Instagram vs. Pinterest

Instagram	Pinterest
Primary Audience	**Primary Audience**
Women, Teens, Under 30,	Women, Foodies, Crafters
Looking For	**Looking For**
Interesting or exclusive photos, *a personal experience with a brand*	Photos, videos, products, tips
Best For	**Best For**
Sharing authentic content (images), creating brand awareness, showcasing 'behind the scenes'	Sharing visual content for products, how-to, e-books SEO, website traffic, sales
Used Primarily By	**Used Primarily By**
Nonprofit, B2C	B2C

| Constant Contact

Figure 9.6 What Marketers Should Know about Using Instagram and Pinterest

personal experiences with a brand and nonprofits as well as B2C brands can use this to their benefit. The craft-oriented audience on Pinterest is looking for ideas and reacts by visiting websites and engaging in other purchase-related behaviors, making it ideal for B2C brands who are able to translate their brand story into appealing visuals.

Another popular photo-sharing site is Imgur. Founded in an Ohio University dorm room in 2009, this site is one of the top sites on the Internet and is a self-styled "storytelling community." Its motto is "Explore Share Discuss."[42] A user might post a picture of his hands and explain his occupation and others will comment on the person's hands and how they relate to that particular profession and other remarks. The stream of comments creates a story around the image. Each day popular images are displayed, shared, and commented upon by Imgur's users. According to Forbes in late 2015 the platform had more than 150 million unique users each month, more than 5.5 billion pageviews and saw 45 million new images uploaded to the site. This storytelling approach is so popular that the site received its first round of external funding in 2014 and is beginning to use display advertising to monetize the site.[43] One of the test clients for promoted posts is eBay, which has been having success with Imgur Promoted Posts.[44] Creative images are proving to work well to drive traffic, even though the cat in Figure 9.7 does not look particularly happy about the whole thing.

Clearly photo sharing is a trend that cannot be ignored by marketers. However, using visual marketing is new and it is important to understand why and how it should be done.

Benefits of Marketing with Online Photos and Other Images

Photo sharing sites function much like other social networks. Users must be active in the community in order to produce results. Indeed, the social communities surrounding image sharing sites are the most important factor because they will circulate and share the content.[45] On Imgur, for example, the most influential users not only share photos but interact with others, commenting on many pictures. Users in turn vote on comments

We understand we're overdue for one of these.

Cat Tax Emporium

Thanks Imgur, we hope you enjoyed reminiscing over the toys of your youth. Now call mom and see which one of these goldmines might be lurking in your basement.

Source: http://www.ebay.com/gds/18-Rare-Toys-Worth-More-Than-an-Average-Car-/10000000179359481/g.html

Figure 9.7   A Promoted Post on Imgur

on the photographs with up and down arrows for "like" or "not," pushing popular comments to the top of the list. Staying connected will draw people back to connect or to look at other targeted content. An early campaign for Canon, a leading camera brand, created a "photochain" for its EOS camera series to emphasize the creativity and inspiration in taking great photos. The brand wanted to stand for "creative inspiration" in photography. Each photographer in the chain took a picture, selected a detail, and made that detail the emphasis for the next photo, connecting photographers and ideas across Australia. Photographers could upload their pictures to Canon's website, start their own photochains, and have an opportunity to have their work highlighted in Canon's advertising campaigns in various media. The website then connected photographers to tutorials, blogs, and products to spark creativity and increase the conversation with the brand. The tracking allowed Canon to see how the company was connecting its customers to each other and to monitor brand conversations.[46]

From a marketing standpoint, there are several advantages to photo sharing campaigns.

1. **Showcase the product**. Photos can be used to showcase a product, document offers, and influence buyer mood.[47] Most directly, images of the product can generate interest and online buzz, leading to sales. Showcasing a product is most effective when the presentation is highly detailed. Some companies shy away from distributing product images and specifications, fearing that their trade secrets will be uncovered. While this is a legitimate worry, the potential risk is often outweighed by the sales benefits of sharing product information. Giving detailed specifications and technical details in photo form can draw press attention and build confidence with potential customers.[48]

2. **Reinforce the brand message**. Company pictures can be highly persuasive for potential buyers even when they are not directly about the product. A company's values and social presence can affect customers either positively or negatively; in an age of online transparency, some consumers expect to know the faces behind the final product. Posting photos can give "a strong sense of culture and provide a human face to the company."[49] The old saying that a picture is worth a thousand words remains true in an online world. Pictures demonstrate an institution's values and beliefs far more vividly than written description.

3. **Drive web traffic**. While visual marketing can help draw traditional press attention, it is perhaps even more effective at driving web traffic toward a product website. Photo sharing websites (and images and videos in general) are treated kindly by search engines such as Google.[50] Photo results often show up on the first page of results, bringing many to view that content. This reality makes photo sharing a natural complement to other tools in a SMM campaign.

4. **Create awareness and encourage sharing**. Andy Crestodina, Founder and Strategic Director of Orbit Media Studios, says that "a blog post without an image is like a postcard without a stamp."[51] He also points out that posts with images are more likely to be shared on Facebook and that Tweets with images get retweeted more often than those without. Posts with images are also retained in memory longer. He goes on to discuss best practices for optimizing both photos and images created by the marketer. Best practices include having the model look at the product, not at the camera, and creating infographics that contain an embed link.[52]

5. **Leverage opportunities to market with low costs**. Finally, the cost, in both money and effort, is low when pursuing an image sharing strategy. While there are initial setup costs, such as purchasing equipment and possibly online storage space, that small investment can be sufficient to propel a photo marketing campaign forward. Taking pictures at company events is quick and easy. This type of activity makes the time commitment for maintaining a photo sharing presence less demanding than a social networking site, such as Facebook or LinkedIn.[53] Compared to the benefits of spotlighting a business and its products for online viewers, photo sharing is indeed very inexpensive.[54] The low cost of executing an image sharing campaign makes it attractive to many companies.

Building Your Personal Brand through Photo Sharing

Photo sharing can be a great way to tell people about yourself. Some individuals have two separate photo sharing accounts, one professional and one personal. The problem with this approach is that anyone can find you on the Internet so you might want to consider being judicious in your postings. The following approach is suggested:

1. **Tie your photo sharing strategy into your professional goal.** If you want to be a professional photographer, pick a professional site like 500px and post regular samples of your work. If you want to be a digital marketer, create a board in Pinterest to keep photos and infographics on the subject and start sharing.

Picking just one or two photo sharing sties will help you to focus. Of course make sure this site is where the people you want to know about you hang out.

2. **Keep the pictures linked to your professional brand, but have fun.**
"Headshots" like those on LinkedIn show your best side, but candid shots in your work environment will convey who you are. Photos that might not be appropriate for LinkedIn might work well in Facebook or Instagram. For photo sharing sites that are highly visual, it is fine to have a sense of humor, as long as you are modest and display good taste.

For example, Dr. Zahay posts pictures of her classrooms and the interaction she has with her students. She is known for her hands-on classes, often taught in the lab. In this case, she uses a picture that reinforces that part of her brand. The picture in Figure 9.8 shows Dr. Zahay and her class in fanciful Halloween garb, "scarified" using a tool from Google photos. The picture received a lot of positive attention on Dr. Zahay's social media circles and helped reinforce her message that students work hard in her classes but also have fun.

Show yourself at work or in a volunteer capacity that reinforces your personal brand message.

3. **Focus on engagement.** Post pictures that will encourage commenting and sharing. This way your brand will be known beyond your circle of friends and contacts.

4. **Be sure not to overshare.** Monitor which pictures get the most attention and with which frequency. Post others like them and be sure to respond to those who comment, engage, or connect with you.

Courtesy of Debra Zahay

Figure 9.8 Dr. Zahay's Social Media Class in Halloween Garb Created Facebook Engagement

Marketing with Photo Sharing Sites

Once the decision is made to market with photo sharing, there are several steps involved in marketing with photo sharing sites.

1. **Determine the target market**. The first step in marketing on photo sharing sites is to determine the target market for the images because different photo sharing sites cater to different clientele. Identifying the demographics and behavioral characteristics of the target market enables the marketer to select an optimal series of photo sharing sites on which to upload images. Check out the sites to determine whether they are primarily trafficked by, for example, college-age viewers, women, or professional photographers and artists.

   In addition, consider the nature of the images to be offered. If many pictures are humorous, instructional, or quirky in nature, then place them on photo sharing sites that have similar offerings. Selecting a single photo sharing site necessarily limits a company's target market. By using multiple photo sharing sites for uploading images, marketers can expand their reach to different audiences.

2. **Select the photos to upload**. Selecting the photos to upload is both the most basic and most crucial aspect of image sharing. The content of photos intended for sharing will likely be different from those used in websites or as part of product content. While professional photography or stock photos (produced by picture agencies or photo libraries) may be useful for ad campaigns, these staged images are less helpful for photo sharing. The most popular shared images tend to be unplanned or spontaneous in appearance. Further, detailed, up-close photographs draw more interest than landscapes. Still, while landscape photos can be interchangeable, there are many aspects that are unique as details change throughout the day. Take advantage of this variety when creating photo content. The Library of Congress used Flickr to select historical photographs, increasing the reach of the library to many who would not visit the library website itself. These discussions resulted in the launch of Flickr Commons, where cultural heritage institutions can showcase and preserve photos online. Today dozens of historical and arts organizations from all over the world participate in this effort to "catalog the world's public photo archives."[55]

3. **Use photos to demonstrate knowledge, involve users, not to sell**. Photos can be used to demonstrate knowledge about a business or industry. For example, a person selling cars might post pictures from the most recent car show he or she attended.[56] As direct advertising is banned on some photo sharing sites, doing indirect promotion can be the most effective way to market a product. Talk about the product in image descriptions but avoid overt sales talk.[57] A link back to the company blog or website is subtle, but it is enough to draw interested viewers to the product. Getting users involved is critical, especially in such an interactive activity such as taking pictures. The success of platforms like Instagram, Pinterest, and Imgur show how brands as well as individuals can engage consumers through visual marketing,

4. **Market the content**. Posting photos, in itself, is no guarantee that the images will be seen. A significant component of sharing images is to market the content being posted. While some shared images will go viral and be spread widely with little effort by their creators, this experience is not the most common. Even popular, catchy images may take time to disseminate if they are not publicized well early on. To avoid such delay, employ social networking tools, both on the image sharing website and on external social networks. Social media platforms such as Facebook and Google+ with their photo and video sharing capabilities can be an important part of an image sharing strategy. Integrate with these platforms to help spread images to more viewers.

Another set of tools that can be used to help distribute online images is the internal search engines on photo sharing sites. Photo search engines direct users to images that interest them based on keywords. Most search engines rely on tags or descriptions to decide which photos to show when a person searches. To help more people find a photo, include highly detailed tags that facilitate photo searching. Mentally ask whether a customer would be able to easily find each image if he or she were looking for information.[58] What search terms might the individual employ? With this in mind, choose tags that are memorable, descriptive, and commonly used. The format of tags may vary depending on the photo sharing site. Flickr tags are space separated so that "salt lake city," for example, might become *saltlakecity* or *slc*.[59] When starting on a new platform, see what format and style popular offerings have chosen, and use that as a starting point for creating tags and descriptions.

5. **Secure permissions**. Not every photo post must be original content. Creating adaptations, parodies, or tributes to other artistic creations is common and even encouraged among many online audiences. However, when sharing repurposed images, it is important to keep legal issues in mind and to avoid taking material without permission or attribution. Some photo content is governed by extremely strict license agreements that limit third-party sharing. Seek out photos that use Creative Commons licensing, which is used by many Internet publishers. These licenses allow photo creators to retain rights to their images, even if the images are used commercially or otherwise shared. The details will depend on which photo sharing portal the images have been posted to, so do the research in advance to avoid legal problems later.

In addition to legal permissions, image sharing requires personal permission as well, especially if casual or unplanned photos are taken. Not everyone is comfortable seeing him- or herself posted online, especially if the person is caught in an awkward moment. Acquire permission from people in photos (especially customers or employees) before uploading or tagging them in images.[60] This permission is especially needed if the picture could cause harm or hurt feelings later on—for example, a picture of someone drinking or appearing overly familiar with someone other than a significant other. Online, the context of a picture is not always clear, so always check with the people featured in photos so that later they will not be unhappy or embarrassed.

Best Practices in Marketing through Photo Sharing

1. **Determine your brand story** and your target market and corresponding objectives and metrics. Do you wish to increase the number of posts, engagement, improve your audience size or rate of growth? Is your audience likely to be on Instagram, Facebook, Pinterest?

2. **Benchmark against others** in your brand category to see how they are using images. Make sure your approach is unique and resonates with your audience.

3. **Optimize your content** by not posting the same content the same way on every site. Realize that one platform may be important to your audience and gauge the analytics. Do your customers respond better to videos or short images? What time of day do they post and comment?

4. **Realize that the customer is the center of your efforts**. If all the photos are posted by the company or brand, the consumer will be less likely to be involved. The goal should be to get customers to share information themselves. If one customer shares images that are pertinent to your brand, other consumers will follow suit. If you put customer photos on your page customers will be more likely to promote your brand. One way to encourage sharing is to use contests and other means to encourage photo sharing. For example, if consumers can get some sort of prize or recognition, particularly based on the number of shares or "likes." In 2014, Starbucks sponsored a contest to redesign its cup on Instagram "#WhiteCupContest" and received over 4,000 applications.[61] Not only was there recognition for the winner, but the other participants felt challenged to increase their creativity.

5. **Don't just display products**; show products in context of how they are used. Instead of showing a coffee cup, show people enjoying coffee.

6. For sharing your own photos, **use images that express your brand's personality**. Don't just use images that are static but ones that evoke the brand.

7. **Use each major platform to its best advantage**. Instagrammers like to show off the latest trends, while Pinterest users often develop elaborate boards over time.

8. **Find and develop your brand influencers**. These individuals can help you tell your story and achieve your goals. Some simple searches around your brand or using a social media monitoring tool will help build relationships with these key brand advocates.

9. **Above all, measure and respond**. See which photos posted by both you and your customers generate the most interest to determine how consumers want to interact with your brand. Use hashtags, descriptive titles a help measure the popularity of specific content.

Notes

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