

Instagram wants to be TikTok, which wants to be YouTube, which wants to be TV

Article

The news: As competition heats up in the short-form video space, each major player is making moves to differentiate—though that differentiation sometimes comes in the form of

following in another platform's footsteps.

Instagram is now pivoting toward video content following the runaway success of TikTok's and YouTube's steady growth, [said](#) Adam Mosseri, head of Instagram, in a video on Wednesday. It's also going to be putting **more emphasis on its algorithm to drive engagement**.

- In the video, Mosseri put a stake in the ground, stating that Instagram is "**no longer a photo-sharing app.**" It will instead focus on four key areas: creators, shopping, messaging, and video.
- This is apparent in the recent changes it's been experimenting with. For example, it's testing [integrating its TikTok competitor, Reels](#), onto the Facebook app homepage and [putting algorithmically recommended content over posts from followed users](#) on the main Instagram feed.
- During its first-ever Creator Week in early June, Instagram [announced](#) **a slew of new features aimed at attracting creators** and keeping them on the platform.

TikTok, meanwhile, is departing from the short-and-sweet format and going for length. As of [yesterday](#), **anyone can create videos up to 3 minutes long**—triple the current 1-minute limit.

- This could be **a play for time spent and user retention**. When compared with other social media networks, these metrics are areas where TikTok already shines: TikTok users [spent 38.64 minutes](#) per day on the platform in 2020, by far the most time compared with users of other social networks.
- The extra video length could also **help TikTok on its way to becoming a "super app" where users can do more than just watch**. Encouraging deeper engagement with individual videos rather than quickly swiping through could aid adoption of its new **Jumps feature**, for example, which adds mini apps that can be accessed from within videos.
- But if TikTok is aiming to become a long-form, video-first platform, as opposed to a social media app, it still has a ways to climb: It still lags behind video platforms like [YouTube](#) (which averaged **43.47 minutes** per day in 2020) and [Netflix](#) (**59.25 minutes**).

Finally, **YouTube** seems to be aiming even higher—at the biggest screen in the home. But Shorts, its short-form video format launched in 2020, adds a new dimension to its increasingly TV-centric strategy.

- More [TV viewership](#) means that YouTube can sell pricier connected TV (CTV) ads, which draw from linear TV ad budgets. But trying to lure TV advertisers means **YouTube needs to provide the same guarantees as TV**—that is, high watch time and good content quality.
- YouTube has been pivoting to prioritize those things for years now, but **those changes have alienated creators, who have long [complained](#) that YouTube’s content moderation rules are too strict** and that its algorithm [prioritizes](#) long, monetizable videos from established creators.
- **Shorts may be the platform’s answer to this**, bringing back a vestige of “old YouTube,” where the shorter video length, less-polished nature, and freewheeling algorithm could boost users to overnight virality.

Key takeaway: With each major social platform (save Twitter) now boasting their own short-form video features, it’s becoming clear that **straight-up TikTok clones won’t cut it**. Though the features themselves may look the same, each plays a different role in their respective platform's longer-term strategy—and marketers should pay close attention.

For more on this topic, read our [“The US Short Video Landscape”](#) report.