

The Age of Algorithms: How to outsmart the system

By [Zubeida Goolam](#)

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Algorithms are often considered as the holy grail of effectiveness in action, but how can brands benefit from a principle so scripted on platforms so agile and emotionally-driven?



Credit: Markus Spiske on [Unsplash](#).

Coded vs chronological

The changes made to social media algorithms in the past couple of years have made many brands rethink their content strategies. Instead of the accustomed chronological order, user feeds were now recalibrated to highlight 'generally engaged with' posts. Facebook's pledge to put 'friends and family first' meant that more personal posts would be prioritised over branded messages, while Instagram aims to ensure users' feeds are filled with fresh, timely content.

By using algorithms to code a much more individualised approach, the aim is essentially to remove 'irrelevant content' and create a user-ready and much more contextual social feed. It's designed to change and develop alongside the user and enhanced to achieve taps and likes.

It's a number's game

Algorithms provide a unique scenario that offers equal parts threat and opportunity. With algorithms curating user feeds based on engagement, posts are ranked on relevancy which has a big impact on organic reach. Frequency, now dependent on engagement and not the other way round, is making posts more valuable given the audience that would see it, but could also potentially lessen the audience that may see it.



The new digital divide is between people who opt out of algorithms and people who don't

Anjana Susarla 23 Apr 2019



It's important to speak to followers that are already interacting with your brand and to start a conversation with those who show interest; to turn a "like" into a "follow" and "follows" into real and meaningful engagement with your audience.

However, unengaged potential customers may not see your post, resulting in a lower ranking.

To beat this requires a strategy of consistency.

It's in your secret sauce

The starting point in outsmarting the social media algorithms is to create consistently high-quality content that can stand up to future algorithm changes. We know that bold visually appealing content, particularly on Instagram, attracts more attention. Increasing your branded video content is strongly encouraged by all social platforms, and IGTV content is now also appearing in followers' feeds rather than only confined on IGTV itself.

Stories are one of the most popular uses of social media; last week Twitter announced its own version of Stories called "Fleets", which is currently being tested in Brazil. Instagram Stories just surpassed 500 million daily users, and while Stories don't have an influence on the Instagram algorithm, it's the perfect addition to your social media strategy to help build brand love by showcasing daily, speedy and relatable content in a format that's super popular.



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Rilind Elezaj 11 Jan 2019



Adding to this, it is important to craft compelling captions and add hashtags to ensure your posts are searchable and discoverable. Including hashtags may be a basic principle, but using the correct hashtag is where it matters. A combination of branded, product, trending and community hashtags is the way to go. On Instagram, it's suggested that brands use at least nine to ten relevant hashtags to encourage engagement, and on Twitter, it's best practice to use a maximum of two.

Finally, one of the easiest ways to win with social algorithms is to monitor your audience behaviour, increase your posting frequency and post during peak hours. Simply having a social media presence for your brand isn't enough anymore. You need to analyse, optimise and grow your audience.



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Rather than be afraid of the new and constantly changing algorithm rules, use them as an opportunity to help analyse your audience data and create streamlined highly-effective social campaigns with maximised results. Now, what else can be done to further assist in using the power of curated content in the Age of Algorithms?

ABOUT ZUBEIDA GOOLAM

With a rich history and culture, Zubeida had an impressive repertoire, spanning over many years at industry giants, before starting and then dominating with her own company Valiant. Valiant incorporates multiple levels of marketing including but not limited to consulting, social media, storytelling and full content creation. With years of experience and a passion for creating, Zubeida now heads up the storytelling team along with co-founder Wayne Flemming, creating online campaigns that both inspire and drive critical engagement.

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