

MARKETING

## 5 luxury brands killing it on Instagram and why

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Millennials and Gen Z have changed shopping to the point where "no one knows what luxury is anymore," according to Quartz fashion writer Marc Bain.

Social values, storytelling and Instagramability have edged out craftsmanship, exclusivity and price as criteria of luxury at least in the eyes of these new consumers.

Now that young people can rent luxury goods they could never afford to own, luxury brands are struggling with how to be inclusive while still creating objects of desire and envy.

This poses a question: If luxury brands are willing to reinvent the concept of what a luxury product is, why has not their marketing followed suit?

While we should not expect luxury brands to suddenly act like their mass-market counterparts, many are missing the opportunity to embrace new definitions of luxury in the most inclusive marketing medium there is: social media.

But some luxury brands are killing it. On Instagram, they have achieved what seems like the impossible task: to be enviable yet approachable, sophisticated yet down to earth, elite yet likeable. The brands that pull this off do three things:

- Give kudos to customers. Luxury brands become approachable by liking, re-graming, or commenting on user-generated photos in which they are tagged. Fans make themselves vulnerable by publishing a tagged photo that strangers will see and judge. They ought to be encouraged for their bravery, if not their taste. The brands that support fan content build community without sacrificing prestige.
- Welcome a broader aesthetic. Most customers are not professional models. Although a luxury brand might want to present a curated image, there is more to gain from letting customers interpret and reflect the brand in their own image. When fans post photos that clash with a brand's aesthetic, there is a choice: ignore and alienate someone, or accept that followers co-create a brand's representation on Instagram.

- Draw inspiration from fans. Some luxury brands have learned that customers love product laydowns: images in which the customer has taken the items from a shipment and spread them on the ground in a deliberate way. This is showing up in brand feeds, too, because it is familiar and likeable. Smart brands also draw inspiration from Instagram Stories, which, like DVDs, allow people to skip the boring parts.

So, what do these tactics look like in real life?

5 brands killing it

Fashion brand [@louisvuitton](#) has found a good balance between aspiration and approachability. Rather than opening its feed to user-generated content, Louis Vuitton draws inspiration from fans' Instagram Stories.

Nearly 33 million followers tune in to [Louis Vuitton's IGTV](#) to get behind-the-scenes of fashion shows and even the Oscars where Emma Stone, among others, sported Louis Vuitton. Stories humanize the brand and its advocates while centralizing creative control.

Footwear designer [@veja](#) has done a stellar job of giving kudos to influencers and customers who offer the unexpected. A great example is this [picture](#) of [@louiseroe](#), a fashion influencer and new mother who is shown wearing Veja in a domestic setting: at home, next to the stove, with her laundry basket on the countertop.

[@louiseroe](#) earned significantly more likes than Veja's average post and diverged from the aesthetic of people in cosmopolitan and beach settings. It is a mother being brave on camera and revealing beauty in a surprising setting.

Luxury fashion retail platform [@farfetch](#) brings style down to earth by giving influencers and fans creative control. From Yosemite Valley, where [a model coils a climbing rope](#), to Tokyo, [where a DJ and model duo sport Gucci in front of their home](#), there is no one face of Farfetch.

The colors, style and perspective seemingly encompass the diversity of all 2,000 designers on the Farfetch platform. It is the epitome of welcoming a broader aesthetic into luxury branding.

Paris fashion house [@chloe](#) deserves a mention because, in addition to being encouraging and approachable, they help Web site visitors find products in a way that most luxury brands do not. Their Instagram experience carries into their [ecommerce homepage](#), where they "hotspot" an Instagram-style hero image in which products are discoverable. It is a smart and visually stunning way to connect social and ecommerce.

The last mention goes to London-based apparel brand [@ted\\_baker](#), which deserves a nod for making luxury quirkier than normal. Flip to its Stories and you will [see](#) models balancing, juggling and fanning themselves with fresh produce as one does.

Meanwhile, Ted Baker's main feed has more of what you would expect: a glamorous, emotive chic. The contrast stands out.

**BOTTOM LINE:** luxury brands on Instagram risk clashing with the democratic ideals of a network that values simple authenticity.

Meet Instagram halfway by engaging with customers, welcoming eclectic tastes, and by drawing inspiration from fans.

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