

Barbie Social Media Strategy

The social media strategy and success of Barbie, a Mattel-owned doll manufacturer, comes from a vested interest in bringing their dolls to life. Barbie's social channels have a combined following of almost 20 million people, with Facebook taking the lead at 14.5 million likes and Twitter falling behind at 263,000 followers. A simple glance at this follower count shows the same conclusion that can be proved by a deeper analysis of the various channels: Barbie is able to command engagement on certain platforms but is struggling to keep up in other places.

A run through of their content on YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and their blog shows that Barbie's content is focused on marketing to parents and children, with all of their images being defined by the company's white and pink logo colors. The content aimed at parents often pretends to be child-like; the product shots are simple, staged, and colorful. I imagine this is done to help parents imagine their children playing with the various Barbie dolls and doll accessories. The content aimed at children develops "Barbie" into a character. On their YouTube channel, the videos display Barbie as an animation who creates vlogs. On Instagram, Barbie is depicted as a normal Instagrammer who shares images of her daily life, events, family, friends, pets, food, and outfits.

I think that Barbie's social channels have the most integrated content across Twitter and Facebook, where most of the content focuses on selling and educating. Instagram and YouTube both have a focus on entertaining with minor components of selling and education, but their

content is creating individually. The blog is the one social channel that seems largely neglected and is not very integrated or updated frequently (the last blog post is dated 2017).

Barbie is able to accomplish many different communication goals by using these social media channels. They are educating audiences on their current #CloseTheDreamGap project which focuses on resolving the statistics that show that girls begin believing that gender is a barrier to their goals from age five. This campaign goes across their Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, and features collaborations with the Glamour Women of the Year event as well as dolls for prominent career women such as Savannah Guthrie and Hoda Kotb in journalism. Barbie also uses YouTube, Instagram, and an Amazon series to entertain and bring Barbie to life. Ultimately, the company uses all of the platforms to sell more toys. For example, the website springs up a mailing list pop-up for consumers who are interested in being the first to receive “new product information.” The Facebook page also has a consumer relations feature where you can message any questions or comments and receive a reply within a day.

Although Barbie has been very successful at social media strategy, I think they can improve in many ways. One space for improvement is in encouraging social media sharing. I did not see any aspect of their platforms that asks followers to reciprocate the sharing or build a community from their following. My suggestions for this issue would be to ask more from followers. One idea would be to ask parents on Instagram to share their child’s unique Barbie set ups, whether that be how they mix and match their Barbie’s clothing or how they decorate their Dreamhouse. Another idea to engage with young parents would be to ask people to share their Barbie stories on Twitter. This could be a story of their first Barbie, crazy things they did with their Barbies when they were little, or why this doll is meaningful to them. My next suggestion is to utilize their blog for their advocacy/education. Barbie frequently has these campaigns where

they focus on an issue of representation, role models, or defining success and a blog is the perfect place to gather long-form messages of research and rhetorical argument in favor of these campaigns. Lastly, I think their Twitter could benefit from having a persona behind the tweets. Companies such as DiGiorno's and Netflix have gained popularity from giving a lifelike personality to their social media and I think Barbie could do something similar with tweets from their Barbie character's perspective.