

PRINT

Do black-and-white print ads take away from luxury luster?

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By RACHEL LAMB

Luxury brands sporadically use black-and-white print advertisements and the contrast when flipping through the latest issue of a magazine can stop a reader in her tracks. But there actually may be a strategy behind black-and-white ads.

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Luxury Daily

High-end labels such as Chanel have been shooting entire campaigns in black-and-white. At first glimpse, it may seem as if the brand is missing out on displaying lustrous fabrics and images sans color, but the brand may just be taking a more artistic route.

“It’s a creative issue,” said Adam Krumwiede, executive vice president and group media director of Gotham Direct, New York. “Black-and-white ads can be more effective than four-color depending upon how they’re used.

“They would use them to convey a certain image, retro or strive to stand out in the clutter,” he said.

For the W

Chanel has used black-and-white images for a few campaigns, including its resort 2012 and spring/summer 2012 collections.

These campaigns have also been shot by creative director Karl Lagerfeld.

Taking into consideration that Chanel uses black-and-white campaign images for its apparel and accessories rather than less-passable collections such as cosmetics, it could be that Chanel is making a creative statement.



Chanel spring/summer collection

“Black-and-white adverts create a mood and distinction among a sea of color,” said Chris Ramey, president of Affluent Insights, Miami.

Chanel’s ads for its spring/summer collection are taking up real estate in luxury-focused magazines such as W.

In that same issue, Fendi promoted its spring/summer collection in black-and-white.

Flipping through the pages could be a little jarring for readers, but that may be the strategy behind the ads.

“It’s most effective when it’s the only black-and-white ad in the publication,” Mr. Ramey said. “Otherwise, it won’t stand out.

“It’s not about missing something, it’s about strategy, tactics and objectives,” he said.

Price could be another reason, since black-and-white ads are less expensive than their four-color counterparts, Gotham’s Mr. Krumwiede said. However, it is doubtful that is the reason behind luxury brands using black-and-white ads.

Read all over

A brand’s image or collection likely will not be damaged because of lack of color in ads.

“Sure, it can be, but a brand’s image is not necessarily dependent upon the process used,” Mr. Krumwiede said. “It’s dependent upon the quality and the content of the creative itself.

“Is the ad good? Does it have stopping power? Does it reflect the right image? Does it elicit desire? Does it make people lust or want to buy it?” he said.

All in all, it is likely not about the process used, but the medium where the ad is.

For example, luxury advertisers frequently take out black-and-white ads in newspapers such as The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal and the Financial Times because

those publications have demographics that would be interested in luxury brands.



Barneys black-and-white ad in the New York Times

Luxury brands that take out ads in these newspapers are likely not hurt because their images are in black-and-white.

Just so, publications such as W, Vogue and Vanity Fair also have high-income demographics.

Some brands are breaking the rules even more with using black-and-white and colored ads in the same campaign. Yves Saint Laurent has this strategy for its spring/summer collection.



YSL ads in both black-and-white and print

“Continuity and objectives are important,” Affluent Insight’s Mr. Ramey said. “If black-and-white is part of the campaign, then it is the DNA.

“Although breaking certain rules is fine, you wouldn’t likely move back and forth in the same campaign,” he said. “It’s a strategy issue rather than a brand issue.”

Final Take

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