

INTERNET

What brands lose by not joining Twitter

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By KAYLA HUTZLER

Luxury brands such as fashion house Bottega Veneta, swimsuit and lingerie designer Eres and carmaker Bentley have been slow to adapt to the growing importance of Twitter in the social media landscape.

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Twitter, originally taken over by celebrities and gossip bloggers, has grown into a successful channel for brands to reach consumers on a global scale. The quick 160-character messages are just enough to lure busy consumers in, yet some brands still appear hesitant to create accounts.

“Social media has changed the way in which luxury brands promote themselves,” said David Langton, global marketing manager at ICLP, London.

“[It] calls for openness to allow conversations to take place without [brands] being in ultimate control, something quite alien to them historically,” he said.

“This perhaps is the most primitive reason why brands might be holding off creating a presence, but if implemented correctly the benefits can certainly outweigh the concerns.”

ICLP is a global loyalty marketing agency.

Tweet nothings

Luxury brands may have first steered clear of social media due to its mass-appeal nature.

But since the release of Facebook in 2007, almost every big luxury brand has created a Facebook account.

The one big-player exception is Italian fashion house Prada which has never joined the social media site.

Excluding Prada, virtually every luxury brand from Aston Martin to Ermenegildo Zegna has a Facebook account.

Despite watching the skyrocketing of Facebook as an exceedingly important customer relationship and engagement platform, many luxury brands are still lagging behind in the Twitter world.

For example, Eres was hesitant to join social media of any type.

The brand only founded its Facebook page at the beginning of June, using the page to share products and campaign snapshots with fans.

Eres still has not created a Twitter account, though it would make sense for the brand to start one soon given the summer season.

In addition, Bottega Veneta has an active Facebook account that the brand uses to post pictures, videos and new products.

Bottega Veneta has 59,290 Facebook fans and an established YouTube channel, but the brand has still does not have an active Twitter handle.



Bottega Veneta added 10 new photos to the album **BOTTEGA VENETA UNVEILS FIRST WOMEN'S FRAGRANCE AT TOKYO LAUNCH.**



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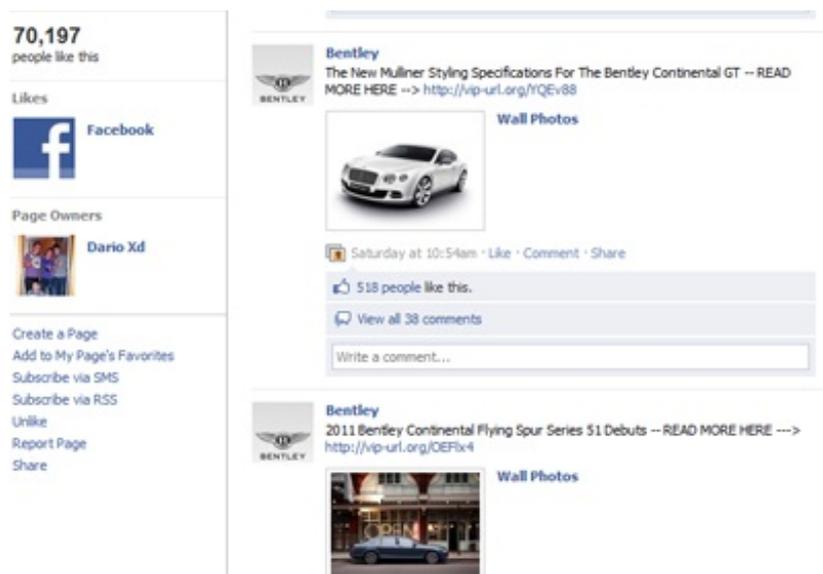


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Also, Bentley also has a Facebook account that the carmaker uses its Facebook to post product and company news.

The brand has 70,191 Facebook fans, but still not has joined Twitter.



The image shows a screenshot of the Bentley Facebook page. On the left sidebar, it displays '70,197 people like this', the Facebook logo, and the page owner 'Dario Xd'. The main content area shows two posts from Bentley. The first post is titled 'The New Mulliner Styling Specifications For The Bentley Continental GT' and includes a photo of a white Bentley Continental GT. The second post is titled '2011 Bentley Continental Flying Spur Series 51 Debuts' and includes a photo of a Bentley Continental Flying Spur. Both posts have engagement metrics like 'Like', 'Comment', and 'Share'.

Tweet somethings

There are many reasons from a branding perspective and from a management standpoint that are causing brands to hesitate.

"Traditionally, luxury brands owed part of their success to the very fact that they weren't readily accessible by all people," said Ron Schott, senior analyst at [Spring Creek Group](#), Seattle.

"Putting their brands on sites where people from all over the spectrum can interact with their brands could prove to be a bit frightening for worry of diluting the brand," he said.

Another reason that brands might be hesitant to start a social media site is that they do not see the incentive to have a social presence as it is hard to measure the ROI of such an effort, according to Mr. Langton.

Social media is relatively new, and many brands have been successful through their traditional marketing approach, primarily focusing on brand communications over building direct customer relationships.

For instance, skin-care line L'Occitane recently launched a photo project to engage global consumers on Twitter and Facebook ([see story](#)).

Also, Barneys and The Row recently used social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter to hype up the Olsen twins' first handbag collection ([see story](#)).

Another large factor is the amount of resources available to the brand.

Establishing a presence and providing the ongoing support and maintenance that a channel requires is an extensive amount of work, per Mr. Langton.

Some luxury brands have invested and now have in-house specialists who are responsible for updating these social media platforms.

However many brands may not be geared up to do this yet, he said.

Additionally, there is often a debate about where social media actually sits in an organization.

Facebook and Twitter can be used for brand and marketing communications, public relations or customer service.

“Getting involved can be quite ominous for luxury brands,” Mr. Langton said. “[However], the ones who harness the insight and who can build longer term relationships with their customer base can use [social media] to their advantage.

“Without a dialogue with customers, say, on Facebook, brands also risk losing a future share of a potential new market in ecommerce as many brands have already established revenue-generating opportunities through e-stores on Facebook,” he said.

“It comes back to having a well-considered strategy and defined objectives before any attempt to introduce social media is made.”

Final Take

Kayla Hutzler, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York