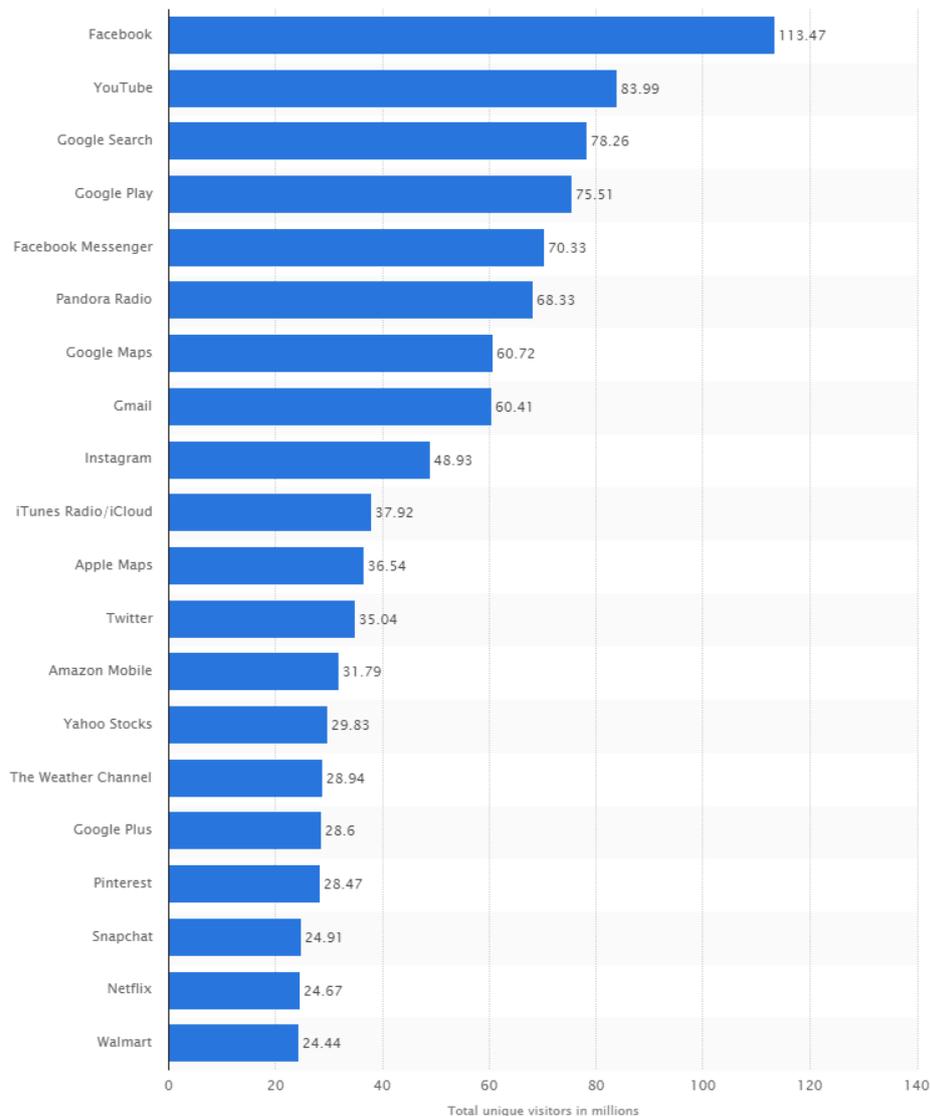


Social Media Marketing part 6 - Instagram

27.6% of the adult population of the US used Instagram in 2015. There are many image sharing networks, but Instagram (owned by Facebook) is the biggest, with 200 million active users. It's one of the 10 more popular smartphone apps – which is probably why Facebook paid so much for it: \$1 billion.



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Fig 23: Top 20 smartphone apps in 2014 ranked by monthly visitors (in millions)
source: <http://www.statista.com/statistics/250862/unique-visitors-to-the-most-popular-mobile-apps-in-the-us/>

Using image sharing networks can get you access to certain demographics that are harder to reach on other networks. Studies suggest that 90% of people on Instagram are under 35 years old, and 68% of them are female. This makes it a good platform to advertise jewellery, fashion, and entertainment. A disproportionate amount of these have high income brackets.

Getting started on Instagram

To start using Instagram, you will need the app. There's a version in both iOS and Android. The mobile app is used to upload, edit and share images – you cannot do this using a desktop PC or Mac. If you are using a desktop, you can view comment on and share content.

Once you have downloaded the app, you need to register, then update your profile. You can make your profile private if you want to spend some time setting it up and populating before making it public. As with twitter accounts, you get a profile image and a short bio, in this case 150 characters. Your profile picture should be the same as your twitter and Facebook profile pictures to maintain consistency across social media platforms.

Because Instagram is a relatively basic platform, you need to connect to your other social media accounts to get the best out of it. Go to profile tab > edit sharing settings then choose which networks you wish to connect to. Each time you upload a photo (or video) you can select which network to make the photo appear in.

Using Instagram for your business

Instagram has a particular culture which means that you won't see hundreds of blurry or tiny images. Content creators are proud of their uploads, thanks in part to the image editing and photo filter tools included in the app. One of the core messages of Instagram is to 'find beauty everywhere'. Therefore, to get your pictures and videos shared and commented on, you need to create great looking content.

For businesses, you need to portray how your company sees the world. This is not just uploading pictures of brand logos, products or staff members, you need to offer a view of the lifestyle that your products or services make possible. You need to show what gives you inspiration, even if it's an ancient tree in the middle of a field, or a pebble on a beach, as long as it reflects your company's vision, then it is a vision you can convey in pictures.

Think of Instagram as your mood board. What you want people to feel about your company is as important as what they think about your company.

Growing your audience

If you want to grow your audience, you need to create high quality, on-brand content that people will want to see in their Instagram feed. If you create interesting or popular content, this can also appear on non-followers' feeds via the 'explore' tab or the 'news' tab. Here are a few other tips to grow you audience:

- Add a link to your website footer for your Instagram account and make it available on every page
- Put the link on marketing materials and press releases. If you create a press release with images, make these images available on Instagram also

- Run photography competitions via Instagram. You should choose a relatively desirable prize like an iPad mini or an apple watch (remember your Instagram audience are quite tech savvy, and statistically have above average income so a 10 quid discount as Asda won't generate much interest.)
- Announce your account on other social media platforms and link back to your profile page.
- Use photo captions to optimal effect by adding a description of the product, a call to action with URL or a question to spark debate on a relevant subject. Note, if you use a url in a caption, they are not clickable so try to make it short and memorable. If you want people to visit your website, you can also add a bit of text to say 'click on the link in our bio to read more'
- Use hashtags. Including hashtags can be a way to tap into a current theme, but avoid overuse of hashtags and this can make it look spammy- ideally no more than three to five per photo. Avoid general hashtags like #furniture or #food as they will get few people finding your content in there. Instead use more descriptive and creative hashtags like #mediterraneanfood or #retrofurniture. Try looking at related businesses to yours and see what hashtags they are using. A few popular hashtags to use are #picoftheday, #instagood, #followme, #beautiful, #love, #tagsforlikes, #happy and #cute
- Use geo-targeting on your photos. Instagram allows you to geo-tag your photos with the location that they were taken. This is then added to a photo map so that people who are near to your location will see the pictures that were taken nearby (a bit like the 'people near me' feature of google plus). This can lead people to visit your shop if they are close by, or just to give them sense of where you come from.
- Share customer photos. This can be a really great tactic when running competitions - show competition winners holding up your product with a big grin on their faces, or people sitting on a bike they have just bought from your shop. Invite people to send in their pictures to you or search for you images with your products in by searching for your brand name. For example, Sharpie posts pictures of people's drawings made using sharpie pens.
- Add comments to other's postings. Perhaps thanking them for buying your product, or commenting on how good their picture is, will enable to get your name spread around and hopefully will attract some people to look at your pictures. Try to comment on images that either contain your products, or are in line with the mood board you are trying to create.
- Golden ticket tactic – this involves selecting a single follower and send them a surprise offer or gift. Select a follower that has lots of followers themselves and encourage them to share the news.

There are a few more ideas on the Instagram for Business website (<https://business.instagram.com/>) which includes case studies of successful marketing campaigns by the likes of Mercedes-Benz and Ben and Jerrys.