

# ADVERTISING ON INSTAGRAM

The Ultimate Guide  
August 2018 edition



makereach



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# Make the most of Instagram advertising **IN NO TIME!**

Instagram's user base has grown dramatically since the platform's creation in 2010. **With 1 billion monthly active users, Instagram offers a unique opportunity for marketers to reach their target audiences through advertising.**

From the launch of the network right up until now, numerous new features and evolutions have been introduced, in terms of design and user experience, search functions, filter choices and of course, advertising options.

## **BUT SETTING UP YOUR INSTAGRAM ADS REQUIRES A LOT OF THOUGHT:**



**WHAT SHOULD YOUR TARGET  
AUDIENCE LOOK LIKE?**



**WHAT SHOULD YOUR  
COPY SAY?**



**WHAT IMAGE SHOULD  
YOU USE?**

**NOT TO MENTION, THE MORE TECHNICAL ASPECTS LIKE WHAT SIZE YOUR IMAGE  
NEEDS TO BE OR HOW LONG YOUR ADS SHOULD RUN FOR.**

As an **extremely visual social network**, Instagram's unique offering to advertisers is a blend of inspiration and performance. **Instagram advertising offers brands the ability to inspire and then drive purchases, build communities and deeply engage prospects.**

And, if you're already running ads on Facebook, you could be making the most of Instagram advertising in no time! Not only do you not require an Instagram for Business account to start running Instagram ads (you only need a Facebook Page), **in one click you can also use [mixed placement](#) to run the same Facebook ads across Instagram!**

To help you in the process of creating Instagram ad campaigns, and to lead you towards greater success, we've put together a guide to show you the steps of setting up and running campaigns and ads. Read on for tips and tricks to getting the most out of your Instagram advertising, as well as detail about the different ad formats available and more!

# QUICK HISTORY of Instagram

## OCTOBER 2010

Instagram launches with the vision of facilitating communication through images



## JANUARY 2011

Instagram adds hashtags to help users discover both photographs and each other

## APRIL 2012

Facebook acquires Instagram for approximately US\$1 billion



## JUNE 2013

Instagram launches video sharing

## MARCH 2014

200M monthly active users

## SEPTEMBER 2015

400M monthly active users

## MARCH 2016

Instagram switches its feed from chronological to algorithmically-driven

## AUGUST 2016

Launch of Instagram Stories



## JUNE 2018

1B monthly active users

## DECEMBER 2010

1M monthly active users

## SEPTEMBER 2011

10M monthly active users

## FEBRUARY 2013

100M monthly active users

## NOVEMBER 2013

Instagram introduces sponsored post advertising, targeting US users

## DECEMBER 2014

300M monthly active users

## SEPTEMBER 2015

Instagram ads go global

## JUNE 2016

500M monthly active users

## APRIL 2017

700M monthly active users

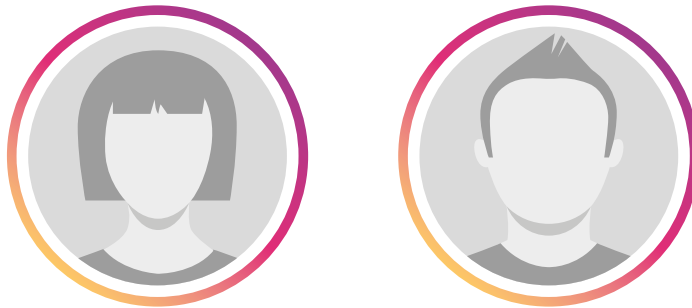
## JUNE 2018

Instagram gets into long-form video content, with the launch of IGTV



# WHO USES Instagram?

Over [60% of all users are aged between 18-24](#), with 85% [younger than 45](#). It is a truly global community, with 75% of Instagram users located outside the US, and this global network is very engaged. In fact, over 60% of users [log in daily](#), making it the second most engaged network after Facebook.



Brands are seeing the value of this audience, and flocking to Instagram in their droves. Even back in 2015, 90 of the top 100 brands in the world had an Instagram account. It's a platform where brands today simply have to have a presence. Looking at one sector in particular, [96% of US fashion brands are on Instagram](#).

And businesses who take their Instagram presence seriously reap the rewards. Consumers expect businesses to be present and have a voice on this platform – [80% of users follow at least one business account](#), the highest rate of any social network. And user [engage with brands on Instagram](#) 10 times more than they do on Facebook, 54 times more than on Pinterest and 84 times more than on Twitter!

All this following and engagement doesn't stop there, however – [one third of Instagram users report having purchased an item](#) they first saw on the platform.

Advertising on Instagram therefore offers huge opportunities to businesses of all shapes and sizes, in all sorts of industries. In the following pages of this guide, we take a deep dive into success with Instagram advertising. From the ad formats you can choose, to objectives, targeting and some best-practices, it's all in here – enjoy!



# AD FORMATS

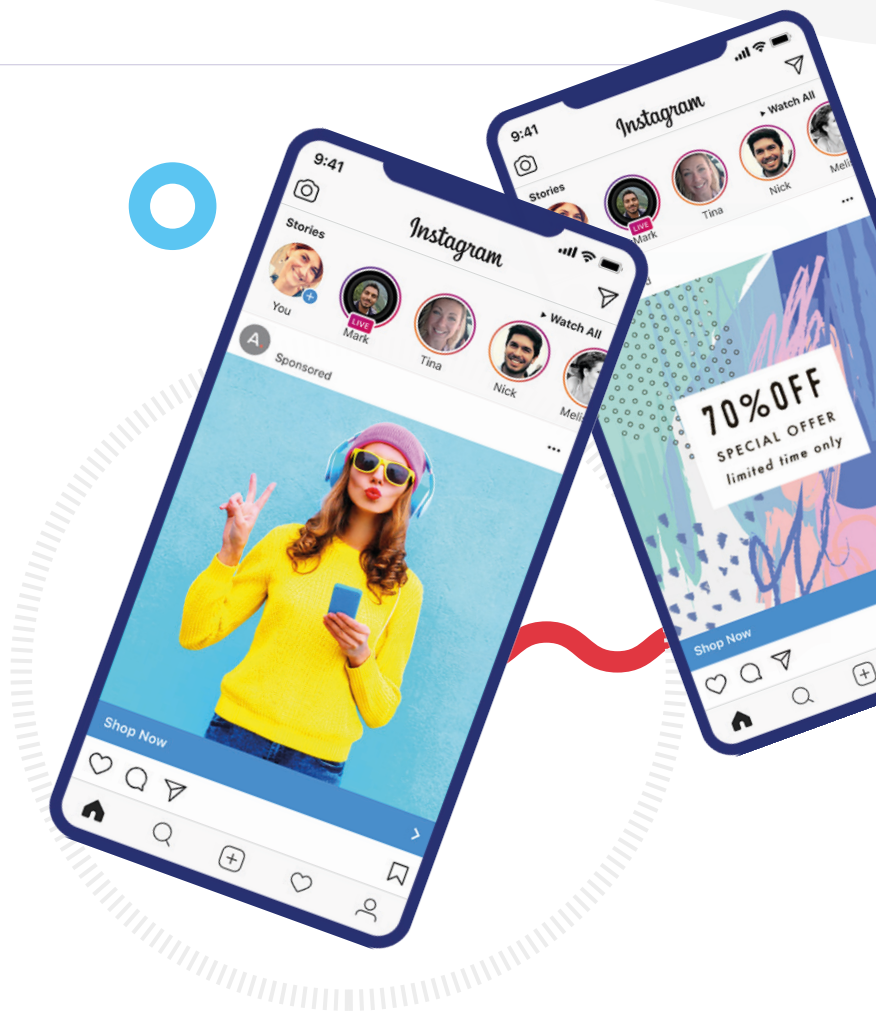
There are a number of Instagram ad formats to choose from, which means every advertiser has room to be creative!

When selecting which ad formats to use in your campaigns, our one piece of guiding advice is this: **choose your Instagram ad type with a measurable business goal in mind.** What are you trying to achieve with your Instagram advertising? Is it purchases, or lead generation, or brand awareness? From the outset, make sure you have a clear goal in mind and let it inform how you set up your campaigns and ads.

## PHOTO ADS

Since Instagram is THE visual social network, there are countless examples of advertisers building visually compelling ad campaigns through simple photo ads. **Photo ads are the simplest form of advertising on Instagram and appear just like a regular photo post, but with a “Sponsored” tag.**

When using the Photo ad format, an important consideration is to **ensure all ads refer to the brand, using the same color palette and photographic style.**



### DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS

File type: **jpg or png**

Maximum file size: **30 MB**

Recommended resolution: **Upload the highest-resolution image available that meets ratio requirements.**

Text: **Two rows of text will be displayed**

Minimum image width in pixels: **500**

Aspect ratio tolerance: **1%**

Minimum image ratio: **4:5**

Maximum image ratio: **1.91:1**

Maximum text length: **2200**

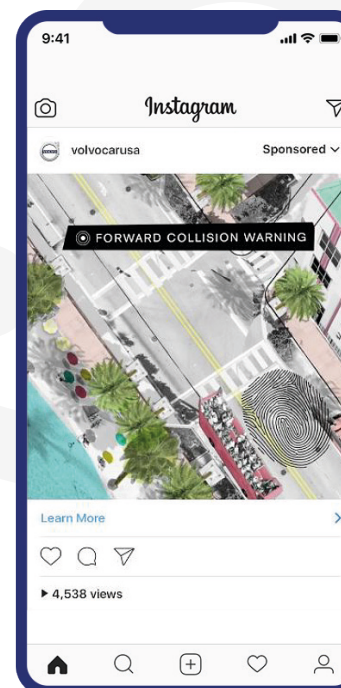
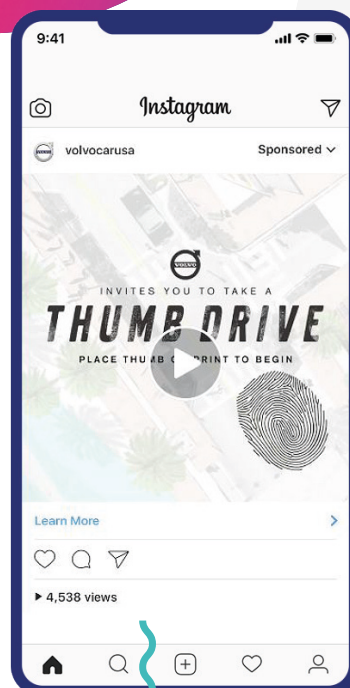
Max. number of hashtags in text: **30**



# VIDEO ADS

We live in the age of video. With the added power of sight, sound and motion, video ads should aim to be visually immersive and drive action. **Advertisers can also use videos to build brand awareness, to establish a connection with customers, and to communicate messages quickly and effectively.**

**Remember to keep your video ads short and sweet** – if your video is too long you will lose the viewer's attention. The longer your video ad, the less likely you are to achieve good completion rates and ensure your audience gets your whole message. For standalone ads in News Feed, as well as in-stream video ads, Facebook recommends using video that is **15 seconds or shorter**.



**VIDEO ADS ARE ALSO A POWERFUL FORMAT ON MOBILE: REMEMBER TO INCLUDE THE “HOOK” RIGHT AT THE BEGINNING TO CAPTURE THE VIEWER’S ATTENTION. A BEST PRACTICE IS TO USE CAPTIONS FOR AUDIO-OFF VIEWING.**

As you may know, there is also an increasing trend towards 6-second video ads. The industry seems to have converged on this length of ad, which is well suited to short, snappy messages. **Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg stated in 2017** that compared to 15- and 30-second ads, **6-second ads showed “higher brand metrics across the board”**.

Have a look at the information below detailing dimensions, text limits, and other practical information you should know:

## DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS

Video ratio: **9:16 to 16:9**

Recommended resolution: **Upload the highest-resolution video available that meets file size and ratio limits**

Video file size: **4 GB max**

Video length minimum: **1 second**

Video length maximum: **240 minutes**

Video captions: **Optional but recommended**

Video sound: **Optional but recommended**

Text: **125 characters**

Video thumbnail images that consist of **more than 20% text** may experience **reduced delivery**

Vertical videos **(with aspect ratio taller than 2:3)** may be masked to 2:3



# CAROUSEL ADS

Instagram Carousel ads bring another layer of depth to campaigns, **allowing people to swipe through a series of photos or videos within a single ad.**

Carousel ads offer advertisers a way to showcase **multiple photos and videos with a call to action button in a single ad unit.** This format can contain up to ten elements consisting of videos and photos, with videos capped at 60 seconds. The carousel, however, offers the opportunity to have **“more flexibility”** in the storytelling by **allowing viewers to swipe to see additional images with a link to a website of the advertiser’s choice.**



**TIP:** Carousel ads on Instagram are slightly different to those on Facebook. With Carousel ads in Instagram, **you’ll need to make sure the first image is both impactful and mysterious enough to cause people to swipe to see the rest.** The below example from Harley Davidson Australia is a good one – the first image includes the motorbike motif, setting up the theme of the ad, and both the road sign and the person in the water are pointing to the right, inviting the user to swipe. When the user does swipe, they quickly notice that each card is part of an overall story and therefore continue to swipe to get the whole experience.

## DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS

Minimum number of cards: **2**  
 Maximum number of cards: **10**  
 Image file type: **jpg or png**  
 Video file type: **Supported file formats**  
 Video maximum file size: **4 GB**  
 Video length: **up to 60 seconds**  
 Image maximum file size: **30 MB**

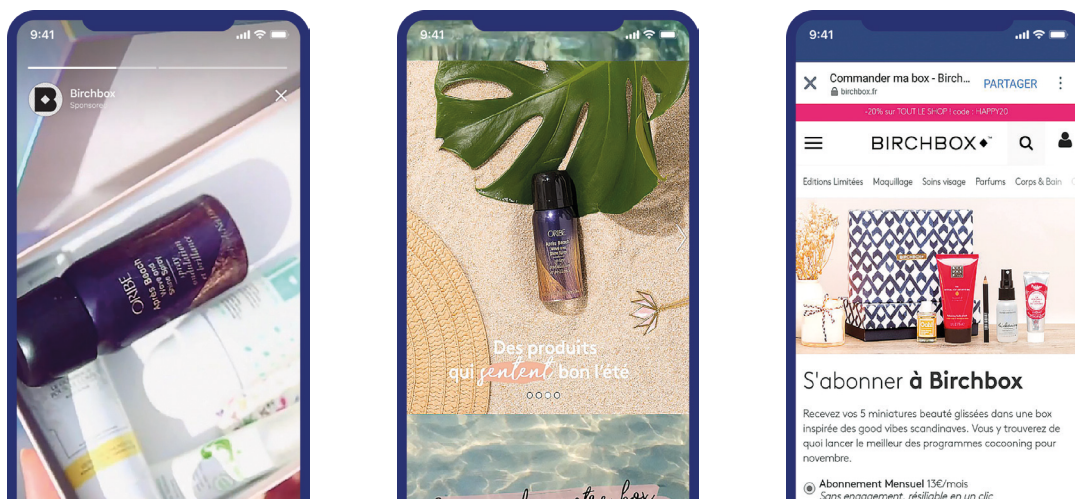
Recommended resolution:  
**at least 1080 x 1080px**  
 Carousel ratio: **1:1**  
 Text: **Two rows of text will be displayed.**  
**Images that consist of more than 20% text may experience reduced delivery.**

# CANVAS

**Canvas** is an interactive, full screen ad experience developed specifically for mobile devices. The immersive format helps advertisers to achieve their objectives by offering businesses a 'digital surface' on which to paint their multimedia stories. The Canvas experience is initiated with a click on a News Feed ad.

Canvas enables advertisers to create full-screen and in-line **immersive videos** that **play automatically**. Advertisers can also incorporate **photo carousels** and **panoramic photos** that users can **swipe or tilt around** to see more, as well as **text and links**.

## BIRCHBOX◆



For their 2017 summer campaign, our client **Birchbox** looked for new and **innovative ways to advertise**. With mobile accounting for 70% of Birchbox's traffic, **MakeMeReach** suggested they trial the **Canvas format on Instagram**.

In their ad creatives, Birchbox wanted to create a natural transition between a video clip of their products lying on the beach, and the offer they were promoting. Thanks to the wide range of ad formats available as part of a Canvas ad (**carousel, collection, single images, videos and slideshows**), Birchbox had a variety options for creating a seamless ad experience.

In terms of the Click-Through-Rate (CTR), **the Canvas campaign outdid all the other mobile ad placements**. People were clearly impressed by the creativity of the campaign and intrigued to swipe up and see what they had to offer. **Cost-per-Impression was also impressive at 50% lower than the Canvas on Facebook**.



**50%**  
**LOWER CPM**  
**THAN FACEBOOK**  
**CANVAS**

# INSTAGRAM STORIES ADS 1/2

Unless you've been living under a rock for the past couple of years, you'll know that **Stories are the 'it' format**. Facebook in fact noted earlier in 2018 that sharing in Stories is set to surpass sharing in Feed (across Facebook and Instagram) at some point in 2019. Users around the world have latched on to this **new way of posting and interacting**, and smart brands are responding in their advertising.



**Instagram Stories ads are videos or images of up to 15 seconds long**, that are shown between user Stories. **The ad takes up the entire mobile screen**, so media needs to be in **vertical format**. The main difference with Stories (and ads in Stories) is that they are ephemeral. **Everything about Stories is temporary** – and brands should take that into account. Even more than ads in News Feed, Stories ads can be quickly skipped. It only takes the swipe of a thumb and your ad is gone – so **you need to capture attention quickly!** The great thing about this format, however, is that **you can be more experimental and raw than simple video ads**. As such, they're great for driving awareness.

## TIP:

- **Start with the main message.** It should be shown during the first 3 seconds of your ad. Get straight to the point to encourage the user to stay!
- If you're using video in your Instagram Stories ad, think about it differently to video ads in News Feed. Apart from the obvious difference of shooting in vertical 16:9 format, **Stories videos need to be shorter and more to-the-point**. The format also lends itself to making them less formal, with lots of great examples shot as selfies, which are really fun!
- **Use a simple concept and clear branding.**
- **Add the graphics and text to your video before posting it**, so you can check that everything fits with the aesthetics of your ad.
- **Consider your call-to-action.** Make sure you **leave enough time to read the message** on the screen.
- **Include a link to your external site**, such as a product page or a landing page.

# INSTAGRAM STORIES ADS 2/2

## HAWKERS

Our client **Hawkers** was one of 30 companies around the world [chosen for a test of ads in Instagram Stories](#) when this format was still in beta. In their first campaign, Hawkerc used this **immersive format to transport users to an ideal vision of summer**, communicating messages of freedom and youth.



### DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS

File type:

- .mp4 or .mov (Video)
- .jpg or .png (Photo)

Maximum File Size:

- 4GB (Video)
- 30MB (Photo)

Video Length:

- **Maximum: 15 seconds**
- **Images show for 5 seconds by default**

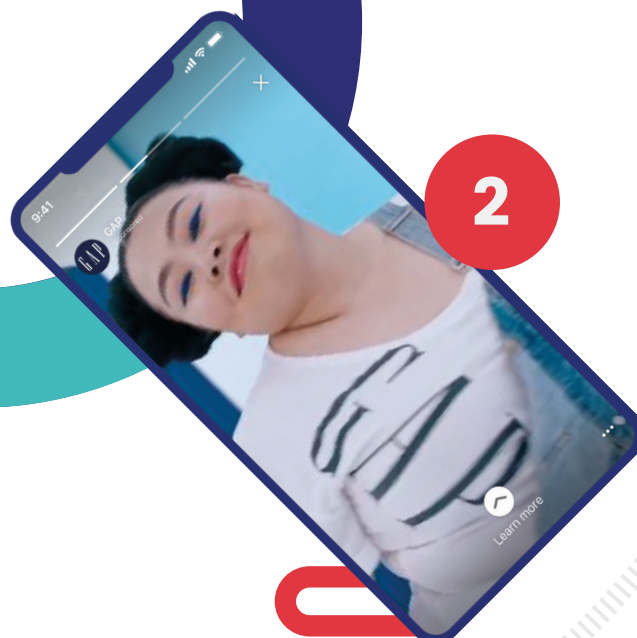
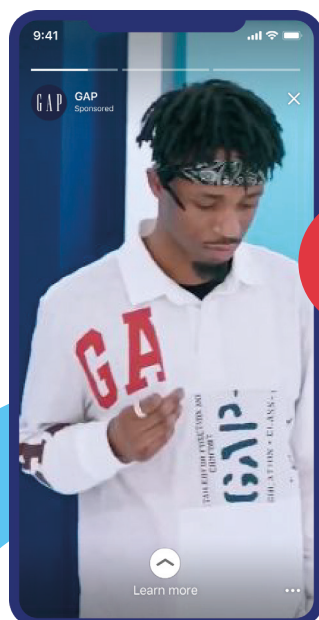
Dimensions:

- **Recommended Resolution: 1080 x 1920**
- **Minimum: 600 x 1067**



# CAROUSEL ADS IN INSTAGRAM STORIES 1/2 2

With this update, you can now display up to **3 consecutive pieces of media** (videos or photos) within a single Instagram Stories ad, mimicking the current organic experience and allowing you to tell better sequential stories!



# CAROUSEL ADS IN INSTAGRAM STORIES 1/2

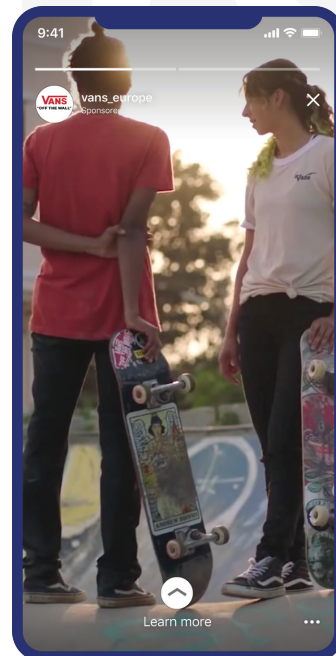


## Vans & Social.Lab take flight with Carousel beta in Instagram Stories.

Social.Lab recently started testing Carousel ads in Instagram Stories.

**This beta ad format was made available to them by MakeMeReach.**

They ran an A/B test to see whether this beta ad product could deliver better results than a regular ad in Instagram Stories. And they were **amazed by the results**: a swipe-up-rate close to double for the new carousel format and a **42% cheaper cost-per-swipe-up**.



SWIPE-UP-RATE

**x2**

COMPARED TO REGULAR  
ADS IN INSTAGRAM  
STORIES

COST-PER-SWIPE-UP

**42%**

CHEAPER

[READ THE FULL SUCCESS STORY](#)

## DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS

Consider leaving roughly 14% (250 pixels) of the top and bottom of the image or video free from text and logos to avoid covering the profile icon or call-to-action.

Minimum number of cards: 2

Maximum number of cards: 3

Ratio: 9:16

Recommended resolution: 1080x1920

Images that consist of **more than 20% text** may experience reduced delivery.



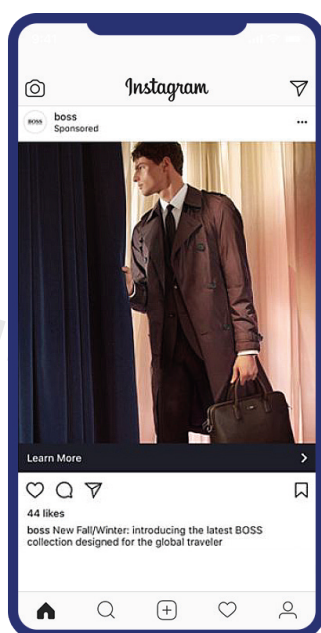
# STORIES ADS NOW EVEN SIMPLER!

Facebook has introduced a tool that makes creating Instagram Stories ads even simpler!

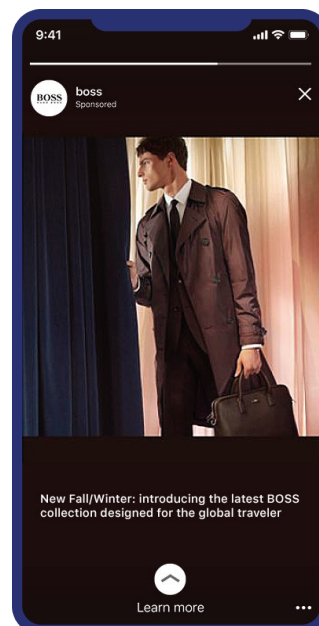
Now you can leverage your existing ad creatives, saving time and effort. Uploading a single photo or a video, under 15 seconds within Instagram Feed ratios, will trigger Instagram to **automatically** provide a full-screen option for the same content on Instagram Stories.



## FEED



## STORIES



The ad creative will get carried over to Stories, and Facebook's pixel-matching technology will automatically select a background gradient to transform the ad into full-screen, vertical format.

If the ad creative is square or landscape, the text from the Instagram Feed or Facebook Feed unit will be added in Stories text font to the bottom of the ad.

# The MakeMeReach CREATIVE CENTER

We've made it our mission to make social media advertising easier and more powerful. We've worked hard to make our platform as user-friendly as possible, and our Creative Center is just one part of that!

The MakeMeReach Creative Center is a kind of 'online pinboard' within our solution, where our clients can see all their visual assets in one place.

This tool eases reporting by visually **pointing out which creative is working and which is not**. It's driven entirely by visuals, making it easier for users to retrieve specific creatives, and to directly perform actions on the campaigns associated. Not only can users **filter and sort creatives based on performances**, but they can also **take actions** like editing the bid or pausing the ads which incorporate a specific creative.



**EDIT YOUR CREATIVES  
DIRECTLY ON  
THE PLATFORM**



**EASILY ADAPT  
YOUR CREATIVES USING  
DIFFERENT FORMATS**

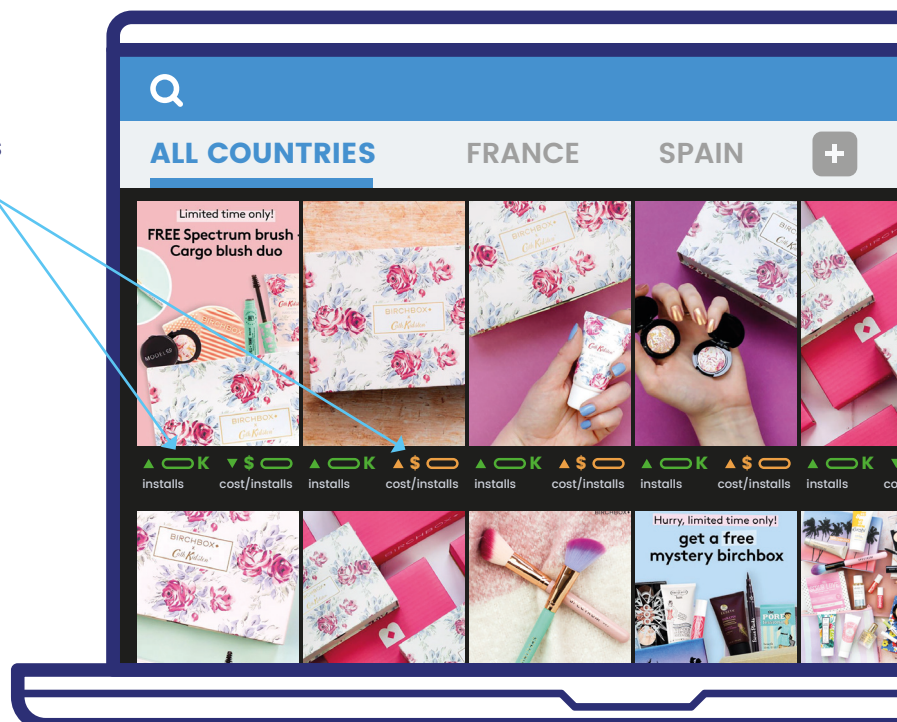


**RETRIEVE YOUR ASSETS  
IN YOUR LIBRARY  
THANKS TO TAGS:  
IMAGES, TEXTS, BUTTONS**

In green are the creatives with **great performance** and the ones in orange are **under-performing** on the two KPIs chosen by the advertiser.

INTERESTED  
IN THIS FEATURE?  
SCHEDULE A DEMO TODAY  
AND SEE IT IN ACTION!

GET A DEMO





# OBJECTIVES

As we're sure you'll know, **Instagram and Facebook are 'one'**, since Instagram was bought by the social giant in 2012.

As such, Instagram ads have most of the same objectives to choose from as Facebook ads.

As a quick refresher, these include:



## BRAND AWARENESS

Reach people more likely to recall your ads and increase awareness for your brand.



## TRAFFIC

Increase the number of visits to your website or get more people to use your app. With traffic as your objective, you can:

- Send people to your website
- [Increase engagement in your app](#)



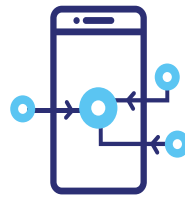
## VIDEO VIEWS

Promote videos that show behind-the-scenes footage, product launches or customer stories. Use the video views objective to put the Facebook algorithm to work delivering your ad to people within your target audience most likely to watch it.



## REACH

Show your ad to the maximum number of people in your audience.



## APP INSTALLS

Send people to an app store where they can download your app.



## ENGAGEMENT

Get more people to see and engage with your post or Page. On Instagram, engagement is only available for posts.



## MESSAGES

With the aim of having users 'click-to-Messenger', get more people to have conversations with your business. Generate leads, drive transactions, answer questions or offer support, via direct one-to-one Facebook Messenger communication with your prospects.



## LEAD GENERATION

Collect lead information, such as email addresses, from people interested in your business. Using some of the ad formats we mentioned above, use the Lead Generation objective to deliver your ad to users within your target audience who are most likely to fill your lead form.



## CONVERSIONS

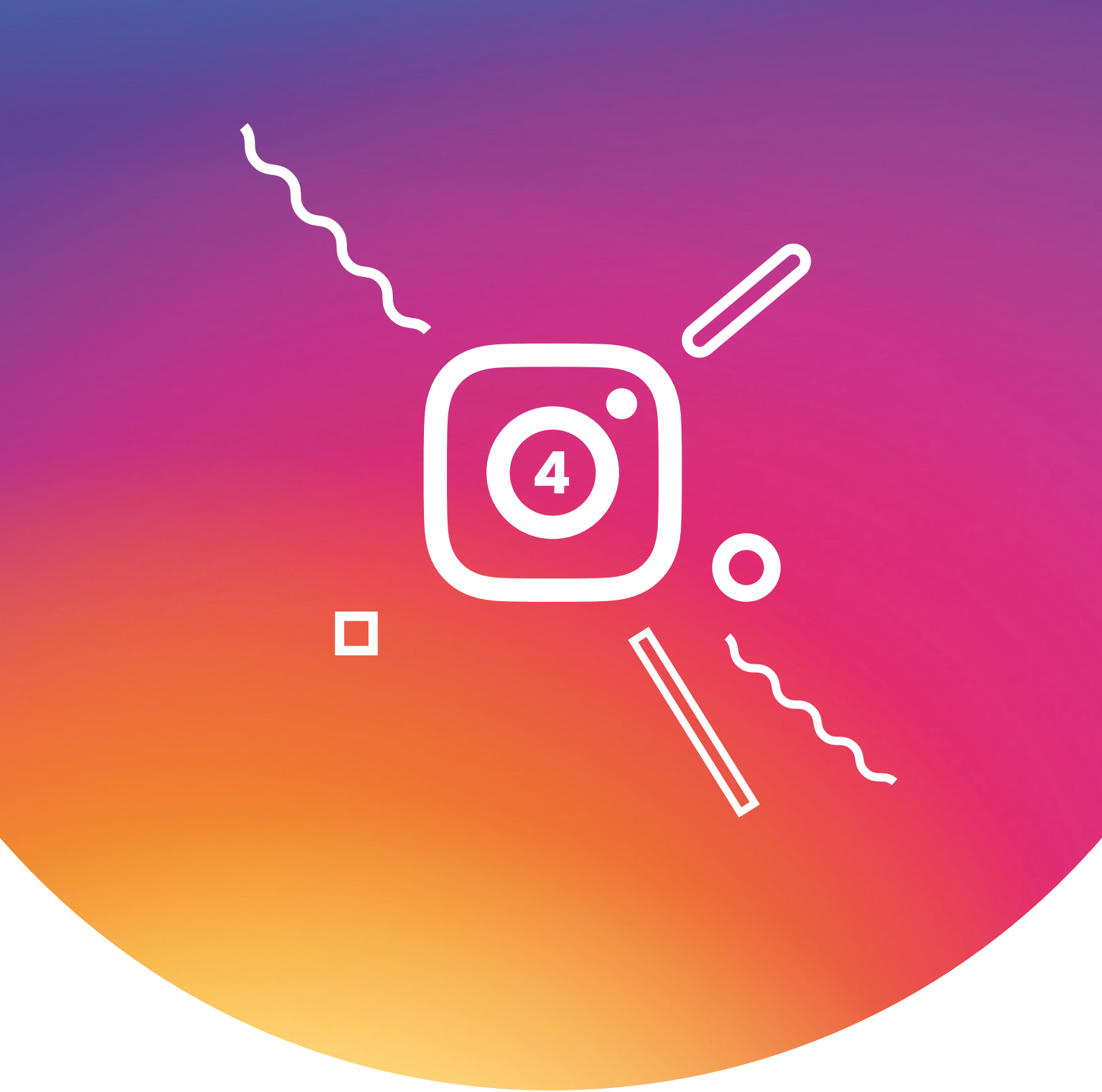
Get more people to use your website, Facebook app, or mobile app. To track and measure conversions, use the [Facebook Pixel](#) or app events.



## CATALOG SALES

Show products from your catalog based on your target audience.

	PHOTO	VIDEO	CAROUSEL	STORIES	CANVAS
App Install	●	●	●	●	●
Brand Awareness	●	●	●	●	●
Traffic	●	●	●	●	●
Reach	●	●	●	●	●
Engagement	●	●	●	●	●
Video Views	●	●	●	●	●
Messages	●	●	●	●	●
Conversions	●	●	●	●	●
Lead Generation	●	●	●	●	●
Catalog Sales	●	●	●	●	●



# CHOOSE YOUR TARGET



Instagram ads have all the same targeting options as Facebook ads (you might be picking up a theme here!). These include **targeting based on location, demographics, interests, behavior**, as well as the ability to **build lookalike audiences** and more.

**Choosing the right audience and ensuring your ads are relevant to that audience is crucial** if you're going to see success with your Instagram advertising. If you're an e-commerce business who sells women's jewellery, there's no point targeting an audience made up of both men and women between the ages of 18-65 in the US. Trying to push your ads to such a broad audience will likely lead to low engagement and a poor Relevance Score and, ultimately, poor results.

Instead, here are a few ideas to get targeting right:

## I. TARGET PEOPLE YOU KNOW ALREADY

### Business contacts and subscribers who haven't bought before:

It's likely your business has a list of newsletter or blog subscribers. Create a list of these who have never bought from you. These people are your 'low hanging fruit', since they have previously shown an interest in your business but are yet to take action and purchase. Create a custom audience on Facebook and drive traffic to your store by showcasing your newest items, highlighting your best sellers, or advertising a special offer for new customers.

**NOTE:** make sure you're complying with the new European GDPR regulations!



### Repeat customers:

Put together a list of your customers who have placed multiple orders with you. You could show your appreciation by targeting them with ads providing early access to new products or exclusive sales. You can automate a lot of this list creation (not only for repeat customers) using the [Facebook Pixel](#). It's an analytics tool that consists of code you install on your website. The Pixel fires to track site visitors, providing you with data you can use to retarget those users with Facebook and Instagram ads in the future, as well as see what they're doing on your site when they return. For more information on how to install and get the most out of it, [download our complete guide](#).

### Old customers and unsubscribers:

Take, for example, the list of people who have previously unsubscribed from your communications. Put together a custom audience and target them with an Instagram ad that (re)builds awareness around your business, or offers incentives. Again, with all of this [make sure you are GDPR compliant](#).

## II. TARGET PEOPLE WITH SIMILAR INTERESTS TO YOUR CUSTOMERS

### A lookalike audience based on your best customers:

Who are your most valuable customers? Who are the ones you want more of? Make a list of them based on your own filters and create a lookalike audience to target with your Instagram campaign. Let the powerful Facebook algorithm find people amongst its 2 billion users who are similar to your best customers!

## III. TARGET PEOPLE BASED ON THEIR INTERESTS

### Your closest competitors:

Use those brands as interest keywords to build a target audience of interested people.

### Repeat customers:

Getting to know your buyer personas and their overall interests is a good idea. That way you can build a picture of their daily lives and identify where there might be links between a likelihood to purchase your product and a particular leisure interest.

The Facebook Pixel is crucial to making the most of targeting across the Facebook network. Without having it properly installed on your website, you won't be able to effectively build audiences of users you've already interacted with or fully track the effectiveness of your advertising efforts, for example. Download our complete guide for everything you need to know.

**DOWNLOAD  
THE FREE EBOOK ↗**





# SET BUDGET AND BID

The next step to seeing success in your Instagram advertising is **setting your budget and bid**. When it comes to this part of the setup process, it's important to understand that it's a **'balancing game'**.

Once you've **set up your target audience**, you're essentially preparing your ads to enter a virtual auction, to compete against other advertisers who want to show their ads to the same audience.

### The analogy of an offline auction can be helpful:

In that case the highest bidder always wins, but in the Facebook and Instagram auction, this is not always the case. How much you are willing to bid is certainly a key factor, but Facebook also has other interests they need to balance, apart from simply making as much money as possible at every auction. **Facebook wants to balance your objective (to show your ad to as many people as possible within your target audience) with its own objectives**, which include not spamming everyone to death with salesy ads. **They want to increase engagement from and between users**, as well as **maximize time spent on the platform**. Simply showing ads with the highest bids would not help them achieve these objectives.

For more detail on getting your bid right, and winning more often in the Instagram ad auction, download our eBook: 'The Ultimate Guide to Facebook & Instagram Ad Bidding'. From explaining the Facebook auction, to detailing different bid types and strategies, this is your one-stop-shop resource to getting your bidding right!

#### LEARN:

- What bidding has to do with advertising on Instagram and Facebook.
- Why bidding is part of a bigger 'balancing game' when it comes to you winning in the Facebook auction.
- Why the highest bid doesn't always win in the Facebook auction.
- Choosing between the 3 main bid types: CPC, oCPM and CPA. Which situation is right for each?
- When to choose lowest cost (or automatic) bidding, and when it might be useful to try lowest cost.
- with bid cap or target cost (manual) bidding options.

**DOWNLOAD  
THE FREE EBOOK ↗**





# INSTAGRAM ADS BEST PRACTICES

Instagram is a hugely popular social network, with **a massive number of highly engaged users**. It's no longer a 'nice-to-have' in your marketing plan, but a place you simply need to be!

To finish this guide on a high, here are **five quick best practices to getting the most out of your advertising on Instagram!**

1

## HAVE A STRONG CONCEPT AND STICK TO IT

Compelling ads on Instagram communicate a brand message **succinctly** and **clearly**, and **give a straight-forward path to action**. The best ads don't really look like ads at all, and include more than just a salesy message. **Identify the core elements of your brand** and build messages throughout your ads that stick to these. Down flip-flop from one wildly different message to another across ad campaigns, but **focus on building a brand narrative that your customers and prospects can buy into**.

2

## CELEBRATE YOUR BRAND LOOK & FEEL

**Make sure your ads are clearly branded**, and keep strong brand consistency across campaigns. **Establish connective elements** across your images and videos — things like an identifiable color palette, composition or photographic style will help to build brand recognition over time.

Use well-crafted ads to enhance the equity of your business on Instagram. **Ads do best when they're well shot, interesting to look at and artistic**. What you create should draw people in and keep them wanting more.





3

## FOCUS ON REAL BUSINESS OUTCOMES

Before you start any Instagram advertising, ask yourself the question: what business outcome am I trying to drive? Do I want purchases of my product, downloads of my app or greater awareness of my brand? Based on your answer, choose your ad format and objective accordingly. Being unclear on what you are really trying to achieve with your Instagram advertising, is a sure way to waste your ad budget!

4

## KEEP IT CONTEXTUAL

Think about the context in which your ads will be seen. Will they be in the Instagram Feed or in Stories? Are you targeting them to be seen at a certain time of day, or a particular location? Use all of this context to speak to the user when and where they are. Doing this will help your ad connect and be more relevant to the user's experience.

5

## ENGAGE PEOPLE

Once your Instagram ads are up and running, your job is not over! Keep the 'social' in social media by engaging Instagram users and responding to people who comment on your ads, for example. Build two-way interaction with users, and give them the kind of experience they won't easily forget!

**READY  
TO TAKE YOUR  
SOCIAL ADS  
TO THE NEXT  
LEVEL ?**

**GET A DEMO**



**makemereach**



**makemereach.com**

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