

SOFTWARE AND TECHNOLOGY

Instagram seeks to combine storytelling and story-selling

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Instagram wants to help luxury brands reach their business goals. Photo credit: Boucheron

By SARAH JONES

NEW YORK Luxury marketers' strategies for Instagram should revolve around not only presenting attractive images, but achieving measurable business goals, according to the platform's head of luxury.

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Instagram offers luxury brands the opportunity to speak to a growing, global audience of 500 million daily users, who are turning to the platform to explore their passions, whether fashion or travel. Speaking at Women in Luxury, the executive explained how a number of brands are mixing organic and paid media to drive both conversations and conversions.

"It's not just about pretty pictures," said Morin Oluwole, head of luxury at Facebook and Instagram, Paris. "We drive our partners' bottom lines, both on the brand aspect and also the commerce aspect.

"We're focused on really marrying the storytelling and the story selling aspects. We're always innovating," she said. "You might log into Instagram tomorrow and see that we're developing new features, but not to disturb the experience you have, but to really make it valuable not just for consumers, but also for brands."

The Women in Luxury conference Sept. 26 was produced by Luxury Daily.

Creating community

Instagram has become the fastest growing mobile application, and today it counts 800 million active monthly users, 80 percent of whom are living outside of the United States.

The social media platform has outpaced magazines as the source of consumers' inspiration, with U.S. consumers more apt to look at Instagram than glossies to find ideas, according to a Facebook-sponsored study by Kantar Millward Brown.



Instagram is a source of inspiration. Image credit: Bloomingdale's

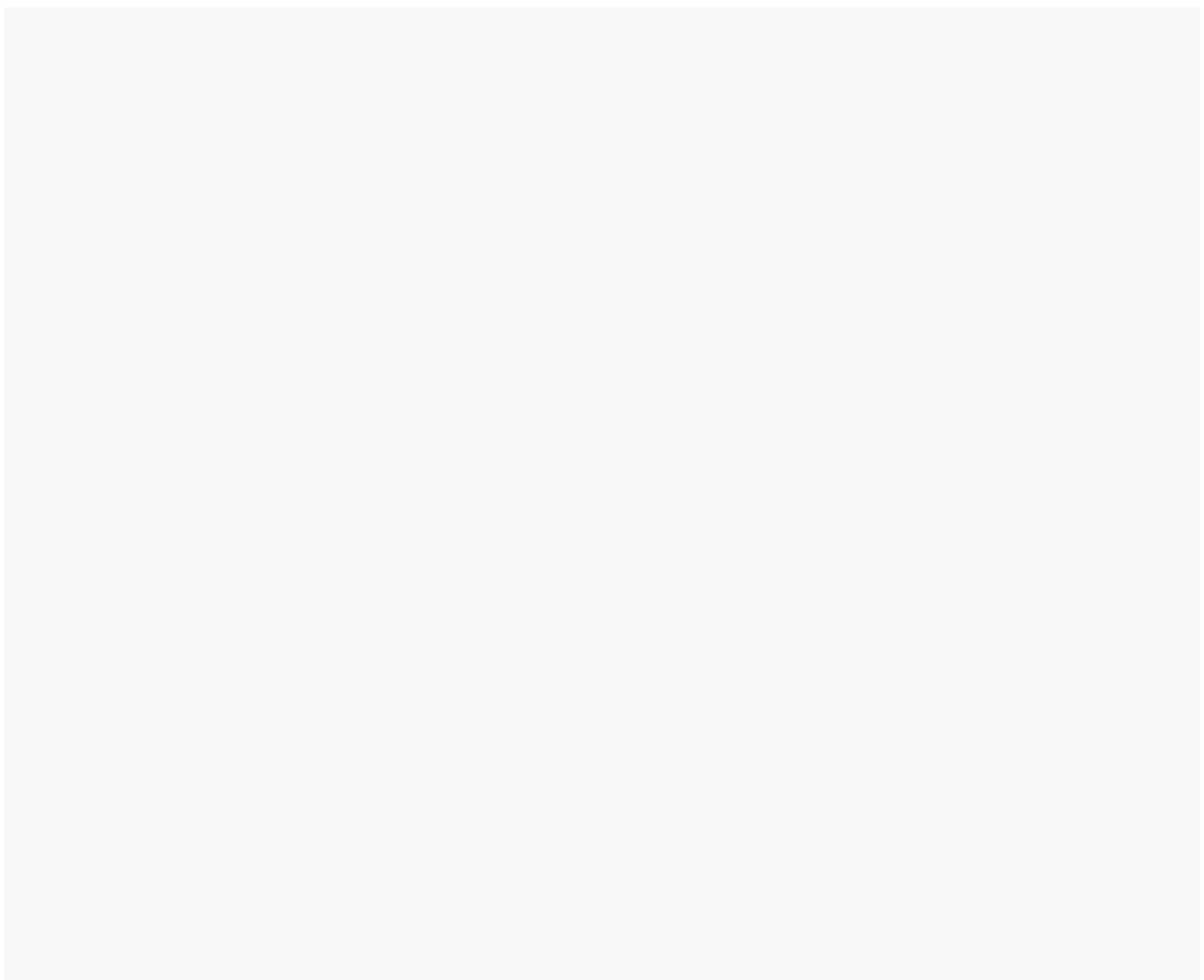
Beyond the content that brands are sharing, posts from Instagram's consumer community can provide insights. Giving an example, Ms. Oluwole said that beauty brands could take trending topics seen on the platform and use it to drive product development.

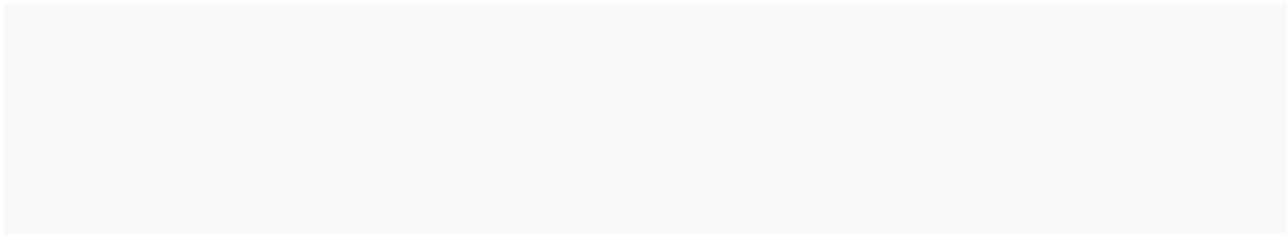
Instagram has launched a number of products in recent years that have proven popular with both users and brands.

Stories, which debuted last year, currently has 250 million users either creating or consuming these pieces of disappearing content every day.

Brands have embraced this feature, with 50 percent of businesses having posted a Story in the last month. One-third of the most viewed stories come from brands.

Users can now broadcast live through Stories, enabling them to involve consumers in events as they happen. For instance, Dior shared its entire runway show from Paris, allowing all fans regardless of income, age or location to tune in.





It's a wrap! The grand finale of the spectacular outing that was #MariaGraziaChiuri's Spring-Summer 2018 show for Dior. #DiorSS18 #PFW

A post shared by Dior Official (@dior) on Sep 27, 2017 at 7:16am PDT

While posting organic content can be an effective way to engage with fans, advertising options on the platform have opened opportunities for luxury labels to more closely pinpoint target consumers with the likely interest and means to buy, turning inspiration into purchases.

Since Instagram launched ads in 2015, it has amassed 2 million active advertisers across business categories, among which are luxury brands such as Chanel and Dior.

Beyond a static promoted post, luxury labels have produced carousel ads, which feature a slideshow of imagery. Instagram Stories' engagement can also be leveraged for paid media, with an additional full-screen Canvas format now available to brands.

Of the brand campaigns that have run on Instagram, 98 percent have seen a lift in ad recall. These placements also drive actions, whether the brand was aiming for app downloads or ecommerce purchases.

Compared to their earlier late adopter status, luxury brands are embracing some of Instagram's features ahead of other marketers as they develop more trust with the platform. For instance, Louis Vuitton was the first luxury partner for the beta of Stories ads, a move that Ms. Oluwole noted never would have happened a few years ago.

"Brands are willing to take more risks to be first to market," Ms. Oluwole said. "Some even want to be first to market without really understanding what the objective is, and I try to help them slow down a little bit. It's not about the shiny product, but how does this contribute to your business and brand objectives."

Creating content

Visual media allows marketers to make an impression in less time than they ever could with text, as the human brain processes images 60,000 times faster than words. Ms. Oluwole stressed that while the feed, Stories and paid media are often thought of as separate entities by brands, the three aspects of a brand's presence on Instagram should be connected.

One consideration for brands as they are developing content for Instagram is budget constraints. While some do create custom content designed exclusively for the platform, others have found creative ways to remix assets they already had, reformatting video for a vertical screen or animating imagery.

When a phone is on silent, Instagram's feed automatically plays video back on mute. However, 70 percent of Stories are watched with the sound on.

This requires brands to create content that works both with and without sound.

As brands create content for Instagram, keeping in mind the platform's organic features and strengths is key.

For instance, Italian fashion label Tod's encouraged followers to put on their dancing shoes in a new social initiative that uses its footwear for dance instructions.

Tod's took to Instagram with a series of video shorts and images that taught followers how to dance various famous styles. From the Charleston to contemporary, fans are giving step-by-step instructions on how to dance with Tod's shoes ([see story](#)).

Italian fashion label Fendi similarly took inspiration from its whimsical Bag Bug charms for interactive storytelling.

The house is tapping the skip ahead feature on Instagram and Snapchat Stories to let consumers control the Bag

Bugs' actions as they look for their "home" on a handbag. This approach to mobile marketing takes away passive viewing, allowing Fendi to potential work around consumers' shrinking attention spans ([see story](#)).

"I want all of the activity, engagement, activation campaigns that our partners do to be measureable and to showcase that this is not just a fad, this is not just a platform that is going to go away," Instagram's Ms. Oluwole said.

"This is transforming consumer behavior and this is the opportunity today that brands have to be part of this revolution," she said. "They have the opportunity to connect with consumers of today and also build relationships with consumers of tomorrow."

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