



THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO SOCIAL MEDIA ROI FOR THE PUBLISHING SECTOR

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Publishers are storytelling pros, and digital mediums have empowered them to extend their reach beyond physical print copies. Adopting social platforms also gave them an opportunity to connect with global audiences at a rapid pace—not only do channels like Instagram facilitate connectivity, but they also give journalism a chance to broaden reporting through visuals.

Embracing the role of both influencer and brand, publications are using Instagram to move in quickly on timely topics and crafting engaging content that is complementary to their main distribution channels. Tapping into both positions is how publishers can successfully navigate the social media ecosystem, it being a natural fit for what they've been doing since the beginning of time: reporting on stories while creating a brand world.

Nevertheless, a very vexing question has loomed above all those outstanding visual marketing efforts as publications try to keep advertisers happy—how does one measure social media ROI? Keep reading to find out.

MORE ISSUES THAN [FILL IN THE BLANK]

Before businesses began hopping on the social media bandwagon, visual networking platforms like Instagram and YouTube were just a fun hobby that regular folks engaged in to connect with their peers. People read magazines and newspapers in waiting rooms, on the train, or, um, in private, before those scenarios were replaced by social scrolling.

The Internet sprang an entirely new industry based on the principle that people want information at the speed of light. And sources best provide if they want to survive and thrive. We have come to expect being able to find out literally anything at the click of a button and at the swipe of a finger. Thinking of how indispensable this flow of information is to readers, it's clear that the publishing sector was the ideal candidate for digitization.

As life continued to rapidly move from analog to digital, it became clear that visual communication, which Instagram facilitates, was the best place for publishers to stay connected with readers (or vice versa). An image is worth

a thousand words, and companies with strong visual storytelling strategies deployed on these new channels are extending their networks and winning the race.

Publications today are using social platforms to generate higher impressions and to tactically drive advertiser revenue, which has proven to be quite effective for both clout and earnings. These are channels on which they can share their point of view and report on relevant world events, cater to a niche audience with their brand story, and establish themselves as the go-to information source for their online community and beyond.

Budgets are getting bigger for digital teams responsible for social media, helping publishers lean into their brand factor, while channels like Instagram are being monetized significantly thanks to their status as influencers. But it's been really difficult for these publications to track the return of their spend and to prove themselves as worthy investments to advertisers. And that is the issue we're about to solve.





FRONT OF BOOK

Before our universe went digital, publications spent decades honing a point of view and core values to speak to specifically targeted segments of readers. Niche glossies have built their image around specific points of interest and drilled that ethos into their readers' collective psyche. They've formed a brand aura by positioning themselves as authorities on a hero topic, and delivered on it through a carefully crafted voice.

Visual storytelling specific to Instagram is an extension of that cultivated universe. It's another way to quench reader thirst on an area of expertise while continuing on the mission of distributing the goods. That said, a publisher is first and foremost a content circulator and, as we know, makes money with advertisers.

The shift to digital shook the industry's process to its core and ad space had to be reimagined to fit the new formats. In order to be able to spread their influence, publications need to make a buck by using

that authority to sell their audience on apropos in-feed paid placements. Also known as native advertising.

This is where the importance of a strong social media strategy comes in. Crafting a tactical game plan can enable a publication to be omnipresent—an approach that yields both intangible and concrete returns. While the latter has eluded many marketers and the former is difficult to track, both advantages work in tandem, are complementary of one another, and are equally as important.

Visual social marketing is an ecosystem with various degrees of benefits for each layer of business. All activities intersect, and the abstract value points of Instagram consistently converge with the more tangible, measurable ones. To fully grasp the returns of social, it's important to properly perceive those more elusive attributes that help publications thrive. Here are three key things to keep tabs on.

The background of the page is a photograph of three glasses filled with pink water. The central glass is a simple tumbler with a sprig of fresh basil floating in it. To its right is a taller glass containing ice cubes and a slice of cucumber. In the bottom left corner, another glass with a textured, diamond-patterned base also holds a sprig of basil. The entire scene is set against a solid light pink background, with soft shadows cast by the glasses.

1 | Awareness

How does a fitness mag stand out in a sea of squat demos and healthy recipes? They use social media channels to connect with their readers in their honed voice and exceptional creative material. Platforms like Instagram are today's primary discovery tool, where users come upon accounts they never would have thought to follow otherwise.

Awareness sits at the very top of the marketing funnel for a good reason: a business' primary objective is being discovered and gaining equity. And for publishers, it's all about making their reader base aware of their killer digital activity so that they follow them on social, while also making strides towards reaching new audiences. Users willingly follow the companies whose content they're fond of, so establishing a strong social presence is key if you want people to keep your site traffic up, and ultimately earn big ad bucks.



2 | Communication

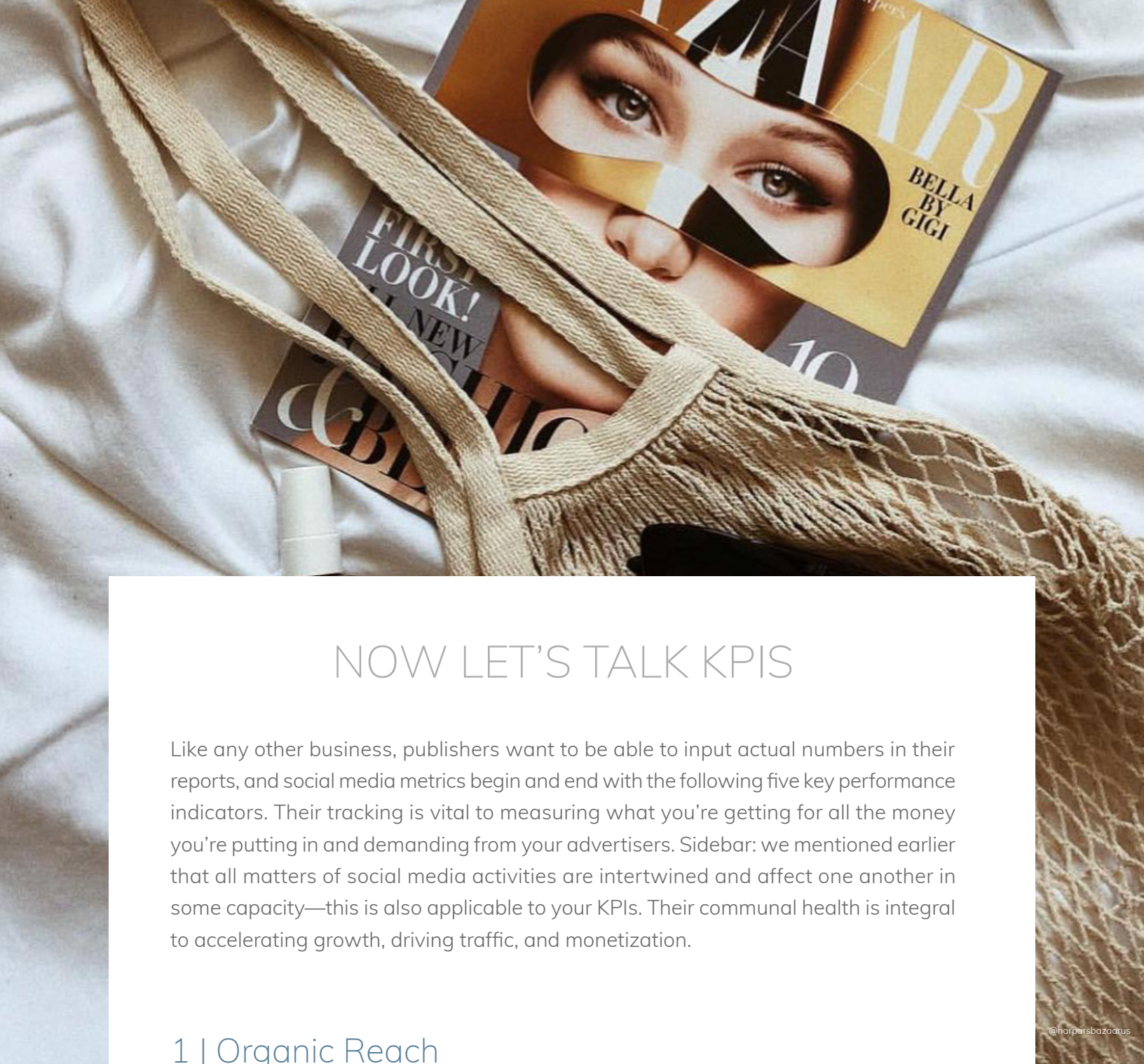
A direct line of communication with readers is a gift, and the one that occurs on social is delightfully multilayered, just like your content mix. The more engaged your audience is, the tighter your community will be, and the greater chances for loyalty. In the literal sense of communication, it means that your publication can have firsthand interactions with its followers by way of liking, commenting, or direct messaging. Cementing that feeling of community and providing a high-touch experience with interactions can change the way your readership feels about you.

But in terms of bigger picture, it also enables your book to lead the conversation, engage in timely dialog, and reach its tribe through a well-crafted, targeted imagery/caption combo. Your attendance at the Millennial vernacular table is vital to not fatally fall behind. Creating those bonds with followers will make them feel valued and ultimately increase your engagement, which subsequently will raise the value of your ad space (cha-ching!). More on that later.

3 | Loyalty

There's something nostalgic and sentimental about a print publication. People's loyalties tend to lie with specific news sources from the analog era, and social media is a chance for you to translate those allegiances to a social following.

Proving your social channels to be of value for your readers will make them a requisite follow. Here's a revelation: Instagram is a content-focused platform, and the accounts that are going to succeed on it are those that understand how to connect with their audience through photos and videos, period. Take that insight and run with it.



NOW LET'S TALK KPIS

Like any other business, publishers want to be able to input actual numbers in their reports, and social media metrics begin and end with the following five key performance indicators. Their tracking is vital to measuring what you're getting for all the money you're putting in and demanding from your advertisers. Sidebar: we mentioned earlier that all matters of social media activities are intertwined and affect one another in some capacity—this is also applicable to your KPIs. Their communal health is integral to accelerating growth, driving traffic, and monetization.

1 | Organic Reach

Your brand receives organic impressions every time another account mentions it in their caption or tags it in a photo. This is also known as earned reach, and it only occurs through auxiliary users. Let's just cut to the chase: it's exposure.

When another account posts an image tagging yours, it puts it in front of their followers and gives them an opportunity to convert into new ones for you. Being exposed to audiences other than your own is the number one tactic for fresh exposure and consequently, a business boost. It's why encouraging the creation of UGC by reposting a lot of user media can drive significant growth.

If you want the world to come to you for breaking news or to become the reference on how to get Meghan Markle's look for less, you have to harness fan power. Prompting your community to create content around your publication makes for a very positive catch 22: followers feel loved and valued when they see you regramming their images, which motivates them to keep producing more in the hopes of being featured again. Plus it alerts their own followers of your account's existence, making you discoverable organically to a new set of potential audience members.

This sort of activity will not only help boost engagement, which makes ad space an easier sell, but it will also enable you to generate more traffic by the same occasion.

What Does it Measure?

Your reach numbers, the impact of your influencer and celebrity partnerships, your popularity among fans.

The DH Way

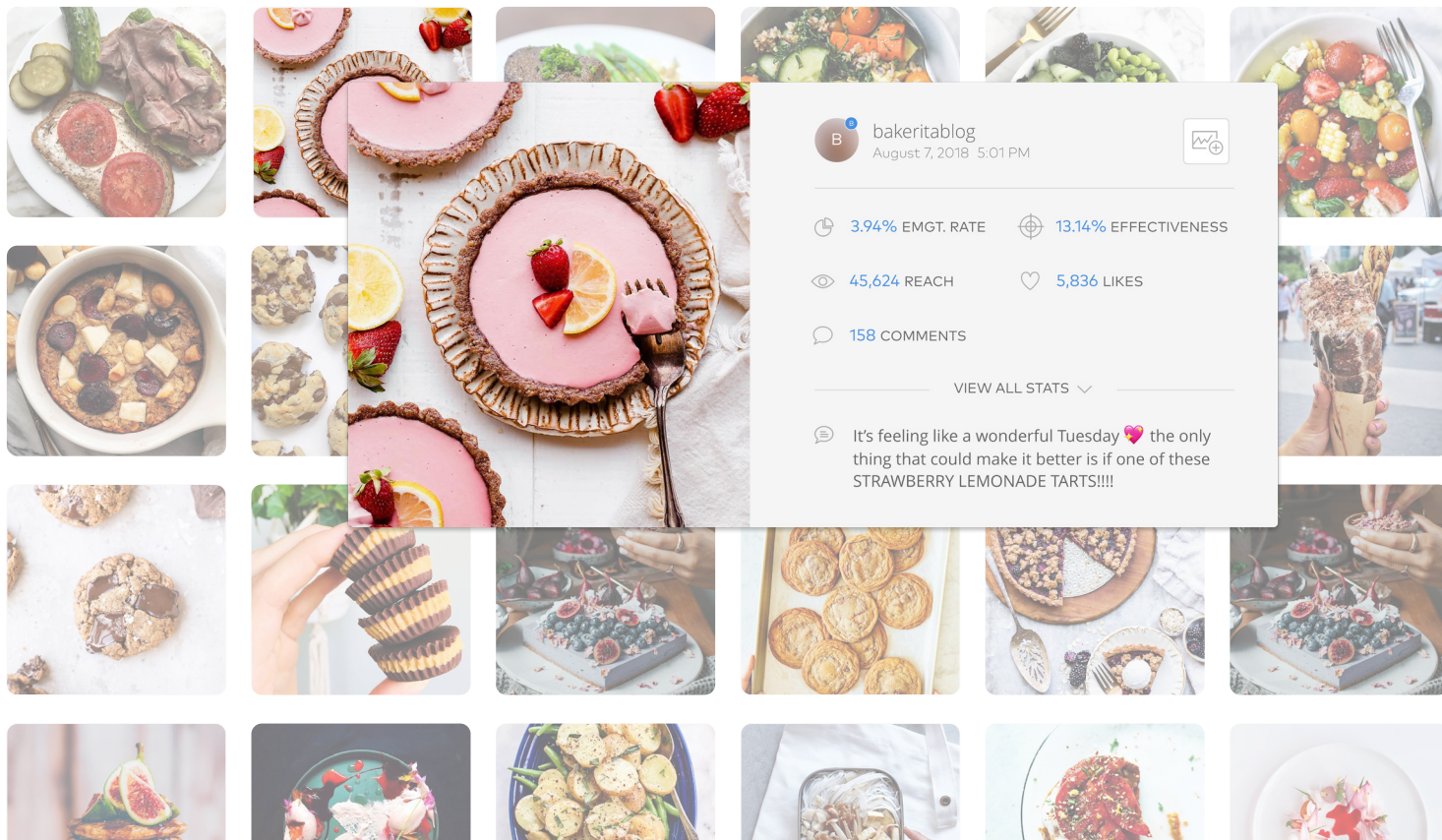
[Dash Hudson](#)'s tool for measuring organic reach reveals all the important numbers relating to the impact of your UGC, which is important to measure both collectively and individually if you're leveraging influencers or celebrities. Instantly compile your reach numbers for a specific timeframe, or for any single post by clicking on an image thumbnail.

SHARING THE LOVE ON @BONAPPETITMAG

AUG 02 – AUG 08

817 Mentions

3233 Photo Tags



2 | Growth Rate

Your growth rate is the percentage at which your audience is growing, and it can be benchmarked on a weekly or monthly basis. Gaining new followers is what the 'Gram is all about, isn't it? Plus more followers on Insta means more potential readers to boost your traffic. It's important to monitor this metric closely to understand whether or not your strategy is working.

Buyer beware: it's one thing to be growing, but it's another to make headway with quality acquisitions, aka new followers who actually share your publication's center of gravity. Hence the importance of organic reach, which drives authentic growth.

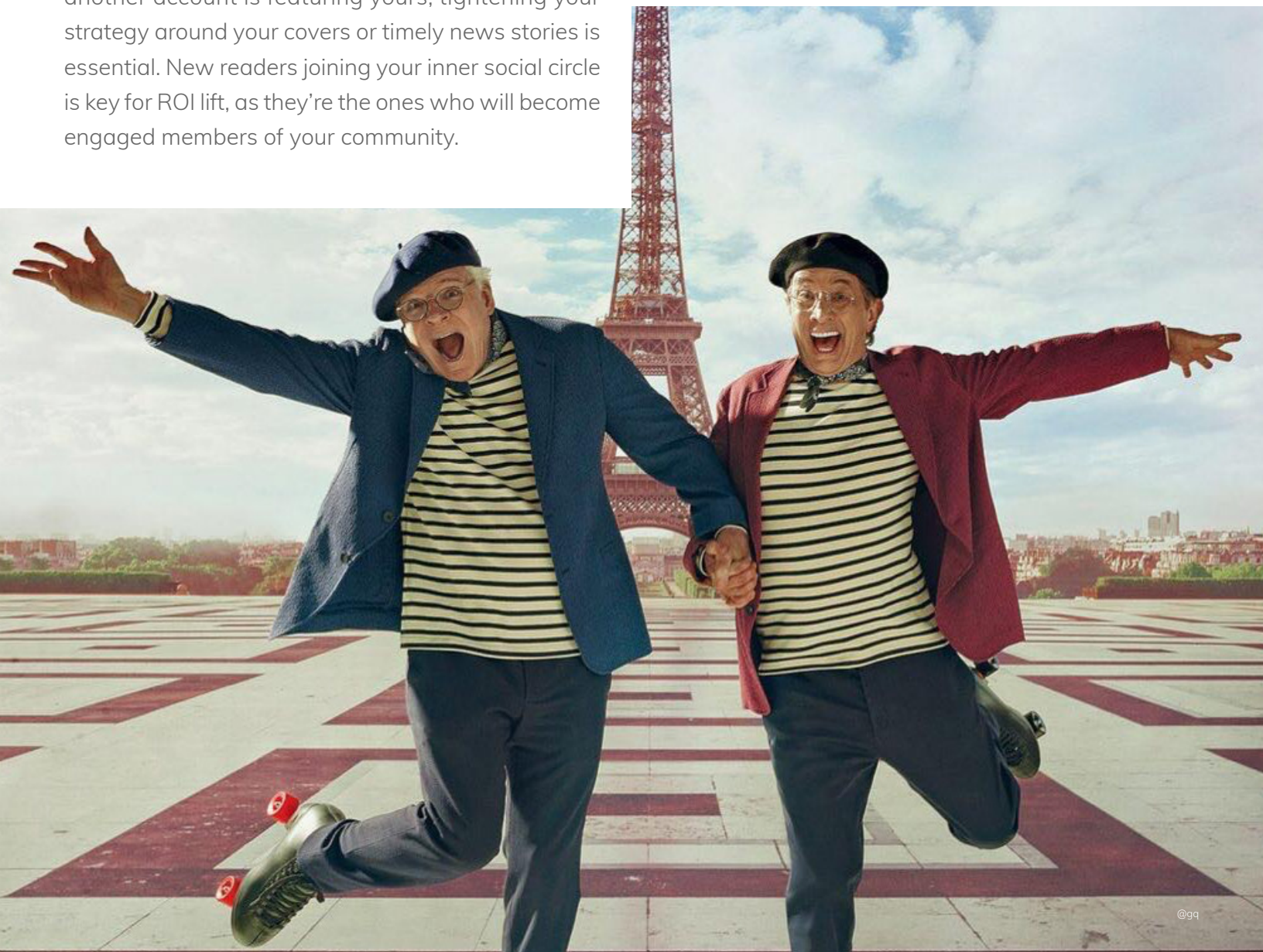
Seeing as most audience expansions are made when another account is featuring yours, tightening your strategy around your covers or timely news stories is essential. New readers joining your inner social circle is key for ROI lift, as they're the ones who will become engaged members of your community.

What Does it Measure?

The effectiveness of your strategy, the impact of your organic reach, the quality of your content, the general health of your account.

The DH Way

You can track all of your follower growth in the Dash Hudson visual intelligence platform. Sort through your audience increases on an hourly, daily, weekly, or custom basis. Correlate your follower spikes with a piece of organic content in which you've been tagged, learn what your weekly follower increase average is, and [inquire about our custom reporting](#) for more granular coverage of your growth rate.





3 | Content Engagement

The amount of engagements on your posts is the most indicative figure relating to your content's success, revealing how much your photos and videos are actually resonating with your followers. A high engagement rate is endlessly beneficial, notably alerting the algorithm of your high quality posts to prioritize them in user feeds. It also lets you know that perhaps your story on Ariana Grande performed better than the one on Jennifer Lawrence, or that your audience is particularly keen on hump day gifs. Additionally, engagement rates are very strong indicators of high traffic drivers, loyal readership, and growth opportunities.

Your post engagement percentage can be calculated with this basic equation:

$$(\text{Likes} + \text{Comments}) \div \text{No. of Followers} = \text{Average Engagement Rate}$$

Converting these numbers into a percentage effectively measures engagement because it puts all of your posts on an even playing field as your account grows. Collecting solely the number of likes and comments doesn't enable an apples to apples assessment of your content as your follower acquisitions ramp up.

Learn what's resonating within your posts by monitoring your engagement. It'll point to where your content strategy needs tweaking so you can focus on consistently bringing in extra lit numbers.

What Does it Measure?

The quality of your content and whether or not your posts are resonating with your followers, fan love, popularity.

The DH Way

You could manually do that math, but don't waste your precious time when it's all automated in Dash Hudson! The platform provides your average engagement rate from the past three months and the engagement rate on each of your posts. Learn what did great and what tanked, and benchmark those performances against your average.

Go deep into content performance assessment with [Dash Hudson's Boards](#), a tool to analyze the efficiency of visual segments. Compare the top and bottom numbers to hone in on your best performing photos and videos for the highest returns, every single time you post. This is also a key tool for measuring native advertiser content and to understand what kind of image will yield the highest impact.



basically

302 posts

126k followers

62 following



3.24%

ENGAGEMENT RATE

% of audience that engaged with post.
(Likes + Comments) / Followers



Knock on a melon
to tell if it's ripe. If it
sounds hollow—we
good. If it asks "who's
there?"—we bad.

basically



6.49%

EFFECTIVENESS

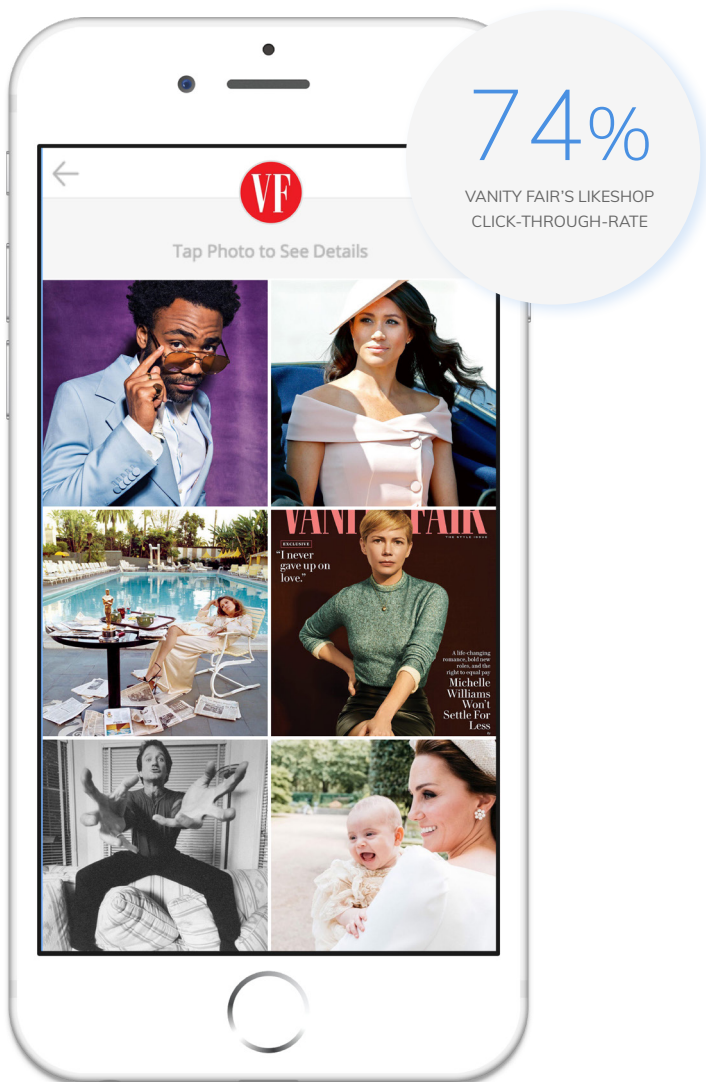
% of users that saw post and engaged.
(Likes + Comments + Saves +
(Video Views)) / Reach



4 | Profile Engagement

Your content engagement might be the crux of your social activities, but your Instagram profile also receives engagements that should be measured. These are the interactions comprising all the little activity around your profile, such as your website click-throughs, content saves, and profile visits. This is especially vital for publishers, as the link-in-bio can become a bonafide growth accelerator.

The importance of a killer profile page is not to be underestimated. People are increasingly searching companies on social rather than going through the old fashioned World Wide Web and it behooves all brands, publishers especially, to conceive an informative, attractive, impressive bio that showcases their authority



at first glance. Potential followers need to grasp that as soon as they land on your account's profile page.

But the honey that's first going to attract the bees is your content. If it's high-quality and cohesive within your feed, including your user regrams, you'll get more post saves. And if your captions carry a strong call-to-action, you'll receive more link taps and much greater web visits, which in turn leads to attractive numbers for advertisers. Awareness of clicks, views, and saves is instrumental in understanding not only your traction, but all that potential revenue as well.

What Does it Measure?

The aesthetic of your profile, the resonance of your content, the efficiency of your CTAs, website visits, traffic increases.

The DH Way

The LikeShop link-in-bio solution is a game-changer in terms of driving new traffic and revenue. Attribute URLs to your Instagram posts before you push them live to turn your feed into an extension of your magazine, crush your captions with super strong CTAs, and keep tabs on how many click-throughs your posts received.

AVERAGE LIKESHOP CTR'S BY PUBLISHING INDUSTRIES

MEN'S INTEREST	72%
WOMEN'S INTEREST	60%
FOOD	86%
FASHION	68%
HOME	70%



5 | Influencer & Celebrity Partnerships and Advertiser Content

This is perhaps one of the publishing sector's most important elements to track given its affinity for putting stars on covers and dabbling in influencer marketing, although it isn't *technically* a KPI. Magazine covers have long been used as promotional collateral as it relates to celebrities, on one hand to get the word out about whatever they're currently involved in, and on the other for the magazine's own traction on newstands. It's a mutually serving affair.

But in the age of social media marketing, publishers are also leveraging famous faces to grow their brands, as they keep trying to crack how to measure the ROI of their hired tastemakers. What is the real impact of Chrissy Tiegen's promo post of her story in your magazine?

Yet maybe even more pressing for publishers is understanding the value of their native advertiser content. While buying ad space in a print magazine comes with concrete numbers on what kind of reach they're getting based on actual distribution figures and data, the same cannot be said for buying out a social media post. Advertisers are a book's bread and butter, and accessing the return figures on native Instagram placements is key for the ongoing success of their core business.

What Should You Measure?

Tapping celebrities to enter the promotion cycle with you will help convert their audience members into followers for you, while unlocking on-brand ad partners will drive growth and increase your revenue. Keep tabs on your audience surges, web traffic, and engagement. Things like new followers and link clicks will be quantifiable while other benefits won't, like awareness and reaffirmed authority.

The DH Way

Dash Hudson's sophisticated tool suite encompasses specific functionality to evaluate the ROI of both influencer marketing and in-feed native advertising. Use Relationship IQ, a game-changing functionality, to see the basic stats of your influencers and celebrities, along with their posts about your publication. It also reveals an estimate of how many new followers each of those posts converted to your account, along with their engagement percentages to benchmark against their average.

When it comes to measuring your ad placements, the Publisher IQ functionality is where it's at. Input all of your paying brand partners into the tool to get an ensemble view of all the sponsored content you've posted in their name. There you'll be able to view the average engagement rate of all that media, both individually and collectively, and benchmark those performances against your average to adjust your strategy accordingly. You'll also be able to see how many followers you brought to that advertiser's account by posting about them.

Every publisher is striving to make advertisers happy with IG placements, and this tool is hands down what they need. It's the best and only way to sell them with certainty.





EPIC CIRCULATION

Social marketing goals will always vary depending on the company and the sector in which it operates, along with strategies on how to reach them. But one common denominator never wavers across all industries: the focus on the bottom line. Profitability is a universal business objective and social media marketing is a really amazing earnings facilitator.

We've now laid out all the consequential knowledge you need to analyze the numbers that matter to measure the ROI of those efforts, as well as all of their more intangible benefits, while also understanding how to keep advertisers happy with these new distribution channels. It's time to go out and apply all of it.

The Dash Hudson visual intelligence platform is a one stop shop for all your social needs thanks to sophisticated tools built explicitly for ROI measurement. Number-crunching has never been easier.

[GET A DEMO](#)