



# The E-commerce Guide to Marketing on Instagram™

How to use the  
platform to benefit  
your business

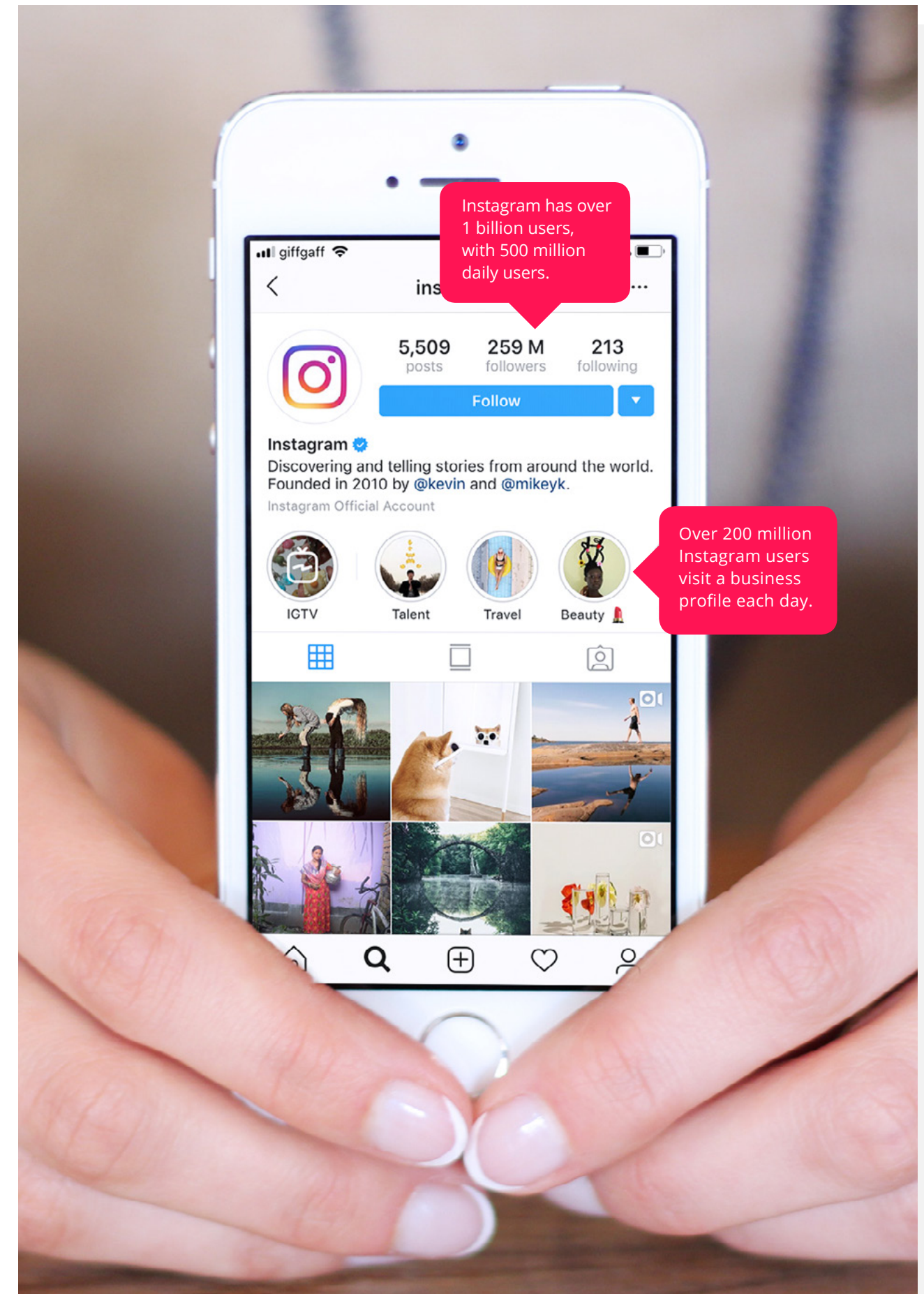


# Introduction

From a humble San Francisco startup to one of the world's most influential social networks, Instagram has become a major game changer for consumers and businesses alike. It now has a global community of 1 billion users and counting, and with over 2 million active advertisers using the channel, it continues to be the most effective way to engage with your future customers.

To help e-commerce brands take advantage of Instagram's exploding popularity as an ad channel, we've put together a guide covering everything from the basics of creating Instagram ads to leveraging the platform's range of tools to create a successful ad campaign.

And, if you need help with managing your digital media spend, AdRoll can lend a hand: as your partner, we can provide simple solutions to help you get going, which we'll also cover in this guide. So, whether you're an Instagram novice or a social media whizz, you'll learn how to use the platform to catapult your business to the next level.





# Instagram's history in numbers



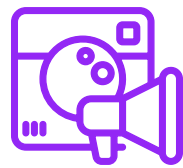
**2**

The number of founders—Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger—who launched Instagram in San Francisco, on 6 October 2010



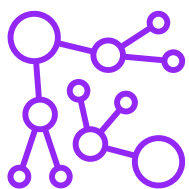
**60%**

The percentage of people who say they've discovered a new product on Instagram<sup>1</sup>



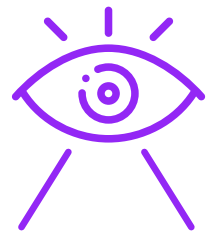
**150 million**

The number of people who have had a conversation with a business via Instagram Direct<sup>2</sup>



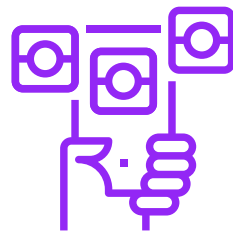
**25 million**

The number of business profiles worldwide<sup>3</sup>



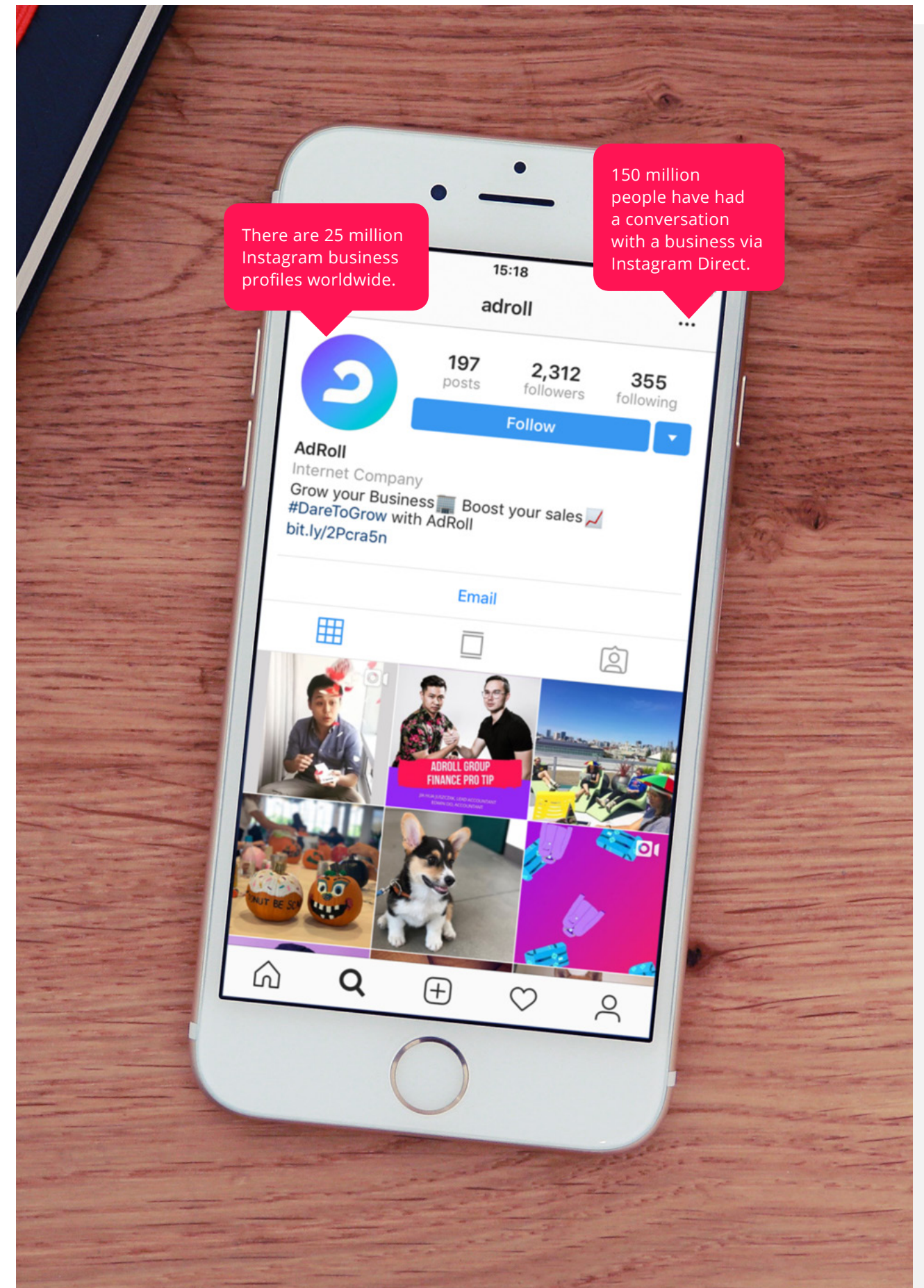
**200 million**

The number of daily active Instagrammers who visit a business profile each day<sup>4</sup>



**400 million**

The number of people who use Instagram Stories daily<sup>5</sup>





# The basics

Getting started with Instagram is easy: download the latest version of the app from the App Store to your smartphone—or, if you use Windows 8 or 10, you can download Instagram for Windows, which is a full-featured version for PC. Instagram will often ask permission to access your phone's camera and image gallery, as well as your GPS or location service.

## Creating a free business profile for your brand

Once you've installed and opened the app, you'll be given the option to sign up for a new account with your email address or phone number. Alternatively, you can register using your Facebook account. If you've registered with your email or phone number, create a username that accurately reflects your brand. As well as the ability to set up ads, business accounts provide you with insights to track important key performance indicators (KPIs) such as impressions, engagement, and follower demographics.

## Setting up your profile

Your brand name can appear at the top of your bio, but as you have 30 characters at your disposal, it's also worth adding keywords to help users find your business in search. For example, a fashion brand could add "clothing"—e.g., apartment8clothing—after their name so it's clear what kind of business it is.

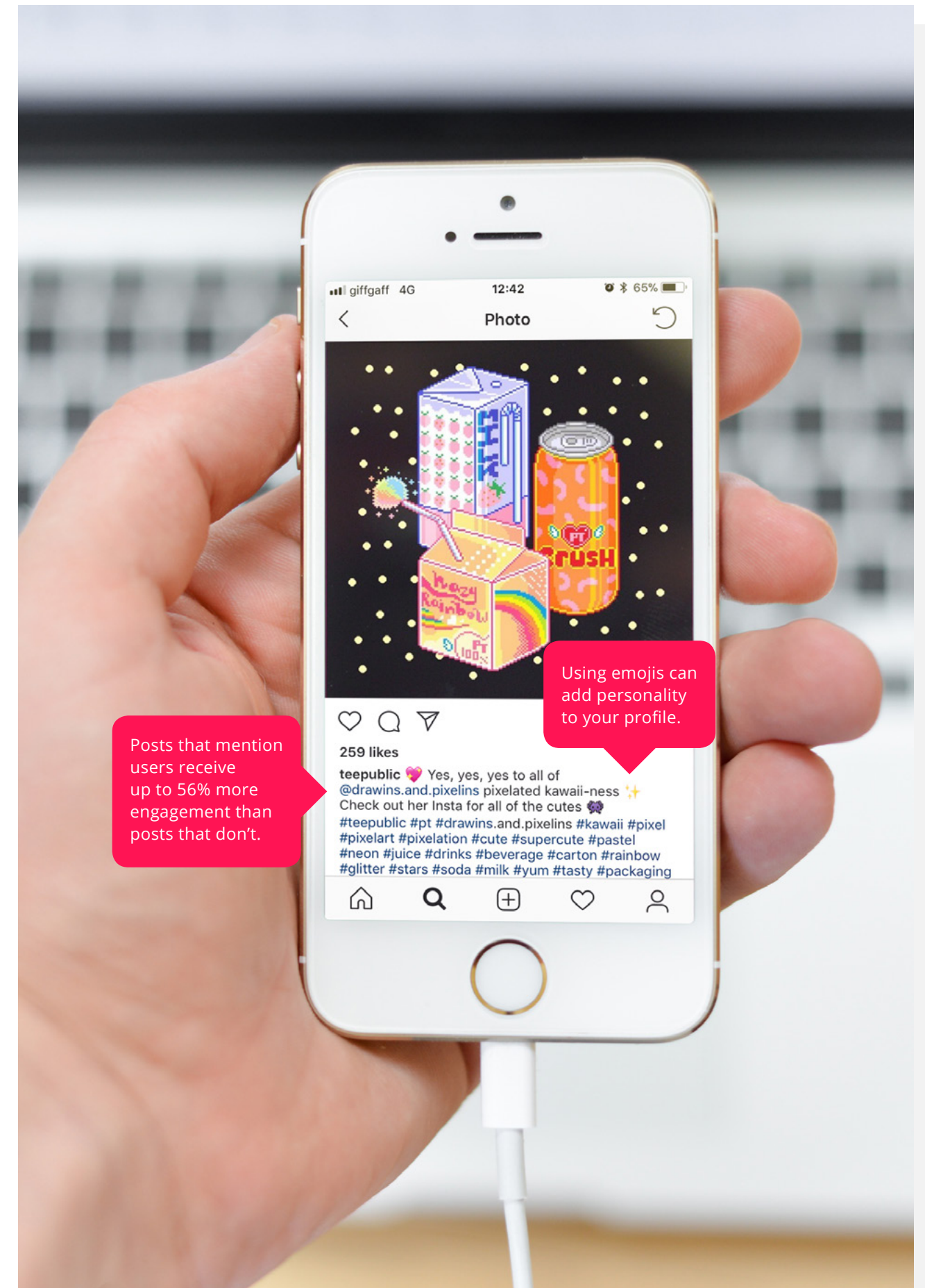
Next comes the bio, which has a 150-character limit. It's a great opportunity to sell yourself, so use it to share your unique selling point (USP) and explain why visitors should check out your feed. Get creative by formatting the text with hashtags, line breaks, or even emojis, which will help bring your brand to life—and remember to include a call to action (CTA) encouraging users to sign up to your mailing list or visit your website.

### Emoji inspiration

NadaMoo  
Infruition

### Hashtag inspiration

Zollicandy



## Branding your profile

Your profile picture is one of the first things users will see on Instagram, so it should make the best first impression. It should also reflect your website and other social channels so your prospects have a cohesive experience of your brand online. Most companies opt for their logo, but bear in mind that profile photos are cropped, so you might want to consider the most appropriate format for your photo. Images should be at least 110 x 110 pixels.

Many brands have also become savvy with their use of Instagram Stories. Your favourite clips don't have to disappear after 24 hours if you save them as a highlight. These are displayed at the top of your profile page, and can give users access to the content you want them to see—so it's a great way for businesses to showcase their products and services. To add a highlight, create your story, tap "Highlight" in the bottom-right corner, then press "New" to name the highlight (it can be up to 16 characters long). The highlight will now appear on your profile.

You can also add multiple clips and photos to a highlight to create an album. Tap the "+" sign in the "Story Highlights" section. An archive list will appear when you add a new highlight, so pick the posts you want to include in the album and choose "Next". Be aware that highlight albums appear in chronological order on your profile—but you might also want to brand them so users know what to expect. Upload an image with an icon or title—you can use these as covers for each of your highlight albums.

Check out some businesses that are getting it right:

### Alternative Apparel

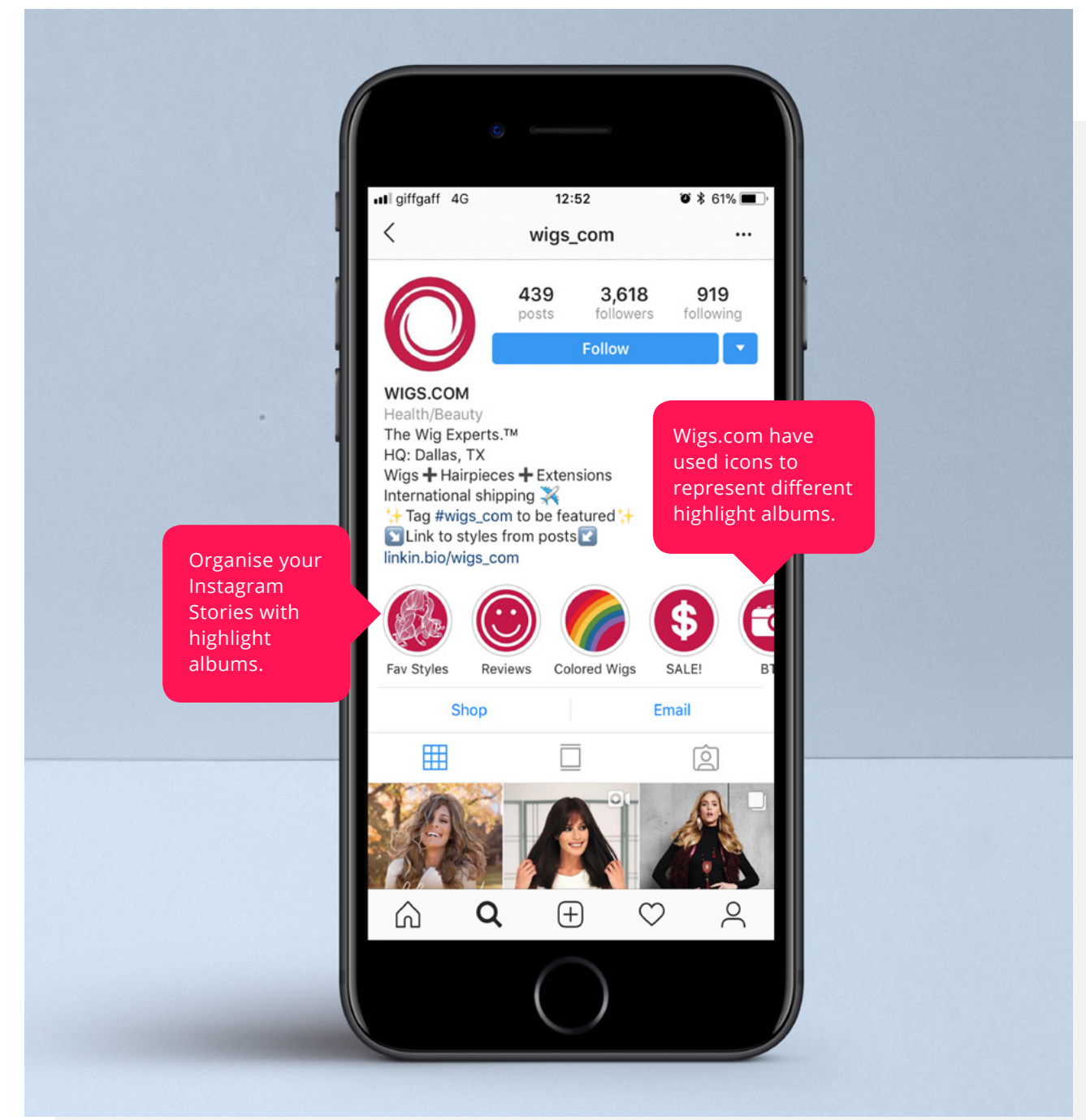
Here, the highlight covers reflect the simple and soft aesthetic of the clothing brand.

### Sweaty Betty

This fitness brand is maintaining a consistent look and feel by using icons to represent different highlight albums.

## Choosing media for your profile grid

Instagram lets you post photos, videos, or GIFs on your profile grid that you can edit with a range of filters and creative tools. But before you dive in, it's worth developing a [content strategy](#)<sup>6</sup> and content calendar to ensure you're posting consistently. For example, you'll want to choose an aesthetic that runs throughout your feed and gives it a cohesive look and feel. A third-party app such as [Planoly](#) can help you manage and plan your posts before they go live.





# Instagram ads

Even with a good-looking feed, advertising on the platform is the way forward. As Instagram becomes increasingly popular, the power of organic posts diminishes—but advertising can help you reach more prospects and give your feed a greater chance of success. It's affordable, you can accurately target your audience, and you can reliably track conversions. And in recent years, Instagram has helped e-commerce businesses thrive by enabling them to use the platform to promote and sell products directly to their users. So far, it's worked: 75% of users reportedly visited a website or made a purchase after seeing an Instagram ad,<sup>7</sup> and the platform now offers a “shoppable posts” feature which lets businesses include product links in posts.

Ads are managed with the same tools used for Facebook Ads and you can create them directly in the app, in Creative Hub, or in Ad Creation. To get started, check that you're the admin of the Facebook Page connected to your Instagram account.

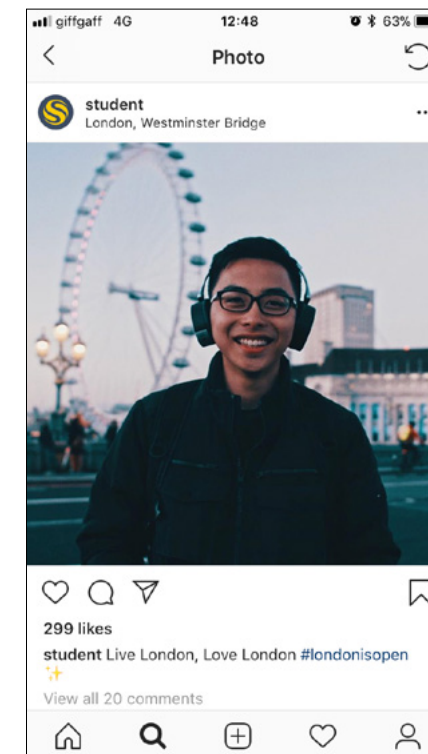
You can also choose from a variety of CTA buttons for your ads, which are essential to ensuring prospective customers can engage with your business.

There are five types of ads you can create on the platform:

## Photo ads

This format is what most users see in their feed and offers the chance to communicate to your audience through engaging still images. Take online education provider [The Great Courses](#), for instance. They use iconic and historic images to help their ads stand out and make an impact.

The recommended image sizes for photos are:



### Square

- Minimum resolution  
600 x 600 pixels
- Maximum resolution  
1936 x 1936 pixels



### Landscape

- Minimum resolution  
600 x 315 pixels
- Maximum resolution  
1936 x 1936 pixels



### Vertical

- Minimum resolution  
600 x 750 pixels
- Maximum resolution  
1936 x 1936 pixels

### Specs

File type: .jpg or .png

Maximum size: 30MB

Your image should not include more than 20% text.

Find more tech specs [here](#).

### Here are available CTA buttons for photo ads:

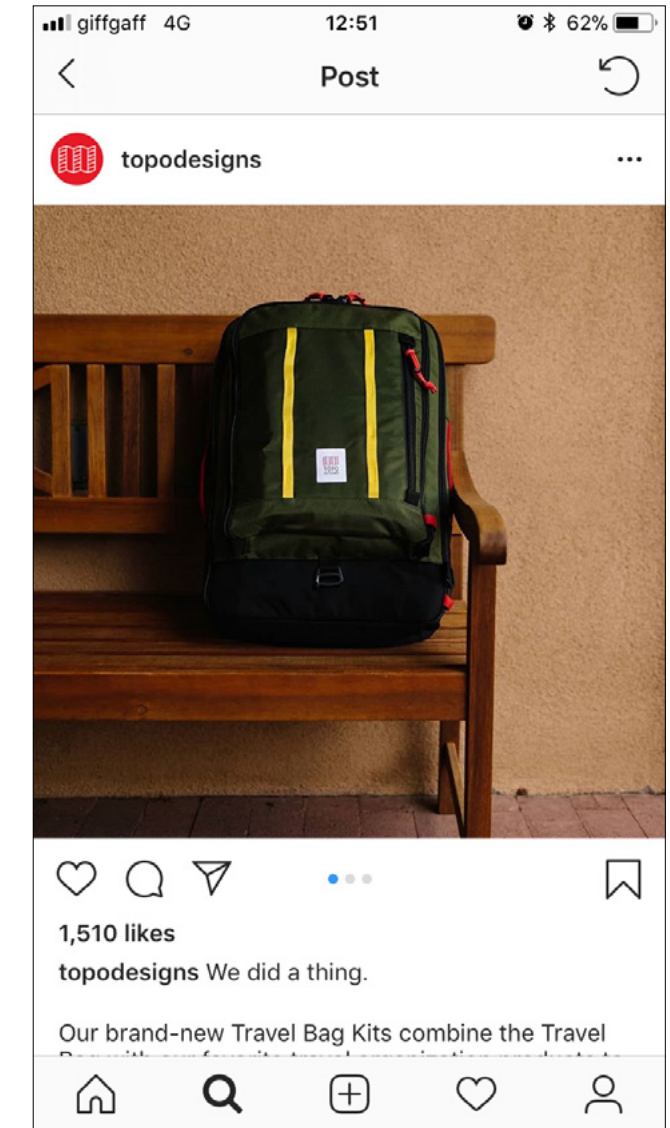
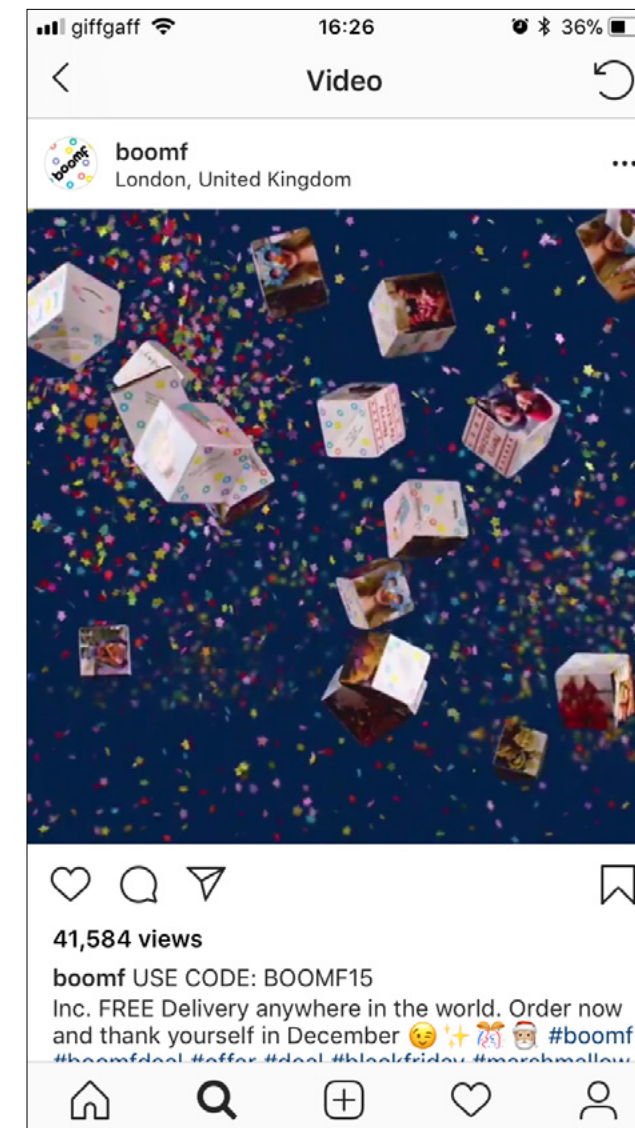
- Apply Now
- Book Now
- Call Now
- Contact Us
- Get Directions
- Learn More
- Get Showtimes
- Download

## Video ads

If you want to show your products in action, you can use a video that plays automatically when it's in the centre of a user's feed. Check out surfer brand [Finisterre](#) for inspiration: they use a mix of compelling videos and GIFs to grab the attention of their prospective customers.

## Carousel ads

Carousel ads do a brilliant job of helping e-commerce businesses showcase products from their websites. You can add up to 10 photos or videos in a single post, which is handy for businesses that might want to highlight different product variations or prices. Price comparison travel company [GoEuro](#) uses carousels to great effect by opting for a series of images to showcase the latest ticket deals.



### Video ads

#### Specs

Length: Up to 60 seconds

File type: .mp4

Maximum size: Up to 4GB max

You will also need a thumbnail image that is no more than 20% text.

Find more tech specs on Video ads [here](#).

### Carousel ads

#### Specs

File type: .jpg or .png

Maximum size: 30MB per image

Your image should not include more than 20% text.

Find more tech specs on Carousel ads [here](#).

### Three ways of using carousel posts to promote your business

- To launch a new product range
- To give step-by-step instructions on how to use a product
- To share customer testimonials that relate to your brand

#### Here are available CTA buttons:

— Apply Now — Book Now — Call Now — Contact Us — Download



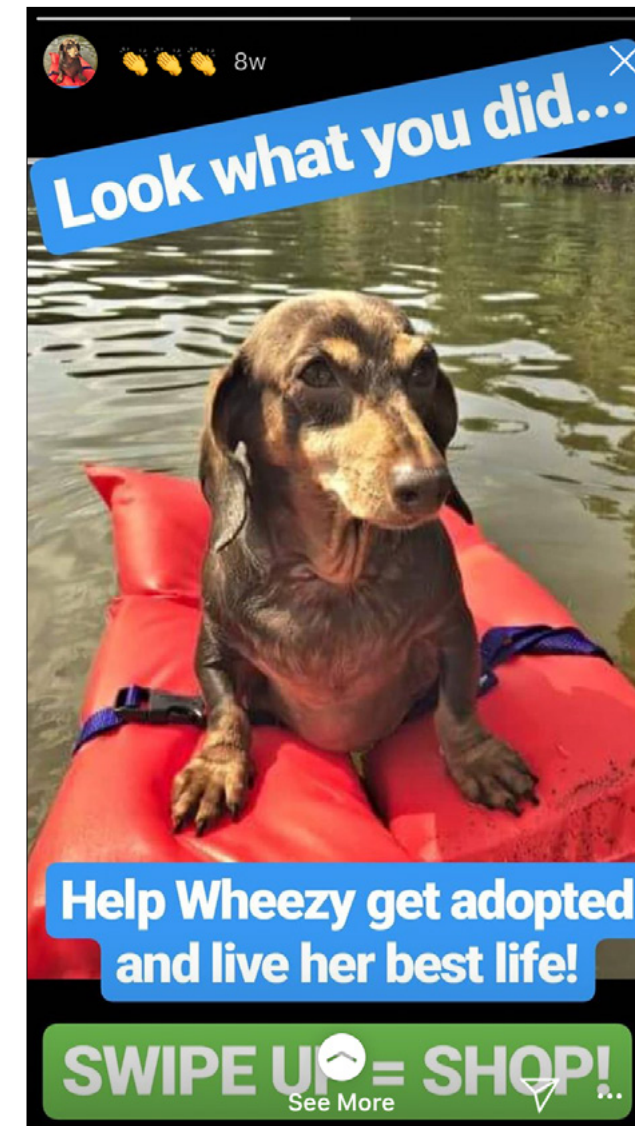
## Story ads

When Instagram Stories arrived in 2016, it gave rival Snapchat a serious run for its money. By allowing users to post photos and videos that disappear after 24 hours, Instagram suddenly gave brands another creative way to reach their customers—particularly as the feature is used daily by more than 400 million people.<sup>8</sup> Plus, more than one in three daily Instagrammers surveyed said they have become more interested in a brand or product after seeing it on Instagram Stories<sup>9</sup>—so it's become an essential marketing tool in its own right.

You can create targeted ads that run on Instagram Stories using metrics such as reach, traffic, conversions, video views, or brand awareness to drive the results you're after. The tool supports mixed media and carousels, but the default display length for images is five seconds, and the maximum for video is 15 seconds. Instagram ads also include one CTA per card, but you can choose different destinations for each one.

## Instant Experiences ads

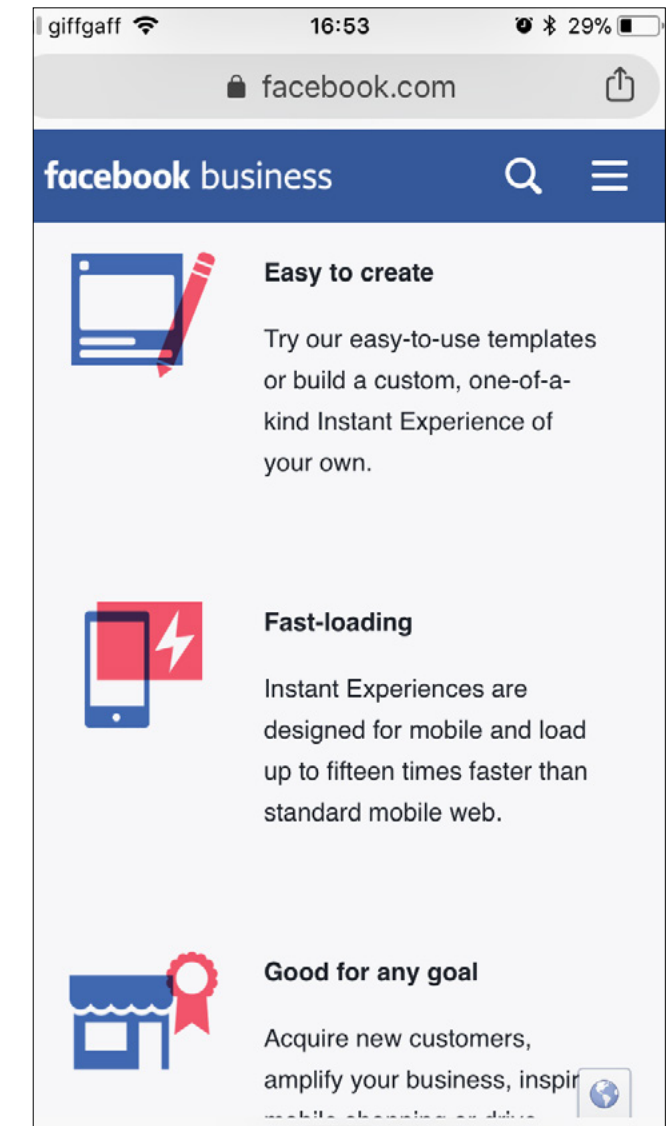
If you want to create the ultimate immersive video experience in Instagram Stories that's optimised for mobile, consider using Facebook Instant Experiences. It offers a variety of templates—or you can create your own—to creatively capture the attention of customers. Brands that have successfully used this format for ad campaigns include [Casper](#) and US flower outlet [The Bouqs Company](#). See their ads in action on [Instagram's website](#).



### Story ads

#### Here are available CTA buttons:

- Apply Now
- Book Now
- Contact Us
- Call Now (video only)
- Download



### Facebook Instant Experiences ads

#### Here are available custom CTA buttons:

- Apply Now
- Book Now
- Contact Us

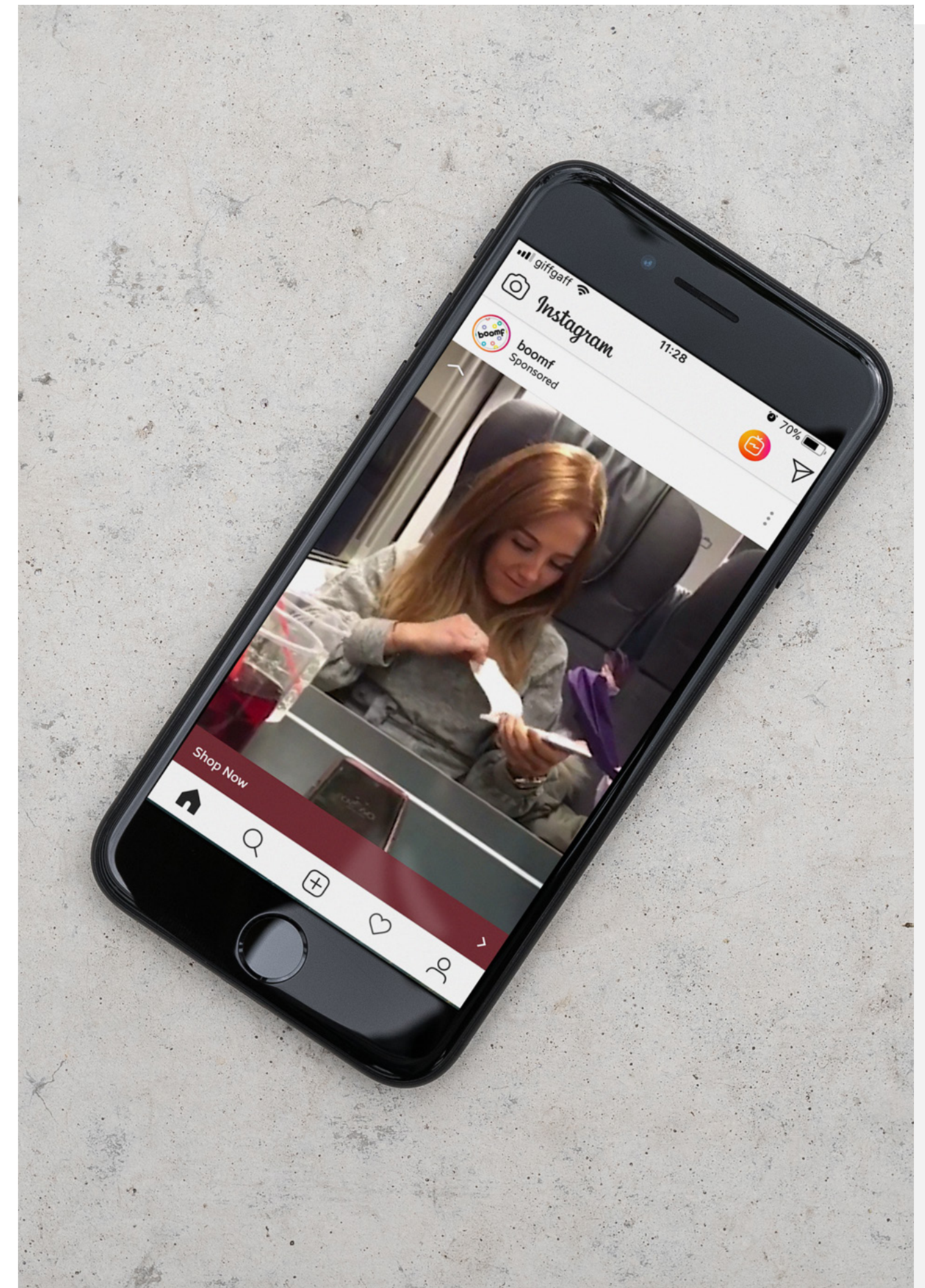
If you're creating ads through Facebook's Ads Manager, you can choose from 10 marketing objectives in three ad groups: awareness, consideration, and conversion. Learn how to set them up on [Facebook's website](#).



## Creating ads directly in the app

Whether they're images or videos, organic posts can now be turned into ads.

1. Tap the "Promote" button below the post's image.
2. You'll then be instructed on how to complete the details of your promotion such as who you want to reach (audience), how much you want to spend (budget), and the length of the promotion (duration).
3. Once you've tapped "Promote" to finish, it will be reviewed within 60 minutes—although, in some cases, it can take longer.
4. Once approved, it will begin running and appear on Instagram with a sponsored tag below your username and a CTA button of your choice at the bottom of the post.

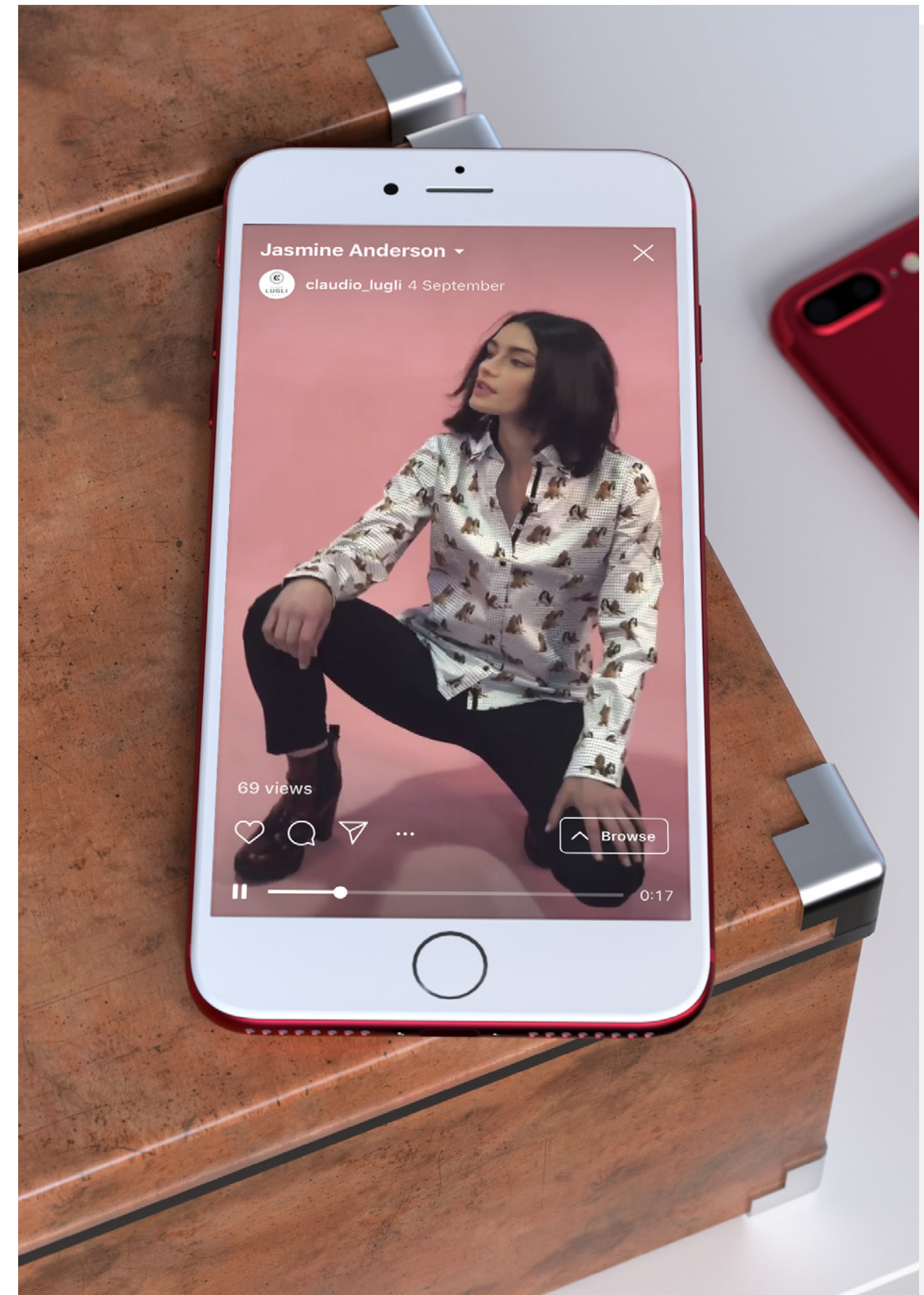




# Using IGTV

Instagram launched IGTV in 2018 to give users the chance to create long-form vertical videos—a reaction, many believe, to a rise in digital video and mobile phone usage. It's predicted that 78% of mobile data traffic will come from mobile video by 2021<sup>10</sup>—and if you're a business keen to make the most of video, this is a simple and intuitive tool to help prospects and customers find and engage with you.

Unlike Instagram Stories, videos on IGTV can be up to an hour in length—and the tool even has a stand-alone app where brands can set up their own channel. Although the platform isn't showing ads on IGTV, you can still make the most of it if you've got the budget and resources. Take a leaf out of the books of early adopters like Nike and Netflix [who are creating new content specifically for IGTV](#). Any content that presents an opportunity to engage with your prospective customers on a deeper level will increase your chances of building relationships, converting, and nudging them down the marketing funnel.





# Business success stories

We've seen numerous AdRoll customers use Instagram successfully (and creatively) as part of their digital marketing efforts. Check out these compelling examples:

## DL1961

A rapidly growing fashion retailer, DL1961 partnered with AdRoll to boost their existing advertising strategies with new, high-performing ad inventory. Instagram's premium audience, inventory, and visual focus were a perfect fit for the brand's well-composed fashion and lifestyle photography. In fact, after adding Instagram to their AdRoll campaigns, 12% of their campaigns' total conversions were generated from Instagram, with these ads alone achieving an overall ROI of 12x.

## University of Missouri–St. Louis (UMSL)

When exploring how to create more registrations for his university's online business programme, Jon Hinderliter, assistant director of university marketing and communications at UMSL, regularly runs A/B tests on new media sources. After adding Instagram to his existing AdRoll Attract and Convert programs, his first Instagram campaign [achieved a 4x higher click-through rate \(CTR\) compared with Facebook Retargeting](#). This boosted UMSL's organic social campaigns as well, increasing followers by 29%.

## Los Angeles Marathon

The Los Angeles Marathon wanted to increase runner registrations by 10% each year, but they didn't invest heavily in digital marketing due to their past experience with poorly performing campaigns. Working with the Los Angeles Marathon, AdRoll created ads that [conveyed the emotional journey of the race](#). Campaigns that included Instagram increased registrations by 3,400 and achieved an overall ROI of 30x; the organisation says they'll use Instagram to promote every event in the future.



# How AdRoll can help



## Working together

A lot of businesses simply don't have enough time to test and optimise a new channel from scratch. Work with an Instagram marketing partner, like AdRoll, whose deep expertise and knowledge will help you apply advertising performance learnings to get the most out of every Instagram campaign.



## Hitting the mark

With our level of data and technology, we take the guesswork out of how to optimise towards your best performing audiences on Instagram. We run over 2.5 million predictions and 500,000 bid request evaluations a second to make the best bids for you—and you're also getting important predictions included in every bid.



## Extending your reach

We provide cross-device, cross-platform retargeting as a high-performance solution to ensure we can reach your audience, no matter where they are—including on mobile devices.



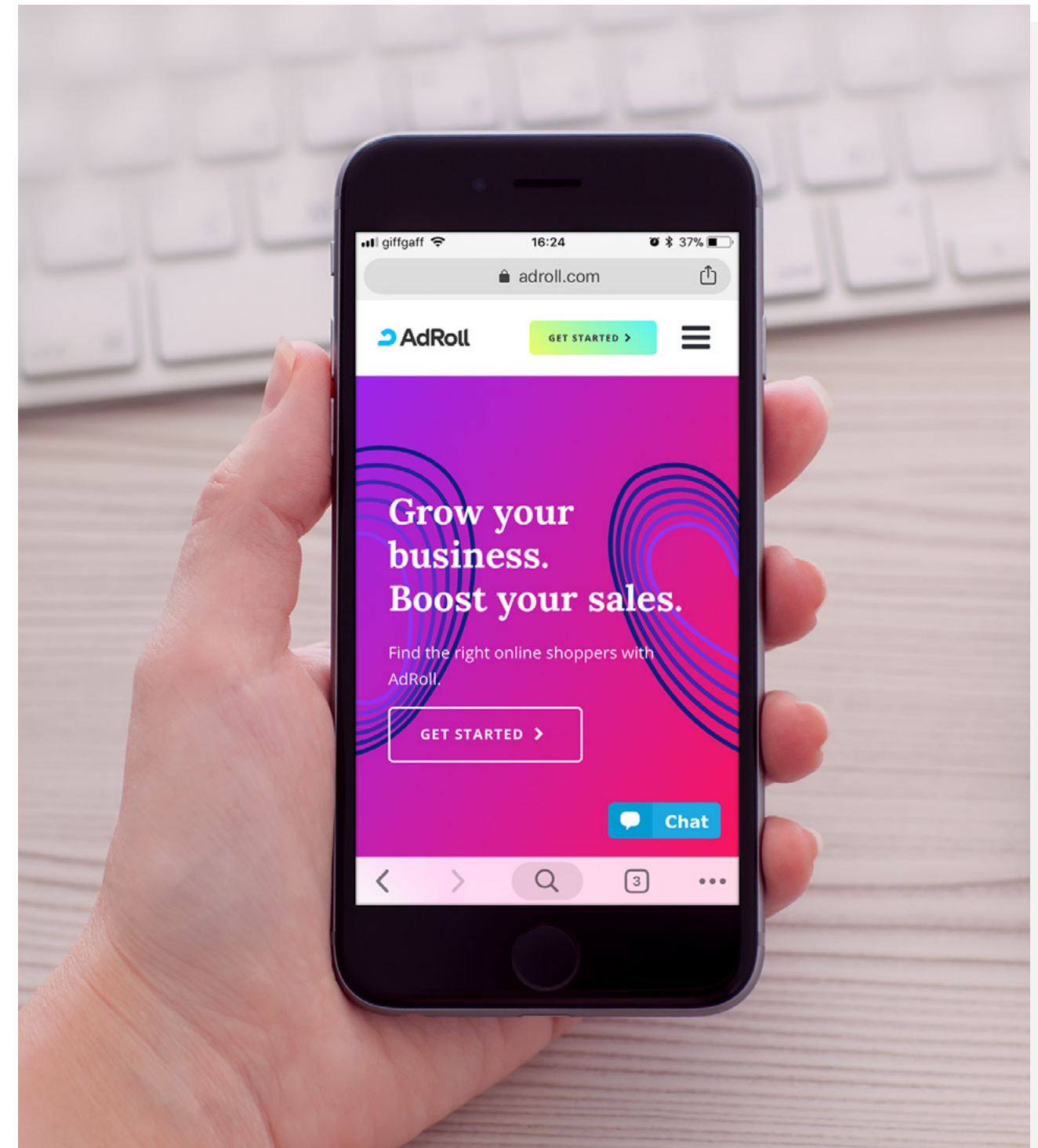
## Segmenting your audience

We give you the ability to segment so you can target customers across the entire funnel. This will allow you to serve general awareness ads to new customers on Instagram and offer discounts to loyal customers. You can segment even further with dynamic creatives to serve ads to your customers based on the specific products they've viewed in carousel posts or Instagram Stories.



## Smarter spending

We believe programmatic advertising offers more value for money—and by using prospecting and retargeting to help your customers move along the sales funnel, we can also help you get a better return on your Instagram marketing spend.





# Final best practice advertising tips dos and don'ts

Once you understand Instagram's key tools and functions, follow this checklist to help you build your brand presence and grow your prospective customer base.

## 1. Do think about when you're running your ads.

According to [Hootsuite](#), Wednesdays are the most expensive days to run Instagram ads, so plan carefully to ensure you're getting the most out of your spend.

## 2. Do attempt to get on the Explore page.

More than 200 million people visit the Explore page daily.<sup>11</sup> It's a selection of content based on your comments, likes, and the activity of the accounts you follow. It's brilliant for businesses: if your posts are featured on another user's Explore page, you've increased your exposure exponentially. Plenty of engagement on your posts is the key to getting featured, which is why it's important to create awesome content—and lots of it. Think about the types of posts your followers interact with the most, and use this insight to inspire future content. And don't forget to make good use of hashtags, tagging, and CTAs.

## 3. Do tag people and add locations to your posts.

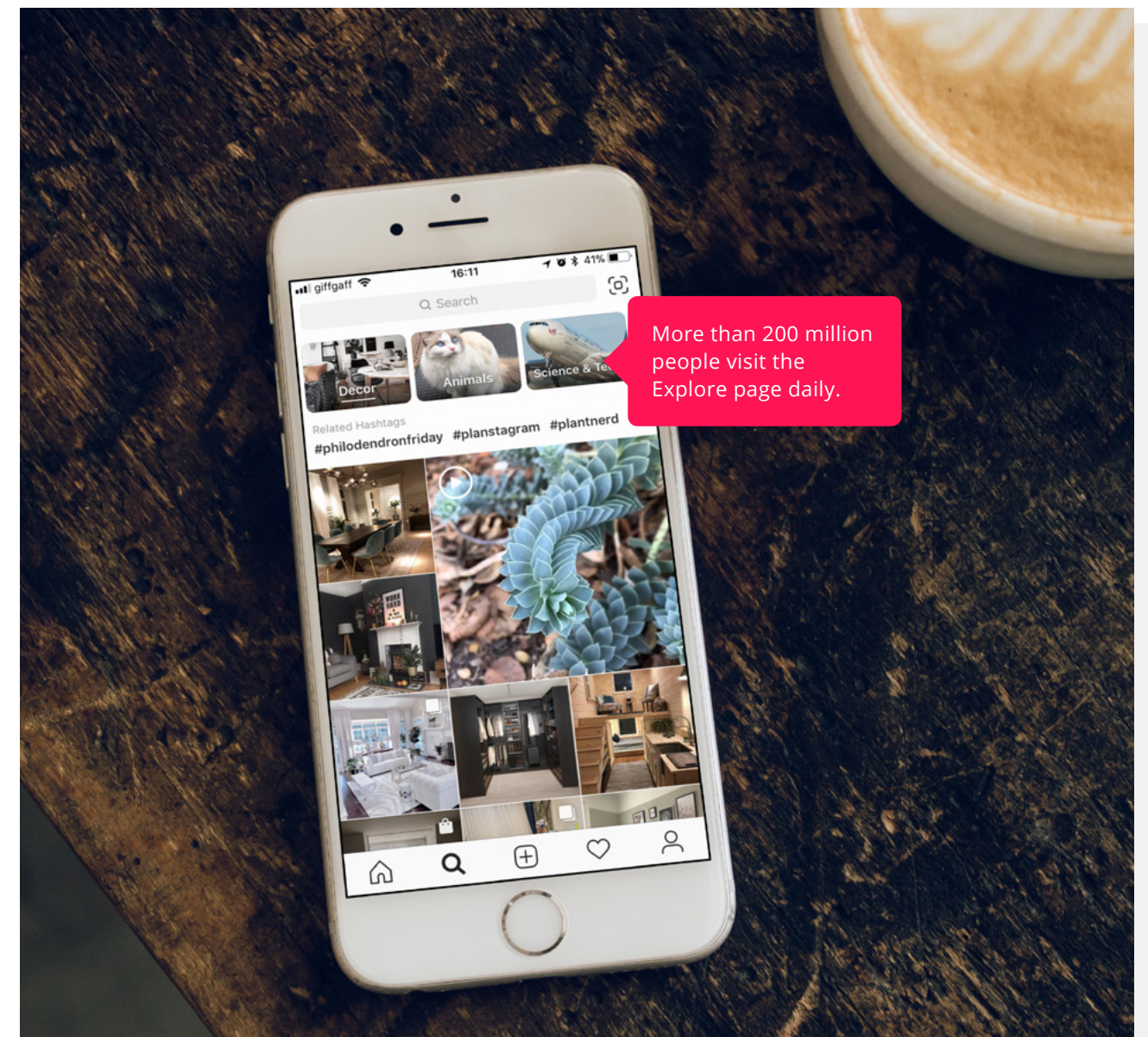
Tagging can be useful if you partner with other businesses and want to encourage your users to connect with them—and posts that mention users see up to 56% more engagement than posts that don't.<sup>12</sup>

To tag, select "Tag People" when creating a new post. Tap anywhere on your image, and type the username of the person or Instagram

account in the search bar. You can press and drag to move the location of the tag; then, tap "Done" in the top right of the screen. You also have the opportunity to add a location to your image if relevant to your post. A location can help you improve your reach and increase the visibility of your account. It also acts as a link to a Photo Map, which allows users to see more photos with the same location tag.

## 4. Do consider using an e-commerce app.

Platforms like [Shopify](#) allow users to turn their posts featuring a product into Instagram ads—so it's a great option if you want to get the most out of your posts.





## 5. Don't underestimate the power of a great caption.

Instagram's algorithm tends to boost posts that receive the most likes or comments—so when it comes to prospects seeing your posts, a good caption could make all the difference. Captions can be as long as 2,200 characters and should entice users with relevant and valuable information that complements the visuals. You should also use CTAs in your captions to drive engagement—particularly those with action-focused language like “Use,” “Start,” and “Get,” for example. Here are other types of CTAs that work well in captions:

- Asking a question
- Pushing people towards Instagram Stories
- Asking for comments or an interaction  
e.g., Show Us . . . , Tell Us . . . , Let Us Know . . .

## 6. Don't forget your hashtags.

Did you know that posts with at least one hashtag get 12.6% more engagement than those without?<sup>13</sup> Hashtags are key to securing more exposure—without them, only your followers will see what you post. You can use up to 30 tags on a post, but 5–10 is ideal—including your brand name. It's also better to post hashtags in the first comment of your post, rather than the caption, so the text looks neat and clutter-free.

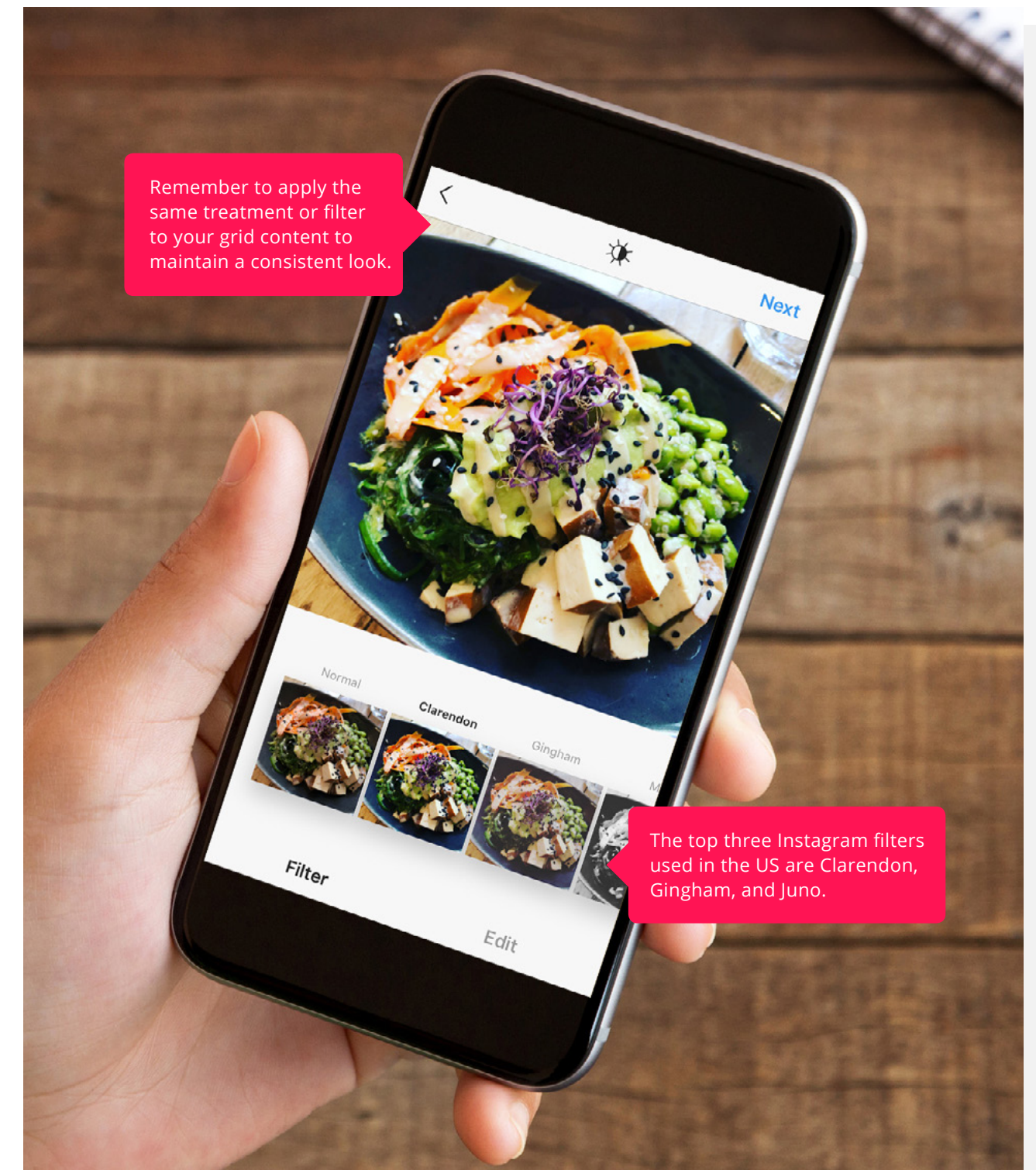
If you're new to Instagram for business, tools such as [all-hashtag.com](https://all-hashtag.com) and [Seek Metrics](#) can help you find the right hashtags to help you become more visible on the platform.

## 7. Don't stick to filters (use third-party tools).

A study by Canva<sup>14</sup> found that the top three Instagram filters used in the US were Clarendon, Gingham, and Juno—but the most appealing profiles spruce up their photos using apps such as [VSCO](#), a tool ranked highly by photographers, or [Snapseed](#). Just remember to apply the same treatment or filter to all content to create a consistent look and feel.

## 8. Don't ignore the full funnel.

Marketing campaigns tend to prioritise the bottom of the funnel—but building brand awareness is just as important. With [AdRoll Attract](#) and look-alike audiences, you can target upper-funnel prospects by serving ads to users who have yet to interact with your brand on Instagram.





# Marketing that delivers performance at every stage

AdRoll maximises the value of customer intent data to attract new prospects, convert them into customers, and grow their value over time.

## Attract

**How do I reach new customers who are unfamiliar with my brand?**

- AdRoll Attract: Drive new potential customers to your website
- CRM retargeting: Maximise the value of your CRM data to target prospects

## Convert

**How do I connect with prospects and turn them into customers?**

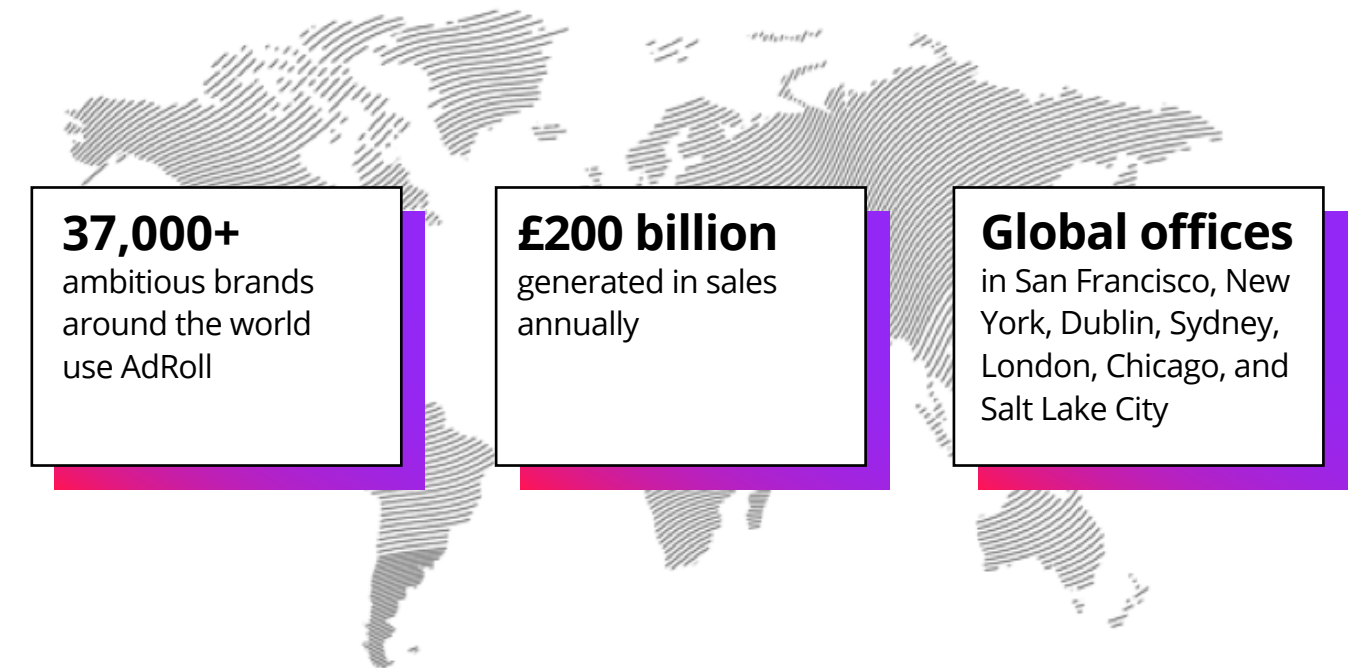
- AdRoll Convert: Target high-intent audiences with relevant ads
- Dynamic ads: Increase performance by using custom dynamic creative
- CRM retargeting: Re-engage existing customers using CRM data
- AdRoll emails: Send triggered emails tailored to prospective customers

## Attribute

**How do I know which marketing activities can lead to the biggest sales?**

- AdRoll Convert: Run loyalty campaigns and cross-sell to existing customers
- CRM retargeting: Leverage CRM lists to re-engage existing bases
- AdRoll emails: Send triggered emails tailored to prospective customers

# About AdRoll



Since 2007, AdRoll has been on a mission to help businesses compete online and grow revenue. Ambitious commerce brands use the AdRoll Growth Platform to make their display, social, and email advertising work together to accelerate business growth. Powered by industry-leading automation and personalisation, brands are better able to structure, measure, and sync their marketing efforts. Built for performance, our Growth Platform sees 37,000 customers generate more than £200 billion in sales annually.

AdRoll is headquartered in San Francisco, with offices in New York, Dublin, Sydney, London, Chicago, and Salt Lake City. Learn more at [www.adroll.com](http://www.adroll.com).

**Start growing with AdRoll today**



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## Sources

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- 13 Simply Measured Q3 2014 Instagram Story
- 14 Canva, The Most Popular Instagram Filters from Around the World