

Health brands use Instagram to become part of new cultural conversations

By  Marilyn Dutlow Munga

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The rise of visual social sharing via platforms such as Instagram has provided brands with a new way to examine their complex relationships with people. Here's why social watching is so important and a handful of health and wellness brands using Instagram to become part of the new cultural conversations...

Social watching involves analysing the world of User-Generated Content (UGC) to provide a rich, visual universe that can reveal the nature of people's relationships to, and perceptions of, brands. The most culturally connected brands recognise the power and importance of user-generated content (UGC) as a means to understand what matters to people, and the role their brand should play in culture.



Health and wellness is hugely prevalent on Instagram, and the giant players in this arena are starting to take notice and adapt their communications to align with the new visual medium. It is clear they understand if you set your brand up with the right tools, people will use these tools and tell a visual story with them.

For example, fitness wear brand Lululemon runs morning yoga classes in its stores, but in order to reach out to its network, each store shares these events on Instagram for their following to tag themselves, and take part in.

By doing this, Lululemon is taking on the role of a wellbeing facilitator and encouraging people to directly link their exercise routine to the physical home of the brand. By creating great content for their followers to interact with, they have set themselves up to be shared and embedded easily in people's lives.

The recent Nike 'Do you believe in more' campaign has a distinctive tagline that makes brilliant hashtag fodder. It features iconic branded pieces that will stand out in users' photos; people with a large, dedicated Instagram following; and it says something provocative. Nike is driving the cultural conversation around health, wellness, sport and fitness by forging an adventurous path with a radical aesthetic and tone of voice.

Smartly, Nike has tapped into the power of authentic influencers by enlisting multi-talented artist and athlete, FKA Twigs, who has 1m Instagram followers, to direct and star in the advert. This ad feels like a deep and deliberate fissure with what has gone before. Through the choreography of the athletes, we are told a story about the holistic nature of sporting prowess:

Achievement in the new Nike world view is creative, not linear; it is about manifesting a physical expression of an internal feeling. Nike is taking a clear role in the cultural conversation by driving health and fitness to a brand new place with revolutionary elements of grime, androgyny and interpretive dance.

It is no accident that these elements are some of the most emergently popular in culture and on Instagram. Most importantly, though, users are picking up on this change of tone and aesthetic and sharing their own content back under the various Nike hashtags.

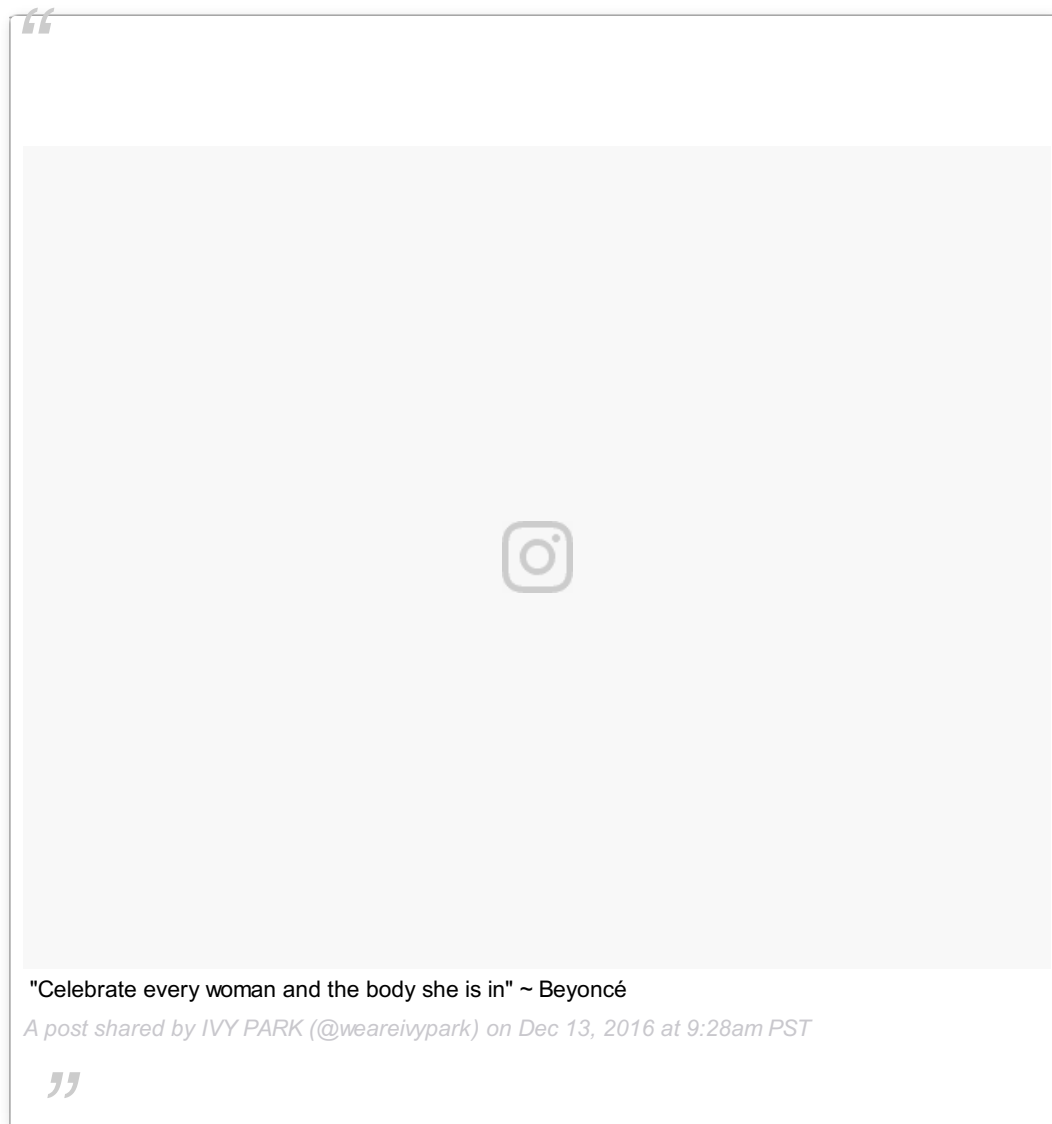
For example, #nikewomen has over one million authentic and unsolicited posts, with a visual world linking closely with the FKA Twigs campaign. Nike has set up a positive story around women in sport and has given women the tools to tell this story in their own way, creating an inspiring dialogue between brand and users.

A picture can indeed paint a thousand words, so imagine what a thousand pictures can tell you about your brand.

Here are a few examples to inspire you:

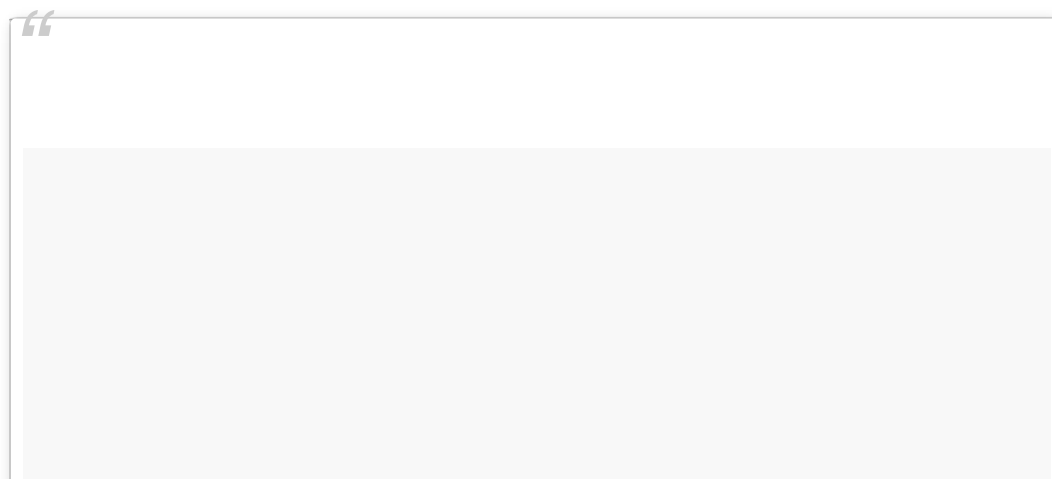
- **Feisty attitude**

Health has got fierce. No longer serious and boring, there is a strong dedication to earning a feisty appearance. We can see this through Beyoncé's Ivy Park Collection, which hit the shelves in 2014 and the dedicated Instagram following of over 365,000 are keen to share their experiences with the brand online.



- **Urban exploration**

The city is the playground for new forms of exercise. Brands like Nike have spearheaded this trend with their Nike+ Run Club urban running communities, which encourage people to get outside and explore their city while getting fit.





The calm and the storm. Lofty comfort. Striking speed. Both, in a single shoe. The Nike Air Zoom Vomero 11. Available on nike.com. Check our bio. [#nikezoom](#)

A post shared by Nike+ Run Club (@nikerunning) on Mar 31, 2016 at 10:13am PDT

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- **Wild adventure**

Adrenaline junkies are finding more and more ways to have an adventure, but also share these online to their following. The likes of Go Pro help capture the spirit of the adventure and upload online.

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Photo of the day! [#GoProFamily](#) member [@logan_dodds](#) ticks one off the bucket list in [#NewZealand](#) with [@trentnattrass](#). . . . [#GoPro](#) [#GoProTravel](#) [#kayak](#)

A post shared by gopro (@gopro) on Feb 16, 2017 at 10:00am PST

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- **Spiritual healing**

Spirituality has become mainstream. People are seeking a spiritual rejuvenation. This January, Liberty ran #LibertyReset events encouraging people to balance themselves through spirituality. This was shared on Instagram through feel good moments and yoga poses.

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Reset your mind, body and soul. We've launched our brand new windows in line with our #LibertyReset campaign. Come down and see them for yourself! While you're at it, drop by our wellness pop-up on 4th and browse our reset edit. #LibertyLondon

A post shared by Liberty London (@libertylondon) on Jan 19, 2017 at 12:51am PST

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- **Mindful serenity**

People are taking to social media to share their moments of serene calm, the mindful moments that enable people to remove themselves from the modern world. Candle brand Neom has captured this perfectly on social media, and we can see people uploading their moments with the candle under the hashtag #neomorganics.

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Rumour has it our Intensive Skin Treatment Candle may or may not be in the sale! Be quick though, once they've gone, they've gone! Follow the link in our bio! 💎💎 by the ever talented @onlinestylist #sale #saleshopping #intensiveskintreatment

A post shared by Neom Organics London (@neomorganics) on Dec 30, 2016 at 1:00pm PST

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- **Get the glow**

There is an increased desire to capture holistic wellness from the inside out through glowing skin and smiling faces. Chef Madeleine Shaw and her book *Get The Glow* was influential in linking looking and feeling good through eating well; showing the happy smiling face that is blooming with joyful energy.

- **Pursuit of perfection**

The pursuit of a perfectly toned body that is flexible and strong is captured through dance moves and ballet on social media. Singer and Songwriter FKA Twigs recently captured this in her Nike advert. She currently has a huge influence on her 1 million followers.

Lyndsay Kelly and Alice Clapp from the Global Added Value office also contributed.

ABOUT MARILYN DUTLOW MUNGA

Marilyn Dutlow Munga has been appointed Associate Brand Director at Added Value South Africa, a member of the global marketing consultancy and research firm of the same name.

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