

RETAIL

Most online retailers value rich content, but are not producing enough of it

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Rich content can be a very effective marketing tool. Image credit: Christian Louboutin

By DANNY PARISI

A majority of online retailers believe that rich content, such as lookbooks and buying guides, are a priority, but a new report finds most of those same retailers are underperforming in the production of this types of content.

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Rich content, defined as the meaty, high-quality content that provides a concrete value to the consumer, is an essential part of marketing a digital retail outlet. Unfortunately, according to a new survey from Zmags, most online retailers struggle to create enough of this content to satisfy customers.

"It's clear that retail marketers simply don't have the tools, time or inspiration to develop the kind of content that differentiates their brand and drives higher conversion rates," said Brian Rigney, CEO of **Zmags**, Boston. "They know they need to do it, but they are often beholden to rigid internal processes and their IT departments to publish new content to their Web sites."

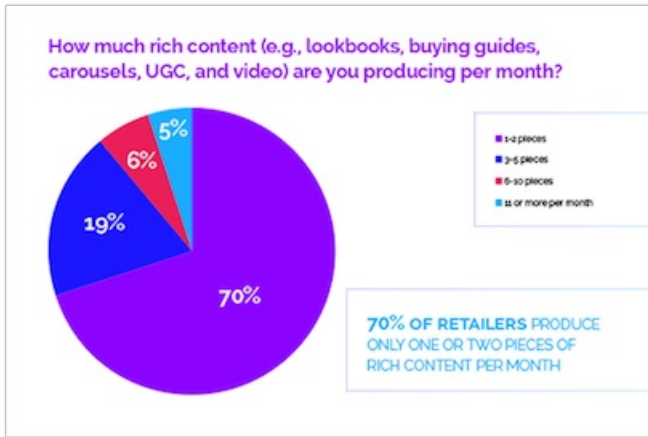
Rich content

Rich content can be a powerful tool for many online retailers and marketers.

When those retailers invest in creating in-depth pieces of content, the kind that can stand on their own and have a premium quality feel as opposed to being quickly thrown together, they can create a level of engagement that regular content cannot hope to compete with.

Online retailers are aware of this as well. Zmags found that more than 75 percent of online retailers that responded to the survey felt that rich content was a priority for them.

Despite this understanding of the importance of rich content, most online retailers are not doing much with it.



Most retailers are underperforming. Image credit: Zmags

Zmags found that most retailers are not creating more than one or two pieces of rich content per month, far less than what they could be doing.

The top three reasons for this, according to survey respondents, were a lack of labor power to create the content, a lack of sufficient new imagery to accompany rich content and a lack of understanding of what kind of rich content should be created.

These retailers are still interested in creating more rich content, however, with how-to guides and holiday content as their number one priority.

Ninety-two percent of retailers believe that rich content provides a positive ROI, further establishing its importance.

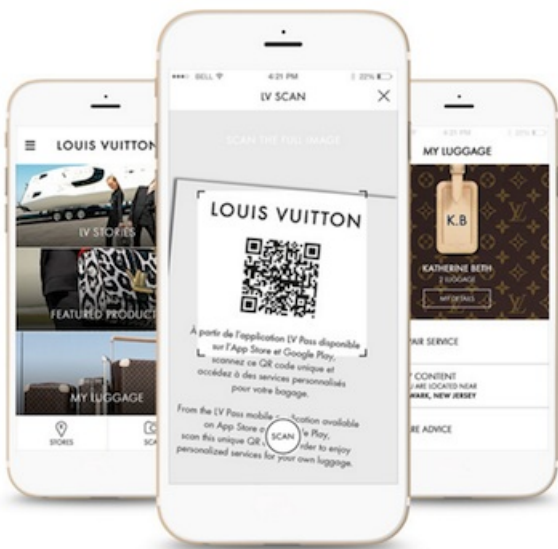
Window of opportunity

Rich content has been particularly popular among luxury brands for a variety of reasons. Chiefly, luxury brands tend to have more resources devoted to their marketing campaigns and prefer the type of in-depth experiences that rich content provides.

For example, French footwear and accessories label Christian Louboutin turned consumers into sleuths with a fashionable whodunit.

The brand's "Whatever Happened to Bellofficier?" finds a trio of friends being thrown into a criminal plot, as they become eyewitnesses to a murder. Adding a narrative thread through this look book campaign encourages consumers to stay tuned and explore more ([see story](#)).

Some of those brands, such as Gucci, are excelling compared to their competitors thanks to their rich content.



Louis Vuitton's mobile rich content efforts. Image credit: Louis Vuitton

The gap between high-achieving digital fashion labels and those who trail behind is growing, as brands with larger budgets to invest in innovation are speeding ahead of the pack.

Gucci rose to the top of L2's rankings this year, ousting last year's leader Burberry thanks to upgrades to its ecommerce site and social media visibility. As ecommerce sales grow and consumers increasingly turn to online channels to make purchase decisions, a brand's digital prowess is only going to become more important ([see story](#)).

Rich content can provide a pathway to success for online retailers, but they have to be willing to invest the resources necessary to make something in-depth and engaging to succeed.

"Today's marketers need more control over content development on their digital properties so they can react to seasonal changes and pop culture trends," Mr. Rigney said. "They need access to tools they can use to quickly and easily publish and optimize new content.

"Rich and engaging experiences make or break a brand in the eyes of today's content-hungry consumers, and this data illustrates a serious challenge for retail marketers."

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