

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Dolce & Gabbana risks alienating older customers to draw in millennials

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Dolce & Gabbana's spring/summer 2018 campaign contrasts hip young models with unfashionable older people. Image credit: Dolce & Gabbana

By DANNY PARISI

Italian fashion house Dolce & Gabbana's latest campaign for spring/summer 2018 is focused on millennials, a strategy now taken by the brand for a number of consecutive seasons. But could this alienate its older audience?

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The fashion house's newest advertising campaign presents a stark contrast between the hip, young models at the forefront and the unfashionable, awkward older people shown in the backgrounds of the photos. While an effective tactic for drawing in younger audiences, older customers may be put off by the campaign's message.

Age gap

Fashion houses must maintain a delicate balancing act when it comes to age demographics.

For one, fashion is all about what is new and hip, with young models and celebrities being some of the most sought-after people in fashion. At the same time, many houses, such as Dolce & Gabbana, have a long legacy going back dozens of years, meaning that they retain customers well into old age.

This presents a challenge when marketing, as brands do not want to alienate any potential or established clients.



An image from the new campaign. Image credit: Dolce & Gabbana

Dolce & Gabbana's latest spring/summer 2018 campaign toes that line with a series of photos of hip young people contrasted with stodgy older people in unfashionable outfits.

The brand has created multiple campaigns in this mold over the years, but few with this explicit of a juxtaposition between young and old.

The risk comes from the fact that the brand may be alienating the many older customers who still enjoy its products, particularly those that have been buying Dolce & Gabbana products for years.

Dolce & Gabbana is counting on the fact that those customers will remain loyal in exchange for a bit of light teasing in an effort to bring in new, young customers, who will hopefully remain with the brand well into the future.

Spending power

While millennial consumers have the weakest buying power, they are the most likely of any adult generation to have purchased a luxury good or service within the last 12 months, according to a report from the Shullman Research Center.

A lot has been made of the up-and-coming consumers, as marketers seek to woo them to their brand even before many of them have the means to make high-end purchases. This strategy may pay off down the line, but luxury brands would be smart not to ignore more established clientele ([see story](#)).

The older generations, the baby boomers and Generation Xers, control the "lion's share" of luxury spending across nine categories, which include apparel, travel and personal care, among others, for a combined spend of \$215 billion for the year. In the inaugural "2016 Affluent Perspective Global Study," presented in New York on May 3, YouGov forecast affluent spending, the difference between the two main demographics and how each approaches and interacts with luxury brands ([see story](#)).



An image from the new campaign. Image credit: Dolce & Gabbana

What is more is that older luxury consumers do not even differ from younger ones much in terms of how they shop. Discussions of how to market to the online luxury consumer are often missing a crucial point: pretty much all luxury shoppers are online.

Speaking at Luxury Interactive 2017 Oct. 17, an executive from Cushnie Et Ochs presented data on the demographics of luxury consumers, particularly in regards to which demographics tend to do the most online shopping. While young people definitely do more online shopping than others, pretty much all luxury shoppers of any demographic group regularly use online for luxury shopping ([see story](#)).

Dolce & Gabbana's older customers may not be dissuaded from buying because of some light-hearted ribbing, but when older luxury buyers can be just as valuable as younger ones, a balance must be struck between the two.

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