

Customer Engagement

Customer-generated content (CGC)



Offer **'shout-outs'** to customers who have photographed your food by reposting tagged images of your business.



This can help **generate visual content** for your business if you don't have the time/ funds to upload photographs regularly, as well as giving you free advertising to the followers of the customer.

This method of CGC is used on Instagram by purezzauk – a vegan business with a following of 17.9k



Offering Incentive



To kickstart your Instagram, you could offer rewards, shout-outs, discounts and freebies to customers who engage with your business online.



To encourage customers to interact with your business online, you could...

- ➔ Create a photography competition, rewarding winners with a gift voucher, free meal or other reward.
- ➔ Create a visually appealing space within your restaurant/ café where customers can take fun photos and tag your business.
- ➔ Include discount codes on your posts of food items for customers to use.
- ➔ Post exclusive news about upcoming menus.
- ➔ Create opinion polls on your story related to the food items you sell.
- ➔ Follow back customers who follow your Instagram account.

Maintaining Customer Engagement

As well as creating initial customer engagement with your business on Instagram, it is equally as important for you to consider how you will maintain the interest of those individuals.

Your production of content and incentives should not grow stagnant; try new photography styles, competitions, captions and images – try to maintain the intention of keeping your audience engaged and excited for oncoming media.

Tips and warnings:

- CGC can sometimes open the window of opportunity for individuals to give unexpected negative remarks about your business. It is important to consider how you will manage these comments to gain the best publicity possible

Creating a Brand Identity: Images

Constructing Identity



Whilst veganism may have previously been interpreted as offbeat and unorthodox, it has arguably been prescribed a new identity through aesthetically pleasing and health-promoting Instagram images.

In transforming the meaning of what it is to be vegan, Instagram has lent a hand to the rapid boom in the population of vegans worldwide.

Plant Based News (2018). Instagram Credited for The Rise of Veganism. 11th of April.

The Changing Face of Veganism



Images are the backbone of every Instagram account; it is important to consider the identity you are constructing for your business online through your photographs, posting times and quantity of images posted per day.

Quality or Quantity?



Vegan businesses Vxlondon and Farmacyuk both have unique approaches to photography and posting times on Instagram:

- ➔ Vxlondon uploads upwards of three posts per day, usually utilizing low-quality and casual photographs (still to an appealing standard) and a short caption. This gives a casual and relaxed impression of the business, suiting its nature as a small London sandwich shop.
- ➔ Farmacyuk, on the other hand, uploads one high-quality photograph every 1-2 days, accompanying it with a slightly lengthier caption. The sporadic professional photos are highly suited to this business - which is centred around nutrition and wellbeing - as they suggest upmarket professionalism.



Consider...



Consider which of these two approaches sounds most appropriate for the needs of your business. You may need to adapt your posting times, image quality and caption length to minimise inconsistency and unnecessary labour.

Tips and warnings:

- Post at similar times each day so that your followers can anticipate each post.
- Don't post too many images in quick succession- you don't want to dominate the feed of your followers too much as this will be perceived as spam.

Creating a Brand Identity: Hashtags

The Purpose of Hashtags



Unlike Twitter, users of Instagram are discouraged from engaging in public conversation. There is a limit of 5 tags (@s) per caption, but an allowance of up to 30 hashtags in each post.

Additionally, hashtags on Instagram are infrequently used to promote conversation with an audience. Instead, they more commonly serve the purpose of identifying oneself with a community or describing the posted image.



This one-way conversation makes Instagram an incredibly performative platform, where emphasis is placed upon identity and one's belonging to a community using hashtags.

It is important to reflect upon the image and identity you are creating for your business through your use of hashtags.

Sloan, L. Quan-Haase, A. (2017). The Sage Handbook of Social Media Research Methods. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications LTD.

Choosing Your Hashtags

If vegan ethics are close to the heart of your business, you may wish to engage actively within the vegan community by utilising hashtags which are relevant to the philosophy.

If the food you offer centres largely around health and wellness, you may cast a bigger net by excluding vegan philosophy from your Instagram. By using neutral hashtags, you are less likely to alienate a non-vegan audience.

Farmacyuk is an example of an exclusively plant-based business which gives no mention of veganism within their posts.



Hashtags can be used to...

Suggest that your business subscribes to ethical veganism:

#vegan #consciousfood #veggie #vegansofig
#whatvegans eat #vegansofinstagram
#crueltyfree

Suggest that your business is purely plant-based and may not subscribe to ethical veganism:

#eatingwell #poweredbyplants #plantbased
#plantpowered #wholefoods #eatplants
#plantbaseddiet

Tips and warnings:

- To target a wider audience, you may choose to use one or more of the top 100 hashtags, as these are most likely to be viewed by active users.
- Remember, excessive hashtags appear cluttered, and remind users of spam accounts.

Advertising on Instagram

Like many social media networks, Instagram offers businesses the opportunity to pay to have their adverts shown to other users. Instagram adverts are largely integrated into the regular feed of the users and are therefore subtle and unobtrusive.

Appropriate Audience



With 55% of Instagram users being between the ages of 18-29, it is an ideal advertising platform for vegan businesses. Half of all vegans are under the age of 34, and only 14% are above the age of 65.

Instagram will therefore give your business a good likelihood of reaching an audience who are interested in the service you are offering.



Demographics

Additionally, due to the partnership of Instagram and Facebook, Instagram has a rich database of information about users, which aids in the process of pairing business advertisements with the appropriate potential customers.

Objectives

Types of objectives:

- Boost your posts
- Send people to your website
- Increase conversions on your website
- Get installs of your app
- Increase engagement with your app
- Get video views

Adverts

Types of adverts:

- Video
- Carousel (a sequence of photos with a clickable link to your website)
- Stories
- Canvas (stories which are specifically adapted to be viewed on mobile – they are smoother and higher quality)

If you intend to utilise your Instagram page frequently, it may be particularly beneficial to boost your posts to encourage your following to grow.

Garnering a larger following will enable you to promote your food business to an audience who are already interested the services you are offering without the need to pay further advertising fees.

Tips and warnings:

- Some Instagram advertisements enable users to leave comments as they would be able to do on a regular post. Whilst this may be beneficial in some scenarios – as it enables individuals to tag friends who may be interested in the product – it also opens the window of opportunity for bad publicity to occur
- It is therefore important for businesses to ensure that they have positive engagement with their posts, so that new potential customers are not deterred.