

Instagram hits 300 million users, passes Twitter

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Instagram co-founder Kevin Systrom addresses a press conference in New York on December 12, 2013

Instagram, the photo-sharing social network owned by Facebook, announced Wednesday it has more than 300 million users as it unveiled a new system to authenticate celebrity members.

The update means Instagram has for the first time overtaken Twitter, which claimed 284 million active users at the end of September.

"Over the past four years, what began as two friends with a dream has grown into a global community that shares more than 70 million photos and videos each day," Instagram chief executive Kevin Systrom said in a blog.

"Instagram is home to creativity in all of its forms, a place where you can find everything from images of the Nile River to the newest look from Herschel Supply or a peek inside the mind of Taylor Swift."

Systrom also said Instagram would start using "verified badges for celebrities, athletes and brands," to help users ensure they are following these members and no copycats.

"These badges will start rolling out over the coming days," Systrom said

"We're committed to doing everything possible to keep Instagram free from the fake and spammy accounts that plague much of the Web... we've been deactivating spammy accounts from Instagram on an ongoing basis to improve your experience. As part of this effort, we will be deleting these accounts forever, so they will no longer be included in follower counts."

Facebook completed its acquisition of Instagram in 2012. The original price was pegged at \$1 billion but the final value was less because of a drop in Facebook's share price.

The main point of Instagram is to share smartphone snaps, which can be enhanced with image filters to mimic historic types of film.

Debra Aho Williamson at the research firm eMarketer said Instagram has a good deal of potential for advertising with an estimated 52.5 million monthly users in the US alone.

"With 300 million monthly [users](#), Instagram's audience is becoming very attractive to marketers, especially brand advertisers, and its rapid growth will only make it more appealing," said Williamson.

"Instagram's ad business is still very new and has a lot of growing up to do—for example, its targeting capabilities are still very limited—but the company's new authentication initiatives send a message to the ad community that their followers will be real entities and that the impressions they receive will not be fakes or bots."

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