Facebook Live Becomes More Accessible During the Covid-19 Crisis

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There have been more than 8.5 billion Facebook Live broadcasts since the feature debuted in August 2015, and the coronavirus pandemic was a driving force behind a 50% jump in viewers during the past month.

Facebook cited examples of Facebook Live usage during the Covid-19 crisis, including virtual concerts, live zoo safaris, cooking demonstrations and Mass with Pope Francis.

The social network said, “We built Live to bring people together through video in real time, and we’re seeing that people need these connections now more than ever. With that in mind, the team is working on new experiences and iterating on existing ones to make Facebook Live even more accessible for both people and creators.”

Facebook added a toggle to Live videos enabling people in areas with low bandwidth to view important broadcasts without the sound.

The social network also removed its geo-gating restrictions, meaning that people without Facebook accounts can now see public Live videos.

Facebook Live broadcasters can now generate toll-free numbers via a public switch telephone network so that viewers can listen to the audio from live broadcasts over any telephone.

Automatic closed captions are now available for all Live videos to make them more accessible.

On the content creator side, more content creators and publishers are getting access to the Stars feature, which enables them to monetize their videos by letting viewers buy and send Stars during broadcasts, for which they receive money from the social network.

Stars is also being tested with musicians and cultural institutions for the first time.

Live Producer—a new surface for managing livestreams from a connected camera and software encoder, making it easier to go live—is now available to all broadcasters, replacing the old Facebook Live composer.

Facebook said new features enabled via Live Producer include comment moderation, overlays and clipping, adding that more information is available here.

The social network has been working with partners such as faith-based and education organizations to provide them with starter kits so that they can produce better live content from their mobile phones.

Media partners now have access to a landing page with information on Covid-19 and how they can use Facebook Live and other features of the social network to bring people together.

Finally, the social network published how-to guides on Facebook Live, including one on livestreaming events and one on doing so with larger events and conferences.

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