

MARKETING

Instagram's video carousel ads a chance to spin creative stories

May 17, 2016



Instagram is changing up its mobile ad units

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Instagram's recent rollout of swipeable carousel advertisements underscores the momentous shift to video marketing on mobile and also signals the need for innovative storytelling that makes use of new creative assets instead of repurposing existing content.

A slew of top marketers including British retailer ASOS and fast-food chain Taco Bell have already taken advantage of Instagram's new offering, which enables advertisers to select a combination of five videos or photos to arrange in a swipeable format. Other major brands will undoubtedly soon follow in the early adopters' footsteps, while smaller companies may encounter some challenges in quickly churning out fresh creative assets and steering clear from leveraging previously released content in the new ad unit.

"The introduction of video carousel formats on Instagram is certainly exciting for advertisers," said Shuli Lowy, director of customer success, Americas at [TVTY/The Moment Marketing Company](#). "Carousel ads have served as one of the best-performing new ad units across the board; adding video functionality to them on Instagram makes them all the more powerful.

"Video ads on Facebook and Instagram serve as high touchpoints. The prominent native placement combined with the fine audience targeting available on the platform and the playful video carousel format will certainly lead to high engagement rates."

Video on the rise

A growing number of brands are tapping into the lucrative potential of mobile video advertisements, a trend that has come to fruition thanks to consumers' staggering usage of social media networks such as Instagram and Snapchat.

Mobile video has skyrocketed with consumer use and brand adoption, but interactive video ads are taking the tactic another step further by fully immersing viewers into content, challenging marketers to learn a new skill set ([see story](#)).

Instagram's new swipeable format ensures that interactivity will be present in each user's experience, as he or she toggles through the various videos and photos to receive full access to the showcased content.



ASOS, Airbnb and Taco Bell are among the first advertisers using Instagram's carousel units

"I definitely think that video content is a critical marketing asset in today's age," said Toni Box, senior director of social media and content at **PM Digital**. "Whether it's organic or paid, social users are more engaged with video content than ever.

"I think the key, like all video content, is creating videos that engage users within the first few seconds this is the biggest challenge and win."

Instagram's new ad unit rollout piggybacks off of the success that Facebook Instagram's parent company has experienced with its own carousel ads.

Facebook continues to entice advertisers of all shapes and sizes by constantly updating its ad units with new features and placing a bigger spotlight on mobile video, including Facebook Live and 360 video, a strategy that helped the social network see a 52 percent increase in revenue year-over-year, per its latest earnings call ([see story](#)).

Instagram's carousel ads can also be paired with a call-to-action, such as "shop now" or "book now."

Potential pitfalls to navigate

Despite their obvious merits, carousel ad formats do pose a series of challenges to marketers that may not have large-enough creative budgets or staff needed to quickly roll out fresh, engaging content developed solely for Instagram.

As discussed in a recent Wendy's presentation at the MMA Mobile Marketing Leadership Forum, content that has been repurposed for a platform it was not originally intended for tends to fall flat with consumers ([see story](#)).

Instagram's visual-heavy focus requires a different creative angle than an ad unit on Twitter or Facebook would necessitate.

"One of the biggest challenges for marketers looking to take advantage of the new carousel unit is that most of them don't have the necessary creative assets readily available," TVTY/The Moment Marketing Company's Ms. Lowy said. "Brands typically have one or several short video spots readily available which can be repurposed across several forms of digital media.

"Video carousels, however, are unique in that they require several videos that connect to a similar theme yet aren't repetitive," she said. "An ideal carousel creative tells parts of a story or a theme as a consumer swipes through.

"Each frame should encourage the consumer to swipe to the following frame. For many marketers, it will mean having to take a new strategy to their video creative build in the coming months."



Airbnb now gives Instagram users more exploratory power

Additionally, mobile video can be a rather expensive endeavor, meaning that brands must commit to creating the best storytelling visuals available within their marketing arsenals.

Nevertheless, Instagram's massive fan base containing approximately 400 million monthly users makes the photo-sharing application an ideal platform on which to advertise eye-catching, interactive creative that goes beyond the stationary banner ad one might spot at the bottom of a mobile Web site.

"I think they are suitable for any industry if a company has the creativity and means to develop them," PM Digital's Ms. Box said. "Carousel video ads hold so much potential for packaging content in a really fun way i.e. mixing still shots with cinematic ones; showing a step-by-step process or a story through a series of short video clips; etc.

"The biggest challenge usually comes down to internal infrastructure to develop quick turn videos it's a common pain point within marketing departments. However, I think that there are plenty of opportunities to partner with freelancers and even influencers within the space who are developing really cool creative video content on a daily basis."

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