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17 Days: Cross-Country With Social Media

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17 DAYS

Zachary Alvarado

Being able to network with others in the world is an undeniably useful skill. Networking helps open the doors to more and more value-creating opportunities in life, and that value embedded within social networks is often referred to as “social capital.” Now, the integration of social media in society is changing the ways in which humans communicate and coordinate as a species, and while humanity’s newfound dependence on social media for community raises some cause for concern, the ability to instantaneously communicate with other online users also allows individuals to raise more support and accomplish greater feats than ever before.

In an effort to investigate the impact networking technologies can have on revealing and accessing value embedded in personal networks, my colleague, Austin Prescott, and I designed a social capital experiment where we traveled from South Carolina to California, staying with people we met through social media along the way. After, the sum costs of our time spent advertising online and travel expenditures can be weighed against the value received throughout our trip to determine whether or not we “broke-even” in our attempts to access social capital using digital assistance.

We seek to inspire and inform through our work, encouraging other to pursue their own dreams in life and establishing a basis from which future studies and courses regarding social media and digital marketing can emerge.

Introduction

Sometime during the fall of my junior year, my advisor and I began brainstorming possible projects or topics for my Senior Thesis. Since I wasn't sure of my options, we searched "Senior Thesis" on the University of South Carolina official website, hoping to discover some inspiration. We found the following:

"Although the thesis is a requirement towards graduation... we encourage you to think of it as an opportunity to express the quality of your intellectual development and to draw your undergraduate learning experiences together."

An *opportunity*? I scratched my head at the thought. I had never really seen a school project as an opportunity before. *An opportunity to do what?*

I wanted to explore, create, innovate, and adapt, and I knew that I was capable of finding out great things through my own way of discovery. I just had to identify a topic that would allow me to engage in the activities I was passionate about while also contributing something of value to the university and to humanity as a whole.

So, I decided the core of my thesis would heavily involve travel.

Traveling is something that matters to me, even if it doesn't seem like an adequate thesis topic at first glance. The International Business program at USC was the number one reason why I decided to come to the University of South Carolina, and I began to realize that traveling mattered to a lot of other people around me too. The desire to explore and discover wasn't just limited to any one person. In fact, the more I looked into the subject of traveling in the world today, the more I started to realize just how important it is to younger generations.

In a Forbes article titled "How Companies Are Adjusting To Gen Z's Shifting Travel Demands," entrepreneur and marketer Deep Patel tells the audience "millennials and Gen Zers crave adventure across all aspects of their life. For these digital natives, experiencing the world is far more important than buying products. In fact, 70 percent of millennials admit that funding travel is their primary motivation for working."

'Digital natives?' What does 'digital' have to do with anything?

Forbes “Gen Z” category includes anyone born in the mid 1990s and the late 2000s. And, as I conducted more research, I started noticing significant ties between fellow “Gen Zers” demand for travel and our use of social media as a generation.

One of my favorite authors on the subject of social media is Erik Qualman. In his book, *Socialnomics*, Qualman proposes, “As people continue to microblog and update their status via social media, it often becomes a competition of who’s doing the coolest thing. What once took place only periodically around a water cooler is now happening in real time.” This type of behavioral change is referred to as “Braggadocio Behavior.”

Merriam Webster Dictionary defines braggadocio as a noun meaning “boastful or arrogant behavior,” and this continuous desire to prove that one’s life is better than another’s can only end in a plethora of negative effects in our world. However, to attribute this increase in travel solely to braggadocio felt criminal. I knew there was more to the story, but I couldn’t figure out just what yet.

As I kept digging, I found some disturbing news. In March 2017, Lend Edu released a study regarding college students and their tendency to use student loans for costs other than those related to education. One quote from the study reads as follows:

“30.60 percent of college students with student debt claim that they are using money they received from student loans to help pay for their spring break trip this year...”

The National Center for Education Statistics calculated that 20.5 million students will be attending college this year in the United States. Orbitz reported that 55 percent of students will be going on spring break. Using this data, we can roughly calculate that 11,275,000 students will be going on spring break this year. And, it is estimated that 69 percent of all current college students use student loan debt by the time of graduation. By doing some additional arithmetic, we can calculate that roughly 7,779,750 student debtors are going on spring break this year.”

While it is absolutely true that using money intended for college to pay for traveling is beyond “financially irresponsible,” I was starting to understand why people were trying to travel more, despite being unable to afford the costs. It wasn’t so much that people wanted to brag about the types of lives they lived; it was that they were displaying a lifestyle they couldn’t afford in order to satisfy a need for communal acceptance online.

Based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, we know that humans will first seek to satisfy the basic physiological needs for water, food, sleep, and sex. Then comes the desire for security, which roughly translates to a roof over your head and other protective measures designed to fend off threats from the external environment.

However, once our physiological and safety needs have been satisfied, the next demand we seek is a feeling of love and belonging with the community around us. It is a basic human need to be loved, and many may feel lost as they search for acceptance or verification from some online group or social order that does not physically exist. They wish to feel as though they are a part of some greater culture, and the prevailing culture of social media today is highly focused on travel. While traveling is popular, some people also believe that you must travel to be popular, resulting in misguided allocations of personal funds.

I believe that those who invented and developed social media did so with good intentions. They saw the benefits of creating digital networks through which humans could more efficiently connect while also gathering data regarding their participants. But while social media was a tool to those who understood how it worked, it was treated as a new reality for those that didn't.

To Baby Boomers and other older humans, the way young people use social media doesn't make sense. It seems strange that so many of us spend our lives with our faces buried in our phones, and there appears to be a cultural disconnect of severe magnitude. Our generation communicates and socializes using very different mechanisms as compared to decades past, and humans are starting to get more of their social needs met in a digital space rather than in a physical reality.

And yet, there exists an entire generation who has yet to be properly educated on the intricacies of these digital technologies. Our generation thinks we understand social media, but, in reality, many do not, and it is resulting in many negative effects.

Students entering college today have spent an inordinate amount of their youth relying on social media for communication, social affirmation and more. Now, they stand the best chance of being able to navigate and leverage digital platforms effectively, but only if we actually take the time to teach them how social media can be used as a tool.

The University of South Carolina itself offers graduate courses for the subject, such as Marketing 718 "Social and Digital Media Strategies for Business," but no such courses are currently offered for undergraduates in the business school. This is the unfortunate reality for many universities

across the nation, and I believe that when you start to educate the general population on how to use social media as a tool, people will be less likely to treat it as a reality.

And so, I began my Senior Thesis. I wanted to show others how it was possible to reach out to the people in your life all at once with the power of social media. Simultaneously, I wanted to champion the idea that experiences in real life should be prioritized over online interaction, and balancing the two sides proved difficult.

I recalled a similar project from my freshman year when I served as a campus ambassador for a clothing brand called Serengetee, LLC. At the end of the semester, all ambassadors from across the country were tasked with submitting promotional content as part of a contest, and the winners were rewarded with more store credit as well as a chance for their video to be featured on Serengetee's digital platforms.

I struggled for a long time trying to come up with some ideas, but to no avail. I had also already lost hope of actually winning the contest since I had no real talent whatsoever when it came to creating digital content. I was frustrated with how little I knew about Photoshop, and even basic programs like iMovie were out of the question.

Then, one day, I mentioned the assignment to my buddy, Austin.

I had met Austin through one of the friends on my hall, but little did I know that this guy was a whiz with a camera and even better with his editing software. Our whole group was already going to Charleston for the weekend, and Austin and I started brainstorming about how we could go out and film on the beach, interacting with scenes out in nature and the real world versus trying to come up with a creative angle from our dorms.

It was November, and we all immediately regretted our decision to film on the beach wearing nothing but board shorts and t-shirts. I still remember walking out into the frigid ocean, feeling the air leave my lungs as I moved deeper and deeper into the water. It was awful, but I had to stop myself from complaining because Austin was the one really suffering as he squatted down in the waves, trying to get a shot of the water falling through my hands even as the entire lower half of his body and part of his torso were submerged.

12/15/2014 1:47PM

Zach your project was absolutely incredible. You didn't win the top project BUT you did get runner up!! I am so extremely happy and excited for you. Ryan and katie will be messaging you soon with a huge whopping store credit!

On top of getting runner up, I am extending you an offer to be a rep captain next semester. Rep captains get a larger discount, more free stuff and you basically just have to assist me in answering questions

😊 ...

Thank you so much! I truly enjoyed creating the project with a friend of mine, and I'm glad that I got to be a part of Serengetee this semester!

I would love to be a rep captain! Thank you so much for the offer and let me know what I need to do and it'll get done!

The cold was excruciating, but our efforts were not in vain. Even though we didn't win the grand prize for the contest, Austin's video still earned Runner-Up in the nationwide competition. Not only did we earn plenty of store credit to split, but I was also promoted to the rank of "Rep Captain" due to the video's success.

Basically, if anyone was going to be able to help out with this project, it was going to be Austin. Once I made contact with him, the true creative process began.

In an effort to inspire others and set a basis from which future courses on the topics of digital marketing, we decided to set out on our own social media adventure. We designed a sort of cross-country escapade and social networking experiment where we challenged ourselves to make it from South Carolina to California, all the while depending on the ever-so-reliable service of Greyhound busses and the goodwill of people we communicated with via social media along the way. We limited ourselves to a maximum of 12 hours of Greyhound travel between each city, and the total amount of time we intended to spend on the road became the name of a project that has changed my life forever: *17 Days*.

Austin was in charge of recording everything that happened during the trip so that we could put together a compelling documentary that tells our story in a way that a written story could never accomplish. The video is intended to inspire others to go out and pursue their own awesome adventures. Later on, Austin will be able to include this film in his portfolio when he goes on to pursue a career in media arts.

Meanwhile, I served as project manager and digital campaign director. Most major communications were circulated through my accounts, and I planned on going back through all the data regarding interactions on our multiple platforms in order to see what content worked best on different sites at different times and so on.

We planned on controlling what aspects we could moving forward, implementing different digital marketing tactics and brand building strategies to help grow our brand, using social media as a tool to help access unbelievable experiences and realizable value in real life and inspiring students to live a life augmented by social media rather than controlled by it.

First, Austin and I went about building our own brand, capitalizing on previously established personal brand equity built through blogs, photos, and videos collected over the years.

Then, we released an initial sequence of posts, analyzing the effects our content had on achieving positive interactions and increasing exposure so we could find potential hosts across the nation.

Next, I developed a cost-benefit analysis of our cross-country trip, accounting for all the value that was added by our hosts and friends throughout the adventure. I attributed a value to each instance where value was added to our campaign, weighted it between my offline and online relationships, and considered the total value earned from our trip as returns from our campaign's online advertising investments and travel expenditures.

Following the breakdown of our adventure, I went on to analyze the effects our posts had on social media engagement. I focused on different audio, visual, and textual figures, determining what mix earned the best response online and why.

Finally, I ended with my own reflection of what the project meant to me and how we can use this information to keep moving forward as humans. People everywhere are anxious to see how we intend to coexist with social media and digital regulations moving forward, and this project is my way of trying to help bridge the gap between generations, offering something new and interesting for anyone willing to read all the way through.

We seek to inform and inspire through our work, and we hope that you share this message however you can with the rest of the world so that they can join the conversation too.

Social Capital

In 1929, Hungarian poet Frigyes Karinthy proposed that the world was not as vast as everyone thought. Rather, the world was getting smaller. The planet was not shrinking in size, nor was the global population declining by any means, but new technologies in navigation and transport allowed individuals to traverse landscapes and interact with others on a never before seen scale.

In fact, the Earth's population had grown very close. Karinthy theorized that one could select any person in the world and, "using no more than five individuals... contact the selected individual using nothing except the network of personal acquaintances." Before long, economists and social scientists took Karinthy's "Chains" theory (also known as "Degrees of Separation") and developed it even further, suggesting that there is inherent value in every interpersonal connection made.

The evolution of these ideas gave birth to this idea of "Social Capital," which the Pennsylvania State University professor John Carroll defined as "the ability of individuals or groups to access resources embedded in their social network." Carroll goes on to suggest, "Social capital can be converted to other forms of capital such as favors (human capital) or new information (intellectual capital)."

One could also view social capital through the lens of reciprocity, where "investment in social relations [yields] expected returns in the marketplace" (Lin), meaning that one receives from their network only as much as they put into it. Therefore, if everyone knows everyone through chains, and tangible returns can be obtained from social networking, then, in theory, one could attain anything by asking the right people the right questions.

Now, the world continues to shrink, and one of the technologies contributing to this phenomenon is the development of social media. Anyone with access to a computer is able to create a digital profile and project it into cyberspace, making instantaneous interaction a reality. The combination of social capital and social media has left the world wondering how they can adapt to the changing social and professional landscape in order to make the most of their networks.

There are many who have attempted to quantify the net worth of these connections by calculating the return on investment (ROI) of digital media. Qualman argues that the answer to the question of ROI with regards to social media can be answered very easily: "The ROI of social media is that your business will still exist in five years."

Being able to understand social media does not necessarily mean knowing its worth in dollars, and just because something does not have a monetary value associated with it does not mean it is worthless. Investments of time dedicated to goodwill, relationship building, trust, community management, and more serve as just some of the intangible factors that contribute to return, and success is not attainable without understanding both the qualitative and descriptive data associated with social capital.

Over the last decade, the prevalence of social media advertising has grown rapidly as companies around the world try to leverage the potential of social capital. Businesses can invest in programmatic ads that pop up in a digital location based on data collected from your online search activity. Or, they could pay a popular personality on Instagram to post pictures using certain products so people who want to be like those influencers will desire the same products.

These techniques have certainly increased in popularity over the years, and the result is a very visible invasion of social media platforms. Videos pausing 10 seconds in, promoted photos popping up in Instagram, and social experiment videos attempting to achieve virality are just a few symptoms of this infiltration. In such cases, the chief obstacle facing digital marketers is being disruptive enough to break through the noise of social media without driving ad-sensitive consumers further from their brand. If successful in finding such a balance while delivering their message, brands can establish a strong digital base from which they may interact, advertise and operate from instantaneously.

We set out to design an experiment that helped to test our ability to raise awareness for a cause and access social capital embedded in our own social media platforms, but it is crucial to make a clear distinction between the types of social capital we will be talking about. When we look at social capital from the lens of a business versus our own personal lives, we have to recognize an inherent bias in the fact that everything we are doing is only possible through a system of trust and reciprocity established through relationships.

Businesses have the luxury of finances to support their efforts to increase reach and exposure, and we commonly throw around the word “connections” in the business world. But when it comes to personal social capital—that is, accessing the capital value embedded in your personal social network—it is dependent upon the relationships we make and maintain throughout life, as well as the degree of trust, respect, and reciprocity specific to each relationship.

Because we relied on our relationships with humans in this experiment, our project cannot be considered a “pure” experiment. A pure experiment in this context means that we have the ability to control all factors that affect the results or outcomes of our project. But when it comes to social media and personal social capital, there is no real way to predict human behavior or inject our friends with different colors and sounds to see what they react to better.

Instead, we decided to treat this project as though it were a joint venture. Austin and I both had some sort of previously established brand equity resulting from years of filming and traveling and posting the results online. Participants were able to buy into our product and brand by connecting with us on social media, sharing our content, and hosting us during the trip. The more help we received, the more likely our whole project was to go viral, and anyone who significantly contributed to our cause would reap the benefits of increased reach and exposure.

If we were going to succeed, however, we needed to make our project and goals known to our networks through a digital advertising campaign. We spent significant time planning different posts and designing page content, but the actual process of recruiting hosts required that we operate within stringent time frames to keep digital momentum for our campaign and increase our chances at achieving a somewhat viral response from our audience.

Virality is something that is difficult to attain in a digital environment, and it is infinitely harder to experiment with. If this experiment were to take place in a laboratory, then maybe things would be different. Our subjects would either react to the stimuli forced upon them, or they wouldn't, and it is up to the researcher to find what has the greatest impact in amplifying or mitigating the effects of a particular virus. Furthermore, there is no limit to the amount of times you can repeat the test in a laboratory setting, and the subject will still be around and react and provide data for as long as the researchers need.

The same cannot be said on social media, where, just like in real life, people can either ignore or miss your attempts to raise awareness online. The secret, therefore, lies in the ability to create a contagion that is infectious in terms of content. Then, that virus must be scheduled for releases in a manner that is neither intrusive enough to cause white blood cells to retaliate nor weak enough to where it has no effect on the host.

One must also be aware as to when one times these injections so as to have the highest amount of exposure possible. Not only must the injection be timed correctly, but it must also not be administered too often or not often enough, as hosts will either grow tired of the onslaught and

seek immediate medical attention, or enjoy a reprieve long enough to recover from the virus and build an immunity to future attacks.

Once one starts to think about our success in terms of a “viral” trend, the idea of using our social media platforms in order to infect other people with our content is basically a game of “Pandemic.” When I was in middle school, “Pandemic” was this online game where one was tasked with designing a strain of bacteria or virus or slow growth something or other in an attempt to infect as many people around the world as possible.

There were a variety of forms your infection could take, and the benefits of choosing each varied. You could pick your strain of disease based on factors such as rate of infection or ability to survive the journey to different sectors of the map. One could adapt better to fight immunizations, and others were resistant to certain environmental factors, but no matter what disease you chose, the goal of the game remained the same: infect everyone. At the end of the day, it doesn’t matter how many friends and followers you have. If you don’t catch these people at the right time, and if you annoy them with too many posts, or if your content is just plain boring, your message will not spread.

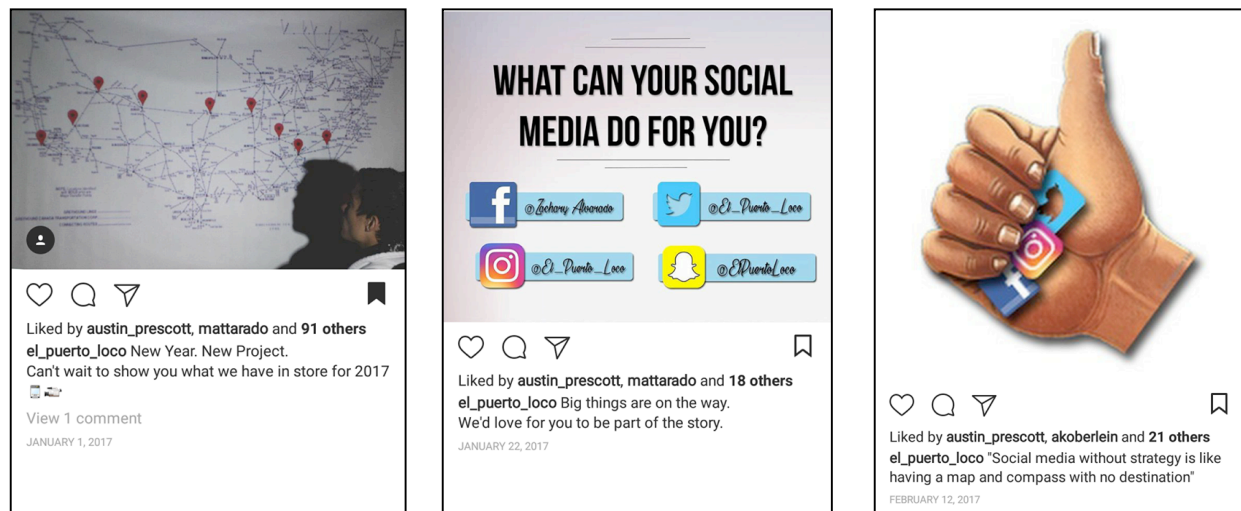
Quite frankly, I had no idea how to achieve virality, but I understood the need for great content in order to achieve digital traction and spread my message. Nothing beats great content when it comes to advertising and marketing, and I knew Austin was capable of producing whatever we dreamt up. At the same time, we had a job to do as well, and we needed to test the efficacy of all different media type if we were going to try and get a holistic view on what post content and distribution methods worked the best.

The Campaign

We decided to start our campaign off slowly, knowing that we needed a little more time to plan our recruitment and advertising strategies before announcing our project to the world.

The first posts would act as “leaked content,” which is basically the release of project content or news ahead of the disclosed launch date. We wanted people to see the leaked posts and ask about the trip ahead of time so that they would talk about it with their friends, and we rewarded curiosity with a feeling of exclusivity when they were informed of our plans prior to the rest of the population.

The first three posts all had a somewhat simplistic design, keeping the same primarily white color scheme while also varying slightly so as to reveal what types of posts may be successful in the future. Each was released around noon on Sunday, and there was a three-week interval between each post. The first fell on New Years Day, focusing on real life content and traveling. Then, we released a post that emphasized digital design, textual content, and primarily social media. Lastly, we designed a post that combined traveling (a hitchhikers thumb) with social media (icons in the palm).



While I posted on several platforms, I will often display examples from Instagram. While Facebook and Twitter provided more metrics for reach and impressions, Instagram posts received more likes, and I considered likes to be more dependent on aesthetics and content.

We were testing the waters to see what type of content my digital audience reacted with best, and, as we can see, the first post clearly outperformed the other two. I attribute this to its visual

relevance to the culture of travel, inclusion of real life content in the photo and the relevance of its caption to the New Years holiday.

These initial results allowed us to preview just a couple different mixes of content, and we would later go on to prioritize design strategies based on what we were discovering after each new post. For example, once we realized that posts featuring real life scenery were more popular, we adjusted our plans to feature posts that included more “real life” content. I would also go on to include different references to pop-culture and alter captions of different posts to feature content I thought may be more relevant to our social networks. The more relevant, the more likely we were to get likes, shares, retweets and increased exposure and awareness overall.

However, even with the initial insights from our “leaked” posts, we were still uncertain as to how we were going to gain an adequate amount of viral traction in order to get our message to as much of our potential audience as possible. We had a lot we wanted to explain to our fans, and we weren’t sure if they were even going to listen in the first place, especially if the content we distributed was lacking in some way.

What does it actually take to get someone to listen?

It’s an interesting question to consider. Today, we have everything from music sharing to online blogging, and most online ideas are readily available and accessible from any part of the earth via Internet. But with so much noise being introduced to our cybernetic environment, it’s getting much more difficult for people to make their own voices heard.

Based on my own observations regarding the community of social media, it seems that those who are listened to above the rest on social media are usually those celebrities and public figures with previously established fan bases. They are supported because their fans believe in the cultures these people represent every day of their lives, and social media allows those influential personalities to spread their culture and message even further out into the world, attracting even more fans to their collective voice.

But what if you’re not a celebrity? How do you get people to listen? How do you get your message across?

You have to tell a story. A story doesn't always have to be a book. It can be a song or a poem. It could be a series of pictures you leave behind as your legacy, or simply a lifestyle you choose to live during that dash between the dates.

Stories have the ability to remove a person from their own reality and place them in the position of someone else, and they can create a collective culture as more and more people listen to the story and come to agree with the values from which that culture derives its foundation. Those that are the best at rallying others to their cause enjoy the luxury of being listened to, and those who can combine their cause with great content enjoy the benefits of virality.

The Video

We had to find the right way of telling our own story. We felt like a lot of people would be willing to help us accomplish our goals of making it to California, but it was up to us to package our message in the most appropriate vessel for distribution. We turned once again to *Socialnomics* for some advice and were happy to find an entire chapter titled “Making Viral Videos.” Qualman argues that videos are one of the most effective ways of spreading content. And, while “going viral” is not a strategy (it’s an objective), there are five key factors one should take into consideration should they wish to increase their chances of making a viral video:

1. *Good music: Unless your video is of a cute baby or an extraordinary kitten, the music you select will be critical to its success...*
2. *Short and sweet: Definitely keep your video to under five minutes, preferably to a minute or less. In Enchantment, author Guy Kawasaki displayed data from research firm Visible Measures showing that 19.4 percent of viewers abandoned a video within the first 10 seconds, and by 60 seconds 44 percent had stopped watching...*
3. *Viewer is king: Only viewers make videos go viral... We need to constantly ask: Am I providing something of value for viewers? What do they want to get out of it?...*
4. *Other purpose: Don’t produce a video simply hoping it goes viral. Produce a video with a clear purpose in mind...*
5. *Share: When people ask for your original file so they can use it in their presentations or for other purposes, share it. Sure, there will be a few who do so with malicious intent, but they will be in the minority. The majority will be adding distribution points and beacons for your great work... In a well-known TED talk, YouTube showcased several popular videos that were dormant for months until a tastemaker like Jimmy Kimmel blasted it out to his legion of followers.*

Good music: We needed to find a song that both matched the vibes of the brand we were trying to create and related to our network’s demographics so as to immerse our audience in our experience. Our song choices were limited to what we could crowd source from social media. This included songs produced by family and friends, but we were also able to pull from Youtube’s wealth of “royalty-free” songs as well as Youtube is also considered a social media.

Luckily, my brother actually makes music for a living. A few years back, he and two other friends from our high school decided to form the power-trio known as “Public.” He has had the amazing opportunity to perform with artists like Walk the Moon and Twenty One Pilots, and one of the last songs was picked up for a commercial contract last year. We asked my brother, Matt, if he had any summer-time, indie tracks to match our wanderlust brand personality. By accessing a pre-existing familial relationship, we were able to secure a poppy backtrack for the video.

Short and sweet: While there was a lot we had to explain in our video, we were able to get our entire message delivered in 1 minute and 11 seconds. In it, we explain the basics of what we are trying to accomplish and ask for our audiences help in making our dreams come true.

The script for our primary promotional video read as such:

“Hi there! For those of you that don’t know me, my name is Zach Alvarado. I am currently a junior studying International Business at the University of South Carolina.

Starting May 4th, my friend, Austin Prescott, and I will be traveling across the United States, and we will only be using Greyhound busses to get from here in Columbia, South Carolina, to Los Angeles California.

But what is different about this trip is that we are going to be primarily relying on social media to get us there. Over the next few weeks, we will be using our social media to help look for people that want to help us on our journey.

And while there are big things to figure out such as where we’ll sleep or what we’ll actually be doing in each city, what we’re really looking for is for people to show us just a little bit of what they see every day.

We want you to join us in writing this unique story, and anyone that can help us will also be featured in the documentary we are filming along the way.

Remember: we can’t do this without you.

In the description of this video is a list of all the cities we plan on visiting and all the dates we plan on visiting them. If you’re going to be at the same place at the same time and want to help out, feel free to contact me or Austin.

If you won't be in the same place, but you still want to help out, feel free to share this video and other posts that we will have on social media to help reach more people and keep the dream alive.

Thanks a ton guys. I look forward to seeing you on the trip."

Viewer is king: One of the most difficult parts of this project was thinking of a way to get our audience to buy into our adventure without coming across as a couple of kids that just wanted to take from those willing to give. The trip was never about the money; it was about experiencing life, and we were just two normal kids that wanted to travel and experience everything we could before we ran out of time.

That is the power of *17 Days*. We were a team that was worth rooting for because of what we represented. We stood for discovery, creativity, reckless abandon, and more, and the community as whole became a team fighting for the success of one project in hopes that the success of the collective would give some sort of value—monetary or otherwise—to those involved.

Other purpose: We actually had several reasons for producing this video. Austin took a second to ask me directly what I wanted to do through this project, and I found it difficult to put into words off the top of my head. Simply, there were too many directions this project could take, and we used the video-making process as a way to get our own thoughts in order about the project.

We also intended the video to be educational in some ways, informing people that such feats were possible and that we planned on proving it. Additionally, I know that anyone reading this can go back and reference the video whenever they want, learning from it on their own time simply by following this link:

<https://www.facebook.com/17DaysDocumentary/videos/1193080407470873/>

We took the time to make sure there was more to the video than just trying to go viral. Increased awareness wasn't going to help us out on the road unless someone who saw the video believed in its message enough to host us. Without this other purpose, both our content and the virality it generated would have been pointless.

Share: Prior to making this video, I had arranged a meet-up with a professor from South Carolina that had some experience in digital networks. I remember him saying specifically that you have to be specific when you are asking for help online. If you wanted someone to like a

page or perform some other online act, you needed to be direct. So, at the end of the video, we made sure to explicitly ask viewers to share the video to increase our reach.

We also put an overview of our plans in the description of our video. We wanted to clear up any confusion regarding what exactly we were trying to accomplish, and we hoped it would also help anyone that wasn't able to understand my accent or the speed of my phonetics. The description reads as follows:

"We are thrilled to announce the start of our social experiment, 17 Days!"

17 Days is a joint research project and documentary that will follow us as we travel via Greyhound from South Carolina to California and stay with people we know from social media along the way.

The research part of the project focuses on social capital, which is the idea that there is embedded worth in one's social network. On that note, we have released (and will continue to release) content on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, monitoring interactions within our social networks along the way.

However, since the University of South Carolina does not fund travel costs associated with research projects, all we can afford to budget for are our Greyhound tickets across America and the flight that takes us back to Columbia.

Basically, this is a leap of faith. We know we are going to California. As far as where we will stay or what we will do, all of that is up to you...

Below is a list of cities that we will be visiting, as well as when we will be visiting them. Our goal is to have a documentary filled with all sorts of different experiences from every walk of life. If you have the time to host us while we visit, we would be up for whatever crazy adventures you bring our way.

This documentary is the chance of a lifetime for us, and it's an opportunity to show the world that you don't need to spend a lot of money or travel somewhere exotic in order to have incredible experiences. If you can host us, or know someone that can, please contact us through any of our social media platforms or by commenting on the 17 Days Facebook page. If you can't

host us, but still want to help, please share, retweet, or do whatever you can to spread the message and help keep the dream alive.

Thanks!

Zach Alvarado: <https://www.facebook.com/zachary.w.alvarado>

Austin Prescott: <https://www.facebook.com/austin.prescott>

17 Days: <https://www.facebook.com/17DaysDocumentary>

May 4: Columbia, SC→Atlanta, GA

May 6: Atlanta, GA→Nashville, TN

May 8: Nashville, TN→St. Louis, MO

May 10: St. Louis, MO→Kansas City, KS

May 12: Kansas City, KS→Denver, CO

May 14: Denver, CO→Salt Lake City, UT

May 16: Salt Lake City, UT→Las Vegas, NV

May 18: Las Vegas, NV→Los Angeles, CA

May 20: Fly from Los Angeles

**Locations are not exact and itinerary subject to change depending on who is available to host us”*

And it worked.

On Facebook, our video was shared over 80 times by the end of our project, resulting in nearly 7,000 views, a total reach (# of people who had post enter screen) of 16,775, and over 30,000 total impressions (# of times post entered a person's screen).

The Page

The initial release video not only allowed us to capture the curiosity of the audience and inform them of our mission, but it also let us easily redirect users to our Facebook page so that they could be exposed to our brand personality. Our brand was malleable, spontaneous and entrepreneurial. Just like with many small companies today, technology gave us the ability to be flexible, allowing us to adjust our approach as necessary, when necessary. However, because we needed to change our brand characteristics over time to accomplish different goals, our total engagement with our audience may have ended up less overall as we did not maintain a stable, uniform image throughout the campaign.

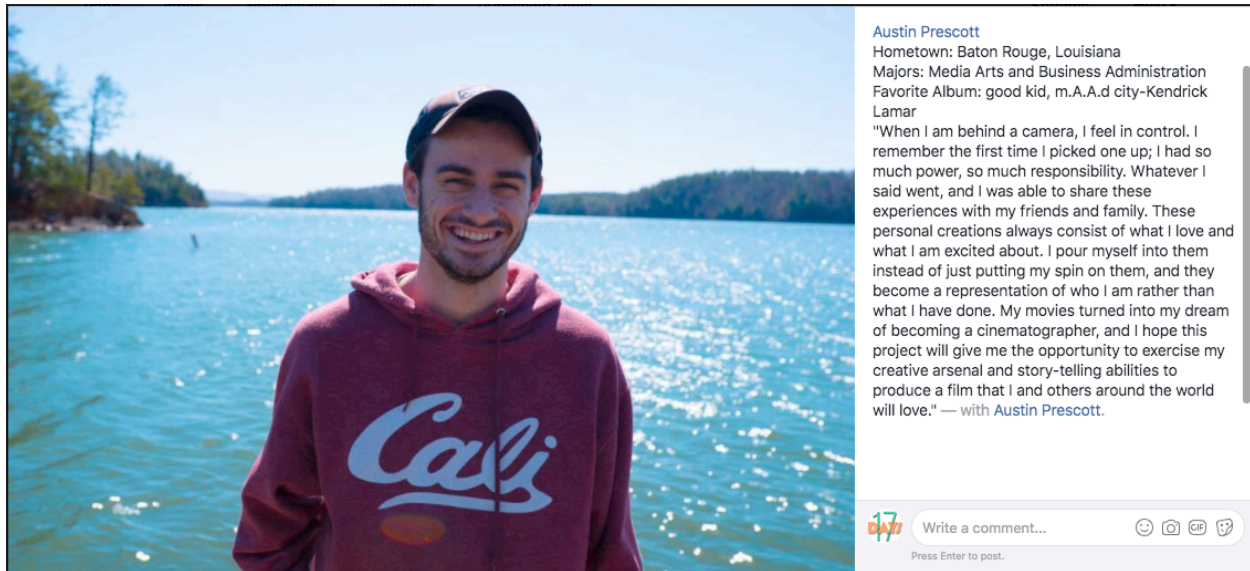
It was extraordinarily difficult to straddle the divide between business brand building and scientific experimentation in this project. Usually, research and development comes before the marketing of a product or service a specific target audience. In the case of *17 Days*, we were doing our best to build a relatable brand personality while also giving ourselves enough room to change our image so that we could observe variable changes in audience response.

The theme of our page stemmed from our use of primarily white color schemes for our leaks earlier on in the year. In anticipation of the release video, we created the page almost a week before and uploaded all of the leaks we had posted previously. We then designed our own, clean logo and an accompanying banner to design the page before we opened it up to the public.



We also understood how important it was for our joint brand to have some personality associated with it. Most of our brand equity stemmed from personal accounts, and no one was going to trust *17 Days* unless they could first trust us as people. The brand on its own had very little power or personality, and we needed to find a way to link ourselves to the page so that others who wanted to help would recognize that, by supporting *17 Days*, they were supporting us.

If we couldn't figure out a way to relate our Facebook page back to us as humans, then we would inevitably fail in our pursuits since the success of this project was dependent on the value of interactions between real life people for success. The following pictures under the album "Meet the Team" helped remind our audience of the humanity underlying our cause and reinforced the trustworthiness of our brand:



Austin and I wanted to be authentic in how we presented ourselves as online personalities, and we spent significant time thinking about who each of us were as individuals and what we wanted to represent going forward. We weren't the same person, even if we were working on the same project, and we both had a unique take on what we were trying to accomplish through our efforts. What resulted was a unique blend of personalities and passions that covered a variety of topics. We hailed from different geographic areas, liked different music, and were unique in our own ways, and that honest acceptance of our diversity paid off as we could relate to all sorts of people rather than create an image for ourselves we believed would be most popular.

Setting up the page was a crucial step in our campaign. Fortunately, the ability to create and manage Facebook pages is not limited to businesses, charities and organizations. Anyone can make a page, and we used ours to create transparency, community and communication.

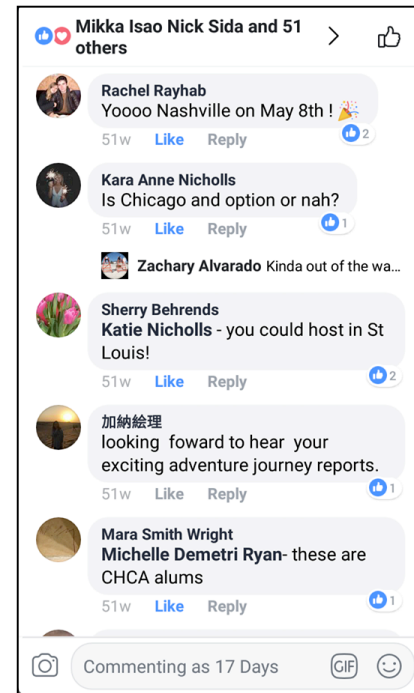
Transparency was necessary in this case because many of the people we would be staying with had never actually met us before. Knowing this, we challenged ourselves to design a profile that acted as a sort of digital background check. While we made the assumption that potential hosts already viewed us with some sort of presumptions or biases based on their experiences with our mutual friends, we still wanted potential hosts to have the ability to look at our page, easily access our profiles, read about us on their own time, and decide for themselves whether the online persona they saw was worth hosting in real life. These online interactions were our first impressions, and we needed to give as much information as possible if people were going to trust us.

Next, we wanted to instill a sense of community, and we decided that a Facebook page was the best way of doing so. Pages allowed us to easily rally interested persons around a collective effort. While those who liked the page came from all sorts of different backgrounds and cultures, the idea was that Austin and I were depending on them for success, and our cause gave our community a certain sense of purpose.

We were all fighting for the same goal, and it didn't matter who you were or where you came from because there was no requirement one had to meet to be a part of the story. We just asked for people to tag along for the adventure and help however they could, and the mere presence of one more like or share on our page helped contribute to the strength of our cause as more and more people bought into the idea that this project was possible.

By growing our community, we were subsequently able to generate more word-of-mouth for our cause. As more people started talking, more people started joining the conversation, and pictured are just some of the comments we received from people looking to help us out.

It was awesome seeing the type of support we were getting from our surrounding community online. Friends, family, and even complete strangers were sharing our posts, tagging other friends in comments, and boosting our message however they could. Offers for housing starting coming in from all over, and we even had one person offer to pay for a hotel out in Nevada if we continued having trouble finding someone to stay with in that state.



At its core, however, this project was designed to focus on more than just the communal aspects of social media. I needed numbers to prove that we were getting as much out of this project as we were putting into it, so I set about creating my own type cost-benefit analysis method to help determine the success of our venture.

Social ROI (Investment)

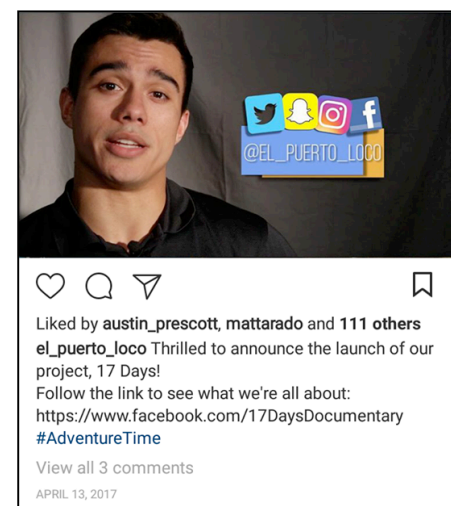
First, I tried my best to design a method that weighed online and offline costs and returns throughout our project. I searched online to see what Facebook's cost per impressions might be for a Facebook ad campaign and found that the usual "cost per 1000 impressions (CPM) based on (2016) Q3 was \$7.19" (Gotter). Then, I calculated the cost of circulating our initial launch video by taking the total number of impressions of 30,369 impressions, divided it by 1000, and multiplied it by \$7.19, giving us a total value of \$218.35.

Twitter proved less responsive to our content. The video was only retweeted seven times, but we still managed to record 1,663 impressions. Twitter's 2017 CPM was \$5.92, and we were able to take our impressions and that CPM value to calculate a total value of \$9.84 (Prater).

On another note, Instagram wasn't even allowing videos longer than 30 seconds at the time we released our initial video post on Facebook and Twitter. We were forced to post a screenshot of the video instead, and we included a link to our Facebook page in the caption. We searched for more measures we could use to quantify the advertising achieved through Instagram, and we found that the cost per click on Instagram typically falls within the \$.70 to \$.80 range (Tate). Since the post earned 113 likes, we can simply take 113 and multiply it by the low end amount of \$.70 to get a total value of \$79.10.

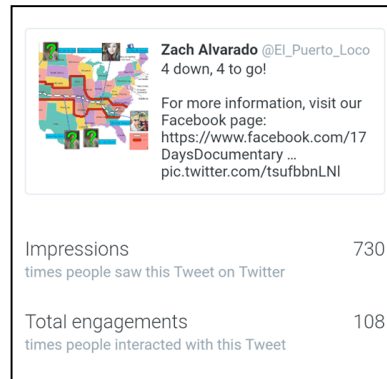
These values gave a sense of the potential reach that can be added to any project with effective digital marketing, but that is not the only purpose they serve. I treated each platform's value as a quantifiable figure for "Time Equivalent" value. We would have had to pay Facebook \$218.35 to achieve the same reach, and it represented the value of our time invested online throughout our campaign.

In hopes of attracting more views, we released a post that featured a map of the United States of America with our planned route running across the middle.



We also placed the pictures of hosts we had already made plans with in their respective states, hoping that others might be encouraged to host us when they saw how these people had already taken a leap of faith in allowing us to stay in their homes.

This message was our way of gently reminding the audience that our project still existed and that we still needed help finding some places to stay. We released the content on three different platforms, and our efforts were rewarded with 605 total impressions on Facebook, 730 impressions on Twitter, and 41 likes on Instagram.



While these posts served to remind audiences of our cause once more, they also acted as a test to see how the cost of circulating this particular picture varied across platforms.

Previously, I used the cost-per-thousand-impressions (CPM) rates for Facebook and Twitter to calculate the cost of advertising costs our video on each platform. Using the formula, I found that the cost of circulating this particular post on Facebook came to about \$4.35 (605 impressions divided by 1000 then multiplied by \$7.19), which was almost exactly the same as the \$4.32 advertisement cost on Twitter (730 impressions divided by 1000 then multiplied by \$5.92).

Instagram rendered a very different cost as compared to the other two platforms. Since it is not possible for the average user to view the number of impressions generated by pictures on Instagram, we used the cost per click (CPC) rate of \$.70 and multiplied that by the number of likes (41) to get an advertising cost of \$28.70.

The discrepancy between platform can be attributed to the use of two different post measures to calculate cost: impressions and likes. Impressions were recorded when our post's content entered

one's screen, and there is no additional interaction between user and post in this instance. Likes required more engagement from Instagram users, so there is a higher cost associated with obtaining those likes. I repeated this same approach with all of other posts in the following tables, using them to determine online advertisement investments per platform for our campaign:

<u>Platform</u>	<u>Metric</u>	<u>Leak</u> <u>1</u>	<u>Leak</u> <u>2</u>	<u>Leak</u> <u>3</u>	<u>Launch</u>	<u>Map</u>	<u>Total</u>
<i>Facebook</i>	<i>Impressions</i>	*788	*813	*1017	30,369	605	33,592
<i>Twitter</i>	<i>Impressions</i>	951	981	1227	1663	730	5552
<i>Instagram</i>	<i>Likes</i>	93	20	23	113	41	290

* # of impressions is not viewable for personal Facebook posts, use "Map" post to set ratio as 605:730

<u>Platform</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Rate</u>	<u>Calculation</u>	<u>Equivalent Cost of Activity</u>
<i>Facebook</i>	33,592	\$7.19/1000	(33,592/1000) x \$7.19	\$241.53
<i>Twitter</i>	5552	\$5.92/1000	(5552/1000) x \$5.92	\$32.87
<i>Instagram</i>	290	\$0.70/Like	290 x \$0.70	\$203

Then, I took the total number of impressions or likes per platform and used that value to calculate each platform's total investment value:

<u>Platform</u>	<u>Time Equivalent</u>	<u>Digital Return</u>	<u>Online ROI</u>
<i>Facebook</i>	\$241.53	-	-
<i>Twitter</i>	\$32.87	-	-
<i>Instagram</i>	\$203	-	-
<u>TOTAL:</u>	\$477.40	-	-

*Where $ROI = [(Returns - Investment) / Investment] \times 100$

The original route for *17 Days* was planned back in November of 2017, and it included stops in Atlanta, Nashville, St. Louis, Kansas City, Denver, Salt Lake City, Las Vegas, and Los Angeles. However, we had to adjust our route slightly. It was difficult to find connections in certain cities, so we decided to visit cities where we did have connections.

When we couldn't find a host in either St. Louis or Kansas City, we found a university in between and saved ourselves a couple days by making one stop instead of two. In Colorado, we could have stayed with someone my parents met while on the Appalachian Trail, but one of my former wrestling teammates, Brandon, offered to drive down from Boulder to pick us up, and we ended up staying on his campus instead. Lastly, we couldn't find anyone to host us in Las Vegas or Los Angeles, but since my buddy, Mekhi, could host us at Stanford, we were able to adjust our route to pass through Reno, where Austin's dad just happened to know someone we could stay with as well.

Since *17 Days* was built off of previously established equity, the only offline expenses we incurred before the trip were for our Greyhound tickets and conservative budgeting for food and travel. The per-city costs were calculated using the price of two tickets from the previous city to the next, \$30 for food each day, and \$20 for emergency travel funds every day we weren't planning on traveling via Greyhound:

<u>Destination</u>	<u>Arrival Date</u>	<u>Investment</u>	<u>Real Return</u>	<u>Offline ROI</u>
<i>Columbia, SC</i>	<i>Before Trip</i>	-	-	-
<i>Atlanta</i>	<i>Thurs., 5/4/17</i>	<i>\$163.50</i>	-	-
<i>Nashville</i>	<i>Sat., 5/6/17</i>	<i>\$129</i>	-	-
<i>Columbia, MO</i>	<i>Mon., 5/8/17</i>	<i>\$277</i>	-	-
<i>Denver</i>	<i>Thur., 5/11/17</i>	<i>\$309</i>	-	-
<i>Salt Lake City</i>	<i>Sun., 5/14/17</i>	<i>\$239</i>	-	-
<i>Reno</i>	<i>Tues., 5/16/17</i>	<i>\$205</i>	-	-
<i>San Francisco</i>	<i>Thur., 5/18/17</i>	<i>\$158</i>	-	-
	<u>TOTAL:</u>	<i>\$1480.50</i>	-	-

Social ROI (Return)

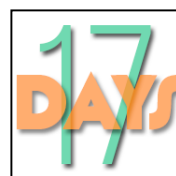
Next, I needed to evaluate the value added to our campaign by friends, equally allocating the capital based on which online or offline relationships were in our communication channel. Throughout the course of *17 Days*, we reunited with old friends we hadn't seen in years and met people we felt we had known our entire lives. This project would not have been possible without the donations our friends gave, and this is my attempt at quantifying that goodwill.

While there are various relationships one can have in life, most people who contributed to the total value of our campaign can be categorized under one of the following types of relationships:

- *Familial: between members of the same home or family*
- *Scholastic: between students who attended school together*
- *Professional: between people who have worked together*
- *Organizational: between those belonging to the same national or international order*
- *Extracurricular: between those who engage a common interest (athletics, fine arts, etc.)*

These relationships were formed over the entirety of our lives, and just because someone we know saw our posts on Facebook does not mean that what they donated to our trip will be wholly attributed to that platform's return. For instance, my brother gave us music to use in the initial video. The value of his backtracks can be calculated by using the low-end of Spotify's pay rate (\$.006 per song) and multiplying it by the number of views we had on our video. Since the video only played on Facebook (6908 views) and Twitter (341 views), we can estimate that the song was played roughly 7249 times, which we can then multiply by Spotify's rate of \$.006 per song to give us an added value of \$43.49.

If we had received this song via social media, the \$43.49 would be counted as online revenue. However, in this case, we did not gain access to the musical content via social media. I asked my brother directly, and his knowledge of the brand did not come from our efforts to raise awareness on digital platforms. In such cases, we will not attribute value to any particular platforms so that there is a clear accounting for return generated per platform versus per offline relationship:



FAMILIAL

\$43.49





Sometime after our video launch, my friend, Cole, asked if he could write and publish an article with *17 Days* as the featured topic. He was writing pieces and building support network for his travel and adventure brand, *Supine Media*, and the two brands matched up perfectly. I was more than happy for the additional exposure he could provide, especially since *Supine Media* had several hundred followers that supported travel as well. This was a cooperative marketing tactic, and I estimated the article's reach using shares as a common performance indicator. Our initial video's 80 shares resulted in 30,369 impressions.

"You've probably heard of people taking road trips across the United States before. Maybe it's even on your bucket list. That oh so glamorous trip of you, your red convertible, and the open road..."

Well on May 4th, Zach Alvarado and Austin Prescott will be embarking on a 17-day unprecedented journey from Columbia, South Carolina to Los Angeles, California. It's just like that one you've been dreaming about, but without the glamour... and that red convertible is actually several Greyhound buses.

17 Days is both a social media experiment and a documentary. This will test just how powerful and influential social media has become. All these guys know is that they are going to California. The rest is a mystery. All that is set in stone is that they depart from Columbia on May 4th and return by flight from LAX on May 20th. In fact, all they have budgeted for is the cost of the buses and their return flight. So the rest should be very interesting.

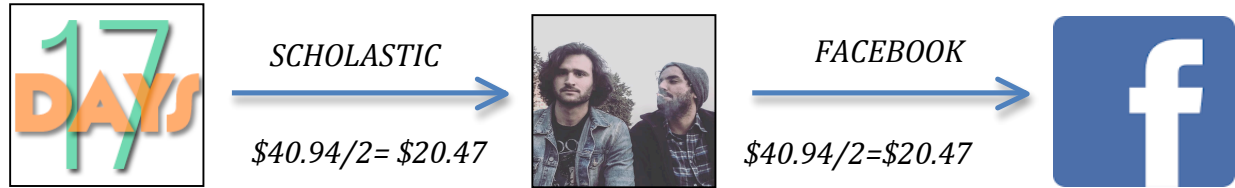
The guys will be documenting all of their moves every step of the way in hopes of not only scoring accommodation in various cities, but also to disprove popular belief that you need a lot of money and an exotic location in order to have a dope trip. They will be utilizing social media in order to connect with different people in every city along the way; getting to experience, first hand, some of the many awesome cultures that the United States has to offer. And yes there is more than one.

Get a load of their 'tentative' itinerary (below) and check out their Facebook page, 17 Days. Also, check out their bios at the end of this article and see what these lads are all about. If you know people in or near any of these cities then share the news with them! Simply go to their page and tag people. Make sure to like and follow their page so you can stay updated on all of their moves. Even give this article a share if you're feeling cheeky!

Check out their informative hype video and give it a share! <https://www.facebook.com/17DaysDocumentary/>

You might not know anyone who can help them, but you'd be surprised at how powerful a share can be."

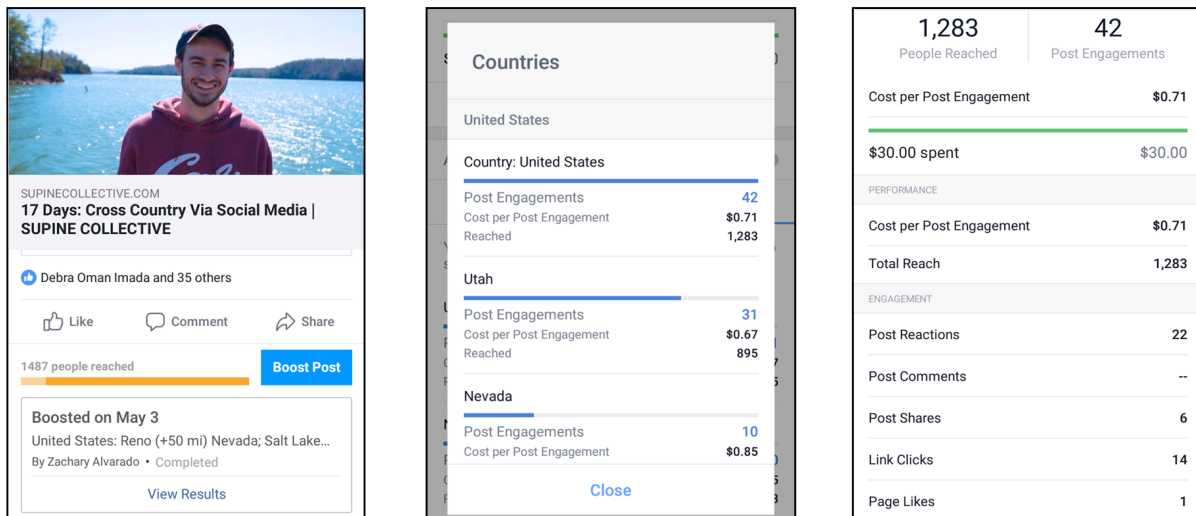
Assuming the ratio for shares to impressions remains constant, the 15 shares on *Supine Media*'s post should have yielded 5,694 impressions, or a total value of \$40.94. If we had met Cole through Facebook, the entire \$40.94 would be recorded as social capital earned via Facebook. Instead, I treated Facebook like another friend in the relationship, distributing the value equally between all connections involved.



Before we knew it, May 3rd was upon us. We were slated to leave for Atlanta the next day, but we hadn't secured housing in between Colorado and California. Luckily for us, Facebook offered us a \$30 dollar advertisement coupon, and we capitalized on that offer.

Facebook wanted us to use the coupon in hopes that we would spend more money on Facebook advertising after seeing its effects. We didn't have money for additional promotions, but that product is definitely valuable to other business pages since Facebook gives administrators the ability to target Facebook's population based on factors such as pages liked, age, or gender.

We redeemed the voucher using the post Cole made with *Supine Media*. We wanted to share the exposure since Cole had done us a big favor in writing the post, and the results show just how far \$30 can take your campaign when using Facebook advertisements:



It was surprisingly simple to filter our geographic promotion by geography, and we could have also filtered our audience based on demographics or interest as well. The cost per engagement of this post (\$.71) was more expensive than our other advertisements, but that \$30 also got us more targeted advertising where our campaign needed it most. This voucher marked the last online return we received prior to May 4th.

Next, I accounted for all the instances of value that occurred in each city throughout the trip. Those values were then evenly distributed between the relationship links present in the value chain before being weighed against offline and online investments to determine project ROI.

Columbia, SC

The first day of our trip was a bit hectic as we rushed to get out of the house. We thought we had packed everything we needed, but we ended up not being able to find the charger for the GoPro camera we planned on bringing with us. Luckily, our friend, Nic, was able to drive over and lend us his. That \$5 donation to our cause was the first instance of social capital earned. Then, our friend, Sidney, drove us from my house to the Greyhound station. The value of her help can be found by searching for the equivalent cost for an Uber ride, which was \$13 in this case.

The above costs are accounted for in the film, but I also wanted to come up with a way to value the time people spent with us as well. Time is money after all, and I decided that the opportunity cost of working a minimum wage job in the same state could be used as a valid metric for quantifying the value of time. Therefore, the hour of time Sidney spent packing us up, driving us there, and driving back can be valued using the state's hourly minimum wage of \$7.25.



Atlanta, GA

Our primary contact in Atlanta was Carson. He joined Austin's family through marriage, and he reached out to us after seeing our posts being circulated by family members on Facebook. He asked that we give a shout out to *My Parent's Basement* for hosting free comic book day. Furthermore, when asked "*If you could tell everyone who watches this documentary one thing, what would it be?*" he responded, "East Atlanta rules. All you other cities are chumps."

Carson helped us out in a number of ways during our stay. He even paid for our Uber to the Greyhound station when we were leaving Atlanta. We would have had to pay Uber \$68 for same amount of transport Carson provided for us while in Georgia. He also provided housing in an area where an Airbnb reservation for the night would have cost us \$40, and he covered breakfast for us our first day there, which would have cost us \$5 each.

Even though Carson was really busy, he still made an effort to spend at least four hours by our side throughout the film. If Carson were working as a tour guide for visitors to Atlanta, those four hours could have earned him \$29 at the minimum wage rate in Georgia, raising the capital value of this series of relationships to \$147.



Carson wasn't the only one who helped us out in Atlanta. We also received an invitation from another friend, Lucy. She reached out to us on our second day there, but since she didn't have a car available to drive, we needed to try and secure transport to hers on our own.

Fortunately for us, Austin had struck up a conversation with this man on the street that called himself Kidd Rolex while we were out filming on the streets of Atlanta. Rolex was initially interested in working with Austin on a music video for one of his songs, but after he heard about our little travel predicament, he pulled out his phone and ordered an Uber with some of his own coupons. We ended up only having to pay Rolex \$5, but the ride would have cost \$25 without his help.



The last person to help us in Atlanta was Lucy. Austin, Lucy, and I all met at USC, so we can consider this as a “scholastic” relationship. Lucy was able to offer us a housing equivalent of \$40 for the night, and she was also able to get us transportation that would have cost us \$25 with Uber. Lastly, She spent about three hours of time with us during our stay, and she could have used those three hours to earn \$21.75 instead of spending that time with us. Since Lucy viewed one of the posts we uploaded to our stories on Snapchat before texting us to see what we were up to in Atlanta, Snapchat became the final link in the chain.



In Atlanta, we received a total of \$253.75. Of that \$253.75, \$116.88 of those returns will be attributed to our online accounts with \$73.50 from Facebook and \$43.88 from Snapchat. We did not incur investment expenses for Snapchat because we did not prepare any posts for that platform. It took us less than 10 seconds to post that snap in Atlanta, but we benefitted greatly from the result, making it necessary to add Snapchat to the online ROI table.

Nashville, TN

Our friend, Rachel, was the one who picked us up when we arrived at the Greyhound station in Nashville. Austin and I met Rachel during our first year at USC through mutual friends, and she was the first person to comment on our initial release video on Facebook. She wanted to give a shout out to us for doing the trip and making it all the way to California, and when asked, *“If you could tell everyone who watches this documentary one thing, what would it be?”* she responded, *“Share what you love.”*

From the moment we arrived in Atlanta, Rachel and her family made us feel right at home. They fed us, drove us, housed us, and contributed a great deal to our social capital returns. For transport, the equivalent cost of all travel would have been about \$160 with Uber. Housing for two nights would have been equal to an Airbnb cost of \$120, and the food and drinks received amounted to \$70.



Rachel also spent a significant amount of time with us, guiding us around all the different parts of Nashville and showing us what a weekend in her life was like. In total, she spent 17 hours with us. She could have spent those 17 hours working to earn money or just spending time relaxing instead of catering to us, and the opportunity cost of that time was valued at \$123.25.

In total, we received \$473.25 while in Nashville. That value can be divided equally between the “scholastic” category of real returns and the Facebook category of digital returns, resulting in an increase of about \$236.63 for each.



Columbia, MO

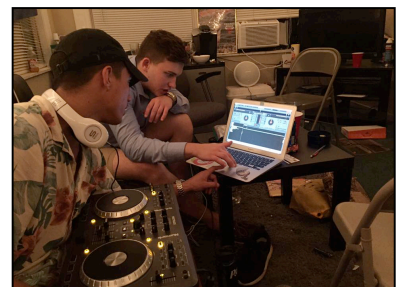
The next stop after Nashville was Mizzou. During our recruitment stage, our posts on Instagram had caught the attention of James, the president of Delta Kappa Epsilon (DKE) at USC. James and I were at chapter together when he brought up the map post he saw on Instagram. I mentioned we couldn't find any hosts to stay with in St. Louis and Kansas City, and it was his idea to save some time by finding a city in between instead of risking not being able to find housing in both.

James gave us the number of Paul, the president of DKE at the University of Missouri. Paul was the one who picked us up at Greyhound station when we touched ground in "CoMo," and that transport would have cost us \$23 if we had used Uber. He also contributed \$10 worth of food and \$60 worth of housing. Lastly, he spent an hour showing us the DKE house and Mizzou's campus, and that equivalent opportunity cost of that time was \$7.70.

Paul wasn't the only brother that contributed value to our campaign during our stay at Mizzou, but instead of creating a communication channel for each individual brother, I decided to make everyone part of the same chain, and the total value of all Mizzou DKE will be lumped into one segment of that chain.

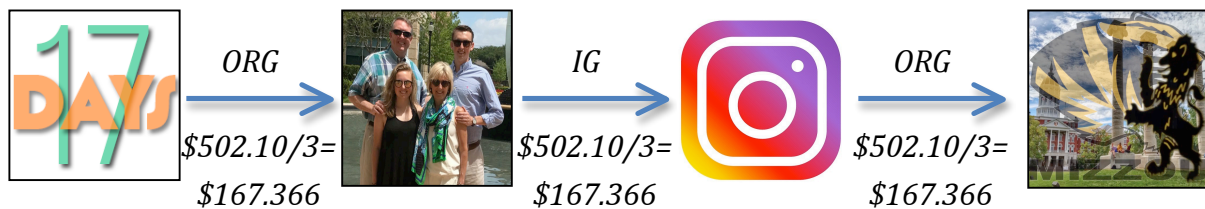
One brother, Matt, took us on a daytrip to the rock formation known as "The Pinnacles". Taking an Uber to and from the site would have cost us \$79, and the 7 hours Matt spent with us was valued at \$53.90. Later that day, we went out with Taylyn and Zack. Not only did they pay for \$10 worth in meals, but they also let us sleep at their place the other two nights of our stay, which would have cost us \$120 otherwise. Lastly, the duo spent about eight hours making sure we had a good experience while visiting Mizzou, and that time could have been spent working as a tour guide. If they had been paid for their work, they would have made \$61.60.

The majority of our last day in Mizzou was spent with Parker. Parker took us hiking on the nearby "MKT Trail" first, then we all went back to the DKE house afterwards to hang out and mess around with some of the DJ equipment he was learning to use. Like Rachel, Parker's shout out was to us for putting in the effort to make this trip happen, and when asked what he wanted to share with the viewers of *17 Days*, he said, *"Don't let parents/other life situations hold you back from what you want to do and see in your lifetime."*



Parker also made sure we had a ride to the Greyhound station the next day, even though he had to get up early to take us there. The value of that ride was equal to \$23, and the time he spent with us was valued at \$53.90. Like Rachel, Parker's shout out was to us for putting in the effort to make this trip happen, and when asked what he wanted to share with the viewers of *17 Days*, he said, *"Don't let parents/other life situations hold you back from what you want to do and see in your lifetime."*

The \$125 in transport, \$180 in housing, \$20 in food and drink, and \$177.10 in time value all added up to about \$502.10 in returns. This particular value chain requires an "organizational" link between James and *17 Days*, an Instagram link since that is where James first saw our posts, and another "organizational" link for the connection to Delta Kappa Epsilon at Mizzou. Since there were three separate connections making up this channel, 67% of the \$502.10 went towards our "organizational" category of offline returns and 33% was counted as returns from Instagram:



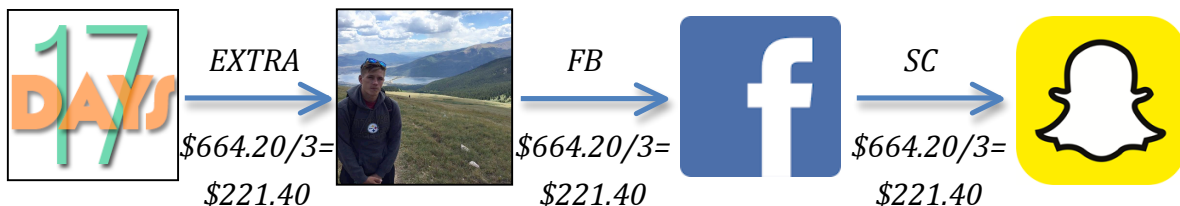
Denver, CO

After Mizzou, we were back on the road for another long trip, this time to Denver. Once we reached Denver, my former teammate, Brandon, picked us up and brought us back to Boulder. Brandon and I met through the Gamecock Wrestling Club at USC, and any relationship formed through participation in an activity of mutual interest—like athletics or fine arts—would qualify as an “extracurricular” relationship. He was first made aware of *17 Days* through Facebook, but it wasn’t until we were conversing via Snapchat that he learned we weren’t for sure on staying in Denver just yet, so there are two digital links in this case.



Brandon drove us around so much during our trip that I actually had to use the equivalent cost of renting a car in Colorado to help calculate how much transport value he gave us. He drove us back and forth from Boulder to Denver and back and forth from Boulder to Hanging Lake. The transportation value he added to our trip came to \$178, but he also provided us with \$30 worth of food and \$140 worth of housing.

In addition to the above contributions, Brandon also spent a whopping 34 hours with us. He took us on a tour of his campus, his Fraternity’s house, and all sorts of hikes throughout the state. He dedicated a week’s worth of work to making sure we enjoyed our time in Colorado. The value of that time was found by multiplying those 34 hours by the 2017 state minimum wage of \$9.30 to give us a final value of \$316.20. I then added the \$178, \$30, and \$140 from earlier to that amount to give us a total return of \$664.20. Because there was an “extracurricular” link, a Facebook link, and a Snapchat link, a third \$664.20 will be assigned to each connection.



We had other values contributed here and there, such as this drone footage that someone in Colorado gave us in exchange for helping him scale the rock face, but pretty much all of our social capital earnings came from our relationship with Brandon.

While climbing the Flat Irons in Boulder, we came across another hiker named Jerad. He had come to the mountain in search of a vantage point to film from, but he was having trouble navigating the rocks with all his gear.

Austin and I spent a lot of time struggling with our camera equipment while we hiked, and when we saw that Jerad needed help, we showed him what the safest paths were to take. When he reached a good spot, Jerad removed a drone from one of his bags and began filming.

After we descended, Jerad offered to send us all the footage he had captured as thanks for helping him with the climb. In return for a simple act of kindness, we received something we would never have been able to obtain elsewhere.

Thanks a ton, Jerad!

Also, check feel free to check out his Vimeo for more travel related content like ours!
<https://vimeo.com/jeradlarkin>.



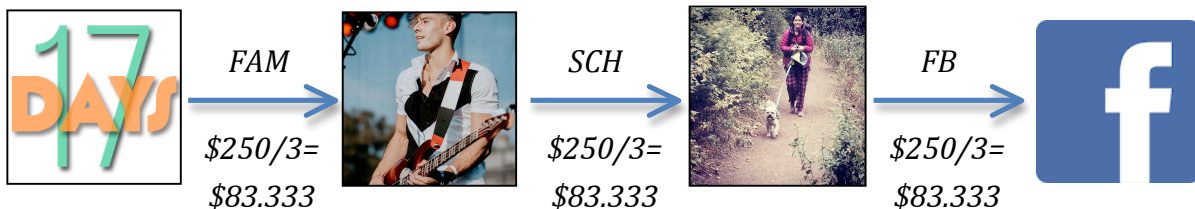
Salt Lake City, UT

The further west we went, the harder it was to find people to stay with. In fact, we actually started this trip without having a finalized place to stay in either Utah or Nevada. Fortunately, Jaynell was able to come through for us. Jaynell and my brother graduated high school the same year back in Ohio, so we were related to her first through a “familial” relationship then by a “scholastic” relationship Jaynell heard about our adventure after my brother shared one of our posts on Facebook, and she wanted everyone who saw this film to know, *“It is possible to travel with little money! There is so much out there to see and it isn't fair to limit yourselves!”*



Knowing not many people from our high school made it that far west, Jaynell opened up her home so that we could have a safe place to stay, which would have cost us \$40 with Airbnb. She also drove us to several hiking trails and scenic routes throughout the mountainous area.

The Uber equivalent for her transport contributions came to about \$152, and the 8 hours she spent with us was valued at \$58. When we add together the transport, housing, and time value accumulated over the day we were there, we get a total value of \$250, which is then divided amongst the three links within the chain



We also ended up getting a cool tour through some of the athletic facilities from one of the guys we met while wondering around the University of Utah. While I couldn't find any cost equivalents for the tour online, the qualitative experience was captured in our film, so make sure you go and watch that!



Thanks again, Josh!

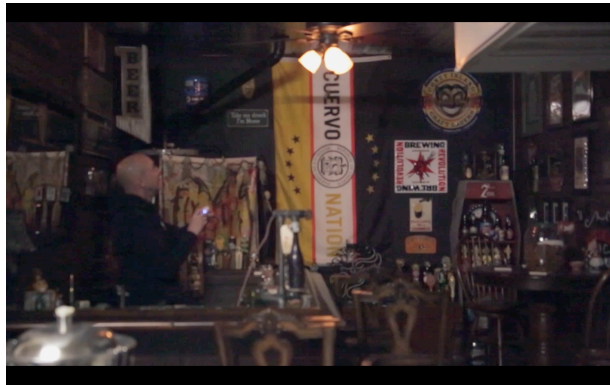
Reno, NV

Reno was the only place we reached without the direct help of social media. Previously, I mentioned that we adjusted our route to go through Reno and Stanford when we couldn't find a host in Las Vegas or Los Angeles. We made the change because we knew my friend, Mekhi, could host us in Stanford, but not LA, but that still didn't change the fact that we didn't have any contact in between Utah and California.



Once we changed our route, however, we heard back from Austin's dad, Pike. Pike had worked with someone from Reno named Ken, and, when he heard from Austin that we were no longer going to Las Vegas, he reached out to his old workmate to see if he knew anyone out west. Surprisingly enough, Ken had moved back out to Reno, and he and his wife, Cindy, were more than happy to host us. They weren't huge advocates of social media use, but they liked the premise of the project and honestly just wanted to help us get to Cali.

Ken and Cindy went above and beyond our expectations, even taking off work that day to drive us all around Reno, Lake Tahoe, and some of the surroundings cities. They also refused to let us pay for any food or drink the entire time we were there, and they spent about 18 hours of time with us. Altogether, they provided us with \$100 in food and drinks, \$272 in transportation, \$50 of housing, and \$148.50 in time value, which all adds up to \$570.55 in returns, which is then broken out evenly between the "familial" and "professional" categories of real return.



When asked if he had any words of wisdom to pass on to our audience, Kend said, "*Be open, help others, and pass knowledge on.*" Ken also wanted to give a shout out to Great Basin Brewing Company and the Virginia City Brewery and Taphouse, which were two of the craft beer bars and breweries we visited throughout Reno and the surrounding area.

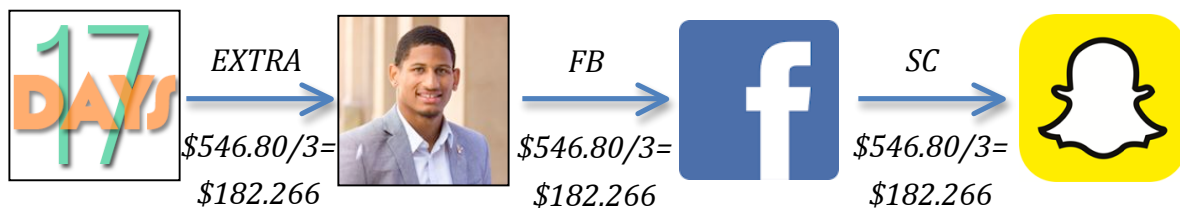
San Francisco, CA

Finally, after traveling through six different cities over the course of 15 days, we were heading to California. Originally, we had planned on going to Los Angeles, but when we couldn't find anyone in the southern part of California to host us, Mekhi came through for us further north.

The first time I met Mekhi was back when we were in high school. He attended NCH, which was the rival high school in our conference. After high school, I was invited by his wrestling coach to come down and help coach a camp they were putting together for kids who couldn't afford the time or transport it cost for Ohio State's camps. I didn't mind one bit, and I was able to become better friend with Mekhi through that "extracurricular" relationship. He also wanted everyone who watches the documentary to know, *"At the end of the day, all you got is the people you have around you. Surround yourself with great people, grow and learn together, and help each other out every step along the way."*

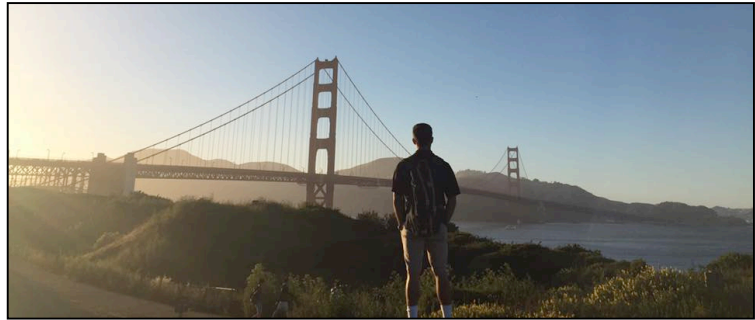
Mekhi, like Brandon, had heard of our project through Facebook, but it wasn't until we were messaging back on Snapchat that he realized he could still help us out, even if he was in Stanford instead of Los Angeles. During our stay, Mekhi hung out with us when he could and put us in contact with good friends of his when he was busy making sure his grades were in line. For instance, while Mekhi couldn't pick us up from the Greyhound station, he did put us in contact with Mamadou and Garry, and they were able to pick us up in San Francisco and drive us back to Stanford. Altogether, Mekhi and his crew contributed \$30 of food and drink, \$219 of transport, \$140 in housing, and 15 hours of quality time (or \$157.50).

Using all of these values to compute the total returns received gave us a final contribution value of \$546.80. This value was then distributed evenly between the "extracurricular," Facebook, and Snapchat links. Even though Mekhi's friends were also involved in helping us out while we were in Stanford, I treated them as an extension of my relationships with Mekhi rather than as several separate relationships.



And just like that, we made it across the country. As my dad always said, “*If you never ask, the answer’s always no,*” and this trip clearly reinforces that mentality. It didn’t matter where we were or who we were visiting.

Everyone helped in his or her own way, and we owe all our success to those mentioned above.



ROI Calculations

At the trip's end, we took all our online and offline returns and weighed them against our online and offline costs to see if our investments of time and effort were worth it in the long run. I also identified which relationships and platforms we depended on the most for help over *17 Days*:

<u>City</u>	<u>Facebook</u>	<u>Instagram</u>	<u>Twitter</u>	<u>Snapchat</u>
<i>Columbia, SC</i>	\$50.47	-	-	-
<i>Atlanta</i>	\$73.50	-	-	\$43.38
<i>Nashville</i>	\$236.625	-	-	-
<i>Columbia, MO</i>	-	\$167.366	-	-
<i>Denver</i>	\$221.40	-	-	\$221.40
<i>Salt Lake City</i>	\$83.33	-	-	-
<i>Reno</i>	-	-	-	-
<i>San Francisco</i>	\$182.266	-	-	\$182.266
Digital Return:	\$847.59	\$167.37	-	\$447.05

<u>City</u>	<u>Familial</u>	<u>Scholastic</u>	<u>Professional</u>	<u>Organizational</u>	<u>Extra-curricular</u>
<i>Columbia, SC</i>	\$43.49	\$55.72	-	-	-
<i>Atlanta</i>	\$73.50	\$43.38	\$20	-	-
<i>Nashville</i>	-	\$236.63	-	-	-
<i>Columbia, MO</i>	-	-	-	\$334.73	-
<i>Denver</i>	-	-	-	-	\$221.40
<i>Salt Lake City</i>	\$83.33	\$83.33	-	-	-
<i>Reno</i>	\$285.28	-	\$285.28	-	-
<i>San Francisco</i>	-	-	-	-	\$182.27
Real Return:	\$485.60	\$419.06	\$305.28	\$334.73	\$403.67

These recorded benefits were then used in conjunction with the platform investments I calculated earlier to help determine online and offline ROI. I derived the equivalent cost of online investment using the advertising rates of social media and the amount of impressions from all our posts to get advertising expenditures per platform, and that was weighed against “Digital Returns” to render an “Online ROI.” On the other hand, the offline investments per city were measured against the “Real Return” values in each city, which was then considered the “Offline ROI.” Lastly, I weighed total cost against total return to see if we broke-even on our investments.

<u>Platform</u>	<u>Time Equivalent</u>	<u>Digital Return</u>	<u>Online ROI</u>
<i>Facebook</i>	\$241.53	\$847.59	+250.93%
<i>Twitter</i>	\$32.87	-	-
<i>Instagram</i>	\$203	\$167.37	-17.55%
<i>Snapchat</i>	-	\$447.04	+
<u>TOTAL:</u>	\$477.40	\$1462	+206.24%

<u>City</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Investment</u>	<u>Real Return</u>	<u>Offline ROI</u>
<i>Columbia, SC</i>	<i>Before Trip</i>	-	\$99.21	-
<i>Atlanta</i>	<i>Thurs., 5/4/17</i>	\$163.50	\$136.88	-16.28%
<i>Nashville</i>	<i>Sat., 5/6/17</i>	\$129	\$236.63	+83.43%
<i>Columbia, MO</i>	<i>Mon., 5/8/17</i>	\$277	\$334.73	+20.84%
<i>Denver</i>	<i>Thur., 5/11/17</i>	\$309	\$221.40	-39.57%
<i>Salt Lake City</i>	<i>Sun., 5/14/17</i>	\$239	\$167.37	-29.97%
<i>Reno</i>	<i>Tues., 5/16/17</i>	\$205	\$570.55	+178.32%
<i>San Francisco</i>	<i>Thur., 5/18/17</i>	\$158	\$182.27	+15.36%
	<u>TOTAL:</u>	\$1480.50	\$1895.01	+27.30%

<u>City</u>	<u>Total Investment*</u>	<u>Total Return**</u>	<u>City ROI</u>
<i>Columbia, SC</i>	\$59.675	\$149.68	+150.83%
<i>Atlanta</i>	\$223.175	\$253.75	+13.7%
<i>Nashville</i>	\$188.675	\$473.25	+150
<i>Columbia, MO</i>	\$336.675	\$502.10	+49.13%
<i>Denver</i>	\$368.675	\$664.20	+19.31%
<i>Salt Lake City</i>	\$297.675	\$250	-16.02%
<i>Reno</i>	\$264.675	\$570.55	+115.57%
<i>San Francisco</i>	\$217.675	\$546.80	+151.20%
<u>TOTAL</u>	\$1957.90	\$3489.53	+78.23%

*Where Total Investment = Time Equivalent + Real Investment

**Where Total Return = Digital Return + Real Return

Throughout *17 Days*, Facebook returned more value to us than Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat combined. Snapchat was also surprisingly helpful, even though we didn't invest any time or effort in preparing our posts on that platform. Instagram wasn't much use to us at all, and our posts seem to get lost in the noise of Twitter.

The value of our digital investments came to a total of \$477.40. That value divided by the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 represents the amount of time we spent working on social media. All in all, we spent 66 hours working on social media and about \$700 each in food and travel costs, but we received all that and more back through the good deeds of others we met along the way.

Overall, the amount of interactions that occurred through social media helped us out immensely, and we would not have made it to California without our social media. At the same time, we also would not have made it to California without the help of our real life networking as well, and a look at the data revealed that the top two categories responsible for earning us value throughout this trip were "familial" and "scholastic." "Professional" earned the least, and "extracurricular" and "organizational" fell in between.

Why was this the case?

Most of the value came from our close family and friends because that is whom we spent the most time with growing up. Then, we started attending school, and that was the second largest investment of our time. After school comes work, but since we won't start working full-time until after graduation, there were very little professional returns.

But going throughout life just going to school then working afterwards is honestly a life with less value, and this experiment proves that! The "extracurricular" and "organizational" categories together accounted for over \$700 of earned value throughout *17 Days*.

Yes, social media helped raise awareness and allowed us to communicate and connect with our audience, but all the relationships I accessed throughout this trip existed in real life first. The communities through which I met these friends were constructed offline, and participating in athletics and Greek Life were just two of the activities that opened up all sorts of opportunities. Our successes in life are as much product of who we surround ourselves with as they are a product of our own capabilities, and the more you engage with different communities around you, the more value creating opportunities you will have in your life.

I want to end this section with big thank you to everyone who helped host us on our way to California. The memories we made will be something I treasure long after I turn this project in and graduate, and I hope you know that I'm here to help you with whatever you need, just as you were there for us.

I also want to give a big thank you to anyone that shared our content online. I hope you continue to do so, sharing our film and our story, promoting a new sense of community around the world.

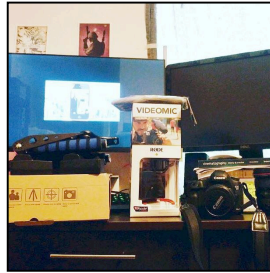
The Posts

After proving how effective social media can be when accessing social capital, I wanted to go a step further with my analysis of online activity and talk about just some of the ways in which the average person can improve their post performances.

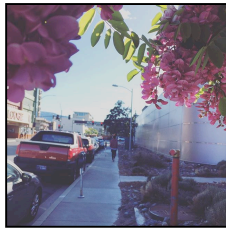
Throughout *17 Days*, Austin and I posted pictures and videos of our trip. Each post performed differently, and those results were dependent on several variables both within and outside of our control. We didn't rely on the number of impressions made or people reached to determine the quality of our posts. Those numbers were dependent on our ability enter our consumers line of sight online, but evaluating posts against one another required the use of a different metric. It wasn't enough that consumers saw our posts; they had to like them as well.

The most responsive platform in terms of "likes" was Instagram. The pictures of our travels earned an average of 84 likes per post, but the range was 43 to 136 likes. Three of my 11 travel posts on Instagram earned between 40 and 60 likes, five earned between 70 and 90 likes, and the last 3 earned between 120 and 140 likes. I organized the posts based on performance into "low," "average," and "high" performing groups to identify characteristics posts within groups shared:

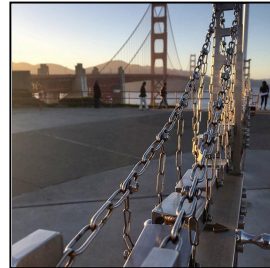
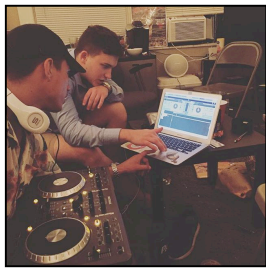
LOW (46, 50, and 56 likes respectively):









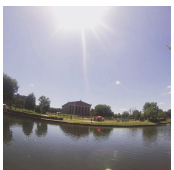

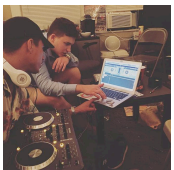


AVERAGE (72, 75, 81, 82, and 85 likes respectively):



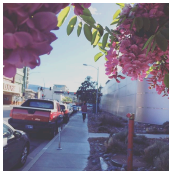



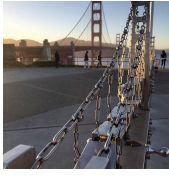



HIGH (121, 124, and 136 likes respectively)



	<p>“New Year. New Project. Can't wait to show you what we have in store for 2017”</p> <p>Date: 1/1/2017</p> <p>Likes: 93</p> <p>Comments: 1</p>	
	<p>“Big things are on the way. We'd love for you to be part of the story”</p> <p>1/22/2017</p> <p>Likes: 20</p> <p>Comments: 0</p>	
	<p>“Social media without strategy is like having a map and compass with no destination”</p> <p>2/12/2017</p> <p>Likes: 23</p> <p>Comments: 0</p>	
	<p>“Thrilled to announce the launch of our project, 17 Days! Follow the link to see what we're all about: https://www.facebook.com/17DaysDocumentary #AdventureTime”</p> <p>4/13/2017</p> <p>Likes: 113</p> <p>Comments: 3</p>	
	<p>“4 down, 4 to go!</p> <p>For more information, visit our Facebook page @ https://facebook.com/17DaysDocumentary”</p> <p>4/28/2017</p> <p>Likes: 41</p> <p>Comments: 3</p>	
	<p>“Can't wait to get the cameras rolling! Bus takes off in 5 hours, and be sure to follow us on social media to make sure you don't miss a beat!”</p> <p>5/4/2017</p> <p>Likes: 56</p> <p>Comments: 2</p>	

	<p>“Free Comic Day! This place is sweet! #17Days #myparentsbasement”</p> <p>5/6/2017</p> <p>Likes: 50</p> <p>Comments: 0</p> <p>*First Instagram post of our actual traveling</p>	 <p>Like Comment Share</p> <p>Liked by danielflykamp, austin_prescott and 54 others</p> <p>el_puerto_loco Can't wait to get the cameras rolling! Bus takes off in 5 hours, and be sure to follow us on social media to make sure you don't miss a beat!</p> <p>View all 2 comments</p> <p>MAY 4, 2017</p>
	<p>“Astronomy 101 #17Days”</p> <p>5/7/2017</p> <p>Likes: 43</p> <p>Comments: 0</p> <p>*Nighttime post</p>	 <p>Like Comment Share</p> <p>Liked by danielflykamp, austin_prescott and 48 others</p> <p>el_puerto_loco Free Comic Day! This place is sweet! #17Days #myparentsbasement</p> <p>MAY 6, 2017</p>
	<p>“Found a new favorite beer today: ‘2-Hop Shakur’ #17Days”</p> <p>5/7/2017</p> <p>Likes: 72</p> <p>Comments: 0</p> <p>*Only post featuring a vice</p>	 <p>Like Comment Share</p> <p>Liked by danielflykamp, austin_prescott and 41 others</p> <p>el_puerto_loco Astronomy 101 #17Days</p> <p>MAY 7, 2017</p>
	<p>“I’ll miss you, Nashville”</p> <p>5/8/2017</p> <p>Likes: 81</p> <p>Comments: 0</p> <p>*No hashtag, GoPro shots</p>	 <p>Like Comment Share</p> <p>Liked by danielflykamp, austin_prescott and 41 others</p> <p>el_puerto_loco Astronomy 101 #17Days</p> <p>MAY 7, 2017</p>
	<p>“Show us what you got #17Days”</p> <p>5/11/2017</p> <p>Likes: 121</p> <p>Comments: 2</p> <p>*Friend in the picture</p>	 <p>Like Comment Share</p> <p>Liked by danielflykamp, austin_prescott and 41 others</p> <p>el_puerto_loco Astronomy 101 #17Days</p> <p>MAY 7, 2017</p>
	<p>“Adventure is out there #17 Days”</p> <p>5/14/2017</p> <p>Likes: 124</p> <p>Comments: 0</p> <p>*Mother’s Day, might look like hiking with parents at first</p>	

	<p>“The view from the U #17Days”</p> <p>5/16/2017</p> <p>Likes: 82</p> <p>Comments: 0</p>	
	<p>“The Biggest Little City in the World... Thanks for the ride, Reno #17Days”</p> <p>5/17/2017</p> <p>Likes: 75</p> <p>Comments: 0</p>	
	<p>“Stanford’s been awesome so far... Can’t wait to see what the rest of Cali has in store! #17Days”</p> <p>5/19/2017</p> <p>Likes: 85</p> <p>Comments: 0</p>	
	<p>“Where the sidewalk ends... #17thDay”</p> <p>5/20/2017</p> <p>Likes: 136</p> <p>Comments: 0</p> <p>*Last picture, different hashtag, well known landmark</p>	

I realized that post success was dependent on three main factors: timing, aesthetics, and content. The “low” performers were all posted at the beginning of the trip, so it is possible that those posts got less likes than later posts because the later posts benefitted from the momentum of other online activity. Also, within the “low” performers, the post with the least amount of likes was a picture of a telescope that I posted around midnight, when the fewest users were online.

Aesthetic appeal also played a large part in the number of likes each post received. The “low” performing pictures were all relatively dark and cluttered, while all the “average” posts seemed more bright and open. I noticed that the more natural sources of blue and green present in each photo, the more likes each post seemed to receive. Also, the only picture to feature any sort of vice (drinking, smoking, etc.) received the lowest likes among “average” performing posts.

Lastly, I experimented with the subject matter and textual content of the posts. Subject matter refers to the content actually being shown in the photo. For example, in the “low” category, the posts featured camera equipment, comic books, and a telescope. The subject matter of each post was far less attractive than the music, adventure, and travel themes of my “high” performing posts. Meanwhile, textual content refers to the caption or title of a post.

The caption effects were negative in certain situations. For example, the telescope post in “low” performers had the caption “*Astrology 101*,” which may have triggered a subconscious distaste among students. However, the successful selection of relatable images and corresponding text resulted in a dramatic increase in likes for the “high” performers. One of the posts featured Parker and I listening to music and working with DJ equipment. Another post featured the well-known Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco at sunset, and, while many of my posts featured hiking and adventure throughout the trip, the most popular hiking post was the one featuring a group of female hikers who happened to be walking the path at the same time we were. The post also just happened to be released on Mother’s Day, and the coordination of subject matter with timing earned the post more likes.

Finally, the “top” performing posts on Instagram all had some sort of quote relating to pop culture, media, or entertainment from different time periods. The first post featuring a quote was music post from Mizzou. The caption read, “*Show us what you got*,” and it was in reference to an episode from the popular TV show, Rick and Morty. The next quote was used in my caption for Colorado’s Hanging Lake post, and I chose to quote a Disney Pixar classic from 2009, *Up*. That caption read, “*Adventure is out there*.”

The last quote I used in my picture posts was from a memory very near and dear to me. Growing up, my mom and I always read together. She loved sharing all her favorite books and poems with me, and, because of her influence, I developed a profound love for the works of Shel Silverstein. “*Where the sidewalk ends*,” served as a fitting last caption, lending an air of finality to the post. The post also invoked a feeling of nostalgia among participants, resulting in a like count higher than that of the other two posts referring to pop culture.

Next, I wanted to evaluate what types of factors played into the success of video content online. Like photos, videos also depended on timing, aesthetics, and content to generate likes. However, unlike photos, our videos also dealt with other variables such as music or play length. In an effort to limit the variability of my results, I decided to release one video post of about 30 seconds of content every day for a week straight. I released every video at the same time each day (around noon), and the caption for each video followed the same basic template that explained what city we were in as well as when we were in each city.






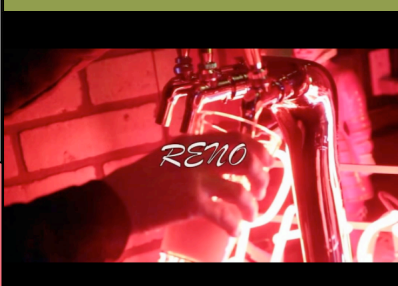
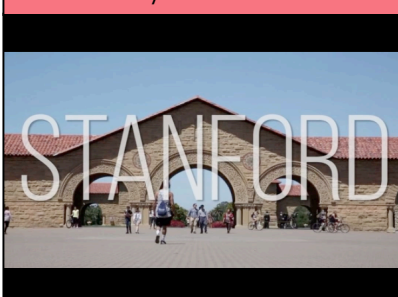
There were two separate metrics provided by Instagram for posted videos: views and likes. Views were recorded when people stopped scrolling on feeds to watch our video, but likes occurred only after viewers were adequately entertained by the video’s content. That means that views were more likely to be affected by the starting scene of our video and the title overlaying that scene, and likes were more influenced by the actual video content that played, including any music or images involved in the creation of that video.

I first organized the posts chronologically, noting details such as the post caption, release date, and genre of music used. Then, I organized the posts in order of views, putting the video with the most views at the top of the page and the video with the least views at the bottom. Lastly, I took the number of likes and views from each video and used them to determine an “efficacy ratio” for each video (% conversion of views to likes).

The more popular videos had more vibrant blue and green color schemes, while the less popular ones trended towards warmer colors like red, orange, and purple. There was also an increased amount of viewership for the videos that had university names as the titles across the screen. Mizzou was the most viewed post, featuring hiking, green and blue colors, and the name of another SEC school. Meanwhile, Reno was the least viewed posts, turning viewers away with its unique color scheme and a city name that was less relevant to our audience compared to other cities we visited.

Whether or not viewers liked our video was another separate interaction from views that was dependent on the quality and content of the post's audio and visual features. For the most part, we used music that was of the "Dance/Electronic" or "Hip-Hop/Rap," but in one particular case, we decided to use the horn intro for Yung Bae's "Ain't Nobody Like You." The trumpets come in about five seconds into the film, and the sharp intro could definitely have caused someone to swipe away from the video before they had to listen to any more. Also, when this video was posted to Facebook, one page follower hid it on their timeline, making this the only post to receive a "negative engagement".

In other cases, music had a positive effect on our posts' efficacy ratios. A prime example can be found in our "Colorado" post, where one of my followers asked what song was used in the comments. That post ended up having the best efficacy ratio of all video posts, but I also attributed this success to the five seconds at the end that featured other friends. Posts that featured activities with friends resulted in more likes, while the Stanford post that featured me by myself at the beginning proved to be the second least effective video in terms of converting views to likes.

 <div data-bbox="584 289 808 573"> <p>el_puerto_loco</p> <p>el_puerto_loco Atlanta, GA: 5-4-2017 #17Days</p> <p>171 views JUNE 18</p> <p>Add a comment...</p> </div>	<p>Caption: "Atlanta, GA: 5-4-2017 #17Days" Release Date: Sunday, June 18th, 2017 Song: "Extreme (feat Sidnie Tipton)" / Bassjackers Genre: Dance/Electronic</p>
<p>"Nashville, TN: 5-6-2017 #17Days" Monday, June 19th "Ain't Nobody Like You" / Yung Bae Hip-Hop/Rap (but clip primarily uses horn intro)</p>	 <div data-bbox="1206 430 1425 714"> <p>el_puerto_loco</p> <p>el_puerto_loco Nashville, TN: 5-6-2017 #17Days</p> <p>208 views JUNE 19</p> <p>Add a comment...</p> </div>
 <div data-bbox="584 714 808 997"> <p>el_puerto_loco</p> <p>el_puerto_loco Columbia, Missouri (Mizzou): 5-9-2017 #17Days</p> <p>317 views JUNE 30</p> <p>Add a comment...</p> </div>	<p>"Columbia, Missouri (Mizzou): 5-9-2017 #17Days" Tuesday, June 20th "Love & War" / Yellow Claw, Yade Lauren Dance/Electronic</p>
<p>"Boulder, CO: 5-12-2017 #17Days" Wednesday, June 21st, 2017 "Afterlife (feat. Echoes)" / Illenium Dance/Electronic</p>	 <div data-bbox="1206 854 1425 1138"> <p>el_puerto_loco</p> <p>el_puerto_loco Boulder, CO: 5-12-2017 #17Days</p> <p>pieceofcake69 @el_puerto_loco what's that song bro?</p> <p>el_puerto_loco @pieceofcake69 Afterlife (feat. Echoes) - Illenium (https://open.spotify.com/track/587qDlaFwNpIF5dCQAYPzB)</p> <p>204 views JUNE 21</p> <p>Add a comment...</p> </div>
 <div data-bbox="584 1138 808 1421"> <p>el_puerto_loco</p> <p>el_puerto_loco Salt Lake City, UT: 5-14-2017 #17Days</p> <p>cincylwich Stop over to Wells, Nv for a quick visit with @grantjmoos</p> <p>202 views JUNE 23</p> <p>Add a comment...</p> </div>	<p>"Salt Lake City, UT: 5-14-2017 #17Days" Thursday, June 21st, 2017 "Back 2 U (Remix) [feat Sisters]" / Sol Hip-Hop/Rap</p>
<p>"Reno, NV: 5-16-2017 #17Days" Friday, June 22nd, 2017 "The Other Side of Paradise" / Glass Animals Alternative/Indie</p>	 <div data-bbox="1206 1278 1425 1562"> <p>el_puerto_loco</p> <p>el_puerto_loco Reno, NV: 5-16-2017 #17Days</p> <p>172 views JUNE 23</p> <p>Add a comment...</p> </div>
 <div data-bbox="584 1562 808 1856"> <p>el_puerto_loco</p> <p>el_puerto_loco Stanford, CA: 5-18-2017 #17Days</p> <p>jerrod94white God I love the tractor</p> <p>kristan_wagner Nice !</p> <p>292 views JUNE 24</p> <p>Add a comment...</p> </div>	<p>"Stanford, CA: 5-18-2017 #17Days" Saturday, June 24th, 2017 "Bring Back the Summer (feat. Oly)" / Rain Man Dance/Electronic</p>

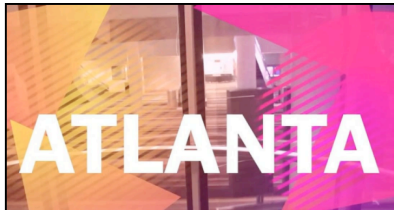


Views: 191

Likes: 31

Comments: 0

Efficacy Ratio = $31/191 = 16.23\%$ of Viewers liked



Views: 192

Likes: 32

Comments: 0

16.67% of Viewers liked

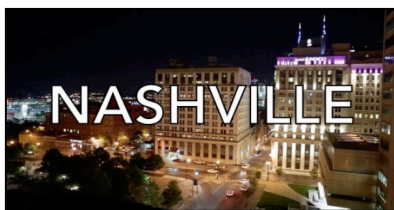


Views: 223

Likes: 37

Comments: 1

16.59% of Viewers liked



Views: 228

Likes: 30

Comments: 0

13.16% of Viewers liked



Views: 231

Likes: 56

Comments: 2

24.24% of Viewers liked

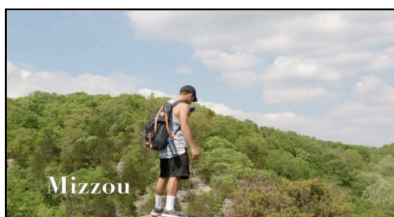


Views: 328

Likes: 48

Comments: 2

14.63% of Viewers liked



Views: 340

Likes: 65

Comments: 0

19.12% of Viewers liked

Conclusion

In total, the money budgeted for travel and food costs came to about \$1480.50. Also, the impressions and likes we received due to our efforts online would have cost us \$477.40 had we paid each social media platform for the same engagement. Adding those two numbers together gives us a total of \$1957.90, which represent the total amount we invested in *17 Days*.

In return, we received nearly \$3500 of goodwill from the people we experienced life with along the way. While we did not “break-even” in every city, it is important to keep in mind that there were no values attributed to unique events such as the University of Utah stadium tour or the drone footage we received from Jerad.

Through this project, I discovered just some of the ways in which social media can be used to help augment real life experiences, and I hope my insights regarding social capital and effective post content afford someone else the opportunity to live an adventure as incredible as the one Austin and I had the luck of experiencing.

We set out on this journey in hopes that our efforts and travels would inspire others to go out and do the same. Because we spent time developing great content, establishing trust, and maintaining constant communication, we were able to rally others to our cause and enjoy just some of the benefits this new online community has to offer.

However, despite all the good social media can help accomplish, I also believe we need to start working together to dehumanize the concept of social media as a safe source of community fulfillment. Between the years 2012 and 2017, the “daily time spent on social networking by Internet users worldwide” rose from 90 minutes a day to 135” (“Global”).

Yes, social media is a great way to communicate and connect with people around the world, but it’s not something we should be spending two hours of our life on every day.

Social media is not real life.

Real life is found in the people around you and in the challenges you overcome together. Life, unlike social media, is not a highlight reel of all the best experiences in your life, and the more we live and share that message going forward, the better off we will all be as humans.

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