

How Benefit Cosmetics Is Leveraging Instagram Stories

The beauty brand is focusing on organic and paid content

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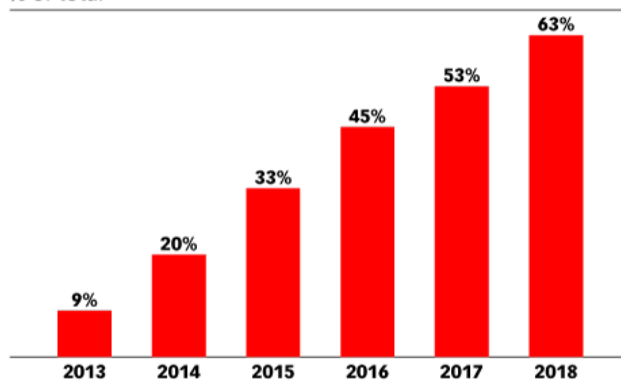
Lucy Koch

There's something about social stories that **users and advertisers alike find so appealing.**

Today, more than six in 10 Fortune 500 companies regularly use Instagram, according to the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth Center for Marketing Research—up from 53% a year prior, and nearly double the usage rate in 2015.

US Fortune 500 Companies that Have a Public-Facing Instagram Account, 2013-2018

% of total



Note: that have posted to their Instagram account in the past 30-45 days
Source: University of Massachusetts Dartmouth Center for Marketing Research, "The 2018 Fortune 500 Target Millennials and Seek Uncensored Expression," Sep 2018

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"[Instagram Stories is] where people are talking about brands, and it's where our customers learn about brands from influencers," said Toto Haba, senior vice president of global digital at Benefit Cosmetics.

With its increased investment in Instagram Stories, Benefit plans to focus on the upper funnel with both organic and paid content in 2019. And rising usage in swipe-up behavior—when a user swipes up on stories content and is taken to a landing page on the brand's website—is opening the door to new opportunities, according to Haba.

Haba recently spoke with eMarketer principal analyst Debra Aho Williamson about Benefit's objectives for organic and paid stories, as well as its key learnings.

How does your stories and feed content work together on Instagram?

It's integrated for us. There isn't one that leads the other—it depends on the objective. We post content in our major markets on both the feed and stories on a daily basis.

The local markets are responsible for producing the vast majority of content for stories, while our global team produces a lot of the feed content and shares it with the markets. This is because feed content is more polished and geared toward big brand moments like product launches.

Stories, on the other hand, are for a behind-the-scenes look at Benefit, and for content like beauty tutorials.

What marketing objectives have you established for your organic stories efforts?

We think of it in terms of brand engagement and loyalty.

Benefit's tagline is "laughter is the best cosmetic." We can be goofy on stories. It's important for us to show that side of the brand. When we use stories for this, we look at completion rates for the entire story stream and user engagement.

We've also found that on the organic side, stories are good at driving traffic through swipe-ups. Because you can embed links there, we've

had some instances where a promotional story drives a lot of that user behavior.

On the paid side, what objectives are you working toward?

Our primary objectives for our social advertising are still around brand awareness. Since we primarily work with retail partners like Sephora and Ulta to sell our products, we don't have a mass direct-click advertising model. It's more about increasing our brand awareness.

With that said, we've experimented a lot. We routinely A/B test content that we produce for each of our stories campaigns so we can learn what works better.

Right now, we're finding that less-polished content—like a person facing straight into the camera just talking to you—is outperforming the more highly produced cut-downs we do in our regular advertising.

Haba was interviewed as part of eMarketer's November 2018 report, "[Marketing with Stories on Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat: How Consumers and Marketers Are Using This Creative Format.](#)" eMarketer PRO subscribers can read the full report for more on Benefit and other marketers using Instagram Stories. Not sure if your company subscribes? [Check here.](#)