

Instagram: Rage for Ubiquitous Image

By Greta Sánchez

The most succesful image social network, beyond prejudices about it triviality, is also a tool that can be used in marketing, visual education and ethnographic research.



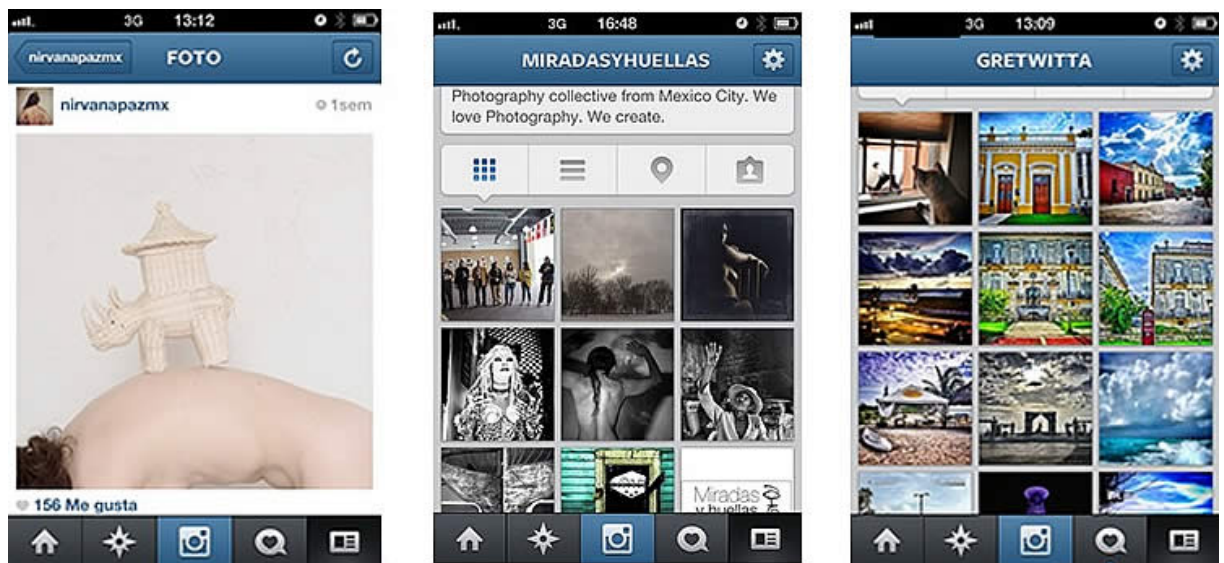
Nowadays, we can state that social networks are the most confident, easy and democratic information source that exist. Even when the majority of media communication has its own

official profile in different social networks, we know they had their slant according to their editorial line.

We got information about Tsunami in Japan 2011 actually in real time, due to the tweets of people who live there and captured photo and video in the moment of the tsunami happened. Never before citizens we had this access so immediate and ubiquitous. It has promoted democratization of the information received and transmitted by users even when we know here in Latinamerica there are a gap without access to ITC.

Instagram (IG), the photography social network with 15 millions of users in the world in 2011,¹ two years later it has 100 millions of users, due in part, to commercial strategies that considered it as a profitable company to buy. Doctor Jacob Bañuelos says that IG has among their keys for success:²

«To promote the passion for instant photography as extension and expression of the emotions in each moment» as well as «to facilitate socialization of photography building a friend community, which it means to reinforce a membership sense inside the network».



In January 2013, neither the threat of users image commercialization (that caused a massive exodus of users) had could stop their growth. Use of IG has been strongly criticized because of the great quantity of snaps uploaded everyday about pets, breakfast, food, self portraits, even a weird trend among young wealthy people who upload bar and restaurant bills and other eccentricities.

Nevertheless, as all innovations, the value of IG resides in the use of human been gives. For that reason, I would like to talk about a few examples of creative use of IG for artistic expression, ethnographic research and education.

- From the universe of amateur photographers of IG that are the majority, there are a

portion who are visual artist using the network as delivery vehicle for their contents. They create pictures with smartphones, but also with DSLR and film cameras. It allow IG to turn into visual experimentation and documentation lab. (See @aronmartineau, @eniacmtz, @nirvanapazmx, @miradasyhuellas, @bruno_bresani).

- There are also organisms that promote the use of IG to share images from topics as culture, care and respect of world heritage, biodiversity and other humanistic issues (@oncetvmexico, @arquitecturamx, @ecoral_co, @manikmexico).
- Of course, there are companies that promote their products and services through IG, which is a place where converge lots of potential customers which also allow companies –through the pictures about breakfast, travel, and self portraits that others dismiss,– to know consumer habits of users. It converts IG into an inexhaustible source of ethnographic documentation with the consequent potential for developing innovation in product and services.
- Other important scope in the use of IG is information and photojournalism: agencies, newspapers (v. g. Chicago Sun Times, Sports Illustrated, Time, New York Times, Basetrack) and freelance photojournalists publish from their smartphones images of the most important events easier, because they not have to wait to download pictures from their camera to their computers and then publish them.
- Last and my favorite, (but here do not finish the uses of IG) a field where this social network is starting to be used very creatively is visual education, through the uploading of photographic exercises (which also could be draws, painting, sculpture, architecture, etc.) with tags that allow to integrate participants in a same course, as well as the teacher to evaluate the improvement of their students. This is the case of Pj University (@photojojo #pjuniversity) a low profile but effective e-learning project.



Previous paragraphs have samples of the potential constructive use of IG. We have within our reach a very useful tool. This article does not finish to talk about IG, this is just an approach from a glance of an active user and observer of its potential.

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1. Sánchez Muñoz Norma Greta. «De lo tecnológico: Steve Jobs, tablets y redes sociales» en Chulel, innovación en diseño de marroquinería basada en el rescate de las culturas indígenas mexicanas: los desafíos de una MPYME para su crecimiento. UIA, 2012.
 2. Bañuelos, Jacob. [*Instagram. La vida a cada instante*](#).

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