

TELEVISION

Cartier aligns itself with ultra-affluent lifestyle through Gossip Girl placement

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Gossip Girl's Valentine's Day episode

By KAYLA HUTZLER

Jewelry brand Cartier took a starring role in the latest episode of CW's television series Gossip Girl on Monday night.

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One of the first scenes of the most recent episode featured a large number of Cartier boxes on the table as part of a private, in-home shopping experience with a brand salesperson. Luxury brands from Chanel to Gilt Groupe have used product placement in the Gossip Girl series to help increase brand awareness and align it with a particular lifestyle.

"When done well, product placements look and feel like ingrained entertainment content, rather than ads," said Paul Farkas, founder/CEO of **Social.TV** and founding transmedia producer of The Water Tank Project, New York.

"Gossip Girl is especially known for weaving products and cameos in its rich narrative," he said. "Gratuitous features are seen as ringing endorsements for its targeted demographic, even spanning across the series, such as with HP's ill-fated touch tablet.

"Cartier contextually fits Gossip Girl perfectly and serves as a luxury brand that [Gossip Girl's] aspiring-affluent audience can long to attain."

Mr. Farkas is not affiliated with **Cartier** or Gossip Girl, but agreed to comment as a third-party expert.

Painting the town red

Cartier made its entrance onto the big screen through a private, in-home shopping experience that it provided to one of the main characters of the show.

The character was looking to pick out a St. Valentine's Day present for his wife.

A Cartier salesperson had seemingly brought a number of pieces for the man to browse in his home.

There are a number of Cartier red boxes, large and small, present on the table.

The man's son comes in and asks what is going on, and the man explained that he was trying to pick a Cartier piece for his wife.

In this case, Cartier did not have to rely on viewers recognizing the brand's signature red boxes.

Having the character state the brand name helped Cartier to ensure there was no confusion over which brand was

providing the jewels and the intimate shopping experience.

Cartier likely chose the Valentine's Day episode since this is one of the prime-time selling months for luxury jewelry and could help to increase brand recall amongst last minute shoppers.

This was a smart move since Valentine's Day spending was predicted to reach a total of \$281 million, and 15 percent of affluent consumers planned on buying jewelry ([see story](#)).



Scene from this week's Gossip Girl episode

Luxury lifestyle

Cartier is not the first luxury brand to tap the Gossip Girl series for product placement opportunities.

Earlier this year, Tiffany & Co. played a large part in one of the episodes.

In fact, the main character was planning a special engagement party in which everything was Tiffany blue and each attendee got a small branded present.

Additionally, Gilt Groupe worked itself into a plotline where actress Kelly Rowland spent the majority of her time in one episode browsing the flash-sale site and being surrounded by Gilt Groupe bags.

New York's Empire Hotel also plays a pivotal role in each episode. One of the main characters is actually the owner of the hotel in the show, and two of them live here.

Other brands such as Chanel, Bergdorf Goodman and Henri Bendel have also made appearances in the series through shopping bags or store appearances.

Restaurateur and chef Daniel Boulud was even highlighted in one of the episodes this season.

These brands may not be reaching potential customers through the product placement since Gossip Girl is geared more towards young adults than the older, affluent consumer.

However, the placements are still important in helping to increase brand awareness and tap aspirational consumers.

The ultra-affluent, New York lifestyle portrayed in Gossip Girl is the image with which most luxury brands look to associate themselves.

While product placement in TV and movies is not going to leave anytime soon, brands should be looking to become part of the larger conversation around these shows and movies.

"Beyond TV programming, its strong, layered social machine of tweets, updates and even column advice offers even more reach and storytelling opportunities for brand spend," Mr. Farkas said.

"Entertainment is embracing what I've been calling made for Social TV,' where networks, writers and producers are creating content with opened, personalized social interactivity in mind," he said.

"A new velvet rope for luxury brands will be their ability to be contextually woven in the evolving transmedia narrative, not just consumers' accessibility to them."