

IN-STORE

## Luxury retailing is understanding the product experience, not the product itself

April 13, 2015



By JEN KING

NEW YORK - In today's retail space describing a product as "luxury," especially for jewelry, no longer has the weight it once had, and must be given more meaning behind its association and significance, according to Unity Marketing's president during Initiatives in Art and Culture's Gold: Trends, Techniques and Transparency conference April 9.

Consumers are familiar with the traditional display case setup found in jewelry boutiques, but the retail strategy no longer appeals to many millennial shoppers. Retailers in the jewelry space begin with the challenge of selling items that are not essential, but by emphasizing the consumer's perception into boutique layouts, sales may increase through emotional motivators.

[Sign up now](#)

[Luxury Daily](#)

"Jewelry shopping is distinctive because gift buying is very important," said Pam Danziger, president of [Unity Marketing](#), Stephens, PA. "You have control of the customer's needs only in so far as you can create and translate and transform that need into desire, and that's what we want to work on."

“We tend to think of retail as a product-oriented business, but in reality it’s a people business, and that’s why you really have to focus your attention to people – the customer, the sales people and that people interaction,” she said. “People do want products for some sort of product experience, but much more than that its about the people side of the retailing business.

“What you're selling and presenting in your jewelry store is special products, for special people and that’s what you want to keep your focus on, the special side of what you’re doing.”

The fifth annual Gold conference April 9-10 was produced by [Initiatives in Art and Culture](#).

All that glitters is gold

To emphasize her point that consumer perception of a storefront situation is rooted in emotion and experience, Ms. Danziger, during the "Jewelry Retailing in New-Luxury Style" session, referenced social scientist Dr. Brian Wansink’s dining experience experiment that explores how presentation and atmosphere can alter how an individual accesses reality.

During his experiment, Dr. Wansink served diners the same meal, but some were presented the food on paper plates while others were given theirs on fine china with a proper table setting. Although the food served was the same the subjects were affected by the outside forces pertaining to the surrounding elements, and the same is true for consumers in a retail setting.

Essentially, a successful retail strategy relies on the brand’s understanding of its consumers and shopping motivators such as need, product, features, affordability and most importantly, emotion.



*Pam Danziger during IAC's Gold: Trends, Techniques and Transparency conference*

For jewelry purchases in general there is no true need for a new \$10,000 necklace, but the purchase is driven by emotion and used to celebrate milestones through gifting and is given much more importance than the buying of other luxury goods.

Retailers must turn jewelry into a nonessential to an active verb by translating need into desire. This is best achieved in a retail setting where consumers have the opportunity to interact with pieces through engaging displays because the more time spent in a store, the more likely an individual is to purchase an item.

But the strategy is easier said than done, so Ms. Danziger formulated a “pop” equation for

retailers to increase consumer involvement and time spent in-store.

The seven steps are as follows:

1. Engage and involve by engaging the consumer at every touch point
2. Evoke curiosity through accessibility and avoiding coming off as pretentious
3. Contagious, electric quality that will draw consumers into a boutique as to encourage time spent
4. Convergence of a brand's atmosphere, store design and merchandise to tell a special and unique narrative
5. Authenticity
6. Offer the right price/value for products sold
7. Accessibility that places importance making the consumer feel special

During her presentation, Ms. Danziger references a series of jewelers who have captured the pop equations in their retail outposts. One store in the luxury space that has a “shop that pops” is vintage and antique jeweler Doyle & Doyle located in New York's Meatpacking District.

Doyle & Doyle uses a gallery setting that limits exposure, for aesthetic and security purposes, in its stores to engage consumers. Using a gallery-type space encourages interaction and expands the transition space.



*Interior of Doyle & Doyle's New York storefront*

Ms. Danziger explained that Doyle & Doyle offers “uptown jewelry with a downtown vibe” through a creative store design that is accessible to consumers at price points ranging from \$100 to \$100,000. Also, Doyle & Doyle exudes an organic electricity due to its excited staff who view themselves as guides, not sales associates, to the jewelry, which in turn will make consumers excited in its offerings.

Convergence is also reflected in Doyle & Doyle's retail strategy as the brand has created a

single experience and story by showcasing vintage jewelry items in a modern way.

Experience out of its bricks-and-mortar store is also important to Doyle & Doyle as a brand. For instance, in 2014 Mandarin Oriental New York targeted couples on the brink of their engagements with a romantic package that let them search for the ideal engagement ring.

The “Engaging Escape” package featured thoughtful accommodations that cater to couples along with an exclusive excursion to jeweler Doyle & Doyle for a private consultation. Engagement rings available at Doyle & Doyle, as of original press time, range from \$485 to \$50,000 ([see story](#)).

### Changing times

Bricks-and-mortar are no longer the only option jewelers have to interact with consumers. The online experience is equally important as more and more consumers begin the path to purchase digitally through Web site-based research and social media interactions.

Digital showrooms cannot offer the same attributes as physical stores, but online searches drive in-store traffic.

Consumers want to have the ability to search online and understand the details of a product, but typically also want to be able to go to a store and try it on or feel the product before making the plunge to purchase.

The Internet is largely manipulated by the physical world, so understanding a consumer’s location and local influencers can change the way in which marketers reach specific shoppers ([see story](#)).

Overall, Ms. Danziger expressed that retailing jewelry is not about the “food,” but how you set the table and serve it, along with understanding the emotions of the consumer.

“If there’s one thing you should take back to your store, it’s really been the transition of shopping from the ‘50s and ‘60s, ‘70s and ‘80s to where we are today,” Ms. Danziger said. “With product, retailing is not about selling product anymore.

“Product is everywhere, anything you want, anytime you want to get it, you can get it – it’s just everywhere,” she said. “Product is not what makes you special, it’s people that make you special and that’s where the authenticity comes in, that’s where your concept comes in.

“That’s why [consumers] want to come in and look you in the eye. They’ve done all the research, but they want to come in and look in your eye and say, ‘Are you a man that I can trust to buy from?’, ‘Do I trust the store?’, ‘Are you telling me the truth?’

“Retail is no longer about selling products. It’s about the people and understanding the product experience, not the product itself. Retailing is really a people business, the products are just what we’re trading money for, it’s really about the people, and that’s ultimately the secret.”

### Final Take

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

Embedded Video: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/MliwAdnqL1A>

---

© Napean LLC. All rights reserved.

Luxury Daily is published each business day. Thank you for reading us. Your **feedback** is welcome.