

IN-STORE

Moët & Chandon leverages brand through key Kentucky Derby placement

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By TRICIA CARR

LVMH-owned Champagne brand Moët & Chandon is flaunting the affluent lifestyle associated with the brand through a Kentucky Derby sponsorship that could allow it to secure key event and television placements.

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Moët & Chandon will get exposure at the Churchill Downs racetrack in the minutes leading up to the race during a branded toasting to the competitors when the brand can reach consumers who are in attendance at the event and those watching on television. Moët & Chandon will be highly-visible to affluent consumers at the Derby with branded bars and a charity initiative.

"Partnerships are about synergy," said Kimmie Smith, editor in chief of [Kitten Lounge](#), New York. "The Kentucky Derby is a classic sport filled with heritage.

"Any brand that is associated with this event must have a longevity that is on par as well," she said. "Moët & Chandon being used in the toast prior to the race is also a sign of interest in terms of creating a new tradition that will be embraced for years to come."

Ms. Smith is not affiliated with Moët & Chandon, but agreed to comment as an industry

expert.

Moët & Chandon could not comment before press deadline.

Winners circle

Moët & Chandon is the first official Champagne partner of the Kentucky Derby.

This is the only time in its history that Moët & Chandon will be directly associated with a thoroughbred horse-racing event, according to the brand.

The partnership was established to align the Champagne brand with a sporting competition that has an affluent audience, per Moët & Chandon.

During the Moët & Chandon Toast to the Kentucky Derby, the brand will ask attendees to raise their Champagne glass to toast the horses before the race.

This could be an significant placement for the brand to reach the large number consumers watching the race on TV as well as at the track. It will also force brand recognition among celebrities and other affluent guests in attendance.



Crowds at Kentucky Derby last year

Meanwhile, the brand will bring its "Sign for the Roses" philanthropic initiative to the Kentucky Derby red carpet to benefit the race's official charity The Churchill Downs Incorporated Foundation, which supports industry education, health and welfare, thoroughbred horse retirement and other local needs.

Moët & Chandon will donate an amount to the charity that will be measured by the amount of celebrity signatures on a six-liter Champagne bottle that will be on the Derby red carpet.

In addition, attendees will be offered limited-edition, Derby-themed mini Champagne bottles available at the Moët & Chandon bars on-site.

The brand will release Derby-themed magnums in May that will be available for purchase at Liquor Barn and Party Mart retailers. The suggested price is \$114.99-\$119.99.

Moët & Chandon will fly its branded hot air balloon called The Spirit of 1743 in the Louisville, KY, area in the days leading up to the Derby.

The Spirit of 1743 started its worldwide voyage from China in September. The balloon will end its world tour in 2013, the year of the brand's 270th anniversary.



Churchill Downs

"Luxury consumers will see their placement as a natural alignment and will feel that it is something that is natural to the brand," Ms. Smith said. "Moreover, they will want to continue to see this positioning in future events.

"The non-luxury consumer is a great outreach as well since they are also potential influencers and affluents," she said. "This consumer will look to this brand when they are out or if they are asked by someone who would like a recommendation.

"In terms of media, this is a great way to be included in social networks, TV segments, print and magazines."

Perfect pairs

Moët & Chandon has a long line of past partnerships with boating and car racing competitions such as the Vanderbilt Cup, Formula One, 24 Hours of Le Mans and the America's Cup.



Moët & Chandon at the Governors Ball Oscar after-party

Moët & Chandon seems to be strategically choosing events associated with a luxury status to leverage its products, a smart move to reach the correct consumers.

The brand has also affiliated itself with the Cannes International Film Festival, the Golden Globe Awards and the Academy Awards.

Other luxury brands are using partnerships to increase brand recognition among luxury consumers.

For example, Swiss watchmaker Tissot began a marketing partnership with Madison Square Garden to leverage its products during sports events at one of New York's most prominent venues.

The watchmaker will be integrated at events such as New York Knicks and New York Rangers games and a branded message will be displayed on game time clocks and marquees on the property ([see story](#)).

Brand association matters, especially with those that share the same values.

"Being associated with the Kentucky Derby via merchandising at the event visually as well as via philanthropic means shows that this is a long-term commitment beyond just sponsoring," Ms. Smith said.

"The brand will have a wider demographic to engage with who will think of them when they have events worth celebrating in a decadent way," she said.

Final Take

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