

What Instagram consumers want: less scripted, more snackable, behind-the-scenes content

By [Leigh Andrews](#)

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Struggling to know when to post to Insta? Future Females co-founder Lauren Dallas let us in on a little secret during Meltwater's 2019 webinar on the what, why and how of Instagram marketing: For SA, the "commute hours" of 6am to 8am and 7pm+ are best for engagement. Here's what else you missed!



Lauren Dallas, founder of Future Females.

Meltwater's marketing manager Philippa Dods introduced the session with the words that since inception almost a decade ago, Instagram has taken the picture-first social world by storm. Today, everyone and [their dog](#) – literally – is on the platform.



The growth of Instagram among world leaders

5 Dec 2018



But times have changed and business brands have come to the social media party, over 25 million business profiles registered on the global image platform.

Brands now use Instagram to humanise their content, recruit new talent, showcase products, build community and inspire their audience through their regular posts, comments and connections forged.

That doesn't make it an easy platform to master. In fact, Instagram is in a constant state of flux, with those algorithm changes that determine who sees the content you post shifting faster than many can keep tabs on.

That's where Dallas comes in. She's a social media expert and coach, as well as an entrepreneurially-minded growth marketer who's taken the time to master Instagram marketing since one of her first jobs back at eBay.



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Leigh Andrews 20 Aug 2018



As a result, her webinar was packed with step-by-step strategies brands can implement today to boost engagement, turbocharge growth, generate leads and revenue, all while futureproofing their brand on Instagram.

This involves getting better at finding and reaching your audience on Instagram, while getting familiar with the trends that are sticking around and how best to position your brand on Instagram.

Putting your brand in front of those 'potential customer' Instagrammers

Dallas said she often hears that brands know it's a powerful platform but the constant updates to how it works are overwhelming, and it's hard to focus efforts to see the best results.

That's why Dallas' particular sweet spot is the early growth phase, in finding that initial traction to grow from 0 to 10,000 followers fast, as doing so unlocks extra Instagram features like being able to link out from your Stories to grow your business and convert those followers to sales, not just engagement.



Instagram, the new marketing hub for business growth

Refilwe Mbnyai 4 Jul 2019



She did this with her own Instagram account, through which she operates Growth Academy and for the entrepreneur community Future Females in just five months, following her growth-hacking strategy.

Before explaining the process, she shared an overview of the current 'what' of Instagram, in terms of changes in the past year; and the 'why', in terms of the opportunity your business may be missing; before landing on the 'how' of understanding hashtags in order to grow successfully on Instagram...

IGTV, interactive Stories, shoppable tags and channel

One of the most notable recent milestones for Instagram was the launch of IGTV in June 2018, further changing the game as 'the next big thing in video consumption' on the platform.

Essentially a direct competitor to YouTube as it was dubbed 'the next generation of video, IGTV is essentially a new feature where brands and businesses with large accounts can share longer-form video content that's up to 60-minutes long, as opposed to the 15-second limit for Instagram Stories.

It hasn't grown as quickly as some had forecasted but has played into the way consumers now consume video, as it requires portrait rather than landscape shooting, as well as less scripted, more snackable behind-the-scenes content. In 2019, Dallas is particularly interested in how Instagram will monetise IGTV by bringing about ads and cross-promotion to build this into a more viable and sustainable feature.

Looking specifically at Instagram's own enviable growth story, Dallas shared that the platform's newest features have really taken off. Having surpassed 1bn monthly active users in 2018, 60% of its users visit the platform every single day - some doing so multiple times per day.



The story behind social media Stories

Rilind Elezaj 11 Jan 2019



Another feature worth noting is that of Stories, as we all know engagement is king when it comes to any social platform.

“ Instagram Stories is a real gamechanger, used by 500m people each day, and 80% of users admitting to following a business account, despite most businesses only posting every two business days or so, at 11 to 20 times per month. There's clearly an opportunity here as it's an excellent social platform to connect with potential and actual consumers alike. ”

As a result, 2018 saw a lot of features released to make Stories more interactive, from question stickers to polls, yes/no indicators and timers for events. These turned Stories into a two-way rather than one-way delivery experience, allowing brands to build a much closer relationship with their customers.

Dallas moved on to describe the pinnacle of engagement the addition of shoppable tags that allow consumers to checkout from posts on the platform. It's been around for a while now, despite hitting SA later than other markets, and tested and rolled out on Stories from June 2018. Social selling for the win! That makes the channel even more attractive for brands and businesses to build a presence on.



Instagram's @shop a curated showcase of shoppable products

14 May 2019



Instagram also released a shopping channel, for posts with shoppable tags as tailored to individual users, based on their interaction and what the Instagram algorithm thought would be most relevant for them, to drive that purchase conversion.

One of the biggest changes on the platform of recent times though is a follow-through of the 2018 crackdown on bots and 'follow for likes'-style fake followers.

Farewell, fake followers

Measures have been put in place to understand if someone is using a third-party tool for any 'inauthentic activity'. Some users have seen a slight engagement drop as a result of this, rather than as a drop from real, engaged followers.



#YouthMonth: How to spot fake influencers on social media

Leigh Andrews 4 Jun 2019



This links to the organic reach decline, across all social platforms.

There's also the coming change of removing the visible likes count to help boost overall engagement with less competition on the platform. That said, it's still one of the best platforms to capitalise on results from free posting but Dallas says there's no better time than the present to learn how best to do so, as there's no telling when the trend will turn around.

Explaining these changes in organic reach, Dallas said there's more content on the platform than ever before - at over 100m photos and videos shared each day, but you wouldn't necessarily realise this as Instagram has done away with the chronological feed, instead making use of Facebook's Edgerank algorithm that's based on thousands of criteria that play into where you'll show up in their feed.



The Great Facebook Swindle

Jason Stewart 21 May 2014



As a general rule, this means that business content is pushed down and friendly personal content up in the feed.

The '10% rule' for businesses on Instagram

This equates to the '10% rule', where Instagram shows your most recent post to your most engaged 10% of followers, based on their responses to or engagement with your regular posts.

This alone means you're constantly required to step up and to do your research so that you post when your most engaged followers are active on the platform.



Study reveals corporate influencers stronger than celebrities for customer engagement

8 Mar 2019

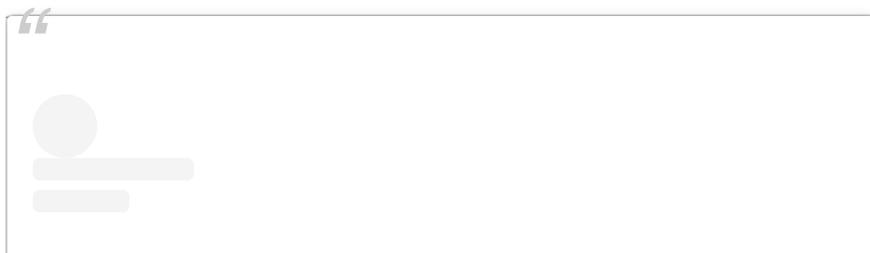


To beat the algorithm, Dallas jokes what she sees in her feed makes it seem that a delicate balance of 'feet on the beach' photos, food porn and cat videos is required.

Instead, the real three factors to ensure your content is seen by the maximum amount of Instagrammers possible are as follows:

The crux of it is based on **interest**.

The algorithm guesses how much your audience will care about your post. Instagram has reported in the past month that your feed as an individual on Instagram is entirely based on your own account activity, so they'll keep showing more of what you've liked before.





[View this post on Instagram](#)



Does knowing the ins and outs of the algorithm mean you will change your marketing strategy? I often hear social media marketers and social media users talk about this algorithm and how they wish they could "beat" it - but do you know what really beats the algorithm? Good, valuable content. No super secret method, or step-by-step process. Just this: post good quality pics, that your audience enjoys, with well-thought-out captions that spark engagement and the algorithm will have nothing on you! ☐ . ☐ . ☐ . ☐ . ☐ . ☐ #entrepreneur #mindhack #mindset #entrepreneurlife #thegrowthacademy #laurendallas #businesscoach #growth #marketing #vision #hustle #financialfreedom #lifestyle #purpose #capetown #africa #southafrica #nomadlifestyle #laptoplifestyle

A post shared by [lauren.dallas](#) (@lauren.dallas) on Oct 7, 2018 at 3:49am PDT



That's why it's important as a business to share what your audience likes – be consistent and drive engagement in a substantial way with comments, not just likes, as that indicated that they want to see more of your posts.

The next factor is **recency**:

While Instagram is no longer chronological, the algorithm still takes into account how recently you posted, as a relevancy indicator. Something you posted a few hours ago will be seen more than something you posted a few weeks ago, unless someone physically scrolls through your posts.



#InnovationMonth: Building a solid presence with tourism storytelling on Instagram

Cari Van Wyk 12 Sep 2016



Instagram posts definitely have a shelf-life. After a typical workday (eight hours), the content is no longer organically shown on the feed, so rely on sharing and hashtags to spread it further.

The third factor is that of **relationship**.

If the audience has a relationship with you, meaning the Instagrammer regularly visits your profile, searches your profile name or branded hashtags and clicks through, they will see your content.

“ *That’s why you’ll likely always see your mom’s content, even though she only posts weekly, and miss most of the posts from a big clothing brand, even though they post multiple times a day.* ”

This is the crux of getting your reach and engagement up, as the Instagram opportunity is very real, not just for brand-building and to build audience but also in a real, tangible way that affects your brand’s bottom line.

When you post does matter

Do it right and invest in the right way, as you don’t need huge growth upswings to build up an audience who will buy from you.

If you don’t know where to start, Dallas says to look at global engagement across times of day.

“ *The 5am to 6am slot and again from 3pm to 5pm offer highest engagement globally on a Wednesday to Friday, while for a South African, UK and US audience, Dallas has found that the “commute hours” of 6am to 8am and 7pm+ at night are best for engagement. Post your content and learn from your analytics.* ”

A hushed hum on the hashtag sweet spot

Elaborating on the power of hashtags and that specific sweet spot, Dallas cautioned to use hashtags specific to your niche and not just the individual post, as it’s a customer journey of sorts. That said, the #beachlife hashtag won’t work if all your posts are about cars or Facebook marketing.

Dallas says to use your local hashtags as well as mega global hashtags that relate. Also note that you can hide hashtags in the first comment on the post or write a short caption then add 5 entered full stops at the end before listing your hashtags, to make it look less spammy.



Business not on Instagram? Here's what you're missing...

Leigh Andrews 13 Mar 2019



Dallas says to also use hashtag groups as the ideal amount is between 11 and 30 - if you try to include more than that, your post may disappear. Make this easy on yourself by saving the lists of hashtags in your phone’s Notes function.

Don’t use the same ones on each post – choose the most appropriate one per post’s theme. You can also start a ‘branded hashtag’ of your own that you include in your Instagram bio, so you appear as the subject expert when the hashtag is searched for.

#Chocolate? Maybe not the best strategy...

The popularity of the hashtags you use will also prove important. If you’re going for a generic hashtag with a huge amount of users, like ‘chocolate’, which has 59million users, it’ll be harder for your post to stand out.

Similarly, if you go for one that only has a handful of related posts, it’s a term that’s not being followed or searched for so won’t bring you much traction. Dallas says the hashtag sweet spot is 100,000 to 500,000.

Try those with a bigger number to see if that results in an uptick, but majority should be medium.

Dallas also fielded questions from the webinar's attendees...

Don't feed the trolls

Asked for advice for handling negative comments, Dallas said nasty comments are something most of us have to deal with on social media.

But note there's a difference between negative comments and customer feedback. If someone is persistently being rude about your brand or spammy, you can block them or hide your account completely from them, but don't do so if that person's not a troll.



A communication era of toxic comments and bad ethics

Tinashe Zvakasikwa 16 Jul 2019



If the commenter in question is a real person who had a bad experience with your brand and wants to give feedback, Dallas says you need to take the conversation off the social platform and into the private space as soon as possible.

Once resolved, the person will ideally also remove their comment.

Should you change the brand's values on Insta?

Asked about how to change the idea of finance being 'boring business', Dallas said to ask what is the business brand? Is it trusted, conservative and mainstream, which appeals to the customer? If so, suddenly changing that to become more personal and fun could alienate the brand's existing audience.

“ If your goal is to become more fun, you also need to be consistent. ”

Dallas says to start with the brand's values and what you want to represent and resonate with the audience. Try a few different post themes, and show your brand behind-the-scenes; give a glimpse of what your employees are like and share the story of building the business.



10 ways to grow your brand on Instagram

Craig Howes 10 Feb 2015



There are often polarising elements of a business brand so brainstorm some new content ideas based on this, with experimentation at the core of your strategy.

Social video: Live or edited?

On whether live video is effective in boosting engagement, Dallas confirmed that live video gets 10X more engagement than pre-recorded and posted video on both Facebook and Instagram as it seems more authentic.

This can range from a behind-the-scenes 'walking through the office' video tour, or the 'I just thought of this' content style. Film the first few minutes of an event, give different employees the power to do so, experiment and find what works best for

your brand.



When brands get social media engagement right

Sheila Afari 26 Apr 2019



If you don't have lots of time to create content for Instagram, the most frustrating way to create is to decide what to do on the spot, says Dallas, as this takes lots of energy.

Rather go for a 'batch content' model, where you plan a week or month in advance, and create as much as possible in one go. Get a photographer to take multiple pics of yourself that you can post, or pay a designer to either create your posts or a few templates. Pay them for their time or images.

These are all practical takeaways to action from today, but ultimately, you'll need to test the strategy for your brand. Post and learn what works best for your business, from your analytics, and follow [Dallas on Instagram](#) for further inspiration.

You can also [watch Meltwater's full hour-long on-demand webinar recording](#) in your own time!

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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