

EVENTS/CAUSES

Vertu bolsters CSR via Smile Train alignment

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By RACHEL LAMB

Mobile phone brand Vertu is giving back to the community via special photo exhibitions worldwide and a product that will benefit children with cleft lips and palates.

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Luxury Daily

Vertu's Constellation Smile phone will help children by donating the cost of an operation for each handset sold. In addition, the photo exhibits in cities such as Hong Kong and London look to raise awareness of children in serious need of dental surgery.

"This effort provides a social reason to purchase a luxury good," said Courtney Albert, brand strategist at Parker Avery, Atlanta. "In this economic climate, there might be a deeper sense of guilt attached to purchasing such a high profile luxury good.

"With the purchase of this particular phone, consumers are not only satisfying their individual wants, but also completing an action that will improve a child's life," she said. "In addition, cause marketing can potentially increase loyalty both internally and externally with the consumers and employees."

Ms. Albert is not affiliated with Vertu, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

Vertu could not be reached before press deadline.

Operation: smile

Vertu launched its Constellation Smile smartphone, which donated money to [Smile Train](#) for each product bought. As of press deadline, there have been 242 operations funded by Vertu, according to its Web site.

The smartphones come in coral blue, coral red, anemone purple and pebble grey. They have a multi-touch sapphire screen and an 8-megapixel camera.

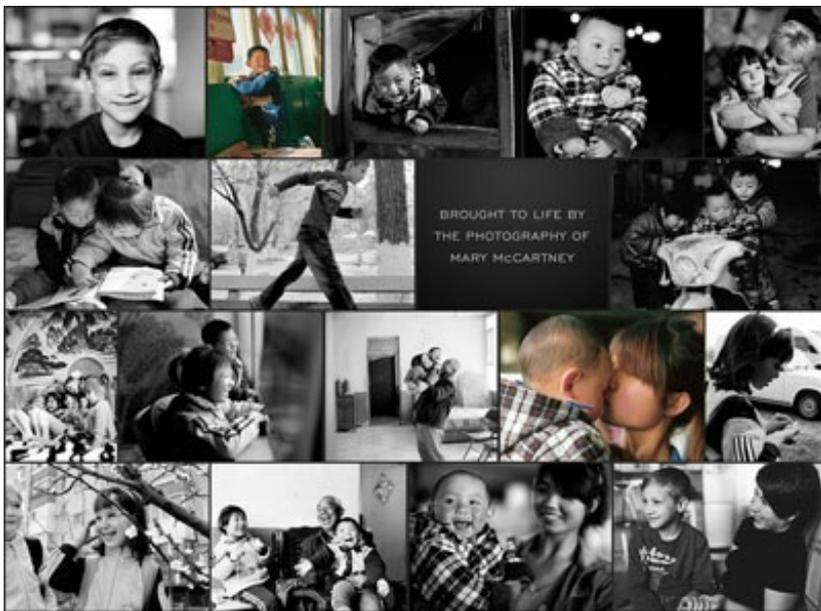


Vertu Constellation Smile in coral blue

Meanwhile, the photo exhibition aimed to increase awareness of care for children with cleft lips and palates and to show how children bloom with the light of life when they receive help, according to Smile Train.

One exhibit last week featured four photos of children born with unformed cleft palates from China and Russia who have received help from Smile Train.

The photos were taken by photographer Mary McCartney in 2012 pertaining to candid smiles.



Ms. McCartney's photos on the Vertu Web site

Vertu is marketing this partnership through extensive digital presences. The phone, as well as photos from Ms. McCartney's exhibition, are available via social media and Vertu's Web site.

Embedded Video: <http://www.youtube-nocookie.com/embed/TQU6XYQykrU>

CSR for CRM

In developing countries, more than 165,000 children are born with clefts and most of them cannot afford the corrective surgery.

However, Smile Train formed partnerships with 1,200 hospitals in 76 countries to create surgeries.

Last year alone, Smile Train treated and cured approximately 122,000 people with cleft palates.

Quite a few luxury marketers are using special products to align with charities.

For example, Swiss watchmaker Hublot teamed up with Miami Heat basketball players Dwayne Wade and Udonis Haslem for the King Power Miami Heat Chronograph that benefits a charity to support at-risk families and education efforts in South Florida ([see story](#)).

In addition, Montblanc launched its first regionally-focused corporate social responsibility project with the Texas Children's Cancer Center and has created two special-edition bracelets to benefit the cause.

Through the partnership, Montblanc will help fund patient care, research and education to enhance the health and well-being of children with cancer ([see story](#)).

"The more obvious benefit point is generating positive public relations and increasing sales," Ms. Albert said. "However, I would argue that it runs deeper and can greatly affect the brand's internal reputation.

"Cause marketing can increase employee morale, especially when participating in locally focused initiatives," she said. "It also allows them to work towards a common goal and acts as an excellent team-building exercise.

"Happier employees equal happier customers."

Final Take

Rachel Lamb, associate reporter on Luxury Daily, New York

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