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RETAIL

How Moda Operandi sold $86K earrings through a mobile app

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Moda Operandi's showroom sales have been massively popular. Image credit: Moda Operandi

By DANNY PARISI

NEW YORK After convincing consumers to spend on categories such as high-end fashion and jewelry online, retailer Moda Operandi is branching out into the world of home furnishings.

In a discussion during Initiatives in Art and Culture's Gold Conference on April 13, Moda Operandi's CEO Deborah Nicodemus spoke about her management style, the world of online luxury retail and more. In the fireside chat moderated by Luxury Daily's editor-in-chief Mickey Alam Khan, Ms. Nicodemus spoke about how the platform's showrooms have driven profits.

"We serve at the most 500 people on an annual basis at our showroom spaces," Ms. Nicodemus said. "We don't serve foot traffic at all.

"Not only does the showroom help us be more connected to our client, but also we understand more about their culture and their community."

Online sales

Since Moda Operandi's founding in 2010, the company has worked tirelessly to establish itself as one of the premier names in the luxury ecommerce world.

The company has experienced resounding success in the intervening years, raking in massive profits and quickly gaining a reputation that puts it in the same league as competitors such as Net-A-Porter.

Ms. Nicodemus attributes this success to the company's multivariate business model. Moda Operandi has three main channels: the trunk club in which customers can buy clothes straight from the runway after a fashion show, its curated in-season shop online which hosts pieces from a number of big brands and its lucrative showrooms.

Moda Operandi CEO Deborah Nicodemus. Image credit: Moda Operandi

In 2014, Moda Operandi opened a bricks-and-mortar showroom in London where customers can enter by appointment to shop a collection curated solely and uniquely for them. This showroom format has been incredibly profitable for Moda Operandi, and after opening another successful location in New York in 2016, the company has big plans to open more of them across the globe.

In addition to the New York and London locations, Moda Operandi plans showrooms in Hong Kong, Shanghai, Seoul, Vancouver, Geneva and Paris.

Luxury ecommerce

Moda Operandi's online operations have also been wildly successful.

While the average spend on the brand's mobile application is around $1,300, Ms. Nicodemus proudly recounted that one of the retailer's first sales through mobile was a pair of earrings priced at $86,000.

At that price, online sales protocol shifts. Rather than shipping something through the post, Moda Operandi hand delivers it in person to maintain the luxury feel.

Moda Operandi's success has allowed the retailer to partner with some of the biggest names in luxury. For example, the retailer collaborated with Italy's Prada on a 20-piece edit of kitten heels and flats.

Moda Operandi x Prada. Image credit: Moda Operandi

The sling-back Prada styles were developed in partnership with the brand, including the use of brocade fabric seen in its spring/summer 2018 ready-to-wear collection, and were exclusive to Moda Operandi. Launched Dec. 15, the footwear capsule marked the first time Moda Operandi has partnered with Prada (see story).

Once area that the retailer has not yet broached is video. Despite selling $86,000 earrings online, the retailer only provides simple, albeit high quality, photographs of products.

However, Ms. Nicodemus acknowledges that video is something the brand is interested in exploring more in the future.

"For us to have video, we would have to have video across the entire site," Ms. Nicodemus said. "We are not ready to invest in that yet.

"We know video is important; whether it's from the runway or with a designer," she said. "Oftentimes when we are in the market, we engage with our clients and they want to see a video of how a pair of earrings move.

"Seeing how a product moves can be very important."