WHAT'S TRENDING # INTAGRAM

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1.   ABSTRACT

Trending is the buzz word in today's marketing scenario and Instagram as a platform has become the face of social media marketing which in turn gives wings to trends. Corporate houses, global businesses, regional companies, celebrity endorsement companies, brand management companies are extensively using this platform to garner such following of the product or the person which was unimaginable prior to the Instagram era. This article discusses the very concept of Instagram, why it should be used, how it is used and how it should be used and the way it is changing the dynamics of social media marketing and marketing on a whole. It also discusses various new apps and tools which has made this experience more fascinating.

KEYWORDS: Instagram, trending, hashtag, geotags, engagement, stories, content marketing, celebrity endorsements, sharing, emoji.

2.   INTRODUTION

INTAGRAM is one of the largest social networks in existence with 800 million active monthly users and counting, according to TechCrunch. To put in context, it's very likely that a good portion of any business's target audience can be found on the platform. Another activity research has shown that Instagram is the pioneer when it comes to engagement rate amongst its other peers, such as Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, etc. It has almost presence of all the major global and regional brands, all the major and industry specific celebrities, regional and location specific influencers. It is a fad amongst the marketing world which has dramatically transformed.

Instagram is basically a mobile, desktop, and web-based photo-sharing application and platform which allows users to share pictures, videos and visual stories either publicly, or privately to distinct followers. It was created by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger, and launched in October 2010 as a free mobile app exclusively for the IOS operating system. A version for Android devices was released 2 years later, in April 2012, followed by a limited feature website interface in November 2012, and apps for Windows 10 Mobile and Windows 10 in April 2016 and October 2016 respectively.

Instagram lets users upload photos or videos to the platform. Users have the option to apply various digital filters to their images, and also add locations through geotags. They can add hashtags to their posts, linking the photos up to other content on Instagram featuring the same subject or main topic. Users can connect their Instagram account to other social media profiles, enabling them to share photos to those profiles as well. In August 2016, Instagram introduced a "Stories" feature, letting users add photos to a 24-hour temporary story, with subsequent updates adding virtual stickers and augmented reality objects.

After its launch in 2010, Instagram rapidly gained popularity, with one million registered users in 2 months, 10 million in a year, and ultimately 800 million as of September 2017. Its users have uploaded over 40 billion photos to the platform as of October 2015. As of April 2017, Instagram Direct has 375 million active users, while, as of June 2017, the Instagram Stories functionality has over 250 million active users. Instagram was acquired by Facebook in April 2012 for approximately US$1 billion in cash and stock. The popularity of Instagram has resulted in worldwide community attachment, including dedicated "trends", in which users post

specific types of photos on specific days of the week with a hashtag representing a common theme. Right now it is the most influential social network all across the globe.

3.   WHY INSTAGRAM

Instagram allows a lot of opportunities to marketers. Benefits of it can be listed as follows:

3.1 Get More Clicks on the advertisements (pictures)
People are 250% more likely to click (tap) on an Instagram advertisement than any other social media ad.

3.2 Outside Links inclusion
With Instagram advertising, one can include outside links, which enables the person to use landing pages and promote product pages. Instagram does not currently allow clickable links in posts or direct messages. One can include a link in caption or message, but the recipient has to copy and paste it into their browser.

3.3 Positive User Experience has been created
Advertising on Instagram is a way of getting in front of desired target audience on the mobile devices they prefer to use today. The ads within the feeds are also less intrusive or distracting than, say, display ads so they create a positive experience with company's brand.

3.4 Instagram has a huge no. of users
As of September 2017, Instagram had over 800 million monthly active users- that are 1.6 billion possible eyeballs there to see any post. The growth is staggering and isn't slowing down anytime soon either.

3.5 Instagram users are most active among its peers
A study done by Forrester Research found that Instagram users are 58 times more likely to like, comment, or share a post than Facebook users and 120 times more likely than Twitter users. This is important because when sending content out into the big open space that is social media, one want it to be played with. Users want that gratification that comes with a like, a comment, or a share. Those moments between posting a photo and reaching that desired like mark feels never ending.

3.6 Users are also spending a considerable amount of time on the platform
On an average, smart phone users are spending 3 hours on their phone per day. If we look exclusively at teenagers, they're spending 9 hours per day. With new added features such as Insta stories the time spent on Instagram over other social platforms is growing at an accelerated rate.

3.7 Instagram spells authenticity
Instagram made moves to drain the swamp of fake accounts and bots to ensure their service is as clean and authentic as possible. An individual or brand whose account is boosted by fake followers creates distrust and skepticism among the entire platform. For this reason, Instagram is dedicated to making sure that people/brands aren't misrepresenting themselves.

4.   HOW IT IS USED: TYPES OF INSTAGRAM POSTS

There are four main types of Instagram posts that can help any business to showcase products or services, introduce new ones, or promote events or sales, or special offers.

4.1 Photo posts
Instagram photo ads are simple and easy. One can use square, landscape, or vertical formats (resolution will vary for each format). Videos are engaging, but one can pack a powerful punch if he uses the right image and caption.
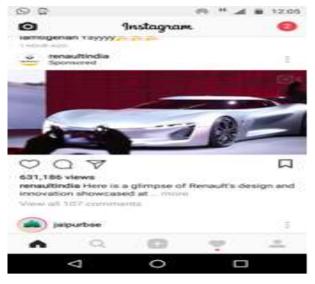Examples

4.2 Video posts

An Instagram ad video can be up to 60 seconds in length. All videos on Instagram automatically play without audio (users have to tap on the video in order to activate the sound), so it should not be totally dependent on audio.

4.3 Carousel posts

Instagram Carousel ads enable user to include multiple pictures or a mix of picture and video in one ad post. Just as with a typical multiple-picture post, users have to swipe left to see the other images in the ad.

4.4 Stories posts

Instagram Stories help to tell an engaging story about the business and captivate the audience. As with video ads, the key to getting results out of an Instagram Stories Ad is in making the point clearly and quickly, as the viewers cannot rewind back.

5.   HOW IT SHOULD BE USED

Instagram is a valuable marketing tool that brands, both small or large, should be using to its fullest extent. The highly visual nature of this unique platform allows marketers to convey their brand story in a different way. The use of pictures and videos provides brands an opportunity to engage their audience effectively with minimum risk of language barriers. A well planned marketing strategy will be required to use it efficiently and effectively. Some suggestions to use Instagram to its fullest extent are:

5.1 Make it trending

Users on Instagram have created "trends" through hashtags, which are specific keywords combined with a hash symbol that lets them share content with other Instagram users. The trends deemed the most popular on the platform often highlight a specific event of the day and post the material accordingly like on a cricket match day India vs Pakistan #indvspak will be trending, on mother's day #mothersday will trend and accordingly advertisements are devised in such a way that they match the trend of the day.

In December 2017, Instagram allowed user to follow a hashtag too allowing relevant highlights of the topic in their feeds.

5.2 Get the photos right

Marketers should keep in mind that an Instagram feed is only as good as the photographs used. So, while thinking of Instagram marketing, user should start with premium quality photos to enjoy the desired results. Some suggestions are:

5.2.1. The best way to save time and compose ideal photos for Instagram is to click striking photographs as these are the ones which will attract more likes.

5.2.2. There are many apps available to shoot Instagram photos like Smug Mug for iPhone and Android with rule of third grids to follow.

5.3 Track traffic using customized link shortener

A crucial thing social media marketers should know is how effectively their Instagram account drives traffic and valuable leads to their website. Google Analytics can be used, but the primary deficiency of this tool is that it cannot accurately track the traffic while the users access the site from mobile Instagram accounts.

5.3.1 To get a more accurate rate of clicks, business marketers can use the customized bit.ly link or a similar link by another shortened for URL of the Instagram bio.

5.3.2 One should create a unique bit.ly link every time while creating new landing pages or campaigns to effectively track traffic.

5.4 Cross promotions should be tried

The latest trend in Instagram when it comes to personal of business networking is to share by tagging others or directly promoting other brands, organizations, services, and products.

5.4.1 For example, in case of local bars which serve quality beers of different brewers in the region, both the parties can take advantage of Instagram marketing by tagging each other.

5.4.2 Associate businesses like dealer-supplier, service providers-clients of any sort can support each other with tap takeovers.

As a result, one can enjoy a higher recognition among the target audience of various businesses, and in turn get increased traffic and improved results.

5.5 Make most of the trending hashtags

Instagramers widely use the Explore feature on this platform to find relevant posts related to the updated and trending hashtags like #metoo, #virushka, etc.

5.5.1 Check if one can find such trending tags, which are relevant to the concerned brand, and include them in the posts to make them more attractive.

5.5.2 Instagram also introduced the feature to search by emoji. If one can devise ways that how these emojis can be incorporated as to enhance the appeal that can be of great use for promotions.

5.6 Get Instagram into the marketing mix

Getting followed on Instagram is important for businesses, but one needs to understand that this is just the first step of the funnel. One needs to validate and try to push the user deep into the tunnel, wherein the actual motive to explore ways to capture the user information/email can be accomplished. This can be done in different ways:

5.6.1 Try to share an image with an integrated call to action for downloading an e-book or subscribing to a newsletter. Once communication address is acquired better relationship can be developed to move to next level.

5.6.2 From that level, engage with the email subscribers by delivering them valuable information and offers to help them move down in the funnel. Supplement this effort with blog posts and parallel social channels to keep the followers up to date with what one has to offer them.

5.7 Create a blend of photos and videos

The hottest marketing tip is to mix the posts strategically by including attractive videos in addition to the photos.

5.7.1 It is a proven fact that videos tend to generate three times more links than written posts and pictures. Videos can be more engaging to the fans and in turn drive in more traffic.

5.7.2   We know that Instagram is specializing in the art of visual storytelling, and one can bring the stories to life with good videos.one can have a look at the McDonald's or Oreo videos on Instagram to get some insight into how stop motion videos are actually used.

6. APPLICATIONS AND TOOLS FOR MARKETING

There are various applications and tools of marketing offered by Instagram. These are:

6.1 Awario

What it does: Awario is a social media monitoring tool - it locates mentions of any given keyword (or keywords) across all the major social media platforms, including Instagram.To find mentions of your brand or product in Instagram specifically, you need to set up an alert You'll then see mentions with and without the #hashtag, and you can reply to any mention without leaving the dashboard. You can also connect multiple Instagram accounts and reply using any of those without having to login and logout at any point.

Awario also helps you determine which mentions you should pay attention to by sorting mentions based on the mentioning accounts' number of followers. This is not always the key metric for all brands, but it does serve as a helpful prompt for particularly high profile responses.

Awario can also show you a list of brand-relevant Instagram influencers (people that have mentioned your product a lot and have a large number of followers), while there's also capacity to produce reports on mentions' analytics from the dashboard.

6.2 Buffer

What it does: Buffer is a scheduling app - it lets you schedule posts to be published to all the major social networks from your dashboard, though it does work a little differently for Instagram.

For most platforms, it's essentially a 'set and forget' process - you choose a time you want a post to be published, and to which network, and Buffer will take care of the rest. Instagram, however, doesn't allow third-party tools to post direct to the app, so after you've scheduled your post in Buffer, the Buffer app will send you a reminder about when to post on Instagram, based on your chosen date and time. The app will then redirects you into your Instagram account, where you can review your scheduled post, apply filters, and post it. Its helpful in ensuring you post at more relevant times and in managing your content strategy across various platforms from one place.

6.3 Simply Measured

What it does: Simply Measured is a social analytics tool. Their Instagram Account Report provides clear stats and insights on the number of your posts, the breakdown of post types (e.g. video and photo), total engagement, engagement per post, the number of likes per photo, and how your overall performance is trending. It'll also help identify keyword mentions in the comments, filters that are performing best, locations of your top-performing posts, and the best days and times to engage with your audience. The tool basically gives you a comprehensive overview of how effective your Instagram efforts are, what you have to change, and what exactly worked and should be repeated in future.

6.4 Crowdfire

What it does: Crowdfire is one of the few tools that help you grow followers with minimal effort.

Follower growth is the thing most social media marketers struggle with - it's one thing to post great content, it's another to get that content seen. What's more, you can't just have any followers, you need your key target audience to see your content - so how can you expand your audience and boost your Instagram footprint to get your strategy moving and build engagement? To a large extent, Crowdfire helps todoexactly that. It lets mass-follow the followers of the competitors, which, in most cases, will consist of the target audience one, also want to reach.

Research shows it's a trend to follow the follower back and that percentage is potentially higher if the product is something in which consumers might be interested in. To ensure constant follower growth, unfollow people that haven't followed back a couple of days later - Crowdfire shows who these people are and lets mass-unfollow as well.

6.5 Instagram Insights

What it does: Instagram Insights provides user with all basic statistics one need to make sure the efforts on Instagram are reaching the right audience - and producing the desired result. If one doesn't have the time and resources to try out additional tools, or if the person is not sure Instagram is even the way to go in his marketing strategy, he should start by using Instagram Insights.

User has access to free analytics once Instagram business account is set up - which he'll absolutely need in any case. The app will show the user total impressions of his posts, their reach, profile views, and website clicks, and also the basic demographics of the audience and their top locations. User can also see the times of the day most of the followers are online, which can be extremely useful.

7. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

No doubt that it is an effective move regarding social media marketing to give a boost to the business by being active on Instagram. This platform itself is always making a lot of improvements for individuals and companies to tap more benefits out of it. Additionally, there are tactics and hacks which one needs to explore to enhance reach, engagement, and following. There are plenty of tools available to help with the Instagram marketing efforts.

7.1 For an effective social media marketing strategy first of all formulation of the business goals for Instagram is must. It may be using it for brand exposure or to simplify purchasing, or to carry out social media campaigns on Instagram or using it for marketing research.

7.2 After establishing the goals next step is trying to choose couple of tools available with free trials. According to the objectives, the business should try them out and go from there.

7.3 Using Hashtags to boost awareness.

7.4 After the consumer gets aware of the product strengthening of the brand is must. For this stick to business story is the best way.

7.5 Interaction freely with the audience is the key to success of the marketing strategy.

7.6 Sharing user-generated content and encouraging in-person interaction with location tags will help in increasing web traffic.

7.8 And lastly advertising to a more highly-targeted audience will help for an effective Instagram marketing strategy.

To conclude, marketers are required to be more innovative than ever at both a human and technical level. This means that the most creative marketers that are producing new and innovative content will be getting tons of engagement in this digitally developed world of marketing.

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