

MARKETING

Instagram testing new features in video push

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IGTV hosts curated, longform videos. Image credit: Instagram

By SARAH RAMIREZ

Social network Instagram is making subtle but notable updates to its user experience, as the platform continues to pivot towards video.

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Although Instagram originally launched as a photo-sharing service, video has been part of the platform since 2013. More recently, Instagram Stories and IGTV have made the Facebook-owned network a major player in video advertising, and Instagram is looking to capitalize on this by making it easier for users to consume and discover video content.

"Instagram has always been a visual medium," said Laura Musa, director of channel solutions at [Adlucent](#), Austin, TX. "As the trend toward video continues, it's only natural that the social network would follow suit.

"Social media users prefer to consume content via video across platforms, and they're expecting it to be available wherever they participate," she said. "Instagram is staying in tune with user behavior by embracing video in its growth strategy."

Video pivot

Launched in summer 2018, IGTV is the home base for the platform's expanded video offerings, including hour-long videos and curated films.

Instagram's video offerings had previously been limited in length and search capabilities. IGTV videos are oriented vertically so that they fit better on mobile devices and the whole user interface is built for viewing on smaller screens ([see story](#)).

"From a brand perspective, it creates another avenue for companies to engage with users outside the main Instagram app," Ms. Musa said.



Bergdorf Goodman has released short films on Instagram TV. Image credit: Bergdorf Goodman

Luxury brands including Swiss watchmaker Audemars Piguet, department store Bergdorf Goodman and fashion label Tamara Mellon have embraced IGTV, creating special content for the platform.

Although *Fast Company* reports that Instagram users watched 60 percent more video on the platform in 2018 than 2017, IGTV has gained little traction among users.

IGTV lives within the primary Instagram mobile application, but also has a standalone version. Downloads for the IGTV app hover around the top 200 in the U.S., according to *New York magazine*.

"Creating IGTV as a separate app made it difficult for Instagram to draw an audience from the popular photo app by introducing a barrier to adoption," said Haley Fraser, content marketing manager at *Pixlee*, San Francisco. "To further muddy the waters, Instagram introduced video content to the primary Instagram platform, further reducing the incentive for users to download and adopt IGTV."

Now, Instagram is updating its IGTV strategy by making long-form videos more prominent within its main app.

Following inclusion of IGTV videos in the "Explore" tab, Instagram is now including one-minute long previews of IGTV in users' main feeds. Previews can also be added to Instagram Stories, which has led to higher rates of engagement than IGTV.

[View this post on Instagram](#)

A post shared by Prada (@prada) on Mar 29, 2019 at 10:56am PDT

Instagram post from Prada

Instagram is also taking one feature of IGTV and testing it with videos posted directly to users' feeds. A seek bar would allow people to fast-forward or rewind any traditional Instagram video.

"Video is a more immersive experience, and allows for context that photos do not," Ms. Fraser said. "Video conveys a greater sense of place, establish stronger storylines, and creates a sense of excitement beyond the snapshot you can capture in a photo."

Instagram vs. YouTube

Instagram's video-centric moves are part of its competition with YouTube.

Google's YouTube remains an important platform for luxury brands, especially as companies work to appeal to younger affluents.

YouTube's revenue jumped more than 10 percent from the third quarter of 2017 to the third quarter of 2018, according to research from MediaRadar. Generation Z consumers are particularly drawn to YouTube's endless supply of visual content, compared to other generations ([see story](#)).

Other small updates have been meant to appeal to both users and advertisers.

For instance, businesses can now add Product Tags to videos that appear in-feed, just as they have been able to do with photos for some time.

When users see a video from a brand they follow, they just need to tap the shopping icon in the bottom left corner and an overlay will appear with product information ([see story](#)).

"IGTV allows Instagram to tap into the long-form video market that was previously dominated by Google's YouTube," Pixlee's Ms. Fraser said. "Critically, IGTV is focused on vertical format, mobile video, making it an ideal home to content intended to be casually consumed on mobile."

"For brands, IGTV provides an opportunity to provide content on a level playing field with other popular users."