Instagram’s Rise to the Top

Emily Robinson

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**Executive Summary/Abstract**

Instagram has become one of the most popular social media platforms all around the world. Due to its success it has entered BrandZ’s Top 100 Most Valuable Global Brands in 2018, with a brand value of $14,496. This free photo sharing and editing application has become a part of millennials’ everyday routine, but has also been expanding to other generations as well. Globally Instagram’s marketing efforts follow the concept of standardization, which means they stay relatively consistent throughout different countries. The application, however, provides great framework for businesses to use adaptation when promoting, advertising, and communicating with consumers all around the globe. It has shown to be very productive for businesses, which suggests to firms who are not using it yet should start. Instagram is a tremendous tool that helps people, customers, and businesses all around the world through a basic picture that captures the essence of the message being portrayed.

**Introduction**

Customs, lifestyles, and people vary all across the world, that is why Global Branding is so important. Instagram is one of the new global top 100 brands that is currently having a large amount of success internationally. Taking the time to analyze the approaches Instagram has been taking is imperative when evaluating its overall success as a global brand.

**Brand Background**

According to Business Insights, Instagram was founded in 2010 in the United States by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger, who created a powerhouse global brand. This popular application is known as a free photo sharing software/application and social media platform. The app gives users the ability to take pictures as well as edit and filter them. See some brand associations in Figure 1 displayed below.

**Definition of Global Brand**

 As learned in class a global brand is defined as, “One that has transcended its cultural origins to develop strong relationships with consumers across different countries and cultures” (Marzofka). Culture can be the key in whether a global brand is successful or not. Not only is culture important, but overall the customer defines the brand. Customers make associations with the brands that they use every day. An example of Instagram’s global brand associations is shown visually below in Figure 1. The brand elements for Instagram can be found in Figure 2. Both brand associations and elements are necessary when attempting to define a global brand. The Instagram brand is a free, popular, and easily accessible social media platform that appeals to multiple age groups, cultures, and types of people.

**Figure 1. This Brand Associations Map shows the visuals gathered from the primary research done to learn every day users’ associations with Instagram.**

Travelers

Photo editing tools

Photographers

Aesthetic

Filters

Adrenaline Junkies

Families

Boomerangs

Videos

Pictures

Viral

Fitness Models

Models

Social Engagement

Celebrities

**Figure 2. Diagram of features, benefits, personality, emotional benefits, symbols, promises, and users necessary for the make-up of the Instagram Brand Structure.**

**Brand**

**Promise**

-Pictures will help tell your story to others

**Brand Personality**

-For Everyone

-Ready to capture adventures and everyday life

**Functional**

 **Brand**

 **Benefits**

-Easily Accessible

-Entertaining

-Recreational or Business

**Brand**

**Features**

-Free

-Distinct Logo

-Social Media Platform

**Brand User**

-Celebrities

-Families

-Businesses

-Younger Generations

**Brand**

 **Symbols**

-Gradient Camera Logo

**Emotional**

**Brand**

 **Benefits**

-Fun

-Happiness

-Inspiring

-Self-Esteem

**BrandZ Report**

 Instagram’s first time being ranked made its main role in the BrandZ report as one of the top newcomer brands. Overall they are ranked number 91 out of 100, with a brand value worth of $14,496. However, it is ranked number 20 out of 20 within the technology industry alone. It has joined these ranks because it has become one of the top preferred social media platforms. Its popularity has also grown among businesses when promoting products and marketing efforts because companies are using consumer driven products instead of marketers. (BrandZ Report 2018).

**International Marketing Efforts**

Instagram has been labeled as the fastest growing picture sharing social media platform by many ("Why your business should be on Instagram”). It has also become a relevant location for businesses to build brand loyalty, connect with consumers, and receive immediate feedback. These aspects of and how users use the application are relatively consistent throughout the different countries.

 With this being said Instagram globally sees a lot of standardization with its international marketing efforts and global segmentation. They use the same application, format, and filters in different countries. However, the way businesses choose to use Instagram can result in adaptation. According to Dr. James Noble, Instagram serves merely as a resource for advertising and marketing for business big and small (Noble 1). With this being said the way companies choose to adapt to global trends and how they would like to market is adaptation, but is not Instagram’s responsibility.

 A huge example of these instances is the use of hashtags within the caption along with the picture ("Why your business should be on Instagram”). The use of the hashtag internationally can connect different countries who are experiencing the same trends. By putting a hashtag with a post it appears to wider audiences and groups together similar posts.

**Commentary/Analysis**

 Based on the information gathered through research and BrandZ report it is easy to develop personal assumptions. Instagram is truly on the rise within the technology industry and providing respectable competition to other social media platforms. Although owned by Facebook they are making larger strides and profit than Facebook. Instagram is a very good source of free advertising, promotion, and marketing through the use of consumers. With this being said, businesses are expanding their presence on this platform, which is why it has resulted in them being ranked within the top 100 on the BrandZ report.

**Impact of Culture**

 Analyzing the different elements of various countries shows how crucial of an impact the culture can really have. For Instagram a huge thing to consider when comparing countries is what type of or how much technology use is there in that location. A geographic location’s beliefs, rituals, and values can also play a role in whether they believe using an application fits into their beliefs. For example, technology is very evident in the United States so the age an individual receives technology is relatively younger than it may be somewhere else. When a company is considering taking its marketing internationally, culture is one of the biggest things it should look at.

**Conclusion**

 Social media and technology are ever growing industries, Instagram just being a single application in this category. Instagram has made tremendous strides with its company all throughout the globe. It is the type of application that is truly up to the consumer on how they choose to use it. With this being said businesses who use Instagram are seeing great results because it is such a strong resource for them that provides guidance and flexibility for promotions, marketing, and advertising within the United States and internationally as well.

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