

Consumer brands that aren't utilising Instagram are missing a key element in their engagement tool kit, warns Punch

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London, UK: 9th August 2012 – With so many people interacting with images uploaded through Instagram, consumer brands that are not taking advantage of this engagement-rich tool are potentially missing the chance to reach new and existing customers in an exciting way, says integrated PR, social media and search agency (<http://www.punchcomms.com/seo-agency.html>) Punch Communications.

Instagram launched in 2010, and in the space of two years the free photo sharing programme has gained more than 30 million members who have uploaded more than 400 million photos. The service allows users to take a photo, apply a digital filter to the image and then share it on a variety of social networking sites, including Instagram itself and Statigram, an Instagram web viewer and search tool.

Brands that share images on Facebook alongside an update typically receive up to 80 per cent higher engagement levels than on a post without an accompanying image. In addition, using innovative filter functions, such as those available on Instagram, makes images more interesting, personal and appealing to consumers.

Last year, Instagram added a hashtag function to help users discover both photos and each other; it works in a similar way to Twitter, in that it groups common themes together and makes them searchable. Statigram allows users of Instagram to search for these hashtags, as well as giving them access to all their images online and source information on who has engaged with their profile.

Instagram and its hashtag capabilities can be used by consumer brands as a social media marketing tool in a number of creative ways, such as promoting events and products. For example, Tiffany & Co. used Instagram a part of a campaign to promote its new range of jewellery; the company asked people to take photos that depicted love and apply the hashtag #truelovepictures. Not only did this allow the company to identify the campaign's success, but also those brand fans who took part acted as promotional ambassadors for the new product range.

Pete Goold, managing director of Punch Communications, specialists in social search (<http://www.punchcomms.com/social-search.html>) and other integrated PR services, said: "Instagram is a simple tool to use and with added functions like the hashtag and filters, it makes images more visually appealing and also easy to find.

"Due to the increase in mobile social network usage, and in-built cameras being a common feature of a smartphone, interaction levels are extremely high; with the amount of people using the free tool, brands that sell tangible goods like fashion products or other image-driven items are missing out on reaching consumers if they don't choose to use it. Brands of this type that are already utilising social networking sites would be wise to add Instagram into their digital strategies to increase levels of engagement and brand awareness in a creative way."

If you are researching or looking to employ the services of PR, search and social media agencies (<http://www.punchcomms.com/social-media-agency/>), then contact Punch Communications to see what an

integrated approach can do for your business. Please call 01858 411 600, or visit the Punch website at www.punchcomms.com (<http://www.punchcomms.com/>).

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