

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

Waldorf Astoria's new digital campaign is inspired by consumer data

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Waldorf Astoria has released its first digital-led campaign. Image credit: Waldorf Astoria

By SARAH RAMIREZ

Hilton's Waldorf Astoria Hotels & Resorts has launched its first digital-led campaign motivated by consumer insight data as rapidly-changing luxury travel trends shift how travel brands need to cater to affluent guests.

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The "Live Unforgettable" campaign playfully highlights Waldorf Astoria's commitment to service in three 15-second spots, with each storyline featuring the concierge helping to fulfill customers' offbeat requests. Waldorf's commitment to evolving its strategy around consumer insight with this campaign exhibits the necessity to adapt to the new normal for luxury travel brands, and using data to do so.

"Customer research is at the core of everything we do as marketers and communicators," said A. Taylor Rains, managing partner **Flugel Consulting**, Charleston, SC. "In an effort to move quickly, though, it is often relegated to the final steps of a campaign as an evaluation tactic rather than a formative element of the strategy.

"When brands take the time to craft a concerted, research-based strategy like Waldorf Astoria has done here it can make all the difference," he said.

"Our research and insights showed that today's luxury consumers are looking for a mix of both the expected with the unexpected, the humorous with the bold," said Kellyn Smith Kenny, chief marketing officer, **Hilton Worldwide**, McLean, VA. "And even though the tone of this campaign is playful, it is still grounded in the True Waldorf Service that our guests experience at every one of our iconic locations around the world."

Concierge hustle

The three vignettes were filmed at the Waldorf Astoria Versailles, Trianon Palace in France. Fashion industry veterans Ward Ivan Rafik and Columbine Goldsmith photographed and directed the campaign, respectively.

All of the videos emphasize face-to-face interactions, a conscious choice made based on consumer data. Hilton partnered with third-party research firm Survata to survey nearly 1,500 luxury consumers over the age of 25.

Among those surveyed, nearly 70 percent said they preferred to interact with an in-person concierge while staying at a hotel.



The "Live Unforgettable" campaign was filmed at Waldorf Astoria Versailles. Image credit: Waldorf Astoria

Each spot follows the same formula: a guest rings the Waldorf Astoria concierge with a request. The staff is shown helping with the details of the request before everything is revealed for the guest and the viewers.

In "Gameday," two staff members are seen assembling a ping pong table and then playing with a family, while others look on. A young girl wins the tournament, and a concierge even hoists her on his shoulders to celebrate.

"Spa for Two" shows off the resort's pool and spa accommodations. A woman is seen floating on a board while holding her small dog, with the pool covered in flower petals.

In "Sundae," a couple enjoy an elaborate ice cream sundae party with the help of the Waldorf Astoria kitchen staff.



The "Live Unforgettable" campaign emphasizes face-to-face customer service. Image credit: Waldorf Astoria

The brief videos also highlight different locations of the Waldorf Astoria Versailles resort.

While "Spa" is set in the pool area, "Sundae" shows off an immaculate kitchen, a winding staircase and a bright and airy guest room. "Gameday" primarily takes place in an expansive interior foyer.

None of the spots feature a voiceover. Instead an upbeat score accompanies each scene, letting the positive customer service experiences speak for themselves.

Changing travel attitudes

Waldorf Astoria is far from the only luxury hospitality brand that is trying to appeal to evolving consumer mindsets. Brands have to balance their long-standing reputations while staying fresh.

As travelers seek more cultural experiences while traveling, Ritz-Carlton recently opened its Yacht Collection for bookings. The yachting journeys will offer a variety of cultural immersion activities, such as local cooking classes, local musician performances and more as visitors immerse themselves in their destinations ([see story](#)).

Last year, Waldorf Astoria partnered with Asian private aviation firm Deer Jet to create a one-of-a-kind journey with its transit experience mirroring the trip itself. Deer Jet offers business travelers trips to Rome and Paris at Waldorf Astoria hotel locations ([see story](#)).

For the "Live Unforgettable" campaign, however, Waldorf Astoria is putting its customer service in the spotlight.

"Much of the brand's historic campaigns have focused on just that: a legacy of excellence," Mr. Raines said. "While that heritage lends credence to much of Waldorf Astoria's unique value, it's undeniably secondary to the customer experience in these campaigns."

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