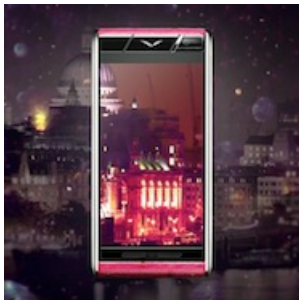


COMMERCE

## Different sectors must approach branding, ecommerce differently

October 30, 2015



*Vertu Aster*

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By FORREST CARDAMENIS

LONDON Understanding the consumer and how she interacts with a product across different platforms is crucial to providing services worthy of a luxury brand, according to an executive from Vertu at Luxury Interactive Europe 2015 on Oct. 28.

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Vertu, a luxury mobile phone manufacturer, sells devices that can exceed \$20,000 and include 24/7 concierge, meaning they appeal to a niche segment of the market. Marketing a niche product requires understanding the consumer and her behavior across different geographies and devices.

"We target people that deserve and believe they want the best in life, that work hard and are unapologetic about [having] worked hard and earned their money," said Elliott Jacobs, head of global ecommerce and sales development at [Vertu](#).

"[Our consumers] love traveling, new experiences and learning and researching luxury items is part of their passions," he said.

### Repositioning

Although there are generalities that apply to most luxury brands, understanding how one product may be different is important to successfully marketing to consumers. High-end goods that fall outside sectors that have been established for a long time must be particularly attentive to how their product complicates traditional ideas of luxury.



*Vertu presents at Luxury Interactive Europe 2015*

"Vertu sits in the border between luxury and technology and not many brands sit in that space," Mr. Jacobs said. "When you look at traditional luxury you would expect longevity in your products and to pass it on to the next generation."

"But, obviously our consumer would get rid of their phone, as many of us would, within two years," he said.

This is just one difference that means Vertu cannot adhere to long-held ideas of what it means to be luxury. Just as importantly, Vertu, because it emerged out of Nokia in 1998, does not have the heritage that so many brands market, meaning it needs to create other narratives.

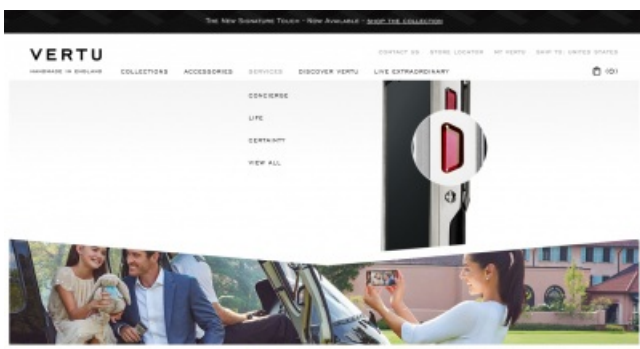


*Vertu Signature Touch*

The three points for Vertu to get across are its craftsmanship, services and performance. Each of these points helps position Vertu as a luxury brand in lieu of other traditional signifiers.

All Vertu mobile and smartphones are handmade in England by a single craftsman working from scratch who inscribes his signature in the device. Its phones have sapphire crystal screens and global 4G connectivity, making them ideal for prolific travelers.

Vertu's concierge can get clients into exclusive spaces or allow them the opportunity to purchase luxury experiences, another feature that would appeal to its target market.



*Vertu e-commerce site*

Luxury brands must also be willing to revise past strategies and reposition themselves, and building new platforms presents an ideal opportunity.

"What was key for us for the Web site was to build the brand perception, certainly in markets where Vertu was becoming known as a mobile phone that was owned by people's fathers because of the 'blingy' nature where the brand used to be with diamonds and other exotic pieces," Mr. Jacobs said. "So we as a business needed to change that perception to become more sophisticated."

Becoming visible in the digital space often coincides with the introduction of Vertu to a younger market, meaning it can be the first step in re-establishing the brand identity for new consumers.

#### *Vertu homepage video*

Establishing a Web site also means that new expectations are leveled against the brand, and failing to fulfill those expectations could compromise its status. As such, Vertu can handle transactions in 37 countries in 7 languages and with 6 currencies and has global trade partners for foreign markets.

### THE ASTER COLLECTION

Every edition within the collection has been designed to be at once visually arresting and truly individual, with a thoughtful selection of sophisticated colours, beautiful leathers and exotic skins.

SHOP COLLECTION



#### *Vertu Aster collection*

Even working on ecommerce platforms, Vertu found that its experiences did not necessarily align with what data predicted. Most transactions continued to be made over desktop sites, not mobile sites, despite data suggesting the contrary.

Mr. Jacobs hypothesized that was a result of the particular product. People may do research on mobile, but they still want to go in and have an in-store interaction and then, once they are sure, return to the safety of a desktop screen to ensure they do not make an error on a high-value purchase.

#### Different strokes

Even with a strong heritage, brands in other sectors have also gone digital as part of a larger repositioning strategy.

Savile Row tailor Gieves & Hawkes is using digital to broaden its consumer base, according to an executive from the brand at Luxury Interactive Europe 2015 in London on Oct. 28.

Gieves & Hawkes has more than 400 years of history dating back to when it was two separate entities and still sees the majority of its business from loyal longtime consumers. But, as boomers fall out of the market and millennials make their entrance, all brands must adjust their marketing efforts accordingly ([see story](#)).

However, still others that, similarly to Vertu, lack substantial heritage, have found success by operating largely offline because of product differences.

Despite the emphasis on digital, traditional marketing still has its place in the luxury world, according to an executive from Watchfinder & Co. at Luxury Interactive Europe on Oct. 28.

Watchfinder deals in second-hand watches and has found that physical stores have improved the credibility of the venture. Although digital marketing is the focus of many brands' efforts, focusing offline may establish a name and lay the groundwork for future success ([see story](#)).

No matter what, luxury always demands good service, and sometimes good service could mean hurting profits in the short term to maintain image in the short term.

"It was important to us for our customer not to have to worry about paying duty when we ship a phone into her country," Mr. Jacobs said. "We wanted to take away the burden of getting a call from somebody from FedEx to say, 'You need to pay some more money.' because we did not feel that was a luxury experience, it limited the number of markets we could go into."

Final Take

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