

COLUMNS

Translating luxury in mobile

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We all know what customers expect from luxury brands. They expect luxury treatment. They want the "red carpet", "white gloves," "Yes sir/ma'am," "anything you say" kind of experience.

Luxury brands are learning that this pandering becomes more difficult in a digital world.

Ring of truth

Brands that have the best opportunity to make experiences matter are the ones with bricks-and-mortar locations or service industries. They have contact with customers, one-to-one and are learning to make the best of the experience. Here are some successful examples.

Luxury automakers offer concierge services, Starbucks and shopping onsite, airport parking service, brand centers and test tracks, just to name a few.

Several of the largest luxury automakers suffered in J.D. Power's rankings due to poor customer service in those one-to-one moments.

Many of those same automakers are investing in training for their employees to treat customers as they expect and are now demanding. These brands are taking customer experience very seriously.

Luxury retail experiences are being tailored to the customer.

Walking into Tiffany in Manhattan is an experience that cannot be denied. Visiting Ralph Lauren's flagship store and the Polo Bar on Madison Avenue in New York is almost an event. Being surrounded by opulence is not enough the customer experience is what makes it truly special.

I have had these experiences in upscale hotels: being delighted by gifts in the room, upgrades to suites, fresh flowers and handwritten cards. And on one remarkable occasion, Happy Birthday sang by 200-plus passengers on a 757, with a Champagne toast in first class.

These experiences have cemented these brands as my first choice. They have me for life.

So, what do brands do when they do not have the ability to influence their customers in-person? And how do they

accomplish this with smaller screens, devices and fewer opportunities to engage?

On message

Our expectations of a brand on mobile are simple: make it fast and easy.

A mobile application can have beautiful images that promote the brand essence, and include features such as access to personal shoppers and other relevant parts of the overall brand experience. But it is not enough.

A great experience is expected, whether we are on Amazon or Neiman Marcus. But customers likely expect even more from luxury brands.

Customers think less of a brand where they have had a poor experience, which is a bigger issue. They expect customized experiences that are feature-rich and beautiful to look at, but also technically sound. This means significant investments need to be made.

We are all barraged with marketing messages daily. We move quickly from device to device. We are researching a product one minute and buying a competitor brand the next.

The sheer volume of content that is available is mind boggling, and there are no signs of it slowing down.

Even with all the chaos, the brand carries its weight in our purchase decision. The product brand as well as the retailer brand. Customers are more likely to stay loyal to a company that treats them well.

LUXURY BRANDS brands can originate an experience in mobile, and they can carry over an experience from another channel as well.

Investments in user experience and considerable thought into relevance will pay off, keeping the customer front and center in the brand experience.

In some ways, an automated yet personalized experience can prevent the human failures that might occur despite a brand's best intentions.

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