

Social Strategies

Best Time to Post on Instagram: Part One

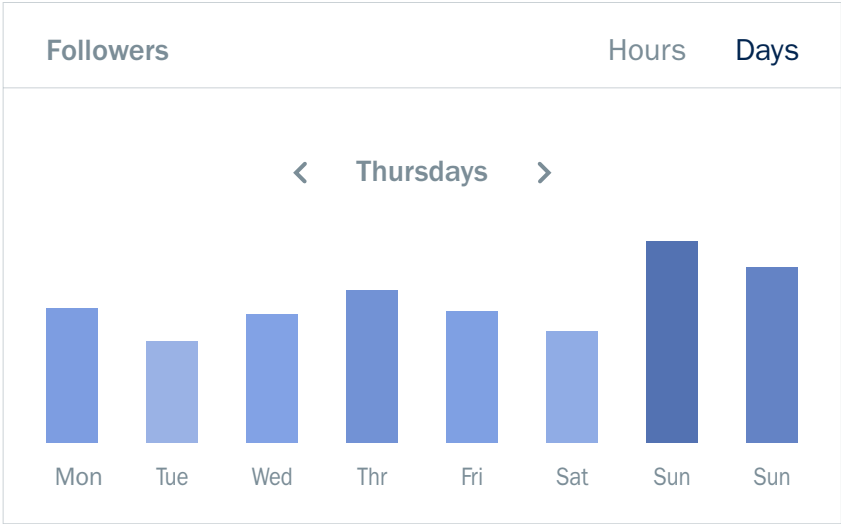
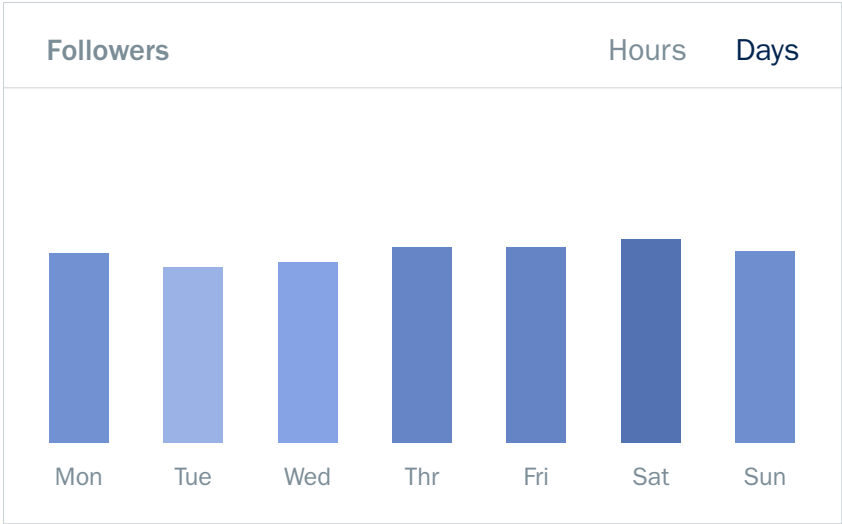
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unmetric

Timing is a crucial component of social media strategy. Knowing when to post on each social network is essential to ensuring that all the hard work you put into perfecting your content pays off. [With Instagram finally letting businesses schedule posts](#) using publishing tools, the discussion on the best time to post on this network is more relevant than ever.

Brands have to seize this opportunity and post to Instagram when their audience is most likely to engage with their posts. You can get this data from Instagram Insights. Here, you can see the average number of times your followers are on Instagram on a typical day and the days of the week when they are most active.



Instagram Insights

However, this data is based on your audience and your brand posts alone. In this article we explore if there are certain hours in the day that are more rewarding for brands than others. This way, you can find out if you are missing out an engagement window that other brands are tapping into.

Notes on Data Collection

When we started collecting the data, we were working under the assumption that the best time to post for brands would be when the audience is most active. For that reason, we collected data separately based on when brands published posts and when audience interactions were recorded.

Another hypothesis was that the best time to post for industries like media and entertainment, sports and for celebrities would be slightly different from that for other brands. This was one reason why we collected data separately for these industries. Another, more practical reason, was that posts by celebrities, media and sports teams sometimes tend to go viral and amass very high engagement. This would skew the data.

To find out the best time to post on Instagram, we collected data for 100 US focused brands across industries selected on the basis of audience size for the period between November 15th and December 22nd 2017. For media, sports and personalities, 100 brands were chosen by audience size for each industry, for the same time period.

All the data presented here is in EST (New York time).

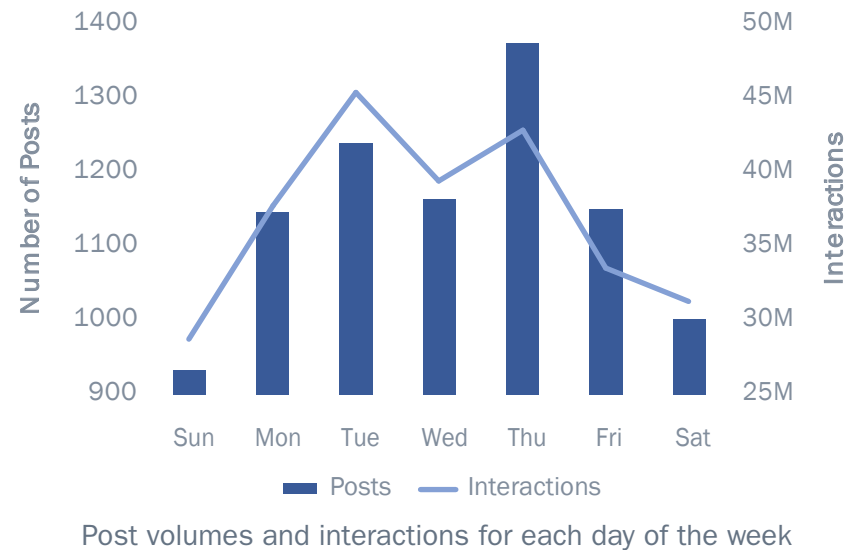
Best Time to Post for Brands

In this section we take a look at when these 100 brands got the highest engagement and why. As mentioned before, in each section, we draw a comparison between the engagement received on posts published at a particular hour and the engagement recorded at a particular hour. Let me make this a bit more clear with an example.

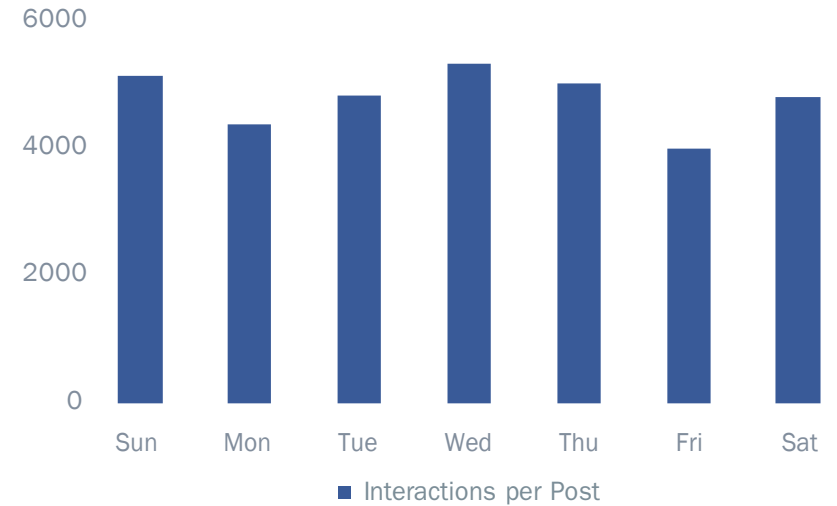
Brand A posted a hilarious video at 11 AM on a Monday. This received over 10,000 likes, 500 comments and 1,500 shares overall. Of this 7,500 likes, 500 comments and 2,000 shares were received within an hour of posting the video. So, in the charts based on **BRAND** activity, all 12,000 interactions will be attributed to 11 AM. In the charts on **AUDIENCE** activity, only 10,000 will be included in 11 AM.

Day of the Week

In the chart below, you can see that brands posted the most on Thursdays. However, posts published on Tuesdays received the highest engagement (likes + comments). Engagement plummeted close to the weekend. This is most probably because brands posted very few pieces of content on the weekends.



When we looked at audience activity, the number of posts users interacted with on average each day of the week was fairly uniform. The most number of interactions per post were recorded on Wednesdays. Interestingly, Sundays also witnessed high engagement, in contrast to the chart above. The least number of interactions per post was seen on Fridays.



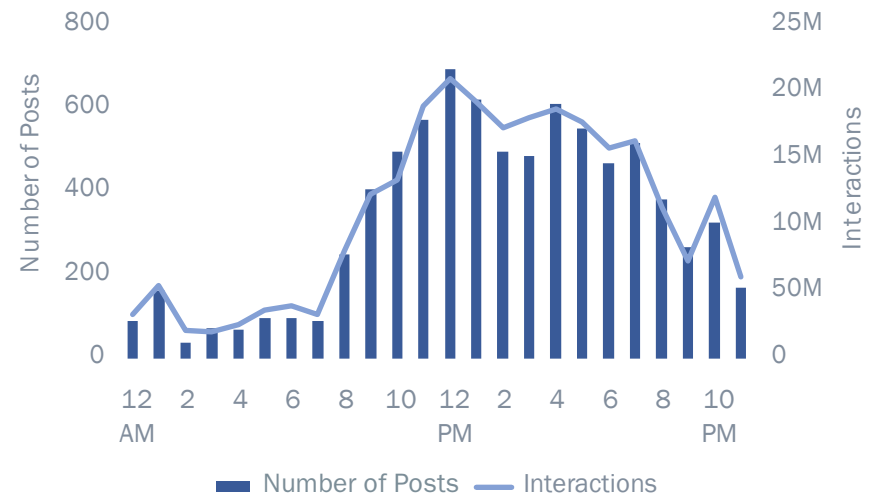
Number of interactions per post registered on each day of the week

Hour of the Day

The discussion on which hour of the day is the most rewarding comes down to two questions: when are brands most active and when's the audience most active. Let's take a look at each:

When are Brands Most Active?

Brands post the most between 12-1 PM. As a result, the overall interactions received by posts published at this hour is the highest. Close to 69% of all the posts were published between 10AM and 8PM. These accounted for more than 68% of all interactions received.



Number of posts published hourly and interactions received from them

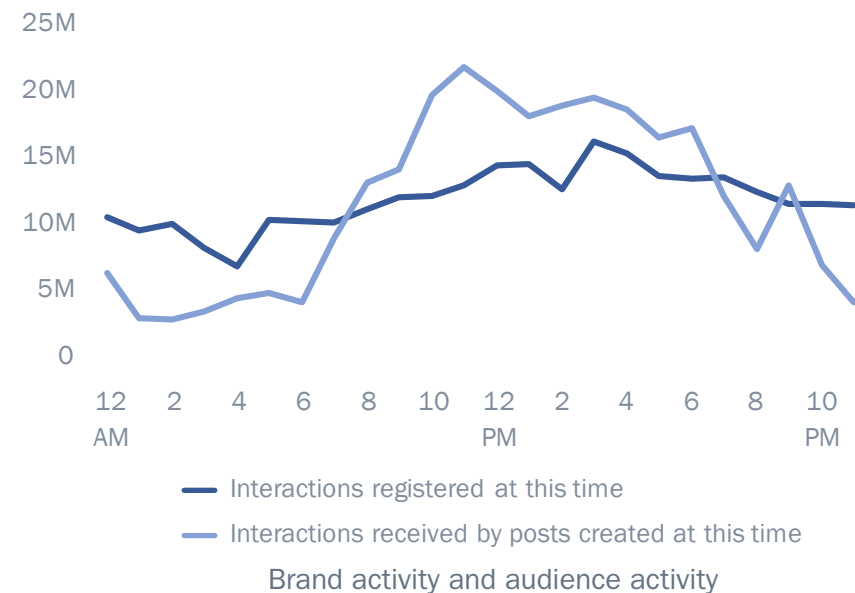
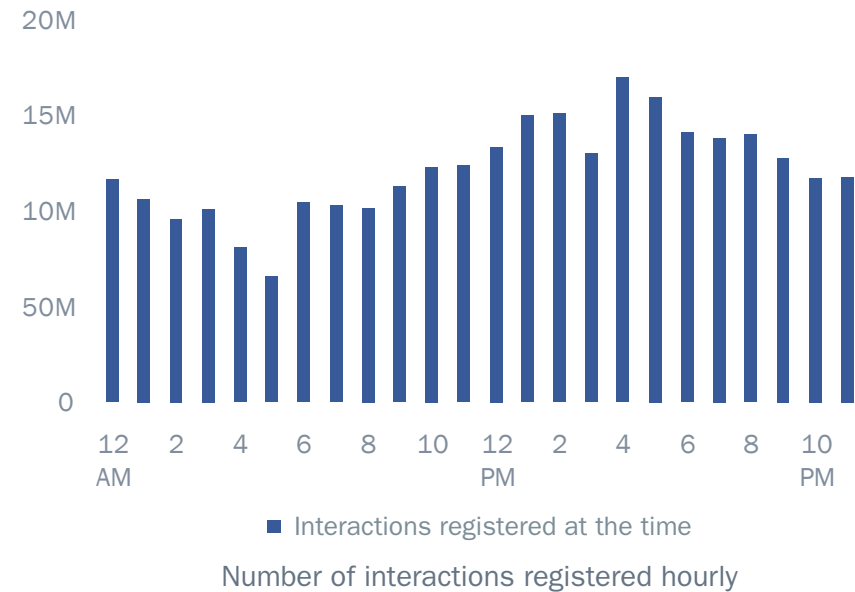
Based on the chart above, it seems like engagement and posting volumes seem to go hand in hand. However, this is because we are looking at aggregate values. Is it really the case that whenever brands post, they get interactions? To answer this, let's look at when the most number of interactions are recorded.

When is the Audience Most Active?

As you can see in the chart below, interactions registered at each hour of the day remains consistently above 10 million between 9AM and 12AM. The chart shows a rising trend till 3PM after which it slumps, only to surge to the zenith between 4-5 PM. After 5, interactions exhibit a falling trend.

The slowdown in interactions registered post 2PM coincides with a fall in post volumes in the earlier chart. This is followed by a sharp rise in post volumes at 4PM, similar to the hike in interactions registered.

This would suggest that as long as brands don't post at odd hours like 4AM, they will get engagement. Similarly, their audience is consistently interacting with content on most hours of the day.



We were also curious if there was a difference in the best time to post based on content type. [Hubspot](#) had found that 9PM works out best for videos, whereas 8-9AM was the best time to post in general.

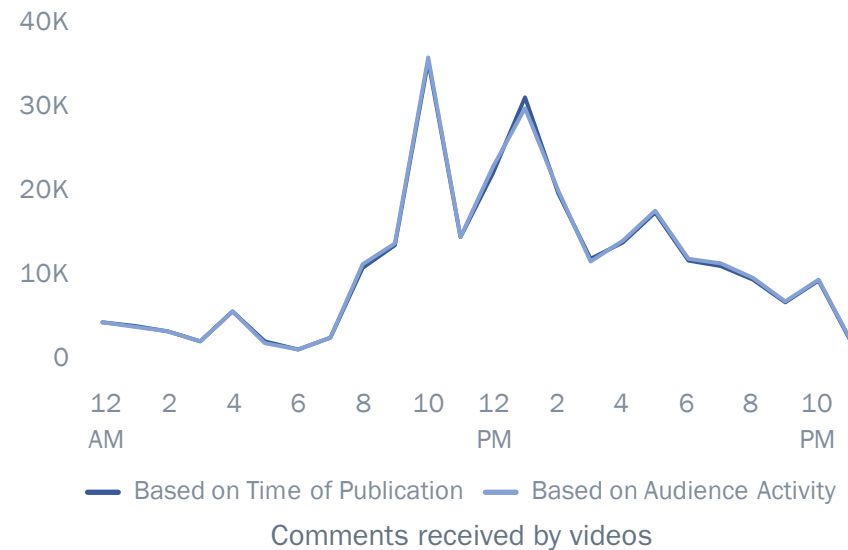
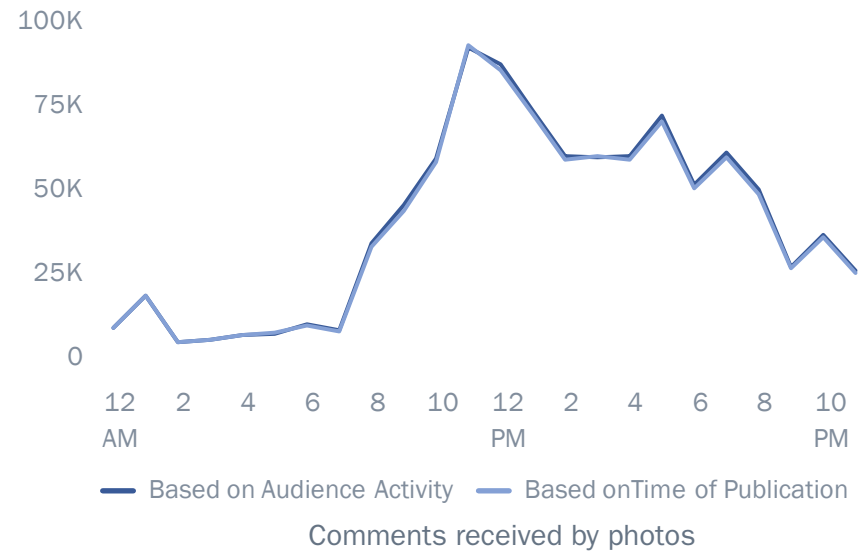
Best Time to Post Photos

The chart below shows the number of comments received by photos. As you can see, the number of comments received on posts brands published at a particular hour and the number of comments recorded at that hour almost overlap.

This data suggests that the best time to post photos is between 11AM-12PM.

Best Time to Post Videos

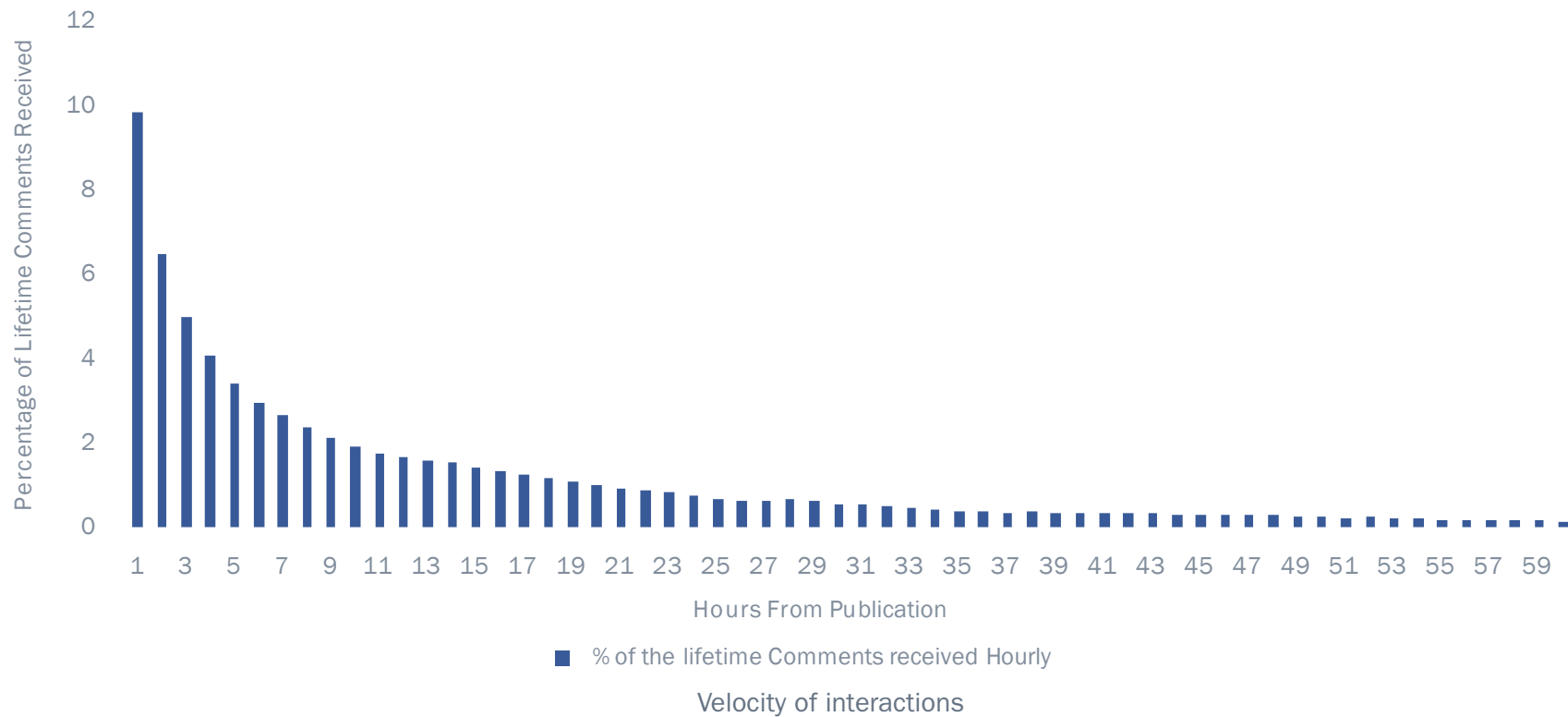
For videos as well, there was a similar overlap. While the trend in engagement on photos bore a resemblance to the overall engagement, videos showed a different pattern.



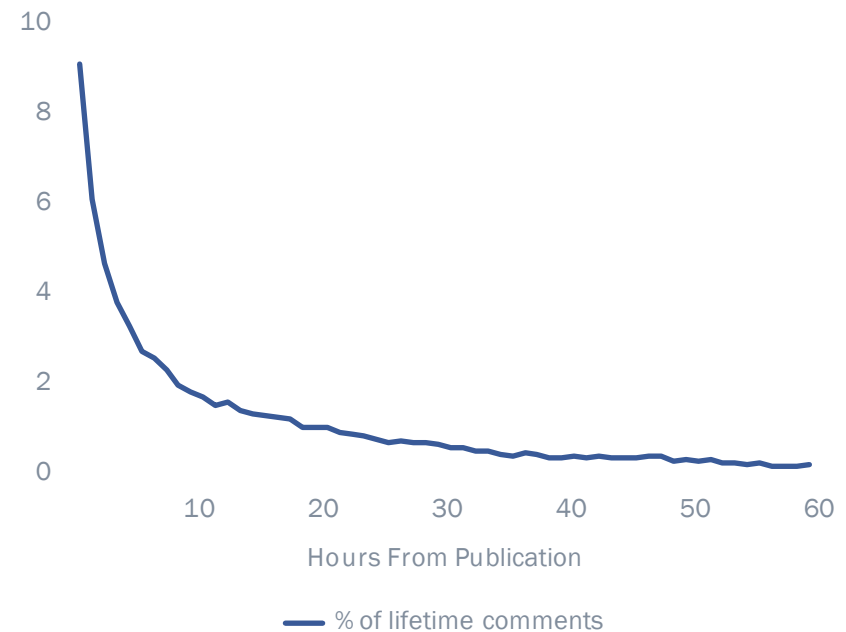
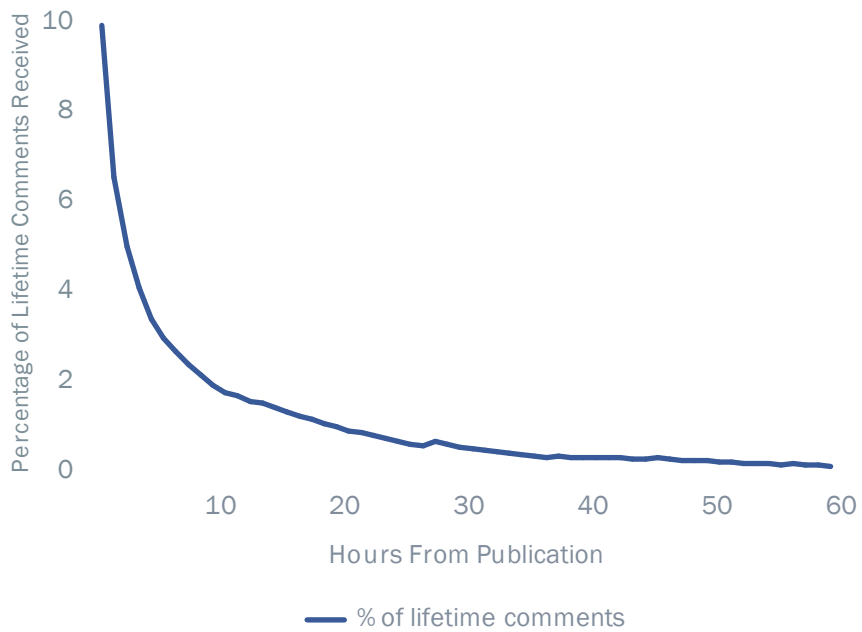
Unlike photos, videos received comments in bursts. Between 8AM and 7PM, videos received over 10,000 comments every hour. The highest volume of comments was recorded between 9AM and 10AM, over 31,000. After this, it fell to 12,000 between 11AM-12PM and rose sharply between 1-2 PM to just under 27,000.

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As you can see, brands receive the highest percentage of overall comments within an hour of posting. Around 44% of all comments are registered within 12 hours of publication. There weren't any marked differences in the velocity at which photos and videos received interactions

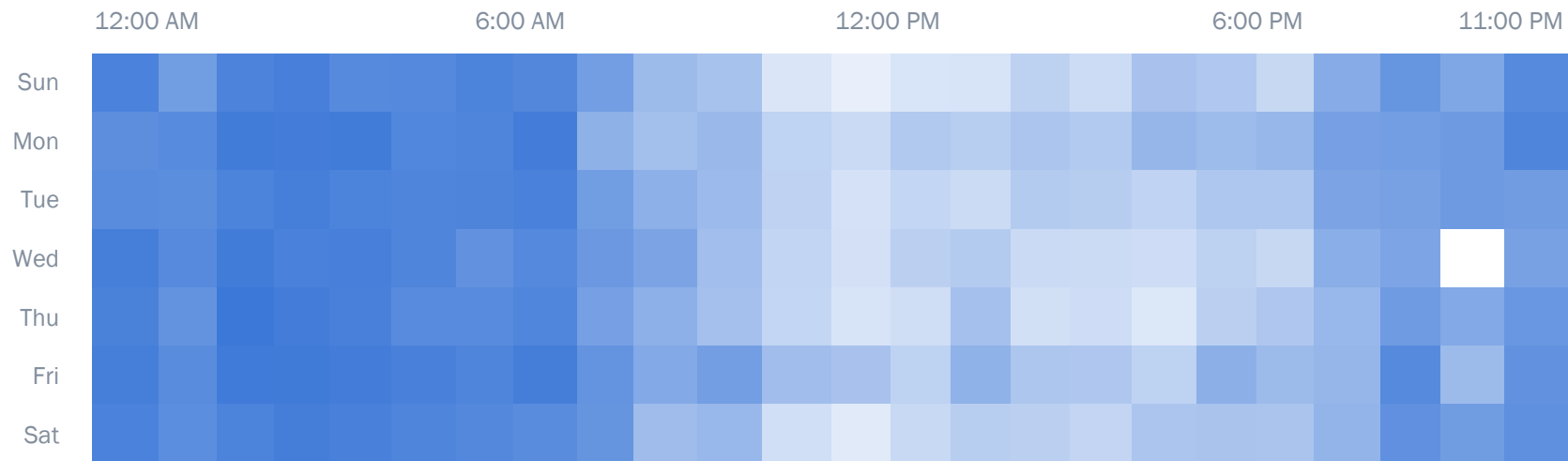


Velocity of comments received by photos and videos

So, unless you promote your Instagram post, an hour from publication accounts for most of the engagement you get. This makes the timing of your post all the more crucial.

The Best(est) Time to Post

Then, is there an engagement window that brands have to be aware of? To find an answer to this, we created a heatmap of when these 100 brands received the highest engagement. The white slots correspond to the highest engagement recorded.



Heatmap of interactions based on time of publication

Based on brand activity, posts published between 10-11PM witnessed the highest engagement. This seems a bit weird given that Instagram's scheduling options were not available during the time period analyzed.

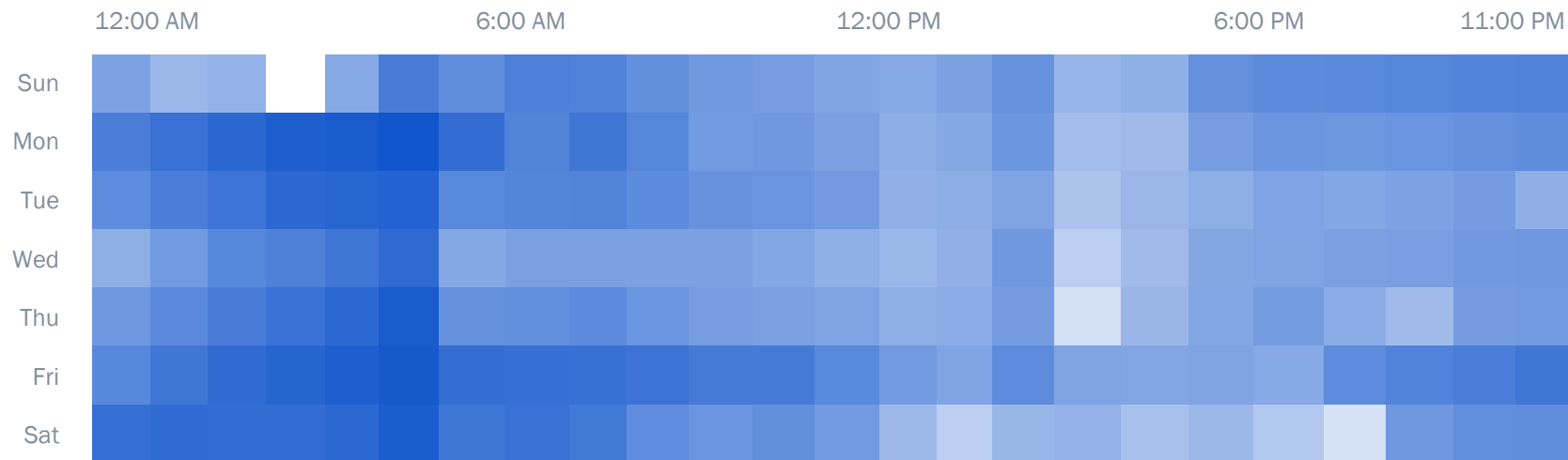
Based on brand activity, posts published between 10-11PM witnessed the highest engagement. This seems a bit weird given that Instagram's scheduling options were not available during the time period analyzed.

When we took a closer look at the most engaging posts published at this time, we noticed that they were by brands such as Anastasia Beverly Hills, Morphe etc. Most of these brands cater to an international audience, but do not have region-specific pages. Here's the most engaging post published on Wednesday between 10-11PM:

<https://www.instagram.com/p/BbOr8Kbjj-r/>

12PM-1PM proved lucrative for brands on all days except Fridays. Fridays, in general witnessed low engagement.

Sundays between 3-4 AM saw the most number of interactions. This could again, be because the data is in ET while the interactions may be coming from other time zones. People seem to be interacting the least on Fridays and between 3-4PM on all days.



Heatmap of interactions based on audience activity

With audience activity remaining steady throughout the day and brand activity confined mostly to working hours, we are inclined to believe that this is a result of the lack of scheduling options. It'll be interesting to see how these patterns change with the option of scheduling posts.

All the data presented here is available from the Unmetric Social Media Intelligence Platform. You can use a combination of owned analytics and competitive analytics to uncover timing insights specific to your brand. In order to understand when the best time to post for your brand is:

- Take a close look at your owned analytics. When are you seeing the best results on Instagram
- Find out when your audience is most likely to engage with your content
- Keep a steady eye on the competition. Make sure that you are not missing out on an engagement window your competitors are targetting
- Look for other factors that could be responsible for engagement. Did your competitor's posts at 10 PM see such high engagement because they posted around a major sporting event they sponsored?