

JEWELRY

Buccellati taps virtual influencer to court younger consumers

July 23, 2018



Virtual influencer Noonoori stars in a new Buccellati campaign. Image credit: Buccellati

By SARAH RAMIREZ

Italian jeweler Buccellati is enlisting a popular influencer to showcase the brand's signature honeycomb pattern in a campaign that speaks to the social media generation.

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With more than 77,000 Instagram followers, computed-generated avatar Noonoori has a large audience that a number of luxury brands have been interested in reaching. This virtual personality is an unexpected choice of partner for Buccellati, since the more traditional house is tapping into an emerging marketing tactic.

"This is very forward-thinking for a luxury jewelry brand," said Donnie Pacheco, cofounder and principal at **Clean Channel Consulting**, Seattle. "While [Noonoori's] followers may not be in the market for Buccellati jewelry today, it plants the seed with them now and will stick with them."

Mr. Pacheco is not affiliated with Buccellati, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

Introducing Noonoori

Noonoori is the brain child of Joerg Zuber, the creative director at German-based design and branding agency Opium Effect. Her persona is engaging and sweet, and she is often wearing high-end labels, including Balmain and Chanel, on Instagram.

"In a world where everybody screams, she is delicate, soft-spoken and elegant," said MariaCristina Buccellati, global marketing and communications director at **Buccellati**. "We like the way she proposes herself and we find it very close to our philosophy."

On the behalf of Buccellati, Noonoori appears in a short film and on Instagram.

The film opens up with Noonoori swathed in a luxurious fabric in Buccellati blue. Behind her, a life-size Buccellati piece begins forming in the house's signature honeycomb pattern. Diamonds float into their places.

Buccellati's short film highlights its honeycomb pattern

Noonoouri walks through the jewelry as it continues forming and then is shown wearing Buccellati's Camelia earrings. Her long, silky hair is in a chic bun, letting the diamond and gold earrings truly shine.

A matching Camelia pendant begins forming around Noonooouri's neck, again emphasizing Buccellati's jewelry-making techniques.

As the film ends, fabric continues to wrap around Noonooouri and she blows a kiss to the camera.

"The campaign reflects the Buccellati brand by keeping the focus on the jewelry," Mr. Pacheco said. "Jewelry is visible, and often the sole focus, in just about every second of the video."



Noonoouri wears matching jewelry from Buccellati. Image credit: Buccellati

Noonoouri also walks fans through a tour of Buccellati's studio on Instagram Stories.

Its jewelry-making process begins with tracing and piercing. To create the honeycomb texture, the thin gold plate is hand-sawed.

Pieces are also engraved, polished and plated.

"In visiting our workshop, [Noonoouri] really captured the essence of our brand," Ms. Buccellati said.

Digital influence

Buccellati has begun embracing digital changes in retail and marketing.

Last year, Buccellati expanded its online retail presence by partnering with ecommerce player Net-A-Porter.

The retailer shared Buccellati's availability with consumers via its weekly "The Chic List," an email newsletter with the "essential style update[s]" for the week ahead. In recent months, Net-A-Porter has strengthened its jewelry and watch category through retail partnerships with luxury's leading brands ([see story](#)).

Buccellati now joins a growing list of luxury brands that have teamed up with virtual influencers.

Fashion labels Moncler and Prada are among the brands that have worked with Lil Miquela, a computer generated Instagram star whose audience now numbers more than 1 million, to debut products or build hype around an event.

While luxury brands continue to adopt influencer marketing strategies, it is not always easy to connect partnerships with personalities into conversions. Virtual celebrities in particular are still gaining traction, though they are beginning to enter the mainstream in countries like Japan ([see story](#)).

Before being recruited by the Milanese jeweler, Noonooouri had worked with several high-end brands, including Gucci and Dior.

"Noonoouri is known for wearing luxury brands and high-end fashion, so it is a good fit for the Buccellati brand," Mr. Pacheco said. "Luxury retailers benefit from enlisting digital influencers by gaining exposure to the influencer's followers."

Noonoouri's appeal to millennials and Gen Z is especially valuable.

"We thought Noonooouri could be an unexpected and surprising way to propose our products to younger and modern targets fond of the digital world," Ms. Buccellati said.

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