

COLUMNS

Retail partnerships are key to market entry success

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By **Glyn Atwal**

The desire for luxury brands to expand their international footprint is often weighed against finding a balance between control and risk.

While a digital presence often serves as the go-to market entry strategy for niche luxury brands, this approach may lack long-term vision.

Digital might give a luxury brand reach but still lacks the physical touch that is central to every luxury brand experience, especially for buyers who are new to the brand.

Luxury brands that partner with bricks-and-mortar retailers can create synergies beyond setting up a mere distribution network.

Franzi, the Milanese luxury leather goods brand collaboration with Neiman Marcus is part of Franzi's U.S. expansion strategy which began in September 2022, with a debut in the Los Angeles store.

"It's a partnership that satisfies the most discerning customers seeking the best of luxury," said Marco Calzoni, CEO of Franzi, in a statement.

The heritage luxury brand has developed this partnership with a series of exclusive events at Neiman Marcus stores in Philadelphia, Atlanta, Houston and Washington.

VIP clients were invited to experience the history of the brand dating back to 1864 and discover how tradition is intertwined with contemporary design.

"These events provide not only a tangible but a sensory connection to convey the cultural meaning of Franzi's artisanal faon".

Neiman Marcus not only provides the first point of contact for Franzi; it evolves into a retail channel for surprising and advising clients, delivering a narrative that resonates emotionally.

It is this level of engagement that offers unique experiences that a digital platform can rarely provide. An example is the launch of Franzi's made-to-order line of the Margherita handbag, allowing customers to customize their bags with a range of colors and exotic leathers.

“Customisation has always been at the heart of the luxury offering. It puts the customer at the center of the brand.”

Retail partnerships can help niche luxury brands break into new markets. It is a strategy that connects brands that are not necessarily on the radar with potential buyers, and vice versa.

Lessons from Franzí’s partnership with Neiman Marcus show that a market entry strategy needs to consider not only the best way to access customers but how to craft a deep affection for the brand.

It is a timely reminder that the personal feel can still be seen as something special and out of the ordinary.

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