

MOBILE

Mulberry marries mobile, in-store for Chinese Valentine's Day

August 19, 2015



Mulberry's Qixi effort

By JEN KING

British leather goods brand Mulberry is inspiring long distance love letters for Chinese Valentine's Day through a mobile-led campaign.

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Luxury Daily

The "Mulberry Love Letters" effort celebrates Qixi, a holiday in China originating from a legend of forbidden love observed once a year on the 7th day of the 7th lunar month of the Chinese calendar. By aligning with a local tradition, in this case one celebrated for centuries, a brand's communications come across as authentic and in tune with the country's culture.

"Mulberry combines the traditional with the contemporary. It's the combination of the two elements that give Mulberry a timeless style," said Yishu Wang, digital strategist at [Hot Pot Digital](#). "Blending traditional elements of Qixi with the digital, social and mobile culture of modern China like a great fit for Mulberry.

"Weibo and WeChat, as popular social media networks, are the ideal platforms to celebrate long distance love. This campaign helps Mulberry's fans connect with loved ones through digital love-letters and then allows the recipient of a letter to collect a unique

Mulberry bracelet," she said. "WeChat in particular has allowed Mulberry to experiment with new experiences for our followers.

"Last year we helped Mulberry launch a immersive virtual experience letting followers explore our Bond Street store, and with the Qixi campaign we're further enhancing the experience of Mulberry on WeChat by developing an online to offline campaign with the chance to win a personalized Mulberry bracelet."

Mulberry worked with digital agency Hot Pot Digital on this campaign.

Across the universe

Qixi is based on the legend of a forbidden love between a weaver girl named Zhinü and a cowherd named Niulang. As per the legend, the two lovers married without the permission of the weaver girl's Goddess mother and as a punishment the pair were separated by the Milky Way, but on the 7th day of the 7th lunar month all of the magpie birds of the world would fly to the heavens to form a bridge so the couple could spend just one night together.

For Mulberry's Qixi effort mobile chat applications WeChat and Weibo serve as the magpie birds seeking to reconnect consumers regardless of distance. Consumers are encouraged to connect with loved ones by sending personalized digital love letters across the world.

In a statement, Anne-Marie Verdin, brand director of Mulberry, said, "Given the global nature of today's Chinese community, we felt it was important to recognize our Chinese customers in the United Kingdom, United States, mainland Europe and beyond. We love the fact that Mulberry is helping out fans to reconnect with a little romance on this important day in the Chinese calendar."

By following Mulberry on WeChat Chinese consumers can enter a message of love up until Aug. 19 from anywhere in the world. The message will then be transformed into a crafted love letter image to be shared with the intended recipient via WeChat on Qixi, which falls on Aug. 20 for this year.



Mulberry's Love Letters on WeChat for Qixi

A number of recipients will be able to take their WeChat love letter to the nearest Mulberry boutique Aug. 20-21, with shops in Shanghai, Beijing, London, Paris, New York and Toronto all participating. When at the boutique the love letter recipient can redeem a hand-crafted leather bracelet that can be personalized in-house while supplies last.

Tying in a physical component to a mobile interaction will not only increase foot traffic and additional purchases at Mulberry boutiques as consumers pick up their leather bracelets, but also help to establish consumer loyalty based on personal experience and nostalgia.

"It's very smart of Mulberry to focus its marketing efforts on a local tradition like the Chinese Valentine Day. This enables Mulberry to build trust and brand recognition with its

Chinese followers," said Gay Gabriliska, chief operating officer at [Gravit8 Marketing](#), Seattle.

"The personalization elements of this campaign will go along way to differentiate Mulberry from other high-end brands," she said. "It's interesting how many brands make the mistake of assuming they don't have to adjust their message for different regions – whether it is in China, the U.S. or Europe.

"Mulberry has created a campaign that is not only relevant but also delivers a level of personalization that is appreciated by this demographic and will likely be acted upon."

Similarly, U.S. apparel label Michael Kors is making shopping more personalized for its consumers in Asia with a new CRM experience housed on social media application WeChat.

Designed to merge the online and offline, the tool offers digital customer service touchpoints to be used both at home and in-store and benefits to members to spur bricks-and-mortar visits. Not only will this platform assist Michael Kors in delivering a customized experience to its consumers, but it will also enable the brand to learn more about its most engaged clients ([see story](#)).

Local talk

Localized communication practices, especially social media platforms, are useful for brands aiming to connect with consumers on a personal level.

For example, Yoox, the official ecommerce partner of Kering, teamed up with Chinese social communication application WeChat to enhance its consumers' mobile shopping experience.

As part of the global partnership, Yoox created new official accounts for the United States and Italy on WeChat and revamped its existing Chinese account. Tapping into WeChat's platform for social shopping will allow Yoox to make the mobile commerce experience more personal for consumers, giving access to live chat and messages from the retailer ([see story](#)).

Also, London department store Harrods increased its exposure in China by being the first British retailer in 2013 to launch a WeChat social media account that conveys its latest content and special offers to Chinese consumers.

Harrods is building off the success of its Weibo blog to reach more consumers as China continues to be a power player in the luxury market. Through the use of local social media platforms, brands and retailers are able to appeal to local sensibilities ([see story](#)).

"The most important social networks in China are WeChat and Weibo," Ms. Gabriliska said. "Seventy percent of WeChat's total users and 30 percent of Weibo's users are located in China, making each of these platforms vital to success when targeting the Chinese demographic. Social media is not optional for companies that want to succeed in China.

"Utilizing these platforms as part of a broader campaign is a great way to retain customers

and promote products, unlike social networks, brand messages are more relevant and are more likely to be read by followers," she said. "It's also a way for the consumer to follow the latest company news; furthermore followers can contact brands directly through instant messaging to deliver a more personalized 1:1 interaction."

Final Take

Jen King, lead reporter on Luxury Daily, New York

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