

LEGAL AND PRIVACY

Despite Facebook's data controversies, Instagram has slid under the radar

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Instagram shares many of Facebook's data collection practices. Image credit: Facebook

By DANNY PARISI

Social network Facebook has been at the center of a number of data and privacy controversies lately, but its subsidiary platform Instagram has mostly been free from this scrutiny.

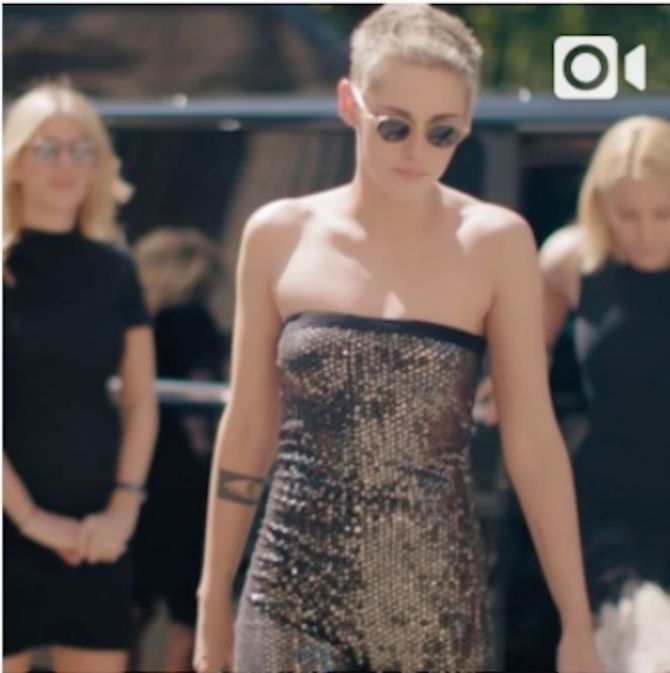
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While Facebook makes headlines for its lax treatment of user data and its founder Mark Zuckerberg has testified before Congress, little attention has been paid in comparison to Instagram's security concerns. But as the two companies share their data collection practices between them, should users and brands be paying more attention to how Instagram collects?

Under the radar

When Instagram was acquired by Facebook in 2013, the platforms' data collection efforts were also consolidated.

Accordingly, any information that is acquired by one platform can be shared with the other. In Instagram's current privacy policy, it is stated that data collected through Instagram can be freely shared with any entity owned by the company that owns Instagram, meaning Facebook or its other properties such as WhatsApp.



Brands such as Chanel get a lot of mileage out of Instagram videos. Image credit: Chanel

Additionally, all ads created to run on Instagram have to go through Facebook's Ad Manager. Because of their shared ecosystem, Facebook can use data collected through Instagram to target ads on both Instagram and Facebook.

The Instagram privacy policy also allows the platform to collect data on users' locations and the sites they visit. In general, Instagram collects less user data, and provides fewer opportunities to share it, but still collects a significant amount of customer information.

For many users, the view that Instagram is safer has led them to hold the platform as a more secure place than Facebook. Additionally, a survey in The Verge found that 60 percent of respondents did not even realize Facebook and Instagram were related.

Privacy concerns

Instagram is one of the primary social networks for luxury brands and where those brands get most of their social media marketing returns. While video marketing continues to thrive on YouTube and Facebook, Instagram has emerged as a surprisingly strong platform for film-based consumer engagement.

Facebook and YouTube both routinely see more brand engagement in general, but according to recent findings from L2, Instagram actually outperforms both when it comes to video views between customers and brands. Luxury brands in particular can use this information to their advantage and plan their video budgets around the highly engaged Instagram audience ([see story](#)).

For luxury brands, a potential data breach on Instagram would be even more damaging to the relationship between advertisers and consumers than one on Facebook.



Facebook's latest data scandal further harms the platform's relationship with users. Image credit: CSPAN

Just a few months after the Cambridge Analytica scandal, a report from The New York Times has found that Facebook gave away years' worth of data on consumers to smartphone manufacturers including Apple and Samsung. While the partnership between Facebook and these companies has been public knowledge, the extent of the data given away, including that of customers who did not consent to this specific partnership, is only now being revealed ([see story](#)).

As it becomes increasingly clear that Facebook's problems with protecting user data have persisted for many years, it seems only a matter of time before Instagram suffers the same fate. Unless Facebook can make real and serious changes to how it operates and controls user data, something that the company has spent the past few weeks assuring the public that it would, Instagram remains just as vulnerable as its parent.

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