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How luxury retailers can stand out in a world of imitations

May 25, 2023



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A running joke made about non-fungible tokens (NFTs) is that you can right click and save, or screenshot them, and have what is essentially the same thing, except without the guarantee of authenticity. It is why many of the best NFTs also unlock some kind of experience.

This pixel-perfect ability to "copy" physical goods has not much existed in the past. If you have ever walked past rows of knockoff handbags and clothing made of inexpensive materials, with poor stitching and off-center logos, you know that the copies rarely would be mistaken for the real thing. But the rise of "superfake" handbags has become a pressing challenge for luxury retailers in recent years.

Getting real

These near-perfect replicas are virtually indistinguishable from the genuine article, sometimes even leaving consumers in the resale market unsure of what they are truly buying.

While [this recent New York Times article did not get very far down the superfake supply chain to determine how this is happening](#), it effectively established how good luxury fakes have become and probably made a lot of their readers curious about purchasing a superfake themselves.

How can brands now differentiate authentic purchases from these near-mirror images and make their authentic offerings more appealing, and justify the price premium of going legitimate?

Some options include offering premium in-store experiences, emphasizing ethical sourcing and craftsmanship of genuine goods, using blockchain and NFT technology, and providing ongoing, engaging experiences for genuine buyers.

Luxury retailers have always excelled at service and should invest in creating exceptional in-store shopping experiences.

Ordering a superfake through a chat on WhatsApp with someone in an unknown location and using a fake name,

waiting weeks or even months for delivery, and worrying about customs seizing an item pales in comparison to a one-on-one immersive experience in a luxury boutique.

The in-store experience should involve offering personalized consultations, hosting exclusive events, and showcasing limited-edition items.

By providing an unparalleled level of service, brands can establish a strong emotional connection with their customers, making the purchase of an authentic item more worthwhile.

Crafting story

Another way to differentiate genuine products is by highlighting the brand's commitment to ethical sourcing and skilled craftsmanship.

Luxury retailers can share stories of their artisans, explaining the intricate processes involved in creating their products.

By emphasizing the time, effort and expertise required to produce an authentic item, both in its design and its construction, brands can underscore the true value of owning a genuine piece.

The superfake supply chain, by comparison, is decidedly murky and might involve everything from cybercrime to obtain designs, to environmental and labor concerns in production.

Another way to make purchasing authentic items a more participatory experience than purchasing superfakes is by partnering with influencers and celebrities who can promote the brand's values and vision.

These partnerships can help generate buzz around the brand and its genuine products, making them more desirable to consumers. This plays into a sense of belonging and being part of the brand community.

Additionally, influencers and celebrities can serve as brand ambassadors, showcasing the unique benefits and experiences that come with owning an authentic item.

Tech that

Technology can also play a helpful role.

Blockchain technology and NFTs offer a unique opportunity for luxury retailers to preserve the resale value of authentic items, with superfakes presenting challenges even to professional authenticators.

By assigning each product a unique digital identifier stored on a secure blockchain, brands can ensure that the item's provenance and authenticity are easily verifiable.

Additionally, NFTs can serve as digital certificates of authenticity, further bolstering the resale value of genuine products.

Luxury retailers can additionally leverage NFTs and other technologies to provide ongoing, exclusive experiences for legitimate buyers.

For example, brands could offer access to special events, collaborations or limited-edition products available only to verified owners of authentic items. This not only encourages the purchase of genuine products but also fosters more sense of community among loyal customers.

To further differentiate authentic items, luxury retailers can incorporate advanced security features into their products. This could include radio frequency identification (RFID) tags, holograms or unique serial numbers.

These security measures not only make counterfeiting more difficult but also provide customers with peace of mind when purchasing an authentic item.

IN THE AGE of superfakes, luxury retailers must think creatively to differentiate their authentic products and make them more appealing to consumers.

By focusing on premium in-store experiences, emphasizing their unwavering commitment to ethical sourcing and craftsmanship, using blockchain and NFT technology, and offering exclusive experiences for authentic buyers, brands can continue to thrive and show value beyond an item's appearance.

By adopting these strategies, luxury retailers can not only preserve the value of their genuine products but also foster lasting connections with their loyal customers.

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