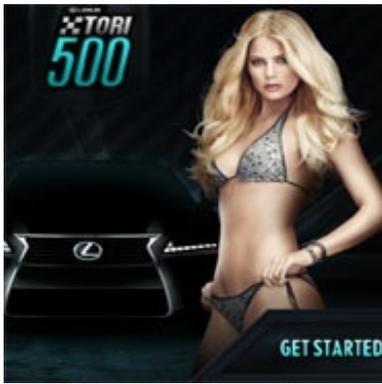


MOBILE

Lexus includes gaming apps for 360-degree GS push

February 16, 2012



By RACHEL LAMB

Toyota Corp.'s Lexus has included two gaming applications as just one of the components in a 360-degree marketing strategy in collaboration with Sports Illustrated advertising its new GS models.

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The campaign is starring swimsuit model Tori Praver, with the two apps, Supermodeled and Tori 500, featuring the model in a racing game and photo app. Both are available for free in Apple's App Store.

"Mobile apps provide an opportunity to engage tech-savvy buyers," said Nancy Hubbell, prestige communications manager for Lexus, Torrance, CA.

"Lexus always has an eye on who's next and what's next," she said. "With the demographics of Lexus buyers starting to shift younger, sponsoring things like the Beauties & Beats music festival and creating engaging entertainment like the Supermodeled app presents Lexus with great opportunities to get in front of different kind of tastemaker, with the goal of showing the world that there's truly no going back for this luxury automaker."

The Lexus GS is a four-door sedan with 28 miles per gallon. It goes 0-60 in 5.7 seconds.

The starting price is \$46,900.

Ahead of the curve

The first app, called Supermodeled, allows consumers to add images of Ms. Praver to pictures on their phones.

Consumers first either take a picture or choose one from their photo library.



Supermodeled app

After that, users can browse through different images of Ms. Praver in a swimsuit that they can insert into the pictures of themselves.

They can share the images through Facebook, Twitter and email.

However, Lexus makes further use of the app by allowing consumers to look at different components of the GS including its technology, performance and design.

The app includes a link to the mobile-optimized Lexus GS site.

Lexus also released a second app called Tori 500.

This racing app allows consumers to race their chosen car around a large version of Ms. Praver lying in the middle a racing track.



Tori 500 app

Consumers can share their high scores via Facebook, Twitter and email to encourage friends to drive.

Users are able to explore the GS in the same fashion as in the Supermodeled app with a link to the GS page on the Lexus mobile site.

In addition to the apps, there will be customer tablet integrations in the Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Edition on the iPad, Samsung Galaxy, Xoom and Nook.

“While I applaud Lexus for integrating apps into the overall Sports Illustrated campaign, the apps appear to have been merely an afterthought with no real strategy thoughts behind them,” said Scott Forshay, Austin, TX-based premium and luxury brand mobile strategist.

“The apps are certainly not in line with the innovative leadership position Lexus has established in the mobile arena,” he said. “These types of candy-store-campaign-focused apps typically do very little to add value to brands.

“The association with the Swimsuit Edition provides a highly desirable platform demographic to engage, but Lexus has missed the mark with the opportunity, seeming to have focused their strategy on appealing to the lowest common denominator.”

Mr. Forshay is not affiliated with Lexus, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

Suitable marketing

These apps are just a small part of the collaboration that Lexus has with Sports Illustrated.

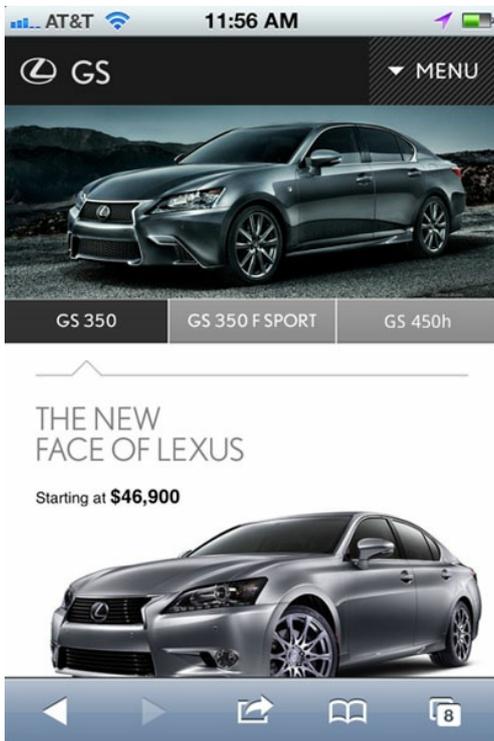
The partnership includes a behind-the-scenes video where race car driver Scott Pruett and stunt driver Greg Tracy compete on the Tori 500 track to see who wins a drive with Ms. Praver in the passenger seat.

There will also be a print component including a four-page spread in the February swimsuit issue in Sports Illustrated, as well as a similar version online.

To top it off, Lexus participated in New York and Las Vegas launch events.

Lexus will also sponsor the first two-day Beauties & Beats music festival at The Cosmopolitan Hotel of Las Vegas Feb. 15-16.

The brand has also been pushing the GS through mobile banner ads on the Wall Street Journal site ([see story](#)) and used it to debut its Timeline on Facebook ([see story](#)).



Lexus' mobile site for the GS

That said, Lexus' apps for this campaign may not have been its best mobile strategy for the GS push.

However, Mr. Forshay admits that the apps do have strengths of their own.

“Certainly the keys to any successful mobile marketing strategy begin with an understanding of the target audience and the engagement that will best generate interest and excitement among that audience,” Mr. Forshay said. “In the Supermodeled execution, Lexus exhibits temporary brand identity amnesia, opting to assume the perceived personality of SI and, more specifically, the Swimsuit Edition.

“The Tori 500 app, on the other hand, is a much more on-brand execution that speaks to their more sophisticated target audience, appropriately introduces the new line and provides auto enthusiast entertainment through the racing game component,” he said.

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