

Instagram Carousel Study

22,360,021 posts show what top-performing carousel posts look like and how they stack up to videos and images.

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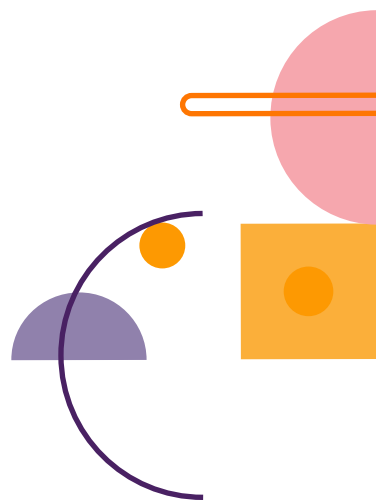
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A. Introduction

Instagram is likely the most popular social media platform, with over [500 million active users per day](#), out of which [63% of Americans](#) reportedly use it daily.

These numbers set the stage for an ongoing battle between brands to capture the attention of these users.

But when it comes to organic Instagram content, social media experts often struggle to find the right balance between the number of image, video, and carousel posts to include in their calendar, as well as pinpointing what top-performing posts include.

Out of all three options, carousel posts stand out as the most flexible option.

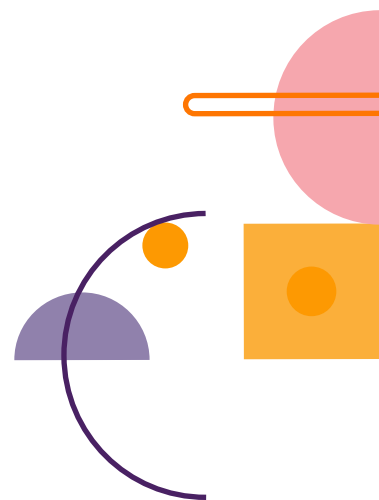
They offer brands the option to include more imagery, videos, or find the perfect mix of videos and images to convey their messages.

But what does it take to maximize a carousel post's engagement, and how does it stack up to videos and images?

[Socialinsider](#) partnered up with the design experts at [Bannersnack](#) to uncover what it takes to create engaging carousels and how to design them.

We looked at 22,360,021 total posts, out of which 2,949,312 were carousels, to get some answers..

Let's dive in!

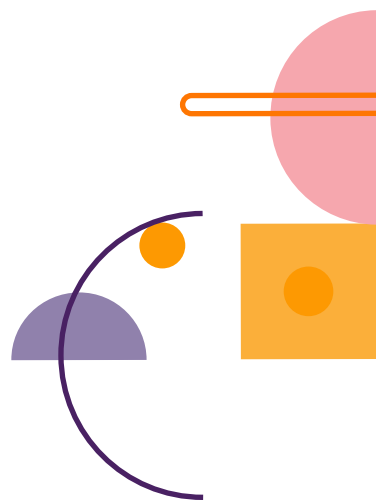


B. Summary

In this study, you'll discover:

- **How popular are carousel posts** - we look into the go-to type of content on Instagram and how carousels rank in brands' preferences
- **How does the engagement of carousels stack up** - we compare engagement rates of carousels, videos, and images.
- **What should carousels contain** - we make comparisons between carousels with images, carousels with videos and mixed carousels that contain both photos and videos in one post.
- **How many slides should carousels have** - we try to understand how many images or videos should go into the best carousel posts.
- **Should carousels captions encourage to swipe** - we take a look at carousel captions that contain messages to swipe, swipe left or choose a favorite visual.

Continue reading to find out how to create top-performing carousels!



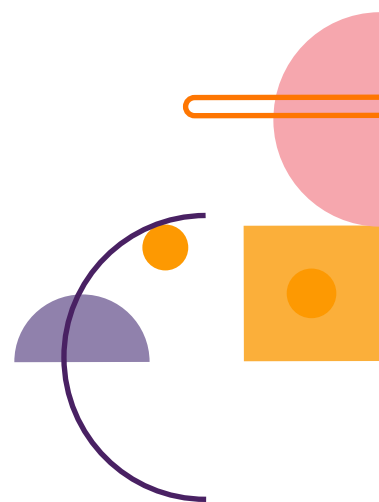
C. Key Findings

Here's a little taste of what's in this report:

- **19.44% of Instagram posts are carousels**, a significant growth compared to approximately 4% recorded when they were first available.
- Carousels are **the most engaging Instagram posts**: 1.92% average engagement per post.
- **The most common carousels have two slides** (33.10%) or three slides (19.69%), but some carousels use the maximum number of slides (6.77%).
- When making use of **all ten slides available**, the average engagement rate per carousel goes over 2%.
- While image carousels are more frequent (88.8%), **carousels that mix images with videos bring the highest engagement rates per post** - on average 2.33%.
- **4.9% of carousels have messages that encourage users to swipe left**, and they perform better, bringing the average engagement rate from 1.83% to 2%.

This balance has proven to influence engagement, and the drive to outperform competition makes optimizing every Instagram post mandatory.

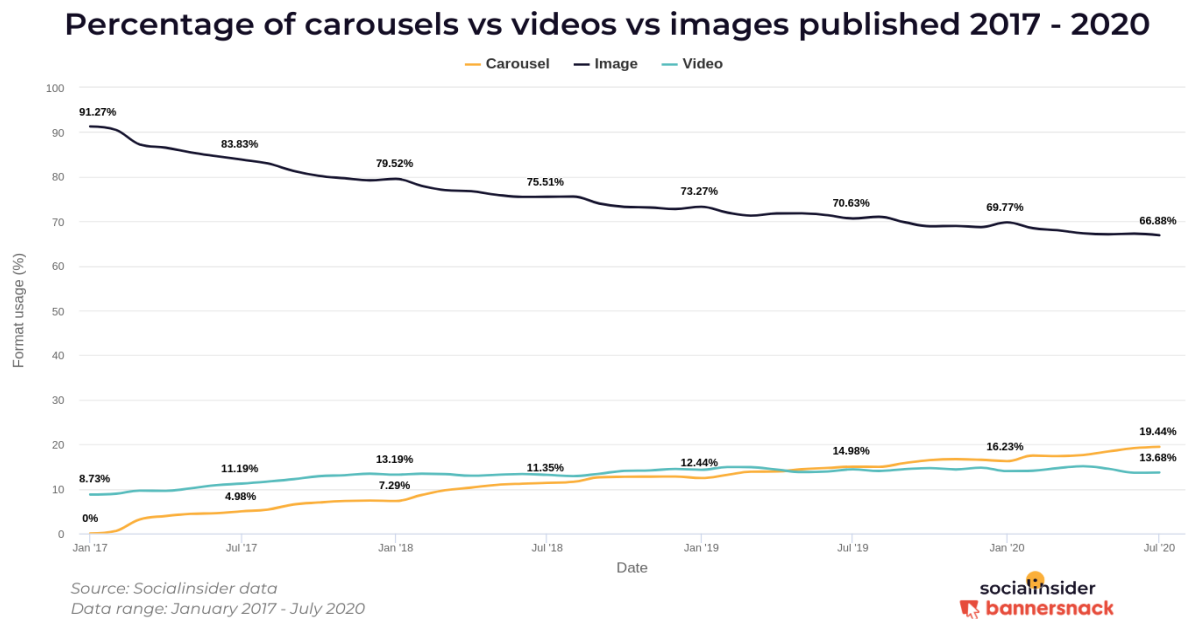
Let's get into it!





1. Instagram carousels are on the rise.

Since the carousel feature was released in 2017, brands have been increasingly adopting it, publishing more carousel posts from one year to another.



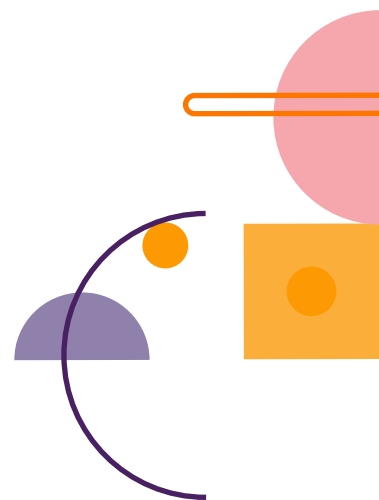
If in 2017 only 3 to 4% of Instagram content consisted of carousel posts, in July 2020 that percentage grew to 19.44%.

What's more, in May 2019, the percentage of carousel posts published (14.41%) surpassed the one of videos (13.79%).

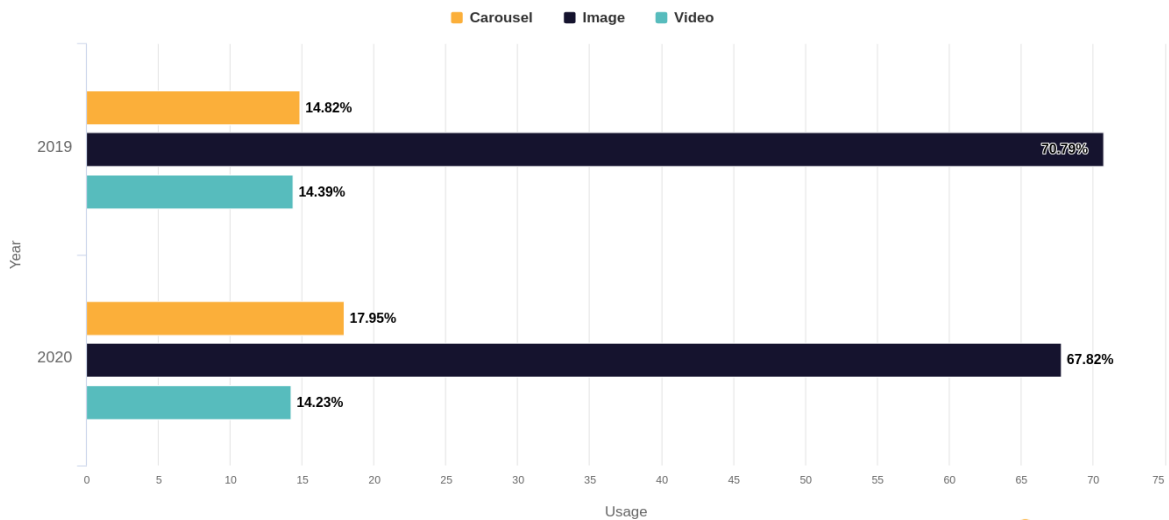
Despite images still being the go-to type of posts, their popularity is declining.

In 2019, data shows that images made up 70.79% of Instagram content, while in 2020 the percentage dropped to 67.82%.

Safe to say that sometime soon carousel posts will be the primary type of organic content on Instagram.



Instagram post types per month in 2019 vs 2020

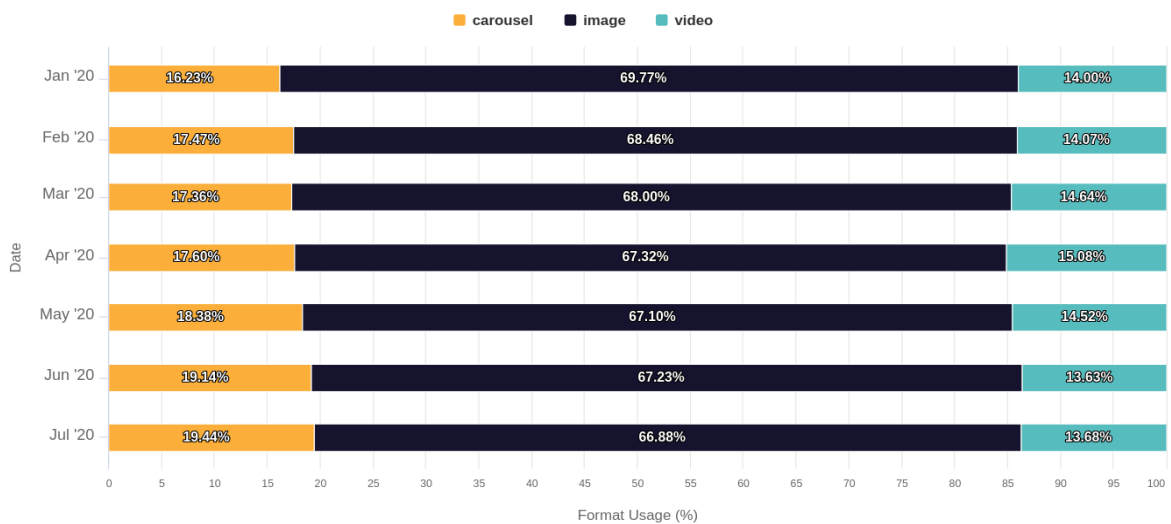


Source: Socialinsider data
Data range: January 2017 - July 2020

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Changes are even visible on a monthly basis.

Distribution of Instagram post types per month in 2020



Source: Socialinsider data
Data range: January 2017 - July 2020

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When zooming in on 2020 data, there are visibly fewer videos and images from one month to another, while the number of carousel posts is growing.

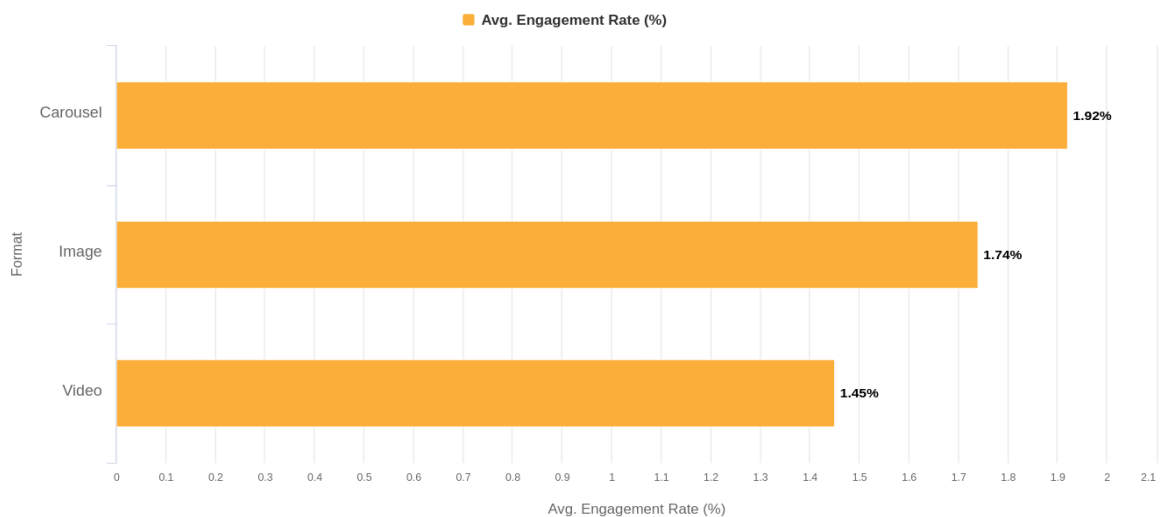
2. Carousels bring higher engagement rates than videos or images.

The boost in popularity of Instagram carousels is backed up by engagement.

Previous [Instagram studies](#) proved that carousel posts bring higher engagement, especially in the case of smaller profiles with under 5,000 followers.

We had another look at the data one year later and excluded those small profiles that are outliers.

Average engagement rate per carousel, image, and video post



Source: Socialinsider data
Data range: January 2017 - July 2020

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The results show the same thing: carousels outperform images and videos, reaching an average engagement rate per post of 1.92%, compared to 1.74% for images and 1.45% for videos.

**Jenn Herman - Instagram Expert & Social Media Strategist - explains this further:**

"I've been recommending people use carousels on Instagram for a while now.

And these data and stats prove why! But to understand WHY this is happening, you have to understand how carousels work.

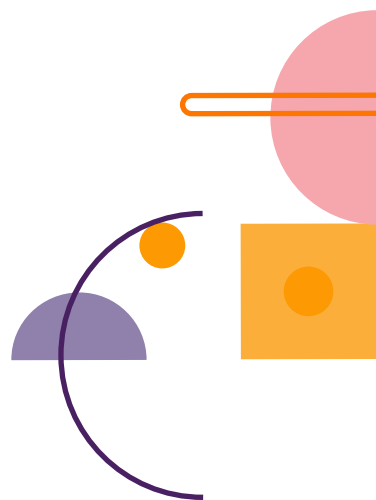
If you upload a normal post to Instagram, that post appears in the feed of each of your followers based on the algorithmic ranking for each of them. If a follower scrolls past your post, it won't resurface for them to see it again.

However, if you use a carousel post, and a follower scrolls past the post with the first image, Instagram will show them the same post a second time (only a second time, not more than that) with typically the second photo or video from the carousel.

This gives you double the exposure opportunities to your followers and a second chance to connect with them if they didn't react to your first post image or video.

While this all sounds great, I caution against overusing carousels.

You don't want every post to be a carousel because it can overwhelm your audience and require too much content creation. So use them strategically while mixing in regular singular posts as well."



JENN HERMAN

Instagram Marketing Expert

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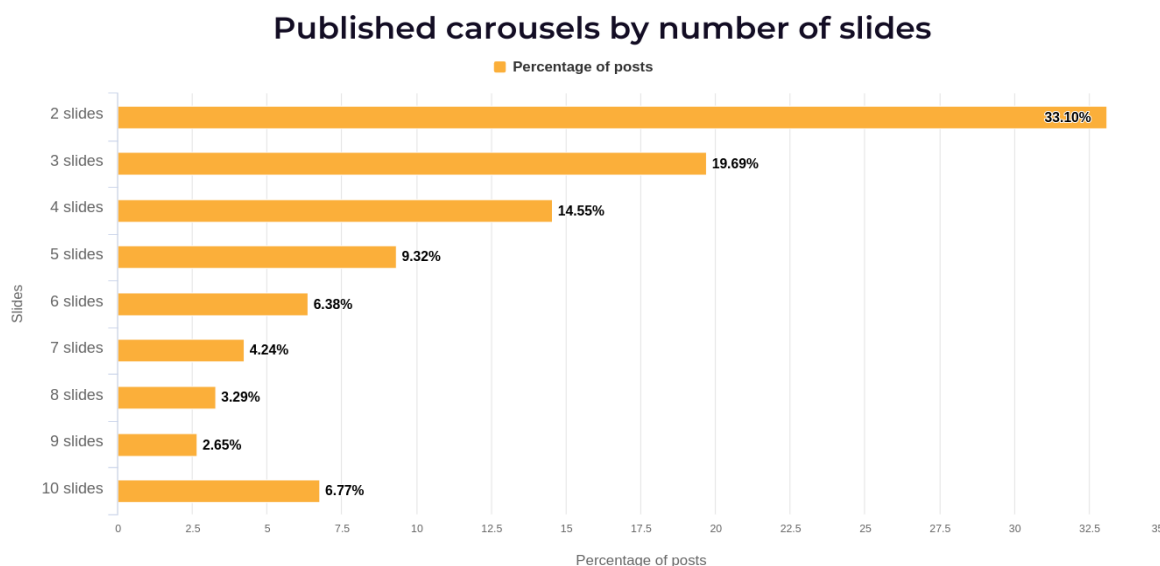
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3. When using all 10 carousel slides, the average engagement rate goes over 2%

The most common carousels have two slides (33.10% of carousels) or three slides (19.69%), but there are also 6.77% carousels with the maximum number of slides.

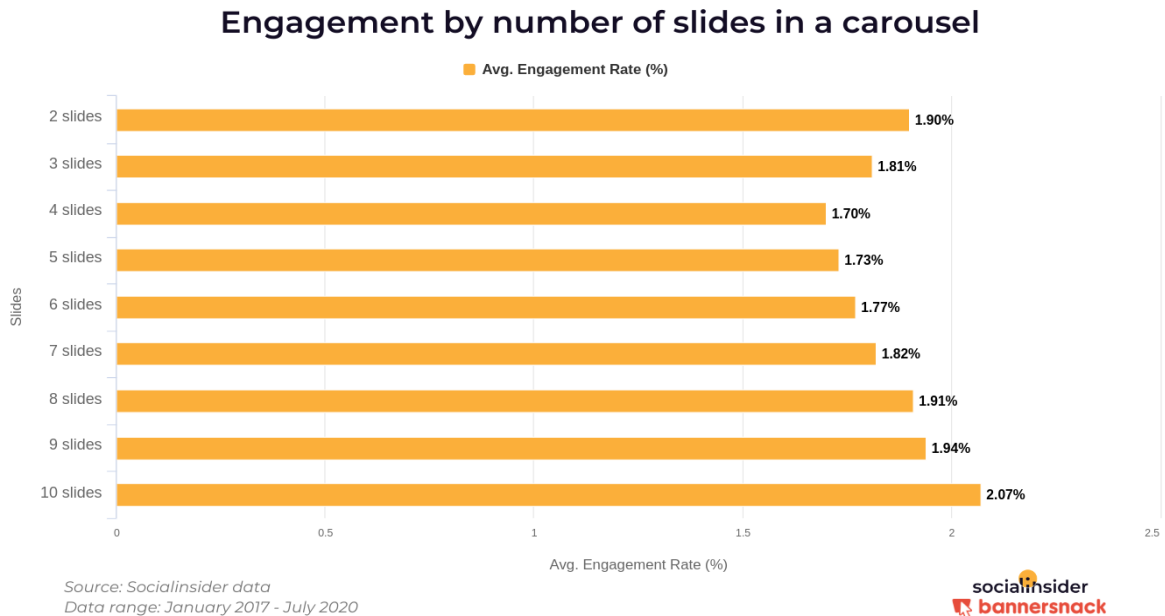


Source: Socialinsider data
Data range: January 2017 - July 2020



While carousels with two slides bring high average engagement rates (1.90%), carousels with eight or more slides perform even better.

When making use of all ten slides available, the average engagement rate goes over 2%.



Carousels with four slides seem to be at a disadvantage, with an average of 1.70% engagement rates.

Dorien Morin van-Dam - Organic Social Media Content Specialist - explains the draw of multiple slides:

"Carousel posts are a great way to showcase an album of grouped products, event snapshots or a multi-step process. Use carousel posts to give a sneakpeek behind the scenes, an update on your event or an upcoming series.

Being able to upload up to 10 carefully selected images in one swoop is a huge opportunity for brands.

Inspire your Instagram audience by showing them more images, lifting the curtain of your brand just enough to let them peek inside."

DORIEN MORIN

ORGANIC SOCIAL MEDIA SPECIALIST

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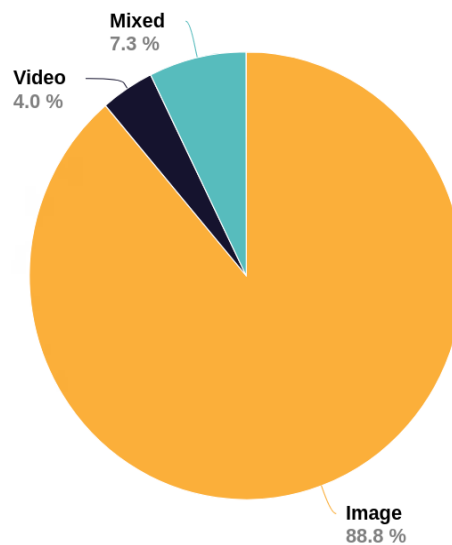
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4. Carousels that mix images with videos bring the highest engagement rates per post - 2.33%

Image carousels are the most frequent, making up for 88.8% of published carousels, but they're not the only available option.

Types of published carousel posts

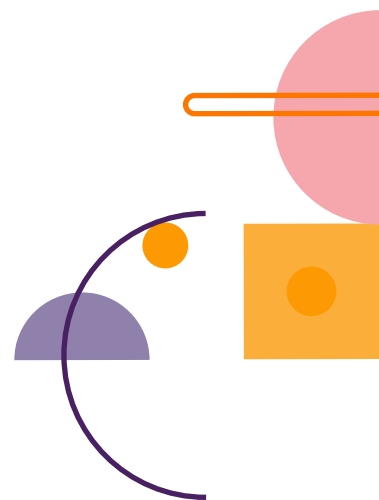


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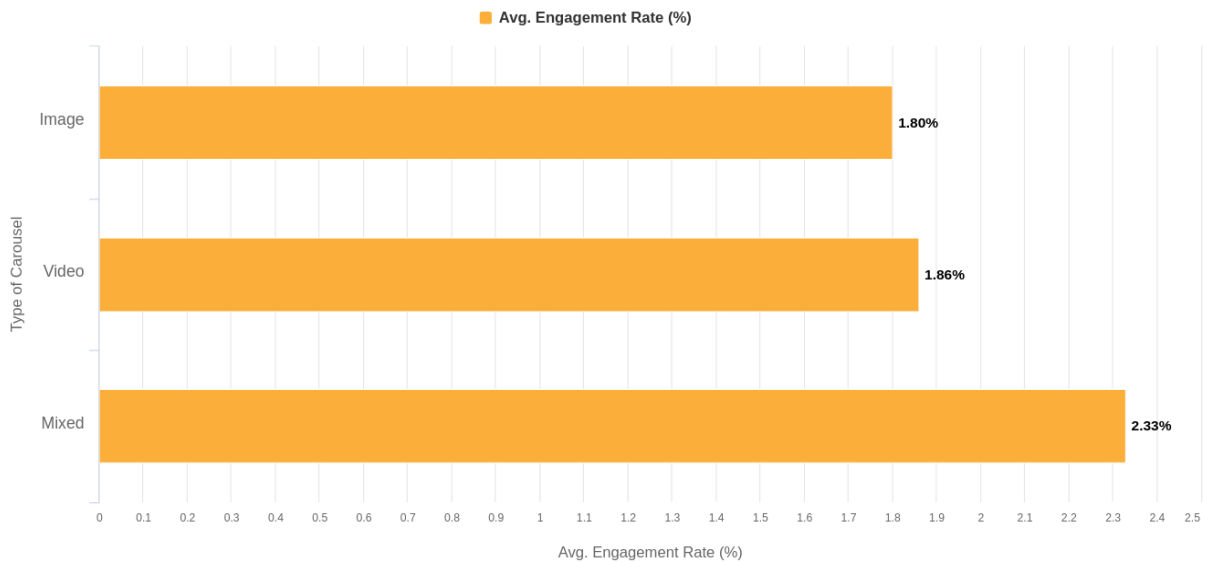
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Due to the versatile nature of a carousel, brands play around with video carousels and even a mix of videos and images in a single carousel post.

This strategy seems to be working, as people become more engaged when faced with a variety of stimuli.



Average engagement rate per types of carousel

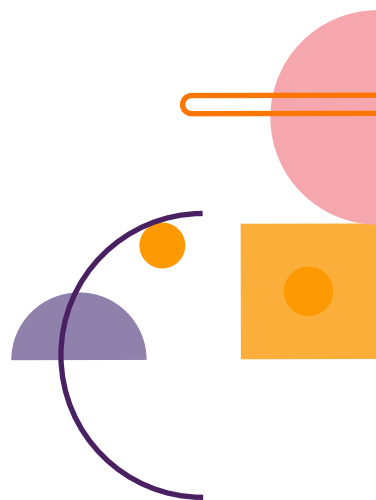


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While image carousels get an average engagement rate of 1.80% and videos receive 1.86%, mixed carousels that include both types increase performance to a 2.33% average engagement rate.

[Get inspired to design quick Instagram carousels with Bannersnack.](#)

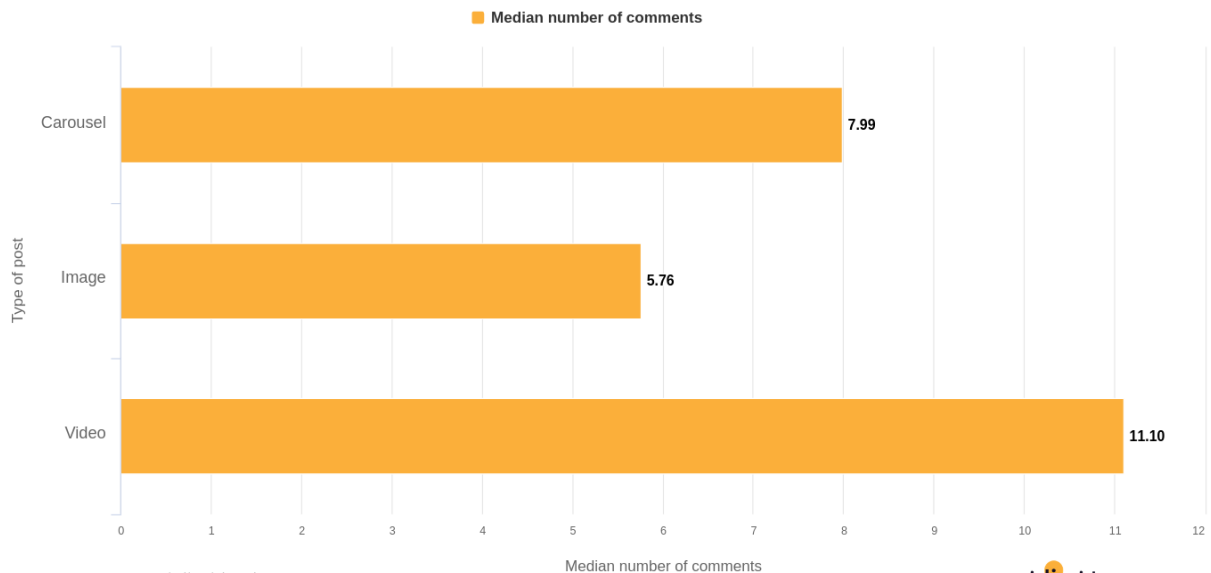


- **Carousels videos receive significantly more comments.**

When breaking down the engagement, a trend emerges that videos incite more comments.

This is an essential insight if one of the goals of a campaign is to start conversations, rather than receiving many likes and high engagement overall.

Median number of comments for each type of post



Source: Socialinsider data
Data range: January 2017 - July 2020

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Carousel posts receive a median of 7.99 comments per post. That is more comments than images (5.7), but fewer than videos (11.1).

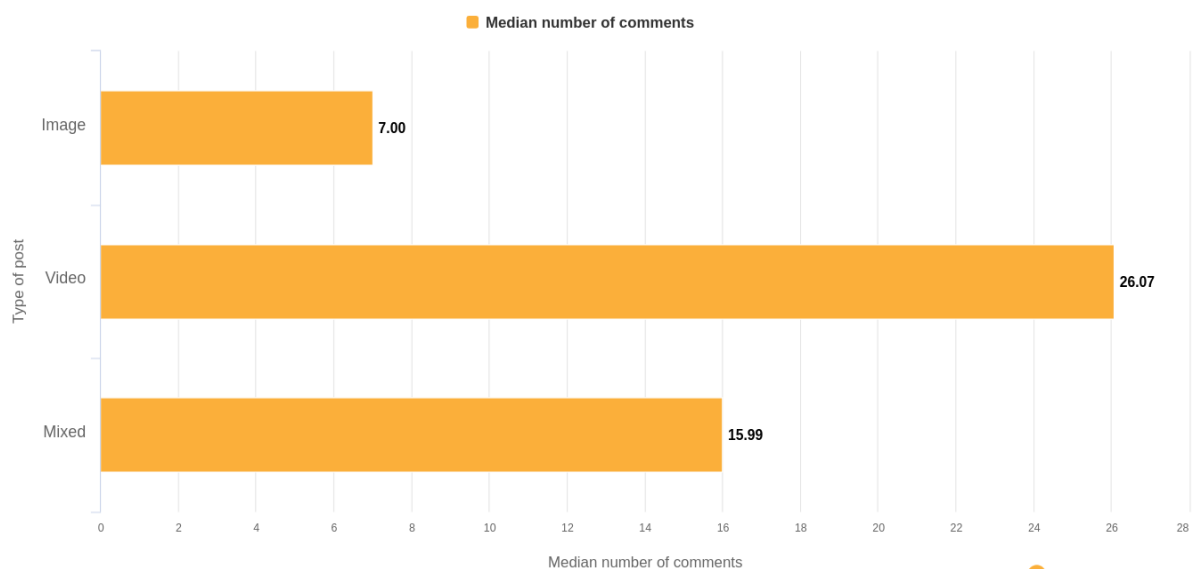
To get the best of all worlds, brands can increase the number of comments by using videos in carousel posts.

True to form, carousels that contain videos receive significantly more comments: a median number of 26.07 per post.

On the other hand, mixed carousels that contain both images and photos also perform well, obtaining a median of 15.99 comments per post.

Given these stats, brands should feel encouraged to try out different content styles and designs, play with imagery, create animated visuals, and mix in some videos.

Median number of comments for each type of carousel post



Source: Socialinsider data
Data range: January 2017 - July 2020

socialinsider
bannersnack

Christina Garnett - Digital Strategist & Inbound Marketer - advises to play on curiosity:

“Great marketers are great storytellers. Just like with IG stories, Instagram carousel posts help you share your story through multiple images. Whether you use them to showcase a weekend trip, your latest items on sale or something else, having carousel images provides an opportunity for your audience to learn more.

Use curiosity to spur them to not just scroll past your post but want to see what else they will discover in your post.”

CHRISTINA GARNETT

Digital Strategist & Inbound Marketer

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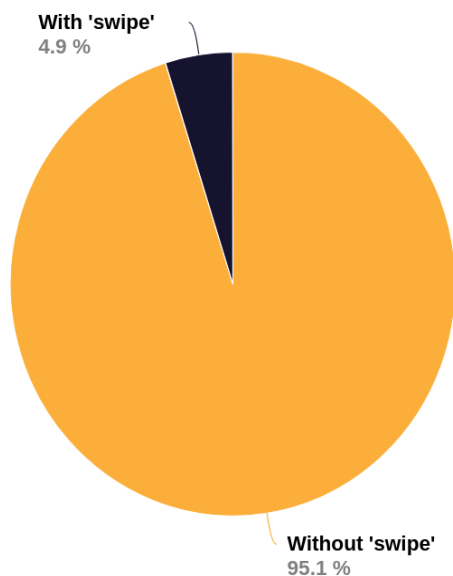


5. Including 'swipe left' in the caption brings the average engagement rate from 1.83% to 2%

Oftentimes, when publishing carousels with several slides, brands can include 'swipe left' related messages in the post's caption.

These terms include any variation of swipe, swipe to see, swipe over, etc., questions about which slide is the favorite or which photo do people like best, or even referrals to a slide number for extra information.

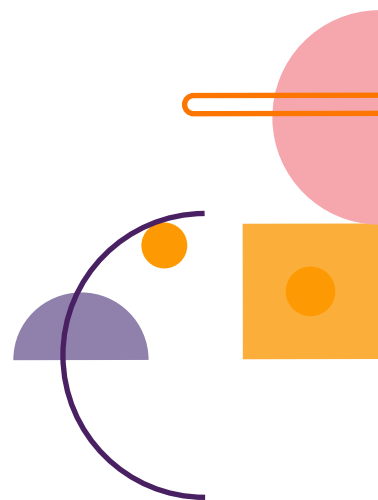
Percentage of posts that encourage followers to swipe left



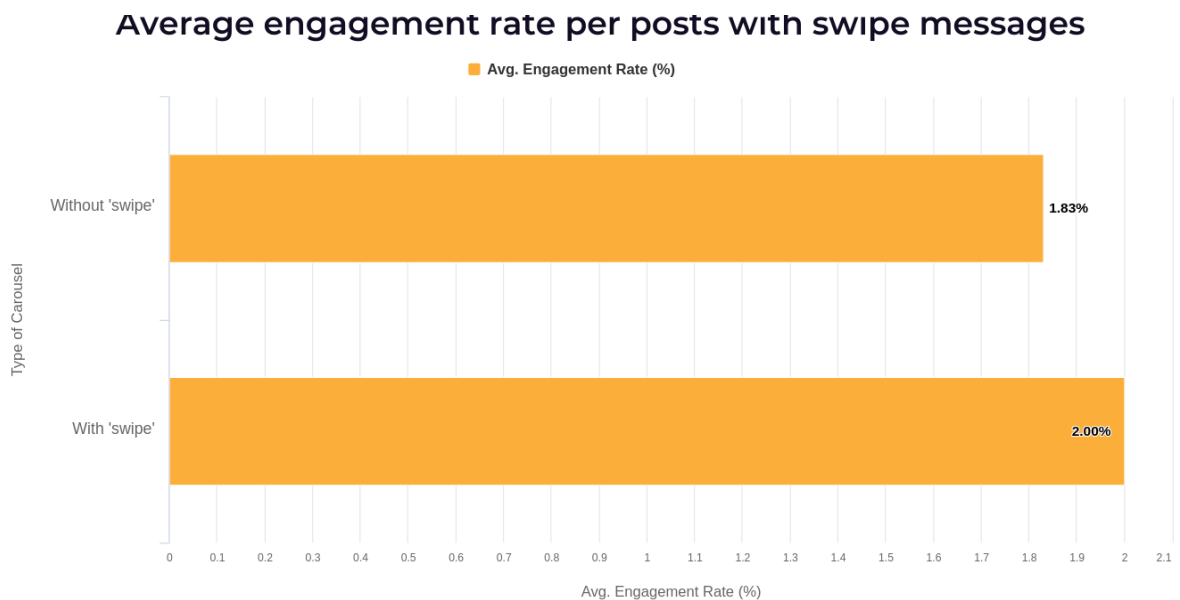
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socialinsider
bannersnack

In fact, 4.9% of carousels contain messages that encourage users to swipe left and they perform better.



These swipe-related hints offered in the caption boost the average engagement rate per post from 1.83% to 2%.



Robert Katai - Content and Communication Manager at Bannersnack - talks about the importance of great visual content:

“Crunching the numbers and looking into the data confirmed what we knew about the importance of carousel design and placement as part of a solid social media marketing strategy.

We, at Bannersnack, believe that great visual content helps content creators build meaningful connections with their audiences, and eventually deliver a trustworthy brand experience.

We also believe that great content never ceases to turn heads and create the context for audiences to engage with your brand, test your products and services, and finally advocate for the solutions that you, as a business, are offering.”

Robert Katai

Content & Communication Manager

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We also believe that great content never ceases to turn heads and create the context for audiences to engage.





D. Methodology

To understand what it takes to create top-performing carousels, Socialinsider and Bannersnack looked into 22,360,021 total Instagram posts, out of which 2,949,312 were carousels, published between January 2017 and July 2020.

Within this report, we included representative business Instagram handles that had over 5,000 followers.

We used the Socialinsider tool to find out metrics such as post counts and average engagement rates while respecting the Instagram API guidelines. We also used Bannersnack visuals to illustrate carousel options better.

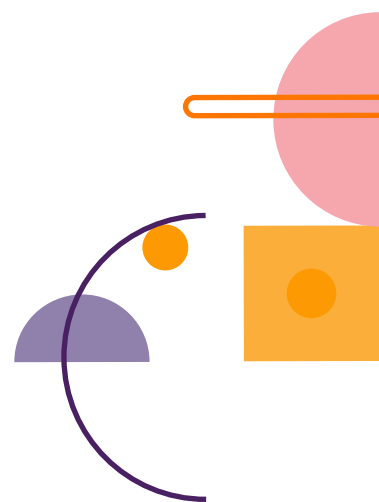
Socialinsider defines total engagement as the sum of likes and comments, while the engagement rate is the engagement per 100 followers.

We wanted to know which elements influence engagement positively or negatively, from post types to specific content elements such as including 'swipe left' keywords.

Please note that this study was based on 2017 - 2020 data extracted by Socialinsider from brand posts that exist within the tool's database.

Take this study as a guideline and a starting point for discovering the most engaging posts for your brand. Despite looking into a big pool of posts, some insights might not be applicable for some profiles.

Create stunning Instagram carousel designs and then [see how well your Instagram content performs!](#)





Socialinsider is a social media analytics tool that aims to deliver quality insights to businesses. With this tool you can track and analyze Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Youtube, and TikTok pages, run hashtags reports and create competitive benchmarks. It makes it easier to optimize all social media campaigns.

Discover your Instagram carousel performance with analytics!



Bannersnack is a cloud-based collaborative design platform that started out in 2008.

It is used for creating marketing and advertising visual assets, offering scalable, customized, and cost-effective solutions to graphic design for millions of users worldwide.

Design top-performing Instagram carousels with amazing templates!

