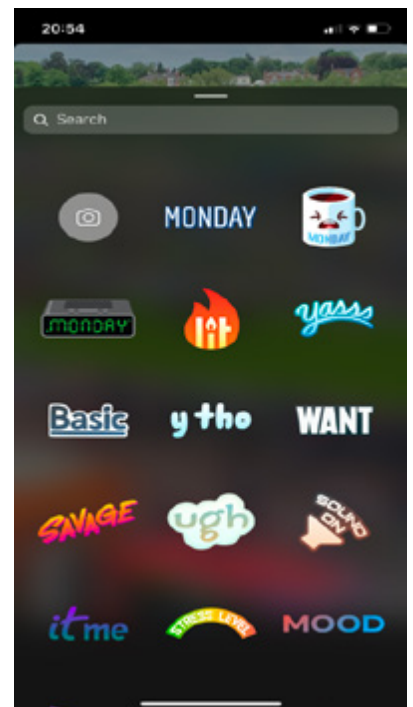
Posts using the story feature are made as follows:

The user chooses their 'base image' (or video) before selecting a filter and editing it accordingly. Once this base image is set up there is a number of other features that they can add to their Story.

The account holder can add text and drawings using the pen tools to highlight a certain part of the image.



They can add stickers to emphasise something, or make them seem more appealing. It was recently stated that posts with stickers, polls and question boxes that appear in a Story, gain around 65% more interaction.



You can also add in a location, which can be expanded out in maps. This is great for businesses who want to tell their customers where they are operating from or where their event is.



As you will see a little later there is a lot to gain from using hashtags on your posts and this is something that you should keep in mind for Stories also.



Check who's seen it – Analytics are important and any business worth their salt will have an idea of who is interacting with them.

It is important to note that content shared to stories won't appear on your profile grid or in the main Instagram feed.



IGTV

For regular readers of our blog, and for those who have seen our other resources you will know that video is on the rise as a primary marketing tactic. In a recent study by Cisco, they predict that there will be around and 80% increase of internet traffic in the form of videos by the end of 2019. Social media plays a huge part of this with Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and now Instagram all leading the way.

There is now a need for the general public to disrupt the news and to share their voices and opinions on a range of topics. They want as much information as possible and have a desire to be part of the conversation. Video allows this. It offers a platform and IGTV works like a YouTube channel, giving the user the chance to broadcast their thoughts and live footage. Best of all is the way that the platform is built. It allows those watching the videos can engage back through the comment function and through emojis, likes and other visual responses.

So how does it work?

IGTV video is an app that can be used alone or in tandem with Instagram, designed for the mobile-optimised viewing of long-form videos.

Any user can set up their own channel and share video content that's up to an hour long. It's up to the user or brand whether or not they want to create channel-specific content here, or if they are interested in connecting it to videos they're already posting on Instagram.

The Digital Marketing Institute recently argued that IGTV could soon surpass YouTube as the 'go-to' video platform, especially for brands. They posted: "Using IGTV will offer individual users and brands some benefits over YouTube. For one thing, there are no commercials at this point, so you can get ahead with your visual content without interruptions that can cause viewers to lose interest and change the channel.

"IGTV is also designed for use on smartphones, with vertical videos that don't push users to move their phones into a horizontal position for viewing. It's not only optimised for phone viewing, but it's also meant for users to upload videos via their phones easily.

"Vertical videos were already made popular by Snapchat. So many viewers, especially the younger set, who used to use platforms like Snapchat, will probably appreciate that extra little feature, even if they don't realise it."

The two social media apps will undoubtedly compete, with Instagram already having a "built-in" audience of 1 billion but only a fraction of people actually engaging in IGTV so far. But given the quick rise to popularity that Instagram Stories took a few years back, there's no telling how quickly it could surpass YouTube's numbers.

Key tips for IGTV –

- Design the videos to fit your audience – see what types of post are working and resonating with them and follow this structure
- After posting, remember to share the link on other social networks and pull people back to your Instagram
- 3-4 minute videos seem to work best from products and reviews, opinion pieces tend to be over 10 minutes and live footage can be an hour. Think about your timing
- Add in clickable links to the video to take the user where you want them to go. This is especially important for those looking to gain conversions
- Also remember to use appropriate hastags
- Remember your corporate message and stay on brand, you don't want to tarnish other marketing activity
- Encourage comments, debate and replies. This is social media after all.
- Analyse performance, at the end of a post make sure you use analytics to understand how the piece did in terms of performance. This will help with future strategy

HIGH PERFORMING POSTS

Understanding the various types of post is a good starting point, but then you have to look at the posts that are performing best on Instagram as a whole. Of course, this is subjective and relates to your audience. Looking at the stats behind previous posts and how your competitors are using the platform is a must, but the following images tend to be the styles that perform best for businesses:



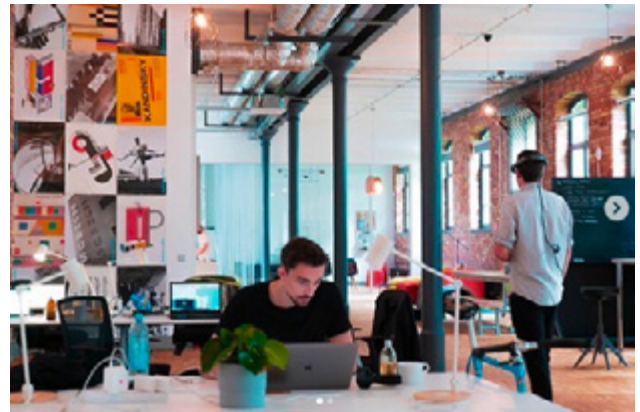
Quotes - Inspirational quotes are a great example of sharable content, especially in the businesses and lifestyle markets.



Products/ Branding – You want to make sure that your brand of logo is front of mind and that people can connect with you so why not share it on your social posts?



Food – It goes without saying that food pictures do well on social media, Instagram especially. If this is an area you work in then why not take inspiration from the above image and add in both a product shot and your logo. This, in truth, can be done across any range of products.



People – People like people; if you have images of those working in your business it can help to build a rapport. The same can be said if you are running events, taking part in charity fundraisers or if you simply want to show others enjoying your products. In fact, photos showing faces get 38% more likes than photos without faces.



Events – If you're running an event or promotion and want customers to attend or buy then it's handy to reach them all at once. Harness the power of social media to put out posts with all the key information on. Remember to add in your hashtags for the event also. The latter point helps with reach and can lead to more conversions.



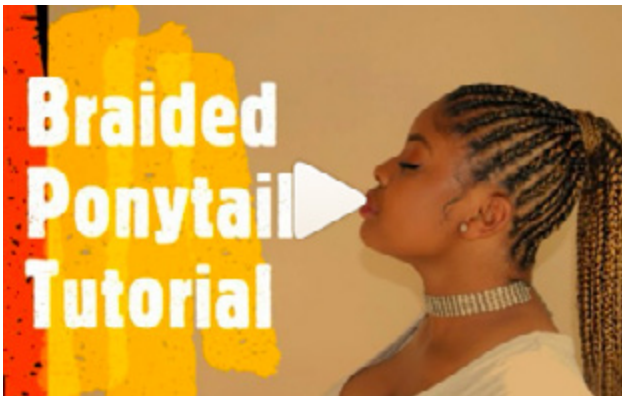
Testimonials – If someone has said something nice about your brand or a product then why not share it on social. Customers trust other customers and testimonials and reviews are a great way to build a brand.



User generated content (UGC) – If someone is using one of your products then it's great to reshare their posts and photos of them using it. It shows authenticity and in truth is free advertising so why not utilise it?



Behind the scenes - It's more important than ever to create a human connection with your customers. Showing them glimpses of your staff, and the things that go on behind-the-scenes is a great way to do this. Show them how you work, how you make and how you design.



Tutorials – If a user needs help then give it to them. Show them videos with tips on how to craft things, bake things and then sell them the tools and products they need.

Top tip:

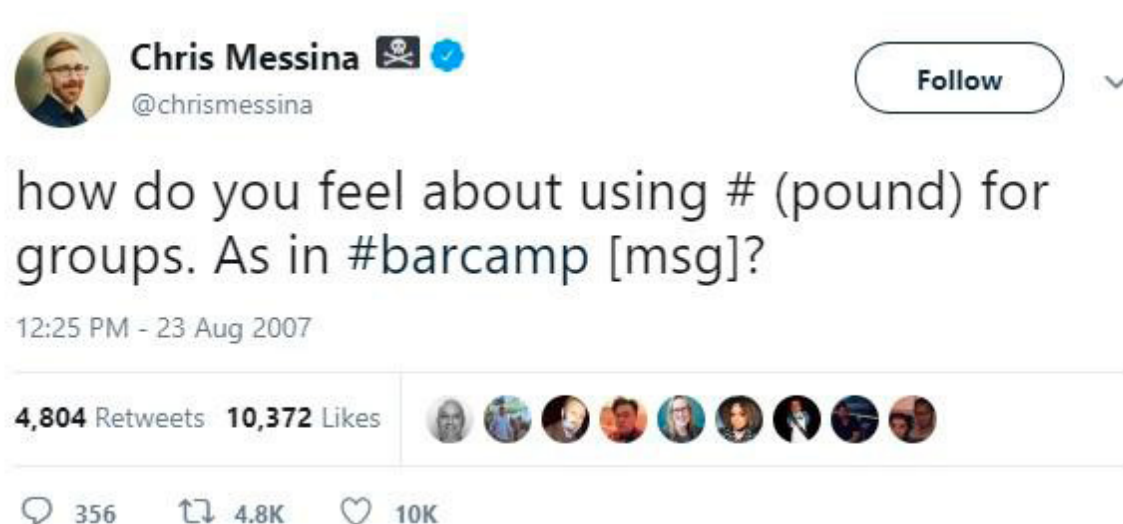
Use a mix of images and formats to make sure that you are reaching as broad a spectrum of your audience and add in the appropriate hashtags



POWER OF THE HASHTAG

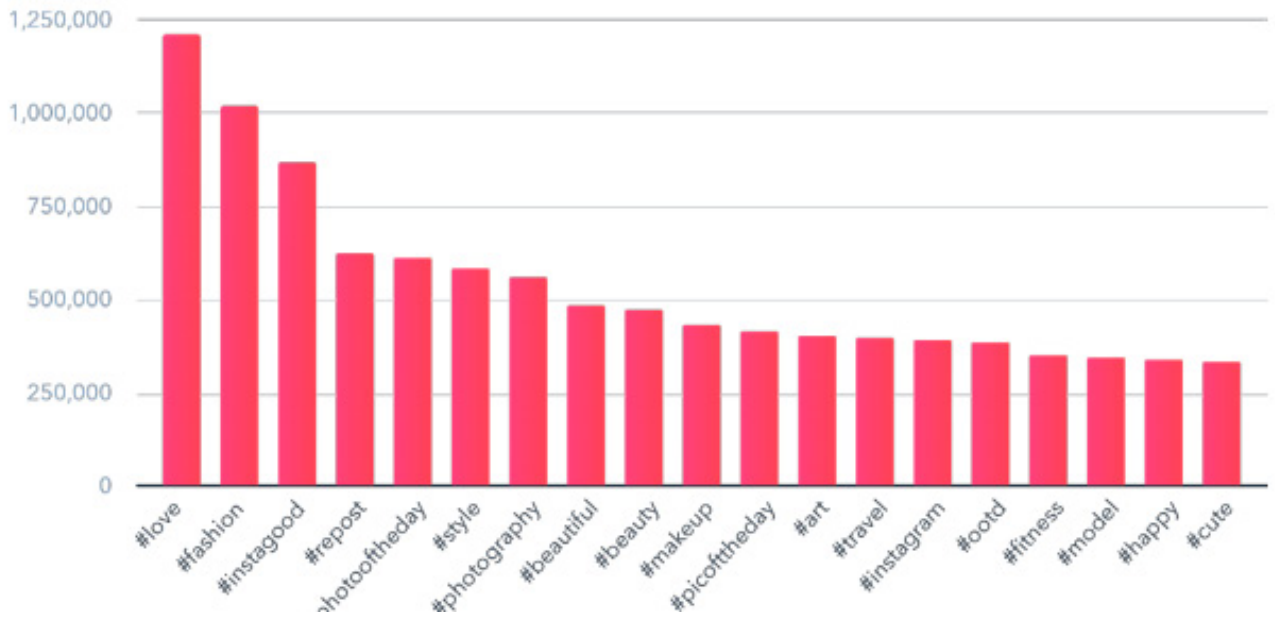
Ever since Chris Messina a Silicon Valley, Product Designer, touted the idea of using the hash (#) symbol as a way of grouping information, (see image below) back in 2007, the trend of 'hashtagging' has seen a rapid increase. You can't look at a social post, especially one on Twitter without seeing one of them and their use on Instagram seems to be even more prevalent. Before we get into their uses and importance it's vital that we understand the hashtag itself.

A hashtag is a type of metadata tag used on social networks which allows users to apply dynamic, user-generated tagging to their posts. This in turn makes it possible for others to easily find messages with a specific theme or content and to search based on topic. Hashtags are typically added in the caption or comments of a post as a way to group different topics of content. Simply put, they are keywords that people would use to search for specific posts.



Businesses can use hashtags to make their posts appear for searches within the platform, and those that do perform far greater than those that don't include them. Hashtags are a great way, if relevant, to entice a new audience. There could be many users who are looking for new health products and they might use #healthfood for their search. If you are a supplement, fruit drink or protein powder provider you might want to add this hashtag into your latest post so that the original user sees your product. This is free marketing so make sure you are utilising it! But how many is too many? Well, research suggests it's better to use fewer hashtags (no more than 5) that are relevant to your post. This is because a high number of hashtags can appear spammy and be ignored.

With fashion, food and lifestyle posts performing best on Instagram the most popular hashtags are:



PAID SOCIAL FOR INSTAGRAM

As well as posting for the benefits that social media brings, such as engaging with your audience and showing off your products and services, brands also want to gain conversions. Ads are a good way of doing this, and more and more businesses are using Instagram as a paid social platform. The popularity of this platform for running ads is such that we can't ignore it. Below is an example of how an paid advert or 'sponsored post' appears in the newsfeed.



So what are Instagram ads, how much do they cost and why should you use them?

Instagram first began offering limited ad services in 2013, after being purchased by Facebook. But it wasn't until 2015 that they opened the floodgates and allowed advertising for brands and businesses of all shapes and sizes. This really took off especially because it is integrated with Facebook Ad Manager, brands can leverage Facebook's massive wealth of user information to advertise directly to their target audience.

Hootsuite ran a report on the cost of advertising on Instagram. They said: "Though the cost of your specific Instagram ad will be unique to you (after all, not all ads are the same), the average cost-per-click for Instagram ads is around \$0.70 – \$0.80. This figure comes from an analysis of more than \$300 million of ad spend.

"Your Instagram ad might end up costing less or more depending on a variety of factors. For example, check out how much costs fluctuate based on the ages you choose to target." And why use them you ask? Well 75% of users take action on Instagram ads (eg, purchasing a product or going to a website) so if you're not running them out you are missing out on traffic and conversions.

There are five ad formats available on Instagram, they are:

- Stories ads
- Photo ads
- Video ads
- Carousel ads
- Collection ads

Each of these ad formats are woven into users' Feeds and Stories offering a non-disruptive user experience. Instagram also offers different types of call-to-actions that can help you collect more leads such as:

- Apply Now
- Book Now
- Contact Us
- Call Now (video only)
- Download

Such is the importance of paid social especially on Instagram, we'll be covering this in a future eBook and in greater detail.

HUBSPOT – RESEARCH

In order to prove the value of Instagram for businesses, inbound marketing and software company HubSpot commissioned some research to highlight trends and the impact of certain posts. This section will cover some of the key findings and identify trends.

The study looked at over 300,000 of the top accounts on Instagram and nearly 50m posts to find out more about engagement rates, hashtags, and other insights that matter to both brands and marketers. The reason this study is relevant is that many of these accounts are businesses, brands or influencers who are promoting products. As you will see the results seem high but this is where many on Instagram aspire to be.

Some of the key takeaways were:

- Video posts receive more than 2x more comments than other types of posts
- Tagging more than 5 users in a post does not increase engagement rates
- The average Instagram post contains 1.01 hashtags
- 46.6% of Instagram users have less than 1000 followers

There are two reasons engagement is one of the most important and telling metrics for Instagram. It allows you to know if you're reaching the right audience with your brand, and if your content is relevant to them.

Hubspot found that, by looking at the sample, it was clear that the average Instagram post receives 5,963.1 likes (including the results of influencers). The median number of likes is around 100, which suggests 50% of users receive less than 100 likes for the average post with video doing better.

Taking into account posts of highly influential users - the average Instagram post receives 100.34 comments. The average number of comments per post for a video is 150. Again this is high but the median number of comments is around 4 comments per post. This allows you to build up a rapport with your audience and it is vital that you maintain a professional tone when responding to comments.

These stats highlight the reach and the potential that businesses can have if they use Instagram properly. Whether or not you already have an Instagram for your business this guide and the findings within it should encourage you to set an account up or optimise the way you use it.

GET IN TOUCH WITH US TODAY

ABOUT US

Click Consult is a multi award-winning digital and search marketing agency with a focus on organic (SEO) and paid search (PPC). Part of global consumer brand business Ceuta Group, we have a team of 70-plus specialists and a portfolio of more than 60 clients worldwide.

Our complementary services include content marketing, outreach, social media, conversion rate optimisation (CRO); and international/multilingual search marketing. We can also offer training and consultation to support your teams or existing strategy.

Click was named Search Agency of the Year 2018, adding to our long list of other awards and accolades, and also ranks within Econsultancy's 'Top 100 Digital Agencies', and Prolific North's 'Top 50 Digital Agencies'. We're also a Google Premier Partner, a Bing Select Partner and feature in The Drum Recommends.

YOUR BESPOKE SOCIAL MEDIA ANALYSIS AND REVIEW

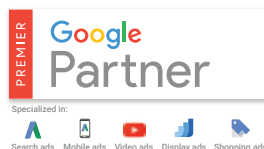
REQUEST NOW



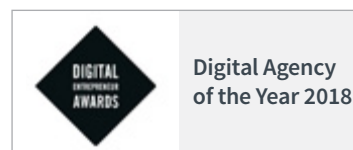
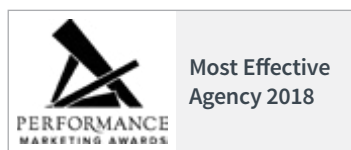
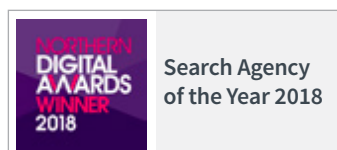
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OUR ACCREDITATIONS



OUR AWARDS



OUR TECHNOLOGIES

monitor **TRAX** rank **TRAX** feed **TRAX** link **TRAX** pro **TRAX** page **TRAX**