

MEDIA/PUBLISHING

## Is the excitement around digital marketing opportunities distracting from the product?

June 10, 2016



*Cartier Amulette Malachite Instagram post*

By FORREST CARDAMENIS

NEW YORK The question about whether to focus on traditional or new media is the wrong one, according to Fashion-Culture-Design panelists on June 9.

Subscribe to **Luxury Daily**  
Plus: Just released  
State of Luxury 2019 **Save \$246 ▶**

The panel focused on the comparative worth of Instagram posts compared to print advertisements and tackled the question as to whether excitement around new media has overshadowed the importance of the product. There is no shortcut to determining the proper marketing mix, and brands will need to evaluate their unique situation carefully.

"It's the wrong question to ask because it really depends on what the context is," said Margaret Zhang, influencer and founder of [Shine by Three](#). "Is it a multinational company like Estée Lauder where consumers expect to see you? That's more of a branding exercise.

"For a lot of smaller brands, Instagram is the branding exercise; you can't really view it as a direct sales mechanism," she said. "I do believe in the power of Instagram as a branding exercise; I'm staunchly against paying for a post or Instagram advertising for most brands, but it really depends."

### Changing the question

Although a preliminary poll of the room conducted online had almost 90 percent of attendees voting that an Instagram post is more valuable than a double-page ad in a September magazine, panelists were quick to dismiss the generalization. Brands need to scrutinize whom their customers and prospects are, determine which media those consumers favor, and then base their marketing mix on that information.



*YSL in September Vogue*

The newness of social media and the rapid cycle that digital has enabled has made brands lose sight of these basics, but regardless of the number of channels or their characteristics, the consumer should remain the starting point.

As noted by Kevin Kollenda of [Two Hustlers](#), an innovation lab and pioneering collective, accountability is not merely an Instagram problem. Knowing the number of readers a magazine has does not tell a brand how many people pay attention to their advertisement. The question of readers, followers and "likes" stretches to a larger question of impressions vs. engagement, historically a tough nut to crack.

Wednesday's Ian Schatzberg and Dirk Standen, editor in chief of Cond Nast's 23 Stories branded content studio, both suspect that decreasing revenue may be related more to product than marketing. With brands worrying about where and how to position themselves, internal excitement has shifted to the marketing department from the creative teams. Both suspect that such brands may be losing sight of the possibility that their product no longer appeals to consumers as it once did.



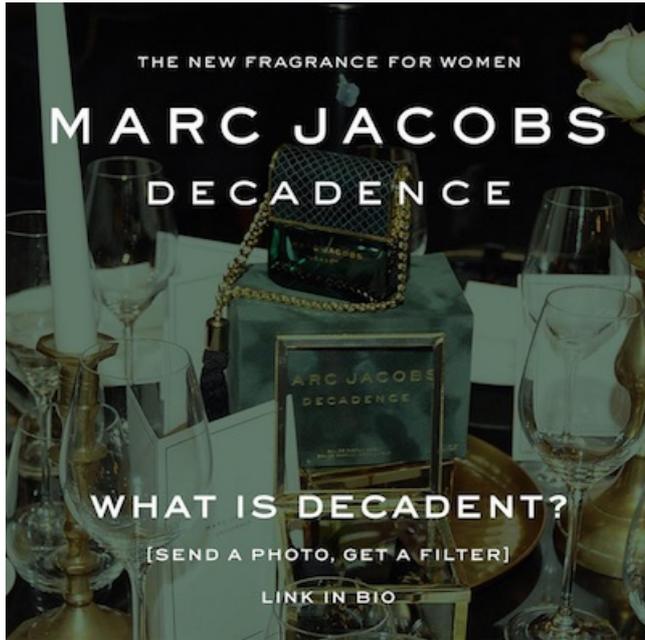
*WSJ. Magazine December 2015 Chanel ad*

However, Mr. Kollenda disagrees. He points to the efforts of Oliviero Toscani as an example of excellent marketing that propelled products that would not have stood out otherwise into the public consciousness.

"If you offer people greatness they will rise to it and if you offer mediocrity they will accept it," he said. "I don't think it is that different [today]; we make it more complicated. New media and old media is all one thread, you just have

to raise and lower the volume."

Nevertheless, the product must not be forgotten in the marketing mix, as the question of where to market a product differs according to the product as well as the brand.



*Marc Jacobs' Decadence on Instagram*

While there is no reliable way of tracking conversions across all channels are contributing particular sales to particular advertisements, brands need to ensure they are on the cutting-edge of analytics so they can segment their market in increasingly specific ways to minimize uncertainty.

### **Pioneers of marketing**

One advantage of new media is that technological developments that directly funnel consumers to sales channels are encouraging impulse buys and shortening the purchase journey.

For example, department store chain Nordstrom is ensuring it has ample visibility and accessibility at the 70th Tony Awards.

In addition to styling the nominees and presenters, Nordstrom will make accessories available online as the performers are seen wearing them. Instantly gratifying viewers will likely cause a spike in sales as consumers seek to emulate their favorite stars ([see story](#)).

In some sectors, the influence of print persists in spite of expectations.

Even as digital mounts a speedy takeover of the marketplace at various points of the purchase journey, brochures still have a place in the automotive world, according to a Foresight Research Study.

A brochure influenced the same proportion of buyers in 2015 as in 2008, and the same percentage preferred to pick one up in person as opposed to finding it online. Understanding the significance of what may seem to be an outdated marketing tool can help brands reach consumers ([see story](#)).

"It's not necessarily about being in this place vs. that place, but I do think there's an obsession in our industry with this question of where to show up," said Ian Schatzberg, president of ad agency [Wednesday](#). "I think we need to reframe the conversation based on what makes the most sense, about where I want to be with my audience and where I need to be to reach that audience.

"It probably is a lot more about media planning at large," he said. "Take a holistic prospective, see where your audience is going and go there.

"And tracking this back to sales is not the right approach either. It's about being where your consumers are going to be. You have to show up where your person is, and that's what it means to be in the right medium."

Luxury Daily is published each business day. Thank you for reading us. Your **feedback** is welcome.