

Paid Social Trends IPROSPECT QUARTERLY REPORT | 2017 Q3

By Brittany Richter, VP, Head of Social Media and Katherine Patton, Director, Paid Social



Reviewing Overarching Q3 2017 Trends

Q3 was another busy one in the social advertising space with more than seventy-five updates released across six platforms. These updates, along with continued increases in spend and further adoption of optimized buying and bid strategies, have led to improved performance despite heavier competition during this time period. In addition, many of the recent updates have informed our learning agendas for next year and are influencing advertisers' Q1 media plans as they expand to include new placements and platforms in 2018.

The following trends and insights are based on analysis of the data from more than 210 brands managed by iProspect U.S. (though the spend is not confined to U.S. markets). The spend data is representative of Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Snap, Inc. and Twitter, while performance data is specific to Facebook and Instagram only.

SPEND

As anticipated, Q3 spend is up 22% compared to Q2 of 2017, and 78% YoY compared to Q3 2016. The increase in spend over the prior quarter is typical for this time of year due to Back-to-School and a seasonal increase in prospecting as marketers prepare for the holiday season. The year-over-year (YoY) Q3 increase in investment is due primarily to the addition of increased prospecting budgets on top of existing awareness and lower-funnel budgets.

While overall spend increased, individual social platforms saw radically different budget trends. On Twitter and Pinterest, spend decreased quarter-over-quarter (QoQ), 12% and 35% respectively, while Facebook spend grew 36%. This can be attributed to Facebook's historically stronger performance against direct-response goals and to Q3 being a critical time period for many iProspect clients to drive sales. While YoY Q3



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investment in Twitter, Pinterest, and Snap, Inc. are all down, Facebook is up 130% and Instagram is up 104%. These increases are due primarily to organic growth amongst our clients who have seen success on the platforms and are going all-in with true, full-funnel approaches on both platforms.

While spend is down on Pinterest and Snap, Inc., total brand adoption of these platforms is on the rise. These platforms' self-serve capabilities have brought the minimum investment level down and have also increased performance. We predict that as clients become more comfortable with the opportunities offered by Pinterest and Snap, Inc., and as ad capability advancements increase performance, we will see investment increases across all social platforms in future quarters.

It has been just over a year since Facebook famously became a "video-first" company. While spend on social video ad placements is nearly flat compared to last quarter (only 2% growth), it has grown substantially–41%–since Q3 of 2016. We're seeing video growth across all verticals, but Auto and Consumer Packaged Goods (CPG) advertisers have embraced video more than most. In response to rising consumer video consumption (particularly on mobile and social) all social platforms continue to evolve video ad capabilities that are highly qualified and efficient.

We are seeing more video creative added to existing campaigns, but more notably we're seeing advertisers shift dollars typically spent in other digital channels to social video. More recently, we have also seen clients reallocating TV budget to drive social video in order to take advantage of its superior targeting, efficiency, and control.

One of the primary benefits social advertising offers brands is a specificity of targeting. People-based targeting is founded on known identity, rather than the inferred identity provided by cookie-based solutions. As such, pixel-based advertising investments eMarketer estimates U.S. adults will spend an average of 4 hours 4 minutes per day with TV in 2017, compared with 1 hour 13 minutes with digital video devices. The trend lines have been shifting in favor of video and will continue to do so through at least 2019, with TV dropping to 3 hours 57 minutes and digital growing to 1 hour 21 minutes.

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>> eMarketer's report, Q2 2017 Digital Video Trends: Monetization, Audience, Platforms and Content.

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on Facebook, Inc. (which includes Facebook, Instagram, and the Facebook Audience Network) are up 29% QoQ and 119% YoY. This subset of Facebook advertising refers to ads that are targeted to audiences collected from the Facebook pixel and/or ads that are optimized toward site activity measured by the pixel.

The Facebook pixel is essential for advertisers who want to leverage the power of Facebook, Inc's people-based targeting rather than relying on proxies or cookies. It is also critical for eCommerce advertisers who wish to buy and optimize on true site performance rather than on link clicks alone. Brands that don't use the pixel risk wasting budget when link clicks don't translate into actual visits or site actions due to poor load times and drop-off. iProspect strongly encourages advertisers to adopt the Facebook pixel for more effective and efficient buying and optimization.

PERFORMANCE

Paid Social continues to perform very strongly, particularly at driving very qualified and efficient reach at scale, and at driving actions—specifically video views, website traffic, and conversions. Because it excels at qualified and efficient prospecting, content distribution, and lower-funnel conversion driving campaigns, Facebook Inc. continues to be the leader; but we have high expectations for additional platforms in Q4 of this year and in 2018.

More specifically, while CPM is on the rise QoQ (up 15%, which is to be expected during the second half of the year), it is only up 4% YoY despite steady growth in advertising revenue and thus competition across Facebook, Inc. While advertisers might be disappointed that CPM increased in Q3, they will be pleased to see that performance is also improving. Click-through rate is up QoQ and YoY, CPC is down QoQ, and ROAS is on the rise as well.

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UPDATES

Many of the social platform updates implemented in Q3 are setting marketers and advertisers up for a strong Q4 by making enhancements to self-serve buying features and adding inventory sources.

Snap, Inc.'s "Advanced Mode" version of their self-serve buying tool makes campaigns easier to manage and includes features that we predict will enhance performance. In addition, Facebook and Instagram became even more connected with Stories placements now available cross-platform via a single buy, and a revamp to the Facebook, Inc. approach to Branded Content.

Facebook also launched <u>Watch</u>, a new destination within the Facebook app where consumers can lean back and take in longer-form content. Pre-roll ads are available within the publisher content and advertisers have the ability to opt in and out of categories and types of content. We are excited for what this will bring to the Facebook Family of Apps and services, consumers, and advertisers alike.

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Key Insights by Platform

FACEBOOK, INC. (FACEBOOK, INSTAGRAM, FACEBOOK AUDIENCE NETWORK (FAN))

Facebook, Inc. continues to raise the stakes on paid social advertising performance. Its family of apps and services continues to introduce new ways to buy, optimize, and target ads across all properties, while continuously streamlining the buying process and enhancing algorithmic auto-optimization between platforms.

For iProspect's clients—early adopters of advertising with Facebook, Inc. who have continued to adopt new products and ways of working—Facebook has become an integral part of the overall media plan rather than just within digital. The scale of the platform paired with the strength of its targeting, the efficiency of its media, and—most importantly—its proven efficacy even on brand lift and in-store sales has established the platform as a key (if not *the* key) partner for many of our advertisers. Facebook, Inc. has proven its ability to deliver tangible business results while also driving branding metrics for brands that want to increase awareness or improve perception.

Furthermore, the Facebook, Inc. family of apps and services has added new inventory sources including Messenger and Instagram Stories ads earlier this year and Watch in Q3. This expansion delivers more advertising opportunities and effectively reduces the risk of reaching the point of diminishing returns.

Reach

Overall, CPM is on the rise, up 15.7% QoQ and 4.14% YoY. Despite the increases, CPM is still incredibly efficient across Facebook, Inc.

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The 15.7% QoQ CPM increase is to be expected as the Back-to-School and Holiday seasons drive greater competition in the auction. The YoY increase of 4.14% is lesser by comparison, but still notable and a consistent trend we are seeing each quarter for both Facebook and Instagram.

Campaigns with reach objectives averaged a \$3.59 CPM. This is a really strong performance when compared to reach-driving campaigns on other platforms and publishers; and, because these campaigns were run across Facebook, Inc., the targeting was more qualified and there is more opportunity for scale.

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Even ROAS-driving campaigns with link clicks or website conversion objectives held an average CPM of \$9.80, which is considered very efficient when ROAS is also strong and the platform offers additional opportunities to scale and optimize campaigns.

The highest CPM is associated with page-like campaigns (\$16.85) which iProspect does not recommend running due to the low organic reach on the platform and inefficiency of the media. The next-highest CPM figures are for App Install campaigns

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(\$14.96) and Event Response-driving campaigns (\$13.04). High CPM is expected for these types of campaigns since the actions advertisers are bidding on and optimizing toward are more difficult to obtain than impressions (associated with optimizing on reach) or even website clicks or conversions.



CPM & SPEND CORRELATION BY VERTICAL

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Traffic

The lion's share (82%) of spend on Facebook, Inc. toward click objectives was on the mobile News Feed placement. Drilling down, additional spend details include: 8% on Desktop news feed, 5% on Instagram, and 4% in the Right-hand Side (or Right-hand Rail) placement. Messenger and the Facebook Audience Network (FAN) each accounted for less than 1% of spend due to low consumer adoption.

Despite mobile historically having lower CTR and higher CPC, even with the overwhelming majority of spend being on mobile, click-through rate is up 14% YoY, and up 24% over last quarter.



CTR OVER TIME

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For a leading retailer we are seeing CPC on traffic- or ROAS-driving campaigns averaging \$0.35. These campaigns also see a very strong ROI. In addition to the audiencefirst targeting strategy, strong creative, and optimization approach, the strong ROI is due to a spend level that is optimal to achieve scale without exceeding the point of diminishing returns, and to the execution of the pixel. Furthermore, this advertiser invests in a full-funnel approach, simultaneously focused on both converting those in the lower-funnel as well as building those audiences and size of the opportunity for future activations.



CPC & SPEND CORRELATION BY VERTICAL

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There has been a lot of growth in video investment, but aggregate view rate is going down (41% YoY growth in video, view rate down 34% YoY). Further investigation shows that this is due to a variety of factors, including but not limited to more advertisers running video, more non-mobile optimized video being run in market, an increase in auction competition, and greater demand of consumer time.



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Video is no longer a single unit on Facebook. Instead, the platform is exploring a number of new video experiences based on different consumption habits (i.e., In-stream, Instagram Stories, Watch, etc.). Each of these video placements can drive different interaction. In-feed is typically better for mass reach, while In-Stream often has better duration for sound-on videos. For this reason, video can't necessarily be considered a single tactic. Brands need to evaluate their video strategies based on which objectives are most important to their business.

TWITTER

iProspect clients' overall Q3 investment on Twitter was down 21% YoY, but investment shifts by client varied dramatically. Two of iProspect's largest advertisers reduced their Twitter budgets, while several other clients across a variety of verticals (including retail, travel, and pharma) more than doubled their Twitter spend compared to last year.

Most notably, 47% of total investment was in In-Stream and Promoted Video ads. We're seeing that clients with video distribution goals—particularly those with the desire to align with live content and other premium content sources—are seeing ongoing success from Twitter's new video products.

One challenge many brands face when considering or executing digital video advertising is the lack of custom-made video assets that adhere to each platform's best practices. Through our partnership with Twitter, specifically the Dentsu Aegis Network <u>DAN Twitter Video Studio</u>, we are able to provide our clients with assistance editing TV commercials so they are specifically tailored for Twitter. The clients who have taken advantage of <u>this unique opportunity</u> have seen substantial performance lift from the buys with these revised assets, and have garnered learnings which they have been able to apply to ongoing video creative for the platform and for all mobile, social feeds.

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Earnings Reports

FACEBOOK, INC.

Facebook, Inc. continues to see growth across the board in Monthly and Daily Active Users and in ad revenue growth across the U.S. and global markets.

Now, with almost 2.1 billion users worldwide, Daily Active Users (DAU) is up 3% across the board, totaling 1.368 billion. U.S. DAU is up 1% at 185MM, Asia Pacific saw the greatest growth (5%) now totalling 453 million. Monthly Active Users (MAU) saw a similar growth pattern in terms of percent growth in each market. U.S. total is now at 239 million, or 74% of the total U.S. population. Advertising revenue continues to climb as well, which corresponds to higher spikes each year in Q4 versus other quarters. Q3 ad revenue was up 11% across all markets, 10% in the U.S., and 11% in Europe.

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Facebook continues to focus on both the platform's user experience and enhancements to advertiser capabilities (both for the advertiser and the user experience). There is a fair amount of crossover between these two efforts. For example, creating additional ways and places for consumers to spend time with content within the Facebook family of apps and services—like Messenger and Watch—improves the user experience, provides advertisers with new ways to reach consumers, and ultimately enables continued growth.

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In response to recent conversations about Facebook's role in last year's Presidential election, CEO Mark Zuckerberg made the following statement on Facebook's earnings call, "Our community continues to grow and our business is doing well. But none of that matters if our services are used in ways that don't bring people closer together. We're serious about preventing abuse on our platforms. We're investing so much in security that it will impact our profitability. Protecting our community is more important than maximizing our profits."

We at iProspect have seen evidence of commitment to this statement in Facebook's growing concentration on viewability and measurement, partnerships with third-party platforms, and in their latest <u>"View Ads" release</u>. We continue to see brands prioritize this level of transparency and brand safety, and do our part to continuously monitor it and work with the various social platforms to ensure we understand the state of their ecosystems today, and can help them shape stronger ones for tomorrow.

TWITTER

Q3 marks Twitter's fourth consecutive quarter of double digit growth in DAU (daily active users)—up 14% YoY. The platform also had 4% YoY growth in monthly active users (now at 330 million). This growth is mostly concentrated in Twitter's top ten global markets, one of which is the U.S., the U.S. seeing a QoQ DAU increase of 1M.

Despite user growth, revenue was down 4% YoY from \$616M to \$590M. Revenue from data licensing and other sources is up 22% YoY, with ad revenue down 8% (about \$42M YoY). International revenue is up 6% YoY while U.S. revenue is down 11%. Despite a YoY decline in revenue, the platform reported its highest adjusted EBITDA (earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortization) margin to date, continuing to improve their GAAP (generally accepted accounting principles) net margin. iProspect deducts that the reduction in revenue is due primarily to the retail



In addition to financials, Twitter reported several key messages that indicate where they are going as a platform. They will continue to put an emphasis on brand safety and video, but they have also begun testing the social-programmatic waters.

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By paying attention to viewability, fraud, and brand safety, Twitter has made a commitment to making their feed safer. Twitter stated on their earnings call: "We're committed to making Twitter safer, and we continue to improve and leverage our technology to reduce the reach of abusive Tweets. This quarter, we further refined our machine-learning algorithms in order to better identify and act on accounts demonstrating abusive behavior."

Twitter also continues to improve and evolve their ad performance and measurement. Their recent updates include better ad platform improvements, self-serve measurement studies, and third-party accreditation. Most notably, Twitter continues their focus on online video.

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The Dentsu Aegis Network is part of Twitter's initial alpha for programmatic buying. We're anticipating strong results when compared to some other programmatic video placements. However, unless self-serve measurement studies can be applied, we expect our recommendation will be that advertisers continue to run most media as self-serve in the auction rather than programmatically in order to have more control and stronger measurement options.

SNAP, INC.

Snap, Inc. revenue numbers are down YoY as the company shifted from direct sales to a self-serve, auction-based bidding system for advertisers. This is a long-term play, made in the hopes that advertising efficiencies and a lower barrier-to-entry will lead to an increase in advertiser adoption over time. However, the short term ramification is a massive, 60% drop in the YoY CPM. This decrease has been great for advertisers, but not great for Snap, Inc.'s recorded revenue.

At iProspect, we have seen increased adoption of the platform in terms of the number of brands advertising there, but a reduction in total spend by brand and thus overall spend. Like Snap, Inc., we are hopeful that, as more brands test in a more controlled and efficient environment, both the number of brands and the amount of spend will increase.

More concerning for Snap, Inc.'s future is their low user growth. With only 2.9% growth in DAU (to 178 million), Snapchat isn't growing fast enough to keep up with Instagram Stories (now at 300MM DAU).

According to details in the earnings report, 70% of the 13 to 34-year-old population in the U.S., France, the U.K., and Australia now use Snapchat; but the app needs to

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Most notable is their statement about a redesign to appeal to a broader audience. Many people have failed to stick with the app due to poor user experience such as slow load times. Snap, Inc. is working to address such issues by making adjustments to allow content to play before it is fully downloaded. They are also using data to power an algorithmically-sorted Stories feed which will deliver a more personalized experience than the strictly reverse-chronological one it uses now.

Any major change poses a risk since user aversion to the new design could drive consumers to adopt Instagram Stories instead. However, based on the areas they've outlined and proposed changes, we are optimistic that the redesign will lead to stronger retention of current user base, foster growth, and potentially even lure back users who have been using another platform.

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Predicting What's Next

In Q4, iProspect anticipates CPM and CPC will continue to rise as auctions become more competitive during the holiday time period. However, we also predict that ROAS will improve as spend increases, new prospecting audiences built in Q3 are capitalized on, the pixel is in place on more sites and with better implementation, and optimizations are made against the Q3 learnings.

In 2018 we anticipate that spend across Facebook, Inc., will continue to increase as advertisers seek to invest up to the point of diminishing returns and adopt these platforms as a primary source of driving new-to-file customers.

Perhaps more interestingly, we're also expecting an increase in spend and performance on Pinterest, Snap, Inc., and Twitter. The ad capabilities—everything from stronger targeting and better ad units to more advanced self-serve buying methods and placements—are expected to drive increases in performance and thus have increased advertisers' interest in the platforms. In future reports, we will summarize several tests being planned for Q1 to support or nullify hypotheses around performance and incrementally as a result of expanding to additional platforms.

We believe that video investment will continue to increase as new "lean-back" consumer viewing opportunities containing ad space on Facebook and Twitter enter the market. Furthermore, as brands begin creating mobile feed-optimized video that performs well across multiple platforms, we anticipate video being used to drive objectives like website traffic and ROAS in addition to simply driving reach and views.

ADDITIONAL READING

>> POV: 2017 Q3 Paid Search Trends Report

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- >> Pinterest Finds its Competitive Edge in the Planning Stage
- >> A Bright Future with Twitter's Video Studio
- >> Facebook Travel Summit 2017: Adapting to the Speed of People
- >> Facebook Really Wants You to Order that Pizza

About the Authors

BRITTANY RICHTER | VP, HEAD OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Brittany oversees the vision and strategic activation of paid and organic social media across iProspect's U.S. offices. A passionate digital native, Brittany began her journey as a food blogger, immersing herself in social media and SEO, and then parlayed that experience into a career as an account manager on integrated accounts covering social media, SEO, and paid search. In 2013, she joined iProspect as a Social Account Lead and helped launch the company's U.S. paid social product offering, serving a variety of verticals including automotive, hospitality, B2B, retail, and CPG. She now leads Social Media across the U.S., the fastest growing offering and team at iProspect for the past three years due to its ability to help clients reach their performance goals and achieve business objectives through advanced targeting and unique customer experiences.



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KATHERINE PATTON | DIRECTOR, PAID SOCIAL

Katherine oversees the strategic activation of paid social media across key accounts in iProspect's New York office. She consistently finds new opportunities to drive innovation and deliver breakthrough ideas for her clients. In her previous role, she specialized in driving digital performance in the field of programmatic video. Since joining iProspect in 2016, she has provided leadership and account support to clients in a variety of verticals including finance, B2B, retail, and CPG. She now leads social media strategy for Diageo.



About iProspect

At iProspect, we transform our clients' businesses by connecting brands with people. Leveraging our suite of services, smart technology, extensive global footprint, and the industry's best specialists, we provide best-in-class performance strategies to get you the results your business needs.

iProspect is the first truly global digital marketing agency, with 4,200+ employees in 91 offices across 55 countries. A trusted partner with an in-depth understanding of consumer behavior, iProspect reshapes brand strategies to meet the fast-paced demands of the convergent world with a focus on exceeding the client's business objectives.

Our global reach, in-depth knowledge of diverse local markets, and expertise produce award-winning, performance-based marketing strategies for leading brands such as General Motors, adidas, T-Mobile, Hilton, Sunglass Hut, Microsoft, and many others. iProspect has been named the "Best Agency for Performance Marketing" by iMedia for 3 years in a row, the 2015 MediaPost Search Agency of the Year and iMedia's Best Agency for Search.

For more information, visit **www.iProspect.com** or follow us on Twitter **@iProspect**.



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Appendix: Major Platform Updates

INSTAGRAM ORGANIC UPLOADING

Instagram released an uploading tool that allows advertisers to repurpose their organic Instagram Stories as a promoted post. Once uploaded, this content will live permanently within Power Editor and Ads Manager for future use.

What This Means for Marketers

As creative continues to play a major role in paid advertising performance, this new tool makes it easy to generate and promote content that is customized for this placement and audience. With over 250 million unique users who watch and create content daily, advertisers can easily garner mass reach and awareness by promoting in this space.

Since the content is created organically within Instagram Stories, the ads generated through this upload tool will, by default, feel more native to this social platform, resulting in stronger overall performance. Advertisers will also have the opportunity to include Instagram Story-specific features such as boomerangs and face filters, resulting in more thumb-stopping ads and higher resonance with their target audiences.

Availability

Available now to all advertisers

Additional Information

>> Instagram Blog: "Giving Advertisers More Flexibility in Instagram Stories"



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SNAP, INC.: SELF-SERVE NOW IN ADVANCED MODE

Snap, Inc. recently introduced 'advanced mode' to its self-service buying tool. In the coming weeks, brands and advertisers will have the option to access a variety of new features that were created to streamline building, managing, and scaling campaigns. The following features are included in 'advanced mode':

- Audience Library: Create a list of Snap, Inc. audiences to use in future campaigns.
- Automatic Permutation Testing: Create hundreds of permutations of custom audiences and ad variants.
- Bulk Creation and Management: Use one of Snap, Inc.'s spreadsheet templates or import your own spreadsheet to quickly create new campaigns, ad sets, and ads.
- Media Library: This provides a new place to upload videos, images, and other assets for campaigns.
- **Power Reporting:** This delivers in-table pivoting and customized exports for more control over analytics.

What This Means for Marketers

In the past, booking campaigns on Snap, Inc. required buying either directly from the platform or through a third-party social ad tech platform. Brands and advertisers now have more freedom and flexibility to activate and modify Snap, Inc. ads. This makes creating ads on Snap, Inc. much easier, mimicking the process and many of the features already available on Facebook and Twitter. With these new improvements and optimization levers, we expect performance on Snap, Inc. to improve, becoming more comparable to results seen across other platforms. Brands should consider allocating investment toward a Snap, Inc. test to see if 'advanced mode' generates positive performance, positioning Snap, Inc. as a more viable advertising platform.

Availability

Available now to select advertisers; wider release coming soon

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Additional Information

- >> Snap, Inc. Blog: "Introducing Advanced Mode for Ads Manager"
- >> TechCrunch: "Now it's Snapchat copying Facebook's ads Power Editor"

FACEBOOK BRANDED CONTENT OFFERING REVAMP

Facebook recently revamped their Branded Content offering, making it easier for brands to more seamlessly promote influencer content. Previously, brands were required to share an influencer's post to their own page in order to promote it. Now, a post can be directly boosted as it appears on an influencer's page. Additional insights will also include detailed tool-tips to more easily understand results, total spend on each post from both the creator and marketer, and separate summaries of total spend and CPM.

What This Means for Marketers

With this update, marketers can not only maintain greater authenticity but can also retrieve valuable data. By promoting directly from the influencer page, the promotion appears more organic to users. Additionally, with the added metrics, marketers can better understand the impact these collaborations have on their business.

Availability

Available now (If the branded content tool is not available on a creator or publisher's Page, they can submit an <u>application</u> to gain access.)

Additional Information

Social Media Today: "Facebook Adds New Branded Content Tools to Better Facilitate Influencer Marketing"



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From gym days to glam nights, my Jasper's Market beauty essentials keep me ready to go.

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FACEBOOK INTRODUCES WATCH

Facebook recently introduced Watch, a new feature on the platform where users can watch longer-form content called "shows." The "shows" will be made up of live or recorded episodes, each with a certain theme or storyline. Watch will be personalized to each specific user with different sections available for discovery, such as "Most Talked About," "What's Making People Laugh," "What Friends Are Watching," and more.

What This Means for Marketers

Brands have been spending more YoY on producing and serving video ads on Facebook due to the historical success generated from promoted video content. With the introduction of Watch, brands now have access to additional ad inventory placements in which to serve their video content. Currently, brands can select the in-stream video ad placement to leverage Watch as a placement for their video ads. The mid-roll videos must be 5-15 seconds in length, and will play within shows and other longerformat videos on Facebook. Ad placements within Watch content will nearly mimic existing mid-roll ads seen within longer YouTube videos.

Availability

Available to a limited group of people in the U.S. (Facebook plans to bring the experience to more people soon.)

Additional Information

- >> Facebook: "Introducing Watch, a New Platform for Shows on Facebook"
- >> iProspect Blog: "Facebook's Watch: Just the Beginning of a Video Revamp"



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