

INTERNET

Social endorsement makes Facebook a prime advertising platform

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By KAYLA HUTZLER

Facebook marketing offers a way for luxury brands to form a trusted, two-way dialogue with affluent consumers and gain more loyal followers by optimizing social endorsement.

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The social network's ads lets brands converse in a way that is more personal than any other type of consumer engagement. Due to the social-endorsement nature of Facebook, it also creates a more loyal fan base than paid search or digital banner advertising.

“Facebook advertising and the notion of social endorsement is really powerful,” said Matt Lawson, vice president of marketing at [Marin Software](#), San Francisco.

“It is very easy to buy a banner ad on the New York Times, or to buy a brand keyword on Google, but that doesn't have a personal feel to it,” he said.

“But when a brand is marketing on Facebook, it can buy ads and can easily target its audience by targeting the ad to people who are already fans, as well as their friend networks.”

Gaining face

Before a brand can advertise on Facebook, it needs to have an interactive and consistent Facebook presence.

This includes having an open wall where fans can post questions or concerns and allowing fans to leave comments on pictures or branded posts.

Other brands offer opportunities for consumers to participate in polls that let marketers quickly gauge reader feedback.

For example, department store Bergdorf Goodman uses Facebook polls to ask fun and entertaining questions to which consumers only need to fill in a bubble to respond.



In addition, Facebook is a suitable platform for imagery and allows brands to quickly post behind-the-scenes videos or campaign photos.

“For the same [imagery] reason a brand might advertise on television, they would also be on Facebook,” Mr. Lawson said. “However, the engagement is interactive.

“Facebook is a conversation you are having with your customers and most affluent people appreciate that,” he said.

“Luxury customers are expecting a certain type of reaction and the opportunity is there [on Facebook] for brands to grow their sales through word-of-mouth.”

Once a brand has an active page, it can begin to use its fans and followers for extremely targeted advertising opportunities.

Endorsing ads

The Facebook advertising technology offers extreme targeting options for luxury brands.

Brands should start placing Facebook ads on the sides of their fans' pages, since they are already interested in the brand and will be more apt to click-through the ads to the branded Web site.

In addition, luxury brands should place ads on the pages of their fans' friend networks.

When a brand does this, it can include a social endorsement feature that highlights which friends are already a fan of the brand on Facebook.

Social endorsement brings a personal level to the ads that other online advertising

cannot.

In terms of designing ads, it is important to update Facebook ads as much as possible. Updates can include keeping images and text fresh to highlight different aspects of the branded social media sites or Web site.

“What is challenging about Facebook is that brands are targeting a small audience, but the consumers log in four or five times a week, so they are seeing a brand’s ads a lot,” Mr. Lawson said.

“But if they see the same ad five times they will tune it out,” he said. “It’s important to put out new promotions or rotate the creative images so that a brand is always maintaining a freshness to keep click-through high.”

In addition, brands can place an extra focus on the social endorsement factor by promoting sponsored stories in a consumer’s news feeds.

This involves highlighting when a potential consumer’s friend “likes” the page or comments on a new feature.

For example, when a consumer checks out the Versace Facebook page, sponsored stories on the side column include Lily Pulitzer, Estee Lauder and Bluefly along with which friends like those brands.



“On Facebook, you have the added benefit of the social endorsement of your fans which entices their friends to check out the brand and see what people like about it,” Mr. Lawson said. “It’s a powerful concept and one that brands cannot underplay.”

“Once a brand has acquired fans to their page, it is easy to push promotions and offers, and keep consumers engaged so the brand can stay top of mind,” he said.

Final Take

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