

# EYECUE

## How Beauty Brands are Communicating on Social Media During COVID-19 Pandemic

Beauty Industry Social Media  
Trend Report by Eyecue Insights

May 2020

Illustration by [@erindwia](#)



## Report Overview

For this report we analyzed the performance on Instagram of over 60 leading global legacy, prestige, indie and disruptor brands in the beauty industry. We focused on metrics from January through April to understand the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic had on the industry. We paid particular attention to how brands are adapting their strategies to the challenges imposed by global lockdowns, social distancing and settling into the *new normal*. As an output, the report identifies the most relevant trends and best practices we have come across.

Illustration by [@angelina\\_bambina\\_dsgn](#)



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Illustration by [@artbetweenthealps](#)



# Key Trends in Digital Content for the Beauty Industry in the COVID-19 Era



Illustration by [@majatomljanovic](#)

## 1. Growth of Text and Quote

"There is no business as usual." This was a powerful text/quote message shared by Lush Cosmetics. At Eyecue Insights we observed a tremendous growth in the use of this type of content during COVID-19, when the crisis hit a global scale in the middle of March and bricks and mortar businesses closed down their operations temporarily. Brands found in this type of content a way to connect with their communities with institutional and inspirational messages.

*Eyecue Insights: Text & Quotes content increase by +162% from pre COVID-19 (from 2/1/2020 until 3/15/2020) to post COVID-19 (from 3/16/2020 to 4/30/2020)*



**In this moment,  
there is no  
business as  
usual.**

Post by [@lushcosmetics](https://www.instagram.com/lushcosmetics)

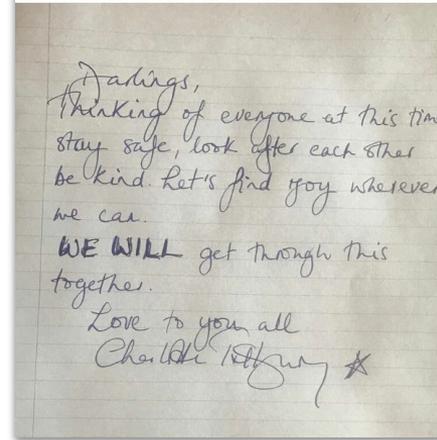
## 2. Humanization of Brands

Personalized letters written by founders delivered great performance in this type of content category, showing the importance of humanizing brands during these trying times.

***EyeCue Insights: Glossier had over 132K likes and a 4.76% engagement rate in its post signed by founder Emily Weiss published the day they decided to close their stores, becoming the highest engagement post among all brands analyzed in this report in the Quote & Text category during March. Other brands that used this type of content to connect with their community were Kylie Cosmetics, with a letter signed by founder Kylie Jenner, Charlotte Tilbury, who published a very authentic handwritten letter, and prestige brand Sisley Paris that shared a letter signed by the brand's president, Philippe d'Omano.***

To everyone reading: We're not alarmists, we're realists. While this may not be the right decision for every company, it's the one where we feel we can make an impact. To fellow business owners, remember your core values during this time—this is when they matter most. To our customers and community, remember the power of adaptability. Stay present, be responsible, and try to lean into warmth and openness when you want to close off and pull down the shades. This is a time for us to remember our humanity.

Love from (virtual) Glossier HQ,  
Emily



**My mission as a beauty brand founder has always been to encourage you all to feel beautiful and empowered, and at the heart of that is the importance of taking care of yourself.**

**Now, more than ever, we need to focus on taking care of ourselves, and each other.**

**I will be using my personal and brand channels over the coming weeks to share news, updates and recommendations from public health officials so that we can all stay informed and safe.**

**The safety of my teams is also a top priority for me. From everyone on the production lines, to my fulfillment centers, and my team in our LA office. I am in constant contact with my teams to make sure proper precautions are in place to keep everyone safe, and we will continue to follow protocols set in place by the government, and suggestions made by officials who are working hard to help us all stay informed on how we can prevent the spread of the Coronavirus.**

**We all need to do our part by washing our hands, staying home if sick, and taking social distancing seriously by avoiding crowds and large gatherings. But we can all still stick together, even when apart. We are in this together. ❤️**

**Stay safe and healthy. Xo Kylie**

Please look after one another, wherever you may be. Continue to embrace self-care and get inspired by better days ahead.

Yours sincerely,

Philippe d'Omano,  
President of Sisley

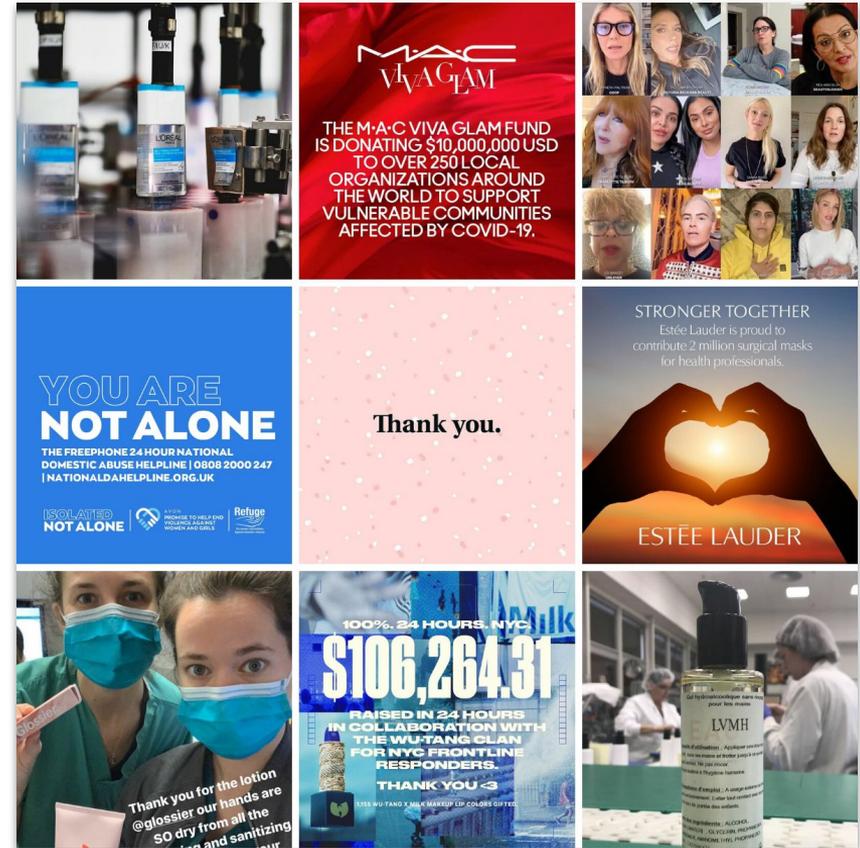
Posts by [@glossier](#), [@ctilburymakeup](#),  
[@kyliecosmetics](#) and [@sisleyparisofficial](#)

### 3. Doing Good and Giving Back

From donating millions of dollars to organizations helping the most vulnerable, to producing tons of hand sanitizers and soap for health institutions, to giving beauty and essential items to the health workers on the frontline of the COVID-19 fight, beauty brands - big and small - have been at the forefront of giving back to those affected by the pandemic.

*Eyevue Insights: Mention of donations and related keywords\* multiplied by 9 from January to April, accounting for 5% of all content published by brands analyzed in this report in March and April. In March, content related to donations, doing good and giving back jumped in performance, generating 2.4 million likes.*

*\*covid19, stay safe, heroes, mission, healthcare, frontline, communities, workers, safety, hospital, charity, sanitizer, staying safe, hospitals, care workers*

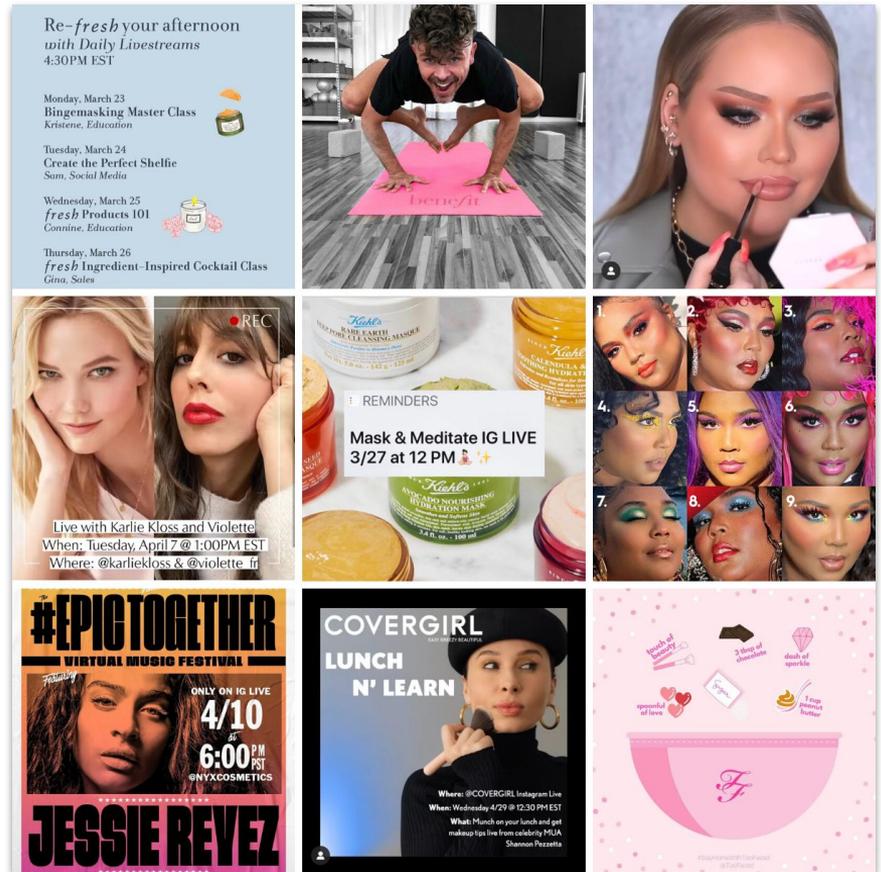


Posts by [@lorealparis](#), [@maccosmetics](#), [@revlon](#), [@avon\\_uk](#), [@birchbox](#), [@esteelauder](#), [@glossier](#), [@milkmakeup](#) and [@givenchybeauty](#)

## 4. Live Streaming Explosion

Instagram livestreaming or 'IG live' content has exploded in the COVID-19 era as users in quarantine are looking to incorporate new skills, exercise, or simply be entertained. Beauty brands have been really creative in this space, finding ways to create content remotely, collaborating with their network of influencers, celebrities, makeup artists, and skincare experts; as well as fitness, cooking, yoga or meditation instructors, among others. Music has also played an important role, with live performances of all kinds. And, since festivals such as Coachella were re-scheduled or cancelled, brands like NYX Cosmetics created their own online music festivals.

*EyeCue Insights: Streaming from February to April multiplied by 4.6 and its performance by 9.4, from 400K likes to 3.9M likes. Streaming is the new leading content for brands to connect with consumers in an entertaining way.*



Posts by [@freshbeauty](#), [@benefitcosmetics](#), [@maybelline](#), [@esteelauder](#), [@kiehls](#), [@urbandecaycosmetics](#), [@nyxcosmetics](#), [@covergirl](#), [@toofaced](#)

## 5. The Rise of Skincare

In the aftermath of COVID-19 pandemic, health and wellness became one of the biggest concerns for consumers. As they stayed at home, used less makeup, and adopted feel good and self-care routines, skincare became one of the biggest trends on the rise.

*EyeCue Insights: Skincare content jumped from 1.8M likes to 8M likes from February to April - meaning 4.3 times the amount of likes. Taking into consideration the growth in content, this category overperformed by 2.2 times comparing with January and February (see next page).*

*The keywords related to this category in the last trimester are:*

*Age (1209 mentions), hydrate (407 mentions), uv (383), ingredient (280), texture (276), hydration (271 mentions), nourish (258), ingredients (240), fragrance free (226), paraben free (221), acid (179), secret (159), firm (157), oils (145), cleanser (142), antioxidant (116), hyaluronic (113), happyskin (113), skincare routine (111), coconut (96), plant (95), hyaluronic acid (93), wrinkles (90).*



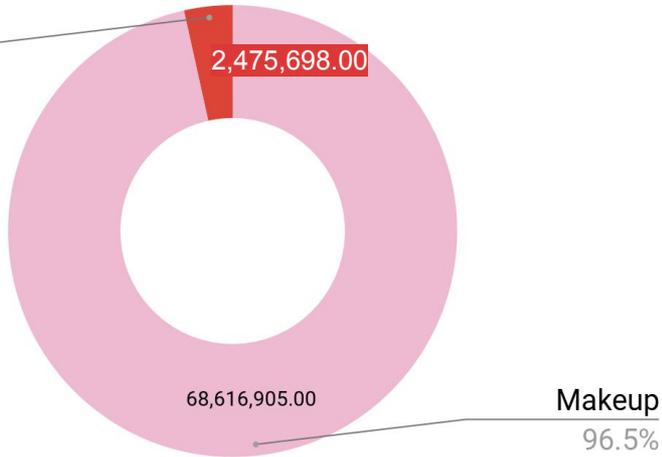
Posts by @[welovecoco](#)

## 5. The Rise of Skincare

Skincare content increased from **10% to 25%** from January to April, and makeup content decreased from **89% to 75%**.

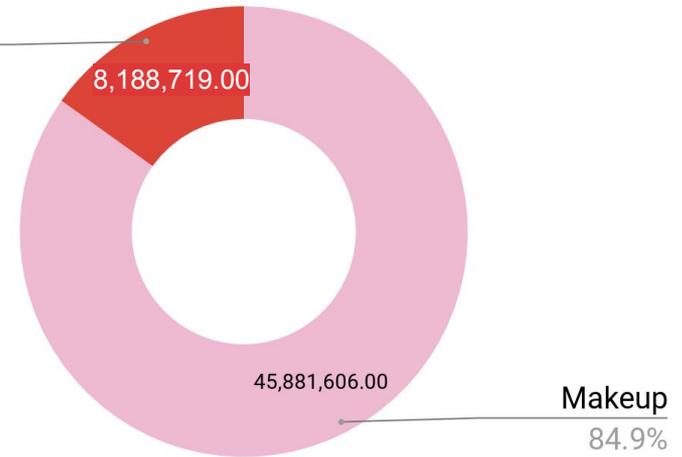
January Likes distribution

Skincare  
3.5%



April Likes Distribution

Skincare  
15.1%



Likes generated by Skincare posts **increased** from January to April by **+230%**.  
Likes generated by Makeup posts **decreased** from January to April by **-33%**

\*Taking into consideration +80% of the posts from 67 leading Beauty Brands analyzed in this report.

## 6. Homemade is a New Normal

As quarantine lifestyle settles in, homemade content aesthetics become a new normal. Visual assets - photo and video - shared by brands are being created with smartphones by users or in collaboration with digital content creators working from home. In a crisis context when marketing budgets are cut, this becomes an opportunity for brands to create compelling campaigns and content from home, with little to no production or post-production costs.

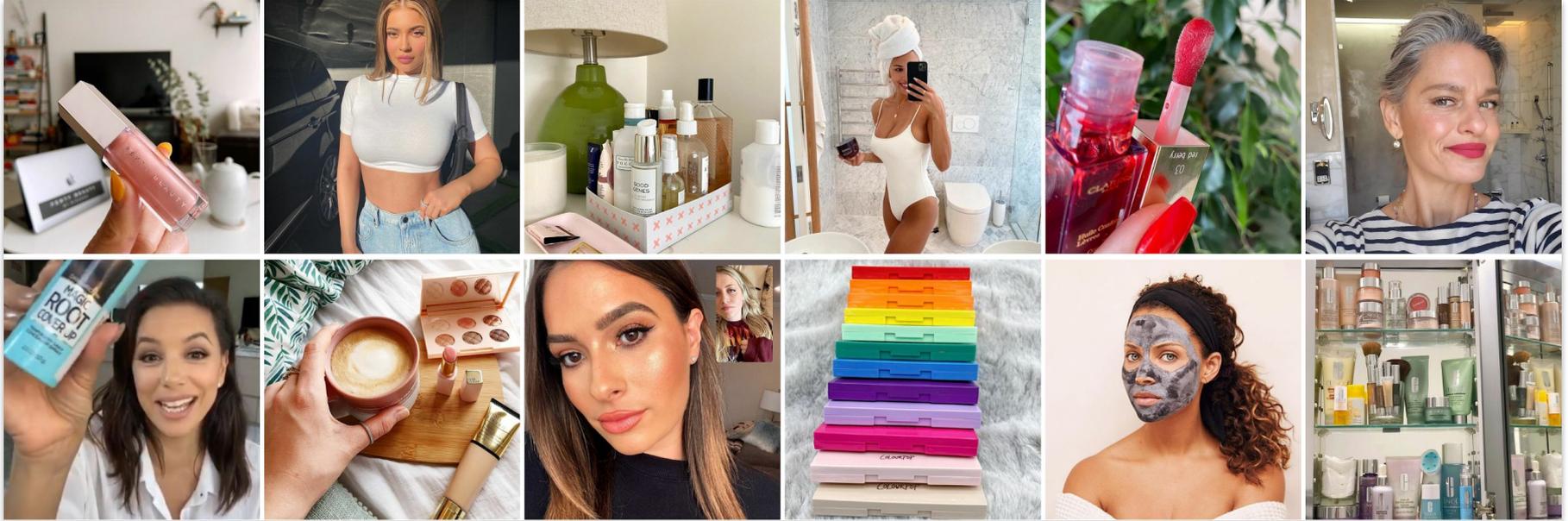
*Eyecue Insights: This post from Glossier is part of the campaign the brand created for the launch of its hand cream where all contents shared are homemade. The image, a UGC created by content creator @juliefagerholt with 15k followers in Copenhagen, was a top performing post for the brand, bringing in over 123k likes and 372 comments with a 4.37% engagement rate.*



Post by [@glossier](#)

## 6. Homemade is a New Normal

Other examples of top performing posts with homemade content:



[@fentybeauty](#), [@kyliecosmetics](#), [@birchbox](#), [@caudalie](#), [@clarinsusa](#), [@welovecoco](#),  
[@lorealparis](#), [@esteelauder](#), [@smashboxcosmetics](#), [@colourpopcosmetics](#), [@beautycounter](#) and [@clinique](#)

## 7. Online Beauty Consulting is Here

In the coming months brick and mortar shops will eventually reopen under new restrictions. But after weeks of consumers staying at home, and with the idea of social distancing still prevalent, shopping behaviors have changed. The COVID-19 pandemic forced brands to up their game on e-commerce and accelerate development and improvement of their digital shopping experience. In this new context leading beauty brands are taking typical in-store benefits, such as one-on-one consultations, online, giving clients the opportunity to connect with experts for valuable advice.

*Eyecue Insights: Some of the brands that are offering Online Beauty Consultations with amazing response from their communities are Laura Mercier, Deciem, Clarins, Glossier and Lush.*

A promotional image for Laura Mercier featuring a black makeup brush with a red-tipped bristle head and a black compact of blush. The compact is open, showing two shades of blush: a vibrant red and a soft peach. The brand name 'laura mercier' is visible on the inner lid of the compact. The background is a soft, warm-toned gradient.

**We're Still Here For You!**

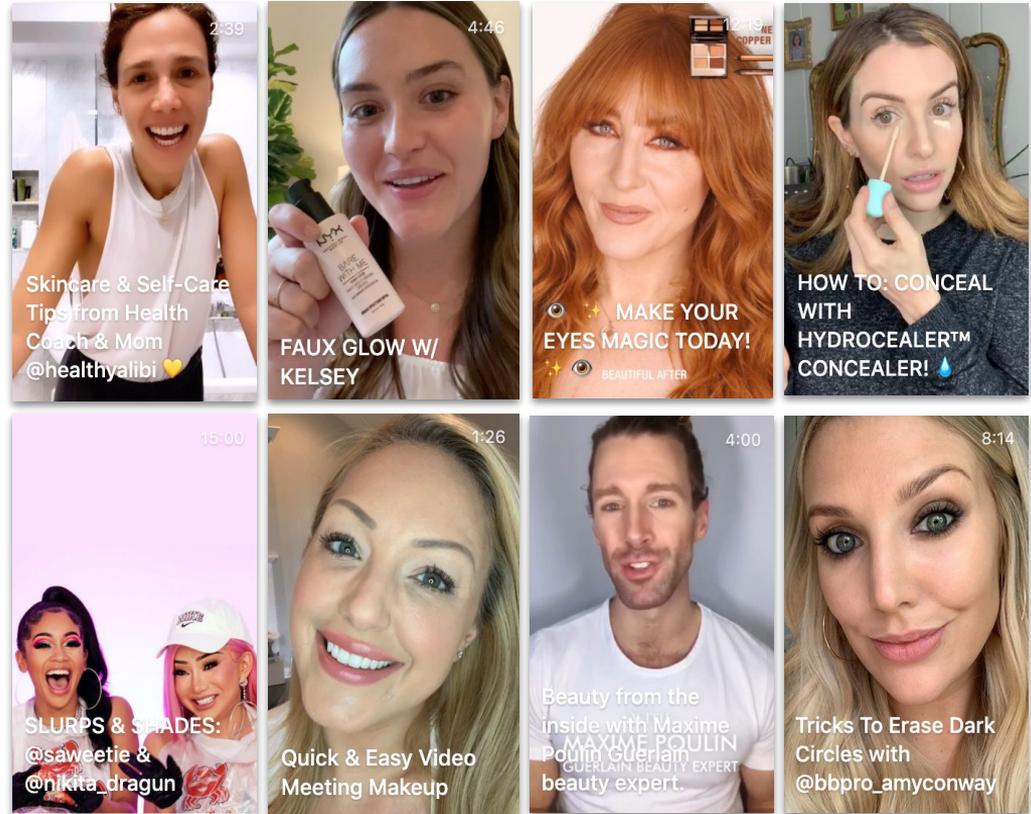
Learn a new makeup technique or look with a complimentary video consultation with our makeup artists

Post by [@lauramercier](#)

## 8. IGTV is Booming

IGTV was born in 2018 but only recently, in the COVID-19 era, have brands really understood the potential of the platform that allows sharing longer-form, serialized content, that users can view at any time (such as on YouTube). It's a great place to post educational content such as "how-tos" or simply to entertain and connect more deeply with your audience on Instagram.

*Eyecue Insights: Video posts on feed grew 24% from February to April, mainly because of IGTV. From the total of beauty brands analyzed in this report (67), quantity of videos published in IGTV jumped from 134 (pre COVID-19) to 517 (post COVID-19), growing by 377%. Also, 28% of brands analyzed posted for the first time in IGTV 'post COVID-19', and only 10% are still not using the platform.*



IGTV Posts by [@kiehl's](#), [@nyxprofessional](#), [@charlottetilbury](#), [@tartecosmetics](#), [@morphebrushes](#), [@itcosmetics](#), [@guerlain](#), [@bobbibrown](#)

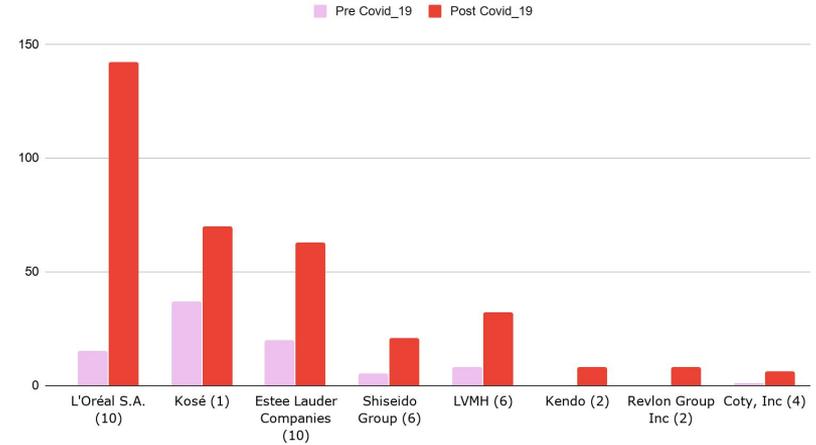
## 8. IGTV is Booming

Big players on the IGTV growth:

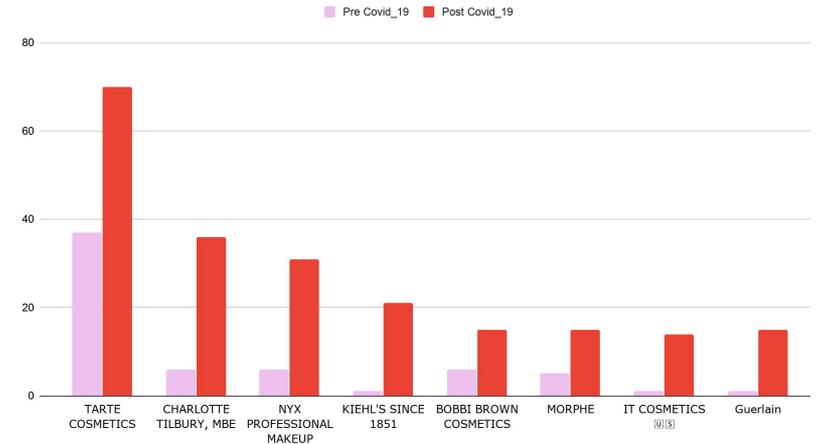
L'Oréal Group (10 brands) accounted for 30% of IGTV videos published in 'post COVID-19' by brands analyzed in this report. In the brand category, **Tarte Cosmetics**, owned by Japanese Group Kose, got the pole position growing its quantity of IGTV content from 37 (pre COVID-19) to 70 (post COVID-19).

Other brands betting big on the platform are: **Charlotte Tilbury** (from 6 to 36), **NYX** (from 6 to 31), **Kiehl's** (from 1 to 21), **BobbiBrown** (from 6 to 15), **Morphe Brushes** (from 5 to 15), **ItCosmetics** (from 1 to 14), and **Guerlain** (from 1 to 15).

IGTV Posts growth from Pre Covid-19 to Post Covid-19 - Cosmetics Groups



IGTV Posts growth from Pre Covid-19 to Post Covid-19 - Brands



## 9. Micro-influence is a Big Deal

The aspirational lifestyle of mega influencers seems disconnected from the current social mood. Brands are concerned about receiving backlash for their associations with these influencers. For this reason, along with marketing budget cutbacks, brands are rethinking their influencer marketing strategies and are finding new ways of working with fresh talent, micro-influencers, or simply sharing more user generated content (UGC).

*Eyecue Insights: Micro-influencer content (less than 25k followers) was the best performer within the UGC category. The growth from 'pre COVID-19' to 'post COVID-19' was 28%, generating 37% more likes, proof that this type of content is well received by the beauty audience. In the case of ColourPop (see image for reference) UGC content represent 37% of their total content feed and Micro-influencer content brought in 3 million likes 'Post COVID-19', representing 46% growth in performance.*

SUMMARY		85,3645 Posts		ENGAGEMENT PER POST		0.81% 2.27% max		0.52% max			
LIKES /1000 Follows		764 per post		12.73 per video		COMMENTS /1000 Follows		0.26 per post		0.16 per video	
	BRAND ColourPop Cosmetics	RATING ★★★★★	ENGAGEMENT 2.27%	LIKES 215.4K	DATE 4/16/2020		BRAND ColourPop Cosmetics	RATING ★★★★★	ENGAGEMENT 2.22%	LIKES 173.4K	DATE 4/19/2020
	BRAND ColourPop Cosmetics	RATING ★★★★★	ENGAGEMENT 2.16%	LIKES 203.3K	DATE 4/21/2020		BRAND ColourPop Cosmetics	RATING ★★★★★	ENGAGEMENT 1.50%	LIKES 137.6K	DATE 3/27/2020
	BRAND ColourPop Cosmetics	RATING ★★★★★	ENGAGEMENT 1.36%	LIKES 119.3K	DATE 3/18/2020		BRAND ColourPop Cosmetics	RATING ★★★★★	ENGAGEMENT 1.25%	LIKES 116.3K	DATE 4/3/2020
	BRAND ColourPop Cosmetics	RATING ★★★★★	ENGAGEMENT 1.19%	LIKES 112.3K	DATE 3/18/2020		BRAND ColourPop Cosmetics	RATING ★★★★★	ENGAGEMENT 1.17%	LIKES 95K	DATE 4/13/2020
	BRAND ColourPop Cosmetics	RATING ★★★★★	ENGAGEMENT 1.15%	LIKES 109.3K	DATE 4/23/2020		BRAND ColourPop Cosmetics	RATING ★★★★★	ENGAGEMENT 1.15%	LIKES 104.3K	DATE 4/10/2020
	BRAND ColourPop Cosmetics	RATING ★★★★★	ENGAGEMENT 1.12%	LIKES 105.3K	DATE 4/7/2020		BRAND ColourPop Cosmetics	RATING ★★★★★	ENGAGEMENT 1.03%	LIKES 97.3K	DATE 4/7/2020
	BRAND ColourPop Cosmetics	RATING ★★★★★	ENGAGEMENT 1.01%	LIKES 95.6K	DATE 4/15/2020		BRAND ColourPop Cosmetics	RATING ★★★★★	ENGAGEMENT 0.98%	LIKES 88.9K	DATE 4/9/2020
	BRAND ColourPop Cosmetics	RATING ★★★★★	ENGAGEMENT 1.00%	LIKES 89.1K	DATE 3/31/2020		BRAND ColourPop Cosmetics	RATING ★★★★★	ENGAGEMENT 0.97%	LIKES 85.2K	DATE 4/27/2020
	BRAND ColourPop Cosmetics	RATING ★★★★★	ENGAGEMENT 0.98%	LIKES 88.9K	DATE 4/9/2020		BRAND ColourPop Cosmetics	RATING ★★★★★	ENGAGEMENT 0.91%	LIKES 80.3K	DATE 4/6/2020
	BRAND ColourPop Cosmetics	RATING ★★★★★	ENGAGEMENT 0.97%	LIKES 85.2K	DATE 4/27/2020		BRAND ColourPop Cosmetics	RATING ★★★★★	ENGAGEMENT 0.91%	LIKES 80.3K	DATE 4/6/2020
	BRAND ColourPop Cosmetics	RATING ★★★★★	ENGAGEMENT 0.91%	LIKES 80.3K	DATE 4/6/2020		BRAND ColourPop Cosmetics	RATING ★★★★★	ENGAGEMENT 0.90%	LIKES 84.7K	DATE 3/28/2020

## 6 Ways to Sustain Relevance in Trying New Times

The world has changed due to COVID-19 pandemic and now consumers expect a lot more from brands. The ones that want to lead the way have to be more creative, responsible, flexible and intelligent than ever. Brands have to make our world better, easier and more enjoyable in every way. And they have to do more with less. It's time to explore, experiment and innovate.

In the following pages you'll find Eyecue's take on how to sustain relevance during the COVID-19 era.

Illustration by [@lisategtmeier](#)



## 1. Mix Creativity and Data Intelligence

At Eyecue we believe that creativity and data intelligence are at the heart of a modern brand. Teams that are empowered by data intelligence technologies will take creativity to the next level. It's time to make space for your teams to experiment and back them up with the right data so they can create impactful work.

## 2. Innovate and Move Fast

This pandemic has made consumers stop and reflect, but for brands it has forced them to re-adapt or completely change their strategies and speed up digital development in ecommerce and social media communications. The data shows us that in this context of uncertainty and everyday change, brands that are more engaged with their communities, have a wide and open view of the world, move with ease in the digital world, and have the flexibility to change and are the ones leading the way.

Illustration by [@erindwia](#)



### **3. Digitalize and Humanize Your Brand**

The new world we are living in is more connected than ever in the digital space, but just as automation is important for brands to achieve scalability, so are one-on-one human connections. Consumers are looking to have more direct, transparent, empathic and genuine connections. They want to be inspired, entertained, and educated by the brands they use and love. Create content that goes well beyond your products and dive deep into the soul of your brand.

### **4. Be Cost-efficient and Find New Talent**

Crisis and limited resources ignite creative solutions. Brands have to do more with less and need to rethink how they are spending their budgets. It's time to diversify and try-out new ideas, tools and talents.

On one hand, big productions and overly produced content feel like a thing of the past, so consider collaborating with up and coming content creators that are generating compelling visuals in a very cost-efficient way.

On the other hand, have a clear UGC strategy. Engage with communities and give them the motivation to create and share content around your products and the lifestyles associated with them; then use that content. Do it the smart way: using artificial intelligence technologies such as Eyecue's to identify new talent with powerful voices, and select the best content based on performance data.

## 5. Stay Ahead of The Curve

To stay ahead of the curve brands need to identify and act on new trends before the competition does. Data analytics will make this possible. It's important to have a clear understanding of performance, of how consumers are reacting to different types of content and what works - and what doesn't - for your brand and your competition. Get insights from successful campaigns, keep a wide and open view of your competitive landscape, and adjust strategies along the way in real time.

## 6. Create Joy and Ease For Your Community

The COVID-19 pandemic, quarantine at home and social distancing showed people that they want to work smarter and spend more time with their loved ones, doing the things they truly love. Connect with the needs and desires of your community and focus on creating amazing experiences for them to have an overall easier and more enjoyable life.

Illustration by [@majatomljanovic](#)



## About Eyecue Insights

Eyecue is a data consulting company and a social media analytics tool that blends **big data analytics** with **proprietary artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning & image recognition technology**, turning social media images into structured data that can be analyzed, optimized and customized to drive desired outcomes in **marketing, influencer marketing & discovery, market research, PR, and commercial efforts.**

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*Illustration by @tomfordbeauty*

