

Sara Hall

PURE 1800

## **Social Media Monitoring and Analysis-- L.L. Bean**

### **Introduction**

The brand I elected to monitor is L.L. Bean. L.L. Bean is a relatively small but prominent outdoor retailer and apparel company. L.L. Bean is a household name that has maintained a positive reputation, largely without controversy, for over 100 years. I selected this company in part because L.L. Bean is headquartered in the state of Maine. I lived in Maine for 10 years, and locally, L.L. Bean is highly regarded and maintains a large community presence.

Currently, L.L. Bean maintains an active presence on all the major social platforms: including Instagram, with 314 thousand followers, Twitter with 64 thousand followers, and Facebook with more than 1.07 million likes. Another notable online presence for the L.L. Bean brand are @llbeanpr accounts which have a large following as well.

Based on my monitoring, L.L. Bean actively utilizes multiple social media platforms to generate a positive and aesthetically pleasing image of the company, foster two-way communication with stakeholders using effective hashtags, form a sense of community by prioritizing user-generated content, and has developed a strong social voice and brand while tailoring content to each platform.

### **PR Trends- Influencers, Events, and User Content**

One PR trend that L.L. Bean utilizes is featuring brand ambassadors and influencer marketing on its social channels. L.L. Bean's Instagram features partnerships with both athlete and student ambassadors, shown both in the main feed and the stories feature.

Another PR trend L.L. Bean uses on its social media accounts is taking advantage of hashtags to collect user content. A large portion of L.L. Bean's social content is user generated. L.L. Bean utilizes hashtags such as #BeanOutsider. L.L. Bean consistently uses #BeanOutsider across all platforms to feature user generated content. #BeanOutsider has over 126 thousand submissions from users (*see figure 1*). L.L. Bean also uses hashtags for giveaways, such as #LLBeanPuppyContest19 for submissions of users' dog photos. These uses of hashtags for giveaways and photo submissions help drive L.L. Bean's goal of creating an interactive online community, not to directly sell its products, but to foster a community of outdoor enthusiasts and establish brand loyalty.

A third PR trend L.L. Bean uses regularly is using social media to promote live events. Many of the events promoted on L.L. Bean's social accounts are highly "Instagrammable"--events featuring scenic backdrops, visually appealing food or beverages, etc. An example of one of these events that generates shareable content is this backdrop at L.L. Bean's "Northern Lights Celebration", widely promoted on all its social accounts (*see figure 2*). This trend connects to both the use of influencers, and driving audience engagement and photo submissions.

Based from observation of social media channels, L.L. Bean's organizational goals via social media include creating a sense of community (and thus, brand loyalty) through the sharing of user content and active two-way communication between brand and consumer, promoting

company-sponsored activities and events, and generating goodwill for the company via lifestyle content tailored to each platform (particularly Instagram).

The specific audiences that are seemingly targeted are primarily outdoor enthusiasts, as well as millennials, including young families and moms in particular. These groups are often featured in photos and the tone and content are likely to appeal to these audiences.

L.L. Bean's tone and messaging remains consistent across platforms, however, L.L. Bean effectively tailors content to each platform. For example, the L.L. Bean Instagram features fun branded GIFs and other shareable content, and takes advantage of many of the features of Instagram's stories tool (*see figures 3 and 4*). Across the board, L.L. Bean's presence on Instagram appears trendier and more interactive than other platforms. L.L. Bean's Facebook presence is more traditional, sharing mostly external links to earned media, CSR efforts, and upcoming events (*see figure 5*). Although L.L. Bean is active on Twitter, most of the content is either reposted from other platforms, or responses to customer comments. Direct advertising is posted more frequently on Twitter than other platforms (*see figure 6*). Although L.L. Bean's Twitter presence may be less appealing than other platforms, it serves an important function as Twitter gives L.L. Bean the opportunity to manage uncontrolled media and respond to consumers. L.L. Bean's customer service appeared highly responsive to concerns via Twitter.

### **Areas to be Improved**

Based on my observations, I found L.L. Bean's Twitter to be lacking; the content seems recycled and the sense of community found on other platforms is absent. On the topic of community, L.L. Bean could be doing even more to commit to fostering an online community of

outdoor enthusiasts. L.L. Bean sponsors multiple outdoor education programs, perhaps it could incorporate educational initiatives into their social channels. The @llbeanpr accounts appear to be redundant, posting the same or similar content, and the purpose of these accounts is unclear. These accounts should be absorbed into the primary L.L. Bean account for a more streamlined web presence and to avoid confusion and redundancy.

Competitors in the outdoor industry include REI, Bass Pro Shops, Lands End, The North Face and other smaller outdoor apparel brands. REI in particular has a strong (and similar) social media presence that also includes high quality video shorts, and competing hashtag #OptOutside. L.L. Bean can optimize its social media presence by expanding into other formats and multimedia, such as short video.

## **Conclusion**

Based on my observation and analysis, and considering the fact that I belong to L.L. Bean's key demographic, I am confident in my finding that L.L. Bean has a strong social media presence that is consistent in tone while often playing to the strengths of different platforms. L.L. Bean maintains a positive and aesthetically pleasing online presence focusing on an outdoor lifestyle, supplemented heavily by user generated content. L.L. Bean effectively utilizes live events and giveaways to partner with influencers and encourage further content submissions.

L.L. Bean's social presence demonstrates the importance of supplementing live events, sales, or initiatives with social media. This is important regardless of industry and will continue to be. L.L. Bean also demonstrates that two-way interactivity with publics can be incredibly beneficial for a brand. As digital becomes more and more prevalent, the ability to foster relationships with key publics via social media will be critical.

Figure 1

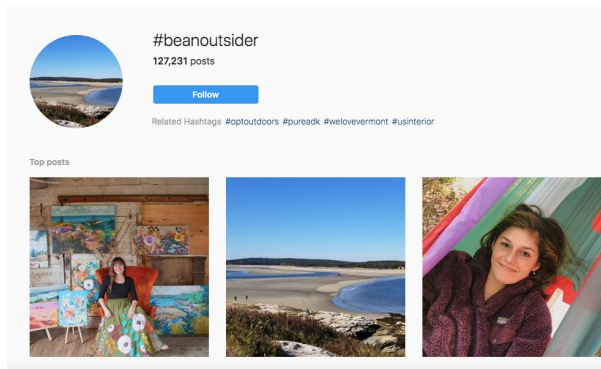


Figure 2



Figure 3

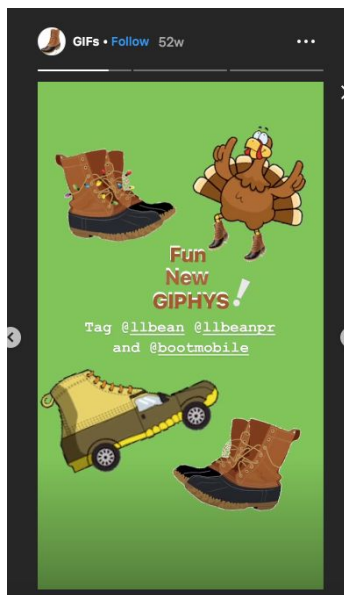


Figure 4



Figure 5

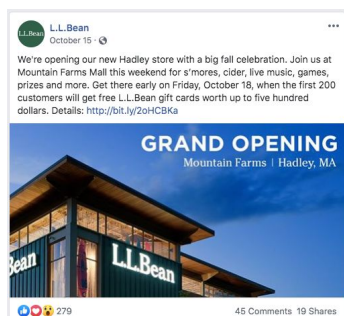


Figure 6



## References

Wilcox, Dennis L. *Think Public Relations*. Pearson Education Limited, 2014.