

MULTICHANNEL

## Leveraging blogger interactions can educate consumers via relatability

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*Van Cleef & Arpels 'Charms Mini watch*

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By JEN KING

NEW YORK – For brands navigating the digital landscape, partnering with bloggers and influencers can help reach intended audiences, according to panelists Oct. 15 at Luxury Interactive 2014.

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When collaborations are rooted in social elements such as a blogger's site, a brand is able to tell its narrative from a different angle while tapping into the influencer's established audience. Also, socially-driven blogger content focusing on a specific product or service is enhanced by the love and respect the influencer has for the brand.

"I've been with the maison for just over six years and I think from the very beginning we knew digital was key," said Kristina Buckley Kayel, vice president of communications and marketing at [Van Cleef & Arpels](#), New York.

"I think what is important about our creations is that every single one has a story to tell, so what greater platform to tell those stories and animate those stories and convey them than through the social media platform?" she said.

Blogger leverage

During Luxury Interactive 2014's "Partnering with Bloggers and Influencers in the Digital Landscape" panel discussion, Ms. Buckley Kayel spoke to attendees about how French jewelry maison Van Cleef & Arpels approaches bloggers and the role employees can have as branded influencers.

Across all sectors, the blogger selected as a partner must align with the identity of the primary brand. For Van Cleef & Arpels this means reaching out to influencers who embody the values of the maison and are playful and culturally curious, but above all the blogger must have an appreciation for the jeweler's products and values.



*NARS Cosmetics' Heather Park and Van Cleef & Arpels' Kristina Buckley Kayel*

Van Cleef & Arpels approaches its blogger relationships, a selective group of about 10 or so, as it would an editor because the partnership is not just about pushing a new collection's launch, but immersing the influencer in the brand. Constant communication also helps to keep the content produced authentic.

Ms. Buckley Kayel was joined by Heather Park, global executive director, digital and consumer strategy at **NARS Cosmetics**, who explained that for her brand, potential bloggers fit into three buckets. This includes well-known bloggers who are included on media lists like newsroom editors, major influencers with a high volume of followers but not necessarily a household name and the everyday follower who engages daily via social media likes, comments and shares.

As an example of Van Cleef & Arpels' working bloggers, Ms. Buckley Kayel mentioned the jeweler's summer initiative with lifestyle and travel publication Condé Nast Traveler. The blogger partnership was focused on Van Cleef & Arpels' Charms Mini timepiece, which was loaned to the bloggers of The Blonde Salad, Fashiontoast and Man Repeller.

Each of the bloggers then wore the timepiece on vacation to Portofino, Italy, Hawaii and Croatia. During their trips, the bloggers were asked to take five pictures of the Charms Mini watch to show the piece was incorporated into daily life.



*Fashiontoast collaboration with Condé Nast Traveler and Van Cleef & Arpels*

The resulting gallery was diverse and showed the timepiece in a playful and fun light. The blogger partnership was also leveraged at the store level with sales associates using the images to show consumers how the Charms Mini would fit into their lifestyle.

Sales ambassadors

Both Ms. Buckley Kayel and Ms. Park agreed that sales associates have the potential to act as brand ambassadors.

At Van Cleef & Arpels many of the sales associates are heavily into social media and post images of pieces from the boutique onto their Instagram accounts. This has resulted in frequent clients following sales associates' accounts and engaging with Van Cleef & Arpels through this personal relationship.

Other brands have looked internally as well to share brand touchpoints.

For example, French fashion label Chloé unveiled glimpses of its spring 2015 collection through a account on social media mobile application Tunepics.

Compared to the brand's other social media accounts, which focus solely on the brand, this account is manned by creative director Clare Waight Keller, lending a more intimate feel to the posts. By opening up about its designer's day-to-day work, Chloé will be able to connect on a deeper level with consumers ([see story](#)).

Similarly, Italian fashion house Fendi hosted a Twitter conversation between accessories creative director Silvia Venturini Fendi and fashion blogger Susanna Lau of Style Bubble.

Fendi asked fans to submit questions prior to the talk by tweeting with the branded hashtag #FendiTalks, which were then posed to Ms. Fendi by Ms. Lau. By hosting this Fendi talk, the brand was able to boost consumer engagement with its relatively new Twitter account, and it possibly gained some followers from Ms. Lau's fans ([see story](#)).

This type of engagement, whether on the associate, executive or blogger level helps to educate consumers about the brand and its products.

"For our creations, given the price point and we don't produce in mass, obviously, I think

it's important to educate [the bloggers] on whatever it is we're trying to push," Ms. Buckley Kayel said.

"Exactly like with beauty, we encourage rather than just feeding them images, we want to loan them the product, we want them to come into the boutique, we tell them the story behind the creation, they try it on and then we want them to go interpret that creation with their tastes and their perspectives incorporated into their lifestyle," she said. "That's what makes the content original."

Final Take

*Jen King, lead reporter on Luxury Daily, New York*

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