

MOBILE

Montblanc leverages historical brand advancements on WeChat

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Montblanc's Heritage Collection Rouge et Noir fountain pens

By JEN KING

Germany's Montblanc is using social messaging application WeChat to underscore its history of technical achievements for a discerning Chinese audience.

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At the center of its WeChat campaign is the Rouge et Noir fountain pen, which has been reinterpreted as the Heritage Collection Rouge et Noir to celebrate the writing instrument's 110th anniversary. First developed in 1906, the fountain pen showcased Montblanc's innovation as the writing utensil was among the first not to require its nib to be dipped into an inkwell.

"The essence of any coveted brand is the story it conveys. In this execution, the brand effectively articulates generations of heritage, craftsmanship and creative innovation - combined with a vision of an aspirational lifestyle - to seduce a highly enviable audience and inspire desire for association," said Scott Forshay, senior retail mobility strategist at **IBM**.

"Historically, the articulation of this vision was realized on a print canvas, where artistic vision is artfully staged with aesthetic precision," he said. "The rise of digital has created new opportunities for luxury brands to message the brand narrative as highly produced video vignettes of similar aspirational effect that provide added dimensionality to classical still imagery.

"Through video and other forms of digital content, luxury brands have become media companies and content marketers selling a vision of an exclusive lifestyle attainable only by a select few.

Mr. Forshay is not affiliated with Montblanc, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

Montblanc was unable to comment before press deadline.

What's red and black?

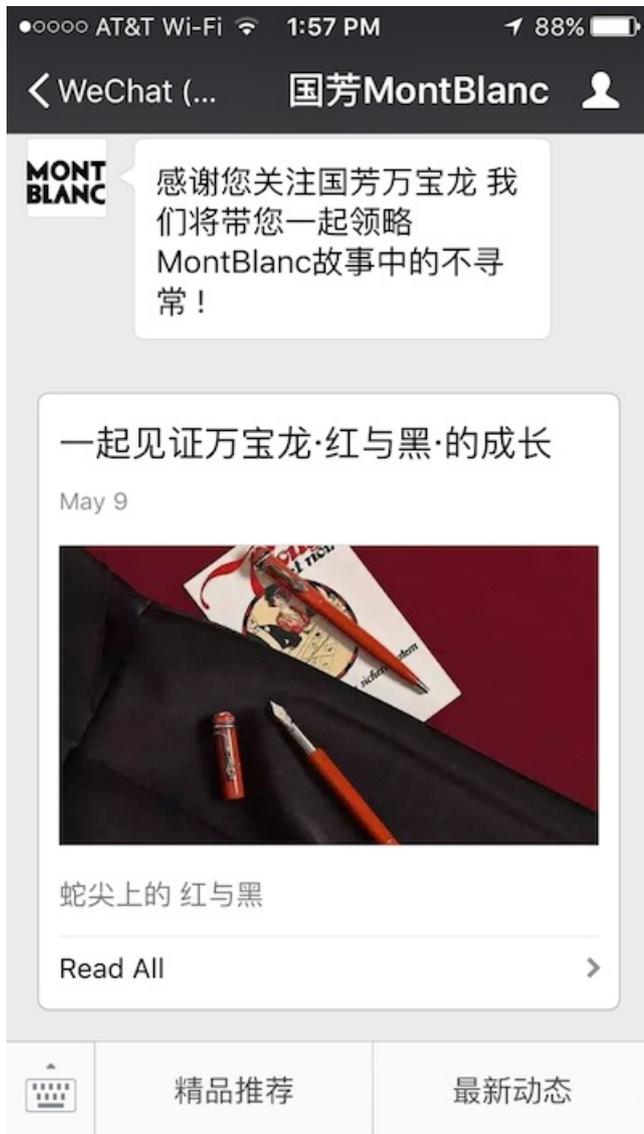
Montblanc followers on WeChat were first introduced to a brief overview of the Rouge et Noir writing instrument. Here, Montblanc tells WeChat users that the pen series originates from the turn of the 20th century and has an Art Nouveau-inspired design.

The Rouge et Noir fountain pen also features a snake clip with a vintage aesthetic. The inclusion of the snake clip in the Heritage Collection Rouge et Noir's design leverages the Chinese's interest in astrology, with a snake being one

of the signs within the zodiac.

Within its WeChat content, Montblanc includes a number of curated images of the pens that serve as a short catalog for the writing utensil, mixing artwork of snakes and the modern interpretation of Rouge et Noir.

Furthering the history lesson, Montblanc included a prompt reading, "Click to be transported to the 19th century." Upon doing so, WeChat users are brought to a section about the Industrial Revolution and how the art movement that coincided with the time period resisted mechanization of craftsmanship in favor of traditional artisanship.



Montblanc content on WeChat

Once the consumer navigates through the educational section, Montblanc asks WeChat users to select the red or black pen, and to share his choice on the app. The results of the poll are not publicized through WeChat, making it likely that Montblanc will allocate the information for its own use.

According to [Jing Daily](#), at the time of campaign launch, there was a chance for WeChat users to win limited-edition leather goods by participating in the poll.

Montblanc's Rouge et Noir fountain reinterpreted design features a longer, slimmer silhouette with coral resin fitting within the barrel and cap. The snake clip is made of alloy metal subjected to a stamping and winding process to create its vintage aesthetic.

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Details of Montblanc's Rouge et Noir fountain pens on WeChat

The special-edition piston fountain pen version retails for \$650 while the rollerball style is sold for \$585.

Chatting up the Chinese

Montblanc often turns to localized platforms to engage with Chinese consumers.

In May 2014, Montblanc aimed to increase engagement among Chinese consumers through an in-application game on WeChat.

With approximately 396 million active users per month, WeChat is seen as a gateway to interacting with Chinese consumers on mobile. Montblanc's game, "Daban," was hailed as an unprecedented move by a luxury brand at the time as it went beyond the traditional touchpoints used on the social channel ([see story](#)).

More recently, U.S. apparel label Michael Kors made shopping more personalized for its consumers in Asia with a new CRM experience housed on WeChat.

Designed to merge the online and offline, the tool offers digital customer service touchpoints to be used both at home and in-store and offers benefits to members to spur bricks-and-mortar visits. Not only will this platform assist Michael Kors in delivering a customized experience to its consumers, but it will also enable the brand to learn more about its most engaged clients ([see story](#)).

"Luxury marketers have been a bit myopic in their selections of mobile social marketing campaign platforms, but they would be wise not to ignore or dismiss the tremendous influence that WeChat carries throughout Asia," Mr. Forshay said.

"As the Chinese luxury market continues to ascend at such an unrelenting pace, brands must be aware of the formulaic success factors in any effective mobile marketing campaign," he said. "They must deliver the right

message at the right time through the right medium and with a proper understanding of context.

"By delivering the Chinese consumer campaign on the region's most popular social media platform, the brand rightly exhibits an understanding of the power of such a large user audience in its communication strategy. Other luxury brands looking to engage this emerging market should follow suit."

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