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Prestige beauty brands: Creating desire while engaging with modern luxury customers online

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Prestige beauty brands are the extension of luxury experiences that are offered by worldwide fashion maisons. These particular prestige brands are constantly on the lookout for new consumer insights and innovations. Each year they provide consumers with new technologies, designs and products that are easier to apply and give better results while opening the doors of luxury to a wider audience.

Recently, however, it is the social media and Internet-driven trends that seem to pave the way to success for prestige beauty.

Not making it up

The way modern women access and experience beauty is more dynamic and varied than ever before, which poses an important question: How to create desire and allure while still engaging with a modern luxury customer?

The entire prestige beauty category in the United States saw a 7 percent increase sales in 2015.

Prestige make-up was a particularly strong subcategory, with sales exploding at 13 percent.

Two essential factors of such industry growth was innovation in beauty products and social media trends.

Barry Beck, chief operating officer of luxury beauty chain Bluemercury, stated that 55 percent of the top-selling items did not exist five years ago. Media consumption and purchasing channels have evidently changed over the last few years.

Taking prestige make-up category as an example, the latest NPD Group research titled, "Makeup In-Depth Consumer Report 2016," showed that the Internet went from the least-frequented source of make-up products information and purchase four years ago to the fastest growing in 2016.

Additionally, social media born trends such as highlighting, strobing or contouring have added the most

incremental value to the entire make-up category over the last year in the United States.

In 2016 the Internet surpassed print and broadcast advertising as the preferred source of make-up product information.

Millennials are especially more likely to rely on online sources such as Web sites, social media sites, YouTube videos, blogs and mobile applications. They are the driving force behind the latest beauty trends that we see in today's market.

The Internet, in addition to being used for product and brand information, has become a critical platform for product purchases. It ranked among top five most common channels used for purchasing makeup products, below department stores and ahead of direct sellers, national chains and beauty supply stores.

It is no surprise then that midsized brands with millions of truly involved followers such as Anastasia Beverly Hills, Huda Beauty or Glossier are changing the game through savvy social media and direct selling strategies, things that multinational prestige brands struggle at executing successfully.

Future perfect

To be successful in the future, prestige beauty brands will have to build both allure and well-established online communities in a very coherent manner. They can achieve this by being desirable trendsetters with clear and coherent mission and brand values, opening themselves to a social and cultural dialogue with their community and by identifying and being adaptable to online trends.

Prestige beauty brands should only adopt certain trends if it is applicable to both their brand identity and target audience.

Balancing upscale style, inspiring content and something more profound such as connection to the myth should be at the core of well-crafted strategy.

For example Chanel, no matter what it does, always refers to its original message, "emancipated elegance," and follows through on its brand promise.

In its latest campaign launching N°5 L'Eau, Chanel used its statement, additionally reinforced by the power of paradoxes and a perfect execution on social media an ideal mix appealing to the younger audience.

French-American model/actress Lily-Rose Melody Depp kissing the huge flacon of perfumes brought the attention of 2.1 million followers and 174,000 likes as a result of just one photo.



The Chanel L'Eau No. 5 campaign feature French actress/model Lily-Melody Depp

It is not the first time Chanel has appealed to millennials and won their support.

By casting other Gen Z ambassadors such as Kristen Stewart or Willow Smith and combining it with modern and

desired content, Chanel shows the way in which to capture the digital zeitgeist of our times.

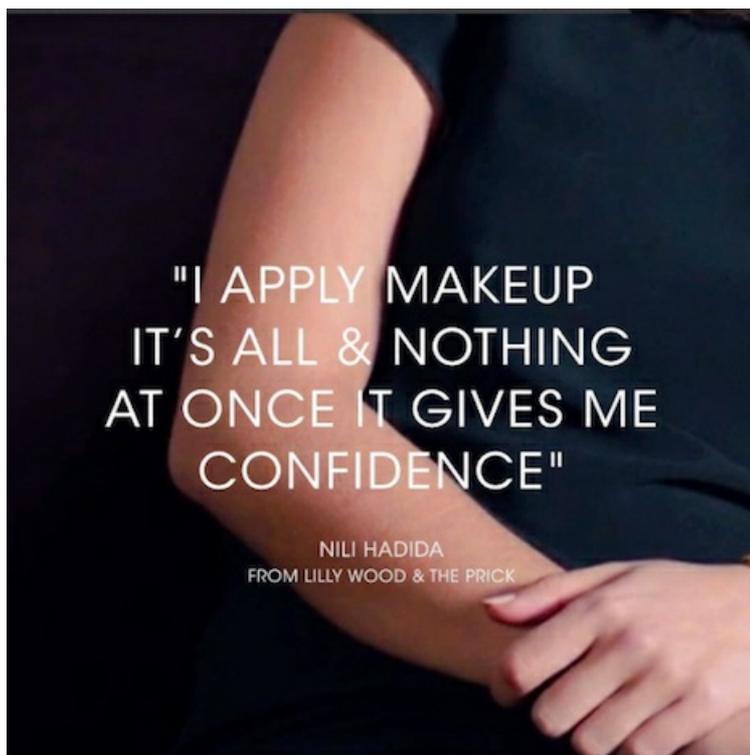
The ability to create a social and cultural dialogue with the community is another way to arouse online desire.

Late designer Yves Saint Laurent was always supporting young and niche artists and this declaration of independence and reinvention is deeply rooted in the brand DNA.

How is this value translated to marketing efforts of prestige beauty products online? By the recent launch of the Web series, "Before the Light," YSL Beauty tries to capture women turning into rock stars right before the show moment.

During short videos, YSL sneaks backstage to hear rebellious Zoe Kravitz or sensual French singer Nili Hadida confessing how YSL makeup helps them get the confidence they need to rock the stage.

This virtual music scene forms a community space to exchange thoughts, fears and excitement, whereas iconic makeup products Touche Eclat or Rouge Pur Couture are the weapons to help women in this stage fight.

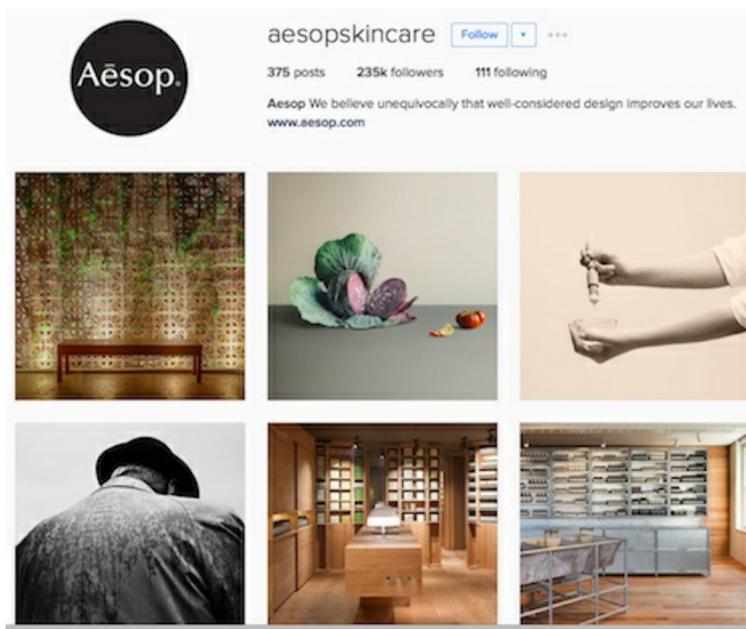


Nili Hadida in the YSLBeauty campaign

Beyond fables

Culturally significant Australian skincare company Aesop builds its brand story on safe and efficacious products. But alongside its commercial activities, it widely explores and supports the concepts of modern arts, film and design. It builds meaningful relationships with its audience by "immersion in unfamiliar landscapes, investigation of local materials, engagement with local culture and history, and development of fertile new relationships."

This message is coherently captured in its bricks-and-mortar stores, online stores and social media platforms. Aesop's Instagram profile looks like an architecture designer album and its short bio states: "We believe unequivocally that well-considered design improves our lives." Is it anything to do with skin care, ingredients, safety? Not really and yet its following and engagement is impressive.



The Aēsop Skincare effort

Embracing online trends in a smart and unique way gives the brand the possibility to stay modern and attentive to customers needs.

Hourglass Cosmetics, a luxury performance makeup brand from California, had its skin-lighting brand concept in place way before the massive growth of the highlighting trend that is so prevalent in online spaces today. Its costumed products and visual communication all revolved around creating the perfectly enlightened, glowy skin.



The Hourglass Cosmetics push

Hourglass started building its online community to find out which products, shades and finishes of highlighting powders were largely appreciated by its customers. This gave the brand an incredible advantage to create new complementary products, limited editions and makeup palettes when the highlighting trend blossomed on social media.

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