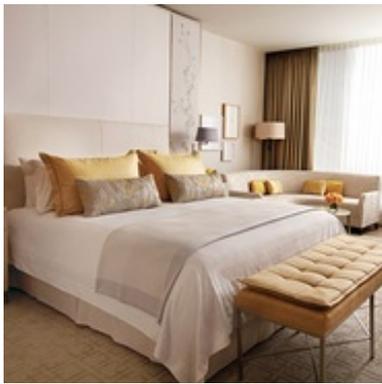


COMMERCE

Consumer services are an essential element for luxury brands

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Four Seasons bed

By KAYSORIN

NEW YORK – Catering to the consumer is the most essential marketing strategy for brands of any size, according to an executive at the Columbia Business School Retail & Luxury Goods Conference on March 27.

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Luxury Daily

While it may seem counter intuitive to provide services that cost the company, ultimately forging a connection with the consumer is a benefit that will serve any brand in the long run. Quality customer service and enjoyable retail experiences appeal to everyone, and implementing these policies can help any brand appeal to a gross majority of the population.

"Mattresses are always on sale," said Jeff Chapin, co-founder and head of product at [Casper](#). "I would hope the majority of the U.S. population, not just business school students, would realize that if something is always on sale, it doesn't actually cost that much.

"We don't do these kind of big sales. We rely on more modern and younger ways of marketing.

"Our biggest hit recently was Kylie Jenner, in exchange for two mattresses, posted an Instagram, and 850,000 people liked it. This is an incredibly valuable thing for our company.

The Columbia Business School Retail & Luxury Goods Conference was organized by the Columbia Business School club.

Quality control

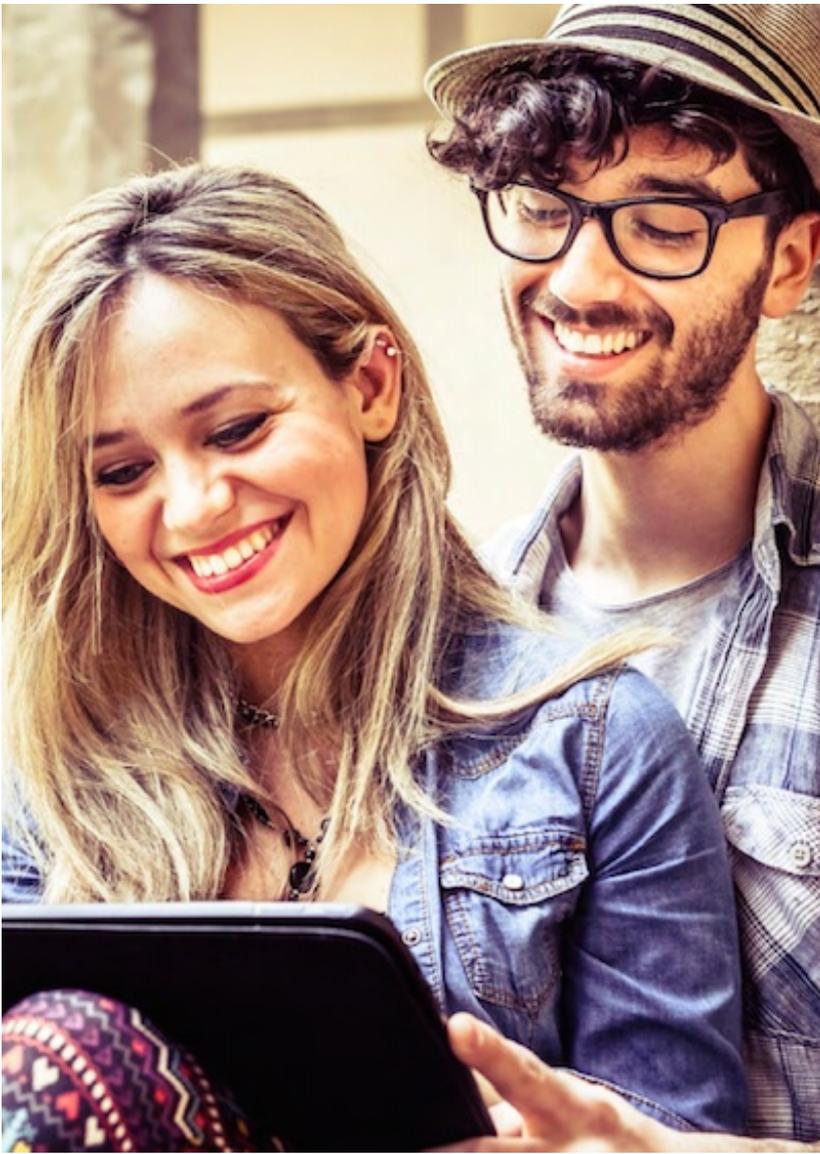
Luxury brands have long emphasized quality over quantity, and this attitude is becoming increasingly widespread among Millennial consumers. Consumers are interested in spending more on products that will last as opposed to purchasing many products at reduced prices.



Mr. Chapin spoke at the conference on March 27

Giving consumers the ability to experience the quality of a product is an excellent way for brands to allow them to see its value for themselves. One way to do this is to offer trials or have a generous return policy that favors the consumers.

This may appear to be detrimental to the brand, as trials give products away for free, but ultimately both of these policies will allow consumers to form a relationship with the brand that will extend beyond a single purchase. In addition to subsequent purchases, forming a relationship with the consumer will also result in increased publicity.



Trials give consumers a chance to form a relationship with a brand

The experience of purchasing a product is also a significant aspect of retail that brands can target to appeal to consumers. Having a positive retail experience will encourage consumers to return in the future.

Luxury brands have taken advantage of this strategy for many years by offering private salons and personal stylists to cater to consumers. In today's market, having an easy-to-navigate online experience is one of the most important ways to do this.



A good Web site is an essential element of the purchasing experience

Trial and error

While consumer services are a great way to form relationships and improve publicity, quality is still the most important element for a luxury brand to focus on. According to a study by the Luxury Institute and Epsilon, when it comes to luxury products, 73 percent of luxury consumers consider quality to be the most important attribute.

The report focuses on defining the different tiers of luxury consumers, focusing on those who are true luxe customers and those who are aspiring to that level. By understanding their consumers, luxury brands will be able to adjust their marketing tactics based on the individual's level of consumption ([see story](#)).

A brand's online presence is also crucial to staying competitive in today's tech-oriented market. In an effort to combine consumer service and the Internet, retailer Barneys New York introduced free returns to its ecommerce services to make online shopping less stressful for its consumers.

Prior to this the retailer had free standard shipping but charged an \$8 shipping fee for online returns sent through the mail. Taking away this possible fee allows consumers to shop more freely online, knowing that they can easily return anything they are not satisfied with ([see story](#)).

If brands can use their online presence and mobile technology to provide excellent consumer services, they will be more successful in appealing to consumers in the digital age.

Final Take

Kay Sorin, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York

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