

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Ettinger brings heritage to the modern, global world

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Ettinger globalizes British heritage. Image credit: Ettinger

By BRIELLE JAEKEL

Retail and luxury are becoming more globalized, paving the way for high-end brands such as British leather goods maker Ettinger to expand their businesses to the world.

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Ettinger focuses on craftsmanship on a personal level, but with globalization taking over, the house is finding new ways to reach the international consumer. As it moves forward, Ettinger is focusing on the customer experience as well as developing products for different markets to adjust to a more worldwide client base.

"Making luxury leather products is not a science, but an art that has developed over hundreds of years against a backdrop of changing British art and fashion and evolving craftsmanship techniques and design," said Robert Ettinger, CEO of [Ettinger](#). "In fact a major change was witnessed by our factory.

"They made bridles, saddles and carriage harnesses at the end of the 19th century, when the horse was the predominate form of transport," he said. "With the advent of the motorcar, they survived by changing production over to making leather accessories."

In this Q&A, Mr. Ettinger details how the heritage brand is taking on new strategies for today. Here is the dialogue:



Robert Ettinger, CEO of Ettinger. Image credit: Ettinger

How does Ettinger focus on bringing a heritage brand into today?

Our heritage manifests itself in all our products from the design to the stitching. British luxury is a certain look, a certain style that adapts itself readily to today's requirements.

We very often, but not always, bring our heritage brand into today by making a modern take on a British classic.

We are, as you can see, used to change and readily adapt. Perhaps this is how we have always kept our brand highly relevant for today.

We can be both reactive and proactive, and being a family business, things can happen much faster.

What are some unique aspects of Ettinger's digital strategy?

Perhaps our biggest priority is to enhance the customer experience. First and foremost our Web site has to be a nice place to be.

It is our window to the world and daily work is made on making the experience online as similar to being in our showroom talking face-to-face with our sales team. Our highly skilled Web site customer care team are second to none.

It is also our current view that digital starts and ends with honest photography and video. As we see viewing time on phones overtake television, our focus over the next few years is in video.

This will give us the chance to tell the Ettinger story like no print ad could do. and we really do have quite a story to tell.

What new trends is Ettinger tapping into in terms of product?

In term of new product in this global economy, it is necessary to be mindful of the different cultural and also age demographics of our customers. For example, in China most people now pay on their phones with either Alipay or WeChat, so a wallet is no longer of primary importance.

Therefore, Ettinger is very much extending its lifestyle range to satisfy modern Chinese demand. In Japan, although younger customers dominate, they like wallets with coin purses.

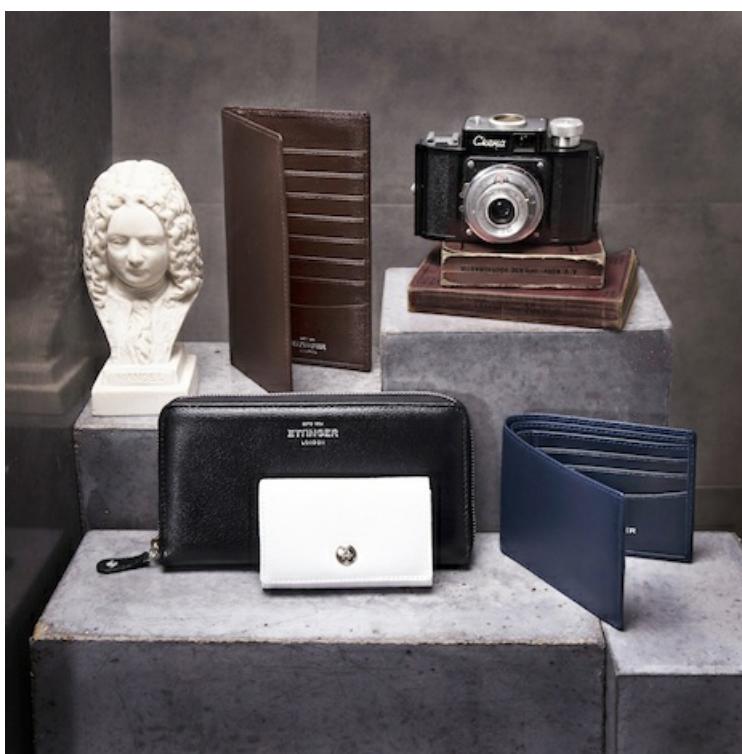
We also know that in order to grow the brand we must attract the millennials globally, particularly the potential high earners. These will be our future and must be nurtured accordingly.

What is Ettinger's globalization strategy?

In retail, we first really started in Japan, where we are now in 187 shops and have our own standalone store on the Ginza in Tokyo. Japan was the obvious start point because we had all the prerequisites: exceptional quality, a Royal Warrant, British heritage, style and creativity.

Now we seek to continue to build the brand globally, particularly focusing on men's top-of-the-range, multi-brand retailers and high-end department stores and we are in many stores internationally from the USA, to Canada, Italy, Germany, Seoul and many other countries. One of the challenges for luxury brands who wholesale is keeping control of not only price but location, as you do not want to see your products discounted or sold inappropriately either on- or off-line.

We also seek to grow our Web sales by continually investing in our Web site. The experience for our customers must be seamless and we must also attract customers on digital advertising platforms.



Ettinger's product offering. Image credit: Ettinger

How will/is Brexit affecting this or other parts of the Ettinger business?

It is the uncertainty that is making it so very difficult for business. The conflict and infighting in our government is extremely disappointing, when we need a united front working closely with Europe.

However, the most concerning aspect is trade agreements, in particular, import and export duties.

What does Ettinger have planned in the short term?

We will be marketing and selling our new Capra Collection and Spectrum Range. We also have some very interesting collaborative projects with interesting and artistic brands.

We will be further developing our digital platform, although we were in fact one of the few luxury brands quick off the mark to develop our own Web site.

We will be developing new markets through digital marketing, social media, print media and collaborations. It is always so difficult to establish which of these, in isolation, is the most effective as together they are all helping to grow the brand.

The long term?

Our five-year plan comes up for revision this spring, so we will be re-evaluating our strategies for growth for the next five and 10 years ahead.

How does Ettinger tackle influencer marketing or other exceedingly modern tools?

We tackle influencer marketing with extreme caution. We do use it, but it has to be someone we know who genuinely loves the brand and critically understands and is right for the brand.

Of course, our greatest influencer is Prince Charles, as he has bestowed The Royal Warrant on us. This honor signifies globally that we are an esteemed, trusted, reliable, quality brand. Many people say to us, "If it is good enough for the royal family then it is certainly good enough for us."