

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Zegna fosters open dialogue in revamped communication strategy

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Robert De Niro and McCaul Lombardi for Zegna's spring/summer 2017 campaign

By SARAH JONES

Italian menswear label Ermenegildo Zegna is looking to forge a deeper connection with consumers through a participatory platform.

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Zegna's spring/summer 2017 campaign marks the launch of the brand's "Defining Moments" initiative, which will see the brand gathering men from different career paths for informal conversations. Kicking off the series are actors Robert De Niro and McCaul Lombardi, who talk about their personal experiences in the film industry.

"The rise of digital and social media and changing consumer preferences have led to more content-based marketing approaches like this one from Zegna," said Jim Gentleman, senior vice president of account management and strategy at **SK+G**, Las Vegas.

"Consumers are increasingly tuning out and ignoring hard-sell/commercial advertising," he said. "So video-based, content-focused efforts like Defining Moments are proving more effective in connecting with consumers."

Mr. Gentleman is not affiliated with **Zegna**, but agreed to comment as an industry expert. **Zegna** was reached for comment.

In conversation

Zegna has established a microsite for Defining Moments, giving it its own platform. Here, consumers can explore content from the spring campaign, which was shot in Los Angeles last year.

Mr. De Niro and Mr. Lombardi are both Italian-Americans and share an affinity for acting, giving them a shared frame of reference despite their age difference and their respective experience in the industry. While Mr. De Niro is a household name who has starred in numerous films and directed two, Mr. Lombardi is just starting out, with a couple of films under his belt including 2016's "American Honey."



Image from Zegna's Defining Moments campaign

"De Niro is an icon while Lombardi is an up-and-coming artist," Mr. Gentleman said. "Likewise, Zegna is a legacy fashion brand that's looking to remain relevant with millennials and younger consumers.

"Both De Niro and Lombardi are fashionable and together appeal to a broad audience of potential Zegna buyers."

In a short film by film director Francesco Carrozzini, the pair's dialogue provides the soundtrack to clips of them cruising in a vintage car or on-set at a house.

Zegna artistic director Alessandro Sartori joined the actors and director during the shoot, creating a dialogue among the foursome. Aside from the film released with the campaign launch on Feb. 10, other footage from Mr. Carrozzini will be shared exclusively on Zegna's social and digital channels.

Defining Moments, featuring Robert De Niro and McCaul Lombardi

Consumers can explore other content on this microsite through a celestial navigation. After waving their mouse over the starry scene, a circle appears.

Various points on this sphere can be explored by dragging. This includes more background on both actors and global cities such as Shanghai, Milan, New York and Los Angeles, hinting at further stories to come.

Consumers also have the chance to share their own Defining Moment. By inputting their name, a story of up to 500 characters, the location of the moment and some contact details, the entrant puts themselves in the running for a made-to-measure suit from the house.

Zegna will be picking the best stories each month to receive the tailoring experience.



Zegna tailor making the brand's fall/winter 2017 collection

Along with the digital campaign, Zegna will be hosting a series of informal events, bringing together accomplished individuals for candid conversations.

Zegna sees Defining Moments as a way to celebrate the people behind its collections, putting a face to its fashions.

Two-way communication

Increasingly, brands are seeking the input of consumers, creating campaigns that do not broadcast but rather start a conversation.

Cognac maker Rmy Martin is highlighting how its spirits would fit within the multifaceted lifestyles of GQ's readership with a placement on the publication's mobile-optimized site.

Rmy Martin's banner advertisement features the brand's recently launched "One Life/Live Them" campaign, for which it teamed up with multitalented actor Jeremy Renner to explore the diverse paths, passions and interests that can be tried in one lifespan. Through this campaign, Rmy Martin is hoping to not only share its own story with consumers, but solicit their own reflections on a life well-lived ([see story](#)).

Similarly, Giorgio Armani Beauty built on its inspirational efforts surrounding its S fragrance by opening a dialogue with women around the world, giving a platform to discuss inner strength.

The S Women's Circle is inaugurated with the stories of five real women who all found the courage to say yes to a challenge in their own lives. Keeping consistency with previous efforts around S, actress Cate Blanchett remains an ambassador for the campaign, urging women to take the plunge ([see story](#)).

"Associating with influencers like De Niro and Lombardi helps the Zegna brand come to life in a meaningful way," Mr. Gentleman said.

"Through videos, event appearances and social media, De Niro and Lombardi become brand ambassadors that personify Zegna," he said. "They help make the storied fashion brand more relatable and authentic to potential buyers."