

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Instagram Is Now Bigger Than Twitter

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New York Times -- Instagram [announced Wednesday](#) that it now has 300 million monthly active users, up 50 percent in just nine months.

That makes the service, a photo- and video-sharing app owned by Facebook, more popular than Twitter, which had 284 million monthly active users as of the third quarter. More than 70 percent of Instagram's users are outside the United States, the company said.

Instagram's rapid growth, while impressive, is hardly surprising. Visual posts, and especially video, have become the hottest growth area in social networking. Facebook has been changing its news feed over the past year to better showcase video content,

and Twitter is focusing more on building up its Vine short-video service. Advertisers are also demanding more video options, and online services are hustling to meet that demand.

Instagram users are highly engaged with the service, with users interacting with posts at 18 times the rate they do with Facebook posts, according to a report issued last month by the research firm L2.

Kevin Systrom, Instagram's chief executive, said in a statement that the service was also going to begin verifying the Instagram accounts of celebrities, athletes and brands. Verified accounts will be identified with a badge so that fans know that they are really what they say they are. Instagram is also cracking down on spam accounts, deleting them from the service instead of just deactivating them.

The problem of imposter accounts is particularly serious for brands. About 40 percent of the Facebook accounts claiming to represent the Fortune 100 biggest companies are unauthorized, according to [a report released Wednesday by Nexgate](#), a division of Proofpoint that focuses on social media security. On Twitter, about 20 percent of the purported Fortune 100 accounts are unauthorized.

While those numbers include unofficial accounts created by well-meaning employees and fans, some are created by hackers,