

INTERNET

How to get digital premieres right

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Mercedes hosted a virtual event to premiere a new series of products. Image credit: Mercedes

By DIANNA DILWORTH

Digital premieres have become all the rage as luxury brands from BMW to Chanel look to build buzz and showcase new products in the era of the COVID-19 coronavirus.

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Hollywood has even begun to roll out the virtual red carpet to showcase new movies, but just like any physical version, digital premieres involve their own set of objectives to achieve success. As luxury brands look to debut new products and experiences through digital means, there are some simple considerations that are critically important.

"Clearly defining what brands are looking to achieve, digitally, is the first step: are they replacing a servicing gap? Boosting sales? Providing high-touch hospitality experiences lost through halted sponsorships?," said Caitlin O'Connell, vice president and group account director at [Momentum Worldwide](#), New York.

"From here, the consideration should be around channel selection and delivering experiences that are native to how the channel is used," she said.

"These are simple but important questions, especially for legacy luxury brands as they face competition from newbie DTC [direct-to-consumer] brands that were born and bred in the digital space and operate as natives."

Chanel's new Cruise campaign was shot in a studio in Paris to look like a Mediterranean beach. Image credit: Chanel

Attention-grabbing content

German automaker BMW premiered the BMW 5 Series, showing off the car's latest design and premium enhancements through the virtual world.

Chanel debuted its 2020/21 cruise line through a virtual fashion show to replace one that was supposed to take place physically in Italy. Instead, the brand created a Mediterranean-looking photo/film shoot in a studio in Paris, building up the event on social media to generate interest and attention ([see story](#)).

Mercedes-Benz debuted a series of new models of its Mercedes-AMG family with a virtual launch June 1 in Malaysia, with an introduction from the company's top executive for that country.

"The global pandemic has pushed consumers to experiment in the digital space, especially with digitally delivered experiences," Ms. O'Connell said. "Now that they are comfortable there, they will expect that brands flexibly show up for them in a way that they can choose how they engage IRL [in real life] or virtually.

"Brands that deliver ecosystems that meet their consumers across multiple touch points of their lives will be the ones that win," she said.

For instance, Chanel teased the premiere on social media, via its ecommerce site and with email, and used these channels again after the event took place.

As brands look to experiment with these digital events, there are several factors they should consider to garner attention from affluent consumers.

The first is the notion of responsible luxury.

"Today's consumer is looking to make purchases especially investment purchases of brands that deliver on a higher purpose," Ms. O'Connell said. "From aligning with their ethics and social causes to delivering on sustainable practices, luxury brands have standards to meet beyond trend and quality."

Additionally, as virtual events become more important, companies should be thinking about data-driven personalization.

"In a world where there is an overwhelming amount of data that we all put out into the space, affluent consumers expect that luxury brands will use it to deliver truly personalized experiences," Ms. O'Connell said.

Additionally, brands should work to deliver service and experiences, which is something that consumers are prioritizing over material goods.

"This isn't new news, but as the turmoil of 2020 has consumers making tough decisions about where and how they spend," Ms. O'Connell said. "It is especially critical now for luxury brands to differentiate not on product, but on memorable service and experiences."

2021 BMW 5 Series World Premiere held as a virtual event

Expect digital premieres to continue

Even as the world reopens, some consumers are hesitant to visit stores and showrooms. Moreover, many are not traveling.

This year, many brands will likely use the virtual premiere as a means to show off new products and cultivate sales. The merging of digital and physical will become even more pronounced.

"We are no longer in the space where brands can show up for consumers in either the physical or the digital they need to deliver both," Ms. O'Connell said.

"The exciting thing about the digital landscape in 2020 is that technology is available and easy to get off the ground," she said. "It's the creativity that is more challenging,

"Brands who are comfortable jumping into what might be new territory for them can use this time as a compelling moment for pilots: creating new approaches to engage their existing market, new channels to reach new markets, and new paths to cultural relevance."