FLEX WEAR

Social Media Proposal: Instagram

Cherice Chang, Aina Nabilah Binti Hamazah, Daniel Martin, Jacquelyn Sandoval

Table of Contents

Introduction

Social Media is a problem child: if utilized correctly, our brand image will be significantly improved like Nike; if misused, our brand can come off as inauthentic, like Pepsi's recent advertisement with Kendall Jenner. Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram are some of the most successful social media platforms, each having unique characteristics. After conducting research on these platforms, we concluded that Instagram will be the best one to use to promote Flex Wear.

In this proposal, we will be presenting our key findings from both primary and secondary research, as well as strategy and recommendations tailored to Flex Wear. Our proposal will focus on tactics for profile, content, customer interaction, measure of success, and budget. Instagram users are visually driven; thus, it is important for us to make sure we are creating aesthetically appealing and diverse content while actively engaging with our clients.

Why Instagram & Goals

Instagram, Facebook, and Youtube offer different experiences for their customers. After examining the benefits and limitations of the different platforms, we chose Instagram for its simplicity in function. Instagram is oriented around visual media, and has a younger user base. Based on our primary research, we noted that of all social media sites, Instagram is the most user friendly due to its easy-to-read symbols and short phrases. For instance, the number of followers a page has is read as "56k" rather than "56,000". The same goes for the millions: instead of "4,000,000", it says "4m". Instagram's attention to detail enhances its usability and popularity. Another reason why we chose Instagram is that the posts in a user's feed are arranged by algorithm, not chronological order. Therefore, those who have more activity with athletic wear brands will be more likely to see our posts and stay engaged within our profile. With the algorithm, the chances of appearing on the explore page are higher, providing more exposure for our brand.

When utilizing social media, we need to approach our customers cautiously to avoid abusing this free tool. Instagram should be utilized as a platform to engage with customers that reaffirms their value for the brand. According to Shanna Mallon, a writer for a firm providing online marketing services,

> "Your goal with Instagram is to reinforce your brand message and build relationship with your audience as you do," (para. 5).

Mallon used Whole Food's and Folk Magazine's Instagram accounts as examples to show how brands can remind customers of their values using visually appealing content. These actions are used to enhance the brand's image; hence we should always remember the goal to why we are using Instagram.

Profile

A profile consists of several segments: the biography (bio), username with verified symbol, and a summary of followers. Lululemon's profile is shown below:

source: Lululemon's instagram profile

Biography (Bio)

The Bio is perhaps one of the first few things that users will see from our profile. Writing a biography is easy, but writing a great biography is harder than one might think. In short, a biography is essentially a description of the service that the business provides. One can observe quite a lot of information in one's bio. Often times, a great bio only needs one sentence. As seen in the bio above, Lululemon described their core belief in only one sentence, attached a #, and even included Lululemon's official snapchat and spotify account username. They provided a good structure of how our bio should be: short and concise.

Lululemon also included a *link in bio*, which is a hyperlink attached at the end of the bio. This link could be mentioned in a post caption. As Instagram does not allow any hyperlinks in the caption, users place it in their bio instead. This feature would be a very helpful tool for us in the future for when we are trying to attach a link to our website for a new product we post or a service that we are promoting.

Verification

The verified symbol is an added feature. Based on our primary research, it is Instagram's method to recognize official accounts of businesses, organizations, celebrities and public figures. Hence, getting the blue verified checkmark should be our first milestone. The most obvious means to get verified on Instagram is through the number of followers, according to social media marketing expert, Kimberly. She further

explained that the higher the number of followers we have, the easier it is to differentiate from fake accounts. Featuring celebrities, staying active on Instagram, and avoiding negative actions will also increase our chance of getting verified. Therefore, Flex Wear should do the same: making sure that we tag related celebrities, post constantly, and delegate a representative to reply to comments.

Follower/Following

Number of followers are perhaps one of the most obvious metrics to measure how successful a user profile is. Hence, we will be using the number of followers as one of our metrics to track the rate of growth.

We should also keep an eye on the number of following as well. Based on our primary research, we noticed that Lululemon had a total of 1.9m followers and followed only 100 people. Fabletics on the other hand, had 307k followers and followed 866 people. The disparity between the brand's followers and people they follow immediately gives people the impression that Lululemon is the higher end brand. The more followers compared to people followed, the more exclusive the brand seems. Therefore, we plan to set a cap of 150 accounts that we are following, thereby allowing us to build our own exclusivity

Content

In our strategy, we must consider what types of content to post, and how we will strategize posting.

Types of Content

Instagram allows its users to post three types of content: pictures, carousels (picture galleries), and videos. We propose to focus on pictures, using the other types less frequently. Ana Gotter from AdEspresso suggests that carousels and videos are more engaging and dynamic than pictures, but we have found that the extra time investment on the viewer's part leads to lower views. Also, Instagram is more suited toward viewing photos: it is sometimes difficult to tell that a post is a carousel, and the built-in video player provides no controls other than start/stop.

Genres of Content

The posts of most consumer brands on Instagram usually fall into one of these categories: celebrity endorsement, catalog photos, lifestyle, and quotes. To maximize follower interest, we want to focus on lifestyle posts. Shanna Mallon emphasized the importance of visual storytelling to establish brand equity. These posts will build our equity on a personal level, as Fabletics has done by showing people casually working out in their products as if it were their daily lifestyle rather than just a promotion.

While lifestyle posts are the most effective genre, we can bring in occasional posts by celebrities and social media influencers. This will provide a diverse body of content as well as exposure to other audiences. In

addition, we must be careful that our guests do not overshadow our brand. Under Armour has made major investments in celebrity endorsements, but they have only increased the discussion about the celebrity not Under Armour itself.

Visual Appearance of Content

In posting, we want to emphasize visual design and color schemes. A notable example is posting parts of an image so that the series forms a composite; this mosaic technique has been used by many companies. In a recent survey of Shopify customers, 93% of the customers cited "visual appearance" as the main reason for purchasing. In addition, nearly 85% of those customers said color was a major factor in purchasing. In our experience, Fabletics kept their content unified and linear with a well-coordinated color scheme. This unity of design gives the account a professional, high-end look.

Frequency of Content

Out of all of our competitors, Lululemon and Fabletics had the most follower engagement. Lululemon posted 3-5 times a week while Fabletics posted every single day. We find a strong correlation between engagement and posting frequency, so we propose making daily posts. According to research from Union Metrics, most brands average 1.5 posts per day on Instagram. We also want to reserve important posts for peak days and times. CoSchedule found that the peak days for user activity were Monday and Thursday. Over the week, most engagement occurred after work.

Tagging

Finally, we can incorporate different types of tags into our posts. We can add geotags to mark locations, user-tags to reach out to users, and hashtags to tap into trending topics. In our primary research, we noticed that Fabletics does not tag their founder, Kate Hudson, in their posts. This is an opportunity that Fabletics is wasting because not all people would recognize that the featured person is Kate Hudson. Tagging actually makes it easier for users to identify who is in our post, where we posted it, and what our post is about. This knowledge can help draw in more user attention.

Customer Interaction

Reply & DM (Direct message)

We recommend directly interacting with followers by replying to their comments. Two of our competitors, Lululemon and Fabletics, utilized their Instagram account for customer service, a practice popular with their followers. Most people asked their questions on the comment section of each picture. For simple questions, a representative would answer in the comment section. For more complicated questions, the representative would ask the poster to follow up with a private message (on Instagram, called a "Direct

Message") for a personalized solution. Providing customer service through Instagram enhances the company's brand equity since most people find it quicker and more efficient to ask a question through social media rather than having to call or drive to the store itself. Fabletics also adds personality by having representatives personally initial their comments.

Contests, Sweepstakes & Promo Codes

To actively engage subscribers, we also recommend hosting contests on Instagram. These would encourage people to make posts that feature our products in some way, with some prizes or promotions on offer. These contests build more engagement than commenting, and also provide publicity for the company.

Influencers

A third element of customer interaction is to reach out to personalities with a large number of followers, called "Influencers". Promotional posts by these influencers can provide quick popularity boosts. For example, Lord & Taylor partnered with fifty influential Instagrammers to promote its new Design Lab collection. Each of these influencers posted pictures of themselves wearing the same dress. As a result, the dress sold out the following weekend. Also, a survey by *Variety* revealed that teens are more influenced by top YouTubers than by traditional celebrities: these users are perceived as 17 times more engaging and 11 times more extraordinary than mainstream stars.

Measure of Success & Analytics

A proposal is not complete without a measure of success. In this section, we will be discussing metrics used to measure the rate of success and analytics used to examine our user profile. As mentioned in the previous section about followers, we decided that the number of followers should be one of our key metrics. We will also be tracking number of likes, impressions created, profile views, clicks on the website, phone calls and emails.

In order to track this information, we decided that "Instagram Insights" would be the best tool to use because it is a free application built into Instagram Business accounts. This tool would be helpful to track down different measures of success, so we can use it to determine the preferences or behaviors of our clients on Instagram. However, in the future, we might consider upgrading our analytic tool to other bigger sites like Sprout Social, which will allow us to track data from across different platforms. These tools usually charge a fee per month and offer services that are different from site to site. For instance, the Sprout Social tool has a 30-day free trial; $59 dollars per month is charged for the deluxe plan. Therefore, it is important for us to pinpoint what kind of data analytics are most helpful to our company before proceeding to make a subscription.

Budget

In terms of budget, we have separated it into three different sections: professional photographer, social media specialist, and analytic tools. The following table shows the cost breakdown:

Item	Short Term Budget		Long Term Budget		Benefits
	Cost	Description	Cost	Description	
Photographer	$20/hour*	Expect 2-4 finished pictures per hour	$32,000/ year*	An all rounded photographer that can work at events and condition.	Improve quality of pictures or videos to enhance our content
Social Media Specialist	$0	Use current staff	$40,000/ year*	Hire when we have different social media platforms**	Ensures the best customer interaction to our clients
Analytic tools	$0	Instagram Insights	$59/ month	Social Sprouts	Used to analyze our profile
Total	~$2500/year	To post daily	~$73,000/year	To post daily on different platform	

* prices may vary according to experience and specialty

After our research, we determined that the most important investment was hiring a professional photographer. As we have discussed in the content section, good Instagram posts are creative and aesthetically pleasing, which explains the importance of the photographer. For now, we propose that a part time photographer is sufficient for our needs. Hiring part-time photographers will also allow us to explore different photography styles and build our pool of photographers for different occasions. However, if our demands increase, we can hire a full time in house photographer in the future.

Next, we decided that we should also delegate a representative to help in customer interaction: replying to comments, promoting events and competition on Instagram, etc. We should choose someone from our current marketing team, a person that is tech savvy and knows Flex Wear well enough to

represent the brand. In the future, we might consider hiring a part time worker to help with replying to comments, or a full-time specialist to assist in social media marketing.

Since we are using a lot of free tools and current resources, our upfront investment is not much. If in the future we decide to expand to other platforms, we should invest in an analytical tools that can track multiple platforms in one interface, since most social media platforms are interrelated. For instance, Flex Wear might post a video and put a link in bio, directing people to YouTube to watch the full version. It is crucial for us to track this data to fully understand our market.

Closing

Social media plays a major role in our clients' lives, which puts a lot of pressure on creators to generate good content. It is easy to lose our focus by trying to get more likes or followers; however, social media is really more about giving our brand a personality and connecting to the community that we create.

To build on our brand equity with Instagram, we firmly believe that building a loyal community is the best approach to achieving this goal. Although we might never change the world posting pictures, we hope that when people see our posts, they can make a personal connection to our brand, Flex Wear.

Thank you for taking the time to read the proposal. If you have any further questions or comments, please feel free to contact our project manager. We are looking forward to following Flex Wear on Instagram.