

INTERNET

Digital best practices for luxury jets, yachts

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By TRICIA CARR

The reach of the digital landscape to the masses could make private aviation and yacht providers hesitant to spread their brand message on this medium. However, a luxury brand that does not enact a digital strategy will miss out.

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Luxury Daily

Though an abundance of luxury fashion, jewelry, automotive and travel brands are building marketing strategies centered on digital and social media, the majority of private aviation and luxury yacht brands seem to be absent from the action. There are quite a few ways that these brands can be present on the digital channel without diluting their brand message to the masses.

“Affluent consumers spend a great deal of time online today and, like most categories, consumers are doing considerable amounts of their research for products and services online,” said Mike Parker, chief digital officer for North America of **McCann**, New York.

“The luxury segment is no different and, in fact, given higher education and more Internet access, this group represents an even higher propensity to research online,” he said.

“If brands are not represented in digital channels, then they are missing the opportunity to connect with these consumers.”

Cleared for takeoff

Private aviation and yacht brands that want to stay top of mind to ultra-high-net-worth consumers cannot ignore digital.

To start, private luxury transportation brands should mirror their print targeting strategy to digital advertising. They should identify Web sites and social media where this audience is spending their time to place brand messages.

“A luxury yacht rental company might choose to advertise in Robb Report, but not Us Weekly,” Mr. Parker said. “Online, it is about the company you keep.”

The digital channel is where jet and yacht brands should go to reach the influx of young, affluent consumers who are exposed to these services for the first time, per D.M. Banks, director of [DMB Public Relations](#), New York.

Young consumers are doing price comparisons, research and decision-making online, which makes digital advertising crucial.

This messaging also needs to be spread via the same tier of outlets that brands use for their print and broadcast strategies.

“As important as it is to have this digital presence in today's market, the overall quality of the promotion is still the key to the success of any brand,” Mr. Banks said.



Flexjet Learjet 85

In addition, private jet and yacht brands should reach out to consumers with appropriate messaging for the research stage of a purchase. This is the stage that most consumers are in when interacting with a brand online, per Michael Silvia, partner at [Evins Ltd.](#), New York.

However, convincing affluent consumers to buy into a private jet or yacht brand could be a bit more difficult than automotive.

Jet and yacht brands can overcome these challenges by touting ratings, new products and awards similar to automotive advertising.

“For luxury brands such as private aviation and luxury yachts, it is important to remember

that the consumer who is online and susceptible to a message is most likely in the research phase of the sales funnel,” Mr. Silvia said. “They are identifying potential brands that speak to them, as well as verifying that the brands they may know already are the best fit for their needs.”

Online segmentation can help these brands reach the correct consumers with digital advertising and keep a brand message from becoming diluted.

Google and Facebook’s ad targeting platforms can reach the consumers doing jet or yacht research online, or those that interact with existing consumers of these brands types.

“Simply by recognizing the types of products and services a consumer searches for on a regular basis, Google and Facebook can steer like-minded brands to that same consumer,” Mr. Silvia said. “If you doubt it, try searching for private yacht brokers, luxury automobiles and private jets for a few days, and then see what types of online ads find their way to you over the ensuing weeks.”



Windstar's Windsurf in the Mediteranean ocean

Social circle

Social media is an effective channel to spread certain jet and yacht brand messages, experts say. Brands can identify their target consumers and look to reach those in the same group.

There are two notions that luxury jet and yacht brands should highlight on digital, per McCann’s Mr. Parker. These are experience and information.

Online media allows these brands to use video and other social interactivity to highlight the experience that luxury consumers will get with a purchase. These channels can be a lot more impactful than traditional channels.

Then, brands can back up this message by linking to in-depth information.

“Bring the customer in through a targeted message that uses technology to provide a taste of the experience, then link to all the important detail and product information,” Mr. Parker said.

“Given the nature of the products we are talking about, I think it is all about the experience,” he said. “A more engaging communication that provides a taste of the experience, or demonstrates through social media that other likeminded, affluent people have used the services, would be more effective.”

“I am not sure you are going to convince someone to rent a private jet through a simple banner ad.”

Engagement tools let aviation and yacht brands bring consumers behind the scenes. Effective tools include video, virtual tours, customer testimonials and insight from executives, architects and builders, per DMB Public Relations’ Mr. Banks.

These digital engagement methods allow potential consumers to become comfortable with a brand, which triggers brand loyalty and purchasing.

“Online marketing and a strong presence on social media outlets provide ways for these brands to have an online presence to a larger demographic than ever before,” Mr. Banks said.

“As we have seen brands like Aston Martin and Porsche create entertaining video advertisements, it is only a matter of time until we begin seeing more of this from the yacht and airline manufacturers,” he said.

Furthermore, jet and yacht brands need to keep in mind that engagement is the beginning of the cycle, but purchase should be the end goal of a digital strategy.

“Engagement is great, but not as effective a sales tool as digital advertising for targeting actual buyers,” Evins’ Mr. Silvia said.

“Social and video are entertainment-focused and great tools for staying top of mind for existing fans, but not great at getting new purchasers,” he said. “It is generally not until we have embraced a brand that we start collecting their associated imagery.”

Final Take

Tricia Carr, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York