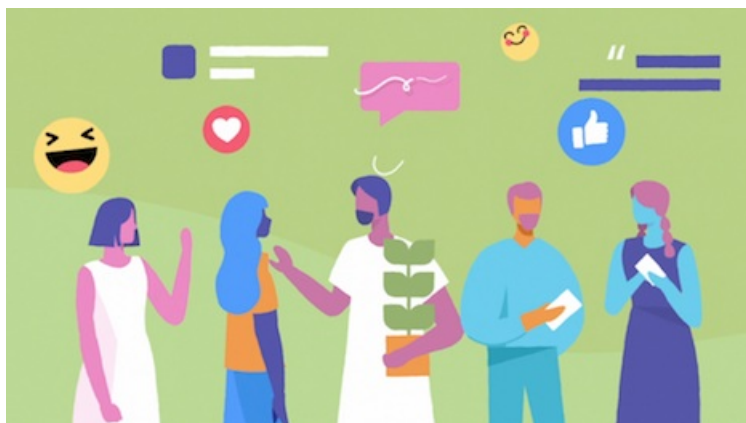


MARKETING

## Facebook, Instagram limit advertiser access in wake of Cambridge Analytica

April 4, 2018



*Facebook and Instagram have both put restrictions on what information third parties can access from the platforms. Image credit: Facebook*

By DANNY PARISI

The Cambridge Analytica scandal has made Facebook so vigilant about protecting its users' information that it is cracking down on which third parties can access data.

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According to TechCrunch, a number of third-party applications were suddenly made incompatible with Instagram this week after the Facebook-owned company abruptly changed access to its API. This comes just a few days after Facebook revoked its Partner Categories feature, which allows brands and advertisers to target relevant users through Facebook and Instagram.

### Data controversies

Facebook has been in crisis mode the last few weeks ever since the news broke that political data firm Cambridge Analytica used access to more than 50 million users' personal data to influence the 2016 election.

The unparalleled access to personal data afforded to the political firm left many aghast at how lax Facebook was with their data.

In response, Facebook has cracked down hard on who has access to its data, but some advertisers fear Facebook's turn may cost them ad revenue.



*Instagram is a valuable tool for luxury brands. Image credit: Cartier*

At the end of March, Facebook abruptly suspended its Partner Categories feature. With Partner Categories, advertisers were able to access a much more atomized view of Facebook's users, allowing them to target based on demographic data such as age, gender and other personal factors.

That change was quickly followed up with changes to Instagram's API, which made many third-party apps for Instagram unusable.

These changes amount to a radical shift for developers and advertisers who use the platforms to connect with customers on a granular level.

Facebook's primary attraction for advertisers has always been the data it collects, which can supplement an advertiser's own datasets to create a comprehensive view of potential customers and their likes and dislikes.

For example, U.S. fashion brand Michael Kors worked with Facebook to seek out older high-spending consumers through CRM and audience targeting to achieve an 18-point lift in ad recall.

Michael Kors looked to entice users aged 35 to 54 with a high household income for its Italian-made Bancroft handbag. The ad campaign saw the highest lift with 45 to 50 year olds ([see story](#)).

#### Limiting access

While putting limits on the amount of information that third parties can pull on users is admirable, particularly in the wake of an egregious misuse of that data from Cambridge Analytica, the abruptness with which Facebook has done so could leave some marketers out in the cold.

This change is particularly important given Facebook's move earlier this year to no longer prioritize branded posts and publisher content in favor of users' friends and families.

After a series of shakeups have left brand partners of Facebook feeling hung out to dry, the move seems the most difficult. While Facebook has admittedly had a problem with overloading users with ads, branded content and publisher media, the effect on brands' relationships with the social media platform will certainly be affected ([see story](#)).



*Michael Kors worked with Facebook to seek out older high-spending consumers through CRM and audience targeting to achieve an 18-point lift in ad recall. Image credit: Michael Kors*

Simultaneously, Instagram has been expanding its advertising capabilities as its popularity has made it a more

effective choice for advertising than Facebook. With the explosive popularity of Instagram's Stories, the platform has expanded the advertising capabilities afforded to brands using the feature.

While Instagram Stories ads have been available for some time, they have normally been restricted to a single interstitial slide. Now, thanks to some internal changes to how the system works, Instagram will allow brands to advertise using its Carousel ad format, allowing them multiple slides of content, including photos and videos ([see story](#)).

As Facebook continues its damage control campaign, it is unclear what other permanent changes may be in store for its relationship with advertisers, but until the furor over the Cambridge Analytica situation dies down, Facebook could make major changes at any time.

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