

ADVERTISING

## Lost in translation: How luxury brands can break language barriers

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Luxury brands are on an ongoing quest to distribute a unified message worldwide to consumers, and have everyone be able to understand it. Without damaging the brand's particular heritage and culture, how can this happen?

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Marketing a luxury brand is all about communication, and since much of it is done verbally and often online, the language connection is extremely important. Some luxury brands have succeeded such as Chanel, Louis Vuitton and Gucci, while others have not such as Prada and Fendi. A brand's connection with a specific culture is important to consumers, which can influence purchasing intent.

"International brands should communicate to their customers in the major languages of their customers," said Ron Kurtz, president of American Affluence Research Center, Atlanta. "In the absence of doing this, they will appear insensitive.

"If they do it well, that will be appreciated by their customers and help to communicate the information that the brand wants to deliver," he said.

Parlez-vous

As luxury brands expand to different parts of the world where many people cannot read

English, Italian or French, for example, it is important for them to overcome foreign and colloquial language barriers that develop during the marketing process.

It is key for luxury brands to market across all different channels, including Web sites, email, events and social media, as it reflects the brand's culture and country.

Brands such as Chanel, Louis Vuitton and Gucci have eliminated language barriers, offering their marketing strategies in numerous dialects.



### *Chanel's tweet in English*

Even though these are international brands, their Facebook page and Twitter handles are in English, the primary language spoken by their affluent consumers.

However, Italian brands Fendi and Prada have yet to jump onto the barrier bandwagon and their social media sendouts are in Italian.



### *Fendi Facebook post in Italian*

It makes sense for Fendi and other brands to prominently display their foreign heritage, including through language.

“But having your Web site or Facebook page default to the foreign language and not provide an English language option is just plain dumb,” said Pam Danziger, president of Unity Marketing, Stephens, PA. “If you want to make sales in the U.S. then you have to provide information in English, it’s that plain and simple.

“Most luxury brands already do that for their company Web site,” she said. “So Fendi needs to do the same if their Facebook page is strategically important to them to reach U.S. consumers.

“If not, then keep Fendi’s Facebook page in Italian, but if U.S. consumers matter to their Facebook strategy, then they better find a fix quick.”

Tu comprende?

It is important for Fendi and Prada to remain true to their Italian heritage, but both brands should consider posting recent news on their Facebook pages in English as well.

When developing social media strategies for different markets, Fendi and Prada should consider developing promotions using various channels with different languages all at once.

Without diluting the brand, Fendi and Prada could look to translate their Facebook pages into different languages to reach all international consumers.

“Perhaps 75 percent or more of their [Fendi’s] business comes from international markets where their customers do not speak Italian,” Mr. Kurtz said. “Those customers may feel ignored or unappreciated and may not understand everything that Fendi wants to convey to them.”

Final take

*Breaking language barriers*

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