



Singapore Airlines (@singaporeair) Instagram



## How firms spend their #insta budgets

Instagram is the top social media platform with over 2 million Singaporean users, so we asked the experts who is doing it right and how.

Singapore Airlines (@singaporeair) is the Instagram king of Singapore with 1.7 million followers and there is a lot would-be Insta-marketers and even hopeful #influencers can learn from the airline.

A key to their success is engaging with fans by encouraging them to tag their posts #FlySQ and #SQavgeek and there are over 100,000 photos on the platform with these hashtags. “They have high quality engagement with their fans, where admin would literally respond to most comments,” **Rina Lim**, managing director of integrated marketing agency Quirk, and **Jaclyn Tan**, Quirk’s senior business strategist, explained to *Singapore Business Review*.

It is nice to be liked, and even talked about, but the aim for brands should be to drive sales from Instagram through e-commerce. Firms in the e-commerce startup phase are trying to put more of that element into social media, and I feel like that’s where smaller shops, and other bigger names, have more free play,” **Karen Soo**, head of marketing agency Reprise Singapore, said.

Meanwhile, fashion retailer Love, Bonito (@lovebonito) has also managed

to marry a little bit of both its brand and the e-commerce element by allowing its Instagram followers to #taptoshop, a feature enabled by the platform thanks to Shopify wherein a mere tap will allow customers to see how much certain pieces go for. Its third physical store in Funan will also offer customer touch-points revolving around the marriage between e-commerce and social media through “Instagrammable” spots and an express counter for e-commerce orders.

Likewise, Singapore-born lingerie store Perk by Kate (@perkbykate), which was founded in 2012, has merged social media and e-commerce, urging its own customers to be part of its #PERKSQUAD on Instagram by posting photos flaunting their buys and celebrating ‘beauty of all sizes’.

### Steps to take before shooting

But what other ingredients do businesses need to convert customers’ hearts and comments into sales and profit? According to **Stefan Lim**, head of digital marketing consultancy firm clickTRUE’s social media arm, whilst there is no right or wrong given the nature of Instagram’s open platform, qualitative factors such as shareability, how inspirational a suite of content is, relevance to life and appeal and willingness to be associated with an Instagram post is the first step to conceptualising content.

Having natural light and clean backgrounds may well be the first step, Lim noted. “When you have a space and the property, you basically need to think about how to make a space on the property popular. And one of the ways is to make sure that these spaces and places are photogenic,” Lim explained.

“A good example would be Funan which has a lot of people going there and taking photos. They’re doing quite well in terms of how they associate themselves to interesting, unique spaces. And then having local brands, designers and photographers setting up shop and offering workshops is an added ‘Instagram’ opportunity.”

He also noted that local businesses such as boutique hotel Lloyd’s Inn Singapore (@lloydsinn), stationery and lifestyle brand The Paper Bunny (@thepaperbunny), accessory retailer The Ordinary Co (@theordinaryco) and cafe Amber Ember (@amberembersg) have succeeded in having consistency with their feeds, from the photos they post to create an overarching, aesthetically pleasing ‘theme’ across their respective feeds to the colloquial and targeted voice they take on with their followers.

“We’re trying to put in place a frame, a structure, a thinking, and help clients think through how they want to stand out and differentiate themselves against everybody else. Then, we can think of what types of content and campaigns we can launch - there’s a lot of planning, and a lot of storytelling involved.”

Lim further underlined that businesses need to be able to look at Instagram beyond a traditional communications platform. “How you project your voice, how you speak, how you write a copy is going to be different from how you write a copy on a poster. It’s actually a challenge that we face with some businesses, so that part of the work is also something that we try to do it for the client,” he said.

This sentiment was echoed by Soo, who added that when creating content, firms need to be mindful of what role Instagram plays in their business.

“In the case of Nestle SJORA (@sjorasingapore), they don’t sell much in retail stores, but they are heavily sold in QSRs like Long John Silver’s and other fast food chains. So their aim isn’t to expand their brand per se but just make sure that people know about them. For them it’s about being visible to their target audience through resonating content,” Soo explained.

As a result, Nestle SJORA’s Instagram page

is filled with quirky illustrations, crossword puzzle, word searches, and short animations which are brought together through its orange, pink and yellow pastel colours.

“Nowadays, everybody’s interested in little illustrations which are different from the traditional photos you just post on the platform. It’s essentially something we’ve found actually resonates with both the younger and older folks,” she added.

### Not just snapping photos

GoJek Singapore (@gojeksg) recently launched dedicated Instagram and Facebook accounts which feature postings of tongue-in-cheek illustrations, and are said to later release more ‘fun and educational’ posts that users will find useful.

“Our social media content will comprise a mix of videos, GIFs, memes, lifestyle recommendations, product updates and funky illustrations that we hope users will love and find useful,” a GoJek spokesperson said.

And it is not just business-to-consumer (B2C) firms jumping on this new trend. The Central Provident Fund (CPF) Board (@cpf\_board) has made efforts to send little messages to its followers to save money and be more #centsible with the use of colourful yet simple illustrations reminiscent of hodge-podge magazine cutouts thrown together and puns to accompany them.

In terms of how much it costs to come up with witty and engaging marketing strategies, they could range between between 10 and 15% of a firm’s overall annual budget. “Content production alone can see anything from \$3,000 to \$8,000 per month,” Lim said. “But even as budgets differ depending on the firm and industry, Instagram-focused marketing budgets are something that we did not see one or two years ago.”

### #goodbyehashtags?

Soo also observed that Instagram marketing may be witnessing a new shift with the absence of unique hashtags, or even hashtags, accompanying posts to boost viewership. Citing a personal encounter with her family, she noted that Instagrammers, or at least the younger generation, are instead turning to ‘tagging’ other users to increase a post’s popularity.

Soo said, “You can actually see some Instagram posts on your Facebook profiles and other similar things along those lines. The upgrade just automatically happened, so marketing people have to be extra vigilant of these little changes, as it can implicate clients and their Instagram pages.”

## INTERVIEW

# Inside Love, Bonito’s largest physical store in Funan

Love, Bonito has launched its third physical store in the upcoming mall Funan and has started offering customer touch points such as “Instagrammable” spots, an express counter for e-commerce orders, and on-demand personal stylists. The fashion e-commerce player is looking to offer a retail experience designed to be “thoughtful and feminine” whilst taking into account the feedback of customers on its first two stores.

In an exclusive interview with *Singapore Business Review*, Love, Bonito co-founder Rachel Lim talks about the new features of their biggest store to date, as well as some future plans to move their stores into the combination of the digital and physical space. Lim also shares the investments they are making to improve store fixtures and train retail staff.

### Can you describe what the third physical store of Love, Bonito will be like?

Our third store will definitely offer a different retail experience, with a refreshed design and layout that is distinctly thoughtful and feminine. More importantly, the store will hold dedicated and designated space for us to bring our community together to experience the brand, via workshops and events.

The store will also see the roll-out of many customer-centric touch points such as multiple, photo-worthy Instagrammable spots, an express counter for e-commerce order collections, and value-added services like alterations and personal stylists on demand - ready to give honest fashion advice to our customers, ensuring they always leave with their head a little higher, voice a little louder. These are a few examples, and we will see more features roll out throughout the year.

### What types of investments have you made to improve offline retail services?

Everything starts with people, so our main investment goes into the training of the people on the ground. We want to make sure our retail staff are not simply driven by commission but focus on building a relationship with our customers. Also, understanding that our stores see a lot of footfall, there can be wear and tear, so we are particular about investing in sturdier and longer-lasting fixtures in the store.

### Recently, there’s been this trend of phygital stores, are you looking into that concept as well?

Yes, I think we’re already taking steps to move in that direction, but never for the sake of trends. We keep our customers at the heart of our efforts, and focus on delivering a seamless,



Love, Bonito co-founder Rachel Lim

delightful shopping experience for them – that happens to include omnichannel, or phygital touchpoints that we’ll continue to explore.

### Has investing in offline made much more of a difference than investing in offline or are they typically the same thing?

Investing in offline has allowed people to really get to know the brand in a more up-close and personal kind of way; they get to touch and feel the brand, so to speak, and that helps us to win their trust. Offline experiences also allow women to experience the heart of the brand, e.g., through our community workshops. We’ve also seen how having a physical space helps to create more brand awareness in general.

### Do you think retailers in Singapore are ready to take on the same strategy that Love, Bonito is undertaking?

I think it differs very much on, firstly, the product that you’re selling, and secondly, the audience that you have. It really depends on what your audience is looking for when they shop, your product, and your brand.

I think there is no one fixed method or a sure way to win the market. I think you really have to dive deep and observe based on your unique product offering and target audience.

By Danielle Isaacs