

MARKETING

Why striving for best-in-class' service creates zero value for luxury brands

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Brand storytelling is the foundation of the brand, while terms like "best in class" are simply objectives and not a direction. Image credit: Shutterstock

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From best materials to best design, best architecture and best craftsmanship one of the most common expressions I hear in discussions about luxury is that luxury is about the "best." And, of course, when it comes to service, I hear **"best in class"** all over again.

But let me explain why I have an issue with this term.

Imagine that you are hired by a luxury hospitality brand. The job you are offered is at the front desk to check in guests who arrive. The briefing you get is, "we expect you to provide best-in-class service."

The hospitality brand also gives you a brand manual which reads something like: "Our hotel is an oasis, a place where people feel at home." The manual furthermore will have values, such as "The guest always comes first," "We embrace diversity" and "We are sustainable." And they tell you that you always must smile and be friendly.

Now good luck providing a "best-in-class" experience.

With a briefing like this typical not just for hospitality but also for many luxury brands you will have absolutely no idea how you can bring the brand values across. While all the words sound beautiful on paper, none of them are actionable. Therefore, they create zero value.

Friendliness in luxury is the minimum expectation when it comes to service. But which target emotion should you provide? What is your role in the many touch points a guest will have? How should you make a guest or customer feel there is always an "on-brand" experience?

"Best in class" is simply an objective. It is not a direction. A more precise phrase should be, "Each individual uses their precise role in delivering the most accurate expression of our brand story."

Best in class means nothing if it is not a detailed script. But because so many brands are relying on this term and briefing their staff to deliver "best," very few brands really stand out.

In a recent [Future of Luxury](#) column, I gave the example of three hotel brands promising their guests "paradise."

Good luck delivering a differentiated "on brand" experience with such a promise paired with "best in class." The outcome will be, at best, average. And in luxury, average is unacceptable.

When I do luxury master classes with some of the world's leading luxury brands, the theme I share again and again because it is so critical there is no value if there is no memory. And I propose to be radical no memory equals no value.

Now I ask you: How many times were you really blown away by the full experience in a restaurant? So much blown away that the experience changes you and creates a memory? How many times did you try to buy a luxury handbag, sneaker or fashion item, and thought afterwards that it was a life-changing experience, creating a memory you will remember positively for the rest of your life?

How certain are you that your clients will confirm that your brand provides a memorable experience each time? How certain are you that your sales team or your front desk know what your brand is about and able to convey this to the clients? How certain are you that your clients feel a consistent positive emotion every time they interact with you?

If you even have the slightest doubt, you need to act.

Brand storytelling is the foundation of the brand, and is an expression of your core values.

If your clients do not understand that through the digital messaging and in-person interactions, then your brand is part of the sea of sameness that so many brands are in. And without a clear profile, without a distinct emotion, without a memory that is triggered by an "on-brand" experience, you are not creating value.

In luxury there is no room for "best in class." Be on-brand, be clear about your story. And be certain that everyone in your organization knows what their role is in bringing the story to life in a way that touches the hearts of your clients.

This is an op-ed article that reflects the views of the author and does not necessarily represent the views of Jing Daily.

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