

Elevating engagement: ARI's social media strategy unveiled



ARI's Global Head of Marketing Laura Toner is committed to ensuring that every content piece, from Instagram stories to Facebook posts, align with ARI's revamped brand ethos "Joy on Your Way"

ARI's social media strategy is a meticulous blend of creative content and strategic engagement that aims to connect with the modern traveler. By focusing on authentic storytelling and interactive experiences, the travel retailer crafts a digital presence that not only highlights its offerings but also builds a community around shared travel joys and discoveries.

Integrating Joy on Your Way

When redefining its brand with the new theme of "Joy on Your Way," ARI embarked on a strategic transformation of its social media landscape. This overhaul entailed a comprehensive refresh of both the visual appeal and narrative tone of its content, aiming to encapsulate the theme in all communications.

Global Head of Marketing Laura Toner and her team committed to ensuring that every content piece, from Instagram stories to Facebook posts, aligned with ARI's revamped brand ethos. This required adopting a livelier and more assertive tone, reflecting the brand's dynamic personality. The transformation went beyond just visual enhancements, extending to how ARI engages with its followers — more directly, personally, and with an added layer of joy, aimed at immersing the audience in the pleasurable experience of duty free shopping.



ARI brings its brand to life through social media by showcasing in-store events, such as a festive Christmas event in Cyprus with DJs and unique cocktails, a playful face-painting event in Portugal during summer, and the delightful visits from Santa Claus in Ireland during December. “These events and collaborations don’t just entertain; they strategically align with our brand,” Toner states

“A significant part of our strategy involves showcasing our team - the true architects of joy at our stores,” says Toner. “We feature them prominently across our social platforms, providing a behind-the-scenes look into the vibrant atmosphere they create. This human element adds a further layer of emotion to our brand.”

ARI also capitalizes on influencer partnerships and nano-influencer collaborations to not just showcase its products but also to capture the essence of the shopping experience. These partnerships are carefully chosen to resonate with ARI’s brand values and to convey the joy of shopping duty free effectively.

“Every element of our social media presence, from visually striking Instagram reels and stories to engaging Facebook posts, is designed to convey the excitement and delight customers experience at our duty free shops,” says Toner. “Our communication style is not just about promoting products; it’s about connecting with our audience in a way that feels genuine, warm, and joyous.”

Social media approach

ARI’s approach to social media marketing is characterized by its customization and attention to detail, steering clear of a one-size-fits-all strategy, especially given its global presence. Toner emphasizes the bespoke nature of ARI’s operations, stating, “We do not take a cookie-cutter approach to any of our business strategies, so it goes without saying that our approach to social media marketing recognizes that a one-size-fits-all strategy is not effective for a global brand like ARI. We adapt our strategies to fit the cultural and consumer nuances of each location we operate in. This adaptability is key in resonating with diverse audiences.”

ARI held a successful collaboration with Irish influencer Doireann Garrihy for a Charlotte Tilbury event in Dublin. This partnership not only boosted the brand’s visibility but also reinforced its credibility and trustworthiness among consumers, as evidenced by the positive metrics in reach, engagement, and conversions

To maintain relevance and engagement in various regions, ARI invests in extensive research to understand the unique trends and preferences of each market. Toner elaborates on this approach, “To ensure relevance in our posts, we conduct extensive research to understand the trends and preferences unique to each region. This approach helps us craft content that is both globally appealing and locally engaging.”

Highlighting the balance between global and local content, Toner explains, “Our social media content is a balanced mix of global and local posts. For instance, we spotlight local events such as Carnival in Cyprus or the Six Nations rugby matches in Dublin, connecting these events with our brand and offerings. We also feature exclusive local products to cater to specific regional tastes.”

Acknowledging the diversity of engagement strategies across different markets, Toner notes, “We recognize that different tactics resonate differently across regions. In some locations, giveaways drive engagement, while in others, influencer collaborations are more effective. We tailor our approach based on what resonates best in each market, avoiding a uniform strategy across all regions.”

Toner explains that though ARI keeps on top of the latest trends, this does not necessarily mean the adoption of all. “Things can change so quickly in the world of social media marketing,” she says. “We must remain agile and do what is right for our brand and our audience.”

She highlights the collaborative effort between ARI’s global and local teams in achieving the delicate balance, “Balancing our global brand identity with local market nuances is a carefully orchestrated process which is very well managed by our global and local teams.”

Storytelling

Storytelling is at the heart of ARI’s social media initiatives, serving as more than just a technique; it’s fundamental to the brand’s engagement strategy. Toner articulates this philosophy, emphasizing the power of storytelling to forge an emotional bond with the audience beyond merely showcasing

items for sale. “We believe that effective storytelling transcends the presentation of our products or services; it creates that emotional connection we strive for with our audience,” she explains. ARI’s content is meticulously crafted to be engaging, emotive and genuine, resonating with its “Tone of Voice” principles.

Toner's social media team is always cognizant of the fine balance between global and local campaigns

ARI’s storytelling strategy is aimed at fostering deeper connections with a global audience, focusing on creating content that is not just informative but also immersive, making the audience feel integral to the brand’s narrative. Toner highlights the importance of this emotional engagement in converting viewers into loyal customers and brand ambassadors.

In practical application, ARI utilizes various content formats, especially Instagram Stories and Reels, to bring its storytelling to life. Toner offers the following examples:

- Product showcases go beyond listing features, incorporating narratives about the product’s benefits, uses, and the inspiration behind its creation, thus enriching the product’s identity within the brand’s storyline.
- Influencer collaborations are crafted with storytelling at their core, focusing on experiences such as using ARI’s ‘Click and Collect’ service. Through captivating video content, these stories demonstrate the service’s functionality and advantages in a relatable and comprehensible manner.

Evaluating the effectiveness of ARI’s storytelling approach involves a combination of quantitative and qualitative metrics, including sales data and engagement levels. Toner underscores the importance of both the analytical and the anecdotal, stating, “It’s not only about the numbers; it’s also about the conversations, the connections, and the community we build through our content.”

This holistic approach to measurement enables ARI to continually refine its storytelling techniques, ensuring they remain impactful and resonate with the audience.

Traditional and digital

At ARI, the goal is to achieve a flawless blend of traditional and digital marketing methodologies. This synergy is clearly demonstrated through the alignment of social media content with in-store promotions. According to Toner, “The aesthetics of our social media posts, including background colours, taglines and overall design, are coordinated to reflect the visuals and messaging seen on our websites, in our advertising and in-store displays.” This strategic coherence ensures that customers encounter a unified brand story, regardless of whether they are browsing online or visiting the physical duty free stores.

Paid advertising plays a crucial role in enhancing ARI’s online visibility and engagement. The company smartly invests in social media advertisements, utilizing its extensive networks and precise targeting features to connect with a wider and more pertinent audience. Toner notes, “As we continue to evolve and enhance our content, we will rely less on paid advertising and allow our content to speak more for itself,” highlighting a strategic shift towards more organic content engagement.



Influencer marketing, like Doireann Garrihy at launch of Charlotte Tilbury, Dublin Airport, has proven an effective tactic

Looking forward, Toner expresses enthusiasm for the increased integration of influencer marketing into ARI's social media strategy. "This approach has shown significant success in 2023, and we plan to expand it across various regions to leverage the unique influence and reach of local and regional influencers," she mentions, indicating the proven effectiveness of this tactic and ARI's intention to scale it. Additionally, ARI is keen on exploring the potential applications of AI in its social media endeavors, signaling an openness to innovative technologies.

Toner also emphasizes the continued focus on video and educational content, underscoring the importance of providing material that is not only captivating but also informative for the audience. "We believe in providing content that is not only engaging but also adds value to our audience's experience," she states, pointing towards a commitment to enrich the customer's journey with useful guides, behind-the-scenes content, and insights into the latest duty free shopping trends.

Upcoming campaigns

As ARI aligns its social media calendar with its marketing and commercial goals, the company is anticipating the launch of vibrant campaigns and initiatives this year. Toner is enthusiastic about

these developments, stating, “We’re looking forward to launching a series of dynamic campaigns and initiatives that not only captivate our audience but also reinforce our brand values.”

Recognizing the pivotal role of content, ARI is set to significantly ramp up its investment in content creation, seeing it as the core of their digital engagement strategy. “Our goal is to create a ripple effect of engagement and sharing,” Toner says, underscoring the company’s commitment to producing content that is both compelling and visually impressive, aimed at sparking imagination and prompting action.

In the year ahead, ARI plans to intensify its focus on local influencer collaborations and product placements, delve into the use of AI in social campaigns, explore the creation of longer content, and adopt a more spontaneous storytelling style, reflecting trends like the informal, conversational mode gaining popularity on platforms like TikTok. Additionally, ARI will aim to more effectively optimize its posts with keywords, and keep a close watch on the emerging trend of gated content, which it has already begun to experiment with in some locations.

Toner highlights the importance of being discerning when it comes to adopting new platforms to ensure the quality of content remains high for ARI’s communities. “A forward-thinking and agile approach is crucial for connecting with our diverse, global audience in meaningful ways,” she notes, emphasizing the need to stay adaptive and selective to maintain meaningful connections.

The plans for the year ahead are just one aspect of ARI’s comprehensive strategy. Each campaign and initiative is crafted to deepen the brand’s engagement with its audience, celebrate its vibrant and innovative essence, and solidify its standing as a trailblazer in the travel retail sector.