

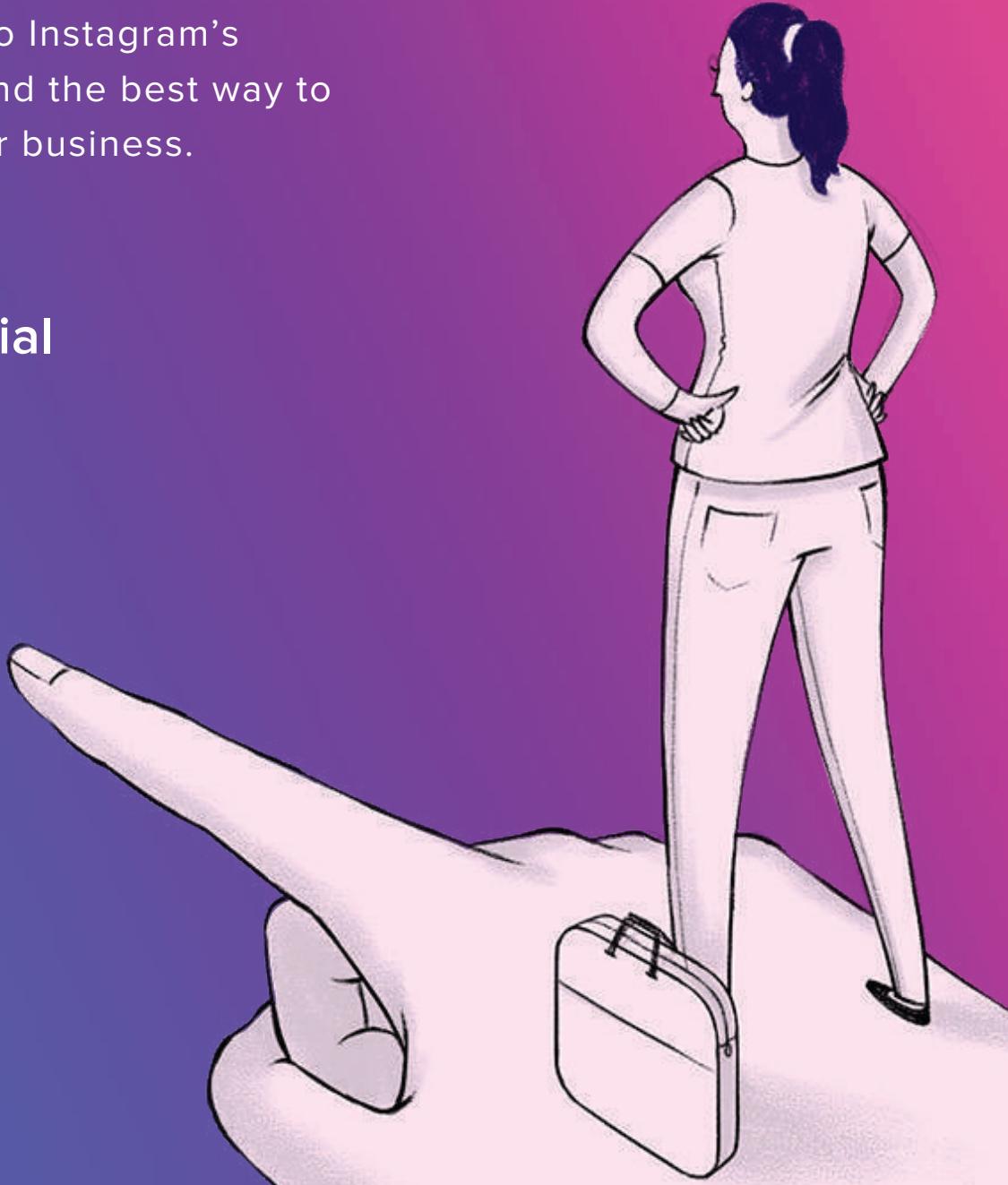
A complete guide to

Instagram marketing

An introduction to Instagram's
many features, and the best way to
use them for your business.

 **Zoho Social**

www.zoho.com/social



Zoho Social

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Introduction

How is Instagram Business different from a personal profile?

Business or personal?

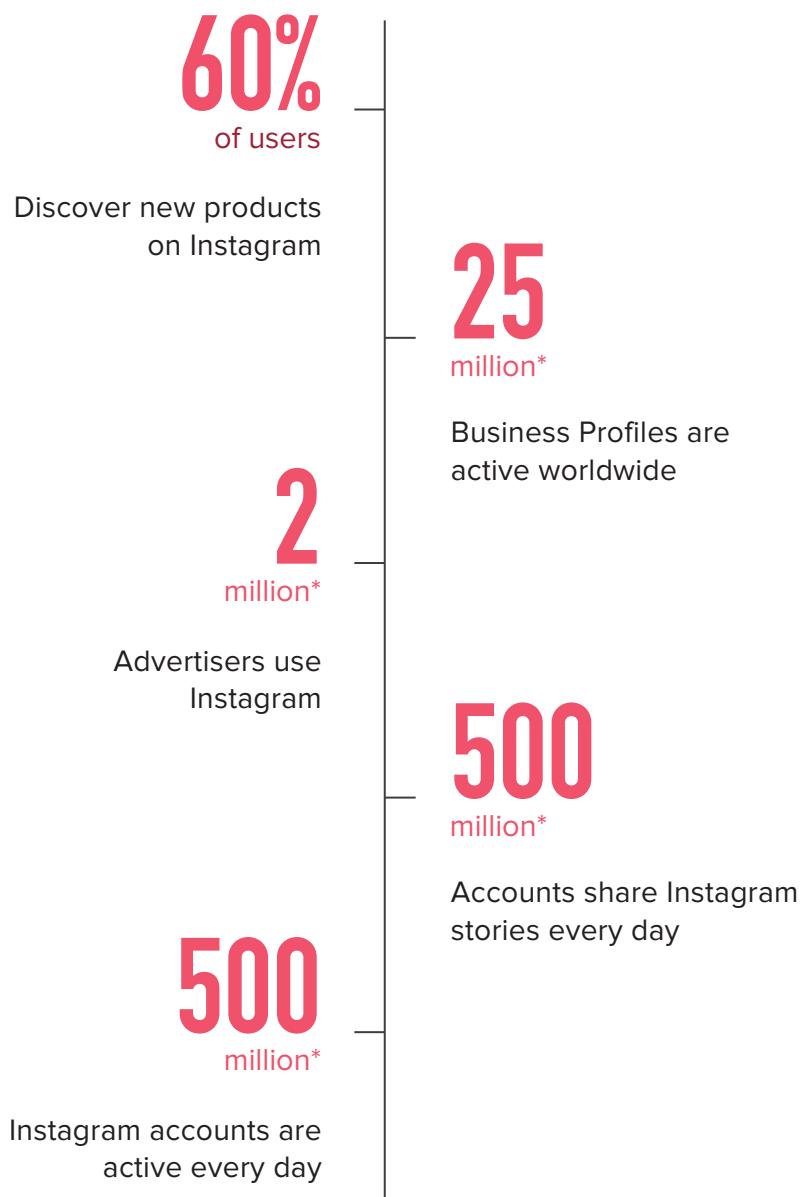
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Here's the story of Kevin Systrom, who built a multi-feature HTML5 prototype for check-ins, called Burbn. He showed it to investors, who really liked his idea and gave him \$500,000 in funding. Systrom, along with Mike Krieger, developed the prototype into a product. Eventually, they decided to narrow the focus solely to photo sharing on mobile phones, and do away with all the other features. On October 6, 2010, the product, now called Instagram, was launched through the App Store.



Ever since its launch, Instagram has seen a phenomenal rise in its user base. In fact, Instagram has over a billion monthly users right now—that's almost as many people as the entire country of India. If you're just starting to build your brand's presence on Instagram, experimenting and trying out different strategies—from publishing posts on your feed to creating full-fledged IGTV content—can seem a bit daunting at first. We're here to assure you that you're not alone in this journey of finding who your brand is on Instagram!

We know one thing for sure—Instagram's exponential growth has made it a valuable platform for businesses. According to Instagram, 80 percent of accounts follow a brand. That's a potential audience of over 800,000,000 people that you could be reaching out to on Instagram alone. But have you ever wondered how to stand out from the crowd and reach those millions of users?

Well, that just calls for finding your voice, by using the right marketing strategies to optimize your reach on this particular social media channel. If you're just getting started with Instagram, you've come to the right place. In this beginner's guide, we're going to introduce you to various features of Instagram and suggest ways you can use them for your business.

How is Instagram Business different from a personal profile?

Instagram Business is packed with features that your brand can use to build a great online presence. First, you get to view detailed insights about your audience, the performance of your posts, and how your audience engages with your content. With a business profile, you have the option to add your brand's business information, such as location, phone number, and email address. You can also add call-to-action buttons on your profile and connect them with other online services, so your audience can interact with your business instantly, and do things like book appointments, order packages, or reserve seats.

All this information will appear on your profile to make it easy for people to get in touch with your brand on Instagram. However, please note that, unlike personal profiles, Instagram business profiles cannot be set to a Private account.

Business or personal?

This is what it all comes down to. If your brand has a presence on Instagram, chances are you've already wondered if you should make the switch to an Instagram business account. Here are four questions you should ask yourself before making the leap:

Would you like to...

- Reach out to a wider audience by running advertisements?
- Learn more about the performance of your band?
- Have easy CTAs to direct people to your business?
- Manage multiple Instagram accounts for different brands?
- Edit and schedule Instagram posts from the comfort of your desktop application, via third-party apps?

If you answered "yes" to at least two of these questions. Then, YES! Instagram Business is the right place to be!



Chapter 1: How to optimize your Instagram business account

Having a stellar profile on Instagram is crucial if you want to build a credible presence that people can follow—so we've put together this checklist to make sure you've covered the basics.

Account

To create an account, enter your company's email address and choose a username. Once your account is created, you can link your Facebook and Twitter accounts to it, which will help you crosspost on these networks simultaneously. You can also link your Instagram account to Flickr and Tumblr, if you're active on these platforms. To start with, you should make the switch to Instagram business by following the steps listed on [Instagram's help guide](#).

Display picture

Uploading a logo, brand mascot, or image specific to your brand goes a long way in marketing on the 'Gram. Display pictures are what people use to recognize existing brands quickly or make visual associations with new profiles. So make sure you upload a clear picture that communicates your brand messaging. The ideal dimensions for uploading a profile picture on Instagram is 110x110 pixels (for mobile) and 180x180 pixels (for desktop).

Bio

Having a good bio on your Instagram business page is like establishing a statement of purpose. It gives you and your audience a clear-cut focus of what your brand is doing on the platform.

You can add a tag line, a description of what your brand does, or both. You may also want to consider adding hashtags to your bio to boost your chances of being discovered. If you have any related Instagram accounts, or a particular hashtag campaign that you want people to closely follow, you can go ahead and add them, too.

Links

A link in your bio helps you direct people to your website or a landing page, thereby increasing your web traffic and improving your brand's visibility. Unlike most social networks, Instagram doesn't allow hyperlinks in post captions, so your bio is your only option—for now, at least.

Contact information

Adding contact buttons is a great idea, especially if you'd like your audience to get in touch with your brand directly, instead of tracking responses and feedback through comments and DMs. When you add contact information, a contact button appears on your profile.

You'll see options like **Get Directions**, **Call**, and **Email**, depending on the contact information you choose to provide. But keep in mind that you must include at least one contact option. Having a CTA that directs people to your brand's email address or website could also help you track customer support tickets and queries outside Instagram.

CTAs

Like I mentioned before, you can add call-to-action buttons on your profile and connect it with other online services for your audience to interact with you instantly. This way, you can easily allow your audience to take actions directly from your Instagram profile, without having to jump between several websites.

Verified badges

Having a verified badge confirms that your profile is the authentic account of the public figure, celebrity, or global brand it represents. Head over to Instagram's help guide to learn how you can [request a verified badge](#).

Managing multiple accounts

On Instagram, you can natively add up to five accounts, and instantly switch between them, without having to log out and back in. [You can learn more about adding, removing, and switching between multiple Instagram accounts from your app](#). However, keep in mind that you'll only receive push notifications for the account you're currently logged into on Instagram.

Chapter 2: How to find your Instagram strategy

Craving Instagrammers double-tapping your posts and coming back for more? Well, it's 2019 and Instagram has come a long way in proving that it isn't just pretty pictures that make your profile stand out from the rest. Formulating a strategy for your brand on Instagram should be your priority—before you begin building a presence there. Check out how other brands are using the platform so you can learn from them and avoid making the same Instagram mistakes.

The first step is to identify what exactly your brand wants to achieve.

What are your goals? Why is your brand on Instagram?

Your Instagram success is determined by how you create and curate the right content to the right audience at the right time, and then measure the performance of your social media marketing efforts.

In a nutshell, it all comes down to:

- Setting social media marketing goals for your brand
- Maintaining a consistent style or theme
- Posting content relevant to your audience or industry
- Connecting with your audience to create a sense of trust and familiarity

So, ask yourself these five questions:

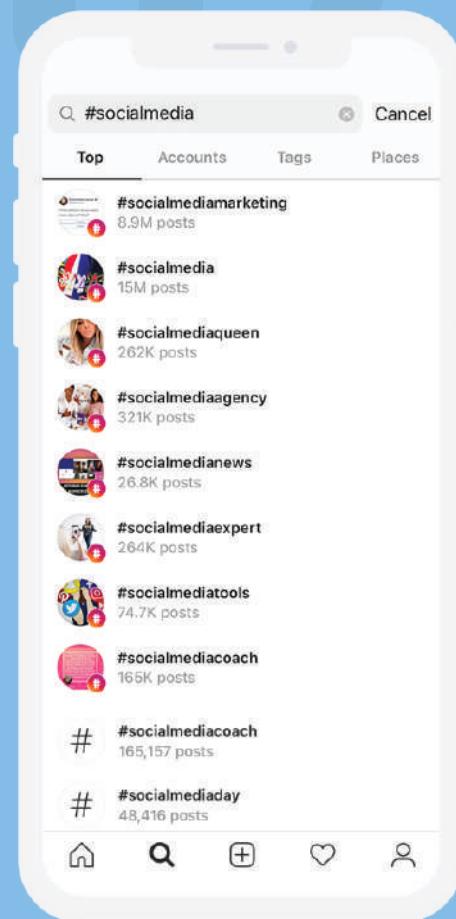
1. Are your existing and potential customers Instagram users?

While there's no doubt that Instagram is a powerful platform, it may not be the right social channel for your business. The first step is to figure out if your existing or potential customers even use Instagram. It's important to do your research in order to:

- Figure out your local Instagram demographic
- Identify the percentage of your target audience
- Discover users posting around interest areas that align with your brand's products or services

One way to do this is to run hashtag searches on Instagram, with relevant keywords to see if posts from your prospective customers show up. This way, you can identify and follow the hashtags that are relevant to your industry. Similarly, it's equally important to keep an eye out for your competitors on Instagram, and what kind of audience they're engaging with—that way you can always plan ahead of time and stay one step ahead of them!

To keep up with industry trends, you can follow posts under particular hashtags, directly on your Instagram feed. Additionally, you can also monitor hashtags that are relevant for your business through social media monitoring tools—and engage with these posts and follow people right away! This not only helps other people discover and engage with your brand, but builds trust, credibility, and a great online presence for you.



Instagram hashtag search columns from Zoho Social's monitoring dashboard.

Keeping all these factors in mind, you can then decide how much of your attention, resources, and time you should invest in your Instagram marketing.

2. What do you hope to achieve through Instagram?

To make the most of any social network, you need to first decide what you want out of it. Here are some of the things you can achieve through Instagram:

Showcasing your products

Are you a brand with good-looking products to show off? If yes, then Instagram is an essential platform for you to connect and interact with prospective customers! Brands often create a visually appealing Instagram profile, simply by showcasing the kind of products they sell. Consider that every post you publish on Instagram is a potential space for you tell a story about your brand through the products you sell—and 60% of users discover products on Instagram by coming across posts or stories they liked. B2C brands can benefit greatly by taking to Instagram to post about their products and create awareness. I mean, who doesn't like a visual treat?

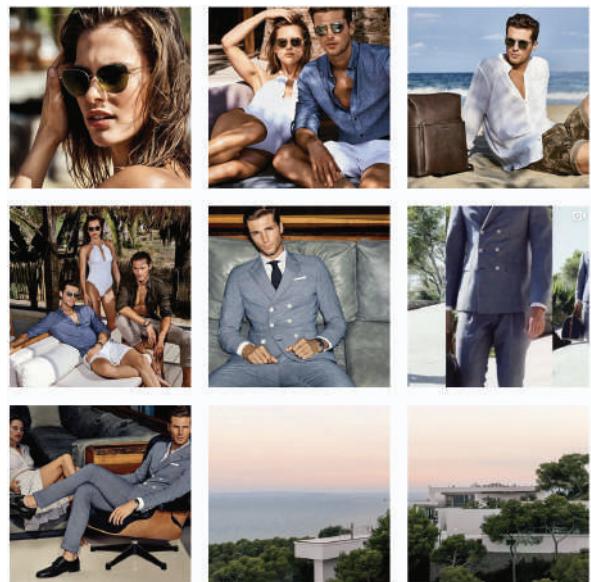
Joop is a great example of a brand that reaches out to potential customers by creatively showcasing the products they sell.

Increasing brand awareness

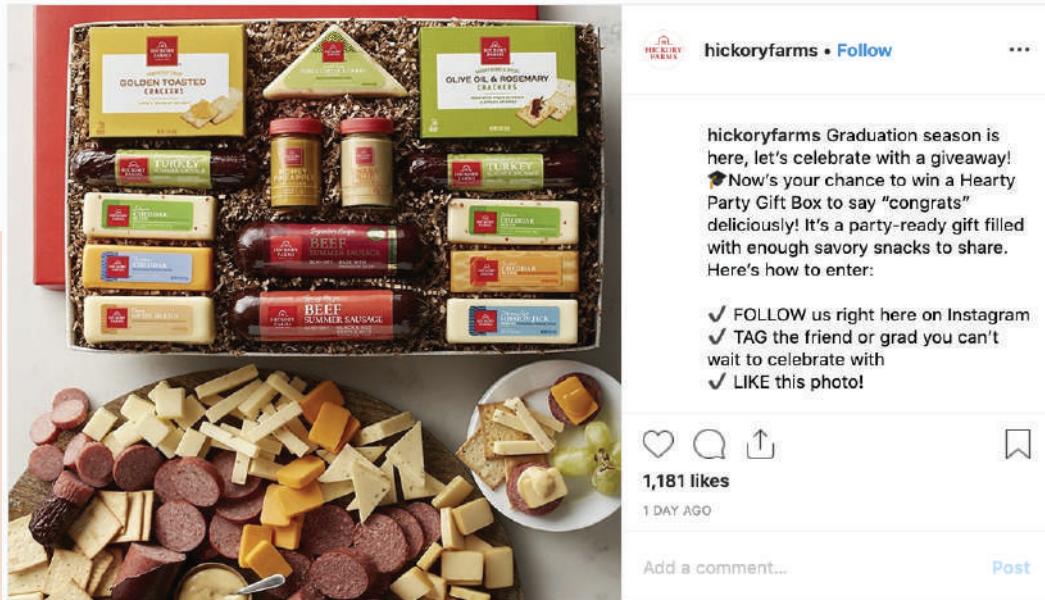
Instagram contests are one of the many options new brands use to get more followers, engage their audience, and grow a presence on the platform. Many brands run contests and giveaways to get their audience to engage with them. If the contestants have followed all the rules stated in the contest post, they could land a chance to feature on the brand's page or ultimately win a prize.

A few things to keep in mind when you're running an Instagram contest:

- Use branded hashtags
- Clearly state the contest rules, eligibility, and restrictions
- Use great visuals to engage your audience
- Give away a prize that will make your audience want to participate

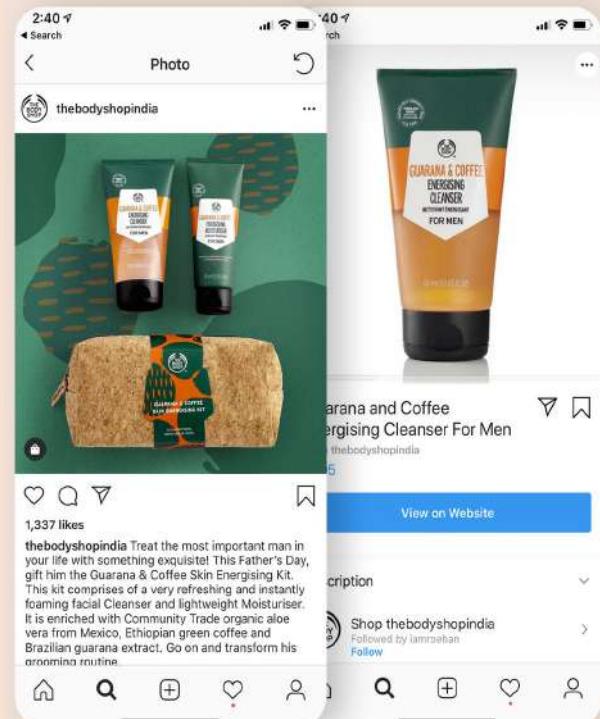


Focus on what you want your brand to achieve through the contest. Your primary goal should never be about increasing your follower count but, instead, to raise brand awareness and build audience interaction for your business. Here's how Hickory Farms successfully managed to create brand awareness by encouraging people to participate in a contest that could win them a party gift-box. Now, who couldn't resist a mouth-watering treat?



Increasing sales

Fashion brands like The Body Shop make it easy for online shoppers to discover products and quickly make purchasing decisions based on what they see. Oh, and guess what? Instagram will soon introduce an in-app checkout process, where shoppers can make purchases right from the app! (Read on to learn more about Instagram shopping)



Building community or brand loyalty

One way to build brand loyalty is by focusing on getting influencers to recommend or vouch for your product. People generally trust what their friends, and influencers, recommend, so make sure you tap into this opportunity!

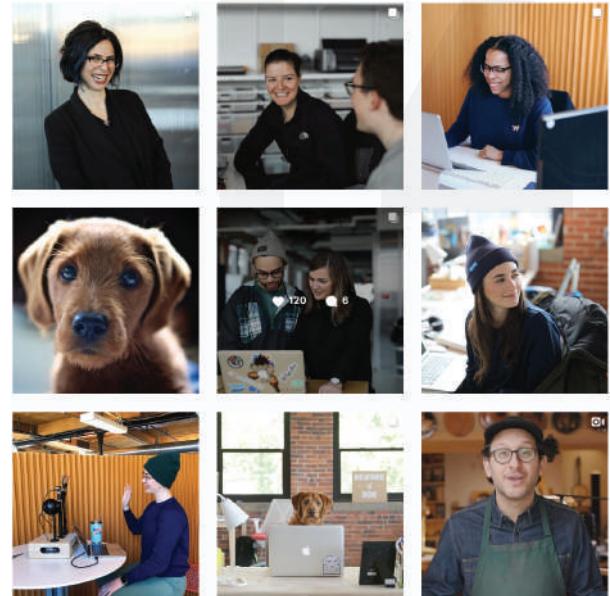
With the rise of Instagram influencer marketing, it's becoming much easier for brands to discover and partner with influencers, to not only create a great brand image but also build brand loyalty and trust. (Read on to find out more about [branded content on Instagram](#).)

Target, for example, often shares stories and posts about influencers who use and recommend their products.



Promoting your company's culture

Wistia, a video hosting platform—with over 900 posts and 5,000 followers—uses Instagram to showcase the life of their employees and values by celebrating their work culture and the community.



Another great example of how brands build an awareness and promote the company's culture is through Instagram takeovers.

So, what's a takeover?

Instagram takeovers allow someone else to take over a brand's account and publish stories and posts from it. Having an influencer run your brand's Instagram account can go a long way in building credibility in your industry. The most common forms of Instagram takeovers happen when an employee or a brand partner uses the brand's account to talk about the company's core values and culture, and connect with followers on a more personal level.

Here are some examples how people take over an Instagram account to share experience with the brand:



@weplaystrong had someone take over their Instagram feed to share their morning routine with the brand's products—adding a more personalized approach to the company's social media feed.

KIPP New Jersey had one of their teachers take over their Instagram account to post updates about their team for their **#teacherappreaciationweek**. This reflects well on the academy's core values and connects well with the audience on a personal note.



Increasing traffic to your website or a particular webpage

Some brands use Instagram as a creative platform to direct traffic from their Instagram posts to individual pieces of content on their website or a different social channel—using the network as a platform to promote their creative content.

For instance, let's take a look at how social media influencers do a great job of driving traffic from their Instagram posts to outside content, by updating the link in their profile:

Superwoman is one example of an influencer who promotes her video content on YouTube by publishing posts and stories as snippets from the original post. She also takes to her post captions to direct the audience to watch her videos on YouTube, by asking them to click the link on her profile bio:



LAST MINUTE HALLOWEEN COSTUMES

OKURRRRR-

FOR THIS WEEKEND

iiisuperwomanii • Follow

9W Reply

5W Reply

5W Reply

noufa.04 I would do YouTube thumbnail that would be funny 😊 imagine

2W Reply

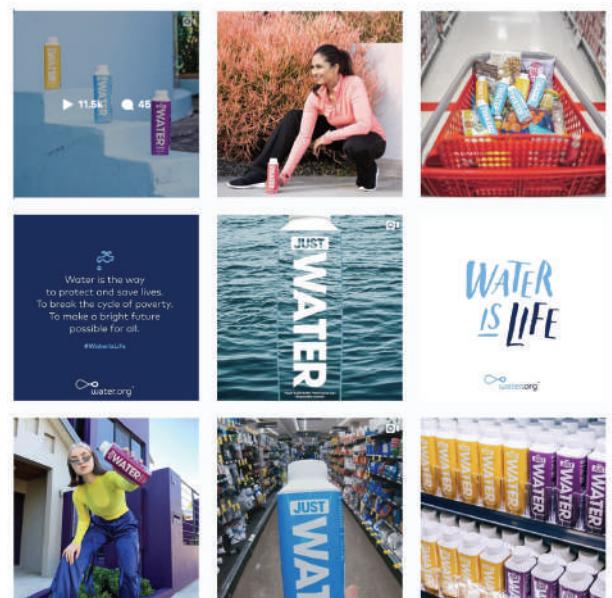
1,055,318 views

OCTOBER 30, 2018

Add a comment... Post

Sharing updates about your brand

Some brands with a large follower base use Instagram as a space to share news and updates about their brand by keeping their audience posted about their products or services. Here's an example of Just Water posting relevant updates on their Instagram feed, announcing the availability of products in stores.



Educating your audience about your industry and business trends

Headspace is a meditation and wellness app—with over 1,800 posts and 500k followers—that has managed to creatively reach out to potential customers and increase brand awareness by posting unique illustrations along with wellness quotes that are specific to their branding.



You should probably choose two or three goals if your brand is just getting started. These will become the guidelines for the kind of content you post—product demos, behind-the-scenes shoots, user-generated content, educational posts, fun imagery, or almost anything else you could come up with!

3. What's your visual style?

Every business has its unique style, and your posts will be a reflection of your brand voice and the message you want to convey to your audience. You should choose the color palette and composition you want for your photos, pick out filters that go with a theme, or write creative captions that will go with your images.

If you're planning to post text content, choose your fonts wisely! Building a style guide with all these elements will help maintain consistency across your posts, and your audience will soon learn to recognize and resonate with your style.

Don't worry, though—your style can evolve as you experiment and figure out what works for your audience, and what doesn't. As you're experimenting with your Instagram feed and changing things around, you may consider archiving posts or stories, so that other people on Instagram can't see them. When you archive a post, it keeps all its likes and comments, and once you choose to show it on your profile again, the post will return to its original spot.

Dropbox is a great example of how brands use a set color palette and confine their posts to a few shades. The whole profile has a consistent color scheme that ties it all together—the range of textures, the subjects, and the content.



4. How frequently will you be posting?

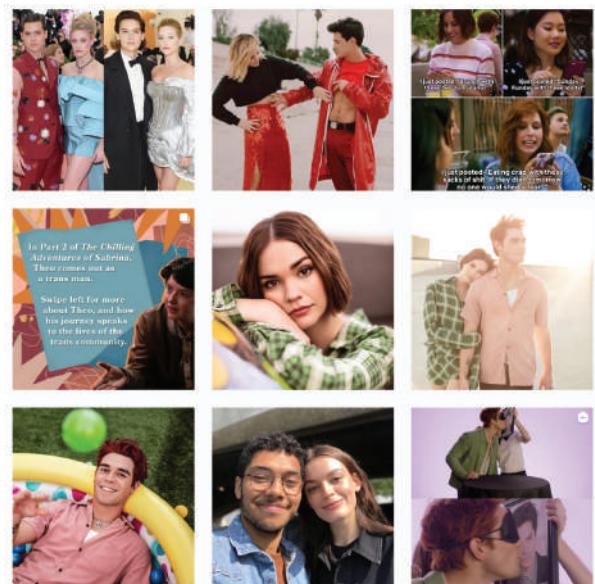
Instagram's algorithm populates the top of a user's feed with the most popular content. So it's ideal to post one to three times a day to ensure you show up in your followers' feeds. Ultimately, the only way you can find the best posting schedule is by monitoring your own analytics. You can use Instagram Insights, which allows you to see what times and days of the week produce the most interaction from your audience.

Planning out your posts using a social media calendar can help you stay focused on your content goals. If you plan and create your content in advance, you can also save a lot of time by scheduling your posts using a social media management tool.

Many brands maintain a consistent posting schedule in the form of images, videos, stories, or IGTV posts one or two times a day. A good example of a brand with a consistent posting schedule would be Netflix—they publish at least once a day, encouraging a lot of engagement and interaction with their audience.

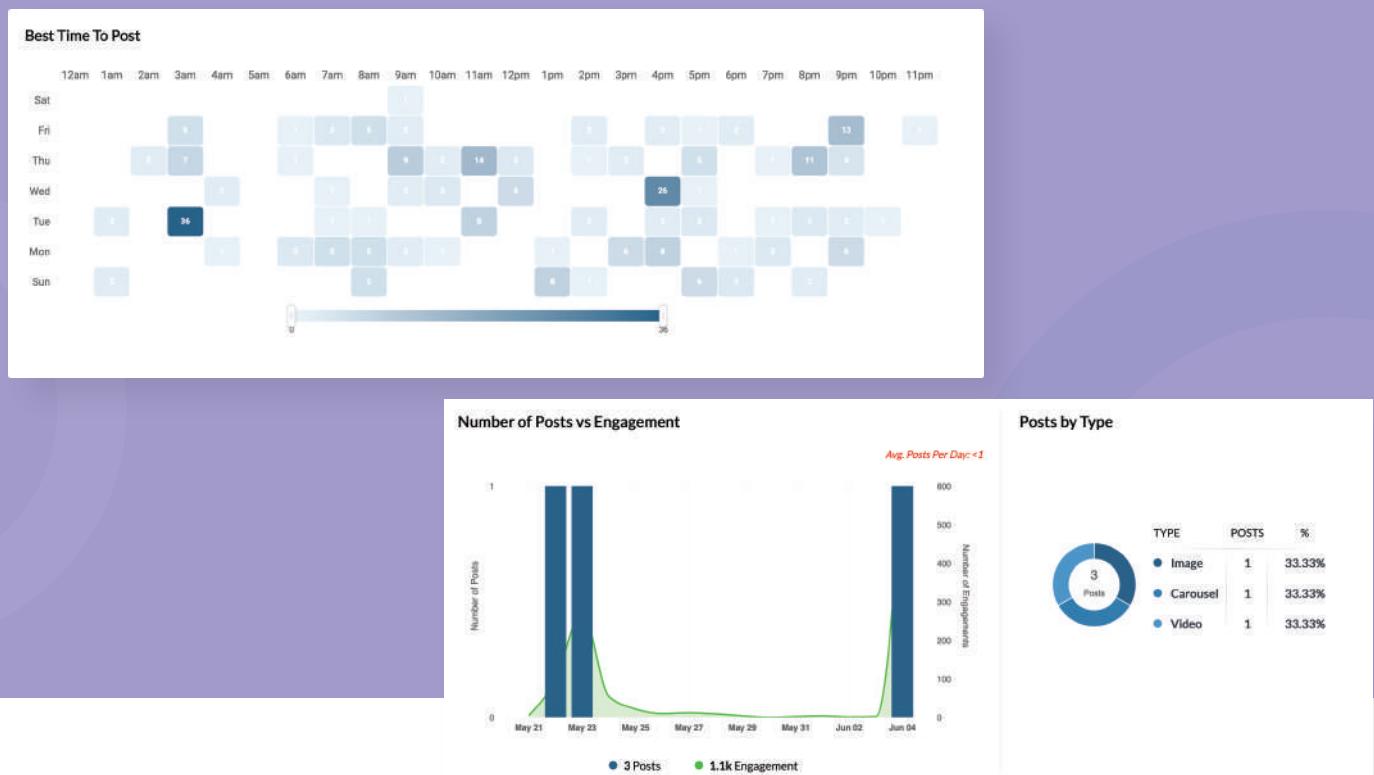
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5. How will you monitor your brand's performance on Instagram?

It's important to monitor the engagement your posts are generating in order to determine how successful you've been at achieving the goals you've set. Listen to what your customers are saying about you and get to know them better.



Instagram Analytics from Zoho Social

You can see some [analytics within the Instagram app](#), where you can monitor your activity, content, and audience. Insights within Instagram business accounts also show viral reach—if your posts have been sent to other users via direct message. In addition, you can also see how many users have bookmarked your posts. However, for deeper analytics, and to be able to focus on the numbers that really matter for your business, you should consider using a social media management tool that lets you create and manage your own reports.

So we've discussed just about all of the steps to help you find an Instagram strategy for your brand. Keep in mind, though, that your plan should align with your brand's core social media strategy. If you're looking to learn more about how you can create a social media marketing strategy from scratch, [check out this guide we wrote for you](#).

Chapter 3: Optimizing your Instagram content

It all comes down to content.

Having a clear-cut goal for your social media presence will help you set guidelines for the content you post. With over 95 million photos and videos shared per day and more than 500 million Instagram users active on a daily basis—**how can you make sure that your posts stand out?**

Let's look at how you can optimize your marketing experience by diving deeper into each feature that Instagram offers.

Publishing posts on your feed

Instagram is known for its visual appeal—it's literally the first thing that catches the attention of your audience when they visit your profile. Since your competitors are

probably already on this platform, a large part of your success on Instagram depends on how your brand stands out from the crowd, with striking visual content in the form of image posts, GIFs, or videos.

One of the most important things to do is to learn how to take the perfect Instagram photos. You can then craft these photos into posts that will help you boost your profile's appearance and foster the engagement your brand needs.

According to a study, videos receive 2.1x more comments than image posts on average. Also, video posts receive 38% more overall engagement compared to image posts. While videos are at the forefront of social media marketing, it's important to optimize your video marketing strategy on Instagram to foster more engagement.

Here's a handy guide to follow when you're posting your media on Instagram:

MEDIA	FILE SIZE	DIMENSION	ASPECT RATIO	DURATION	SUPPORTED FORMATS
 Image	8MB maximum size 30MB	Landscape: 1080x566px Portrait: 1080x1350px Square: 1080x1080px	Landscape: 1.91:1 Portrait: 4:5 Square: 1:1	—	JPG
 Video	50MB maximum size 4GB	Landscape: 600x315px Portrait: 600x600px Square: 600x750px	Landscape: 1.91:1 Portrait: 4:5 Square: 1:1	60 seconds	MP4 and MOV

Filters

Instagram may offer 40 different filters, but it's best to select a few and just use those for your posts. Some of the most popular filters are Clarendon, Gingham, Juno, Lark, and Valencia. However, we suggest you do your own research to narrow down the most popular filters in your industry. The ones you choose will also depend on what photos you're posting and what you want to convey through them.

Captions

Captions are a great place to drive engagement, and you should experiment with different kinds of captions to find your sweet spot. The captions should reflect your brand's voice and follow the style guide that you created for your brand. You should also try using emoji in your captions, to make them more appealing and help you attract more followers.

However, keep in mind that Instagram does not recognize line breaks to differentiate between paragraphs for long-form captions. You'll need to manually insert an invisible special character to help you with this. You can also use tools like Insta-Space to add line breaks and separate paragraphs in your captions and bio.

You can have long storytelling captions like NatGeo:



You can have short, witty ones like McDonalds:



Or captions that end in a question to prompt a conversation, like with Amazon Kindle:



The captions should reflect your brand's voice and follow the style guide that you created. You should also try using emojis in your captions, to make them more appealing and help you attract more followers. When you're writing a caption, remember that after three lines, anything further is shown as an ellipsis in your users' feeds. Make sure that the most important part of your caption is at the beginning. Also, note that there's a 2,200 character limit.

Mentions

When you mention an Instagram profile, they'll get a notification about the activity in their feed.

As a brand, it's always good to acknowledge and engage with posts that you're tagged in. Take a look at how Pottery Barn maintains a beautiful feed by featuring posts from users that mention their Instagram profile in their posts. (Read on to learn more about reposting content on Instagram!)



Hashtags

Hashtags help your content get discovered by users who aren't following you, and you can use a maximum of 30 of them in a post. While Instagram recommends you use three, various studies have recommended different numbers, mostly ranging from 9 to 12. Spend some time choosing hashtags that are most relevant to your content, and add the most value to your posts.

When you type a hashtag, Instagram suggests related hashtags, and shows the number of public posts using them. If you use broad hashtags—like #love—your post is likely to be buried in the noise, and it won't attract the right audience. That's why using focused and related hashtags is important.

Find out what the popular hashtags in your industry are and use them. To learn more about finding the right hashtag, check out this handy hashtag guide we whipped up for you.

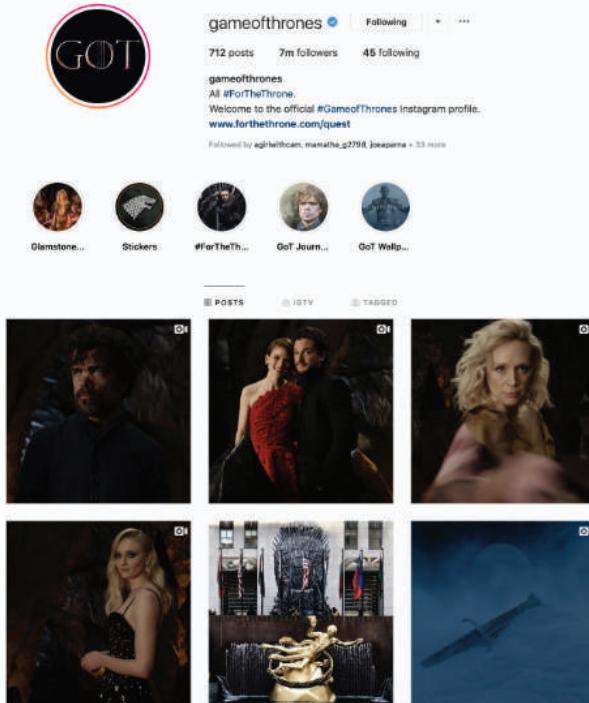
Here's how the beverage brand Frooti is killing the hashtag game by creating a unique identity for their brand:



If you're running a contest or a campaign on Instagram, like how Gap did here, creating unique hashtags will not only help popularize your brand but also make it easier to track engagement.



To build up the suspense and keep their fans engaged and anticipating the approach of their final season, Game of Thrones, added #ForTheThrone in their Instagram bio, along with their official #GameofThrones.



Zoom feature

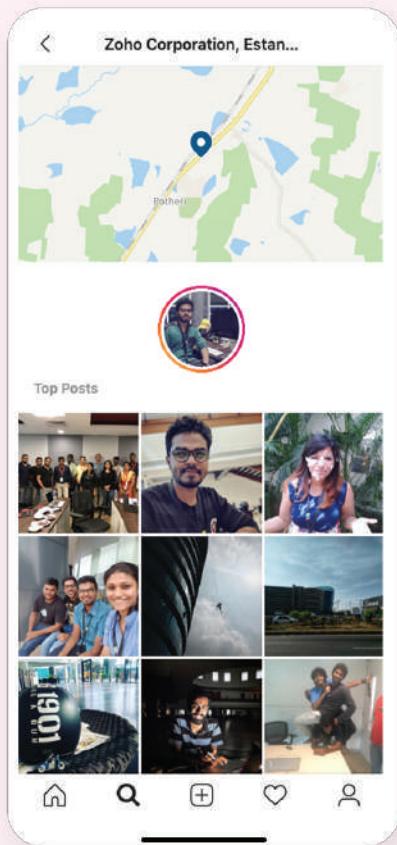
Instagram lets users pinch and zoom on an image. This feature can be used by brands in a variety of ways. Check out how Amazon invited their audience to engage with their post using this feature:



Location tag

If you have a physical store, encourage your customers to post pictures tagging the location. It's a great way to spread the love they have for your brand—and this enables you to engage with these posts right away! In fact, Instagram also lists location stories on the Explore page, which allows users to view all the publicly posted Stories that are tagged with a particular location sticker.

Users checking out your location on Instagram can also see these posts, so they serve as an excellent source of crowd-sourced content for your business.



You can monitor these locations right from the Explore page, and keep track of what users are saying about you or your competitors.

Crossposting

Crossposting is essentially publishing links, images, video clips, and text to more than one online channel. Instagram allows you to crosspost content on channels like Facebook, Twitter, and other social media platforms. You want your business to stand out on multiple social media channels—a space where many potential customers could be and crossposting can go a long way in aiding your social media strategy.

Reposting

The repost feature lets you republish image or video posts from another user's Instagram profile to your feed, while giving credit to the user who originally published the post. While you can't repost natively from Instagram, you can use third-party posting tools to republish other posts that could be relevant to your brand or audience. And yes, only business profiles with a connected Facebook Page can repost on Instagram.



Reposted image on Instagram

Reposting can help your brand to:

- Engage with posts that feature your customers or your products/services
- Curate relevant content for your audience and increase your viewership

As a business, you can republish posts that showcase how people are using your products or services. You can also repost user-generated content that your audience will find interesting. Reposting is a great way to connect with authors who create original content, as they are likely to appreciate reposts that bring more visibility to them. For instance, when a user mentions or tags you in a post that features your product, reposting it will help increase your brand's Instagram presence.

And reposting content has never been easier. All you have to do is follow a few simple steps to directly republish posts on your feed. Head over to our [detailed guide to read more on how you can repost on Instagram business profiles](#). However, keep in mind that it's always best practice to check with the author before you reuse their content, to make sure you have their consent. This also gives the author an opportunity to share additional contextual information that you may want to use in your captions.

Repost this from your Instagram account? X



Repost using @ZohoSocial -  :@onceinabluepool Water is definitely my element 💧 Winter sea is unbelievably beautiful 🌊 Landscapes change, lights get softer and the sand runs guided by the wind. Silence reigns, surrounding this beautiful old village. Time to relax ❤️ •#onceinabluepool #italy #ig_italy #ig_liguria #liguria #cinqueterre #amazing #architecture #architecturelovers #colorful #buildings

 Please seek permission from the original photographer before you repost. [Learn more.](#)

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The reposting feature on Zoho Social

Instagram Stories

More than 150 million people have conversations with businesses through Instagram Direct each month, with a third of those messages beginning with an Instagram Story.

Instagram Stories are pictures or short video clips that inhabit their own feed and disappear after 24 hours. According to Social Media Week, 70% of users watch Instagram video stories without sound, so it's important that you post ones that visually convey their intended message. You could use a third-party application like [Clipomatic](#), to create live captions on your screen as you speak, making your videos more interactive and inclusive. Another important thing to do is to optimize your content by following the upload specifications that we outline in the table below. There are plenty of options to choose from—like posting pictures, videos, stickers, links, or GIFs, which can be viewed for up to 24 hours.

Stories can be used to:

- Share behind-the-scenes content from an event
- Create curtain raisers for important announcements
- Showcase your product or company culture
- Display educational content creatively through a variety of interactive features
- Update your audience with product updates
- Help your brand get discovered by an audience outside of just your followers, by using hashtag and location stickers
- Crowdsource decision-making, using features like polls, questions, and quizzes
- Start fundraisers for non-profit organizations that you support (as of publishing the donation sticker is still in testing)

Here's a handy guide to follow when you're posting your media on Instagram stories

MEDIA	FILE SIZE	DIMENSION	ASPECT RATIO	DURATION	SUPPORTED FORMATS
 Image	30MB	1080x1920px	9:16	15 seconds	JPG
 Video	4GB	1080x1920px	9:16	60 seconds	MP4 and MOV

Stickers

Location stickers

You can use location stickers on your stories to help get discovered by an audience outside of your followers, since Instagram users often follow and search for stories from a particular location. When users click on a location tag, they'll be taken to a feed where they can view other content posted from the same location. You have the option to choose your location, as well.

Oh—and location stories can be viewed from the Explore page. So if your location is trending on Instagram, you can be sure that people are watching you!

Hashtag stickers

Hashtag stickers make your hashtags stand out to your audience. You can also use multiple hashtag stickers in a single story, to encourage your audience to post stories around the same tag. Between branded hashtags and campaign-specific ones, there's a lot of room of your brand to experiment with this sticker and receive a ton of engagement on your stories!

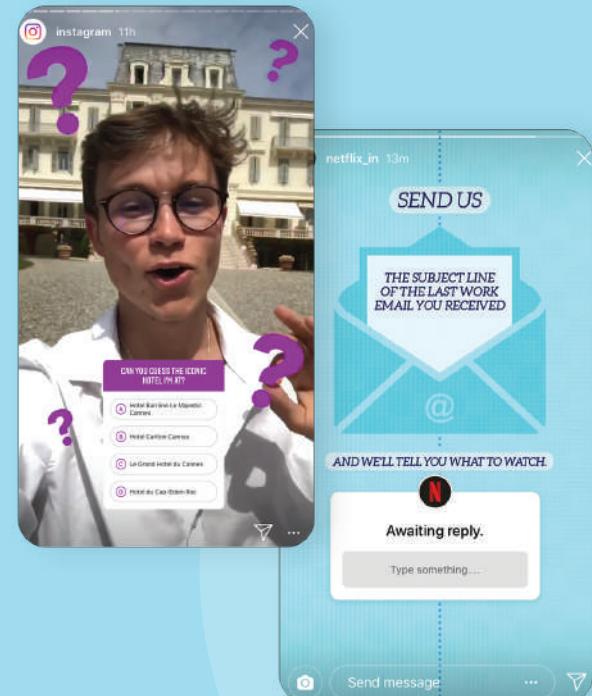
Tags and mentions

There's also an option to @mention someone in your stories, the same way you can in a comment. You should also engage with posts and follow accounts that tag your brand, assuming it's relevant to your business. This is an excellent way to help other people discover and engage with you.

And shout-outs are one of the best ways to build relationships with other brands in your industry—you can mention an influencer or tag another business, if your brand is collaborating with them. This goes a looooong way in building more credibility and trust with your audience!

Website links

Verified accounts can also add a website link to their stories, which appears as a "See More" option, for users to swipe up and get redirected to a website.



Stories with interactive stickers on Instagram

You can make your Stories interesting in a number of ways:

- Adding photo filters and selfie filters
- Drawing on them with editing tools
- Adding text, GIFs, emoji, and more
- Adding interactive stickers, like polls, emoji slider stickers, chat stickers, selfie stickers, current time or weather stickers, rating stickers, order stickers (this sticker isn't available to everyone), countdown timers, music stickers (this sticker is only available in some countries right now), donation stickers (this sticker isn't available to everyone), question stickers, and quiz stickers, to creatively engage with your audience.

[Learn more about using stickers on Instagram.](#)

- Using visual effects like Rewind, Superzoom, and Boomerang, that let you play around with images, videos, or GIFs
- Repurposing content from stories by crossposting them to Facebook

To learn more about how your brand can use Instagram Stories, check out our [handy dandy guide](#).

Story highlights:

You can choose to add stories that appear on your profile as highlights, even after they disappear from your profile. Your saved Story Highlights will appear below your profile photo, like this:

To make your highlights more engaging, you can categorize your stories under common themes. To organize your Story Highlights further, you can choose a cover photo and a story name to identify stories with specific themes. Take a look at how TheBucketListFamily maintains their profile with engaging Story Highlights. You can also add more photos or videos to your highlight at any time by tapping **Edit Highlight** under each story.



Story Archive

The stories you create and share on Instagram are automatically saved in your Stories Archive, so there's no need to save them to your phone manually. You can click to view all the stories you have published from your device. You can also republish old stories from here that will appear on your profile as a throwback post.

Instagram Live

Instagram Live is a great platform for driving new followers and interactions for your brand. Instagram allows you to post live videos to stream events, or any interaction you choose to have with your audience in real time. These videos will appear as stories that stay on your followers' feed for a while after you're done with the broadcast.

While the option to broadcast a live video doesn't let you prerecord videos or retake snippets, it's a great medium to engage with your audience in the moment. When you're live, you can see the comments people are posting and respond to them immediately.

- You can start a live video at any time by tapping the camera icon in the top left corner of the screen to open your Instagram camera
- Tap the Live option and then Start your Live Video
- You can then keep track of the number of viewers and engage with comments from your audience
- You can also pin your comment to the top of your feed, so that viewers can see as soon as they join the Live video
- Alternatively, you can also choose to switch off commenting, depending on what your broadcast is about

Oh, and it's always best to practice a bit before you get started with your Live video!

From driving sales to gaining new leads for your brand on Instagram, Live videos can go a long way to increase your profile's discoverability on the Explore page, if you manage to get a lot of engagement for your videos. This exposure can not only benefit you by boosting your brand image, but can even help you talk to people interested in your products/services, collect information about your leads, and even close some deals! You can promote your

Live videos by planning campaigns well ahead of time to create a sense of suspense around the broadcast. Here are a few themes that you could create Live videos around:

- Q&A sessions about topics that are relevant to your brand or industry
- A new feature/product/service launch
- Live broadcast of an event
- Marketing campaign that you'd like to promote

But, here's the best part—just like your stories, your Live videos can be just about anything you want it to be! So go ahead and explore the different ways you can make your stories and Live videos as engaging as they can be.

Viewer and comment moderation for stories and Live videos

You can choose to hide your stories or Live videos and make them exclusive to just a few of your followers by navigating to your profile, selecting Story Settings and tapping Hide Story From to select specific users who you don't want to see your live video. This feature is helpful not only to keep spammer away but to help you target select groups of followers for your Live broadcasts.

You can also choose to hide inappropriate, explicit, or spammy comments in your Live stream or stories. Head over to your Instagram settings, go to Comments and then switch on the toggle to Hide Inappropriate Comments. You can also add certain keywords that you don't want to appear in comments. This way, you have more control over how people view and engage with your stories and Live videos.

How brands can use the Close Friends feature creatively

Like I mentioned before, you can curate your stories to allow only an exclusive group of users to view and engage with them. The Close Friends feature on Instagram lets you do precisely that! You can choose to create a separate group of people who have access to view your stories that you may not want to share with everyone else. This could be:

- Promotional stories
- Everyday activities of your brand
- Behind-the-scenes moments
- Tips or advice
- Exclusive offers

Here's the best part— you can keep your stories private by adding and removing followers from your Close Friends list at any time, without them ever receiving updates about it. Head over to the Instagram guide to learn more about sharing stories with your close friends.

After you've posted a story to your Close Friends list, you'll see a green circle appear around it on your feed—and this will appear on your Close Friends' feed, too, so they don't miss it! This also communicates a positive message to your audience by offering a level of exclusivity to what they're viewing.

Instagram video chat

Ever looked for different ways to provide personalized customer service on the go, other than letting your audience slide into DMs, email, or a phone call? Well, here's where Instagram's video chat can come in handy! It's 2019, and instead of having Q&A sessions on your stories to address the masses, you can count on video chat to offer personalized help when your audience wants to know more about your products, brand, or industry. Live chats not only help your brand gain more trust and credibility, it can also be used to:

- Get feedback about a product or service
- Provide personalized customer support service on the move
- Schedule one-on-one product demos
- Host meetings with clients or your team
- Run a live Q&A session

You can also initiate video chats with a chat group from your inbox, up to a maximum of 6 members. Head over to Instagram's guide to learn more about starting video chats.

IGTV

With the introduction of IGTV, for streaming longer video content—with a maximum duration of up to 60 minutes for verified accounts—Instagram has managed to successfully establish a largely mobile-centric social media era. IGTV holds the potential for your brand to grow in multiple directions, and it's new enough that you can experiment with ideas and see what works best for you. If you're looking for ideas to use this feature, [check out our story about four brands that are making the most of Instagram TV for their marketing.](#)

To post videos on Instagram TV, you'll first have to create a channel on the IGTV or Instagram app.

When you're ready to get started, check out our guide to learn [how your brand can create engaging IGTV content.](#)

Another important thing to keep in mind is that videos that don't follow Instagram's Community Guidelines could be removed, so make sure your content doesn't violate them!

Follow these specifications for uploading videos on your IGTV channel:

MEDIA	FILE SIZE	DIMENSION	ASPECT RATIO	DURATION	SUPPORTED FORMATS
 Video	upto 3.6gb	720 Pixels	Vertical:9:16	15 seconds to 10 minutes	MP4

Chapter 4: Managing Instagram engagement

Your Instagram success need not be dependent on the number of followers you have or the number of people who randomly like your post. In fact, a study shows that over 81% of businesses identify engagement rates as the most important metric for success.

Now that you're aware of how to optimize your Instagram posts to up your marketing strategy, the next step is to manage the engagement you receive for your posts. This way, you can maintain a personal connection with your audience by liking, reposting, or responding to tags and comments you receive from your audience. Let's face it—not many people follow brands that sound like a bot!

First, it's important to keep tabs on the following two spaces to track engagement for your brand on Instagram:

Message inbox

You can send and respond to direct messages from your inbox. Your inbox can be categorized to view message requests from people who you don't follow back, unread messages and flagged messages. You can also view:

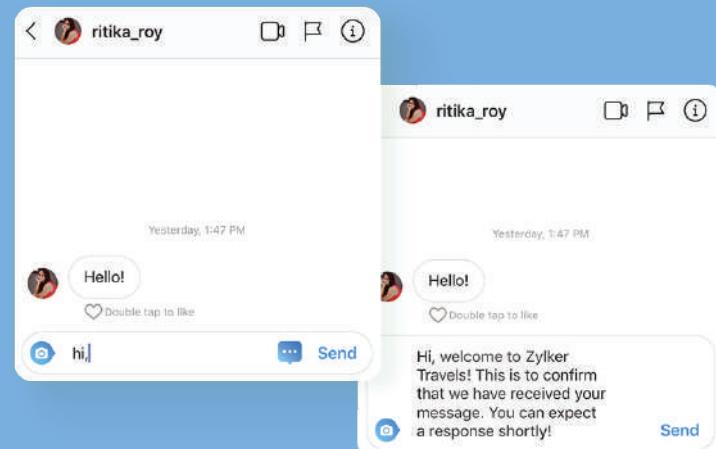
- Story mentions:** When someone tags your username on their story
- Tagged story mentions:** When someone reposts a story that you've tagged them in
- Image and emoji reactions:** When someone reacts to your story with an image or emoji
- Messages:** When someone sends a message from your story
- Post mentions:** When someone tags your post or IGTV video on their story

Voice messages

Instagram Direct has a voice recording feature where you can record audio messages in individual chats and group messages. Brands can use this creatively to add a personal touch to their DMs with their audience or customers. The best part about this feature is that you can simply trash the recording or choose to unsend the audio message, in case you want to rerecord it!

Quick replies

Business profiles can make use of the *quick reply* feature to respond to incoming messages. Once you've set up your quick replies from your Business Settings on your Instagram app, you can tap the ellipsis (three-dot chat bubble) icon in the text box. Then, you can select a quick reply from the list of saved replies to send a message.



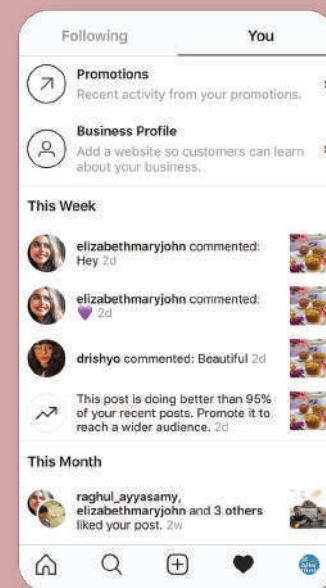
Notifications

Here, you'll receive notifications when people like and comment on posts from your feed and IGTV. You'll also receive notifications when someone tags your username on post captions, images, and videos.

You can also view the activity of the people you follow by tapping Following on your notification screen. Insights within Instagram Business also show viral reach, if your posts have been sent to other users via private message.

You can choose to directly respond and engage with these notifications and updates natively from your Instagram app or use third-party tools to manage your Instagram comments.

Did you know that Instagram lets you hide comments that may be inappropriate and offensive from your posts, stories, and live videos? Comments can also be filtered automatically—head over to Instagram's guide to learn more on filtering out comments that you don't want on your posts.



This is the first time Charles has engaged with Zylker Travels. Charles has 102 followers and is following 67 people. [Know more about Charles.](#)

[Follow](#) [+ Add to CRM](#) [Discuss](#)

Zylker Travels - Your Holiday Planning Destination @ZylkerTravels 16 Oct 2018 02:35 PM

It's a hard blog life: How to make it as a [#TravelBlogger](#) buff.ly/2scptJl Via [@IrisTimesBiz](#)

[Reply](#) [Retweet](#) [Like](#) - [1](#)

Charles @charles   Awesome

26 Oct 2018 02:44 PM - [Reply](#) [Retweet](#) [Like](#)

Typos are costly. Read before you comment!

Live Stream

@Charles replied to your tweet 26 Oct 2018 02:44 PM

@mikesanthony retweeted your tweet. 25 Oct 2018 at 9:12 AM

Alan Bryson commented on your wall post 25 Oct 2018 at 9:10 AM [Contact](#)

@johnmatthews started following you. 24 Oct 2018 at 4:43 AM

@KevinChieff started following you. 24 Oct 2018 at 4:00 AM

@Andrea liked your post. 23 Oct 2018 at 10:46 PM

Tony Karrer commented on your post. 23 Oct 2018 at 08:18 PM [Lead](#)

@Andrea liked your post. 22 Oct 2018 at 10:46 PM

Responding to comments from Live Stream on Zoho Social

Hashtag search

You can also monitor hashtags that are relevant for your business through social media monitoring tools—and engage with these posts and follow people right away! This not only helps other people discover and engage with your brand, but builds trust, credibility, and a great online presence.

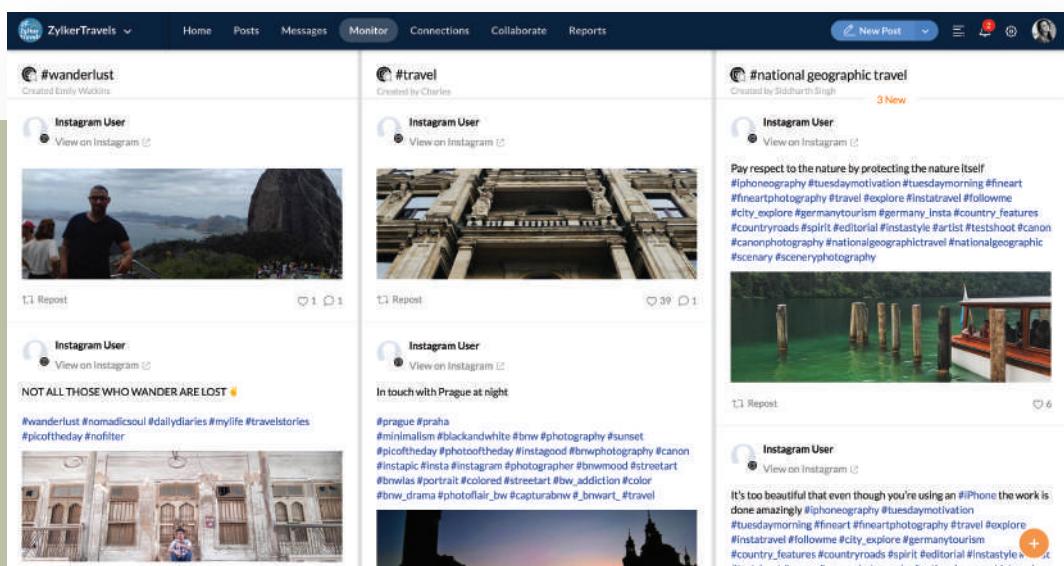
As a business, your brand should be on top of relevant hashtags to discover users posting around interest areas that align with the brand's products or services. You can follow hashtags using the follow feature natively available on Instagram—which shows posts related to a particular tag in your feed. However, this can seem cluttered and disorganized for businesses that actively endorse their hashtags or follow other hashtags of interest to their brand. That's where a social media monitoring tool can come in handy—you can easily create and monitor hashtag searches to keep track

of all the posts that matter to your business, and engage with them right away.

What are Instagram nametags?

Nametags provide a quick and easy way to allow people to discover and engage with your brand on Instagram. You may have encountered instances where people have failed to spell your profile correctly with all the characters you included in your username. But here's the good news—scanning a nametag can take a person directly to your profile, so they can follow your brand without mistaking it for another profile. Head to this guide to learn about the ways you can scan a nametag. Also, you can follow these steps to customize your nametag on Instagram.

You can always be creative when it comes to customizing your nametag, by adding vibrant backgrounds, emoji, and more.



The screenshot displays three columns of Zoho Social's hashtag monitoring interface. The first column, titled '#wanderlust', shows a post from 'Instagram User' with a photo of a person standing in front of a large rock formation. The second column, titled '#travel', shows a post from 'Instagram User' with a photo of a building's architectural details. The third column, titled '#nationalgeographictravel', shows a post from 'Instagram User' with a photo of a boat on a lake. Each column includes a 'Repost' button and a 'View on Instagram' link.

Hashtag Monitoring columns on Zoho Social



Here are the following ways you can display your nametag:

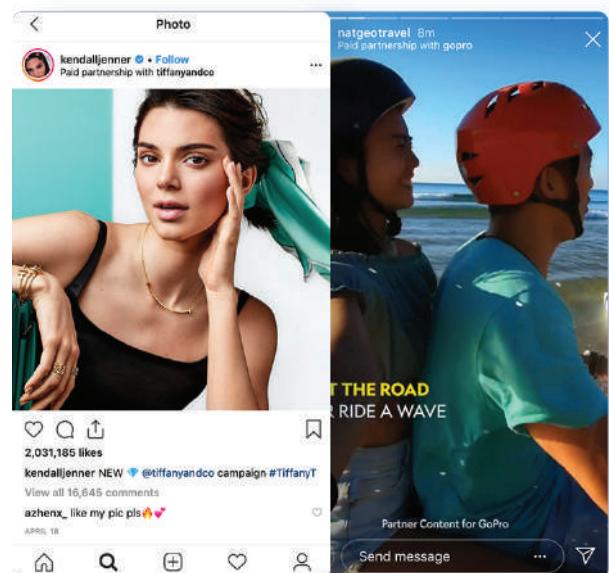
Share it as a story on your profile

- **Share it as a story on your profile**
- **Endorse your brand name at events by displaying your nametag**
- **If you own a store, you can display it for customers at your physical location**
- **Post it on your website, social media channels, blogs, and more**

Chapter 5: What is influencer marketing?

With over 80% of people following a business, Instagram provides a community for brands to interact with each other and build relationships by tapping into their audience's interests and passions. Your brand can partner with celebrities, influencers, and publishers to launch branded content campaigns—this is otherwise known as influencer marketing.

Brand partnerships aim to build brand awareness with potential and existing consumers through well-known micro-influencers and celebrities. Instagram defines branded content as "a creator or publisher's content that features or is influenced by a business partner for an exchange of value."



While influencers can endorse brand partnerships on Instagram, brands have the option to approve business partners to post branded content and stories about them. Head over to Instagram's guide to learn more about how you can tag and approve branded content.

Chapter 6: What's Instagram Shop?

Did you know that 70% of shopping enthusiasts turn to Instagram to discover new products? In fact, 130 million Instagram accounts tap on shopping posts to learn more about products every month. Instagram Shop is a great place for people to discover your products or services and make an instant purchasing decision. With this feature, you can showcase products on your feed or story. What's more? People can directly find featured products on the Explore page!

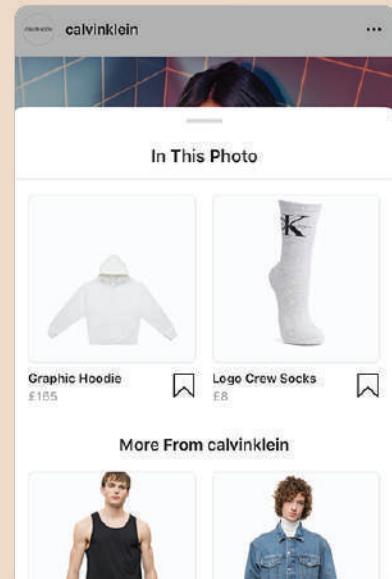
When you feature product tags on your posts or product stickers on your stories, you'll be able to see a shopping bag icon. Tapping these product tags, will take you to the product description page where you'll be able to view:

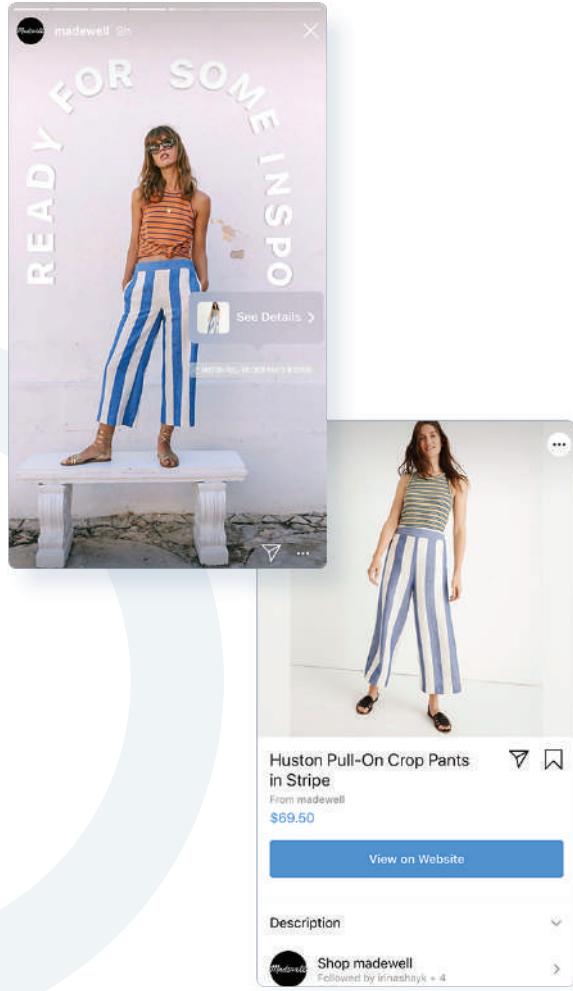
- An image
- A description
- The product cost
- A CTA button that directs to a website to purchase the product

However, you need to make sure that your business profile is in a market where Instagram shopping is available. Also, make sure you've associated the right Facebook page to your account.

Now, you're all set to connect your business profile to a Facebook catalogue. You can either choose to:

- Set it up yourself
- Use certified Facebook Partners, like Shopify, to set up your catalogue



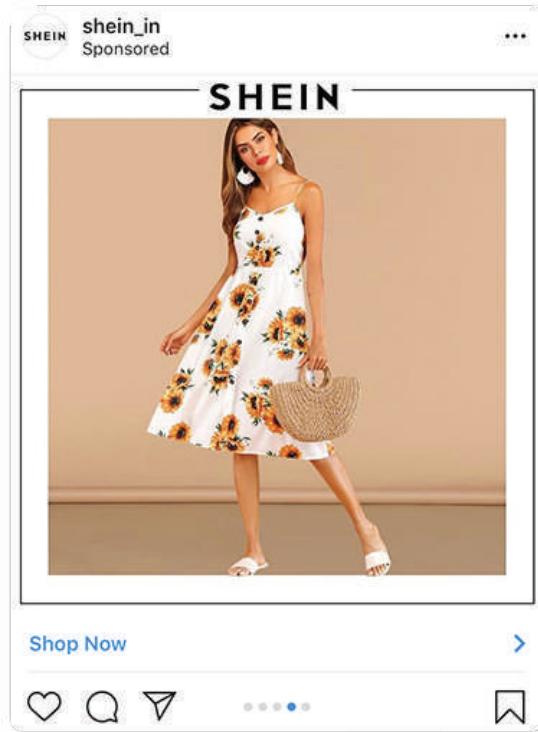


Chapter 7: Marketing your brand with Instagram ads

Here's food for thought—with over 25 million active business profiles on Instagram, 2 million+ advertisers worldwide use the network to share their stories and drive business results. And to add to those numbers, Instagram states that 60% of their users claim to discover new products on Instagram through advertisements—that's almost twice the population of the United States discovering new brands, and potentially purchasing products, every single day!

It's always good to consider creating Instagram ad campaigns to reach out to the audience that matters most for your business, by targeting people based on their:

- **Locations**, like counties, regions, cities, or countries
- **Interests**, such as the apps they use, ads they click on, and accounts they follow
- **Personal information**, like age, gender, and language
- **Activities** they do on Instagram and Facebook



Sponsored ad on Instagram

Who can create Instagram ads?

Any user with a business profile can create ads on Instagram. Oh! And it gets even better if you have a connected Facebook profile, as you can directly use Facebook tools to create and manage ads that'll appear on Instagram.

You can create and manage Instagram ads:

- Directly from Instagram: With an Instagram business account, you can create new ads from the Promotions button in your profile, that lets you run post and story ads.
- From your Facebook Page: After linking a Facebook Page to your Instagram account, you can directly create promotions that will appear on both Facebook and Instagram.
- Using Facebook Ads Manager: With Ads Manager, you can create and manage ads on Facebook and Instagram, among other platforms. Working as a comprehensive ad management tool, it doesn't limit your functionality to creating ad campaigns, but also enables you to review and edit your budget, audience, and placement options. You can even keep an eye out for trends over time, to identify areas to improve your campaign performance.
- Instagram partners: You can also manage your promoted posts and optimize your business with third-party Instagram marketing tools.

It's a lot to take in, huh? Don't worry—you can get started by deciding which advertising objective aligns with your marketing goal. [Here's all you need to know about the different types of ads on Instagram.](#)

Chapter 8: Benefits of using a third-party tool to manage your Instagram presence

While you can manage your Instagram presence directly, via the native app, there are a lot of actions that are ONLY possible via a third-party app, such as:

Managing multiple Instagram accounts from a desktop application

With a social media management tool, like Zoho Social, you can add and manage multiple Instagram accounts [alongside other networks.](#)

Editing and publishing posts from a computer

Third-party tools allow you to edit multiple images or videos from a web desktop app, and publish the post directly, without having to send it to your phone.

Scheduling posts ahead of time

You can schedule posts well ahead of time, plan your Instagram content strategy in advance, and manage your posts with a publishing calendar—this functionality is not available if you're only using the Instagram app.

Crossposting to many other channels

With a social media management tool, you can save a lot of time and effort by crossposting content to all major social channels, while you're posting to your Instagram profile. Crossposting can go a long way in improving your social media strategy.

Managing Instagram engagement

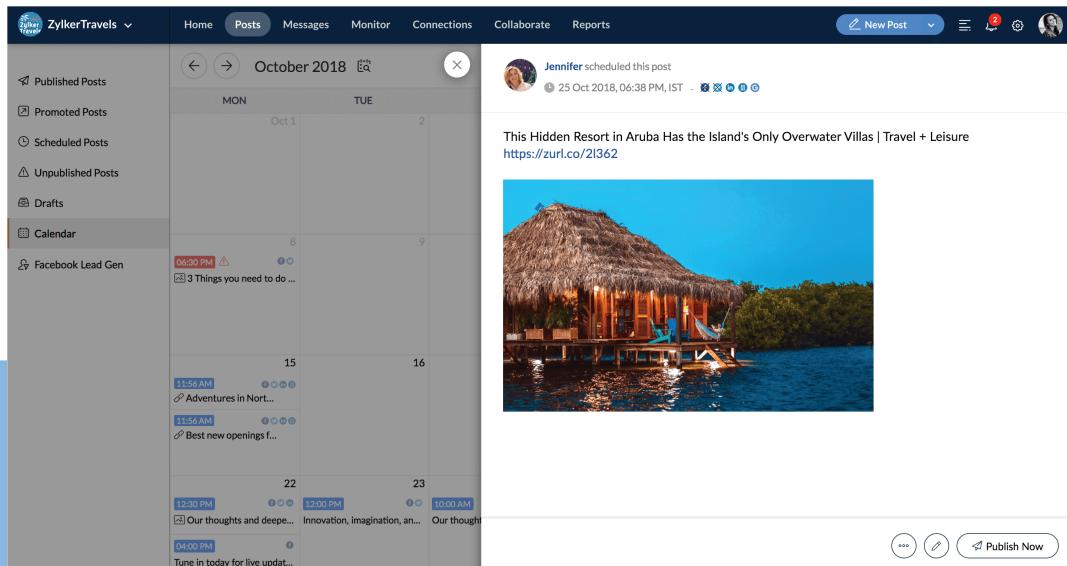
You can view all the comments you receive on your Instagram posts and respond to them instantly. What's more? With a social media tool, you can run hashtag searches and repost on Instagram directly from your desktop application with a few simple clicks. This option is not available natively on the Instagram app!

The screenshot shows the Zoho Social software interface. At the top, there are social media sharing icons for Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, and Instagram. Below them, a post is scheduled for November 16, 2018, at 12:27 PM IST. The post content is: "11 places that bring the magic of kids' movies to life <https://zurl.co/ke032>". The post includes a thumbnail image of a green landscape with a small building. A note says, "Thumbnail previews are automatically generated by Facebook and can't be customized. Why?". The publishing calendar for November 2018 shows the 16th as the current day. At the bottom, there are buttons for "Post Now" and "Schedule".

Publishing on Zoho Social

Managing Instagram engagement

You can view all the comments you receive on your Instagram posts and respond to them instantly. With a social media tool, you can run hashtag searches and repost on Instagram directly from your desktop application with a few simple clicks. This option is not available natively on the Instagram app!

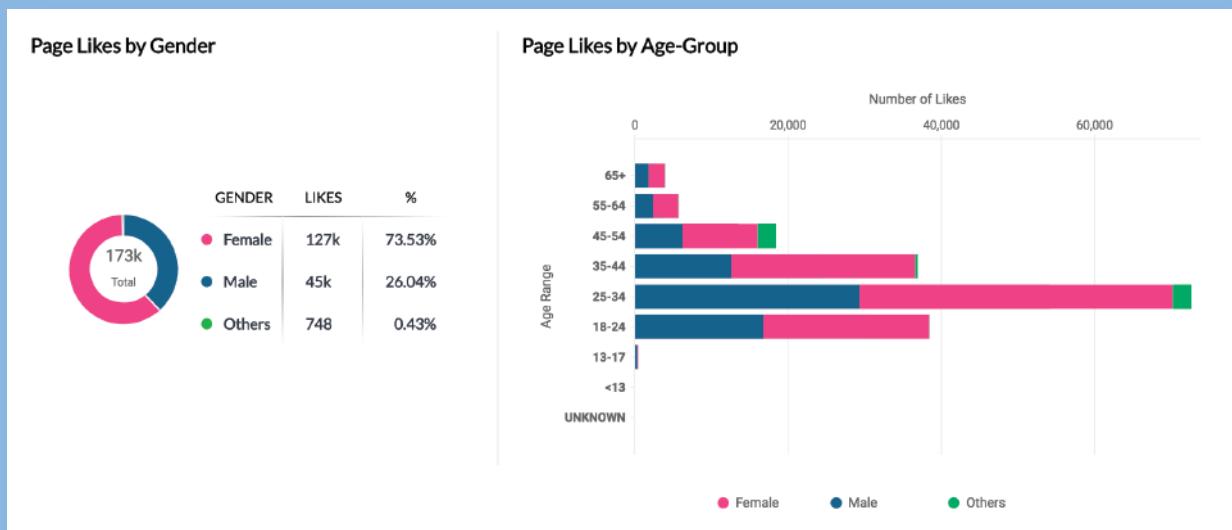


The screenshot shows the Zoho Social interface for the 'ZylkerTravels' page. The top navigation bar includes Home, Posts (selected), Messages, Monitor, Connections, Collaborate, and Reports. A 'New Post' button is on the right. The left sidebar has links for Published Posts, Promoted Posts, Scheduled Posts, Unpublished Posts, Drafts, and Facebook Lead Gen. The main area is a calendar for October 2018. A post by 'Jennifer' is scheduled for Oct 1 at 06:30 PM, with the caption: 'This Hidden Resort in Aruba Has the Island's Only Overwater Villas | Travel + Leisure https://zurl.co/2l362'. Below the calendar, there are several other scheduled posts with captions like 'Adventures in North...', 'Best new openings...', 'Our thoughts and deeper...', 'Innovation, imagination, an...', and 'Tune in for live updat...'. At the bottom right of the calendar area are three buttons: a three-dot menu, a pencil icon, and a 'Publish Now' button.

Responding to Instagram comments on Zoho Social

Creating customized reports

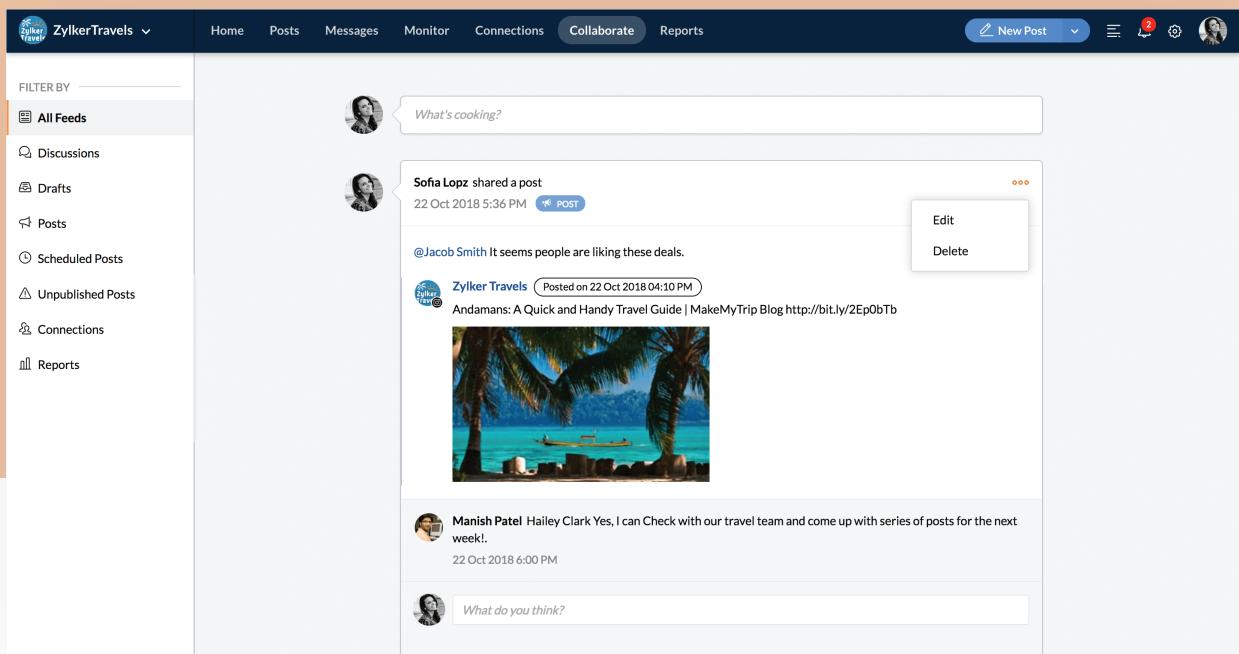
With a third-party tool, you can create and schedule custom reports based on what matters the most for your business. You can also compare relevant stats from other networks, all on a single page.



Analytics from Zoho Social

Collaborating with your team

How great is it to give multiple people, or a whole team, access to post from your brand's Instagram account, without having to share credentials? A good social media tool lets you invite your team members to manage your brand's social media accounts, and provides a space to collaborate with each other to discuss all things social media—from sharing creative content ideas, social media analytics, and posting schedules, to discussing a social media connection that could be relevant to your brand or industry.



Team collaboration on Zoho Social

If you're planning to use a third-party tool to manage your Instagram presence, here are some things you'll need to do first:

- Make sure that you've switched to an Instagram business account from your Instagram app. Only business profiles can create hashtag search columns. [Learn more about switching to a business profile on Instagram.](#)
- If you have an Instagram business profile, you'll view a pop-up that'll instruct you to authenticate your business profile with an associated Facebook Page.

Conclusion

Instagram is growing at a rapid pace, even more than other visual networks like Pinterest and Snapchat, with an active audience of 500 million+ accounts every day! It's about time we started taking Instagram more seriously, as a way to build our brand presence, and reach out to our potential audience. If you noticed the difference in impact the written story and the visual story had on you, then you've unravelled the secret to Instagram's popularity. The app holds a universe of visual stories, and for businesses, storytelling is the new strategic imperative.

Great! Now that you've learned the basic how-to's of Instagram, you can start familiarizing yourself with the platform. Try experimenting with the features we've mentioned, to begin with.

While consistently posting evergreen content is crucial for a visual network like Instagram, it's equally important to engage with other profiles regularly, post comments, follow hashtags, and like other posts to let your followers know that you're up and active. It's important to be prolific on Instagram, so post often and engage with your followers.

We hope this guide helped you get started with building a compelling strategy and presence for your brand on Instagram.

Happy Instagramming!

Elizabeth John
Marketer at Zoho Social



For more information,
contact us at support@zohosocial.com

