

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Teleconferencing lifestyle breeds new professional dress code: corporate comfy

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LVMH brands on personalization shopping site Qubit. Image credit: Qubit

By DIANNA DILWORTH

For those companies planning their next market opportunity, targeting the work-from-home market with more elegant and yet comfortable luxury fashion is an option.

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Many affluent consumers are still video conferencing with colleagues which still requires a minimum in attire and cosmetics. Promoting comfortable yet stylish apparel, accessories and make-up choices through online stores could help luxury brands weather the tough times they are facing with stores closed.

"Keeping up appearances will still be important even if it's on Zoom or [Google] Hangouts," said Graham Cooke, founder/CEO of Qubit, London.

"People being at home forces brands to think about how to deliver relevant experiences to visitors even if the traditionally popular categories change," he said.



Nordstrom's "stylish in sweats" email campaign. Image credit: Nordstrom

Stylish in sweats

Fashion companies have an opportunity to target the work-from-home market with more elegant and yet comfortable luxury fashion.

U.S. department store chain **Nordstrom**, for instance, sent an email this week encouraging women to cozy up while at home. The subject line of the campaign reads, "Stylish in sweats."

Once a customer opens the message, she is greeted with the message: "Feel comfortable and cute in supersoft jersey sweats and slides."

"We've heard from customers that they're looking for certain things now, so we've added new categories to our homepage such as Create Your Sanctuary, Get Comfortable, Relax and Rejuvenate and Keep the Kids Busy, to make these types of things easy for customers to find," said Anna Brown, PR specialist at Nordstrom, Seattle.

Betabrand, an ecommerce site that sells women's apparel and is known for its yoga pants that double as dress trousers, has created a "corporate comfy" marketing campaign to reach newly working-from-home professionals.

The high-end direct-to-consumer company sees an opportunity in targeting consumers in a new way and has created content to help nurture this conversation.

"Presenting your clothing as relevant to a consumer's at-home existence is key," said Chris Lindland, CEO of Betabrand, San Francisco.

"We're now presenting dress pant yoga pants as part of consumers' teleconferencing lifestyle," he said. "We're exploring a professional dress code called corporate comfy."

"It's important to meet people where they're at and focus on the world they're living in right now."

"We're not leaving it up to consumers to connect the dots and understand that our products could fit into their work-from-home lifestyle. We're presenting that story through every part of our sales funnel."



Graham Cooke is founder/CEO of personalization shopping site Qubit

Loyalty is up

Personalization engine **Qubit**, which works with luxury companies including LVMH, Net-A-Porter, Shiseido and Hobbs London, has seen a 14.4 percent increase in online sales across retail in the last week, noting that ecommerce has quickly become the only opportunity to sell new apparel to consumers working from home.

"Targeting the work-from-home market with specific categories of product can be made easy with simple and effective placement slots on high-traffic areas of the Web site," Mr. Cooke said.

"Typically, we've seen retail brands, in the last couple of weeks, choose areas on the Web site to deliver campaign messaging and offers focused on a specific product line," he said. "An example of this might be targeting an offer on the homepage and directing browsers to the comfortable luxury category."

The company noted a 19.5 percent increase in revenue in its luxury category in the last week.

Interestingly, the number of sessions is down by 2 percent, but the conversion rate is up by 21 percent.

"Acquiring new customers will be very difficult in the next couple of months," Mr. Cooke said. "Your loyal customers and VIPs will be the ones who will not only continue to shop, but in fact buy more than normal.

"Focusing campaigns around VIPs should be an essential part of any luxury brand strategy right now," he said.

Data will help

Luxury brands are going to face a tough uphill battle with retail stores being closed for an indeterminate period of time.

However, marketers that can focus on their relationships with loyal customers will likely fare better.

Affluent customers want to be soothed and they will likely be responsive to their favorite brands that offer to make them feel better.

Additionally, brands that use data to deliver more personalized experiences have an opportunity to make that customer special.

"Delivering relevant experiences using an individual's data is a key way a brand can remain sensitive to the consumer browsing the site," Mr. Cooke said.

"While there's an expectation that home office attire will see an increase in sales, brands that are using technology to really get to the core of what an individual is showing intent for, or what visitors similar to them have purchased, are the ones that are going to be successful," he said.