

Winning Strategies for Facebook and Instagram Ads



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The Rise of Facebook and Instagram Ads

Years ago, when Facebook expanded beyond the realm of college students and began to gain traction as a global social network, brand marketers were encouraged to establish a presence on the platform.

In the marketing world, Facebook took off as a low-cost method of raising brand awareness. Consumers connected with their favorite businesses on Facebook to show their support, to discuss customer service issues and to unearth special offers. It was an effective way to cultivate existing relationships, but it wasn't exactly an ideal method of converting new customers. When the opportunity to invest in sponsored content became available, the platform emerged as a solid customer acquisition channel.

Today, both Facebook and its subsidiary Instagram offer advanced targeting options that allow brands to get in front of new consumers. And there certainly are a lot of consumers to target. Instagram reports it has 400 million active users per month—the majority of which are mobile—while Facebook has hit 1.55 billion.



Consumers spend 1 of every 5 mobile minutes on Facebook or Instagram.

Facebook

How Brands Are Falling Short

Despite having built large followings, it's become increasingly difficult for brands to reach audiences on Facebook and Instagram organically – that is, without any media spend. As a result, marketers are now investing greatly in these networks. According to eMarketer, Facebook captured nearly 65% of social network ad revenues in 2015. As for Instagram: The mobile app boasts more than 200,000 advertisers.

While marketers are investing in the right channels, however, many have yet to truly unlock their ad revenue. On Facebook, for instance, it's common to see brands retargeting consumers with stock photos – you know, that uninspired image of a product against a white background? And Instagram is still new. Brands are just now testing and learning.

The bottom line is this: Highly visual consumers, who have access to all sorts of information at all times, command today's marketplace. In order to activate them, marketers must target their content and their audiences strategically.

At Curalate, we work with hundreds of brands that are doing just that, and as a result are reporting higher returns on their media investments.

This guide will clearly outline how you can deploy innovative social ad strategies, and become a smarter marketer across Facebook and Instagram.



An Intro to Facebook DPAs

Studies have shown that retargeting is an effective way to re-engage consumers who have recently demonstrated interest, but have yet to make a purchase. In a 2015 Adadyn survey conducted by Morar Consulting and published by eMarketer, **three in five digital shoppers believe receiving ads based on sites they recently visited is useful for completing purchases.**

Dynamic Product Ads (DPAs) are Facebook's retargeting solution.

How do they work? Well, picture this: A young woman is browsing online for a new summer hat. She stumbles onto your site and is intrigued by a trendy one she sees. However, she gets distracted before she reaches the checkout page. Moments later, the woman is scrolling through her Facebook feed. Because she hasn't had time to check out your competitors, it's the perfect time to re-engage her interest in that hat.

This is where Facebook's ad unit comes into play. The image of the hat appears on the woman's newsfeed, and she's once again attentive and engaged.

To sum it up: Facebook DPAs help brands promote relevant products to shoppers that have browsed the brand's product catalog across any device. The cherry on top: minimal work on the marketer's end. These ads pull content from a brand's existing product feed, so there's no need for marketers to design custom creative specifically for them.

But there's a catch.



THINKING BEYOND “SET IT AND FORGET IT”

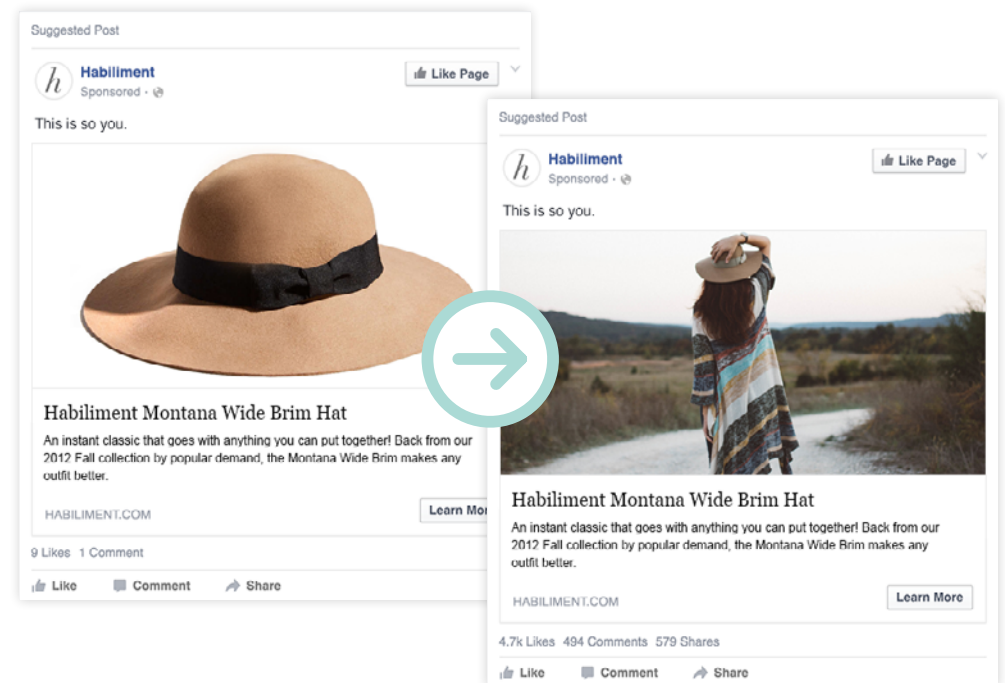
In theory, Facebook DPAs allow advertisers to target the right people with the right product at the right time. In practice, it’s a “set it and forget it” technology that yields high click-through rates.

But there’s something most marketers don’t account for when they set up their ads. The moment a user logs onto Facebook, they are bombarded with birthday invites, engagement announcements, baby photos, political debates, and more. As a marketer, you need to be thinking about how your brand fits into the feed, and you need to optimize your product images so they appeal to Facebook users.

The challenge with Facebook’s retargeting solution is that it pulls images from a brand’s product feed – a steady yet insipid stream of stock photos and descriptions that are managed by ecommerce and web management teams. Not exactly inspiring. This information certainly serves its purpose on your website, but it won’t do much to cut through the noise on a channel like Facebook.

In order to retarget Facebook users with better product images, brands choose Curalate. **Our technology makes it easy for marketers to programmatically 1) update their Facebook DPAs with lifestyle images from a variety of contributors** (e.g. community managers, store associates, influencers, customers) and 2) connect that content to their product feeds.

When this happens, the results are spectacular. Brands that work with Curalate to optimize DPA creative are seeing north of a **31% increase in RoAS** (return on ad spend).



FACEBOOK DPA BEST PRACTICES—3 TIPS

As we've established, driving greater engagement with Facebook DPAs begins with connecting inspiring lifestyle content to your existing product feed. Where do these images come from? The smartest brands are pulling content from a variety of contributors. Here are a few ideas:



Harness photos from fans. Who better to create authentic imagery for your brand than the people who truly know and love it? Create a custom hashtag that people can use to upload photos on social networks, or add an upload widget on your site. Just make sure you're clear with everyone that you'll be using the photos for marketing means.



Work with influencers. They have tons of followers for a reason. Influencers know what works. In exchange for some samples and a chance to be featured on your brand channels, you can partner with people who have large followings to create valuable content.



Create the photos yourself. Don't underestimate your ability to produce engaging, experiential images for ads. Tap into the talents of social media gurus on your team to get a good feel for the type of content that resonates on these platforms. And of course, if you have the budget, there's no shame in hiring a professional agency to create photos for you.



CASE STUDY

Connecting Lifestyle Content To Products



QVC originally relied on stock images to drive traffic from their Facebook DPAs to their ecommerce pages. While the brand was seeing some engagement with this imagery, it became undeniable that they could drum up a lot more interest by incorporating authentic photos into their product feed. The brand tested the new strategy with a skincare product from philosophy.

Using Curalate, QVC took lifestyle content created for social and connected these pictures to the products contained within the images. QVC was then able to programmatically swap out their traditional product creative for their editorial creative.

The results were extraordinary. Curalate-connected content outperformed traditional content 75% of the time, enabling QVC to drive a 31% lift in RoAS.



An Intro to Instagram Ads

Earlier this year, Instagram reported that its platform yields a 2.8x higher ad recall than Nielsen's norms for online advertising. This is great news for marketers who are investing in the platform, but it means very little if brands aren't targeting audiences effectively or tailoring their content to Instagram.

Currently, ad targeting on the platform is based on Facebook user data, which includes factors such as location, demographics, interests and behaviors.

This is a great start, but here's the challenge: Someone who follows a brand on Facebook isn't necessarily the ideal person to target on Instagram. For one, Instagram's overall demographics are different – e.g. the median age of Facebook's userbase is 40, compared with 30 for Instagram, according to GfK MRI. Secondly, someone who has shown interest in a brand on Facebook hasn't necessarily demonstrated intent to purchase.



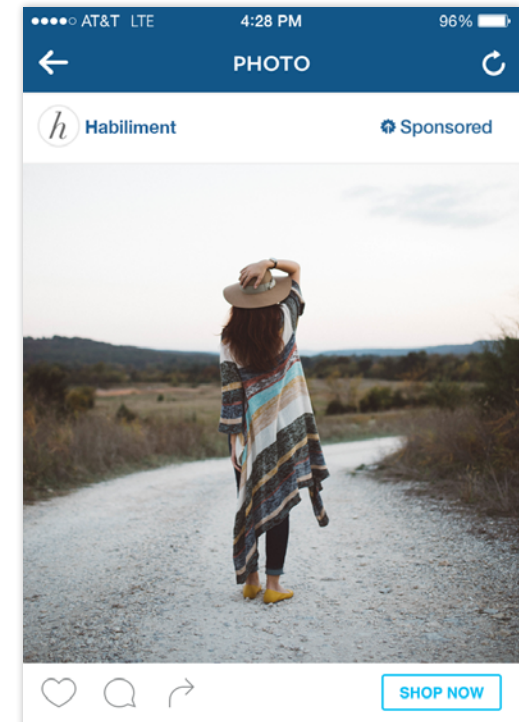
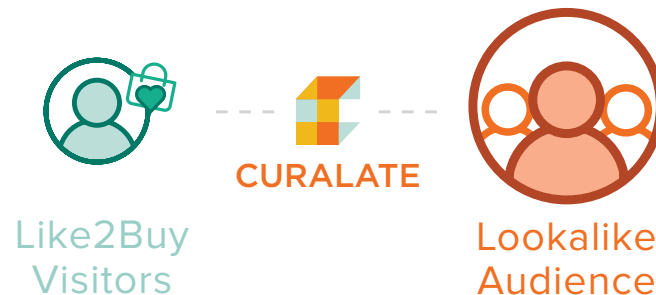
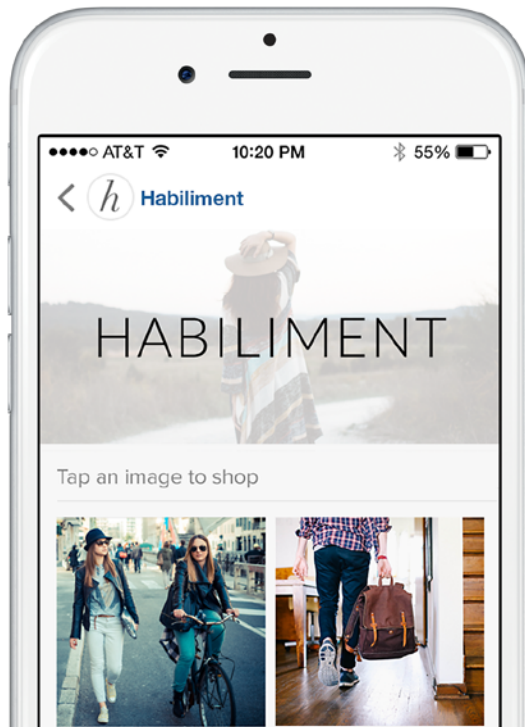
SMARTER INSTAGRAM TARGETING

As a marketer, you may know that lookalike audiences are one of the most effective ways to reach new customers who fit the profile of the people who already love your brand. What if you could customize that audience to resemble people who show an even higher intent to purchase your stuff?

At Curalate, we're able to build custom lookalike audiences on Instagram based on consumers that have engaged with our clients' products or content in **Like2Buy** – their shoppable Instagram galleries.

Building a lookalike audience around consumers that have engaged with products in this environment has proven supremely effective for the brands we work with, resulting in an **81% increase in CTR** (click-through rate) and a **40% decrease in CPC** (cost per click).

It makes sense. Like2Buy visitors show a deep interest in your brand on Instagram. Building a lookalike audience around them results in an audience that has a greater likelihood of loving your products, content and brand. Pair this proprietary audience data with the targeting you already use on Instagram to increase reach and engagement with Instagram ads.



TAILORING CONTENT TO INSTAGRAM

Targeting is only half the battle when it comes to Instagram ads. Much like Facebook, branded content needs to be tailored to the platform — and the experience needs to be mobile optimized.

Think about the type of photos that dominate Instagram: They tend to be aspirational and celebratory. Whether it's one user sharing a photo of Taylor Swift and her squad, citing them as #goals, or someone else posting an image of a scenic view on vacation, it's typically the type of content that leaves viewers in a state of desire. Your sponsored ads should follow suit.

Another way you can optimize your creative? By harnessing click-through data. For instance, brands that use Curalate Like2Buy have a unique way to test an image's ability to drive click-throughs on Instagram before putting media spend behind it.

Find Out More



INSTAGRAM AD BEST PRACTICES—3 TIPS



Foster brand recognition. If your products feature your logo, make sure you promote images in which your logo is visible. While authenticity is imperative, don't miss out on the opportunity to foster some brand recognition in a subtle, unobtrusive way.



Don't create content that's too busy or complex. People are scrolling through their feeds quickly, and images that require too much time to grasp won't do much to capture anyone's attention.



Keep in mind that Instagram is a mobile platform. Users who click through to your landing pages are doing so on mobile devices. Nothing will drive away a mobile user faster than landing on a page that isn't optimized for mobile. Ensure that your pages are aesthetically pleasing and functional for your audiences.



CASE STUDY

A Guiding Light for Great Creative

Z GALLERIE

Home furnishings retailer Z Gallerie has mastered the art of sharing relevant content within Instagram sponsored ads. Loren Mattia, Content Marketing Manager at Z Gallerie, notes that he and his team pay attention to what drives the most engagement and clicks on the Z Gallerie Instagram feed.

“We know what works for our regular Instagram content. Spaces that are very personal and almost theatrical do well. So for Instagram sponsored ads, we typically use our own lifestyle shots that feature bedrooms or living room settings,” Loren says.

And while Instagram filters make for a fun effect, the Z Gallerie team avoids using them in their photos. “It decreases the quality of the imagery. All of our images are shot in-studio, so using a filter might detract from the way they were meant to be seen.”

For sponsored content, Loren and his team like to drive leads to their sales.

“That’s what many of our customers are looking for. Some of our items are very expensive, so a lot of our customers are looking for deals when they become available.”

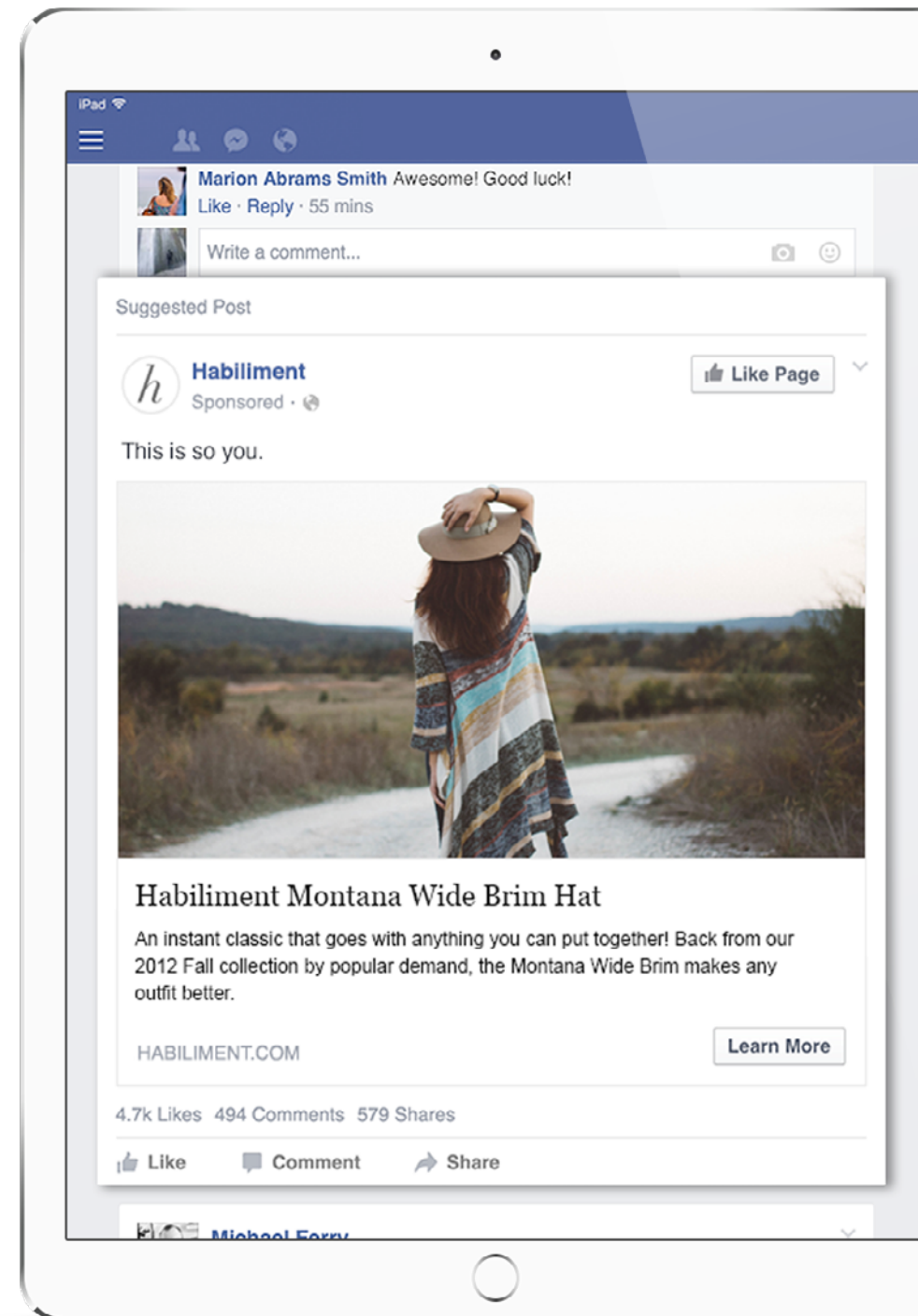


Make Your Ads Work Smarter, Not Harder

Ultimately, your goal is to connect with consumers on the channels they frequent. But the efforts put into those platforms are fruitless if you don't target consumers with content they care about appropriately.

Remember: The visual consumers of today don't want to be marketed to. They want to be inspired. Social media is just one of the many touchpoints to do that, and investing in advertising is the best way to get in front of the right people with inspiring lifestyle content.

If you're already investing in Facebook DPAs and Instagram sponsored ads, chances are you're seeing some benefit. By optimizing your audience targeting and creative strategies, you can make those ads work harder for you.



About CURALATE

The Curalate Visual Commerce Platform connects content to commerce throughout the customer journey to generate awareness, increase engagement, and drive revenue. For more information, visit www.curalate.com.



Social Commerce

72% of Like2Buy traffic is new visitors. Like2Buy visitors spend 32% more time on site and view 29% more pages than average visitors.



Ecommerce

Visitors generate an 11% greater average order value after engaging with Curalate optimized content.



Social Engagement

Up to 56% increase in Pinterest followers and 187% increase in Instagram followers.



Blogs

110% increase in clicks to site from blog posts.



Ads

Up to 63% increase in Facebook DPA CTRs, and up to 81% increase in Instagram ads CTRs.

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