

TO GRAM OR NOT TO GRAM?

Ayush Rathee

D.A.V PUBLIC SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

There has been an adjustment of working business to Instagram. People are using the stage because of it being one of the most simple to utilize and secure applications. The author in this paper has discussed Instagram as an online media stage, how to foster business on Instagram, why is Instagram transforming into a huge stage for business and thoughts regarding how business can become on Instagram.

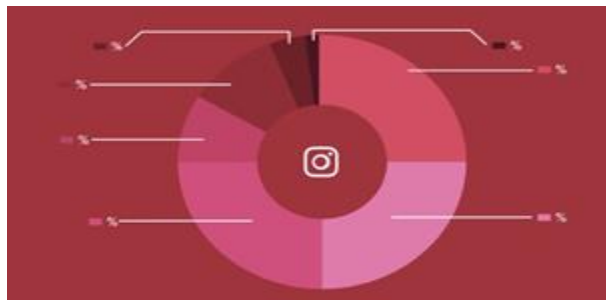
Keywords: Business, Facebook, Hashtag, Images, Instagram.

About Instagram

One could argue that Instagram is an online media network like no other. Maybe because rather than words, the stage is created fundamentally around sharing pictures and accounts. This visual bend is the explanation Instagram is the social sturdy it is today-"Instagramming" is definitively a verb now.¹

With over a billion enlisted accounts, Instagram, which was bought by Facebook in 2012, has transformed into a piece of everyday presence. It seems like everyone is on Instagram nowadays, from privately owned businesses to colossal ones, news relationships to social establishments, celebrities, picture takers, and entertainers, and furthermore the house business of forces to be reckoned with that have come thereafter.

¹ William Antonelli, A beginner's guide to Instagram, the wildly popular photo-sharing app with over a billion users, <https://www.businessinsider.in/tech/how-to/a-beginners-guide-to-instagram-the-wildly-popular-photo-sharing-app-with-over-a-billion-users/articleshow/77876081.cms>



It similarly doesn't hurt that we all likerooting a well-captured selfie.

Instagram allows users to edit and upload photos and short videos through a convenient application. Users can add a caption to all of their posts and use hashtags and region based geotags to record these posts and make them noticeable by various other users on the application. Each post by a user appears on their followers' Instagram feed and can similarly be seen by the public when marked using hashtags or geotags. Users in like manner have the option of making their profile private so their followers can only see their posts and stories.²

Similar to other social networking platforms, Instagram users can like, comment on and bookmark others' posts, and send private messages to their friends through the Instagram Direct message feature as well. Posts from Instagram can also be shared on one or a couple of other social media sites- including Twitter, Facebook and Tumblr - with a single snap. Instagram is not only an assembling point for individuals, but for businesses as well. This photo sharing app provides companies with an opportunity to start a free business profile to promote their brand and products. Companies with business accounts got access to free engagement and impressions . As per the Instagram's site, more than 1 million advertisers worldwide are using Instagram to share their stories and drive business results. Moreover, 60% of people have said that they discovered new things through this application.

History of Instagram

Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger envisioned Instagram in San Francisco, who at first were endeavouring to make an inter phase genuinely like Foursquare but later they turned their thought uniquely to photo sharing. The term Instagram is a mix of two words “instant camera” and “telegram.”

The climb in Instagram's popularity was beyond anyone's expectations. The association almost

² Brian Holak, Instagram, <https://searchcio.techtarget.com/definition/Instagram>

had 40 million active users within the first two years after it was founded. This got the eye of various farsighted people as they comprehended the power of Instagram later on, finally Facebook purchased Instagram for \$1 billion in the summer of 2012. At first only photos could be uploaded on Instagram by its users, yet later the association expanded to 15-second video in 2013, followed by another update in 2016: expanding the length of a video to 60 seconds. With such unbelievable changes Instagram moreover procured an amount of 700 million powerful users, which is more than two times that of Twitter's full scale customer base.

Features and Editing Tools on Instagram

Various advanced filters are provided by Instagram which the users can apply to their photographs, which includes the one that adds a vintage or a blurred look. Instagram's other editing features incorporate for instance Lux, which is an effect that lightens the shadows and darks the highlights with increased contrast. Apart from that photo-tuning tools further allows users to adjust brightness, contrast, saturation level, sharpness, structure etc. It is also possible to add a manual tint shift and vignette effect to the photos.

In 2017, Instagram carried out a feature that permitted users to post various photographs or video recordings at once, presented in a carousel format.

A new story feature was introduced by Instagram in the year 2016 after being motivated by Snapchat and this feature allows the users to share moments from their day and this story vanishes after 24 hours. The stories on Instagram also include the ability to incorporate reality-based face filters and various stickers and also the ability to add some text, emojis, drawings, links and geotags directly to photo or video.

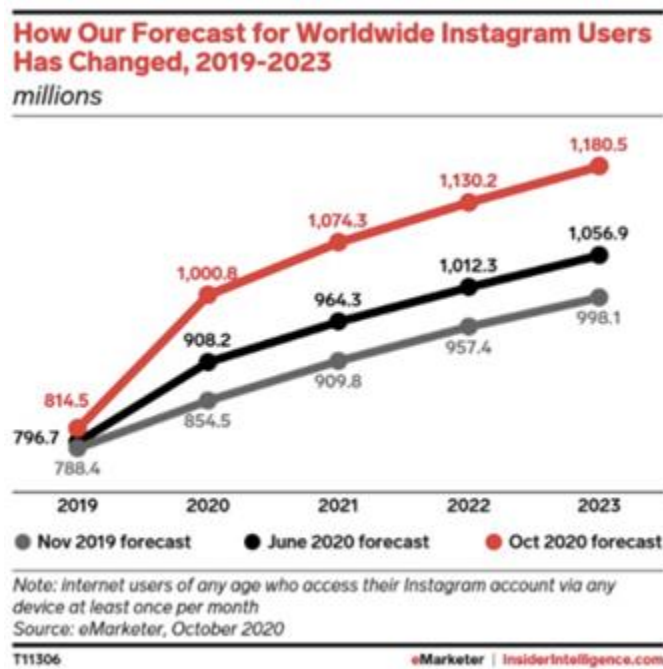
Instagram stories recorded 200 million active users in April 2017, outperforming the dynamic users of Snapchat, its toughest rival.

Instagram additionally has a progression of extra applications accessible. Some of these applications are boomerang that makes custom GIFS; Hyperlapse which makes time-lapse recording and also layout which makes a picture collage with numerous pictures. Once installed these applications could be directly accessed through Instagram. However with the progress Instagram has made so far, the user now doesn't need to download any of these apps as now they come as an inbuilt feature with Instagram.

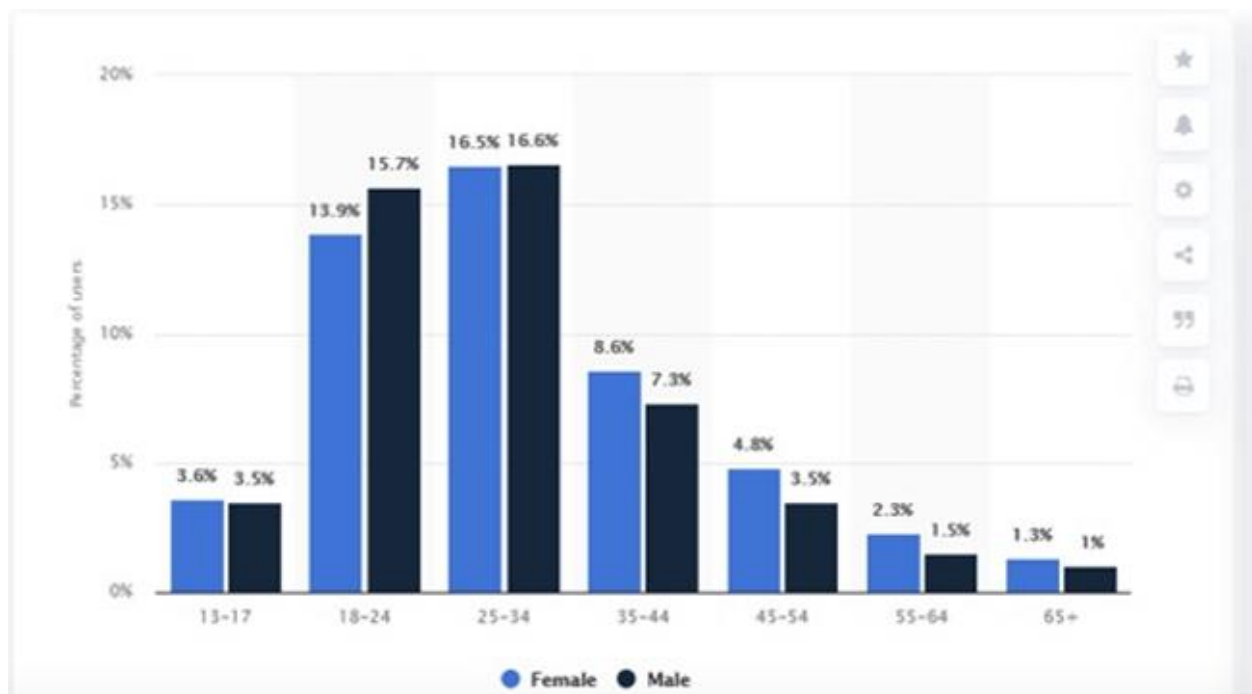
Growth Chart Of Instagram

The chart below gives a reasonable picture with regards to how Instagram active users have

changed worldwide from 2019-2023 and the numbers are rising continually.

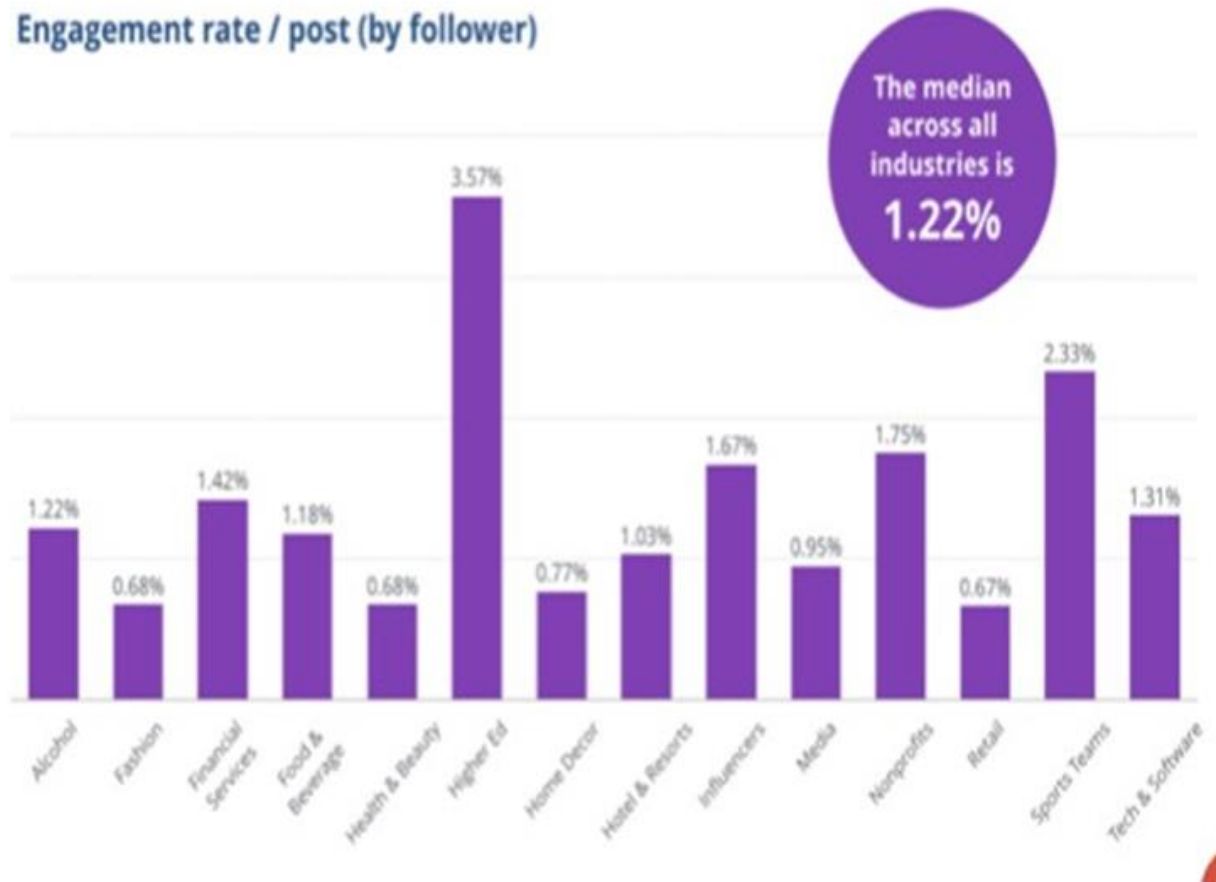


The image underneath portrays the appropriation of the Instagram users around the world.



Why Instagram for business?

Engagement rate / post (by follower)



1. More individuals are using Instagram

The online media presence of Instagram carries more than 1 billion dynamic users at present. Out of these huge numbers of individuals, over 500 million have shown up on the platform on a daily basis. Hence there are no limitations or restrictions as to the level a business can reach with a market comprising these many active users.³

2. Any business size can flourish

Instagram is a significant platform for business if we talk about social media. That goes for enormous, established and notable companies as well as little shops and businesses, and

³ Kiely Kuligowski, 2 reasons to use Instagram You're your business, <https://www.business.com/articles/10-reasons-to-use-instagram-for-business/>

entrepreneurs. No company has ever overnight and no company at any point would, however over the long run and gradual cycle Instagram can play a significant role in the success story. The travel industry for instance, is an area which has encountered a boom on the Instagram as a "new travel destination and the places to explore" is found to be trending by around 48% of the users on Instagram who are travel enthusiasts, which has made Instagram to update their application to further incorporate the features which permit businesses to add Save and book buttons on their feeds.

3. Business owners can make money directly

Over the course of years, Instagram has advanced a lot and has enabled on-platform online business deals. The shop tab is the most recent update, which enables the users to explore as well as purchase from the brands through Instagram. Likewise Instagram offers shoppable posts that permits the business owners to add tags to the products listed in their posts along with links including product description, product price as well as an option to purchase now and the user is redirected to the online store. With such administrations, it has become simpler for businesses to draw in deals from the website. In addition to that it has been reported that 72% of the Instagram users were buying products via online media at least once. Not incorporating Instagram to social media marketing, tragically can prompt a misfortune.

4. Stories make your business engaging

Instagram live posts and stories give a decent method to assemble compatibility, trust and validity with the audience, it also shows that there is a human side to the business. This should be possible through a large number of the application's features, but one can truly establish a connection through live posts and stories, with this Instagram presents an incredible chance to show the clients that it's not another faceless organization. The most ideal approach to utilize the live story is by showing behind the scene insights of the company, revealing recordings of in-house representatives interacting with one another, showing recordings of how the products are made or possibly showing various cycles occurring at the organization, and going live for Q&A sessions between the audience and the organization. Visual feeds reflect uniqueness and help in standing out.

5. You can collaborate with influencers

At the point when we talk about Social media there are two kinds of accounts: the regular users and Influencers, Influencers are individuals having an enormous number of following or we can likewise say online celebrities. On Instagram one could get countless Influencers accessible for promotion of the brand. An Influencer can very easily spread the word of his/ her business or

product to a large number of followers on instagram in a brief timeframe. A trustworthy Influencer can carry an organization's sales to another level, hence this method gives an increase in return on investment and also access to the demographics which are not normally under reach.

6. Hashtags can advance one's visibility

As a new business, one can surely be intimidated by the competition, however if they use hashtags appropriately, they would definitely have a great chance to stand out from the rest of the crowd. Basically, these hashtags are the keywords that sum up the message which the picture is trying to deliver to the audience. Some examples are #ShareACoke by Coca Cola, #MyCalvins by Calvin Klein made these organisations more recognisable. Though the small businesses might not have the strength of numbers unlike big brands like Coke, they are making advancements as they are also catching up with the trend by publishing and marketing their brand and encouraging sharing of visual moments and then aligning those moments with a particular hashtag.

7. One can effectively engage with clients

Engaging with clients on a consistent schedule is getting significant with time for a brand, which is practically close to incomprehensible whenever done offline or an organization may have to recruit countless workers only for connecting with clients; however Instagram got the ability to replace this load of representatives and is more efficient. The truth of the matter is that individuals like to impart their insights when they love anything. Instagram enables people to like, share and comment on their favourite posts. The better the quality of photographs and video content that one posts, the more engagement they get, and their business gradually becomes more noticeable to their selected audience. They will also get more likes if they insightfully take advantage of various features provided by Instagram.

8. Mobility is best

Instagram was made to be an application since the start, dissimilar to the vast majority of different websites like Facebook and Twitter. The majority of time spent by a person on mobile is spent on applications, hence this is taken as an advantage by various companies and posts are made accessible in a way that it can be viewed anywhere. Cell phone users will in general go to Instagram on the grounds that it has a cleaner style and it seems to be more organised, which may be the explanation that engagement on Instagram is multiple times higher than on Facebook. So essentially individuals never saw Instagram as a website page on the grounds that they got an application version since the starting which may be the explanation individuals are more comfortable with Instagram.

9. One can track the competitors

Instagram can be utilised for watching out for their rivals and perceive how they interact with their audience. Observing carefully and imbibing things from them could unquestionably cause an organization to develop.

10. Reaching out to new consumers through Instagram advertisements

With help of Instagram promotions, one can land new clients and broaden the scope with customizable, trackable advertisements. Specific demographics can be targeted to link to one's website and then valuable user data can be gathered to assist with social media marketing campaigns.

11. Use Insights of Instagram to sharpen your online media promoting technique

In case one is simply beginning their online media promotion techniques, utilizing Instagram Insights can give an explicit, appropriate data regarding the audience and how the product is performing and these insights can be further used to plan out other content for social media.⁴

Instagram For Entrepreneurs

Instagram may not be a pay-to-play service, but it does require something much more valuable for entrepreneurs: time.

An entrepreneur looks forward to attracting new customers with each and every effort that is being put into the business. They take out time to create pictures which are of high quality, then put in efforts to come out with right hashtags to go with the picture and also check the content several times. This can either prove to be helpful but sometimes can also pull away the person from other money-making tasks.

The important question that arises is as to how one can make out if this is worth the effort. This completely depends upon the business as well as the goals behind it.⁵

Audience building, not sales

⁴ DESPINA KARATZIAS, 10 Reasons Why Instagram Is Important For Your Business

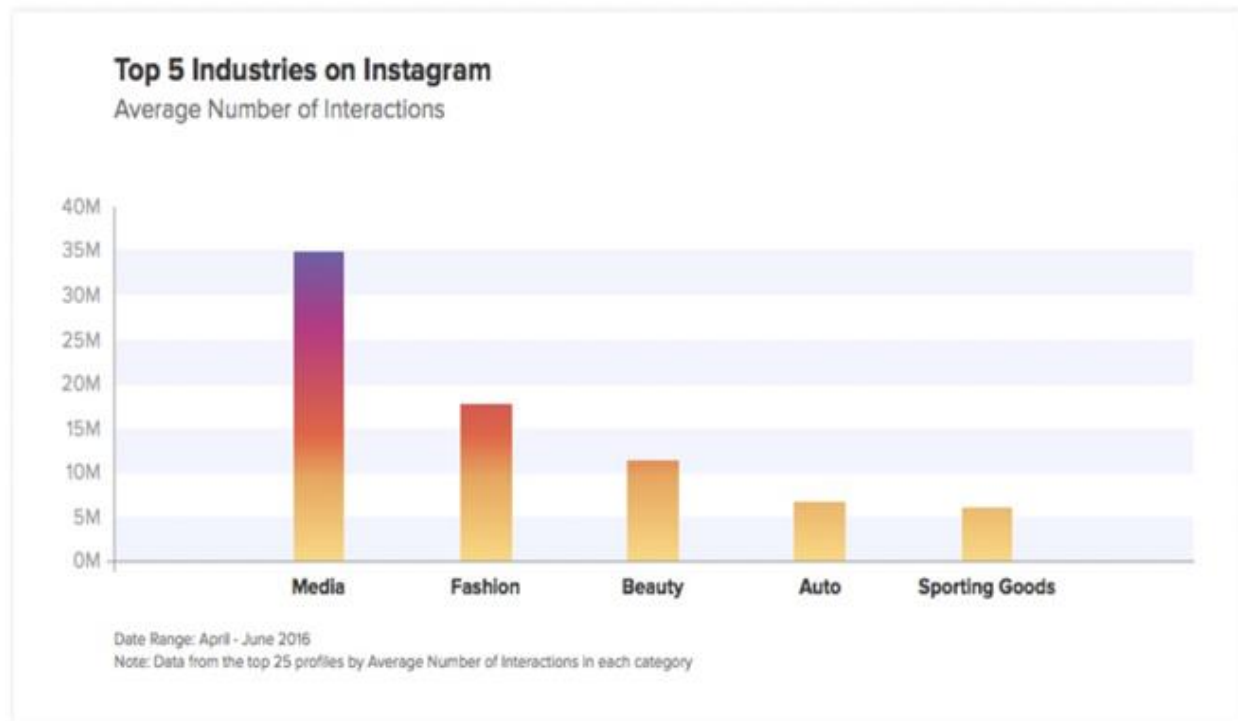
<https://www.instituteofexcellence.com/10-reasons-why-instagram-is-important-for-your-business/>

⁵ Amanda Walgrove, Is Instagram marketing worth your time? Here's what entrepreneurs need to know

<https://growthlab.com/instagram-marketing-for-entrepreneurs/>

Instagram is best for the purpose of creating awareness and also building an audience base. It can be really helpful in building a community that has shared interests and values rather than pure marketing content. There are numerous businesses who have turned their Instagram followers to email subscribers.

This is done by directing the viewers to the link that is provided in the Instagram profile and when the users click on that link then they are directed to a landing page where they can download free content or subscribe to newsletter etc. This is a successful technique and the same can be substantiated by the example of Foundr Magazine which has successfully made more than 70,000 subscribers in a year from their Instagram profile. It is not denied that they had to catch the attention of the audience through their Instagram content. That implied understanding what the audience is looking for, catering to their specific interest and then building their follower base.



Which businesses are doing good on Instagram?

Media, style, excellence, auto and outdoor supplies are the five major industries on Instagram according to Socialbakers. These industries have shown to generate the most engagements on the application.

This makes a lot of sense as well. All the News and media houses are working with an intent of building a community of like minded individuals. Beauty, fashion, and auto tend to get numerous engagements because of the visuals. However, one does not need to be Burberry or Nike to dominate the competition. You may be a fashion coach, beauty expert, or fitness guru who can help in putting the business into one of these classifications. There is no surprise that this group of people are quite active on Instagram.

This further implies that if a person is running a business in health, fitness, beauty or fashion then people are already looking forward to such similar content on Instagram. This implies that customers are already there on Instagram and this is what makes it different from an online business where a person is required to set up the business first and then the customers come. Hence Instagram already has customers waiting and it is a great opportunity to tap into the customers.

Which content works best on Instagram?

Now comes the crucial question as to how one can build a large following on Instagram in a short time? The answer is simple, by posting content that caters attention.

Here is how one can get started:

Positive content

Positive messages and good quality visuals: this is what Instagram is all about. #love and #instagood were some of the more used hashtags, and the most used emoji was heart. Instagram was referred to as the happiest place on the Internet by Psychology Today.

Hence one can always share the positive side of their business such as the positive reviews from their customers, success stories or some inspirational tips and this will get way more engagement. However, in the event that positive information is off-brand for you, it could be ideal to take to other web-based media.

Content for youthful crowds

Instagram has more than 500 million monthly active users. 80% of them are less than 35 years old, and 80% of them reside outside the US. Instagram is one stop destination to find Gen-Z.

Tips And Tricks

Stay on-brand.

If you are using it for business purposes then you need to keep in mind that every single thing on your Instagram handle should represent your brand, it cannot be some random thing coming out of nowhere. Sometimes it might be quite appealing to share pictures of fashion, food, animals etc. since these have gained popularity on Instagram. But in case this has nothing to do with one's business, it can definitely confuse your audience. It has been noticed that the post which is in line with the brand voice got the maximum engagement.⁶ Sticking to on-brand content helps in making your audience feel connected to your business. I believe that every picture and caption should be strictly based on the vision of the business.⁷

Holding some giveaways isn't a bad idea either

There are several ways of giveaways but some of the best are by selling your product through and choosing a random customer as the winner of the giveaway and another one is just simply post an image which tells about your giveaway and ask your audience to repost this with an specific custom hashtag to participate in this giveaway and then you can simply go to that particular hashtag to see all your participants and select a random one as the winner. Such promotions let your customer do the marketing for your brand and you will end up gaining more audience and more customers.⁸

Make real connections/interact with the audience

Interacting with your audience and customers is really very important for any business. A bond between the brand and the customer is very important and this can be only accomplished once you start interacting which includes replying to people's comments, answering questions, holding giveaways, if a customer posts a picture of one's product then one can directly share that post on their story this way one's product would be highlighted and one's client would get the feeling of importance it's a win-win, try using polls and interactive question stickers this would definitely make things interesting for your audience and you will get a good retention. Interacting with your audience shows them that you are paying attention and they will get this feeling of importance and this would eventually lead to a strong bond between the two.

If you are running a website then embed your instagram posts there. As soon as people start

⁶ Katherine Paljug, How to boost your business with instagram, <https://www.businessnewsdaily.com/10391-instagram-tips-algorithm-changes.html>

⁷ Saige Driver, Instagram for business: Everything you need to know, <https://www.businessnewsdaily.com/7662-instagram-business-guide.html>

⁸ Katherine Paljug, How to boost your business with instagram, <https://www.businessnewsdaily.com/10391-instagram-tips-algorithm-changes.html>

noticing the instagram post you will start getting more followers on instagram because who doesn't want updates and reminders in this century and don't forget to give regular updates through instagram.⁹

Influencers for promotion

Everyone has heard of Influencers, they are the people who have large followings, yeah they are the one you need! Collaborate with them to promote your business. You can pay them for marketing your products in front of their audience. This sponsored content looks more subtle and does not look like any other advertisement.¹⁰

Using the potential of instagram for your profit

IGTV is a feature of instagram which displays long form, vertical videos. This feature of IGTV is there in the stand alone app and also within the Instagram application. Each video of IGTV can be up to an hour long. There are numerous ways in which IGTV can be used to market business if one gets creative. Some of the instances are hosting FAQs and conducting some sessions etc.

Reels: The feature of Reels was launched by instagram in August 2020 and is one of the most recent and trending updates of instagram. Reels are like short videos which can be edited with audio effects, other visual effects and creative tools. Reels can also be used to promote business products.

Show up consistently

Consistency plays an important role in business may it be online or offline. One of the major causes for the decreasing number of audience and engagements can be you not showing up regularly. Inconsistency somewhere means that your audience will stop interacting with your posts and when this happens instagram algorithm is less likely to show your posts in their feed moreover instagram algorithm wouldn't put you in suggestions and it's very tough that your posts make it up to instagram users' search page. This leads to a great decrease and you would have a huge loss! Set instagram a priority and always remember they are waiting for you!

⁹ Saige Driver, Instagram for business: Everything you need to know, <https://www.businessnewsdaily.com/7662-instagram-business-guide.html>

¹⁰ Katherine Paljug, How to boost your business with instagram, <https://www.businessnewsdaily.com/10391-instagram-tips-algorithm-changes.html>

Consider your grid

The Square of posts visible on one's profile page is known as grid and it is going to be the introduction of one's instagram handle to a person visiting the profile for the first time, now you might have heard that first impression is the last impression so the aesthetics of the grid matter a lot. So this grid will decide whether the new visitor clicks on that follow button or not. With looking good these posts should also provide a visual clue to what the particular brand stands for. When we go to a page and it is a messy mishmash with no rhyme or reason, it does not encourage us to follow that page. "Businesses should not just be concerned about each individual picture they are posting, but also how that picture actually looks next to all their other pictures in their grid view."

Embrace hashtags

Hashtags are a great way for increasing one's reach on instagram because several people browse through hashtags. Instagram clubs all the videos and pictures attached with a hashtag together from every single account. When someone searches for the particular hashtag they lead to two tabs named 'Top' and 'Recent'. One has to compete to get their post in the top column, the more the number likes, the higher are the chances. But every post is there in recent times which will eventually go down with time but before going down the post would definitely show up to a number of users, the number depends on the hashtag. It is believed that one should use the most trending hashtags as they have the greatest number of audience but some believe that the great number of audience make it even tough to get the post in Top column, so they rather suggest to use the less trending hashtags with low number of audience which makes the competition easy. I conclude that it is recommended that one should use both the trending and the non trending hashtags to get the best results, the limit is of 30 hashtags so the division can be 15-15.

Reach out

Don't just wait for customers to come to you on Instagram. Actively seek them out and promote your account. "Ask any customers you already have to connect with you on Instagram," Camilleri suggested. "Publish your Instagram handle on your business cards, put it in your email signature, include it in every newsletter, have it posted in your shop, include it in every package you send out." You should also seek out other store owners in your neighbourhood or colleagues in your industry. Being as connected as possible will put your business in front of more potential followers.

Be creative

Many businesses fall into a rut of posting only product shots or stock photography. But assembling a creative variety of posts can help you stand out. "You see the accounts that infuse humour or teach their customers something new or post beautiful, inspiring pictures with thoughtful commentary doing really well and continually growing," Camilleri said. If you feel stuck, think about the reaction you want to create when people look at your content. "People connect with brands based on... how that brand makes them feel," Camilleri said. "How can you show your product or service in a way that evokes some sort of emotion from your followers?"

Identify your target customer

As with any form of business promotion, successfully using Instagram requires knowing who you are marketing to. The target customer profile that you develop for your other forms of marketing should inform your Instagram strategy as well.

"Know your customer," said Camilleri. "And then think: How can I educate them, or entertain them, or inspire them, or encourage them, or connect with them? If the pictures and captions you post strive to meet one of those objectives, you'll see your engagement on Instagram grow."

Conclusion

Everyone of us has witnessed the tremendous growth of Instagram. The app which was just made for sharing pictures is now replacing most of the other apps alone as it is capable of doing what those apps do. The unique features and the increasing number of audience are enough for suggesting why one should incorporate instagram marketing for their personal business. Moreover it is free of cost. Considering everything it isn't tough for Instagram to play a crucial role in e-commerce in the coming time as it is doing two tasks at the same time: first is selling things directly on instagram and the second is leading people to the business websites where they can buy the services. Instagram already has the precious gem which is required by every business to grow and that is the audience! Audience here is already waiting to get entertained and if the business gets an audience half of the work is already done, in other words if you use instagram for business you never start from zero!

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