



Leveraging Social Media

Shaghig Rastkelenian puts the spotlight on Armenia through social media



Shaghig Rastkelenian, a former model, is a marketing professional day and night; she leverages her marketing knowledge and skills to increase Armenia's online presence through social media, boosts fundraising campaigns and helps advance her family business. "In this era, marketing is key to success in any field," says Rastkelenian, who knows the power of good publicity.

In 2015, Rastkelenian, along with two friends, Stephany Sanossian and Sarin Puzantian, founded Live Love Armenia online movement, which has garnered almost 50,000 followers on Instagram and Facebook, making #livelovearmenia a trending hashtag. "Live Love Armenia is a campaign that aims to show the beauty of Armenia on social media through the best photographs," says Rastkelenian. "We share the breathtaking beauty of Armenia and the cultural wealth of our nation for tourism development." For Rastkelenian, Live Love Armenia is one of the many ways of engaging young people from the diaspora to help them better understand the homeland. The campaign also aims to build "a strong and large Armenian community for youth on social media." Rastkelenian and her friends capitalize the large number of followers on social media to bring together a network of celebrities for important charity campaigns and sell products with their logo—bracelets,

t-shirts and hoodies—to raise money for non-profits and people in need. "We donated woolen hats and scarfs made by a Syrian-Armenian family to an orphanage in Gyumri," she says, explaining her approach to charity.

A native of Aleppo, Syria, Rastkelenian was part of its big AGBU family, engaged in many activities, ranging from the scouting movement to the AGBU Yerevan Summer Internship Program. Although war made her family to flee Syria, it was a conscious decision to make Armenia her new home. "Living in Armenia is a dream that came true. We have always felt a longing for Armenia," says Rastkelenian, adding that despite initial difficulties, her family indulged their passion for food. In 2016, when Rastkelenian's mother and sister started their restaurant Zeituna near Cascade in the heart of Yerevan, Cascade, she immediately took over the marketing side of the business, putting it in the media spotlight. Zeituna soon became one of the most popular food destinations in Yerevan both for locals and tourists and, along with Rastkelenian, was featured in a *Forbes Magazine* article. "Business has the same difficulties in all countries," she explains. "Maintaining quality, keeping prices low and working hard are important elements of a successful business." 🌟