

MULTICHANNEL

Recipe for success: Constant innovation and a consumer-first mindset

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Four Seasons' private jet

By FORREST CARDAMENIS

NEW YORK A globalized and democratized world means that luxury brands need to rethink the way they connect with consumers, according to a Four Seasons representative speaking at Luxury Interactive 2015 on Oct. 15.

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Trends ranging from the influx of influential millennial travelers to the globalization of the consumer base and the proliferation of user-generated content offer opportunities for a brand to reinforce its legacy and commitment to excellence. To make true on the promise of the name, brands will have to be bold and creative, adapting constantly to change and targeting consumers individually and by region, all while staying true to brand identity.

"Our mission is to determine, 'How do we deliver our audience the right content in the right place at the right time of their customer journey, in the right language and on their device of choice?'" said Felicia Yukich, director, marketing communications and content at **Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts**. "It's through the lends of content strategy that can happen.

"How can we recognize that luxury is truly personal?" she asked. "By focusing on an incredible individualized unique experience."

Consumer-first mindset

During her keynote, Ms. Yukich identified seven key ways of providing that incredible experience that consumers, especially those staying at luxury hotels, desire and value. The methods are wide ranging, from a helpful mobile application to creating unique experiences to appealing to consumers in Asia with optimized Web sites.



Felicia Yukich of Four Seasons presents at Luxury Interactive 2015

The first key is to focus on "ownable" experiences. In the case of Four Seasons, this has manifested through the "Extraordinary Experiences" campaign, in which the hotel uses a variety of partnerships to create something that could not exist without Four Seasons, such as celebrating Singapore's independence with tickets to the Formula One Grand Prix ([see story](#)). However, merely offering that experience is not enough.

To bring the ideas to life, Four Seasons allows users on its Web site to search the Extraordinary Experience by location or interest or any other manner and view photos and descriptions of the event. Doing so increases the visibility of the experience and emphasizes its uniqueness to the Four Seasons brand.

Similarly, the brand has also launched its own jet, which offers, for more than \$100,000 per seat, trips around the world, taking its reputation as a brand that takes charge and puts its guests at ease to the logical extreme by including concierge and an executive chef on board ([see story](#)).

Similar to the Extraordinary Experience campaign, the brand generated visible social content by inviting an influencer onboard to take photos and share them with his or her extensive social network.



Four Seasons private jet interior

Today, any attempt to cater to the consumer must include reaching them on mobile, which also happens to be a brilliant platform for making a stay at a hotel even more convenient. The Four Seasons app allows guests to check-in a full day before arrival, check-out early, order room service and do much more.

As many others have, Four Seasons empowers its consumers by using their content, from photographs to reviews, on its own site.

"Everyone is a professional photographer now," Ms. Yukich said, referring to the widespread popularity of camera phones and apps such as Instagram. "There are a lot of assets out there. Not all of them are good but some of them are spectacular. They give our Web presence a really authentic presence and voice."

User-generated content extends even to the homepage, while photos from previous guests use geotagging to allow browsers to shop the location or experience directly from the photo of a previous patron.



Four Seasons New York

Simply loading a site with user-generated content is not necessarily a recipe for success. Consumers in different regions demand different things from a Web site and may have different expectations for mobile sites as compared to desktop sites.

Also, simply translating a Web site isn't enough; the entire design might need to be changed to fit the preferences of consumers in other parts of the world. Failing to do so jeopardizes a brand's reputation as putting the consumer first or providing great service.

Accordingly, there are always things to change or that can be improved. Rather than just having an idea to test, it could be useful to simply test things big and small, from a redesign or relaunch to merely changing the color of font or transaction buttons to see what effect it has on conversions or activity.

A culture of testing allows a brand to constantly push the needle and innovate, necessities for staying both ahead of competitions and at the front of consumers' minds.

Teamwork

Four Seasons has been particularly active parting Chinese consumers, through Web design as well as other means.

In August, the hotel chain strengthened its presence in Asia by partnering with the International Interior Design Association to sponsor the 2015 Best of Asia Pacific Design Awards.

Celebrating innovation and excellence in interior design, the Best of Asia Pacific Design awards were presented in 14 categories at the Four Seasons Hotel Hong Kong in December. Four Seasons is currently expanding its portfolio in Asia, making this event the ideal collaboration for the brand as it looks to gain more attention in the region and highlight its aesthetic ([see story](#)).

Regardless of the industry, developing an effective brand identity requires teamwork rather than isolated efforts.

For cross-channel efforts to succeed, panelists at Luxury Interactive 2015 Oct. 14 agreed that marketers must concentrate less on silos and more on internal collaborations.

During the CMO panel titled "The Role to Build Cross-Channel Collaborations," senior executives discussed how their brands have evolved as omnichannel strategies have become commonplace in the luxury landscape. As technology has advanced, brands across industries have had to restructure internally to streamline consumer expectations within the digital and physical realm ([see story](#)).

While flashy tricks and gimmicks may make the headlines, sometimes gaining an edge is as simple as surveying more obvious elements of a campaign or brand presence.

"It may not sound as sexy, but it's the fundamentals," Ms. Yukich said. "That's the next thing people need to focus on, and people who understand that are going to win."

Final Take

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