

MARKETING

Instagram challenges YouTube with launch of long-form video hub IGTV

June 26, 2018



IGTV will host curated, longform videos. Image credit: Instagram

By DANNY PARISI

Instagram is diving headfirst into video with the launch of IGTV, a new home base for the platform's expanded video offerings, including hour-long videos and curated films.

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The new platform will allow creators to make more varieties of video offerings, which have previously been limited in length and search capabilities. Instagram may be attempting to challenge YouTube for video dominance, something that brands who work with the platforms should be aware of.

"Following standard new platform growth strategies, IGTV is in habit building mode with its content users and creators, meaning 'Let's get everyone watching videos and using the platform, then figure out the best ways to monetize the platform for advertisers,'" said David Pierpont, senior vice president of performance media at [Ansira](#), St. Louis, MO. "In the meantime, this is a great opportunity for brands who have a mature content strategy to engage their Instagram fanbase with organic longer format stories.

"The catch is, if your content is not engaging and authentic like those hip-creators, you could lose fans," he said. "If you don't have a content strategy in place, stick to sponsored ads and your current content until you do and test your way into it.

"Brands that don't have a mature content strategy can still work with influencers who do have a strong fan base and know how to engage with them to help support your brand efforts. In time, Instagram will have ad units that will allow more opportunities for brands to engage along with other standard content, but we wouldn't be surprised to see some similarities to YouTube and other streaming formats for branded ads as it will also be important that IGTV makes it easy for brands who have existing assets like pre-roll to use them."

IGTV

While it began as a photography app, video has been a key part of Instagram's strategy for many years now.

However, it has always taken a back seat to photos, with limits on length and the ability to search for videos.

Now, Instagram is going in the complete opposite direction. At a live event on June 20, the platform unveiled IGTV,

the new hub for creating and viewing long-form videos on Instagram.



IGTV. Image credit: Instagram

A unique twist of IGTV is that it is entirely focused on mobile-first video. Videos will be oriented vertically so that they fit better on mobile devices and the whole user interface, as with Instagram's regular services, will be built for viewing on smaller screens.

Instagram is banking on the long-form vertical videos as a way of helping brands get even closer to their audiences, building engagement for the platform's brand partners.

IGTV will also be heavily curated, with Instagram working directly with many of the influential creators on Instagram to help them adjust to the new parameters of IGTV.

Video challenge

The move seems like an open challenge to YouTube for dominance in the world of digital video.

Instagram has recently offered some serious competition to YouTube, particularly in the world of beauty marketing.

YouTube has been dethroned as the number one source for beauty promotion by Instagram, according to a Influencing Beauty report from Celebrity Intelligence.

Digital influencers have also replaced celebrity spokespeople as the top preference for collaborations and partnerships. More than 80 percent of brands believe that these influencers are vital to appeal to millennial customers.



IGTV's features. Image credit: Instagram

For upcoming projects, 83 percent of beauty brands are working with influencers as their top choice ([see story](#)).

IGTV also represents an opportunity for Instagram to offer some reassurance to advertisers after recent scandals caused the platform's owner, Facebook, to limit advertisers' access to data. 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.

According to TechCrunch, a number of third-party applications were suddenly made incompatible with Instagram after the Facebook-owned company abruptly changed access to its API. This came just a few days after Facebook

revoked its Partner Categories feature, which allows brands and advertisers to target relevant users through Facebook and Instagram ([see story](#)).

IGTV represents a significant shift in Instagram's priorities as the biggest change that has come to the platform since the introduction of Stories.

But just as Instagram challenged Snapchat with the inclusion of Stories, the platform now looks to take on YouTube in the world of social video.

"This is a solid move for Instagram and so far seems to be an engaging addition to compete against YouTube, while simultaneously giving Snapchat another hit towards lack of scale despite previous unique format offering," Mr. Pierpont said. "Many are talking about YouTube countering with new moves for content creators to make money and keep interest in the platform, but most of us assume Google and Facebook will continue to battle across all its offerings as the two giants with the largest user bases.

"Instagram already established content creators using their platforms every day," he said. "Content creators, just like brands, need to go where people spend their time at scale, and they get that with this new offering, which adds excitement to a new opportunity.

"The monetization will come close behind, but Facebook Inc. has scale and audience to figure it out, where other competitors would need to get it right quickly."

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