



In the [social media certificate program](#) I teach, we discuss social media best practices for posts and advertising.

One of my past students recently asked, "I know that an Instagram post only shows the initial 115 - 130 characters before you have to click "more." Yet I've seen some posts that have more than 115 characters, e.g., National Geographic, along with a number of hashtags in the post. I also know that there can be up to 2,200 characters in a post. Are the longer posts showing all the copy because they are older? They also contain the entire copy when I tap on the photo."

My response.

Yes, a post may have up to 2,200 characters; but, it will be truncated at 150 when it will display the "more..." link.

According to [Sprout Social](#), "If you want to maximize engagement on your Instagram posts, stick to 138-150 characters in your captions."

Also, keep these tips in mind:

1. Ideal ad caption length: 125 characters;
2. Hashtag sweet spot: between 5-10 (avoid Shadow Banning); and
3. Best number of characters in a hashtag: < 24.

The full post will show up when you click on the image.

How to Maximize Instagram Posts and Avoid Shadow Banning

What is shadow banning?

On Instagram, you have the ability to use up to 30 hashtags per post. Why wouldn't you to reach more people, right? Wrong. You should have a relevant list of hashtags to choose from for each of your posts, but stuffing all of them in every post will cause your posts to show up less frequently in searches for those hashtags. Also, [Track Maven](#) discovered that your engagement rate will begin to drop if you consistently use more than 10 hashtags in your posts.

How do you avoid being banned?

Mix and match your hashtags for each post based on the list of hashtags you want to be associated with. Also, consider what the post is really about. Then use the appropriate hashtags for that post. Keep the number of hashtags to within the hashtag sweet spot mentioned above.

Bonus: Advertising Tip

He asked a secondary question about Instagram advertising, "I know that once a post is published, there are a couple of methods to increase its visibility beyond one's own followers, including promoting posts. My confusion/question regards promoting a post and the audience who will see it."

He adds, "For example:

- Promoting a post to five geographic areas;
- Interests include food, snacks, food and drink, college basketball;
- Female, age 30 to 50; and
- The total audience comes to about 1,700,000."

"When I add the budget of \$15 for one day, the potential audience drops to 500-1500 (between \$0.01 and \$0.03 per person). I am trying to understand how the audience drops to this small quantity and why the promoted post wouldn't reach the entire audience?"

It's a great question, one I'm sure you've wrestled with too.

Here's my response.

With an audience that large (over 1.7 million), your ad spend would have to be greater to reach all of them, particularly if they are in diverse geographic areas, e.g., NY, CA, TX, OH,

etc.

The reason the reach is so low is that the amount you've identified, \$15, will be spent before it reaches the location furthest from your originating source location.

What's the remedy?

Create different ad spends for each geographic area you want to reach.

If the max is just \$15/day, you will not be able to reach across the country. Instead, create an ad campaign for each geographic location for \$15 per day and run the ad one day in each geo area. For example, Monday, NY \$15; Tuesday, Chicago \$15; Wednesday, Dallas \$15; Thursday, Miami \$15; and Friday, San Diego \$15/day.

Now that you have these tips, will you tackle your Instagram posts and ads differently?

Additional Resources

- [6 Steps to Accounting Firm Instagram Success](#) (any business can use these tips)
- [Instagram for the Forward-Thinking Firm](#) (also good for any business)