

EVENTS/CAUSES

## Bringing the exclusivity factor back to luxury collection showings

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By RACHEL LAMB

It used to be that fashion shows were only attended by the best and brightest VIPs and magazine editors. However, creating extra efforts at shows or events that can only be sensed by the crowd is a way to bring back exclusivity.

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This is not to say that the space has become diluted. Rather, many experts believe that live-streaming shows and even allowing select mainstream consumers to watch could help to improve the brand image. However, there are still ways that luxury marketers can reach their core customers, those who can truly afford to buy luxury products, with experiences that only those present can feel.

“Fashion and Fashion Week are inextricably entwined,” said Christina French Houghton, associate strategist at [Siegel+Gale](#), New York. “With partnerships between Stella McCartney and GapKids, Jason Wu and Target, fashion is increasingly being marketed to a wider audience.

“After all, every designer aims to build a profitable business and by too narrowly focusing his or her efforts, the average consumer stands to be alienated,” she said. “Despite live-streaming and the increasingly high-quality of digital imaging, no virtual experience fully simulates a runway show.”

Rain or shine

Luxury marketers are coming up with new and creative ways to provide exclusive experiences for consumers at fashion shows.

For example, British retailer Alfred Dunhill combined sight, smell, sound and vision in a recreation of famed Trafalgar Square in London that displayed a simulation of all four seasons over the course of one day ([see story](#)).



*"Spring" sector of Dunhill's show*

The event was broadcast March 16 to more than 1,000 global guests in Shanghai, China, as the third of a series of installations. Trafalgar is one of the longest live single CGI sequences ever made to simulate a full year of British seasons over one day, claims the brand.

Most consumers could see the collection online, but only the lucky select could actually feel the weather and excitement of the actual show.

Sometimes it is all about the location of the show.

For example, Italian designer Salvatore Ferragamo will be the first brand to use the Louvre museum in Paris for a runway show. Guests are invited to dinner and an exclusive museum tour after the show ([see story](#)).

In addition, Chanel's 2013 cruise collection presented in the gardens at the Palace of Versailles. Also, the brand debuted its spring/summer 2012 haute couture line on a private jet.



*Chanel cruise 2013*

“Feeling the excitement in a room, hearing the whispers of the crowd and waiting with anticipation are not duplicable or transmittable online,” Ms. Houghton said.

#### Exclusive offers

However, these extra effects may not be enough to bring back exclusivity.

“I am not sure that designers today are always aiming for exclusivity,” Ms. Houghton said. “More than that, they seem to be trying to elevate the quality of this in-person runway experience by dramatizing it.”

However, brands do need to become more exclusive in terms of who they are marketing to.

Luxury consumers enjoy feeling special and needed, especially by brands that they covet. Therefore, having an experience that can be experienced by all is not something that will make them want to buy a luxury product.

Furthermore, if only a few luxury brands make the effort to make a consumer feel special, consumers may flock to those labels rather than ones that seem to cater to everyone.

Therefore, brands may want to step up the runway or event experience if they want to keep their core customers.

“Turning an event into a total sensory experience makes it more impactful, particularly when it is a first, but it is not a long-term strategy to ensure exclusivity,” said Karen Weiner Escalera, president and chief strategist at **KWE Group**, Miami. “The glamour and chic appeal of the location is always an effective draw, adding to the cachet.

“Ultimately, though, runway shows are probably outliving their effectiveness as coveted events precisely because of social media and the Web,” she said. “It is time to come up with another, totally new and different strategy to bring back the exclusivity to Fashion Week.”

#### Final Take

*Rachel Lamb, associate reporter on Luxury Daily, New York*

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