

COLUMNS

How luxury brands should engage on Instagram and Snapchat

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What do David Yurman and the George Washington Bridge in New York have in common? The answer: nothing. Except that there is a giant David Yurman billboard oozing luxury as you drive by the bridge.

Luxury brands need to market to people where they are and inspire desire on the go.

Driver of traffic

Millennials and Gen X-ers are obsessed with mobile devices and become dysfunctional without connectivity. I can say that because I am one of them.

It is projected by eMarketer that in 2016 more than a third of mobile phone users will log on to Instagram at least once a month, and that by 2017 more than half of social network users will use Instagram.

The number of users over the next four years could be more than 100 million. By then, almost two-thirds of all millennials will be using Instagram.

Instagram has become a leader, especially for luxury marketing, with new content to engage brand fans.

Mercedes-Benz's "Build your GLA" Instagram campaign is an example of a big success story for luxury.

Mercedes wanted to reach a younger audience with its new entry-level offering, the GLA. For car companies, an important engagement and sales tool is the car configurator on their Web site. So how do you translate this tool into a more social experience?

Mercedes created more than 280 Instagram accounts to lead people through a choose-your-adventure-type format.

Users start on the Mercedes-Benz main Instagram, and then are led to a tagged account with the color options as individual photos. They choose the photo with the color they like. Then it leads them to another detail or option to select. The automaker's easy-to-navigate system allows up to 132 possible unique configurations.

According to Mark Aikman, department manager for digital marketing and CRM at Mercedes-Benz USA, there are 25,000 more followers on the Mercedes-Benz USA handle. This is a 540 percent increase in brand interest, as measured by traffic to Mercedes' site.

So what about Snapchat: where does it fit into this luxury picture?

Get the picture?

The growth of Snapchat's mobile video traffic is a force to be reckoned with.

A source confirmed with Fortune magazine that more than 7 billion videos are viewed per day through Snapchat's photo and video-sharing application.

Snapchat's "stories" feature, according to Bloomberg, is responsible for much of the gains in viewership. Stats for Snapchat included 100 million daily users in 2015, according to Craig Smith/DMR.

Savvy luxury brands can exploit this increasingly popular app among young millennials to reach a new customer base.

However, it is important to note that luxury brands need to conform to Snapchat. It is not going to be the other way around for a while. How can they do this?

In my opinion it is best to stick with BTS (behind the scenes) and WIP (work in progress) content.

Snapchat is great for sharing previews of new products or campaigns and collections.

Burberry is one of the primary luxury brands currently making effective use of Snapchat.

In a New York Times article, Christopher Bailey, Burberry's chief executive and creative director, agreed that it was important to understand how people engage online and to bring the brand to them accordingly.

Burberry has been focused on becoming a relevant and cool brand since 2006. It wants to connect with cool, young customers and engage them on a deeper level.

Snapchat offers a rough-cut, edgy view into the behind-the-scenes reality of a brand.

Burberry gave sneak peaks of pieces from its Spring 2016 line before its debut. It also sent snaps of invitations being delivered to high-end attendees such as Vogue magazine editor in chief Anna Wintour. Once the show began, it added live coverage of the show to its story.

YOU CAN BREAK the rules of traditional marketing with Snapchat since there are no terms of engagement.

For those on the more risqu side of things, as some fashion brands are, here is a hot little idea.

Imagine if Tom Ford, who is famous for his sexy campaign style, used Snapchat to send out unedited R-rated versions of campaign images to interested, age-appropriate brand fans. That is really getting into the spirit of Snapchat.

It is possible in the future that Snapchat may evolve to better suit brands. Word of caution: If brands decide to use this app, it needs to be done with edginess and innovation.

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