WhatsApp Begins Rolling Out a Host of New Features

|
3 hours ago
Several new features will be added to WhatsApp over the coming weeks.

The Facebook-owned messaging application said in a blog post that stickers are one of the fastest-growing ways for its users to communicate, and it is rolling out new animated sticker packs.

People will soon be able to add new contacts by scanning QR codes.

Dark mode, released for Android and iOS in March, was added to desktop and web.

During group video calls, users can now focus on a single participant by pressing and holding their video, expanding it to full screen.

Video icons were also added to group chats of eight or fewer people so that one of the participants can start a group video call with a single tap.

And people using WhatsApp on Linux-based operating system KaiOS now have access to Status, WhatsApp’s take on Stories, which disappear after 24 hours.

WhatsApp said in its blog post, “WhatsApp is already used and loved by more than 2 billion people around the world. While our focus remains on providing a simple, reliable and private way for people to chat with friends and family, we also

continue to push forward our product design to make sure WhatsApp remains the most useful way for anyone, anywhere to connect.”

https://www.adweek.com/digital/whatsapp-begins-rolling-out-a-host-of-new-features/

Facebook Adds to Monetization Options for Video Creators

|
4 hours ago
Facebook rolled out several updates last week aimed at enabling creators to better monetize their video content on its platform.

Product marketing director Yoav Arnstein and head of creator and publisher experience Jeff Birkeland outlined all of the changes in a blog post, writing, “Now more than ever, creators, video publishers and media are using Facebook to build a meaningful community and business. We’re seeing the traditional notion of a creator evolve as comedians, artists, fitness instructors, athletes, small businesses and sports organizations use video and online events to connect with their audience.”

Facebook is making its Fan Subscriptions and Stars options available to more creators.

Fan Subscriptions enable people to support their favorite creators via recurring monthly payments, and Facebook said any page in these markets meeting these eligibility criteria can sign up here.

And viewers can buy and send Stars to creators via the comments section of videos, enabling creators to monetize their livestreams.

Creators can now set a Stars goal that appears as a permanent overlay on their videos, and managing Stars was improved with tools in Creator Studio including automated thank-you cards.

Facebook said creators in these markets can get started with Stars here.

Arnstein and Birkeland also outlined updates to the social network’s in-stream ads.

Creators can now monetize videos of 60 seconds to 180 seconds with image and post-roll ads, with Arnstein and Birkeland noting, “While we continue to invest in long form content, shorter content can also build loyalty and intention, so we’re testing these two non-interruptive ad formats in engaging short videos.”

New formats were developed for Facebook Live videos, including a new type of mid-roll ad that plays in the main video player while the livestream plays in a smaller window. Select Live videos are also now eligible for monetization.

Facebook is also testing the option of allowing users who

start watching videos in News Feed to continue viewing them in Facebook Watch after viewing a short ad.

The social network is making it possible for pages to create, promote, host and monetize live events on its platform, with select pages receiving invites to its paid online events product, and more details to be shared in the coming weeks.

Video insights in Creator Studio are being expanded to include the performance of Facebook Live videos and Stars, and a new Video Details Explorer dashboard includes traffic sources insights for each video.

Hourly metrics were added for the first 48 hours after videos

are published, and Facebook posts can be published and scheduled directly via the Creator Studio application.

The social network introduced Comment Insights, showing creators how commenting on their own posts boosts engagement and impressions. They will appear as a weekly notification.

Finally, Facebook is investing in a suite of tools that are specific to Instagram, including the ability to log into Creator Studio with Instagram credentials and expanded access to branded content tool Brand Collabs Manager.

https://www.adweek.com/digital/facebook-adds-to-monetization-options-for-video-creators/

Facebook Is Changing Its Algorithm to Prioritize Original Reporting

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https://www.adweek.com/digital/facebook-is-changing-its-algorithm-to-prioritize-original-reporting/

TikTok Banned in the Country Where It’s Become Most Popular

|
14 mins ago
The government of India said today that it will ban 59 mobile

apps with ties to China, including TikTok, amid escalating military tensions between the two Asian superpowers along their shared border.

The apps “pose a threat to [the] sovereignty and integrity of India,” India’s Ministry of Electronics and IT said in a news release, noting data security and privacy concerns.

On that list is TikTok, owned by the Chinese company ByteDance, perhaps the most influential emerging social media platform in the world in recent years, as well as Tencent’s WeChat and Sina Weibo, prominent social platforms in mainland China.

India was the No. 1 country for mobile downloads of TikTok at 46.6 million in February alone, according to app analytics firm Sensor Tower. By comparison, the United States, where TikTok has grown astronomically in recent months, saw 6.4 million downloads during the same time period.

TikTok was already briefly banned in India over child safety concerns last year, but after the company appealed, its app was allowed to be reinstated in the App Store and Google Play.

Last week, The Hindustan Times reported that the Indian intelligence community recommended a list of 52 apps to Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government for removal. That original list included Zoom, which has seen enormous user and revenue growth in recent months due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Zoom, a U.S.-based company, was not among those banned today.

The decision comes two weeks after tensions between India and China’s military forces became deadly along their shared border; 20 Indian soldiers were killed in a recent skirmish.

TikTok has often been criticized around the world for issues of user privacy and the app’s proximity to the Chinese government.

In the U.S., TikTok is under intense scrutiny. ByteDance's 2017 acquisition of Musical.ly, which was rebranded as TikTok, is under a national security review by the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States. Additionally, the company was fined $5.7 million by the Federal Trade Commission over children's privacy violations last year, and a pending Senate bill would prohibit the app from all federal government phones.

Spokespeople for TikTok have previously denied it is owned by a Chinese company. Rather, as they told The New York Times recently, TikTok and all Chinese properties are owned by ByteDance Ltd., a company incorporated in the Cayman Islands.

The platform has gained additional momentum in the U.S. and hired Kevin Mayer, the former head of Disney's streaming operation, to be its new CEO in May.

https://www.adweek.com/digital/tiktok-banned-most-popular-country/

Conviva: Instagram Stories Reach Rates Are Rising

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41 mins ago
Global streaming media intelligence company Conviva released its third annual Instagram Stories Benchmark Report, which analyzed "publishing and user engagement trends" on the Instagram Stories platform across four different verticals: sports, media, entertainment and brands.

Conviva analyzed more than 920 "top" Instagram profiles and

28,700 individual Stories posted in Q1 of 2020. It then compared this data to that from Q1 2019.

The report found that “sports” accounts had the highest Story completion rate, at 90%. Accounts in the “entertainment” vertical experienced the most improvement in this area, going from 81% to 88%.

At the same time, Conviva found that the average number of Stories posted per week across all four verticals decreased in 2020. In addition, the average number of frames per Story also decreased across every vertical except for “Brands,” which increased from 5.2 to 5.5 frames per Story.

Finally, when looking at an average of all four verticals, Conviva found that overall reach rate increased from 6.7% in 2019 to 7% in 2020. Brands, entertainment and sports saw an

increase in average reach rates during this time period, while the media reach rate decreased by 1.1%, from 5.4% to 4.3%.

You can view the full report, here.

https://www.adweek.com/digital/conviva-instagram-stories-reach-rates-are-rising/

Google Is Bringing Free Retail Listings to Search

|
2 hours ago
In April 2020, Google announced that it would update the Google Shopping tab to consist of mostly free product listings. Now, free listings are coming to Google's search results page as well.

Currently, when users search for a product on Google, they will see sponsored shopping links in the product's "knowledge

panel.” This summer, free listings will begin appearing in this panel, and sponsored links will appear in a separate area at the top of the page.

These free listings will roll out in the U.S. on mobile devices first, followed by desktop at a later date.

In a blog post, Google president of commerce, Bill Ready, said the addition of free listings to the Google Shopping tab “has already produced a significant increase in user engagement, with both clicks and impressions up substantially for merchants…”

Businesses can learn more about free product listings on Google’s Merchant Help Center.

https://www.adweek.com/digital/google-is-bringing-free-retail-listings-to-search/

Road Trip: Pinners Hit the Gas on Car-Related Pinterest Searches

|
15 hours ago
As the stay-at-home orders related to Covid-19 begin to lift, road trips have become the rage, with people still reluctant to travel by airplane for numerous reasons.

Pinterest cited data from the Arrivalist Daily Travel Index

showing that car journeys during Memorial Day Weekend saw volume up more than 70% compared with normal summer volume for many destinations.

Global automotive strategy lead John Gray pointed out in a blog post that Pinners are eyeing more sparsely populated destinations.

Citing Pinterest data for April 25 through May 24, compared with the same dates in 2019, Gray said searches for Utah road trip are up 30% year-over-year, while South Dakota road trip is up 25% and national park road trip up 11%.

During the same time period, Pinterest searches for road trip packing surged 237%, while road trip essentials for teens was up 65%.

And comparing May 4 through 17 with April 20 through May 3, searches for boats are up 80%, while kayaking saw a 21% jump.

Cars are being used for much shorter trips, too. Gray wrote that when comparing Pinterest data for April 6 through 19 with that for March 23 through April 5, there was a 197% increase in searches for drive-by birthday parade, while searches for graduation car décor were up 4.7 times and graduation car parade ideas were up 12 times.

Gray noted that even before the coronavirus pandemic began, 84% of weekly Pinners who engage with auto content and purchased luxury cars said those vehicles were extensions of their lives, and 93% liked to spend time in those vehicles.

After the Covid-19 crisis took hold, searches for car date ideas shot up 210% year-over-year, while those for truck bed date were up 180%.

Gray offered four tips for marketers looking to court car-crazy Pinners:

1. **New deals on new wheels:** For Pinners looking for a new

car, let them know about your latest offers and incentives. Nearly one-half of new vehicle shoppers who've delayed purchase say they will be ready to buy within one month when local shelter restrictions are lifted. An equal amount say they'd be in the market sooner if they find a deal or incentive they can't refuse.

2. **Make it easy to get going:** Let Pinners know how your vehicle's features will make their travel plans easier. They're ready to listen: 58% of Pinners who've recently purchased or plan to purchase a vehicle want to learn more about vehicle features they and their families use most. Share details on your advanced trailering cameras to help launch the boat—or on the cargo area power outlets to help everyone plug in when they're far from home.
3. **Get them ready for the road:** Some Pinners' cars have been in park for a while, so they may need a little extra attention. There's been a dramatic rise in calls for dead car battery service, says AAA. Help Pinners get their vehicles road-ready with service offers and maintenance tips before they pull out into traffic.
4. **Inspire their celebrations:** Help Pinners think of ways to trick out their vehicles and show their loved ones how they feel. Give them car parade decoration ideas, or invite your fans to share photos of their own unique car accessories to inspire others. You'll score points for being useful.

He concluded, "All signs point to a steady return to our cars. Now's the time for auto brands to reach consumers with the right messages. Those that help people get back into the driver's seat have a unique opportunity to build affinity and even market share."

https://www.adweek.com/digital/road-trip-pinners-hit-the-gas-on-car-related-pinterest-searches/

Upon Further Review, Facebook Will Label Politicians' Posts That Violate Its Rules

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16 hours ago
Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg is taking a page out of the Twitter handbook, revealing during a Facebook Live video Friday afternoon that the social network will begin labeling content from elected officials that it deems newsworthy, but that would otherwise violate its policies.

Zuckerberg explained in a separate post that this occurs "a handful of times a year," and that seeing speech from politicians is often in the public interest, and that content will be allowed to remain on its platform as long as the public interest value outweighs the risk of harm.

This marks a shift from his comments late last month, in the wake of President Donald Trump's now-infamous "When the looting starts, the shooting starts" social post.

Twitter chose to allow the tweet to remain accessible, while placing it behind a label indicating that it violated the platform's rules against glorifying violence.

Facebook, meanwhile, allowed the post to remain live as-is, with Zuckerberg saying at the time that it did not violate the social network's policies, writing in a Facebook post in the late hours of May 29, "Unlike Twitter, we do not have a policy

of putting a warning in front of posts that may incite violence because we believe that if a post incites violence, it should be removed regardless of whether it is newsworthy, even if it comes from a politician."

Zuckerberg said during his livestream Friday that there will be no exceptions for content that glorifies violence or is intended to suppress voting, adding, "We're going to take that content down, no matter who says it. There are no exceptions for politicians in any of the policies I'm announcing here today."

Zuckerberg wrote in his post that people will be allowed to share content that is labeled in this fashion in order "to condemn it, just like we do with other problematic content," but they will see a prompt informing them that the content may violate its policies.

Free Press co-CEO Jessica J. González weighed in, saying in a statement, "Facebook must understand that enabling the spread of hate speech comes at a huge financial cost. The country is changing. We're at a pivotal moment in the fight for the rights of Black and Brown people. Unless Facebook changes and takes crucial steps to curtail the spread of racism and bigotry, it will continue to suffer consequences."

#StopHateForProfit, the push for advertisers to boycott Facebook, counts Free Press among its organizers, along with the Anti-Defamation League, Color of Change, Common Sense Media, the NAACP and Sleeping Giants.

And that push is working, as several brands have committed to various degrees. A list, which will be updated as needed, is available here.

The bulk of Zuckerberg's appearance on Facebook Live was devoted to the upcoming presidential election in the U.S., and he said, "The 2020 elections were already shaping up to be incredibly heated before we faced the complexities of a

pandemic and racial injustice.”

He expanded on last week’s news that Facebook was embarking on the “largest voter information campaign in American history,” with plans to register 4 million people prior to Election Day (Nov. 3) by outlining steps the company is taking to provide authoritative information on the process.

Zuckerberg noted that Covid-19 brings the extra challenge of potentially scaring people away from going to the polls, making accurate information even more vital.

A Voting Information Center will appear at the top of Facebook’s News Feed and Instagram’s feed, directing users to information on how and where to vote, including voting by mail and early voting.

The Voting Information Center will also contain links to posts that discuss voting, including posts from politicians, with Zuckerberg adding that including these posts is not a judgment on their accuracy, but an attempt to share authoritative information.

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LinkedIn Details Its Pride

Initiatives

|
13 hours ago

LinkedIn’s temporary logo celebrates Pride
LinkedIn is marking Pride with a temporary logo update on its desktop homepage, as well as new stickers and profile background images.

The professional network recently held a virtual event featuring Karamo Brown of Queer Eye, who said during the event, “The spirit of Pride is empathy, education and equality. It’s about people saying, ‘I want equality and deserve equality.’ It’s about asking people to be empathetic to our experiences, and to understand what we’re going through, so that you can join our fight. I mean, we just saw yesterday where the Supreme Court finally said, ‘Yeah, we can’t fire you because you’re gay.’ I want people to think about that. Yesterday, people finally said, ‘We can’t fire you because you’re gay.’ That means that we should still be in a space of understanding. That as we’re going to Pride and we’re celebrating where we’ve come from, we’re also educating

ourselves on where we need to go and having empathy as allies and as members of the community ourselves, and continuing to try to stride and fight."

This LinkedIn Learning path on Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging for All is available free-of-charge through Aug. 31. Courses include:

Finally, the professional network is encouraging employees and members to share their personal stories and experiences using the hashtag #OutOnLinkedIn.

Join Adweek and many of this year's Pride Stars, LGBTQ leaders creating an impact in advertising, marketing, and culture, this Friday at 12pm ET for a live discussion on how they are personally and professionally navigating these turbulent times. Save your virtual seat.

https://www.adweek.com/digital/linkedin-details-its-pride-initiatives/

@TwitterOpen Has All Cylinders Cranking for Pride Month

|
14 hours ago
@TwitterOpen, Twitter's business resource group for lesbian,

gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, and ally employees, is putting the spotlight on the stories of its members and other employees to celebrate Pride.

The social network said the #AlwaysProud campaign is intended to empower the voices and validate the experiences of its LGBTQIA+ community worldwide, and to serve as a reminder that Pride is year-round.

Twitter has worked around the fact that the pandemic is keeping people out of the office and canceling parades and marches by hosting remote events such as: live drag performances; watch parties (for shows including Intertech; Love, Victor; Pose; and Queer Eye); panels on topics including allyship, marriage equality and pride; and question-and-answer sessions with Margaret Cho, Ani DiFranco and DeRay Mckesson.

The company also surprised @TwitterOpen members and allies worldwide with Pride boxes filled with reminders of "how we are #AlwaysProud."

On-platform, @TwitterOpen released its #AlwaysProud video, as well as the first installment in a short video series, asking the question, "What's one thing you'd like to tell the queer community?"

The social network created hashtag-triggered emojis for tweets containing #AlwaysProud and #UntilWeAllBelong.

And the @TwitterOpen avatar was changed to stand in solidarity with fellow BRG @Blackbirds.

Join Adweek and many of this year's Pride Stars, LGBTQ leaders creating an impact in advertising, marketing, and culture, this Friday at 12pm ET for a live discussion on how they are personally and professionally navigating these turbulent times. Save your virtual seat.

https://www.adweek.com/digital/twitteropen-has-all-cylinders-cranking-for-pride-month/