

MEDIA/PUBLISHING

New York Times banks on branded content with Hong Kong studio

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Promotional image for Tag Heuer content on NYT VR

By SARAH JONES

As more advertisers are tapping into the opportunities of branded editorial, The New York Times is expanding its commercial content operations.

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Having developed more than 150 campaigns for about 100 brands including BMW, The Macallan and Cartier, the media company's T Brand Studio is opening up a location in Hong Kong to better serve clients in the Asia-Pacific region. Display advertising's waning efficacy has marketers turning to native placements to reach consumers through storytelling, creating new relationships with publishers who are adept at the medium.

"We see a real opportunity to expand our branded content business in Asia as more and more brands in the region are interested in the high quality content that T Brand Studio creates," said Raquel Bubar, director, **T Brand Studio International**.

"We also have an existing client base in Asia whom we can partner with more closely by having a local team in Hong Kong," she said.

"We have over 100 million unique monthly readers in APAC, and our decision to expand T Brand Studio in Hong Kong further strengthens our ability to serve existing and future clients who want us to produce advertising content that targets these readers."

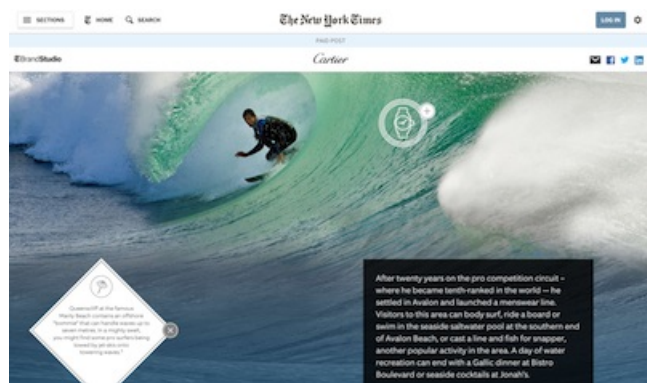
Creating content

T Brand Studio was founded in 2014 with offices in New York. Since then, the company opened T Brand Studio International, with a collective team of more than 20 working out of three offices.

While connected to the newspaper, T Brand Studio is a separate entity, creating commercial content for the online and print editions of the title while leaning on talent pulled from the journalism world to write and edit.

Last year, T Brand added Tracy Doyle to its team as the creative director, fashion and luxury, looking to further court

clients in this space.



Cartier's campaign with T Brand Studio

Now, the content division is again growing its footprint with offices in Hong Kong. This shop will cater to clients in the Asia-Pacific region, with a team of strategists, producers, editors and designers.

Among the new hires for the Hong Kong office is content strategist Reno Ong, who comes from the editorial world, having worked at media startup #legend and Time magazine.

Producer Clara Lim comes to T Brand Studio from Singapore Press Holdings, where she worked in the branded content division.

Jason Li, who was hired as an editor, has an existing relationship with T Brand Studio, having freelanced for two years. Mr. Li comes to T Brand Studio from Monocle, where he was deputy bureau chief.

These three additions to the team are multilingual, speaking English and Mandarin. In addition, Mr. Ong speaks Tagalog.

"T Brand Studio in Hong Kong is made up of some of the best talent in the region," Ms. Bubar said. "They come from publishers as well as agencies, and have experience working with brands throughout the region.

"They understand the desire for content locally, and know the value of storytelling, which is what we do best."

Along with its global expansion, T Brand Studio has been making investments in its marketing operations, acquiring social influencer agency HelloSociety in 2016 and experiential design agency Fake Love.

Going native

T Brand Studio has adopted new forms of storytelling, including virtual reality.

For instance, Swiss watchmaker Tag Heuer crafted a legend with the help of the New York Times' virtual reality mobile application.

The NYT VR app put readers at the center of New York Times' content, including what is produced by its brand partners, through immersive 360-degree video experiences that allow for an interactive narrative. LVMH-owned Tag Heuer used the NYT VR app's storytelling capabilities to share the heritage of its Carrera timepiece with New York Times' audience, showing both its placement within the overall watch industry and its modernity ([see story](#)).

During a panel at Luxury FirstLook 2017: Time for Luxury 2.0 Jan. 18, T Brand Studio's Ms. Doyle made a bold prediction, claiming there is a chance that traditional advertising studios will become obsolete in favor of in-house brand studios.

The content overload in today's market is causing native advertising to become increasingly important as a way for brands to connect with consumers. With the influx of publishers and media brands creating these in-house studios for brands to create truly native advertising, there could be a major shift in the industry ([see story](#)).

"Leaving the instability in the global trade market aside, there is no separating the words global and luxury," said Vincent Krsulich, senior vice president, sales and marketing at [Martini Media](#), New York. "The majority of the luxury brands have an international footprint by birth. The New York Times has been attracting a worldly audience since inception."

"Setting up a content shop in Hong Kong makes sense," he said. "It is a natural progression of the trend in the industry."

"Traditional, well established, trusted voices helping brands leverage their audiences in an authentic, creative way. London and Hong Kong are perfect 'luxury' hubs, along with New York City."

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