

INTERNET

## Should luxury brands consider bloggers for marketing strategy?

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By IVYTAN



Bloggers who critique luxury products and brands are

undeniable gods in their use of technology and media savvy. But do they have the ability to educate a true luxury buyer about the industry?

It might seem like a pair of mismatched socks when one tries to associate the glitz-and-glam of luxury brands with that guy over there typing away on his laptop.

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But the guy on the keyboard holds more power than one would assume.

"Beyond reporting recent or breaking news and trends, bloggers combine transmedia storytelling and marketing in weaving products, opinion, curated looks, event recaps and giveaways," said Paul Farkas, Founder/CEO of [SocialTV](#). "Brands have limited risk along

image and ROI lines in knowing that inferior bloggers largely do not earn high site metrics and setting up performance-based and in-kind relationships.

"Notably, though, the heavy flow of industry events, live editors' showings, tweet parties, and step-and-repeat photos has led to a fair amount of self-serving, overhyped hierarchy," Mr. Farkas said.

#### Blogger schmogger

One end of the spectrum, one can argue that the true luxury consumer does not need a blogger to help determine which Chanel suit to buy.

That argument is supported by the fact that a whopping 50 percent of luxury consumers, who are of the older and more educated portion of the demographic, do not get their information from the Internet or social media ([see story](#)).

A majority of luxury consumers are not on Facebook, posting their favorite items on a personal blog or "tweeting" about their latest purchase from Bergdorf Goodman.

"The true luxury consumers are typically sophisticated shoppers who have confidence in their knowledge and judgment about luxury products and brands," said Ron Kurtz, principal of Atlanta-based American Affluence Research Center.

"For a blogger to have influence, the blogger must establish credibility for their knowledge of the subject, their independence and their objectivity," Mr. Kurtz said.

It's all too easy for blogs that promote luxury to turn stale after every other fashionista or lifestyle critic has hopped on the bandwagon.

These days, originality can be hard to come by after all the good ideas are seemingly taken.

"Bloggers can have some influence with the aspirational, emerging and potential luxury consumers who lack experience with luxury and lack confidence in their knowledge and judgment about luxury products and brands," Mr. Kurtz said.

#### Pro blogger

On the other hand, one can argue that luxury brands should even thank bloggers for the free publicity they have received from a few entries that present their products in a certain context or in real life.

"Today's digital savvy consumer finds bloggers essential in discovering and buying luxury items," said SocialTV's Mr. Farkas. "Top bloggers each have a unique formula to develop high traffic and ultra-affluent readership."

In fact, high-profile bloggers are attending fashion shows and industry events and getting stints on some of the world's most venerated print publications that sell luxury.

For instance, Scott Schuman of [The Sartorialist](#) has scored gigs at *Vogue*.

Mr. Schuman and his girlfriend Garance Doré, a French illustrator and fashion blogger, are frequently tapped to photograph shows during fashion week in the major cities.

More recently, luxury automaker Mercedes-Benz enlisted the help of beauty bloggers to promote their new 2012 CLS63 AMG model ([see story](#)).

Dolce & Gabbana's Milan store got a makeover on February 27 when the brand invited bloggers to dress up its windows using apparel and accessories from the spring/summer 2011 line ([see story](#)).

Moreover, blogs like [Sea of Shoes](#), [Swagger360](#), [Kitten Lounge](#) and [James List](#) provides consumers with an outlet for inspiration, constantly driving their readers to go out and get "the look" or what items are hot.



*Karl Edwin Guerre of Swagger360*

For luxury brands, popular blogs are a very good indicator of what is or will be successful in the marketplace.

A true upscale brand may not need the bloggers to sway consumers, but what about potential consumers?

After all, panache and style are about the timelessness of a product.

Style is always changing and moving forward. If a brand wants to retain its longevity, then it needs to know what the youngsters are up to these days.

One of the best places to find fresh faces and creativity is blogosphere.

"Consumers and brands alike find bloggers invaluable because they trigger what's trending and valuable in an authentic, charismatic voice," Mr. Farkas said.

"They are also largely photogenic and with a better grasp of digital and multimedia tools to start and engage in conversation," he said.

Final Take

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