

INSTAGRAM ENGAGEMENT STUDY

102,700,573 Instagram posts show how Instagram engagement rate decreases back to its initial values from 2019

Contents

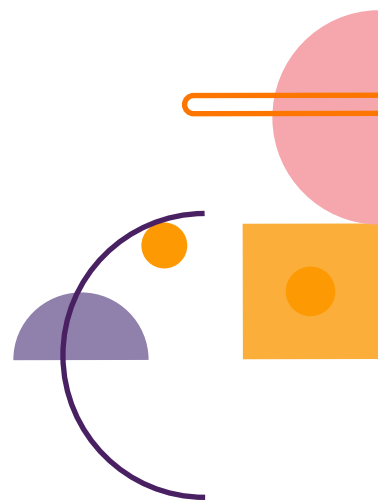
A Introduction

B Summary

C Key Findings

1. Instagram's engagement decreases back to its initial values from 2019.
2. Instagram carousels bring higher engagement rates for small accounts.
3. Captions up to 10 words increase engagement on Instagram for businesses.
4. Carousels posts led to get a higher impressions rate on Instagram.
5. Carousels increase the median number of likes per posts on Instagram.
6. Videos increase the median number of comments for larger Instagram accounts.
7. Images return more savings on Instagram for larger Instagram profiles.
8. Instagram carousels assure the highest reach rates.

D Methodology



Introduction

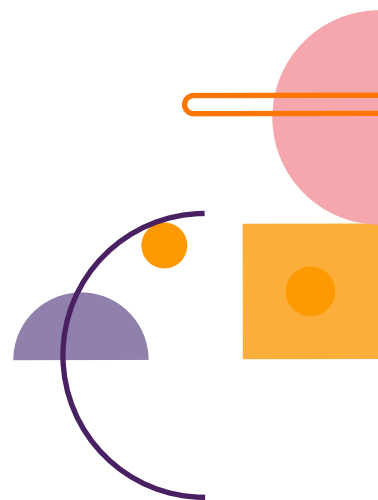
Everyone's favorite platform, Instagram, due to its huge visual impact is keeping its users hooked, by constantly innovating, bringing into people's attention new toys and ways of having fun.

Things to which brands must adapt fast, both in case of understanding the ways in which they can connect with their audiences and acting to catch the wave.

We know today's digital world is in a great part about stories, which are a great way of facilitating conversations with customers. But there's always the other side of the coin, which, in this case, may be the implications over the fluctuations of Instagram's engagement, that we'll cover moving forward.

In this study, altogether with the team from [Sked Social](#), a social media management and scheduling tool, we've tried to uncover if the tendency towards using stories has somehow affected the way people are interacting with the regular posts in feed, by analyzing how the Instagram engagement has evolved starting with 2019.

Let's get started!



SUE B. ZIMMERMAN

Instagram expert & business coach

The longer you can get someone to stay connected to your content the more Instagram rewards you.

There are many ways to creatively attract more ideal followers and keep our current followers engaged and connected to you and what you do.

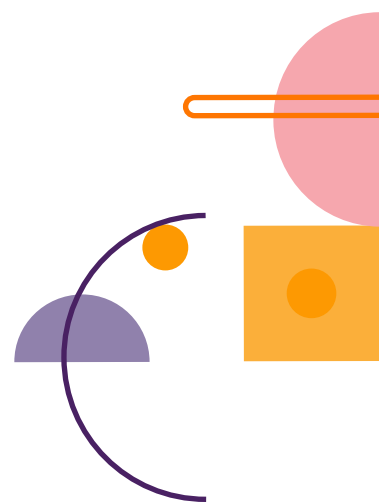
Try posting content in all 5 neighborhoods:
the feed, IG Stories, IGTV, IG Live and Reels. When you create content in all 5 neighborhoods your follows can connect with you deeper.



Summary

In this study, you'll discover:

- **How Instagram engagement has evolved over time:** a comparison between 2019-2020: we try to show what a digital marketer should expect when looking at the data, for analyzing efforts and results compared to the market's tendency.
- **What's the average engagement per impressions:** we look at the interaction level per view, for the cases in which a post appears multiple times in the same user's feed, with this metric being helpful especially for measuring ads effectiveness.
- **What types of posts get more likes:** we expose what's the type of content that gains more likes for your brand.
- **What do people usually comment to:** we discover which types of posts make people wanna start conversations with brands on Instagram.
- **What type of content is more likely to be saved by users:** we unveil what are people's preferences for saving content on Instagram.
- **What's the average reach for every type of content:** we find out how a brand is more likely to reach people, based on the type of posts they use.
- **Average reach per post by profile size:** we reveal how the profile size can influence the average reach of your brand's messages.
- **The captions length's influence over the engagement:** we analyzed to which extent having a shorter or a longer copy impacts on the user's tendency to engage with the posts and what's the optimal choice.

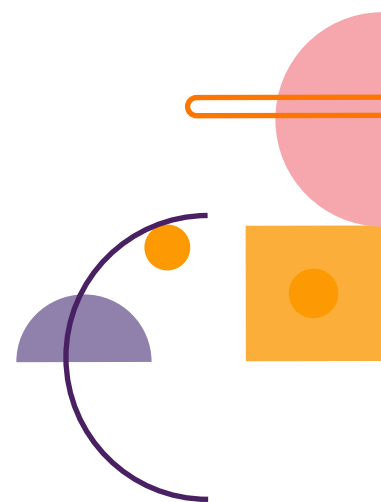




Key Insights

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

- The Instagram engagement rate has been on a flat line in 2019, followed by a notable increase during the first half of 2020, only to go down to the initial rate of around 2.02% after that.
- Higher Instagram engagement is mainly brought by carousels, especially for small accounts (under 5K), but when it comes to medium ones, it's better to choose video.
- Shorter captions, up to 10 words, combined with carousels form the posts to which users prefer to interact with. But worth mentioned, captions with more than 30 words are better paired with videos.
- Average impressions rate had greater values for 2020, compared to 2019, being found around carousels, which may tell us that Instagram is pushing this type of content in people's feeds more.
- Carousels are getting more likes than any other media type.
- People are more open to comment on video posts across all profile sizes.
- Great posts through which you can start a conversation with your followers are both videos and carousels, people being open to comment to either one of them, but the account's size is an important factor for establishing their preference.
- For larger accounts (more than 100k followers), people tend to tap on save for the image postings.
- The average reach rate's values are higher for carousels, and especially in case of profiles with less than 5K, but also for those between 50-100K followers.



1. Engagement on Instagram is merely on a flat line since 2019, despite spike of hope occurred between February - July 2020.

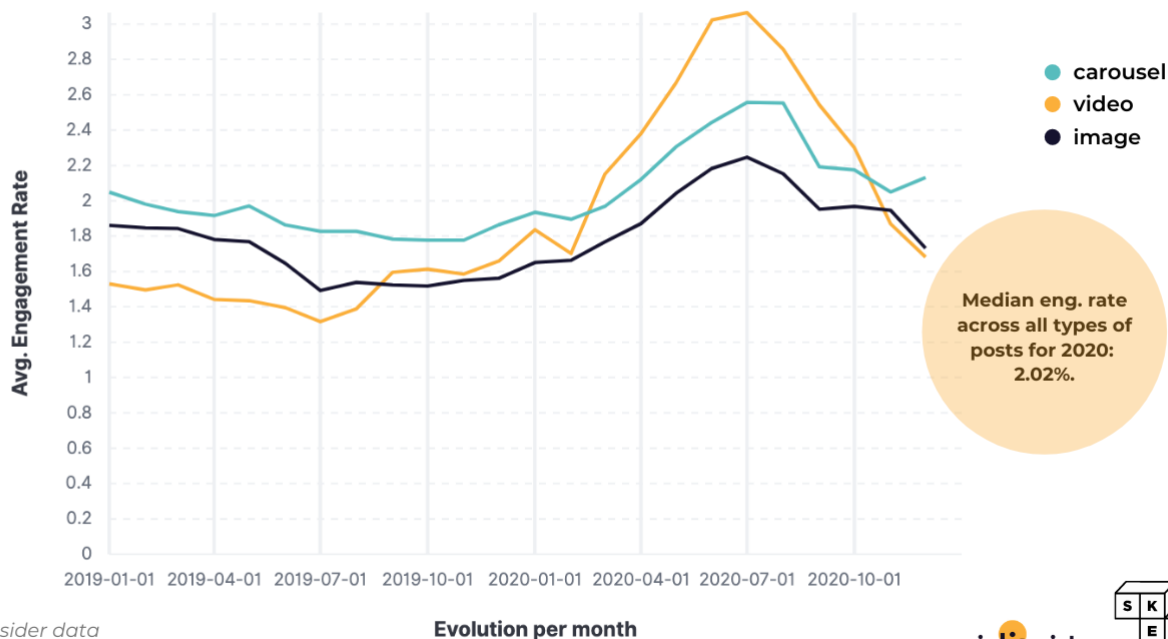
At the beginning of 2019, the [trends](#) indicated Instagram's engagement will start to slow down from ascending and the data proved it right.

Starting from a position of 2% average engagement rate for carousel posts, it reached a maximum of 3.0% in July 2020, thanks to videos and eventually, changed direction again, with carousels, going down to 1.6%.

Of course, we're talking about the peak values, which may differ depending on the type of content.

To have a clear picture, the average engagement rate per post (by followers) for Instagram across all types of posts is 2.02%.

Instagram engagement rate per post (by followers)



Source: Socialinsider data
Data range: January 2019 - December 2020



What's interesting and immediately caught our attention was that until February 2020 carousels were the posts that had a bigger engagement rate on Instagram, but starting with March they were quickly replaced by videos, only to have a role change again, starting with November 2020.

Curious, right?

For more insights about this trend, the possibilities it brings, and the way brands adapt their strategy, focusing more on [videos](#) or carousels, to meet their customer's needs and expectations, bring the popcorn and go further with the reading. The juicy stuff is coming.

Moving on, there was a spike of hope around February 2020, when it seemed things may have a possibility to surpass the data what we knew so far.

Going against the big flat line, there was a significant growth of engagement, for what the numbers looked like at the time.

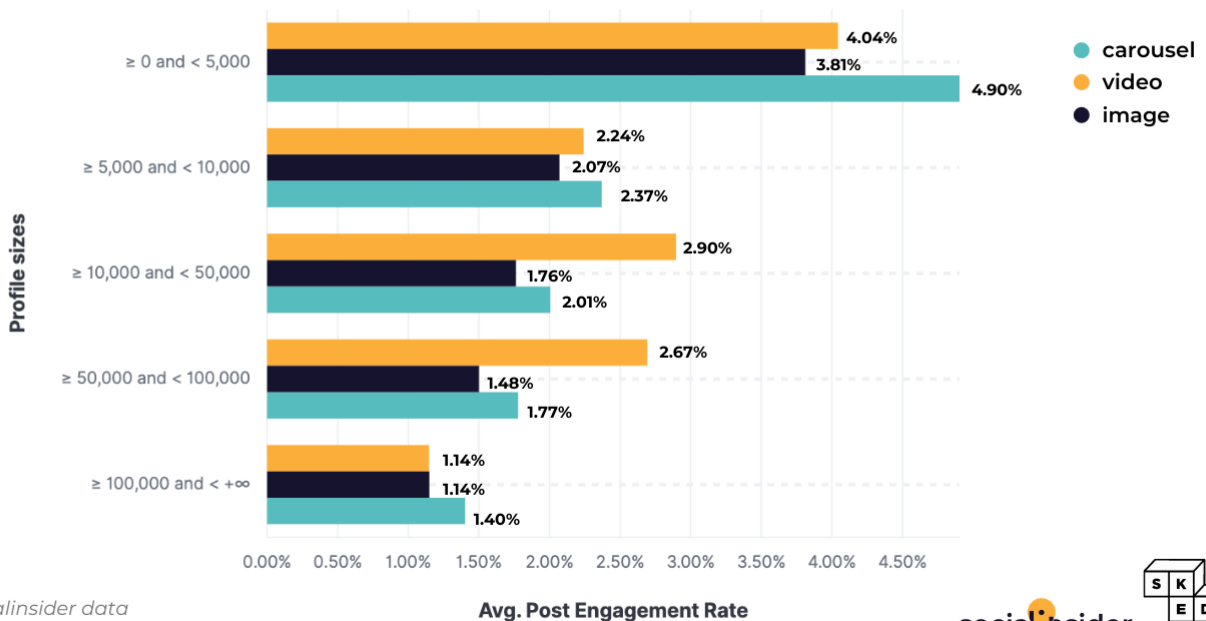
But it didn't last that long until the engagement rate returned to a steady floating level.

2. Instagram carousels bring higher engagement rates for small accounts

One of the questions that's on every brand's lips is what type of content should they post to [increase the Instagram engagement](#).

And truth be told, there's no one-way, single receipt for choosing the right type of content. There are plenty of other variables that need to be considered when creating a [strategy](#).

Instagram average post engagement rate by profile size



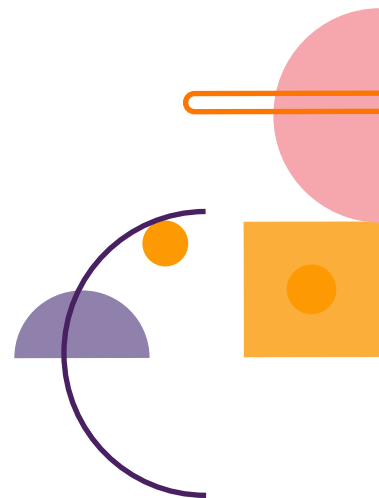
Source: Socialinsider data
Data range: January 2019 - December 2020



Here, let us show you what we're talking about.

Have you ever thought, for example how the profile size impacts on your engagement?

Cuz', let us tell you, it matters a lot.





According to our data, for profiles up to 5K, carousel is the type of post that brings the highest engagement rates - 4.78%, followed by video, with an average engagement rate per post of 3.82%.

However there's a twist that makes everything much more interesting. For bigger profiles, between 10K - 100K video is the type of post that brings a higher engagement rate, up to 2.88%.

And things seem to reverse again when we're talking about profiles bigger than 100K, where the [carousel posts on Instagram](#) win again, with an average engagement rate per post of 1.40%.

There seems to be an up and down battle between carousel and video, so that's why every marketer should be very careful when creating an Instagram strategy.

3. Captions up to 10 words increase engagement on Instagram for businesses.

Well, this is a tough one. We've heard a lot of discussions regarding the [caption](#) length's influence over the engagement.

Like in every good debate, there are some arguments on why the caption length should be longer, like creating a good story for the customers, making them connect deeper on an emotional level with the brand, and others why it shouldn't.

For this other side of the coin, marketers say by using longer captions your reader's attention will be lost before fully receiving the message.

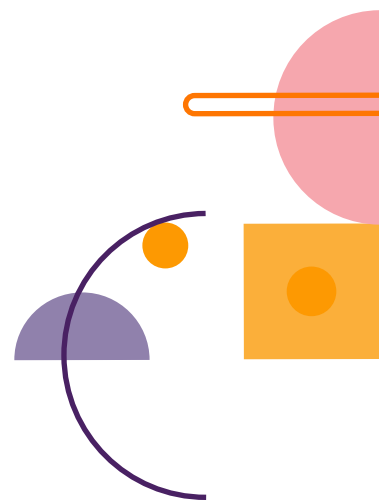
Of course there's no one size fits all, 'cuz every brand has its unique mix of variables.

However, numbers show nothing but the truth, which is what we're after.

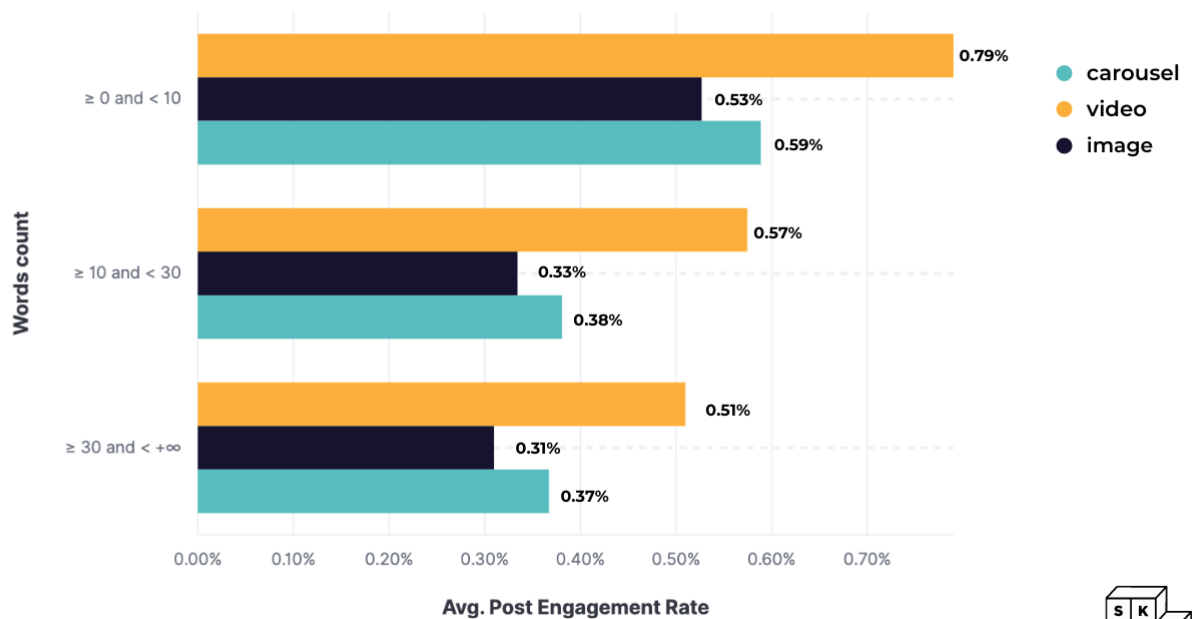
According to our data, captions up to 10 words are the ones that bring the most engagement, especially when combined with a carousel.

When using more than 10 words, the Instagram engagement slightly lowers down, in case of carousels with about 0.70%.

But here's an interesting catch: captions longer than 30 words may be better to be paired with a [video](#), as the data shows.



Instagram average engagement rate by caption length



Source: Socialinsider data
Data range: January 2019 - December 2020



4. Carousels posts led to a higher impressions rate on Instagram

Life as a marketer is not easy, we know it very well. You must continuously adapt to changes and more importantly, never lose hope in trying.

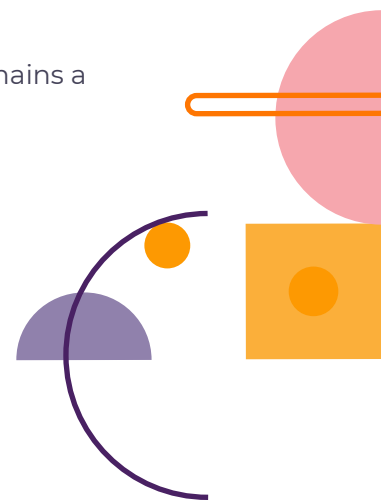
Things like keeping your audience's interest, attention and loyalty are not an easy job, but as long as you do your best in improving your efforts, you'll eventually see the light at the end of the tunnel.

Don't worry, this is not a motivational speech, even if sometimes one is needed, 'cuz where we're heading is to [the rule of 7 in marketing](#).

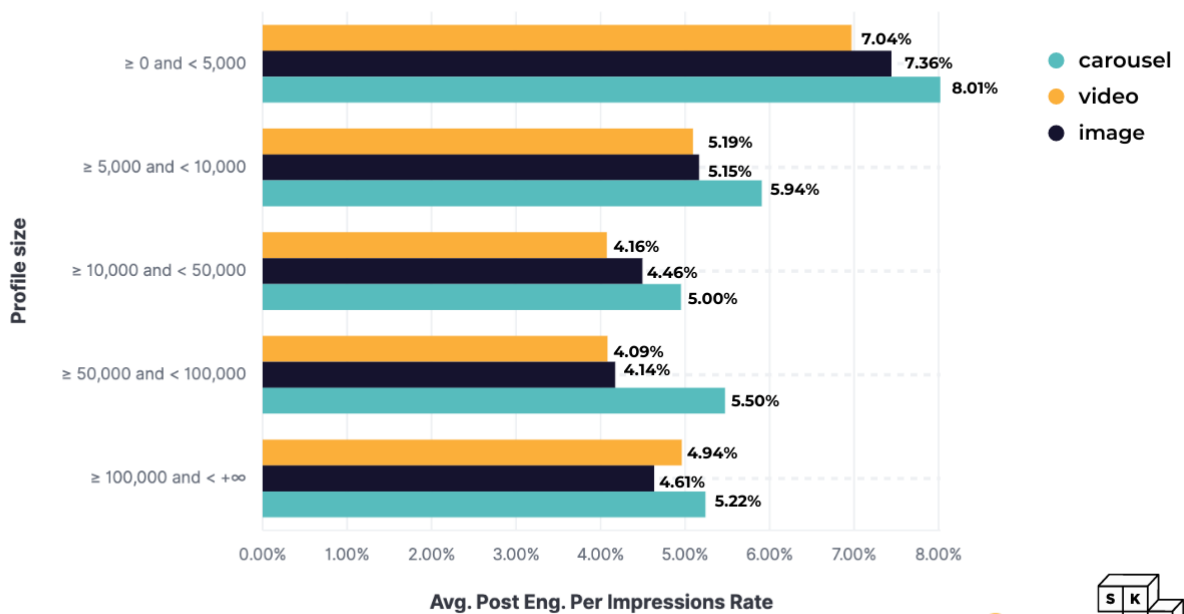
Simply put, there's a word out there, that your consumers need in average 7 interactions with your brand before making a purchase decision.

Which leads us to our metric, the engagement per impressions rate. Or, in other words, the engagement per view.

We know, people don't usually engage with the same post twice, but it remains a piece of information from which you can take some helpful insights from.



Instagram average engagement rate by impressions rate



Source: Socialinsider data
Data range: January 2019 - December 2020



Overall, it appears there were higher values for the engagement rate per impressions in 2020, especially for carousels posts. Which can uncover one of Instagram’s strategies, of pushing forward this type of content into the user’s feeds.

So, if you are wondering what posts to boost on Instagram, consider using carousels.

For example, accounts under 5K followers have a significant engagement rate per impressions of 8.01% for the carousels postings.

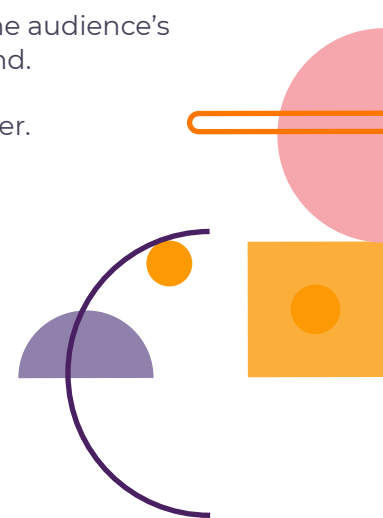
5. Carousels increase the median number of likes per posts on Instagram

Now, we’ll cover the likes part.

To get a clear and helpful insight on how the digital landscape looks like from this side of the land, we chose one powerful metric: the median.

We’ve already seen the battle between videos and carousels for winning the audience’s attention, but when it comes to likes, carousels seem to have won this round.

No worries, though, video still has its advantages, that we’ll discuss a bit later.



JENN HERMAN

Instagram marketing expert

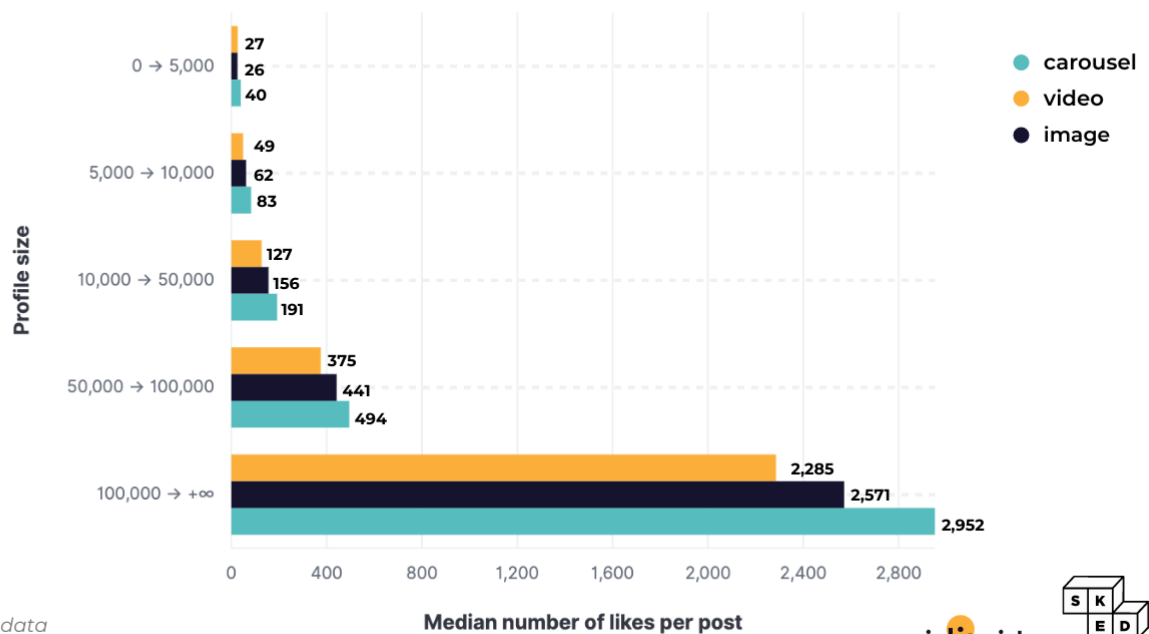
If you use a carousel post, and a follower scrolls past the post with the first image, Instagram will show them the same post a second time (only a second time, not more than that) with typically the second photo or video from the carousel.

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.



Instagram median number of likes by profile size



Source: Socialinsider data
Data range: January 2019 - December 2020

socialinsider



As we can see, from the smallest to the highest, the median number of likes per post reaches the greatest values for carousels, regardless of the account's size.

Surprisingly, it is followed by images, which got second place, and this hierarchy is kept the same regardless of the profile size.

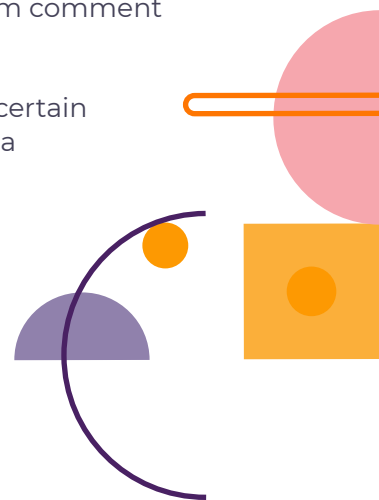
For [small business accounts](#) the number is very low, really notable values having the accounts with more than 100K followers. Which is kind of logical, if you think about it. They have more budgets to invest in Instagram ads and boost the user interactions on Instagram.

6. Videos increase the median number of comments for larger Instagram accounts

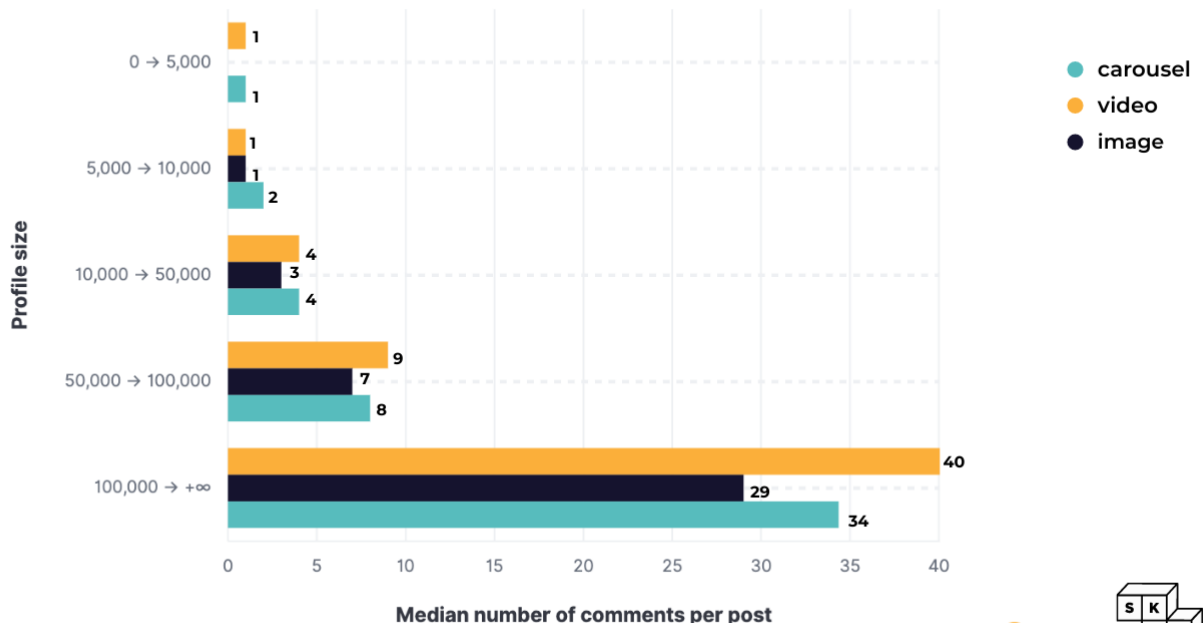
Now that we've seen how things are going with likes, it's time for the next level. 'Cuz as a brand, there are so many other things you're interested in, besides likes.

Impressing the audience enough to like your post is good, but making them comment is even better.

Since this requires a stronger connection between brand and users, and a certain level of loyalty from their side, the median number of comments will show a much lower value compared to the one of likes.



Instagram median number of comments by profile size



Source: Socialinsider data
Data range: January 2019 - December 2020

socialinsider



Here's an interesting point regarding the median number of comments per post type: it has a lot of waves when paired with account's sizes. Which can only mean that you must plan your content based on what you want to achieve.

Let's break it down a bit.

Our data shows accounts between 5k - 10K followers have more chances of getting comments from their community when posting a carousel.

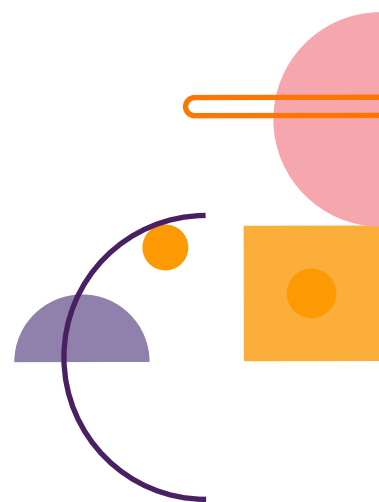
For medium sized accounts, between 10K- 50K there seems to be a draw between carousels and videos for the user's commenting predisposition.

When it comes to accounts between 50K - 100K, video starts to have a slight advantage.

At last, but not least, let us tell you size matters when we talk about Instagram accounts. Because brands that have a following above 100K and rely a lot on videos have a median number of comments 4 times bigger than the smaller ones.

Remember, when you want to build a strong, long-lasting and mutually beneficial relationship with your fans, conversations are the key.

And now you have enough ammo on how to trigger them.



7. Images return more savings for larger Instagram profiles

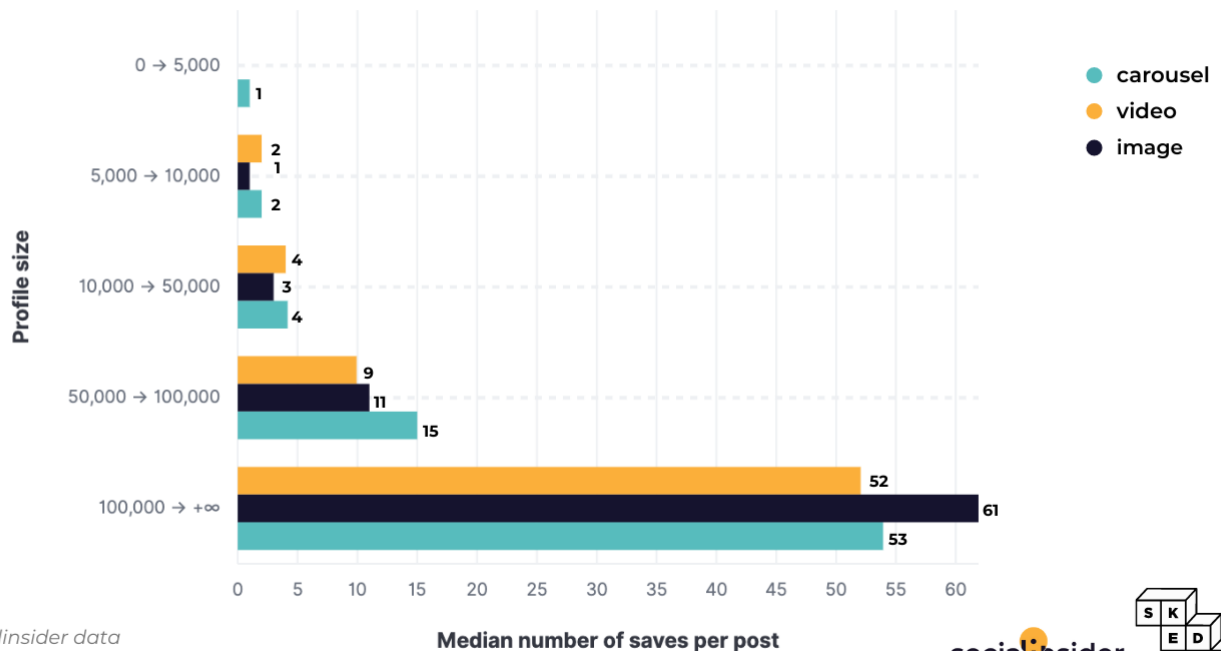
In case you didn't pay much attention to this type of insight so far, as a [social media manager](#), you should start doing it.

This is also one of your consumer's ways of telling you what they want and expect.

If you thought the other insights our data revealed were interesting, we're glad, but wait till you see these discoveries.

Starting primarily with images, which initially gave its status of a visually oriented platform, Instagram has long evolved over the years.

Instagram median number of saves by profile size



Source: Socialinsider data
Data range: January 2019 - December 2020



Once again, it seems small accounts, under 5K get along better with carousels.

Up until 500K followers, there's a tie between video and carousel. But go figure, after the situation starts on taking quite a turn.

When we're talking about profiles between 50K - 100K, the carousel is the one that's winning people's hearts, making them press that save button more often, followed by images this time.

Applause, please! Cuz images are making quite a comeback, if we look at the big profiles.

This time big profiles over 100K break the pattern and have a priority for images when it comes to content saved, though videos and carousels are not that far, having close positions one to another.

Now, after all this data, we bet you're wondering what type of content you should post in the end. We've said it before and we say it again - it all comes down to your business objectives, and what you wish your customers to do.

Once this is established, [finding the right strategy](#) to deliver your messages to your audience is the next big step.

If you need some help, you can check some [examples of social media campaigns](#) that rocked in the digital landscape and some tips of how you can start your own.

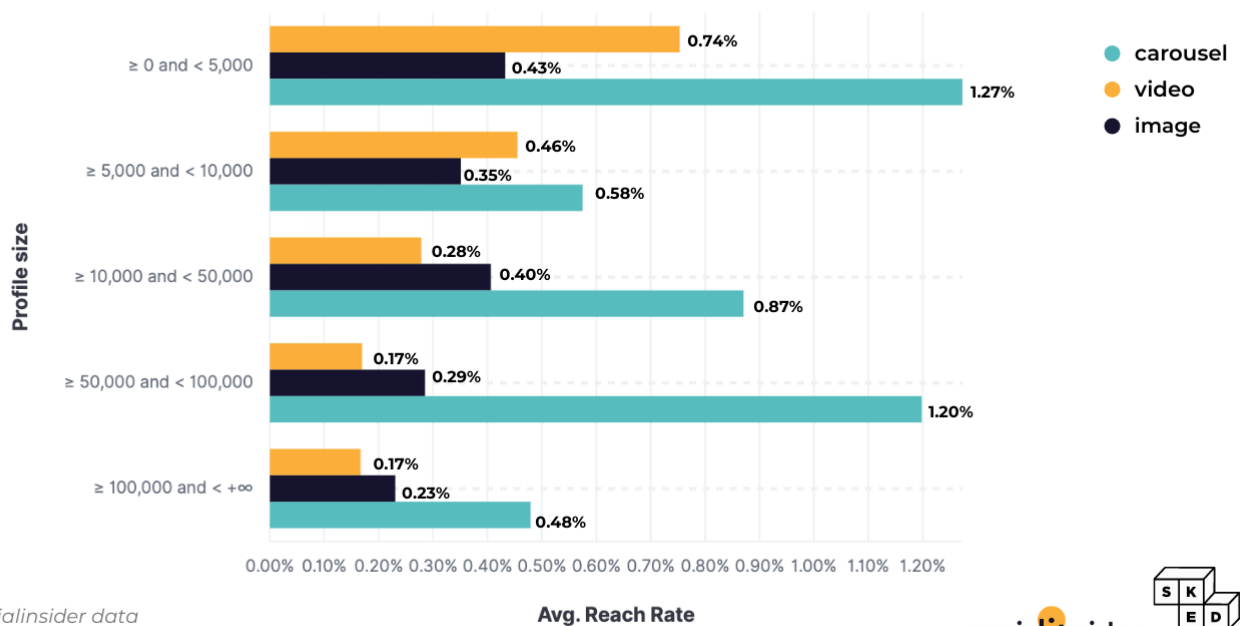
8. By using carousels, brands have a better chance of getting higher reach rates

For you to have the full picture (which means the whole data) when it comes to creating your Instagram strategy, we give you a couple of more metrics and numbers that may come in handy.

Nowadays, a lot of customers are interacting with brands through stories, since they are more interactive, not to mention the do-not-miss-this-moment feeling, by being available for just 24 hours, making posts in feed to lose their appeal, therefore causing the engagement to lower down.

Well, that's a perfectly good explanation of why the [story's reach rate](#) is bigger than the one of posts in feed. But let's go over the numbers, shall we?

Instagram average reach rate by profile size



Our study has revealed for the average reach rate on Instagram, carousels win the first place, across all profile sizes.

Although every account's goal is to grow, as a social media manager you should know there are also some benefits of being a small account.

As expected, profiles under 5K have the highest reach rate, and carousels have twice the potential of video for them.

But this time, accounts between 50K - 100K are the ones that caught our attention, with quite a high value for carousels. Although there's a significant difference between the two types of posts, images are the ones on which larger profiles can count on, as a second option.

Final thoughts

Throughout this study we've seen each type of post has its own advantages and possible gains for your business. Only by pairing the right objectives with your desired actions will get you where you want.

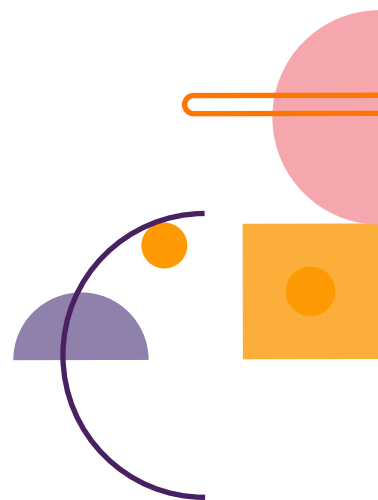
But remember your social media strategy should always be built on your past experiences as well.

Although the Instagram engagement works in mysterious ways, this set of data should give you a strategic direction for when you start planning. What's your ROI saying so far?

D. Methodology

To have a clear and sustained conclusion regarding the matter, we analyzed 102,700,573 Instagram posts, from a total of 62,895 business profiles, segmented as follows:

- profiles under 5K followers: 25,643
- profiles between 5K-10K followers: 7,291
- profiles between 10K-50K followers: 15,881
- profiles between 50K-100K followers: 5,947
- profiles with more than 100K followers: 12,421



Engagement: is the sum of likes and comments an account receives.

Average engagement rate per post (by followers): measures the level of interactions an account has through the content published, divided by the number of followers, and multiplied by 100, to get a percentage.

It is best used when you're comparing your data with your competitor's performance.

Impressions: refers to the total number of views a piece of content has had.

Engagement rate per impressions: it reveals how many people liked or commented on your posts from those who watched repeatedly.

It is calculated by dividing your engagement to your impressions, then multiplied by 100.

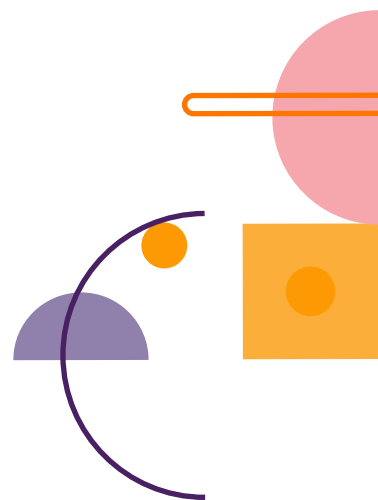
Is especially a helpful metric for ads, with which you can see how many times they were displayed in your target's feed.

Median number of likes, comments or saves: midpoint values for likes, comments and saves.

Reach: shows to how many people your content was delivered in the feed, counting only the unique values, as opposed to impressions.

Average reach rate per post: it reveals how many people interacted with your posts (photo, video, and carousels) from those who have seen your posts aside from your followers. It's calculated by dividing the engagement of a post to the reach, all multiplied by 100.

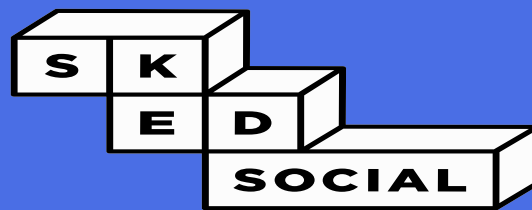
It is helpful to see the potential virality of a post.





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's strategy performance with analytics!



Sked Social is a social media management and scheduling tool. Over 10,000 Instagram-first agencies and brands trust Sked Social to visually plan an attractive and cohesive feed, automatically publish posts of all types and analyze and learn from every post.

Design your Instagram feed like a pro!

