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Luxury branding: Achieving the total brand experience

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Luxury is inextricably tied to the notion of status. Status, however, is a fluid concept.

Understanding the modern drivers of status and how these codes are evolving is crucial to the success of luxury brands and businesses. It has far-reaching implications for how luxury brands are built and how brands need to consider the experience that they offer.

When at its most successful, the total brand experience means mapping and delivering a rich but consistent experience across the total path to purchase, including how the brand should be experienced in culture, with relevant communities of interest and new influencer groups who can play a significant role in driving consideration and conversion.

Shared values

For many luxury consumers, the value proposition behind a luxury brand lies in perceived superior quality.

If their experience of this brand at any point does not live up to their expectations, the value proposition is compromised and their willingness to invest in the brand is subsequently damaged.

In short, the ticket to the place they bought a trip to is no longer worth the fare.

Though the total brand experience for luxury brands differs, there are three core areas that should be at the heart of building and sustaining all luxury brands.

First, a clear and single-minded commitment to the brand purpose.

Next, the building and delivery of a cohesive brand world at every touch point influencing purchase behavior.

Finally, the role of communities of interest and influencers on this buying journey.

Brand purpose is not a new concept for building brands, nor is it relevant only to luxury brands. It does have great value to luxury brands, however, since purpose gives meaningful reasons to buy beyond product. This corresponds

to new codes of status, such as altruism.

But this is not to say that brand purpose must always be altruistic. It is more about finding shared values between brands, the products they make and the people they serve, so that when customers spend, they feel their purchase is justifiable and rewarding.

Developing communications, partnerships and product innovation from a brand purpose enables the creation of more powerful stories, grounded in truth and meaning. This delivers a more powerful connection with customers because through these activities, what the brand believes in and exists for, is inherent in the resulting output.

Clarity of purpose

Strong brand worlds are integral to luxury brands.

Brand worlds move how the brand manifests in the customer's world beyond what traditional brand guidelines are capable of. They draw on a sense of time and place the brand opens the door to they are physical, textural and behavioral, which in a day and age where interaction online and offline is crucial, provides the backbone to the consistent experience that customers desire.

The starting point for the luxury brand world will differ. Each brand has a different place of origin, story or time that encapsulates or conveys its purpose.

Single-minded focus on this brand world and an unwavering commitment to delivering this world at every touch point, from branded content to retail and product packaging, will build and preserve the brand experience, ultimately, helping defend the premium price tag.

Brands need to understand which communities of interest and influencers are important to building belief in and the relevance of the brand.

Here again, having clarity on brand purpose is hugely beneficial.

By being clear on the purpose driving your brand and business and the beliefs that underpin both, the task becomes a matter of identifying communities and influencers who share your values.

Crucially, it is not simply about buying advocacy. It is about working with and adding value to these communities, building them into the brand's stories and network. It is about creating a plan that is intuitively woven, not simply integrated.

THE JOB OF the luxury marketer is one of the hardest in the industry.

It is precision-engineering meets creative intuition, but living the brand purpose, opening the door to a compelling brand world, seeking to deliver the optimal brand experience at every touch point and allowing new voices to build and share the brand's stories.

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