

National Geographic

Masters of Visual Storytelling



Key Takeaways



Instagram

Re-purpose exclusive content to increase user engagement and expand audiences



Facebook

Take advantage of description text to capture audience attention and drive them to the web



Twitter

Get out the news fast and promote content from other platforms



YouTube

Publish videos regularly featuring content from other digital and traditional media

Introduction

National Geographic has one of the most effective social media strategies on the planet. They are able to leverage a wealth of content from all of their mediums - stunning magazine spreads, interactive apps, TV shows, and across the entire digital space. Social media has given Nat Geo a new platform to utilize their existing content in new ways - and data show their audiences can't get enough.

The foundation for their success lies in good planning and using each platform for a targeted purpose. Following in their footsteps, it's critical to build your approach and content around platforms that help to achieve business goals and highlight your company's identity.




On Instagram

Nat Geo has become the largest, fastest-growing, and most-interacted profile on Instagram. The platform has matured, [boasting over 400 million users](#), and is a perfect fit to house Nat Geo's footage and images from their global community of visual storytellers.

To put their success into perspective: they have more than 54.2 million Followers and gain 76,000+ new Followers per day. Since January of this year, they've been able to attract 13.9 million new Followers. Compare that with June of 2015 when their audience size was 20.7 million - growing by 16% in one year. To put this into perspective, another organization that uploads stellar images and videos of our planet and solar system - NASA - gains an average of 30,000 new Followers per day.

Nat Geo's growth has been met with a highly engaged audience - they received over 1.5 billion total interactions between July 2015 - June 2016.

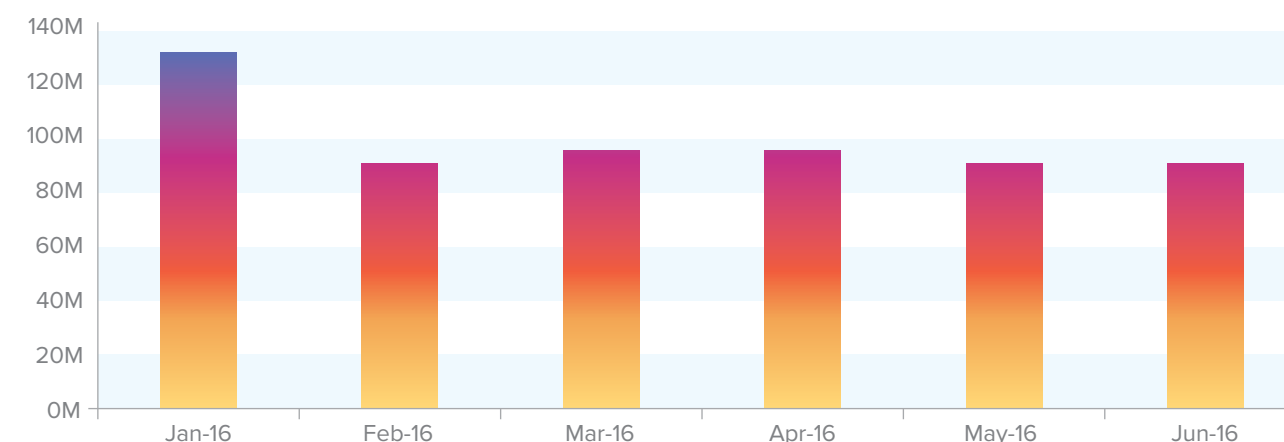
Nat Geo's social media success on Instagram is largely attributed to featuring exclusive content every day from their extensive network of photographers. These contributors are massive personal brands in their own right, and they tend to publish to other profiles as well - both branded and personal. The posts tend to promote each other, which helps to generate quality content daily, increase user engagement, and mutually expand their audience.



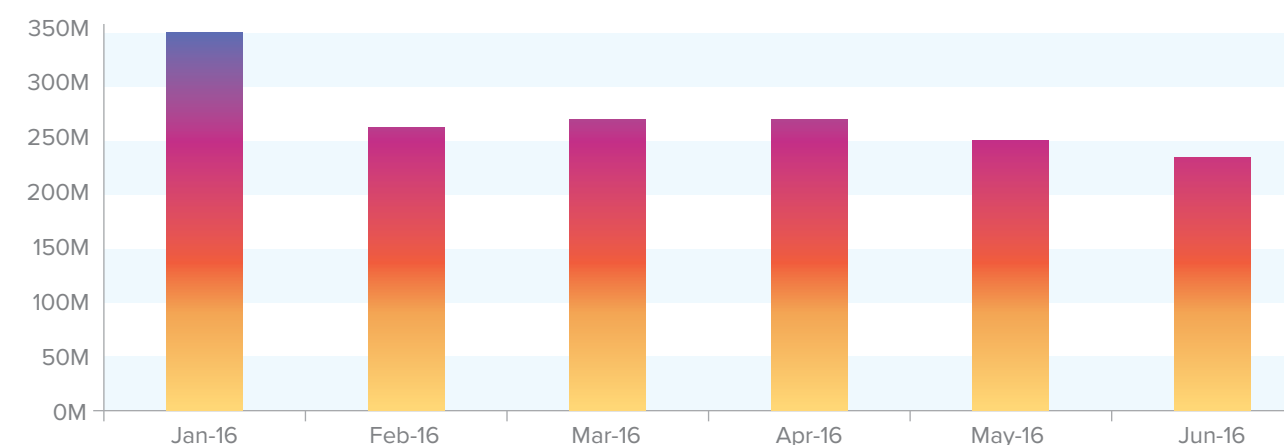
TIP

Your Instagram content should show-off your company's identity, give Followers an insider's look, and really be targeted at your core audience. **If you are not enthusiastic about the photo or video you uploaded, your Followers probably won't be, either.** Featuring fans through contests, partnering up with a key influencer, or handing over your account for guest posting are great ways to increase interactions and expand your audience.

National Geographic - Interactions on Instagram

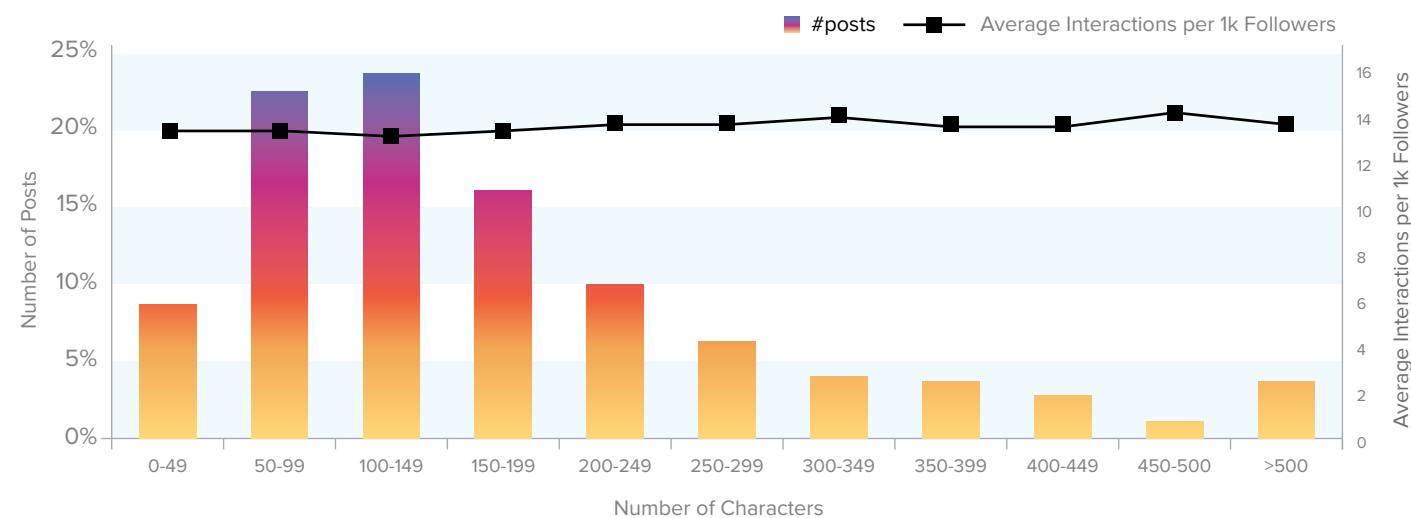


National Geographic - Posts on Instagram



Making use of Instagram Description Text

Average Engagement Rate for Post Description Length

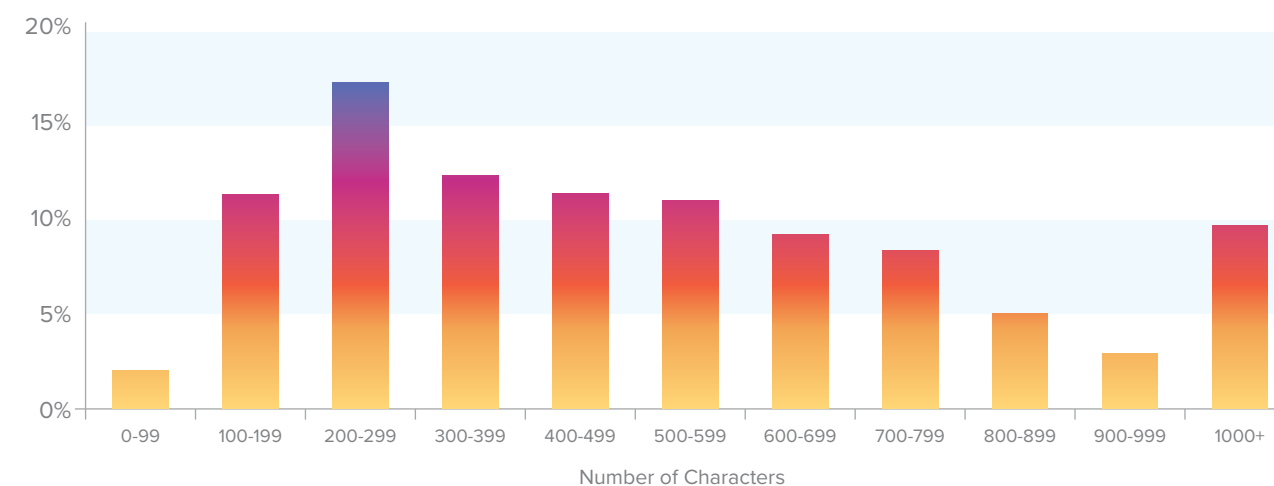


Date Range: March 2016 - May 2016
Data Sample: 651,388 Company Posts from 7,650 Company Profiles

We took a look at more than 650,000 company posts from over 7,650 company profiles to see whether character length affects engagement on Instagram. Here we can see that **the length of the description text does not influence engagement**. This demonstrates two important principles:

- ▶ Instagram serves as an excellent platform for storytelling.
- ▶ Instagram users are enthusiastic about the profiles they follow and enjoy learning about the content they are viewing.

National Geographic - Description Length on Instagram




Date Range: January - June 2016

Nat Geo's posts are more than just striking photography. They make the most of the description text to provide a compelling story behind the content - certainly a core advantage of Instagram as a platform. 58% of Nat Geo's posts have over 400 characters, while in terms of companies, only 6% have over 400 characters. Nat Geo is using Instagram as a microblogging service, and it is working.






Nat Geo’s most popular post of the year was this photo of a young grizzly bear in Denali National Park in Alaska. The photo received more than 761,000 total interactions - by far the most from the time period we analyzed (January 2016 - June 2016). They gave credit to their photographer [@argonautphoto](#), cleverly incorporated the Denali National Park hashtag, and used this post to support their larger campaign featuring National Parks in that month’s issue of *National Geographic Magazine*.



LESSON

This post demonstrates how they are able to leverage description text well - they informed Followers about their latest magazine, recognized their photographer and provided his Instagram account to follow his assignment in Alaska, and promoted Denali National Park.



**National Geographic**
 /natgeo

Tuesday Jan 26, 2016 03:25 UTC +00:00

Details

Comments (10502)

[VIEW ON INSTAGRAM](#)





Photo by [@argonautphoto](#) (Aaron Huey). A young #GrizzlyBear in the epic colors of Fall in #DenaliNationalPark, Alaska. Check out our feature on Denali in this month's issue of @natgeo magazine - part of our year long series on our National Parks. Follow @argonautphoto to see more of his unpublished images from this assignment!


**Interactions**

Likes

751 299

Comments

10 502

 **Interactions per 1k Followers**

17,98

Post Labels (0)

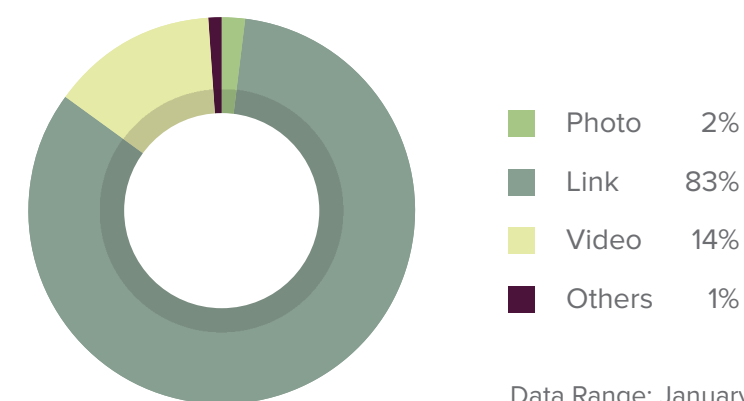
Screenshot taken from [Socialbakers Solutions](#)

f On Facebook

Nat Geo has an audience of more than 41 million Fans, and so far in the first half of 2016, they have attracted more than 2.4 million Fans - that's nearly 400,000 new Fans per month on average. Their strategy on Facebook and Twitter seems to be focused on building communities and driving fans to their website; whereas Instagram is used mainly for sharing pictures and the stories behind them. [Social engagement drives site visits](#) - and, for the most part, that's how they are using Facebook and Twitter. On Facebook, 83% of their posts are links, and they receive 62% of all interactions. Photos on the other hand are posted only 2% of the time, accounting for 4% of total interactions.

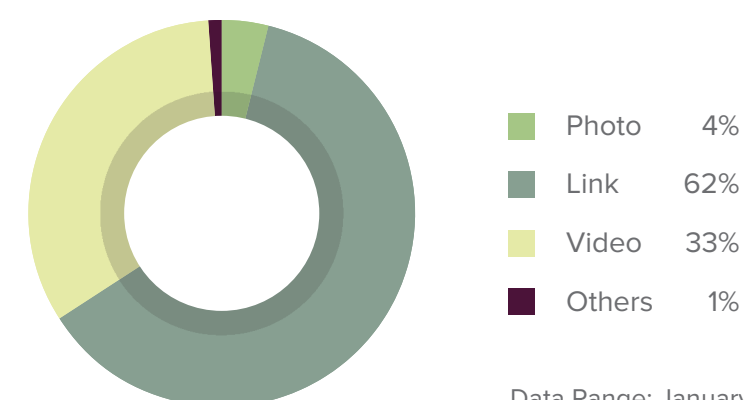
In the first half of 2016, Nat Geo's top 10 Facebook Posts were videos - in 2014, 9 out of 10 posts were photos - but it isn't surprising with new features like [Facebook 360](#) and [Facebook Live](#) videos increasing in popularity. They are building awareness through gaining high levels of engagement for videos, but their aim seems to be focused on driving users to their website.

National Geographic - Post Type Distribution on Facebook



Data Range: January 2016 - June 2016

National Geographic - Post Type Interactions Distribution on Facebook

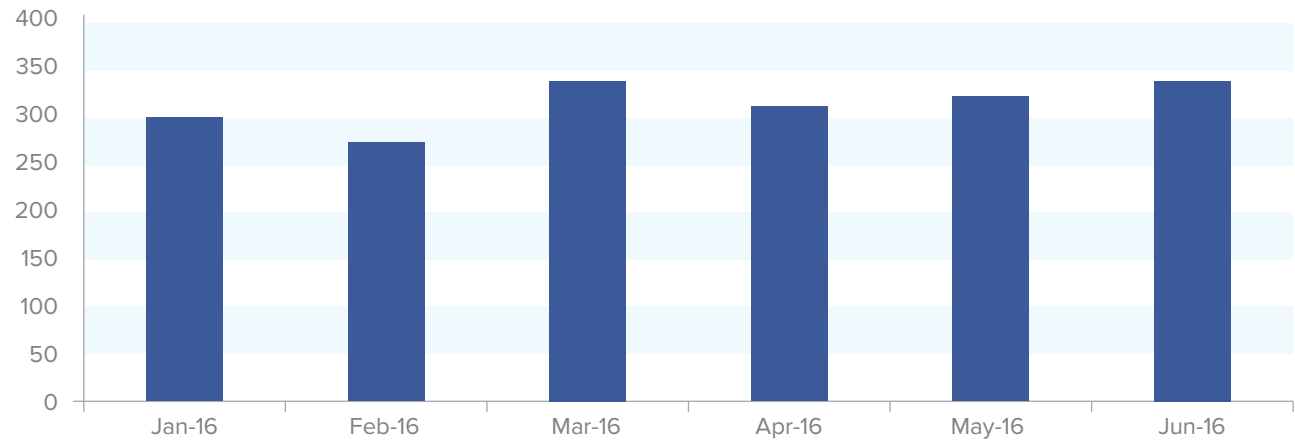


Data Range: January 2016 - June 2016



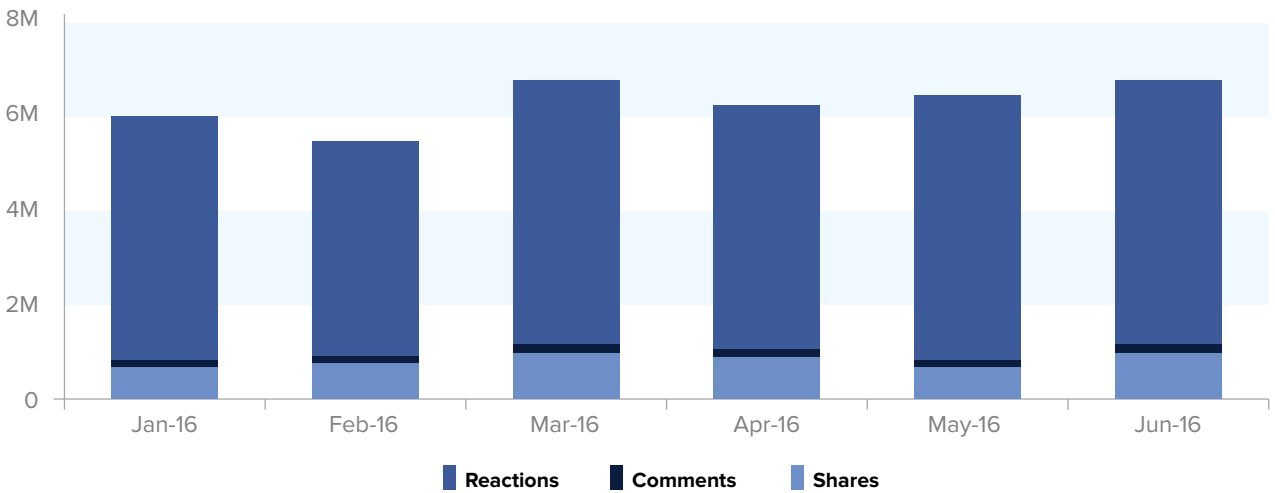
Nat Geo posts frequently and often - an average of over 300 posts per month which garnered an average of 6.4 million interactions per month from January 2016 - June 2016. Compare that to Red Bull, which has an even bigger audience (45.7 million Fans), posting an average of nearly 720 posts per month and receiving only an average of 3.8 million interactions per month.

National Geographic - Page Posts on Facebook



Number of Interactions

Aggregated by Month Jan 01, 2016 - Jun 30, 2016



Summary of Number of Interactions




National Geographic

Reactions	Comments	Shares	Max	Min	Avg. per Month
31 377 276 81,44%	1 145 065 2,97%	6 007 170 15,59%	7 485 510 Jun 2016	5 210 004 Feb 2016	6 421 585




Their most popular Post was a video about scientists’ growing concern for aquatic life with the recent release of *Finding Dory*. It received over 594,000 interactions and linked to an article on their website that delves into the topic further. This is another well-made post that is taking advantage of descriptive text to drive users to their website.



TIP

This Facebook post had 5 important elements which was sure to help it succeed, and which you should try to replicate:

- 1) it commented on popular conversation;
- 2) it was presented in a video with captions (ideal if being watched on mobile);
- 3) the description text teased the audience to watch and read more with urgency;
- 4) it included the #FindingDory to increase exposure and searchability;
- 5) and it had a specific call-to-action which drove users to their website.



▶ National Geographic

f / natgeo

ORGANIC

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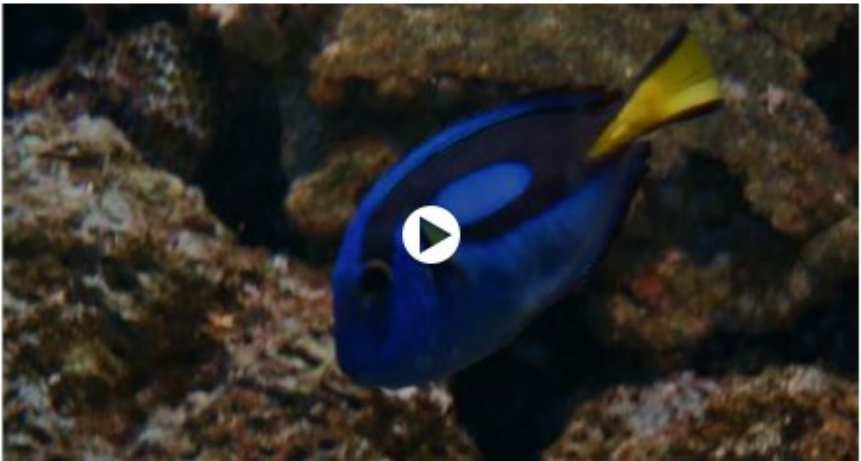
Monday Jun 20, 2016 22:31 UTC +00:00

Details

Comments (13078)

VIEW ON FACEBOOK >

Scientists are concerned that the release of #FindingDory will lead to a demand for blue tangs as pets. Here's why that's a huge problem.
<http://on.natgeo.com/28JMLkz>



Interactions

595 301

Reactions

166 825

Comments

13 078

Shares

415 398

Interactions per 1k Fans

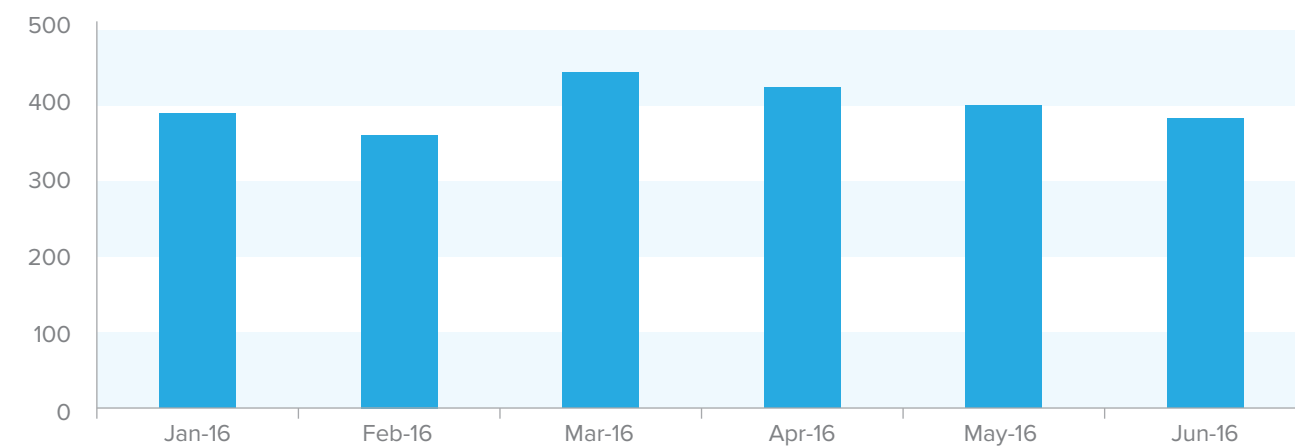
14,55

Screenshot taken from Socialbakers Analytics

On Twitter

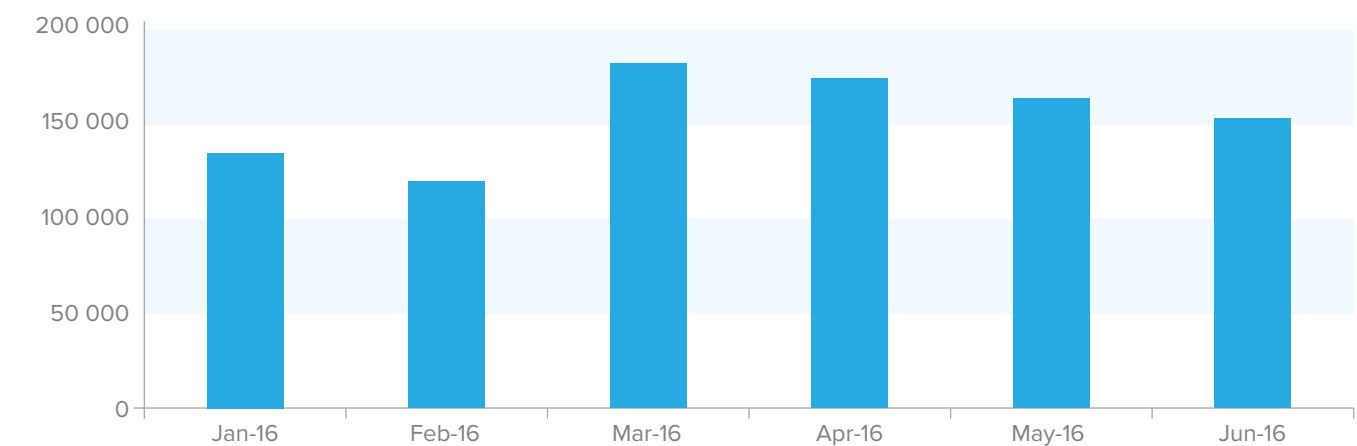
Nat Geo has more than 12.3 million Followers on Twitter, and over the course of 2016 were able to gain 1.4 million new Followers. Their strategy on Twitter is similar to Facebook - get news out fast and drive traffic to their site with article links.

National Geographic - Number of Tweets on Twitter



Nat Geo posts nearly 100 more Tweets on average per month than they post to Facebook; however, they don't interact with their audience or Retweet. Regardless, their stellar photos, trending topics, and attention to global and environmental issues garnered an average of more than 40,000 mentions per month, and 1.8 million interactions in the first half of 2016.

National Geographic - Number of Mentions by Users on Twitter



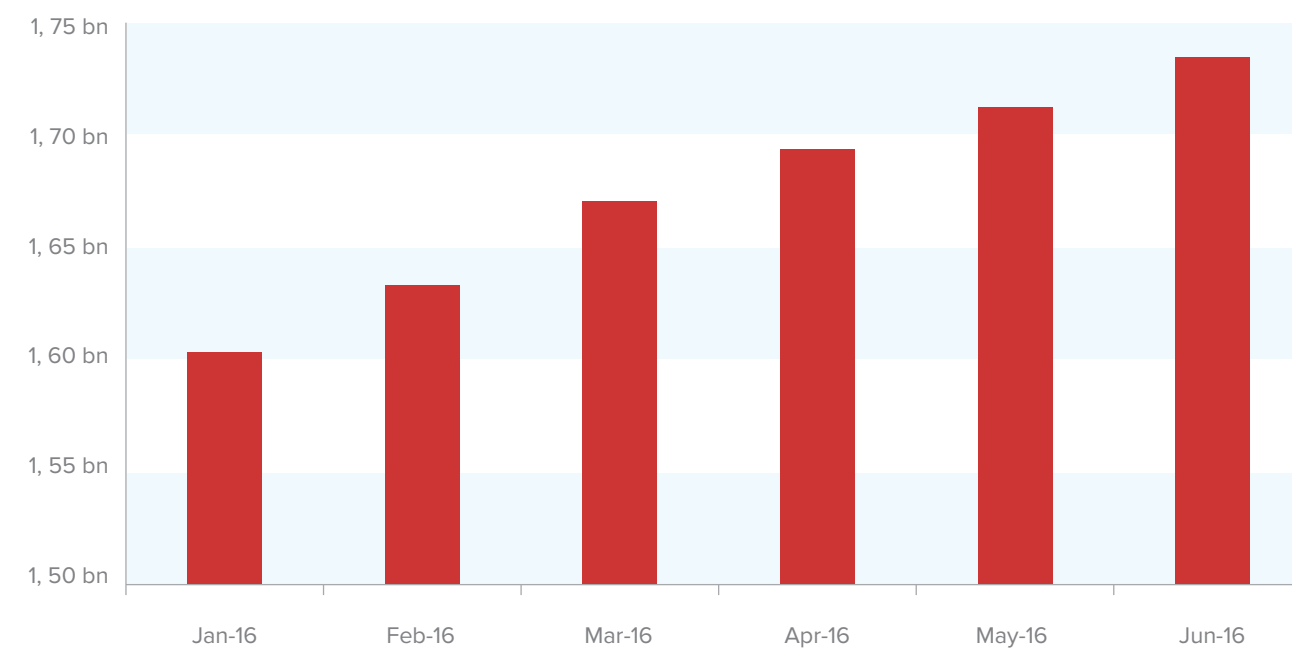
On YouTube

Nat Geo has no shortage of great video content and are publishing to their 4.9 million Subscribers. They've been ahead of the curve for implementing visual content as the core of their social media presence. Where static images and short videos dominate on Instagram and generally on mobile, YouTube gives the space for lengthy storytelling with videos on full-screen desktop. They are extremely active on YouTube - they've published 312 videos - an average of 52 per month - and gained over 500,000 new Subscribers in the first half of 2016.

LESSON

It's not just about capturing new Subscribers. What matters is how much they engage with your content. On YouTube, video views and growth of interactions are a good measurement to help define success. In Nat Geo's case, their increase in Subscribers was significant because they were highly engaged as can be seen by the increasing number video views.

National Geographic - Total Uploaded Video Views



Conclusion

Social media is an excellent channel for Nat Geo to showcase their existing content in new ways. Their content goes beyond striking visuals and videos, they educate their audiences with the stories behind them. Using creative formats like [Facebook Live](#), is one of the reasons why they have become one of the most engaging storytellers on the planet in the digital age.

Their social media strategy is built on using each platform for a targeted purpose with exclusive content for each feed which keeps their audiences coming back for more. They are successfully using concrete call-to-actions in their content such as linking to their articles or increasing awareness about their other media streams. By leveraging the power of their creative community, they are able to publish regularly and mutually expand each other's audiences. Following in their footsteps can help you to improve your social media content strategy and create more authentic customer relationships to drive your business forward.



See what Socialbakers Solutions can do for you.

Contact us at sales@sociabakers.com

