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### Deposited in DRO:

21 January 2016

### Version of attached file:

Published Version

### Peer-review status of attached file:

Unknown

### Citation for published item:

Hardey, M. (2015) 'The UK's Instagram changing economy cultural landscape: the sharp rise in professional Instagram users as share of images; affiliation and other revenues continue to grow.', Project Report. Mariann Hardey.

### Further information on publisher's website:

<http://www.mariannhardey.com>

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# The UK's Instagram Changing Economy & Cultural Landscape

FOR RELEASE November, 2015

*The Sharp Rise In Professional Instagram users  
As Share Of Images; Affiliation And Other  
Revenues Continue To Grow*

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION  
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## About This Report

This is the first report highlighting findings from a series of reports about the UK's Instagram Landscape, the centerpiece of which is Future Gazing – how will this economy grow and change over the next 5/10/15 years.

**Dr Mariann Hardey** belongs to a number of technology “think tanks” who informs the public about the issues, attitudes and trends shaping the digital landscape, branding, marketing and the effect on consumers. She does not take economic or policy positions. Dr Hardey's experience includes digital methods of consumer opinion polling, demographic research, social media content analysis and other empirical social science research.

This report is based on the input and analysis of the Primary Researcher

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# Contents

<b>Overview</b>	<b>2</b>
What is Instagram and how many users are there worldwide and in the UK	
Demographic of Instagram users in the UK	
The emergence of Instagram users as influences	
What this means for brands	
The purpose of this report	
<b>Section 1: The Instagram Economy in 2015</b>	<b>4</b>
What is the Insta-economy?	
Who holds the power? Brands or influencer's?	
What is the Insta-economy worth today?	
Who are the main brands?	
<b>Section 2: The future of the Instagram Economy</b>	<b>7</b>
Predictions up to 2020	
Drivers of the rise and rise of the Insta-economy	
<b>Section 3: Instagram as a source of personal income</b>	<b>10</b>
Earning potential of influencer's	
The first Insta-millionaire	
Importance of authenticity	
<b>Section 4: Success on Instagram</b>	<b>12</b>
The influence factor	
Top Ten Instagram users in the UK	
How to increase success as an Instagram users	
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Summary</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Putting findings from the 2015 UK Insta-report into context</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>19</b>

## Overview

In October 2010 Instagram was created by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger, and launched as a free mobile app. Facebook acquired the service in April 2012 for approximately US\$1 billion in cash and stock. In 2013, Instagram grew by 23%. In the same period, Facebook, as the parent company, grew by 3%<sup>1</sup>. To Investigate the Insta-economy in the UK there remains little clarity over definitions and still less over the power of influence, revenue methods and future impact. In this report the link between productivity, user profile and influence pull together a wide-range of data sources on the pace of Instagram change and the proper role and status, and size of the UK leading Instagram users. As a result, the findings set out in this report is motivated by evidence and original analysis examined. The commercial potential for the UK is the focus of the report.



Dr Mariann Hardey

*“Instagram has 400 Million Users” with 14million active monthly accounts in the UK.*

The UK share of the Instagram population is rising fast, and the number of UK adults who do not hold an Instagram account or are linked with any social media is declining. Moreover, these changes are taking place across the economic landscape, affecting all areas of Instagram and is of significance to demographic groups of users who are under 35 years of age, and of whom a high proportion are female.

**While the rise in UK Instagram affiliation is particularly pronounced among young adults, it is occurring among UK users of all ages. The same trends are seen among both graduates and adults with only a school education; and the same significant rise among women as well as**

**men.**

The app is most popular with the *digital generation* (those born since 1991), with usage at 41% among those aged 16-24 and at 35% among 24-34s, and highest on mobile devices.

49% of users are female, while 51% of users are male<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> See statistics for year end, 2013 from Instagram Press News and Facebook Newsroom Room, data retrieved September 2015 <https://instagram.com/press/> <http://newsroom.fb.com>

<sup>2</sup> For official user statistics, refer to Instagram Press News, data taken September 2015 <https://instagram.com/press/>

Social media activities	2014 total of ALL adults in the UK	16-24	25-34	35-44
Maintaining a Profile on social networks sites / mobile apps	69%	96%	85%	73%
Sharing images – using Instagram	38%	61%	52%	42%
Finding community news in the local area	32%	28%	32%	38%

Table 1 Activities on Social Media Undertaken at Least Quarterly by Age: 2014-2015<sup>3</sup>

The proportion of online adults who use Instagram has doubled since the platform was first tracked in 2012. In the UK 38% of online adults use Instagram (up from 13% in 2012). However, there is not a statistically significant increase in usage between September 2014 and April 2015. Use of the internet and social media tends to complement rather than substitute for traditional forms of communication, but is nevertheless tied to new forms of social etiquette and behaviour, such as in meeting new people as well as recently endorsed and exploited revenue model.

**In the UK, David Beckham’s account @davidbeckham is the most followed and holds the most influence as one of the new Insta-Celebrities.**

The emergence of Instagram users as influences is defined as simple as anyone with influence - i.e. Anyone with over 1000 followers and who have real and engaged followers.

Brands have learned how to exploit an influential profile on Instagram. As is common with other social networks, Instagram’s monetisation strategy is focused on selling ads and cross-referencing this with consumer data from its sister platform Facebook.

In the USA, Instagram first began testing sponsored posts in late 2013 with brands including Michael Kors, Red Bull, Levi’s, Lexus and Ben & Jerry’s.

In a poll of top Insta-brands, after Nike, Red Bull and Starbucks, the top UK brand ranked at #4 is Burberry<sup>4</sup>. The high-end retailer uses its account to post iconic London and mixes in merchandise pictures, as well as behind-the-scenes pictures from photo shoots and commercial films. Facebook’s ad targeting tools are opened up to Instagram advertisers, this means brands are tailoring content to target specific audiences and identify key influencers. Some users are now earning six-figure incomes, and are able to sell their influence for sometimes thousands of pounds.

The purpose of this report is to provide a detailed account of the UK Instagram landscape both now and in the future. In this context it is important to think about influence ‘skills’ in the same breath as wider promotional methods. The report concludes with the most distinguishing characteristics of the emerging UK Insta-economy and Top Ten Instagram influencer’s.

<sup>3</sup> Statistics from OfCom Media Report 2013-2014 and Pew Social Media Report 2014-2015, retrieved September 2015

<sup>4</sup> Poll by Coop Attack, 2015

## Section 1: The State of the Instagram Economy in the UK

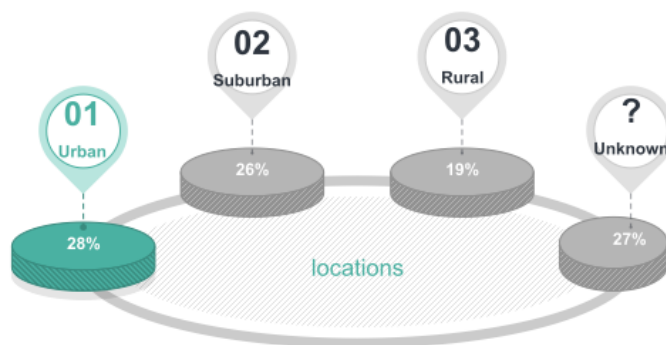
With 14million active monthly users, the UK Insta-economy could be worth an estimated £2million this year<sup>5</sup>.

The Instagram Economy is defined by the earning potential of brands and users who have influence. The potential revenue is highly fluid because the share of national influence going to users has increased considerably over the past 12-18months, emulating longer running rises on other more

**While London dominates as the main territory of UK Instagram users, patterns of users are heavily concentrated in main cities including Manchester, Newcastle, Leeds, York and Birmingham with, on average, 1.5million tagged posts.**

established social platforms such as YouTube, Facebook and Twitter. The changing nature of promotion and sponsorship has made brands target high-profile users as ‘influencer’s’ – linked partly to more fluid commercial choices but also the demands of a digital society. Official measure of shifts in the nature of revenue and income in these areas mean that middle to high-level income has been made possible by paying a £400 premium on sponsored posts for key influencer’s.

Figure 1: Location demographics as a proportion of online adults using Instagram



The most popular locations for are *photo-worthy locations*, with users preferring urban over rural and using location services to tag content. In the UK, London is the most tagged city with over 42.6million posts since 2010,

compared to New York, the USA’s most instagrammed city, with 29.9million posts. UK Instagram users are posting on average 70% more than their USA peers – at least 38 posts per week<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> Based on estimates from eMarketer Ad Revenue forecast, July 2015 and Gartner research analysis September 2015 indexed against net mobile ad revenue data reported by Instagram 2015

<sup>6</sup>Statistics based on Instagram city tag search through trending Tags and trending Places #London and #NewYork (September, 2015, based on Instagram iOS 7.0)

Importantly the shape of growth in the UK can explain these trends<sup>7</sup>. Figure 1 shows that while the overall ratio of locations clearly align with urban areas, it is not a particularly strong differentiation and the fit against age is much tighter (see Table 1).

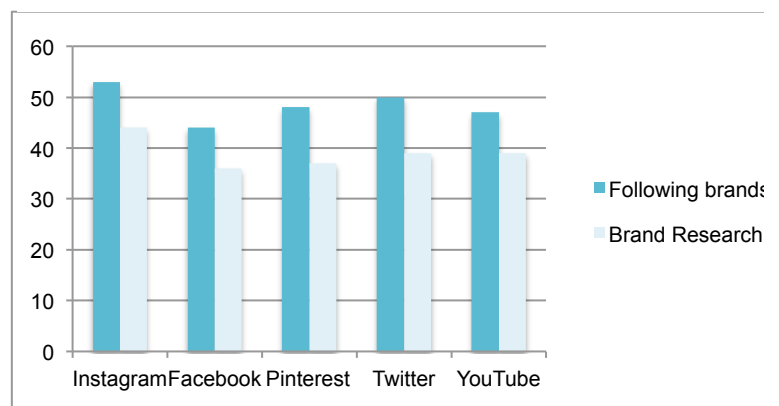
**Strong brands in the top half of Instagram posts**

As a result of a mixture of commercial circumstance, platform choices and global trends, the UK has arrived at a strong economic model in which a relatively small, but rising, number of users hold influence alongside the top brands. Both individuals and brands are realising earning potential can be significantly increased when promoting commercial content. Instagram users have to state full disclosure of sponsored images, either through #hashtag or by mentioning the brand in the post. Creative control is mostly in the hands of the

Far from softening the malign trend in targeted messages, brands are becoming savvy to the power of Instagram influencers and support is now going to amplify them

account holder, though some brands have strict rules about how they want their content to appear.

Figure 2: Why Instagram's Influencer's Matters to Brands<sup>1</sup>



**Changing patterns of influence**

Brands are moving beyond display ads, and looking to build awareness and relationships with influencers. Instagram users have started to Follow and conduct research about brands using Instagram and sharing content across image-sharing platforms. The chart shows that 53% of Instagram users follow their favourite brand – a significance more than any other social media platform. Also 44% use Instagram as a place to research brands, indicating strong advertising and commercial potential.

**Alignment with Facebook**

Facebook makes money from Instagram by charging brands. Where ad budgets are already growing aggressively: brands create Instagram images and targeted videos, share them to Facebook pages and then boost them into paid media. This enables brands to reach Facebook's 818 million monthly active mobile users, close to eight times more than Instagram's 130 million. Brands and influencer's are moving quickly to capitalise on Instagram multi-media and cross-channel potential. As Instagram increases in size, advertising is likely to be a natural integration and direct part of the platform. Influencer's have a significant potential to leverage responsive and new methods of effective and innovative endorsement.

**Increasing digital search and profile impact**

Also, with experience online, some individuals have started to develop preferences for particular sites, such as Instagram, as a first port of call for search based on #hashtag, in doing so users are

<sup>7</sup> Source: based on statistics from Instagram Press Room and Sprout Social, September 2015



learning how to hold influence and raise their profile. Together these trends in search and profile status have left the Insta-economy in the UK providing a large proportion of recent income growth on social media, particularly through current trends for original content, leaving brands in a responsive state to fall into line with the influencer's. Finally, increasing numbers of users employ a combination of platforms and social media Profiles, the most popular being Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram for search, and may not perceive themselves to be using a search engine or accessing related databases<sup>8</sup>.

**By numbers food is the most tagged and shared content on Instagram with #PIZZA as the dish of choice**

**New favourites boost profiles among the top half of Instagram earners**

Italian chefs Alessio Mecozzi and Klaus Davi carried out the research, finding over 17 million Instagram posts tagged with some variation of #pizza<sup>9</sup>.

In the Insta-economy the UK is now entering, this will require a strategic approach to establish a mature profile and ensure investment in influence by followers. This is a massive challenge. People follow influencers to find relevant content and to tailor a commercial presence to fit their feed in a way that can raise their profile. Overall, authenticity is the most important, with Instagram users prepared to endorse branded content, but being careful not to lose followers and their influence factor. The only way to avoid criticism or damage to reputation is to be far more active and ambitious in supporting growth areas – such as food and fashion – simply increasing the rate of posts is not enough.

Influencer's have inspired action through cause related marketing and brand awareness e.g. cancerresearch and #nomakeupselfie. This is hard, slow work and ultimately comes down to influencer innovation. The end goal is that causes can work in the UK's insta-economy sector, through powerful influence-based promotion, to identify key posts and to design structured routes through the deluge of social media content for brands, causes and new products. Influencer's have a direct role in helping establish the tone and presence of new content. Such influencer's are particularly important for encouraging other users to invest in key areas, raise awareness and come together, which makes up for more than 80% of the promoted posts on Instagram and so will determine much of the influencer profile of the future UK Insta-economy. Aside from the demise of pure commercial channels on Instagram (these are much more popular in the USA), the UK has a much stronger core set of influencer's, making them more capable of taking a strategic method and applying this to their user profile and being responsive to the needs of their sector (see Section 4: Success on Instagram). The combined result of these changes is that there is now more support for influencer's at the top half of the UK user distribution, compared with many other countries, tilting the balance towards business strategies that are based on high personal involvement and high levels of potential revenue from a single post.

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<sup>8</sup> Reported by eMarketer, 2015

<sup>9</sup> First reported by Stylist, September 2015

## Section 2: Future Gazing – how will the Instagram Economy grow and change over the next 5/10/15 years?

Up to now, the use of Instagram along with other social media is a complement rather than substitute for other methods of promotion and business, but is nevertheless tied to substantial revenue changes, such as a new and emerging economy in promoting the user as a ‘brand’ and other perceived benefits of product endorsement. Aided by convenience and ubiquitous access provided by smart mobile devices. At least 92% of young people aged 13 and above report using social media daily<sup>10</sup>.

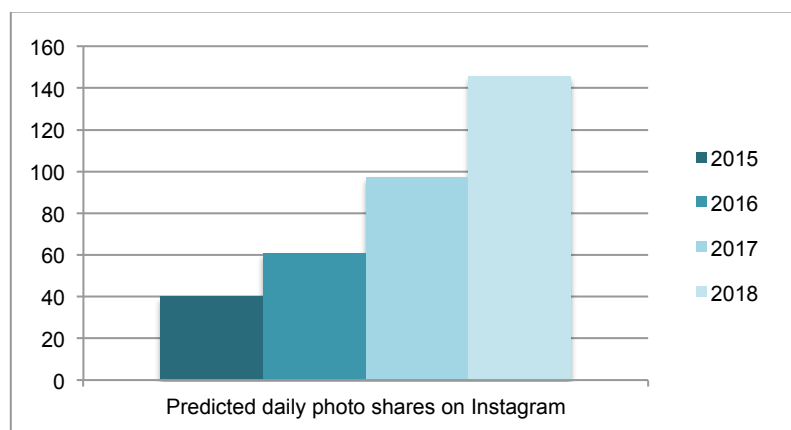
By 2020 there will be a premium on the skill of maintaining a professional profile, of professionalism, of awareness in the face of persistent and pervasive tool extensions through Instagram and other social media. The challenge in the future will be to maintain influence.

Today, the majority of Instagram users believe that the Government should not regulate social media and other digital technology more than it does, but there is a growing awareness in this generation of the need for protection of the vulnerable and perceived risks online<sup>11</sup>.

With over 40 billion daily image shares, Instagram is currently the market leader in terms of reach

and scope and Instagram users influence. The site has been shaping the social media landscape since its launch and has been an important factor in differentiating commercial content. For Instagram users the daily share of images up to 145.5 billion by 2018 offers significant possibilities to share content and add new features such as social games for social good. Social advertising and social gaming will continue to be two major points of revenue for campaigns and raising influence.

Figure 3 Number of daily images shared on Instagram worldwide from 2015 to 2018 (in billions)<sup>1</sup>



<sup>10</sup> For reference see Social Media & Technology Overview Report by Pew, (2015)

<sup>11</sup> Detailed results of relevance to the Government methods of policy making and implication of the internet are available from The World Internet Project (WIP) and Oxis report (2014)

This change will be an effect of Instagram users spending more time on social media platforms, and relying more on links recommended within social media networks to not only find information, but to innovate and develop new preferences for resources, such as Instagram for fashion posts and purchase choices, food posts and eating out.

The increased use of social media in posting photos from smart mobile devices parallels the more intensive use of existing platforms and masks a greater emerging trend toward short-video communication. It is noteworthy that both these activities – posting / posing / tagging images and making short-videos – are among those made cheaper and easier by networked social media such as Instagram. This means while the diffusion and reach of social media may have plateaued amongst the Instagram users (growing only 1 % points of the proportion of internet users involved in SNSs since 2013<sup>12</sup>), new methods of promotion, content and aggrandizement as revenue streams will increase rapidly over the next 5-10 years, as well as the continued steady increase in methods to enhance and personalized posts across multiple platforms at the same time.

In line with Instagram users-penetrated promotion, this will encourage further smart-mobile ad spend in the UK and could account for a significant share of advertisement revenue to reflect a similar growth predicted as up by 16% in the USA by 2019<sup>13</sup>.

In the UK the same market share will be shaped by the following factors: 1. The rapid user growth on the platform in major UK cities such as London, coupled with new search Tag and Place; 2. Demand for smart-content and personalized ad posts; and, 3. Increasing traction from non-branded users who are seen as highly valued and independent engagers, owing to popularized posts and rollout of short-video to improve reach and promotion techniques.

In addition to Instagram users taking over as the leaders of emerging economic streams on Instagram, commercial brands and agencies will begin to sponsor and endorse these pioneers and recognize that new methods of interactive advertising offer immersive experiences and significantly add to the UK economy. In the USA the growth in interactive advertising was recorded at over \$12billion in 2014<sup>14</sup>. In the UK, according to an analysis of all impressions run through Videology's platform in the second quarter 2015, 50% of UK advertisers are choosing interactive media as a top KPI to measure the effectiveness of their media spend, with 80% of all UK campaigns running on more than one device in Q2 2015<sup>15</sup>.

For the Instagram users one the major growth areas will be video recorded on wearable devices. Having a wearable, smaller than GoPro, will prove invaluable from a new business perspective, with a view to having an innovative, immersive, native experience and personalized approach to the Instagram economy. It's pioneering users such as the Instagram users who are going to change the world, as we know it, and forge new careers.

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<sup>12</sup> Figures from OxIS current internet and SNSs users report (2015)

<sup>13</sup> US Ad Market and Social Media report, by Forrester (March, 2015), reported in Forbes.

<sup>14</sup> Full report from the IAB by the New Media Group of PwC. The results are considered the most accurate measurement of interactive advertising as the data is compiled directly from information supplied by companies selling ad revenue on the internet for the period 1996-2014

<sup>15</sup> Read more at <http://www.iabuk.net/resources/white-papers/videology-q2-uk-video-market-at-a-glance#IA4tX0tA2CP4M5PE.99>

The Instagram users might be a threat to branded channels, and the UK's digital advertising industry will need to continue to prioritise reach (and more easily achievable thanks to programmatic methods), while simultaneously being seen to deliver the most authentic and trusted experiences to their followers.

As with any new movement in tech combined with strong generational groundswell, there are opportunities and obstacles. There are great opportunities for the Instagram users to expand into emerging markets and secure new methods of revenue and business promotion and development. However, this landscape is incredibly competitive which makes it difficult to transition posts across different formats and verticals and retain the same audience capture. Moreover, very few (a tiny proportion) of UK Instagram users sustain profit and commercial versatility through one-channel promotion.

**Authenticity is a big factor – if an influencer starts being inauthentic they threaten their profile and will lose followers and revenue, brands won't work with them etc. The popularity of Instagram has so far been due to its relative non-commercial, non-advertisement driven nature**

At present the Instagram users are in an experimental phase, pushing boundaries with posts and still trying to determine the best way to incorporate a message into Instagram posts. To be successful, messages will have to be authentic, personalized and welcomed by followers, otherwise Instagram will never be more than an accessory to other channels and formats of promotion in the UK. The main challenge will be those hard-to-reach consumers who will opt for this kind promoted content, albeit with curiosity and likely to reject unsolicited promoted content. The Instagram users experiences will have to be seamlessly integrated and flawlessly delivered to be successful and sustain revenue 15 years from now.

*In the UK we should be in anticipation for what the future holds in terms of additional incomes and business opportunities.*

# Section 3: Instagrammers – how much money can the UK’s top Instagram users earn? Has there been an Instagram millionaire or billionaire? Will there ever be?

“Creating a moment.”

## Earning power in the UK

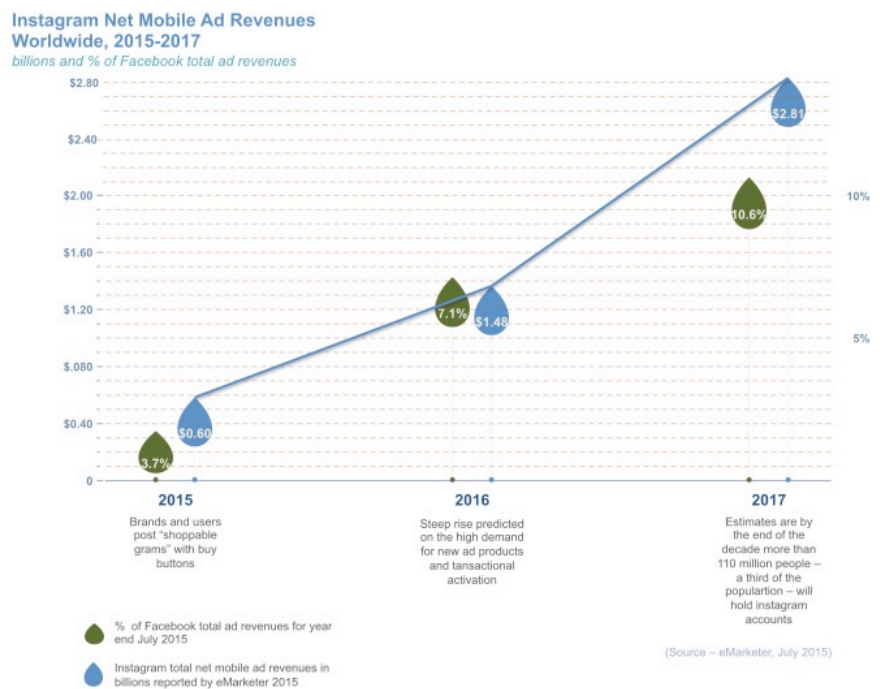
We know it pays to have a popular account on Instagram – based on the latest release figures from Mobile Media Lab value a user with 100,000+ followers, who gets 2,000 likes per image around \$750, around £500, for an endorsed post.

If the average UK Instagram users posts 152 images per month, their earning potential is currently £912,000 per annum<sup>1</sup>

## Insta-illionaire

Worldwide, not one user has sustained a revenue income solely based on Instagram postings. Yet the rapid acceleration in the pace of image capture and sponsorship has created a very viable and healthy commercial economy. The first Insta-millionaire might be on the horizon for 2018 in the UK.

Figure 4: Instagram Net Mobile Ad Revenue Worldwide 2015-2017



## Engagement with brands

plays a key role in the Instagram economy, particularly with the growth of brand accounts and sponsored user accounts.

- In Q2 2014, 20% of internet users aged 16-64 had an Instagram account.
- This is up from 15% in Q2 2013 (Figure4).

## Topline

Total Instagram ad revenue is estimated to be worth at least \$2.81 billion by 2017 (quarterly percentages Q2 2014 and Q2 2013 taken from Globalwebindex, 2015).

Influencers are part of the new status era. Homegrown talents from the UK have become famous on channels like YouTube, Vine, and, of course, Instagram. Influence is sometimes combined with celebrity promotion to buffer an ad campaign and to meet the steep rise predicted on the high demand for new ad products and transactional activation on Instagram. Networks and communities of users are most important and the company's Women's Influencer Network, includes both powerhouse Instagrammers like Elizabeth Banks – separated into 'I'm a Brand' and 'I'm an Influencer'.

Brands will target the influencer most suitable for them based on the demographic they want to reach, Instagram can connect them with mix of celebrities and Instagram users influencers for the job.

There is evidence that influencers in a range of different sectors – fashion, food, lifestyle, culture, politics, photography and so on, will earn more. Analysis for ad and commercial revenue on Instagram indicates a sharp rise (faster than had been anticipated), causing between an exponential increase in total earning potential (see Section 4).

The growth rate of the Insta-economy in the UK can only rise and rise.

### The central role of paid-for content

Before we go on to examine what makes a successful Instagram users in more detail in the next section, it is worth looking briefly at the more specific question of earnings potential (before declaration of taxes or other fees) to compare how influence growth and number of followers affect the link from influence to personal profit.

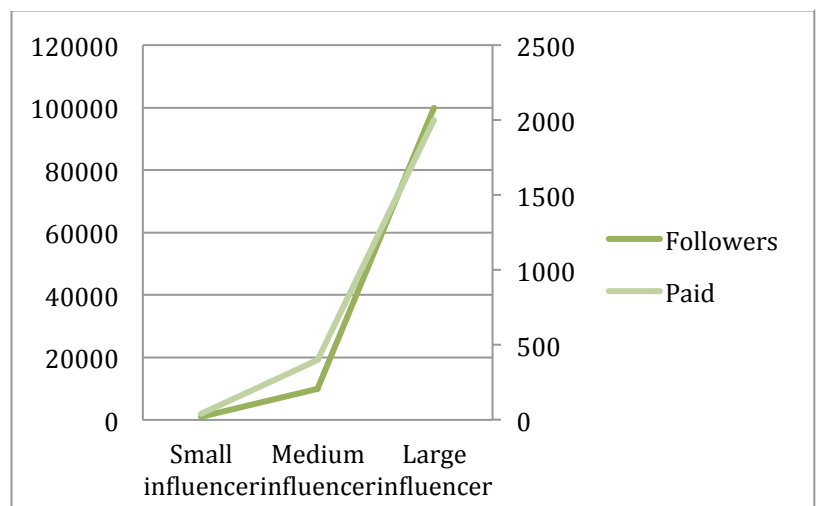
One useful measure of the effectiveness with which influencers share growth is the relationship between the Follower upswell and growth in the rate of earning potential. With the most significant rate of growth, the projected rate of earning income per post rises exponentially above the threshold of 10,000 Followers (see Figure 5).

This is remarkable when we consider that for much of the lifetime of Instagram earning distributions have been compressed into the commercialization of the app since

Table 2: Summary of earning potential based on influence rate

	Followers	Rate of return per post
Small influencer	1000+	40
Medium influencer	10,000	400
Grand influencer	100,000	2k

Figure 5: Projected rate of revenue plotted against number of followers



Facebook's purchase in April 2012, with income potential put in proportion to the overall growth during the same period.

The magnitude of this dual rise in the UK has been broadly above that for other countries, with above-average Instagram users as SNS users at about two-fifths of the growth rate (at least 52% of the online adult population) compared with four-fifths for the USA (close to 50% of the online adult population), and little-to-no growth at all in countries like France (39%) and Germany (34% of the online adult population)<sup>16</sup>. There is big magnitude and persistence in the relationship between growth and influence. Over the last two-three years, we can observe three main trends:

- Countries including the UK and USA and Russia, where there has been a pronounced growth in user accounts and the threshold of influencer's;
- Countries such as Spain, Brazil and France, where the relationship between user growth and potential influencer's is more recent, but still severe;
- Countries including Japan, China and Egypt where this relationship is recent and mild, and in Egypt's case because user growth has itself been weak.

This puts the UK's recent performance into international perspective; while in the last two years of Instagram's rapid growth, the UK is now a particularly strong performer at establishing new influencer's.

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<sup>16</sup> Statistics based on source data from Pew Global Social Networking Report 2014

## Section 4: The Shifting Successes of Instagram – what makes a successful Instagram users?

The average Instagram users user spends 21 minutes per day using Instagram on their mobile. That's a significant amount of time capturing daily life.

### Influence Factor

Engagement on Instagram is being measured by their Influence Factor (IF). Traditional PR efforts to channel endorsement through celebrities and key public figures is being applied to popular users across an array of social media accounts. Those with the highest influence rate are likely to have over 100k followers, approximately 0.1% of current Instagram users. The share of influence can be used to evaluate Instagram users earners and the method is to look at engagements/followers for the most recent posts of an influencer. As a crude metric: Engagements = Likes + Comments.

The influence factor takes into account both the user's number of followers, number of likes and comments.

The influence factor is used to establish two points of unique data:

- 1IF. Impact rate– this is based on account usage statistics
- 2IF. Engagement rate – this is based on how much followers connect, comment and share

The median influence rate for the Instagram users population (born since 1991) is at 500 followers, and the median Media is up 33% (up from 990 in 2011) to at least 3,000 posts in 2015<sup>17</sup>.

### A Note on Defining the Study's Terminology for the Instagram users

In this report, the Instagram's user UK affiliation (also sometimes referred to as the "top Instagram influencers") is based on Millennial and the GenerationC user profiles. The digital generation, for instance, are defined as all young people who are born since 1991, regardless of their specific demograph status and whether or not they use Instagram and other social media regularly.

For more details on the exact indexes used to identify Instagram users identity, please contact Dr Mariann Hardey at [mariann.hardey@durham.ac.uk](mailto:mariann.hardey@durham.ac.uk).

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<sup>17</sup> based on data derived from commercial marketing companies and brand sponsorship, November 2015. Sources: wearesocial; famebit; supercastr.



## Top Ten Instagram users in the UK<sup>18</sup>

				<b>Influence status</b>
1	<b>shirensungkar</b> , London	Shireen Sungkar, shireen-sungkar.tumblr. <i>Happy momy and wife. Indonesian. Proud muslim.</i> 1.2k posts since June 2011	326,2487 followers 417 following  15,996,204 Likes received, 350,893 Comments received	Lifestyle and culture
2	<b>matthewzorpas</b> , London	Matthew Zorpas, <i>Lecturer, Founder of The Gentleman Blogger</i> , Website: <a href="http://www.thegentlemanblogger.com">www.thegentlemanblogger.com</a> ,	1,002 Media since February 2012 94,567 followers, 429 following  1,199,629 Likes received, 13,742 Comments received	Fashion (men)
3	<b>5inchandup</b> , London	Sandra Hagelstam, studies fashion at the London College of Fashion. <i>Designer, Super Scorpio, Create your own luck Finnish in London.</i> 2,361 Media since August 2011	69.8k followers, 1.2k following 1,631,351 Likes received, 24,162 Comments received	Fashion (women) and celebrity
4	<b>Livcookefs</b> , Lancashire	Liv Cooke, Twitter @livcookefs. <i>Known for freestyle football skills.</i> 760 posts since July 2014	38.8k followers 83 following  800,485 Likes received, 34,174 Comments received	Sports and leisure
5	<b>eatlikeagirl</b> , London	Niamh Shields, <i>You love food, I love food. Lets talk about it! ☺ Cooking, culinary travel &amp; London. Recipes &amp; stories, hello @eatlikeagirl.com</i> , 3,533 Media since June 2011	9,684 followers, 1021 following 170,397 Likes received, 9,516 Comments received	Food and travel
6	<b>Joeottawaystyle</b> , London	Joe Ottaway, Menswear Image consultant Website: <a href="http://www.joeottaway.com">www.joeottaway.com</a>	972 Media since August 2013 90,988 Likes received, 2,789 Comments received  7019 followers, 254 following	Fashion (men), food and culture

<sup>18</sup> For GenerationC definition and 'influence' of social media see Hardey, 2011, "GenerationC", International Journal of Market Research (IJMR).

7	<b>Danielrhone</b> , London – personal shopper for Selfridges	Daniel Rhone, <i>mensfashionmagazine</i>	978 Media since May 2012 47,415 Likes received, 2,274 Comments received 3,586 followers, 847 following	Fashion (men) and culture
8	<b>Topgrain</b> , London	Matthew Coles, see <i>TopGrainUK</i>	617 Media since February 2012 26,986 Likes received, 785 Comments received 2,317 followers, 522 following	Fashion (men), city life
9	<b>Feistytapas</b> , UK	Mario Bravo, <i>there is no shame using kitchen gadgets, menu planning, weekly planners, audiobooks and much more to save your sanity</i>	1,681 Media since April 2012 67,530 Likes received, 7,763 Comments received 2,276 followers, 2,515 following	Food, menus, photography
10	<b>Jos_pictures</b> , UK	Jo Brigdale, <i>supermum</i>	1,153 Media since October 2012 21,947 Likes received, 1,229 Comments received 1,137 followers, 2,694 following	Food, motherhood, culture, children

Table 3 Top Ten UK Instagram users who have high Influence Factor *all metrics correct at time of writing*

### How to increase success as an Instagram users

#### 83% Instagram images contain a #hashtag

These are the ways each of the Top Ten hold influence and could profit from Instagram posts.

**ONE** – Actively engage with your followers, give them access to the part of your life that you share on Instagram, if they leave comments or ask questions, respond to them – this will increase your engagement rate. Such steps run with social trends to keep more followers and engage on a daily basis.

**TWO** – A distinctive message consistently and stylishly composed. Each of our Top Ten uses consistent titles, posts, captions and hashtags. *Put your face in the picture*. There is a 38% increase in Likes when a face is tagged in an image. There is a 32% increase in Comments when a face is tagged in an image. And with over 50million selfies on Instagram a well placed selfie can get you instant recognition and increase influence.

**THREE** – Strong presence across other social media and creative platforms. All of our Top Five work with Twitter, tumblr, Pinterest and more...to emphasise an active and professional presence. Notably not all are on LinkedIn.

**FOUR** – Sustained Follower ratio. This is a numbers game, to a certain extent. Optimisation of any account requires a degree of influence and most sponsors are looking for accounts with at least 5,000 Followers.

**FIVE** – Association with a brand. Brand ‘Ambassadors’ are often endorsed after 10,000 Followers. Rates of pay vary in addition to how ‘influential’ the user is perceived to be, and the strength of presence across other social media accounts.

### **Where does influence go?**

The combination of growth in this current period presents a new model of influence flow. If influence is feeding through those with the highest follower and engagement rate, where does the value being created in the UK economy go? We can answer this question specifically by breaking down the path from gross value added (the influence factor) in combination to the portion that goes to influence as profit (the profit share); the profile share that goes directly to the user and diffusion to a targeted (sometimes non-targeted) audience.

The above success factors also shows the importance of changes in overall user profile-levels and professional links e.g. brand association and product endorsement. Dividing up the Insta-economy we have high-income commercial companies on the front line of the promotion market. Since 2012, influencer growth and brands have worked together, delivering increased turn over, overall impact and ensuring new revenue methods for future years. Finally, cross-platform support has been vital. When put in this short-term context the 2012-2015 period stands out starkly as a period when influence has become a high-earning commodity. Meanwhile, brand influence is starting to plateau the Instagram influencers are turning what has been good growth into even stronger growth. In summary, without influencer endorsement, even with a good cross-platform brand presence, brand reputation and profiles will stagnate.

## Conclusion

The road to shared growth for the UK's insta-economy will be paved with innovative steps boosting user profiles while focusing relentlessly on status for holding high influence to the Instagram users. Macroeconomic conditions provide the potential for widespread prosperity, though the use of sponsored posts may not be enough to guarantee a high status for all Instagram users. Significant threats to securing a high influence factor and holding onto this betray the sanguine view that steady and sustained growth is guaranteed.

The evidence in this report suggests that shared growth in 21<sup>st</sup>-century Britain will not emerge simply because users post images on Instagram. But it also suggests that the right steps, taken boldly enough, have helped to build it and will sustain the foundation for a high-revenue insta-economy for many years to come. The current focus of UK Instagram users is –rightly – securing a sustained period of economic potential and growth.

For the first time, serious commentators are discussing the possibility that the UK will experience a sustained period of rapid and high-level growth in this area. There is also recognition of a long-term slow down and potential decline as 'real' income potential will have to survive platform modifications and the Instagram users stiff competition on current paid posts from brands and emerging digital agencies.

## **Summary**

This report is the first of its kind to reveal the distinct patterns in Instagram use in the UK among the Instagram users. It presents a unique picture of social media image use by ranked status and Influence Factor (those with at least 10,000 followers and a complimentary impact and engagement rate). Smart mobile devices continue to facilitate shifts in media content and image-based communication.

There is a small, but significant, gender differentiation with young women using Instagram and other social media for sharing strong visual content more than their male counterparts. Detailed information on the demographic distribution of social media user and of the kinds of benchmarks available is available upon request. Please contact Dr Mariann Hardey at [mariann.hardey@durham.ac.uk](mailto:mariann.hardey@durham.ac.uk) for more information about the report.

# Putting Findings From the 2015 UK Insta-report into Context

This is the first report on findings about the use of Instagram in the UK, the centerpiece of which is the model of the Influence Factor. This is the first time the Tinman has commissioned an Instagram Economy Study.

The report is designed to serve three main purposes:

- To provide a detailed account of the impact of the profiles that populate the UK Instagram landscape;
- To describe the demographic characteristics, practices, and social media values of those profiles; and
- To document how the landscape of the Instagram economy of the UK has changed and what the future holds.

## **Press coverage**

Other findings from the 2015 Insta-report will be released later this year.

In addition to the Press Release, the findings will be available through a series of Report Updates available at [www.mariannhardey.com](http://www.mariannhardey.com)

## **Acknowledgments**

The report is authored by Dr Mariann Hardey.