

Patagonia Uses Instagram to Make Meaningful Connections

Rachelle Todea

Introduction

While creators for one social media app aimed to set itself apart to communicate through images, one brand set to advance its mission. The Instagram iOS app launched in October 2010 (Siegler, 2010) and became available on Android phones in April 2012 (Wagstaff, 2012). Fast forward to July 2017, Instagram has grown to 700 million users (Constine, 2017). Instagram “has become the home for visual storytelling for everyone from celebrities, newsrooms and brands, to teens, musicians and anyone with a creative passion” (Instagram, 2017). The clothing brand Patagonia posted its first image to its Instagram account in May 2012 (personal observation). The image is of Patagonia’s humble beginnings, a small garage space with some corrugated steel panels as walls. The account name is the brand name in lower case type, “patagonia.” The post is geotagged “Patagonia Ventura,” and it reads, “Where it all began.” Patagonia’s first Instagram post in May 2012 has 457 likes and 34 comments. May 22, 2012 marks the first day towards a following of nearly 3 million followers for Patagonia on Instagram today.

This case study will examine how Patagonia utilizes Instagram as a part of its digital media content strategy to connect with its audience while upholding its mission.

According to Schnitzspahn (n.d.), the outdoor industry, which includes Patagonia, has grown into a “thriving, tech-driven sector of the economy” (p. 3-4). According to a 2017 report by the Outdoor Industry Association, the outdoor recreation economy generates about \$887 billion in consumer spending (Outdoor Recreation Economy, 2017). The outdoor industry has begun to leverage its legitimate voice for environmental issues (Schnitzspahn, n.d.) and Patagonia in many ways has led the charge with its uniqueness and digital content.

Literature Review

Media convergence has created an opportunity for brands to connect with their audience.

Connecting users across media, which integrate content, is one goal of media convergence. (Lawson-Borders, 2009). By investing in Web 2.0 technology, brands' main objective is improving customer interactions and increasing sales (Celaya, 2008, p. 146-147). According to Ros-Diego and Castelló Martínez (2012), the growth of the internet requires online actions as an obligatory part in brand's communication strategy (p. 1).

...