

LUXURY MEMO SPECIAL REPORTS

## Audio marketing – Luxury Memo special report

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*Podcasts offer a way to reach consumers through audio. Image credit: Bang & Olufsen*

By NANCY BUCKLEY

Branded content offers the potential for a connection with consumers beyond selling a product. But audio content, such as podcasts and playlists, presents an opportunity for brands to craft a longer narrative.

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It is estimated 112 million Americans have listened to a podcast and 67 million Americans listen monthly, while 45 percent of global consumers use music streaming services. This immense population of potential consumers serves a community brands can reach through narrative content and audio to establish a deeper connection with consumers.

"Smart luxury brands now all curate and share their own music playlists," said Louis Viallet, CMO and cofounder of **Soundsgood**, Paris. "As conveyors of culture and lifestyle models, it was only natural for luxury brands to share their own.

"Branded playlists embody their vision, their values, their core message," he said.

### Top 5 trends in audio marketing

- Branded podcasts

Brands are constantly looking for ways to connect with their consumers. Podcasts are branded advertising that consumers can connect with on a less invasive platform.

- Podcast public awareness

It is estimated 67 million people listened to a podcast in the last month, and 42 million people listened in the past week. These numbers are almost immeasurable when it comes to advertising. If a branded podcast can make it to the top of the podcast charts, the reach of potential consumers seems endless.

- Playlists offer a personal touch

Crafting a playlist has historically been a sign of affection. Whether it be an admirer recording a cassette tape or burning a CD, or a friend creating the perfect playlist for every occasion, creating a list of songs is

associated with those who people care about the most. When a brand creates a playlist, it is taking a personal role in a consumer's life and offering a piece of itself.

- The top coming down

CEOs often seem to be on a different level than the company, and podcasts, both branded and not, have offered an opportunity to introduce the highest executives of a company to the consumer, humanizing them.

- Ads in the middle

Any listener of a free streaming service knows about the repetitive ads that come on between songs. As brands enter the audio world they are reverting back to advertisement styles from years ago that aired on radio stations. However these placements are now streamed through apps such as Spotify or Apple Music.

#### Audio social media

Storytelling is a central part of luxury brand building today, but some marketers think beyond text or video to share their perspectives.

A number of brands including Chanel and Harvey Nichols have developed podcasts, looking to the medium as a means of connecting with consumers over audio. While still a relatively new concept for marketing, podcasts offer an appealing audience for luxury brands ([see story](#)).



*The barneys podcast logo*

Department store chain Barneys New York added entertainment to its repertoire of offerings with a new endeavor.

Barneys has taken on podcasting with a new series dedicated to a sophisticated, yet lively discussion. Fashion, culture, style and design are all topics covered in "The Barneys Podcast."

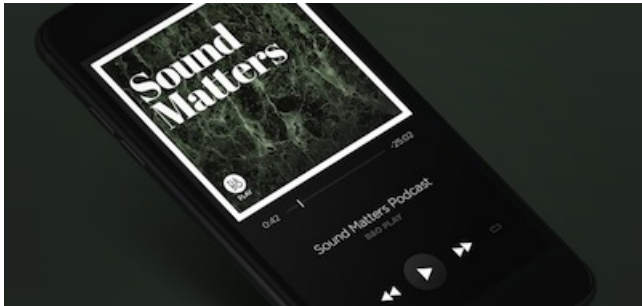


*Barneys podcast video still*

"Being at the center of the creative and fashion worlds, Barneys New York has so many stories to tell," said Daniella Vitale, CEO and president of Barneys New York, in a statement. "We are so excited to share these fun and thought-provoking conversations with some of the most interesting people in fashion, design, art and media" ([see story](#)).

The podcast began in May 2018 and has received high ratings. The episodes can include general interviews or feature time-specific conversations, such as during Barneys' #WhatPrideMeanToMe campaign, which featured window displays, a short film, a social media initiative and a podcast episode that focused on building a conversation around Pride Month ([see story](#)).

Bang & Olufsen also has a branded podcast that shows "sound matters"



*Image from Bang & Olufsen's podcast*

Bang & Olufsen's Sound Matters is housed on the brand's BeoPlay Journal page and was promoted on its social channels to boost awareness and interest. Curating sounds that align with a brand's ethos can help share DNA while allowing consumers to explore its products and message ([see story](#)).

In September, LVMH will also launch a branded podcast series titled "Confidences Particulieres" that will introduce some of LVMH's talents to listeners.

Consistently published podcasts by luxury labels are not very common, but some have taken part in podcast series, especially in the wake of a certain event for the brand.

For example, Chanel nodded to its history in a collection and corresponding campaign that reimagined classic designs.

Fronted by It girl Kaia Gerber, the brand's "Handbag Stories" effort was shot in Coco Chanel's apartment at 31 Rue Cambon. Chanel keeps its brand heritage close, frequently looking to its founder's legacy for marketing efforts and design inspiration.

In addition to the advertising campaign, Handbag Stories also comprised a podcast series.



*Kaia Gerber for Chanel Handbag Stories. Image credit: Chanel*

Episodes featured influencers including Margaret Zhang and Soo Joo Park discussing Chanel's bags with host Amanda Harlech in Ms. Chanel's apartment. For instance, author Anne Berest discusses the love of literature seen in both Ms. Chanel and Mr. Lagerfeld, saying that it shows their inquisitiveness ([see story](#)).

Chanel has previously tapped into podcasts to engage its audience.

During its month-long pop-up at Colette, Chanel produced a biweekly podcast hosted by fashion journalist Daphn Hzard. During the podcast, Ms. Hzard invited friends from film, literature, music and dance to participate ([see](#)

story).

Branded podcasts, whether they be reoccurring or a limited-time series, are not very common among luxury houses, but it is becoming increasingly more common for podcast hosts to appear in campaigns and brand executives to appear on other podcasts.

For example, Nordstrom took a humorous approach to marketing its Anniversary Sale, showing that fashion can also be fun.

*Your Wardrobe is Calling - Nordstrom Anniversary 2018*

The Anniversary Sale campaign featured a number of comedians, including Phoebe Robinson, author, actress and one half of the "2 Dope Queens" podcast (see story).

Similarly, Selfridges immersed consumers in an exploration of luxury's modern meaning through a multi-sensory exhibition.



*Selfridges' The Flipside takes a multimedia approach. Image courtesy of Selfridges*

Titled "The Flipside," the exhibit featured displays that showcased a variety of interpretations of the concept of luxury. In addition to the installations, Selfridges hosted events at The Flipside, including a live taping of the podcast "The High Low" (see story).

### Infinite playlist

Creating a playlist has long been a sign of affection for a significant other or a close friend, since crafting a curated playlist allows a person to share their favorite songs for every moment.

From Apple Music and Spotify to Pandora, brands have numerous options to create the ultimate playlist.

For example, Chlo partnered with Apple Music to delve into then creative director Claire Waight Keller's free-spirited music tastes.

For the music streaming platform's fashion curator series, the designer hosted a month-long takeover during July 2016, sharing her ideal summer playlists. Through this placement, Chlo was able to showcase its perspective to Apple Music's 13 million subscribers (see story).

Similarly, Christopher Bailey commemorated his time as chief creative officer of British fashion house Burberry with a soundtrack exclusive to Apple Music.



*George Ezra performed at Burberry's "Burberry brings London to Shanghai" event. Image credit: Burberry*

Under Mr. Bailey's creative direction, Burberry has had a long-standing relationship with music. Since joining Burberry in 2001, Mr. Bailey has incorporated music into the core of the brand's retail experience, runway presentations, events and campaigns, as well as through support of musical talent ([see story](#)).

In addition, Galeries Lafayette ushered in festival season with an immersive celebration of music in all forms.



*Galeries Lafayette's "Music Machines" will be up for a month and a half. Image credit: Galeries Lafayette*

Galeries Lafayette's "Music Machines" campaign spanned pop-ups, live concerts, workshops and a contest, engaging consumers through sights, sounds and experiences. Bricks-and-mortar retail is increasingly leveraging experiences that go beyond the commercial to surprise and delight shoppers.

For Music Machines, Galeries Lafayette teamed with electronic music DJ, composer and producer Pedro Winter. The founder of Ed Banger Records had a hand in everything from the artistic direction to the programming, acting as the campaign's "conductor" ([see story](#)).

Gucci had a similar campaign when it heralded its debut in New York's SoHo neighborhood by paying homage to one of the area's cultural heydays.



*Gucci Wooster keeps many of the building's architectural details intact. Image courtesy of Gucci*



In honor of its first store in SoHo, Gucci put a lens on the artsy scene that developed in the neighborhood in the 1980s, as it attracted creatives such as musician Blondie and painter Jean-Michel Basquiat. Dubbed Gucci Wooster, the brand's almost 10,000-square-foot boutique is designed to mirror its home, creating an eclectic space for both creativity and commerce ([see story](#)).

Pat McGrath Labs ushered in a new era of retail, which combines music and products for a highly tailored purchasing experience through innovation.

Spotify crossed a major line into retail, which allows users to purchase products related to an artist of interest without having to leave the application. A line from Pat McGrath Labs was touted through a partnership with music artist Maggie Lindemann, in both marketing and retail.



*Image courtesy of Merchbar*

Spotify is now taking a step towards commerce that will provide listeners a way to purchase products related to whatever artist the user is listening to.

Pat McGrath Labs was the first brand to usher in Spotify's new commerce initiative. Users listening to Ms. Lindemann will have the opportunity to purchase items from the new line, which was created in partnership with the music artist.

The Merchbar popped up on Spotify with merchandise and tour tickets for that particular artist. However, for the Merchbar launch, Ms. Lindemann featured the new beauty collab line from Pat McGrath Labs ([see story](#)).

Beyond curating playlists, luxury brands are also turning music producers.

Jeweler Tiffany & Co.'s spring campaign "Believe in Dreams" remixed the window shopping scene from "Breakfast at Tiffany's," casting actress Elle Fanning as the protagonist.

Tiffany's effort centered on an original hip-hop track of the song "Moon River" performed by Ms. Fanning and A\$AP Ferg. This marked the brand's first music recording, which was available to stream ([see story](#)).

*Behind-the-scenes of Tiffany's recording of "Moon River" with A\$AP Ferg and Elle Fanning*

"People stream music now," Mr. Viallet said. "And mostly, they stream playlists. Playlists are editorial by essence, they tell a story, they allow listeners to dive into emotional realms and really connect with the curators editing these playlists."

Best practices in luxury audio marketing

- Louis Viallet, Soundsgood
  - "Even before music streaming was the new paradigm, luxury brands had always been intimately close to music. At Soundsgood, we help them making sure that music does not stay in their stores, fashion shows, private events, hotel lobbies, airline business classes, etc. We design playlist strategies for brands and distribute their playlists across all streaming services, including Spotify, Apple Music, YouTube, Deezer,

Napster, Qobuz, SoundCloud, etc. We also provide universal playlist links that anyone can stream no matter what streaming service they use.

- "These universal links are often shared by luxury brands on social networks, Web sites, newsletters, CRM activation campaigns, but also directly in physical touch points as a gift to customers."

- Erin Styles, Spotify

- "Meet your audience where they are: Your listeners will hear your message between songs during their listening session. If you choose to use background music, consider using similar music to your audience's listening preferences.
- "Know your listeners. Ads that are personalized to the listener see higher engagement. Considering including a targeted approach to your messaging. For instance, if targeting New York, say, 'Hey, New York!'
- "Get to the point. Take advantage of the first few seconds to introduce yourself, your business and the purpose of your ad.
- "Include a call-to-action. Ads that have a direct call-to-action have clickthrough rates that are about three times higher than those with none. Ask the listener to do something, such as 'tap to find a location,' and they'll be more likely to engage with your ad.
- "Be clear and stay on message. Focus on the most important point you want the listener to walk away with. Try to avoid skits, jokes or testimonials that make it difficult for listeners to connect with your brand.
- "Communicate benefits. Talk about exclusives, sales or promotional codes in your audio ad.
- "Keep a consistent tone and tempo. For a 30-second ad, aim for between 55 to 75 words and try to keep your pace even throughout."