

MARKETING

Livia Stefanini takes helm of Havas LuxHub UK

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Livia Stefanini

By MICKEY ALAM KHAN

Livia Stefanini has been named head of United Kingdom operations for Havas LuxHub, a leading agency focused on fashion, luxury and affluent marketing with global clients such as Hermès, Fabergé and Gemfields.

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The promotion comes a year after Ms. Stefanini joined the agency as global strategy director after serving at St. Luke's London and VCCP Australia with creative responsibilities. She is charged with building on existing client relationships and sourcing new business, as well as working with parent Havas Group's Havas Media International unit.

"As ecommerce grows and performance marketing demands increase, my personal concern lies in finding the right balance," Ms. Stefanini said.

The appointment was made weeks after **Tammy Smulders resigned** as global managing director of **Havas LuxHub** to head **Vice Media's fashion group**. Ms. Stefanini's position is newly created, while a replacement for Ms. Smulders has yet to be named.

In this Q&A, Ms. Stefanini discusses the state of the U.K. luxury market, her focus for the year ahead, Brexit's effect on British luxury, how the agency and its clients are adapting to the rapidly evolving media and marketing climate, and the current concerns of luxury advertisers. Please read on.

The promotion to head of Havas LuxHub U.K. must have come with a stiff mandate. What is it about this role that will challenge you?

Everything will challenge me more clients, more partners, more new business opportunities, more technologies and platforms to work with. But these are good challenges. It's exciting.

What is the state of the U.K. luxury market?

Tough question. In general, the market is doing well, yet is naturally vulnerable to a global shift from luxury products to luxury experiences.

However it's hard to define the market with national boundaries. The U.K. is a top destination for luxury buyers from

all over the world. Thanks to international spending, the luxury retail market remains strong and a hub for luxury shopping.

The market for U.K. luxury brands or more specifically, British brands has some really powerful players, but many of the brands feel quite international, too.

While Burberry leads the charge for British heritage, Stella McCartney, Alexander McQueen and Christopher Kane fall under the Kering empire and Victoria Beckham has proven her international scale by showing in New York Fashion Week.

Will Brexit affect luxury sales in the country?

It has already. The dropping sterling has encouraged luxury consumption from tourists, particularly in London.

I remember when I was a teenager in Rome just before the euro was introduced and American tourists would line up outside of Prada and Gucci stores to buy half-priced goods because the exchange rate was so favourable.

I don't think it will ever be that way with British luxury brands in the U.K. Retailers have been quick to adjust their prices.

On the other hand, Brexit will certainly affect U.K. luxury sales negatively if high-net-worth individuals start fleeing.

Agencies, similar to the media world, are undergoing tremendous change. How is Havas LuxHub adapting? Brands need to communicate across more platforms with relevant and appropriate content.

A brand's organic story needs to be always on. We need to do more with less and not think by channel.

Havas LuxHub focuses on understanding the audience and their influencers first what makes them tick. This process is channel agnostic and can then be turned into an insightful, but holistic media approach.

Who are some of your leading U.K. clients?

It's quite a mixture and a pretty international mix. From Herms to Faberg to Gemfields, we work with a brilliant range of clients.

What kind of services is the U.K. shop currently offering that will evolve or enhance under your leadership?

I've benefited from great leadership since I joined last year and am looking forward to continuing to grow our vision across media, creative and content.

For premium media services, it's about combining efficient planning with total brand safety and sophisticated experiences.

With my background in creative though, I'm eager to expand our creative and content offerings.

Will you expect to interact with other Havas LuxHub outposts worldwide in a more integrated manner?

Absolutely. While the focus is our clients' business interests here, their needs are usually multimarket.

The global Havas network is extremely synched up and we collaborate all the time on client briefs, thought pieces, insights and new business efforts.

What are some of the leading concerns of luxury advertisers in this environment?

As ecommerce grows and performance marketing demands increase, my personal concern lies in finding the right balance.

A brand performance approach requires a mixed media and content strategy. More with less.

Your take on what marketers can expect in 2018.

It's a cluttered market and everyone is searching for authenticity.

The jig is up with some influencers, so 2018 will be about micro-influencers and smarter, more valuable social reach.

There is also a trend back to longer video content housed across a series of owned digital platforms, yet with programmatic TV on the horizon. Smaller brands with smaller budgets will be able to target specific audiences with classic TV adverts.

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