

MULTICHANNEL

Omnichannel marketing allows brands to unite diverse audience

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Four Seasons Hotel Toronto

By FORREST CARDAMENIS

LONDON Reaching the luxury traveler today means making connections in a new way and linking digital touchpoints, according to a Four Seasons executive speaking at Luxury Interactive Europe 2015 on Oct. 27.

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Although many marketers are targeting millennials, much of what that consumer wants overlaps with the desires of the baby boomer and long-time, loyal customers. Digital media is a way of reaching these overlapping desires in ways that both empowers the consumer and reinforces what makes the brand special.

"What [new platforms, technologies and corresponding behaviors] mean more than ever is that we are in an omnichannel universe," said Elizabeth Pizzinato, senior vice president of marketing and communications for **Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts**.

"We talk about omnichannel' and it's much more talked about in the retail space than the hospitality space but omnichannel is about taking in different brand information from all these places and trying to put together your own brand story," she said.

No generation gap

For a variety of reasons related to and independent from a democratized digital space, luxury consumers are more diverse and geographically dispersed than ever before. However, apparent differences mask that all consumers want a smooth, effortless experience and to feel valued and important to brands.

Using this information, Ms. Pizzinato shared five major observations that Four Seasons has made and implemented to help them stay ahead.



Elizabeth Pizzinato presents at Luxury Interactive Europe 2015

"It used to be that owning something, the right watch or the right handbag, was a signal to the rest of the world that you're a luxury consumer," Ms. Pizzinato said.

"Those things are still important, they represent the brand and those brands are important to consumers, but experiences are the number one thing people desire," she said. "It's something that is bragging rights, something special and unique."

Simply offering an experience is not enough; whatever a brand offers must be consistent with its identity. For Four Seasons, this meant taking the service the hotel was known for and upping it with the launch of Four Seasons Extraordinary Experiences.

For the initiative Four Seasons compiled top experiences from properties around the world for its new "Extraordinary Experiences Collection" series, ranging from Michelin-starred dinners to bareback elephant rides depending on locations. The collection aims to immerse guests in a location's culture, taking the services offered by knowledgeable concierge to the next level ([see story](#)).

Similarly, Four Seasons launched a private jet, allowing travelers to bypass the hassle of an airport and go around the world with the hotelier's concierges and chefs as well as professional or influential photographers.



Singapore Formula One Grand Prix, part of a Four Seasons Extraordinary Experience

Although these experiences may be limited in the number of consumers they reach, Four Seasons hyped the events and posted photographs, including photos taken by consumers, across its social media channels to broadcast the experience and excitement.

"Is it for everyone? No. Does it create an amazing halo effect? Yes," Ms. Pizzinato said. "It's really something that makes consumers say, 'Four Seasons is a company that does extraordinary things, I want to go and stay at the place that does these amazing things and be a part of it.'"

Ms. Pizzinato also suggested that do-it-yourself services have become luxury and vice-versa, citing Uber and OpenTable as examples. For the Four Seasons mobile application, the chain needed to incorporate this trend in a way that would appeal to consumers, allowing them to check-in/check-out from afar and communicate with the hotel in the event a guest, for example, forgot to send something to the dry cleaners.

But just because all consumers have something in common does not mean differences can be ignored. When the

app launches in China next month, the interface will be entirely different and information will be presented differently.



Four Seasons Dubai Mercury Lounge

"When you think about luxury DIY you think about how you're making your commerce experience more seamless or how guests are using mobility," Ms. Pizzinato said. "Think about utility and how you can bring the human touch into it.

What do you do in the store that is unique that you can somehow bring to a digital platform?" she said. "Then for different markets think about how they're doing that online experience."

Lastly, Four Seasons offers a customizable mattress that can be made firmer or softer, a bespoke twist on the brand's famous good night's sleep.

"DIY is about digital, but it's also about product," Ms. Pizzinato said. "How can you bring your product to life with bespoke offerings?"

Digital media also offers consumers a chance to co-create and engage with the brand. User-generated content is used throughout Four Seasons, on its various social media networks and its Web site, to help tell a story.

For Four Seasons, a shared Pinterest board, a wedding site and a user-generated content aggregator that deploys photos taken by guests all across the Web site all give rise to new content and allow consumers to co-create with the brand.



Four Seasons jet interior

"Consumers know they are on the brand's site and it's your brand photo [but] they love seeing real photos," Ms. Pizzinato said. "That's why they go to TripAdvisor, because they want to know, What is the view really like? What does the room really look like?' And we're serving it up to them right here."

Sometimes, innovation comes in more unexpected ways, as it did with the Four Seasons food truck. Although the two seem antithetical, a food truck brought the Four Seasons experience and dining to people a fun and accessible way, revealing the human behind the brand, an element Ms. Pizzinato described as essential.

Sharing is caring

Recently, Four Seasons has spoken about the importance of involving the consumer and continuing to innovate.

A globalized and democratized world means that luxury brands need to rethink the way they connect with consumers, according to another Four Seasons executive, who spoke at Luxury Interactive 2015 on Oct. 15.

Trends ranging from an increase in 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 ([see story](#)).

Just last week, Four Seasons kept good on its promise with a new campaign promising getaways and promoting user-generated content.

Four Seasons is keeping things in focus with its new visual education series.

"Focus on Four Seasons" will offer tips to take the perfect photograph and curate the best images captured at Four Seasons hotels by professional photographers and the average Instagramming consumer alike. Meeting consumers on a platform they enjoy in a rewarding fashion helps keeps a brand visible and attractive to consumers ([see story](#)).

Maintaining a dialogue with consumers must be a significant part of all brands' strategies going forward, but that does not mean relinquishing control.

"I used to say in presentations, even as recently as January this year, The consumer owns the brand," Ms. Pizzinato said. "I've changed my mind; the consumer wants to co-create your brand with you. They will tell your story in ways you will never imagine.

"I don't believe the brand has lost control and the consumer owns the brand," she said. "It's about saying, 'Let's partner with our consumers and see what they want to talk about.'"

Final Take

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