

Advertisers on Why WhatsApp's Status Is a Good Testing Ground for Ads

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Jasmine Enberg

Ads on WhatsApp are to be expected sometime in 2020. And most advertisers we spoke to for our new [report on global messaging apps](#) agreed that Status—WhatsApp's version of Stories—makes sense as a testing ground for ads.

It's the most "social" feature of the app, and while chats are intended for one-to-one or one-to-several communication, Status updates are one-to-many—the calling card of social networks. People are already accustomed to seeing ads there.

"Consumers have come to expect ads to pop up pretty much everywhere they engage on social," said Chelsea McDonald, senior social media strategist at DEG, Linked by Isobar. "In one-to-one messaging, it's less expected because it's more private. But since the ads will be in Status, I think consumers will engage with and respond to them in a similar way to Instagram or Facebook Stories ads."

There is little data on consumer attitudes toward Stories ads, but there is research to suggest that they perform reasonably well. Measurement platform Conviva analyzed 13,000 Stories from the top 300 Instagram accounts during Q1 2019, finding that the average completion rate was

84%. That was up from 73% in Q1 2018. Average reach was just 6.7%, likely because viewers can skip over Stories ads they don't want to see.

Conviva defined "top accounts" as enterprise-level Instagram accounts in brand, media, entertainment and sports categories. It excludes influencer or individual Instagram accounts.

US Instagram Story Performance Metrics, by Industry, Q1 2018 & Q1 2019

	Average completion rate		Average frames per Story		Average reach	
	Q1 2018	Q1 2019	Q1 2018	Q1 2019	Q1 2018	Q1 2019
Brands	69%	85%	6.9	5.2	5.9%	5.1%
Media	70%	81%	8.4	7.6	5.7%	5.4%
Entertainment	71%	81%	7.3	7.4	7.0%	5.4%
Sports	77%	86%	7.4	8.4	10.0%	8.6%
Total	73%	84%	7.4	7.7	7.2%	6.7%

Note: n=13,000 Stories from 300 top Instagram accounts; brands include consumer-related products, service brands, events or locations; media includes newspapers, news organizations/websites and publishers; entertainment includes TV/movie networks, TV shows and social-first content networks; sports includes teams, esports, leagues and sporting events; 90% of accounts measured were located in US
 Source: Conviva, "2019 Instagram Stories Benchmark Study," July 25, 2019

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Yet, despite sharing similar features, Instagram and WhatsApp are independent platforms with different use cases. Instagram users follow and interact with a range of different accounts from friends to influencers, celebrities, publishers and brands. In a January 2019 Facebook-commissioned report by Ipsos, 66% of Instagram users worldwide considered the platform a place to interact with brands. Engaging with celebrities and influencers was also a top-cited response when respondents were asked what they associated with Instagram.

Meanwhile, WhatsApp interactions—including those on Status—are limited to contacts in a phone book, which are primarily friends and family. "Even where we've built features that allow for broader sharing, [WhatsApp] is still a less public experience [than Facebook's other apps]," CEO Mark Zuckerberg said in a March 2019 Facebook post.

Some advertisers have also compared WhatsApp Status ads with Stories ads on Snapchat, called "Snap Ads."

"I would say that Snapchat is probably the best analogy of what exists today in terms of how to understand WhatsApp Status ads," said Joe

Yakuel, founder and CEO of digital marketing firm Agency Within.

That's because both apps were originally created for one-to-one messaging, and they keep their messaging functionality separate from Stories. On WhatsApp, users have to open a different tab to view Status updates. The same is true for Snapchat, while Stories on Facebook, Instagram and Messenger appear at the top of a user's feed or chat log.

With that in mind, advertisers are generally optimistic about the upcoming launch of WhatsApp Status ads. Some initial consumer pushback is expected, but users should come to accept them as they have other forms of digital advertising.

"It's going to be similar to any new platform when ads become available," said Liz Cole, vice president and group director of social strategy at Digitas North America. "The first bad ads and the first best ads will really stand out, but eventually, most ads won't be remarkable in either a positive or negative way."

For more analysis on WhatsApp and other messaging apps, read our new report.

Report by Jasmine Enberg Sep 11, 2019

Global Messaging Apps 2019

**GLOBAL
MESSAGING
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What's Up with WhatsApp
Status Ads and Other
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ANALYZED BY
Jasmine Enberg
Contributors: Michael White, Lisa Ruth, Shreyas, David White, William, Nadeem

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