

MOBILE

How luxury cruiselines can connect to youngsters via mobile marketing

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By RACHEL LAMB

Since many luxury cruiselines are attempting to draw younger consumers, mobile could be a way for them to attract affluent consumers in a cost-effective, convenient and portable medium.

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Mobile applications, sites and SMS messaging could help luxury cruiselines to get in contact with consumers on their level. By building a relationship with consumers early on, they will likely grow up with a relationship to the cruiseline and use it when they are older.

“To appeal to a younger, affluent and device-savvy demographic, luxury cruiselines must incorporate mobility into their overarching digital marketing strategies,” said Scott Forshay, mobile and emerging technologies strategist for Acquity Group, Austin, TX.

“The younger affluent demographic typically has more disposable income allocated for travel so the goal becomes how to best reach, and remain in consistent communication with, this audience focused on lifestyle attainable to very few,” he said. “The essence of any successful luxury marketing strategy, and what the audience requires, is priority access to a lifestyle provided by the cruiseline as well as to the brand itself.”

Sea of options

Cruiselines such as Windstar, Silver Seas, Celebrity Cruises and Cunard are trying to attract younger consumers with new promotions such as two-for-one deals or non-traditional social media marketing.



Windstar uses social media marketing on its blog

Mobile is an instantaneous, on-the-go channel that is widely used by younger consumers.

Not only is it a modern technology, but one that is portable. Consumers usually do not stray from their mobile devices for too long.

Luxury cruiselines have even more of an advantage because affluent consumers are more likely to buy smartphones such as iPhones, iPads, Androids and BlackBerrys, on which can be downloaded rich apps.

Mobile is also used as a research tool. Therefore, creating mobile-optimized sites could be beneficial for consumers wanting to research and book cruises from a portable device.

Another option is SMS or MMS messaging, which is one of the most instantaneous ways to reach a consumer.

“A logical and effective initial strategy would be to add targeted SMS and MMS elements into a cruiseline’s marketing mix,” Mr. Forshay said. “Given the ubiquity of text messaging, couple with the more rich creative capabilities offered by MMS, the cruiseline can leverage a luxury lifestyle-driven marketing approach to attract this valuable demographic.

“In addition, exclusive video content that promotes the aspired lifestyle delivered instantaneously to a mobile device is an excellent example of marketing in the moment,” he said.

Setting sale

Not many luxury cruiselines are using mobile, causing them to lag behind the rest of the travel industry.

Almost all luxury hotel brands, for example, are using mobile sites and apps to reach affluent consumers.

However, Celebrity Cruises' mobile site allows consumers to plan, explore and book cruises from a smartphone or tablet.



Celebrity Cruises mobile site

Users can look for voyages to certain destinations or plan by trip or by time of the year.

“[Mobile] gives [cruiselines] a relatively inexpensive medium for communicating with prospects and past clients,” said Ron Kurtz, president of American Affluence Research Center, Atlanta.

In addition, mobile is one of the main channels that brands use to build brand loyalists.

Therefore, connecting with a younger audience through this channel could grow into a relationship that the consumer will grow up to use for the rest of their lives.

“For decades, travel and hospitality brands have provided the quintessential example of refined, smooth game mechanics through rewards programs,” Acquity Group’s Mr. Forshay said. “Showing loyalty to a particular airline or hotel brand is rewarded by priority access, express lanes for check-in and points that carry redeemable monetary value.

“These types of seasoned game mechanics incent loyalty and participation for mutual value between brand and consumer,” he said. “They provide engagement, the ability to achieve status and exclusive rewards for the most loyal participants.”

Final Take

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