

Instagram is courting smaller creators as US TikTok ban looms, but it's a delicate balance

Article

The news: Instagram has rolled out a series of product updates and provided a recommendation for Reels length in an effort to improve discovery for smaller creators.

- Instagram is introducing a **new input to ranking that will give smaller creators more distribution**. It is also removing content aggregators from recommendations.
- It is **replacing reposts with original content in content recommendations** as well as adding labels to reposts that link to the original.
- Instagram also posted a video on its @creators account saying that in order for a Reel to be recommendable to non-followers, **it needs to be under 90 seconds**. The “sweet spot” is between 30 and 90 seconds, per Instagram.

Why it matters: Smaller creators have historically struggled to gain as much reach as larger creators and content aggregators on Instagram.

- Previously, Reels content was primarily ranked by how an account’s followers engaged with it, meaning that creators with large followings generally saw the most reach.

Between the lines: Instagram is **not-so-subtly trying to court TikTok creators** as the prospect of a ban looms large.

Yes, but: It’s a delicate balance. Instagram must ensure that its content ranking changes don’t flood users’ feeds with the bite-sized videos TikTok popularized. That could annoy users or established big-name creators and undermine its efforts in longer-form video.

- TikTok has long been the platform of choice for many up-and-coming creators looking to break through. Its algorithm recommends content to users based on their interests, rather than follower count or engagement, meaning that even creators with few followers can reach a broad audience.
- Shorter videos tend to feel less daunting to create than longer videos. That makes short clips an obvious choice for new creators, who may also have fewer resources than established ones.

By the numbers:

- Half (49%) of US consumers who engage with creators said they first discover a creator on their feed or recommended content, per July 2023 data from Teachable, followed by searching for specific content or expertise (25%).

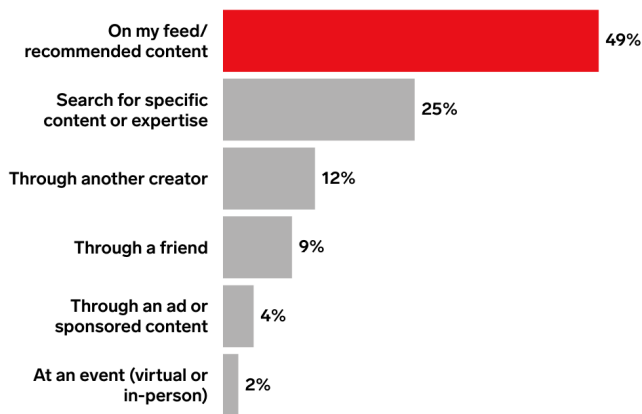
Zoom out: Even without the prospect of a TikTok ban, there's a growing space in the market for another home for smaller creators.

- It's now easier than ever to become a creator, but harder than ever to break through. **The days of overnight TikTok sensations are largely over**, as the platform has become crowded with creators and users looking to "go viral" and monetize their content.
- TikTok has recently been paying more attention to nurturing its bigger-name stars as it also pushes into longer-form video to take on YouTube.

The big takeaway: The battle for creators is on. While Instagram may never be the platform of choice for many small creators, the earning potential for creators on Instagram is generally higher than on TikTok, and almost all US creators are already active there, per CreatorIQ. The more Instagram can aid discovery for smaller creators, the more attractive the platform could become.

About Half of Creators' Fans Discover Them via Feeds or Recommended Content

% of US creator fans who were asked about how they discover creators, July 2023



Note: n=1,000 ages 18+ who have meaningfully engaged with at least 1-5 creators and/or made a purchase of any kind from a creator
Source: Teachable, "Creator Connections" conducted by Dynata, Oct 30, 2023

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