

MARKETING

## Online shopping turns consumers into editors: Moda Operandi co-founder

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*Image courtesy of Moda Operandi*

By SARAH JONES

SAN FRANCISCO Digital has shifted consumers' purchasing habits, requiring brands to share their story online or risk being left out of the purchase journey, according to panelists at the Financial Times' Business of Luxury Summit on May 23.

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Whether consumers are trading in visits to the department store beauty counter for consulting friends or researching and purchasing a car without talking to a dealer, ecommerce allows consumers to be more independent. Brands can reinsert themselves in the buying process through an editorial approach, creating a community and engaging consumers with their products.

"What we so often hear is that digital is the wild west, and people have lost control of their brands and their brands are out there and the customers are making their own brands," said Lisa Green, head of industry, fashion and luxury brands at Google. "But in fact it gives brands a platform they never had before, it gives them a voice and a way to connect with their customers where previously their wholesale partners were right in the middle and they didn't have that direct communication and connection with their customers."

### Luxury 2.0

Moda Operandi was founded to close the gap between the runway show and the consumer, giving regular women access to designer fashion that they would not otherwise have had. Taking a traditional luxury fashion concept into the 21st century, the retailer hosts online trunk shows, making it easy to preorder the collections right after fashion shows.



## *Bally trunkshow on Moda Operandi*

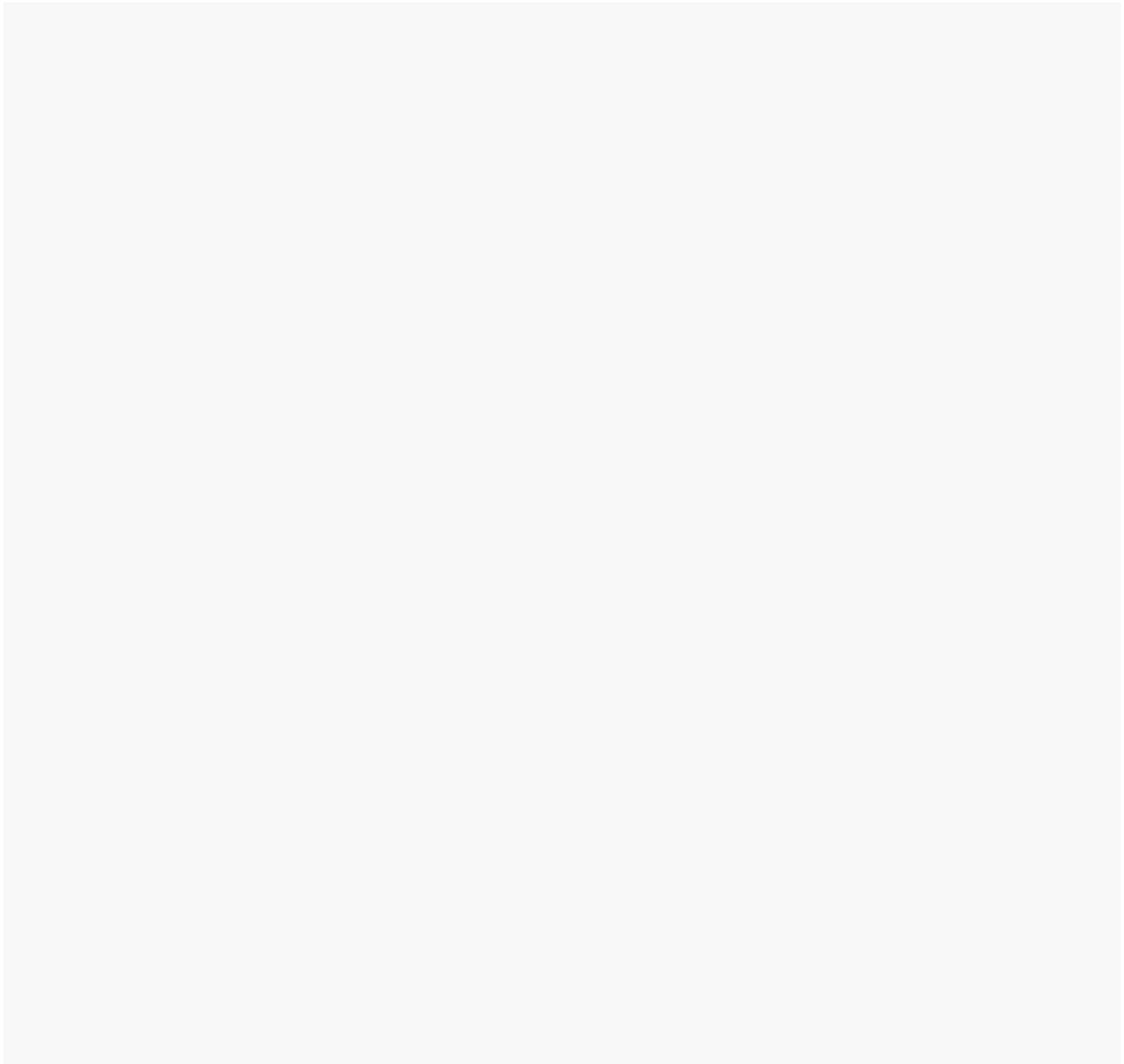
During the recession, the conspicuous consumption of in-store trunk shows went out of style, as women did not want to be seen participating in these events. Moda Operandi allows them to have a similar direct shopping experience from the comfort and privacy of their homes.

Also launched after the recession hit, The RealReal was inspired by a shift in consumption observed by founder Julie Wainwright. While out shopping with a friend who was a large spender on fashion, she noticed that her companion went straight for the consignment section of a boutique, looking to buy the same labels at a better value.

Recognizing an opportunity to step in with a trusted luxury consignment ecommerce experience not offered by marketplaces such as eBay, The RealReal provides authenticated products. Taking an active role in the fight against counterfeits, The RealReal works with brands to authenticate products and will confiscate fakes that come in from vendors.

Into the Gloss and Glossier's Emily Weiss, a former fashion assistant at Vogue, noticed that while beauty is big business, it was not getting the same kind of editorial coverage in glossy publications. Taking inspiration from the success of blogs such as The Sartorialist, she launched her editorial site with a personal style approach.

One thing that connects all of these startups is an editorial approach. The RealReal invests in photo shoots to provide inspiration for combining its merchandise in a fashion-forward way, while Moda Operandi uses content to speak to its varied customer base.



Room Service: Our latest lookbook is dedicated to resort-ready looks that were made for jet-setting. Link in profile to shop. #LouisVuitton

A photo posted by therealreal (@therealreal) on May 9, 2016 at 9:18am PDT

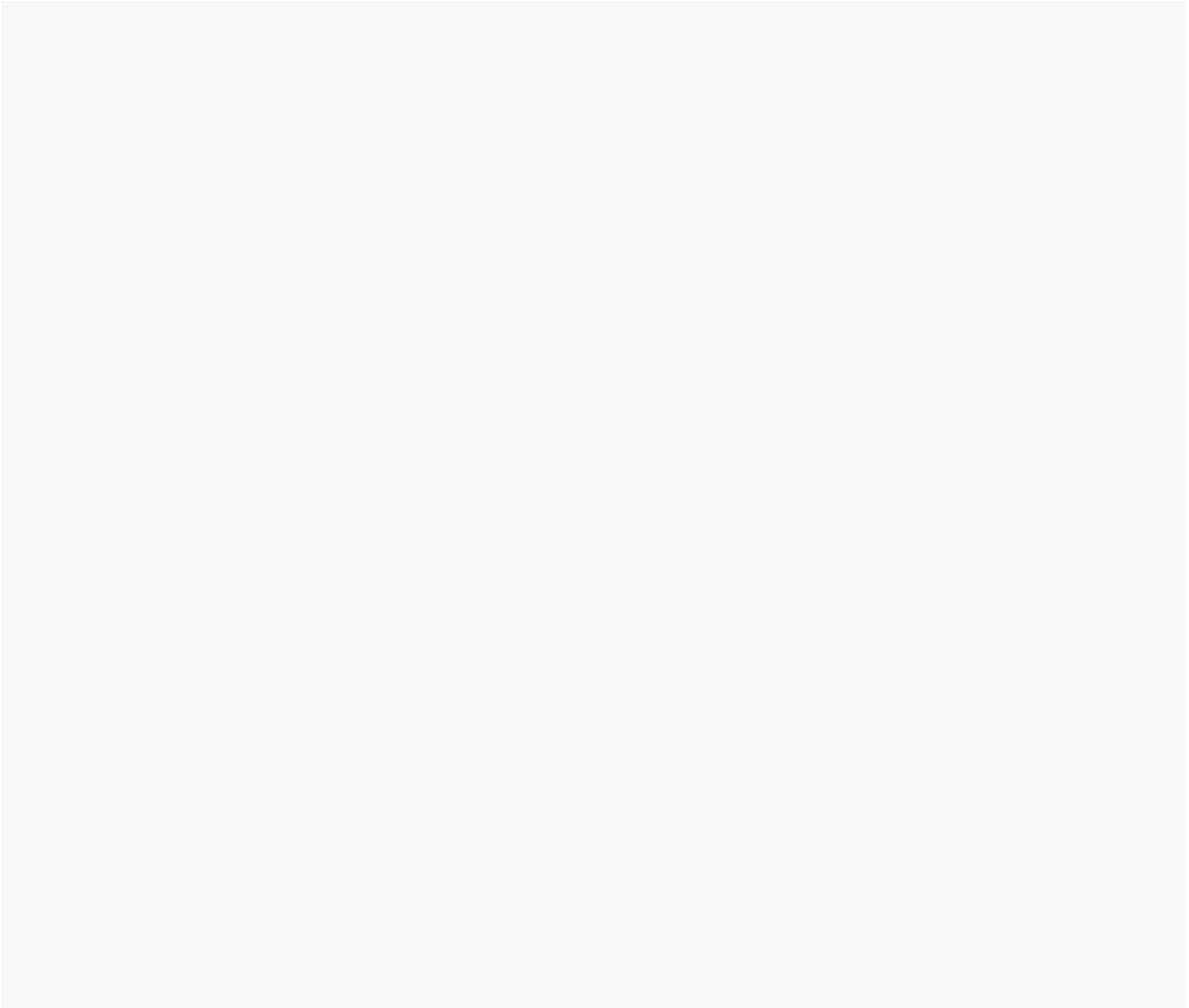
Google's Ms. Green has seen brands leverage YouTube in particular as a storytelling medium to reconnect with existing customers or introduce labels to a new audience, whether Gucci's new look under Alessandro Michele or the Inside Chanel video series.

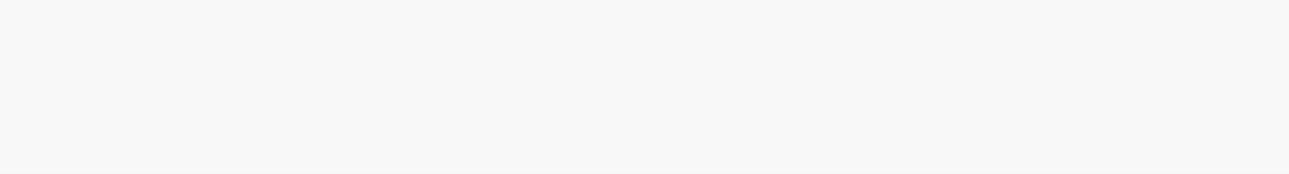
One opportunity that more brands could take advantage of is integrating editorial content into the commerce experience, whether online or in-store.

Bricks-and-mortar stores can also take more cues from the way consumers are shopping online.

Moda Operandi's co-founder Lauren Santo Domingo said that whereas consumers used to go to a store and have a conversation with a sales associate to discover new items, online shopping has trained them to act similarly to an editor, quickly scrolling and picking things they like. The in-store experience often does not reflect these new habits, and department stores and boutiques would be wise to add editorial elements to their sales floors.

Glossier's Ms. Weiss suggests designing retail stores with more room and less merchandise. At the online platform's last pop-up, some women spent up to two hours in the space, as they introduced friends to products, danced or offered feedback to the brand, creating a physical representation of its online community.





You can touch, you can play with all of our products today at 123 Lafayette St. #GlossierPenthouse we'll be here from 12 to 6 ?

A photo posted by Glossier. (@glossier) on Mar 27, 2016 at 8:17am PDT

#### Human factor

Building trust is an important aspect to selling luxury online, particularly when trying to sell thousands of dollars worth of merchandise. Building this understanding revolves around putting a human face to the brand.

For luxury brands, there is an opportunity across all channels to make the consumer purchase path more personal, according to a panel at Luxury Retail Summit: Holiday Focus 2014.

Affluent consumers are more selective than they were before the recession with how they spend their money, making the brand interaction all the more important. Knowing as much as possible about a prospective consumer puts brands in a better position to treat them as an individual ([see story](#)).

While technology can help deliver a high-touch experience to consumers, data and automation cannot replicate the level of engagement that a salesperson can create with shoppers, according to an executive from Moda Operandi at Luxury Interactive 2015 on Oct. 13.

Moda Operandi employs stylists, who work with its most valued consumers to provide personalized recommendations and one-to-one communications, but the process being used to deliver this service was tedious. Keeping the same human touch business model, Moda Operandi built a new platform to help its stylists deliver more relevant, visually appealing messages to the most important customers ([see story](#)).

"I think the founder title really means something when you're talking about the Internet," Ms. Santo Domingo said. "I believe that the Internet without a human face can just be this headless robot of algorithms and engineers and a woman does need someone and something to connect with on a personal level."

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