

COLUMNS

For high-end fashion brands, wellness is the ultimate luxury

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The luxury brands that get it, get it. Today's consumers aren't interested in flaunting designer pieces as status symbols. Rather, they want to belong to the communities and associate with the identities that luxury brands cultivate. Increasingly, the luxury fashion market is becoming synonymous with the wellness marketplace's culture of ethos. Shoppers seek to invest in high-end items that lean into the wellness movement.

Health and wellness industry trends were strong before 2020, but the pandemic accelerated them. You've likely seen luxury fashion brands increasingly emphasize wellness in their product offerings and prioritize it as part of their brand DNA.

For example, Gucci has collaborated with Oura Ring to create a wearable device that tracks health and well-being. This combination of health monitoring device meets luxury accessory generated much hype, compounded by its limited-edition nature in a flawlessly executed fashion-wellness crossover.

A Shifting Consumer Mindset

According to a 2022 survey by McKinsey & Company, 50% of U.S. consumers consider wellness a top priority. Consumers have become increasingly interested in wellness for many reasons, but two, in particular, have furthered the intersection between luxury brands and wellness.

Consciously, people are paying attention to longevity, anti-aging, better sleep, and mental health. There is an international uptick in consumers' desire for products free from harmful ingredients, utilizing ethically sourced ingredients or sustainable packaging, which typically come at a premium.

Subconsciously, there's the idea that investing in health is more socially acceptable than old-fashioned mass consumption. It is easier to confidently justify purchasing behaviors for expensive goods if they fulfill health and wellness needs.

Aligning Values to Boost Brand-Buyer Trust

Consumers perceive brands as trustworthy when they offer items that tie into health, wellness, or fitness. These days, they're more likely to be swayed by a luxury brand's weighted blanket rather than the it' bag of the season.

To tap in, the following ideas should help springboard creativity and innovation across your marketing, sales, and research and development teams:

1. Know your audience.

"Wellness" is a buzzword that can seem vague. However, when you break it down, it represents an interconnected system of eight dimensions. These dimensions encompass physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, financial, occupational, environmental, and social realms.

One or two dimensions may resonate strongest with your target audience. Home in on these dimensions of wellness to create a storyline throughout your marketing and product touchpoints and avoid the pitfalls of an overly holistic approach that lacks authenticity or depth by attempting to include them all.

2. Incorporate wellness textiles into physical products.

When is a textile more than the sum of its parts? When it provides the user or wearer with more than aesthetic or basic functional considerations. For that reason, luxury brands should partner with textile innovation experts to make their clothing perform in unique, wellness-fostering ways.

Consider International Flavors & Fragrances Inc.'s Sensory Perception technology, distributed and endorsed by Woolmark Development International Ltd. IFF has added soothing fragrances and active ingredients, such as aloe vera and vitamin E, into fabrics to improve consumers' product experiences. Other materials innovations include wearable infrared fabric technology, which essentially allows clothing to function as a low-dose infrared sauna, minus the sweat.

3. Present consumers with a complete wellness collection.

Rather than only marketing a couple of garments that utilize special technologies or wellness-focused benefits, consider developing an entire collection. That's what Loro Piana did when it partnered with Christy Turlington on luxury gym accessories, meditation sets, and other items.

A collection makes a stronger statement and enables you to craft a compelling marketing story and publicize your brand's stance on wellness. Beyond capitalizing on trends, it demonstrates your interest in supporting buyers' lifestyle goals. Remember, a collection doesn't have to be an extension of an existing line; your wellness luxury brand capsule collection can exist in a new product category, such as skincare or scents.

4. Showcase your health-related products at pop-up events.

To draw customers to your retail environment, host wellness-aimed pop-ups within your brick-and-mortar locations or another environment as off-site experiences. For example, you could bring in an integrative nutritionist or herbal expert to host a tea tasting. The expert could recommend shoppers teas to address their ailments. A creative in-store experience helps show your customers you're invested in their wellness journeys.

Regardless of how you arrange your pop-up, ensure it's an event where customers feel more connected to your brand. This will set the stage for stronger fandom and loyalty. Additionally, it can give your brand some user-generated social media content.

Luxury items will always hold a certain appeal. The only change today is that consumers aren't just buying logos or status symbols. They're investing in stylish merchandise and on-trend services that put their health and well-being front and center.