

Julia Chanourdie:

Instagram Market Influencer

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COM 250: Business Marketing

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July 18, 2021

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Julia Chanourdie: Instagram Market Influencer

I chose the social media influencer Julia Chanourdie. She is a French rock climber and one of the only women to be able to climb 9b (a very difficult grade for outdoor rock climbing). She is currently doing a lot of competition bouldering, which uses artificial walls and climbing holds to assess a climber's ability. She will be competing for team France in the 2020 (delayed until this year due to covid) summer Olympics held in Tokyo this summer. For this assignment, I wanted to choose an influencer who was active outdoors. I have been climbing more lately and looked through a few profiles of popular climbers, but I found that most of them did not endorse many products. Most of their personal Instagram or Facebook pages had only personal posts and they endorsed products through some other media platforms. Julia posts on Instagram regularly and has a few sponsors which she tags. She also uses some of these products in her everyday life. I also liked that her product promotions weren't aggressive. I felt that the content was mostly about her with elements of the promotions scattered throughout which made her posts much more entertaining. I believe her profile was a great fit for this influencer project because of the regular posts, promotions and quality of entertainment.

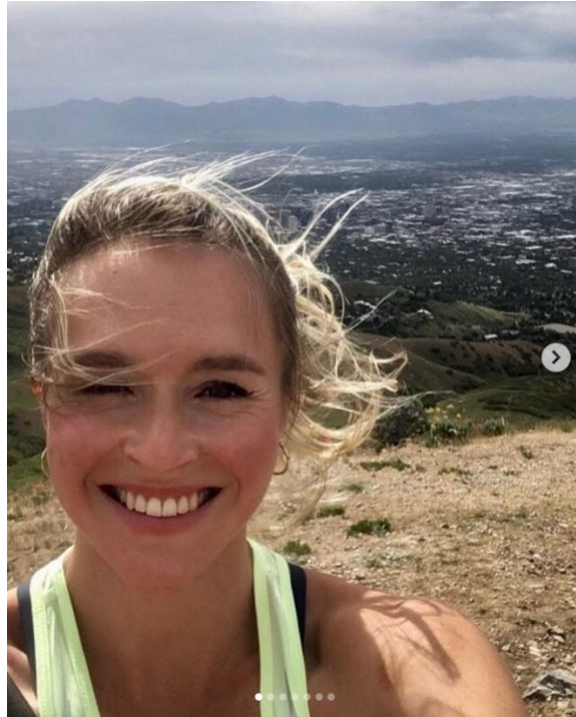
Initial Reactions to Julia's Posts

Julia posted seven times in the six weeks which I followed her for this project. I chose the first six posts, although the sixth and the seventh post were very similar in content. Both announced results of a climbing competition accompanied by a photo taken after a climb, so I decided to keep my sixth initial reaction post. Overall, I am quite happy with the six that I got to react to and analyze. I felt that they were great posts that summarized previous posts I had seen. I wish I could have included all of the photos from each post, as some had multiple, but these ones are still great. The five photos and one short video which I've done my best to summarize have personal elements from Julia's life as well as some great entertaining photos.

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Post one

This first post from Julia Chanourdie was a conglomeration of five photos and two videos. The other photos were similar to the first one as shown here, with the exception of two that were of the landscape only.



The two videos were also of the landscape. For context, Julia had injured her shoulder just after she had arrived in Salt Lake City, Utah for a World Cup climbing competition. This post came across as very personal and wholesome to me. Having played a few sports competitively, I can empathize with Julia. I can imagine how hard it would be to travel (to another country) to compete and then just as soon as you get there, have your ability to participate stripped away. I really appreciate how she is making the best of her time there though. Although she cannot climb, she has managed to find a beautiful spot outside of the city to reset and have a good time doing it. This post really solidifies the fact that Julia is a person, prone to injury, just like the rest of us, but that she is still making the best of it. Of course, this post is not without brand advertising though, with her sponsors tagged in the bottom of her post.

@energiedusport
@cupra_france
@michelin
@ca_des_savoie
@petzl_official
@climb_up_officiel
@blacksheepvan
@lasportivagram

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Post two

I found this post reassuring, since there were not many details about Julia's shoulder injury given in her first post. Those that follow Julia religiously were probably quite relieved to know that she is already climbing again. Her note of caution

comes across as smart to me. It is clear to me that she cares about the longevity of her career as a climber since she is taking extra care to make sure that her progress towards competitive climbing again is slow and steady. This post also came just a week after her last one, so it is very nice to know that she is keeping her fans up to date with her injury and how she will continue forward. Although this photo was taken while she was taking it easy on her shoulder, it is a great action shot!



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Post three

The third post I'm analyzing was again posted in direct succession of the last one. This post was a video preview of a movie called Julia, which was played at the Chamonix Film Festival and available for



streaming anywhere. The video starts out with two logos displayed, Alpine Magazine, and Petzl, a company which makes climbing gear. The preview alternates between action shots of Julia climbing outdoors, and snippets of interviews with Julia and her father. Some of the action shots are of old footage when Julia was young and all of it is engaging! I was struck by how determined Julia appeared when climbing. You get a sense of all the hard work she has put in to get to be one of the best climbers in the world. I also really like that her father is in the preview. You can tell that he has played a large role in the support network that has helped her get to that level of intensity. Although I haven't watched the full movie, I can imagine that those who chose to watch it feel that they have a much deeper connection with Julia. Seeing old footage and hearing other people talk about how she got to be where she is, must motivate and inspire others. I actually wanted to watch the full movie myself, but missed the streaming date, and I haven't been able to find it since then.

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Post four

Cupra is a French car manufacturing company which Julia is representing here. She advertises its comfort, claiming that it



helps improve her performance. She was presumably on her way out to a crag (cliff) to do some climbing and her sleek looking Cupra got her there. Whether or not she posed for this photo or not I don't know, but it looks as though she has gotten all of her gear and just got out of her car, about to start the trek to the crag. She looks happy and you can even see some pretty awesome looking cliff faces in the background. I can see how Cupra could be advertising to many outdoor types here, including hikers, kayakers, campers and more. The advertisement comes across as a little cliché to me though. Can a car really improve your performance that much?

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Post five

For the fifth initial reaction piece, we have Julia pictured with team France. Team France competes in many competitions for the International Federation of Sport Climbing, including the Olympics. This



was the first post which I'm analyzing that doesn't have any tags of brands which Julia represents. That being said, we can see that team France has several sponsors who have logos on their shirts. To me, this photo really puts the "sport" in sport climbing. Seeing the team members in uniform really brings out the competitive aspect of Julia's career. Again, as someone who has played team sports, I feel like I can relate to the comradery and competitiveness of sports, and the uniforms really bring that out for me. From my somewhat limited experience, I think I can say that climbing indoors can be a whole different universe from climbing outdoors. Most people outdoors don't seem too focused on placement in a competition, but rather pushing themselves for their own satisfaction and enjoyment, while socializing with others who are doing the same. This photo emphasizes the multiple aspects to Julia's climbing career.

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Post six

In climbing terms, Julia has some serious “pump” going on in this photo, as can be seen by the vascularity of her forearms. She most likely just came off a difficult lead climb, as harnesses are not used for bouldering, and will rest before giving it



another shot if she didn’t quite reach the top. Even though this photo is not an action shot, it’s still pretty awesome. Julia looks super strong, and I can definitely relate to the feeling of being exhausted after a difficult climb. I also like that even after a day of intense competition, she is updating her fans. We can also see some sponsorships again on team France’ uniform as well as more tags for her own personal sponsorships.

Analysis

I argue that the primary typology Julia uses for influencing followers is both self-media, and a creative outlet. Furthermore, I believe the social media outlet itself (Instagram) is best used for self-media due to its rigid form of only captioned photos or videos, which are posted in chronological order. This is contrast to Chen and Zhu (2015) referencing Instagram as a creative outlet. Perhaps in the time since their research, Instagram has evolved to become more profile-based instead of content-based. They could also argue that profiles are not necessarily people. Many profiles are meme pages or geared towards content and do not represent a person or company. In this context especially, it is appropriate to label Instagram as a self-media platform since the profile about Julia and not about any particular content. This structure of self-media makes it perfect for following celebrities and advertising products. The reason that I argue Julia also uses it as a creative outlet, is due to the largely personal aspects of her posts and the

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entertainment value which her photos and videos provide. Although she is a celebrity, she also gives us a window into her thoughts, feelings, triumphs and struggles which are unique to many different cultures including athletes, outdoor enthusiasts and even travelers. I argue that she uses a social media outlet which is best used for self-media due to its rigid structure, but addresses human needs associated with creative outlets, like self-actualization and competence.

Typology. In *Social Media and Human Need Satisfaction: Implications for Social Media Marketing* (Zhu and Chen, 2015), Instagram is referred to as being a creative outlet, since it is content based and the messages are broadcast to a large group of followers. I would argue that Instagram is more of a self-media outlet than it is a creative social media outlet. I take this position because even though some profiles on Instagram are content based, there are also many celebrities and businesses who post regular updates. Instagram is about who is posting, at least as much as it is about what they are posting. With this in mind, Instagram does not contain customized messages. Although you can respond to comments, typically the poster broadcasts to a large audience and has minimal response to any followers' comments. This disqualifies Instagram from being a relationship, or collaboration typology.

In the context of Julia Chanourdie's posts I see both content and personal updates. Post one is the most personal post of the six posts I chose. She expresses how she is feeling about being unable to compete due to her injury. The post is not about any particular content, instead it addresses how she is coping with an unexpected accident and sharing elements of her personal life with her fans, friends and family. Her followers also respond personally, addressing her directly often, not only the landscape in her photos. For example, the account "xavagepalmier" says, "Je te souhaite de garder cette belle rando associée à ce voyage, cette émotion vivifiante que tu as éprouvé pendant la marche. Bon courage pour ton rétablissement, tu as pris la décision qui permettra je l'espère de réduire ton temps de repos. Bon retour Julia", which roughly translates to, "I hope when you reflect on this trip, you will associate this invigorating emotion with this hike. Good luck with your recovery, you have hopefully made the decision that will cut down on your rest time. Welcome back Julia."

There is content in her posts as well. The video preview of her documentary is a promotion of her own content. xavagepalmier responds to her video preview in post three, "Magnifique, inspirante, ces images me font rêver! Merci Julia ", which means, "Magnificent,

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these images inspire me! Thank you Julia”. The comment from xavagepalmier shows that Julia’s posts entertain and inspire. Posts two, five and six have the elements of content as well, in which Julia is wearing a team France uniform. People certainly watch climbing competitions, specifically in the Olympics, or other competitions which team France competes in. Post four also endorses a product which Julia supports. Throughout all but one post, she also tags brands that sponsor her. In some posts we can see the brands she is wearing as well, including Petzl and Adidas. Her posts give insight into her personal life, as well as showing entertaining and creative pictures.

Human Needs. When thinking of the human needs addressed in Julia’s posts, we again see elements of self-media and of creative outlets. Zhu and Chen (2015) state that followers of creative outlets desire pleasure-stimulation (see Appendix A). Many of the photos are action shots of Julia performing some pretty impressive climbing moves. It is truly entertaining scrolling through her Instagram, seeing some wild moves, and beautiful photos of nature. Plenty of comments show that followers are also enjoying the posts. For example, a comment in post six from the account ch.flocon says, “J'échange la France en finale de l'Euro de foot contre Julia en finale d'Innsbruck! Alleeeez Julia!! T'es plus forte que Benzema et MBappé réunis!”, or in english, “I exchanged France in the Euro football final for Julia in the Innsbruck final! You are stronger than Benzama and Mbappé combined!”. This comment not only shows that Julia and her posts are entertaining, but also the multiple interests and cultures which her followers are a part of. Her media extends past climbers, into other sports and outdoor activities enthusiasts. Zhu and Chen (2015) also state that the person posting in creative media outlets is searching for self-actualization and competence. This can be seen throughout Julia’s posts. For example, we see in post one that Julia is disheartened from her injury in post one, although she makes the best of her trip. In post two, we get an update that her injury is minor, and she will recover as long as she treats it appropriately. By post six, Julia is climbing again. Despite the setback of her injury, she is still placing quite well in competitions which can be seen in later posts, not included here. This succession of posts can be seen as Julia seeking recognition for her efforts as a climber. Although I haven’t seen her documentary from post three, I’m sure it showcases her hard work and talents to a greater degree than her posts as well.

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There are a few elements of human needs associated with self-media in her social media as well. Currently, she has over 56 thousand followers. I assume she doesn't personally know 56 thousand people, which means there is a parasocial relationship between her and her followers. That parasocial relationship is often associated with self-media (Zhu and Chen, 2015). Self-media can also be seen in the way that advertisements are used in her posts. She directly endorses products through tags, and even has an entire post dedicated to promoting the car company Cupra. The post about Cupra, as well as posts which feature her wearing branded athletic gear (Petzl and Adidas) as mentioned previously, show how she has integrated these products into her everyday life. Zhu and Chen (2015) conclude that advertising directly, and indirectly through incorporating products into celebrities' lives are elements of self-media. Even with Julia's well integrated advertising, there is some criticism from her followers. Her caption in post four may be a little far reaching, and the account andssuchet has no problem pointing it out. They say, "Une publicité de voiture un peu ridicule, le business de la grimpe, mais bravo à la championne pour ses réalisations et dommage qu'il faille coller une voiture derrière pour financer!! Bravo pour l'escalade !!" which means, "A slightly ridiculous car advertisement, but congratulations to the champion for her achievements. The business is on the rise, but it is too bad that you have to stick a car behind you to finance yourself. Good work climbing!"

Reflection

After writing my analysis, I don't think my first impression of the posts have changed too much. I enjoyed looking back at my first impressions to realize that they were in line with how I was going to analyze Julia as a social media influencer. The entertainment value in her posts is hardly diminished by the product promotions in her posts. I believe this is especially true because many of the brands she represents are in line with my own interests, including Petzl, Adidas and Black Sheep Vans. I think many athletes and avid outdoorspeople don't like to advertise for companies because the people who follow them dislike advertisements, but Julia does a great job of ensuring that the advertisements don't take away from the entertainment. I really like that her posts are a nice mix between content and personal posts. Followers get to view posts in quick succession, with weekly updates and some pretty amazing action shots. You don't have to see an interview on live T.V. to know how Julia feels about her performance in a competition, it's right there!

Conclusion

Julia Chanourdie uses a media outlet that is best used for self-media yet mixes content and personal posts flawlessly. Furthermore, she manages the delivery of advertising fairly well through a direct and indirect approach, although some followers get discouraged by the more blatant advertising. She builds a loyal fan base by regularly sharing personal updates yet keeps the content exciting for those who want entertaining, expressive posts. Her posts embody competence and self-actualization by focusing on her own goals, achievements and struggles. The sheer difficulty of the climbs she completes and the competitions she competes in add to her prestigious reputation. Followers can pursue the same prestigious reputation by emulating her lifestyle choices. Becoming a member of the “CupratrIBE” by purchasing a Cupra car, or perhaps buying Petzl climbing gear could help a follower associate themselves with climbing and more clearly express who they are. Julia also inspires followers to use her products so that they can achieve the feats that she has. Through status and personalization, Julia Chanourdie’s page is ideal for growing the climbing community, retaining followers, and influencing followers buying decisions.

References

Zhu, y., Chen, H. (2015). Social Media and Human Need Satisfaction: Implications for Social Media Marketing. *Business Horizons* (58), 335-345.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2015.01.006>

Appendix A

Selected Figures from Zhu and Chen (2015)

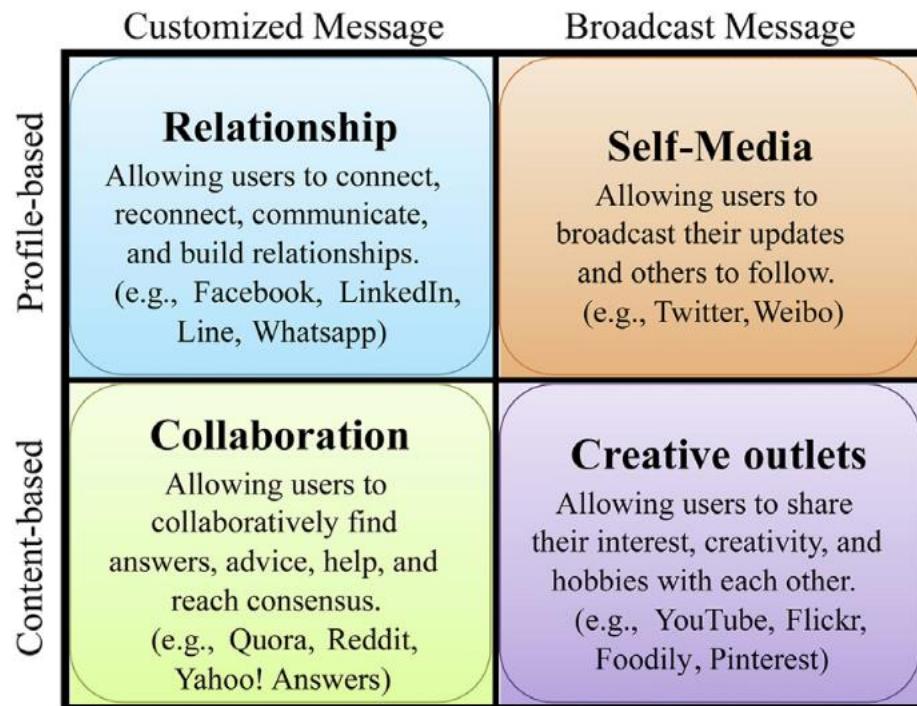


Figure 1. Social media matrix

	Relationship	Self-media	Creative outlet	Collaboration
Poster	Relatedness, Self-esteem	Popularity-influence, Money-luxury*	Self-actualization, Competence	Competence, Self-actualization
Follower	Relatedness	Self-esteem, Relatedness	Pleasure-stimulation	Autonomy

* Although not mentioned in academic literature, influential posters get handsome rewards for sponsored content. Thus, we add Money-luxury as one of the needs for posters.

Figure 2. Types of social media and human need satisfaction