

INTERNET

5 key online marketing tips for luxury brands this holiday season

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By KAYLA HUTZLER

Online holiday marketing needs to be in tip-top shape if luxury brands wish to stand out from the campaign crowd and increase ecommerce sales this season.

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For luxury brands, the holidays present a time to increase end-of-the-year sales and can often prove quite successful since many consumers save luxury purchases for a special occasion. This season, it may be likely that affluent consumers choose to forego the busy stores for the Internet, which has developed into a trusted platform for shopping transactions.

“I think that there is one thing we can guarantee about life online and that is traffic, and sales to nine out of 10 Web sites will increase, probably by about 300 percent, over the holiday period,” said Fadi Shuman, New York-based cofounder of [Pod1](#).

“That means a number of things really,” he said. “But the main thing is, if you are doing the right job, with the right products, you will really be successful during the holidays.”

Tips to the top

The busy holiday season will mean a surge of shoppers trying to access branded sites, and any site that takes too long to load will quickly lose consumer attention.

There are five main tasks that brands should complete to see high Web sales this holiday season, according to Mr. Shuman.



First, brands must ensure that its Web site hosting is up-to-scratch. A fast Web site is one that allows customers to transact happily.

Marketers may want to consider cloudhosting for the holiday months, Mr. Shuman said.

Next, luxury brands need to realize that there is a lot of competition during the holidays, and to guarantee that a brand is on a level playing field, it has to offer free delivery and returns.

“If a brand doesn’t offer free shipping and returns, it will be missing out on sales because everyone will be doing it,” Mr. Shuman said.

The third step is to make sure branded holiday marketing and sales are available across multiple channels.

Customers will be increasingly shopping from their phones and their iPads, and brands should allow them to do so by creating a dedicated mobile site or enhancing a branded Web site for mobile, Mr. Shuman said.

In addition to multiple device platforms, luxury brands also need to consider allowing consumers to shop online and pick-up or return in-store.

“Multiple capabilities like these makes consumers think less about making a purchase and lets them make the purchase spontaneously,” Mr. Shuman said.

Furthermore, luxury brands should think about creating a gift guide tab on their branded Web sites or creating a microsite.



For example, most affluent consumers are extremely busy and may want to order a few gifts via Web during their lunch break. A gift guide option separated by who the gift is intended for, price and style will help them to do this quickly.

Lastly, luxury brands particularly should identify who their top customers have been this year and give them an early sale or gifting discount.

“These customers who are really loyal will jump at the opportunity to buy things early and avoid the rush through pre-sales,” Mr. Shuman said.

“And you can bet your bottom dollar that these customers will be customers for life,” he said.

Battle of the brands

Indeed, luxury products are purchases that require a lot of thought and consideration and are likely often bought in light of a special occasion or holiday.

Holiday marketing campaigns are necessary for a luxury brand that does not wish to get lost in the clutter of advertising messages that consumers will receive this season from its competitors.

The holidays are a fighting season, per Mr. Shuman.



While many luxury brands are still focusing a large portion of their marketing budgets on

four-page spreads in Vogue, this will not be largely effective in driving holiday sales.

Marketers need to focus more attention to the digital world and work their online marketing to gain a share of holiday profits.

Indeed, many mass retailers and department stores will be creating noise surrounding Black Friday and Cyber Monday that may draw the early attention away from luxury brands.

Therefore, Mr. Shuman stresses that luxury brands look at who has bought from them in the past year and give them exclusive access to a sale or gift guide.

“Luxury brands are exclusive in theory, and they need to make sure they look after their customers,” Mr. Shuman said. “To do that, they need to make their customers feel that they are being given something extra, an extra opportunity.

“If they work like everyone else, it’s not luxury,” he said.

Final Take

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