

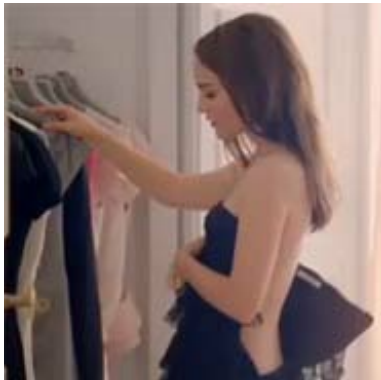
ADVERTISING

## Dior fends off bad Galliano press with Natalie Portman campaign

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By RACHEL LAMB



What better way to steer focus away from all the hoopla around

John Galliano than to have an ad with Natalie Portman in a steamy encounter with a handsome gentleman?

Using digital advertising channels such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, Dior has just released a new campaign with Ms. Portman promoting the Miss Dior Cherie fragrance. Advertising experts have long stressed the importance of the Internet and social media as ways to effectively control the damage caused by an embarrassing company moment.

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“Brands have several paths for shoring up public opinion after an embarrassing or damaging incident, but social media such as Facebook and Twitter will be the most

effective,” said Jeff Hecox, B2B Marketing communications manager, [Yahoo Advertising](#), Burbank, CA.

“They offer an immediate communications pipeline and, assuming a brand has a critical mass of fans or followers, can reach a large portion of its most passionate supporters,” he said.

Miss Dior Natalie

The campaign, directed by Sofia Ford Coppola, features shots of Ms. Portman inside and outdoors in Paris, where the actress lounges in her bathtub in Dior sunglasses, blindfolds her co-star and rolls around in her bed.

### *The new campaign starring Natalie Portman*

The timely release of the new ads, which are riddled with branded apparel and accessories, as well as the promotion of the Dior fragrance, may be just what the brand needs to pick itself up from the former head designer John Galliano's fall.

Mr. Galliano was caught on video spewing anti-Semitic remarks in a cafe during Fashion Week in Paris. The brand's inebriated ex-creative director was escorted from the cafe by the police.

“Long before the Internet, it became clear that the way to fix a PR problem was to get out in front of it, honestly and openly, admitting mistakes when they are made and offering apologies,” Mr. Hecox said. “That hasn’t changed, but with the Internet’s instant communication vehicles, the ability for a company to take these steps is greatly enhanced.

“But, so is the potential for a public relations disaster to go viral and worldwide in a matter of minutes,” he said.

Mr. Galliano’s allegedly bigoted statements certainly did go viral, as the video of his Paris rant was available on British publication The Sun’s Web site.

Although Dior executives acted quickly and efficiently by dismissing Mr. Galliano from his position as the brand’s creative director, millions of people around the world had

already heard – and seen – the damage that had already been done.

To add insult to injury, the Israeli-born Ms. Portman reportedly opted out of wearing Dior at the Academy Awards, arguably the world's most televised and glamorous event, in retaliation to Mr. Galliano's anti-Semitic comments ([see story](#)).

However, the fact that Ms. Portman appears in the ads post-arrest could potentially sway others to forgive and forget.

The Internet's ability to spread news quickly damaged Dior's reputation. Luckily, the brand can use the same channel in a different way that is much more beneficial to control the damage.

"Online press releases can still be effective in getting a message in front of the mainstream press and blogs, as well as in search results, if people are looking for news about the brand in the wake of a public relations challenge," Mr. Hecox said.

"And speaking of search results, many savvy companies use paid search advertising like Microsoft adCenter to get messages—both marketing and damage control—at the top of search results where they will be easily seen by users," he said.

Most successful channel

The Internet's ability to reach a mass amount of people at once is presumably one of the key reasons that Dior is advertising the campaign via this channel.

In addition to social media, Dior can post things on its Web site, send press releases and use email to alert its customer base of anything new happening with the brand.

Consumers live in a round-the-clock news cycle, which is only fanning the informational wildfire that spreads instantaneously throughout various channels.

As for other mediums, none are as quick and effective as using videos, images or other digital content in the event that something damaging, urgent or embarrassing happens to a brand.

"[The Internet] enables companies, news organizations and everyday people to measure the pulse of public opinion on all of the day's hot topics," Mr. Hecox said. "We're in a culture that's gone beyond a 24/7 news cycle.

"Traditional new organizations actually have come to rely on Twitter for not only lead generation but content, as well," he said. "I don't know if there any channels that are not somehow related to the Internet, even if a brand wanted to get a message out to traditional print or television media, it would still be initiated through email or electronic communications.

"TV advertising to help fix a PR problem is still an option, but it's expensive and you lose the targeting that makes social media and search advertising so valuable."

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