

FRAGRANCE AND PERSONAL CARE

Beauty brands have to be aspirational, yet relatable: Givenchy Beauty exec

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Consumers are looking for authenticity and inclusivity in their beauty marketing. Image credit: Givenchy Beauty

By SARAH JONES

As the beauty purchase path becomes more complex and fragmented, owned media is an often overlooked opportunity for brands to build communities and establish loyalty from their existing client base.

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During a webinar hosted by Launchmetrics and moderated by the platform's senior vice president of industry relations Jessica Michault, a panel discussed the ways in which beauty marketing is changing, from the increased importance of word of mouth to the impact of influencers and the rise of consumer-facing launch events. Consumers today are looking for more personalized and less prescriptive beauty suggestions, and brands are finding more ways to engage their audiences directly or through trusted proxies to make a connection.

"Customers today refuse to be put into categories and be told what to buy," said Alison Bring, chief marketing officer at **Launchmetrics**. "They're looking for real recommendations, personalized interactions, true connections through every stage of that buying journey. It's more of a conversation than ever before."

Word of mouth

According to data from Launchmetrics, 74 percent of consumers are open to trying new products. Per panelist Mimi Banks, founder of **MB Social**, beauty fans have shifted from following big brands to seeking out and reveling in discovering indie products.

Jessica Barlow, vice president of communications at **Givenchy Beauty**, also believes this modern approach to beauty requires a change in how brands market. Instead of a counter salesperson attempting to communicate that everything the label offers is the best, it is more realistic for the consumer if the associate focuses on key hero products for their particular brand.

Partly due to this era of experimentation, there are now three times the number of touchpoints in the customer journey than there were 15 years ago, said Ms. Bring.

Earning the trust of a new consumer today largely revolves around word-of-mouth marketing, whether through influencers, celebrities or reviews.

For newer brands seeking to generate awareness, influencers hold significant power. They also represent half of luxury labels' share of voice.

The impact of an influencer promotion also has a wider reach than their own posts, as media and others share the news and earn more impressions.

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New Pump & Volume Mascara by @DIORMAKEUP ! Our newest campaign by @peterphilipsmakeup @studio_letiquette @stephanelancien #DIORSHOW THANK YOU

A post shared by (@bellahadid) on Apr 19, 2019 at 9:45am PDT

This campaign had a total impact of \$3.5 million for Dior across all media, including the brand's own channels

Traditional media is not dead, but today it only accounts for 28 percent of luxury beauty brands' total media impact value. Comparatively, for fashion brands, traditional media has a 60 percent share of voice.

While gaining attention from new customers is intriguing, it is more cost effective to hold on to existing clients. For instance, it takes \$4 to convert a new buyer, whereas former customers can be turned into return purchasers with \$1.

Brands' own channels are key to driving loyalty and share of wallet. Owned media is also less costly to implement for the amount of ROI it generates.

On average, beauty brands get back \$5.1 million per month in media impact value on their own channels.

Eighty percent of all beauty MIV is driven by YouTube, making brand-produced content such as tutorials a key engagement tactic.

Along with owned media, beauty brands also often neglect the potential in leveraging their retail partnerships to spread awareness and boost engagement. Regrams from a retailer, such as Sephora, that has an active community can help to give brands credibility or a bigger platform.

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A post shared by Sephora (@sephora) on Jul 23, 2019 at 11:32am PDT

Getting posts from retailers is one way to drive attention

Ms. Bring suggests that brands can negotiate social media placement as part of their wholesale deals, with stipulations for reposts or mentions.

Panelists also stressed that social media marketing is about listening, since consumer comments can tell a brand a lot about its own products.

Authenticity and inclusivity

Beauty more than other categories is shifting towards a younger audience, as millennials and Gen Z consumers gain more disposable income.

However, even with the rise of the Gen Zers, luxury brands need to consider whether chasing them is an on-brand move.

Ms. Barlow said that for Givenchy, a 14-year-old is not an authentic demographic for the brand to pursue, making teen-centric platforms such as TikTok a poor fit.

Consumers today are also guided by their values when it comes to beauty.

Ms. Banks pointed out that the beauty community is now far larger than it once was, with the addition of new clientele such as men.

There has also been a push towards more inclusivity and diversity. For instance, since 1990 makeup brands have collectively grown their available foundation selection range by 564 shades.

When Rihanna's Fenty Beauty came out, it hit on the beauty business' need to cater to a wider range of skin tones ([see story](#)). However, rather than jumping on the bandwagon about inclusivity, brands should instead think about whether they have the right positioning to back up a marketing move.

"While I think inclusivity is extremely important, I think that brands can't just do it for the sake of doing it," Ms. Banks said.

"You have to actually really mean it," she said. "Fenty means it, Fenty is about diversity, it's about that community, but when other brands don't have that same story, it actually does not work in their favor."

[View this post on Instagram](#)

When @badgalriri launched #FENTYBEAUTY in 2017, it was important to her to make sure it was available globally so everyone had access to it. We know we haven't reached everyone, but we hear you, and we're committed to making sure everyone is included. That's why we're bringing Fenty Beauty to Hong Kong, Macau, Seoul and Jeju in September! We will be available in Hong Kong & Macau at T Galleria by @dfsofficial, @sephorahk, @harveynicholshk, @beautybazaarhk, and @beautyvenuehk. In Seoul, you can find us in Duty Free

locations at @lottedutyfree, @shinsegaedutyfree, and in Jeju at the @shilladfs_en. #newgenerationofbeauty

A post shared by FENTY BEAUTY BY RIHANNA (@fentybeauty) on Jul 18, 2019 at 6:19pm PDT

Instagram post from Fenty Beauty

For luxury brands, focusing on the core codes is one way to get consumers on board with a brand, according to Ms. Barlow.

Premium and luxury beauty brands are facing growing competition from mass players, since the messaging that resonates with consumers is more than skin deep.

A webinar hosted by Euromonitor on June 26 delved into the key forces driving the beauty business today, from wellness and body positivity to male makeup. While premium labels continue to outperform mass brands, today there is less separation between the two in the mind of the consumer as health becomes a greater concern than aesthetics ([see story](#)).

While the Launchmetrics panel was in debate over the aspirational positioning of beauty today, Ms. Barlow offered her take on what drives demand for beauty.

"I still believe that brands do need to be aspirational, but I think the difference is to be aspirational, yet relatable," Ms. Barlow said. "I still need to have the aspirational element in order for people to have the demand and want something."

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