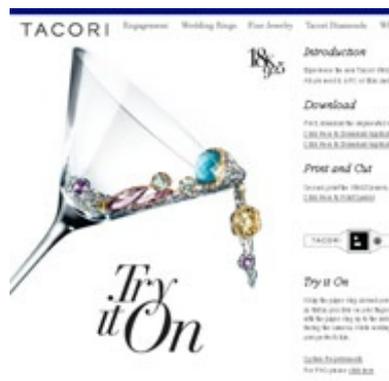


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How augmented reality has changed luxury jewelry shopping behavior

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By RACHEL LAMB

High-end jewelers including De Beers, Forevermark, Tacori and Boucheron have implemented augmented reality into their digital strategies, which changes the way consumers think about and buy products and the brand image, both online and in-store.



With augmented reality allowing consumers to virtually “try on” products, it has given consumers an interesting way to interact with the brand before purchase. Furthermore, this interaction increases the probability that they will choose that jeweler in the future since they have spent more time with that label.

“There is no doubt that augmented reality has had a major impact on the affluent consumer and their decision-making process,” said Lynne Murray, brand director at **Holition**, London. “Luxury consumers are time poor but are technically savvy and use the digital tools at their fingertips to find out more about a product they like which means they are engaging closely with the brand.

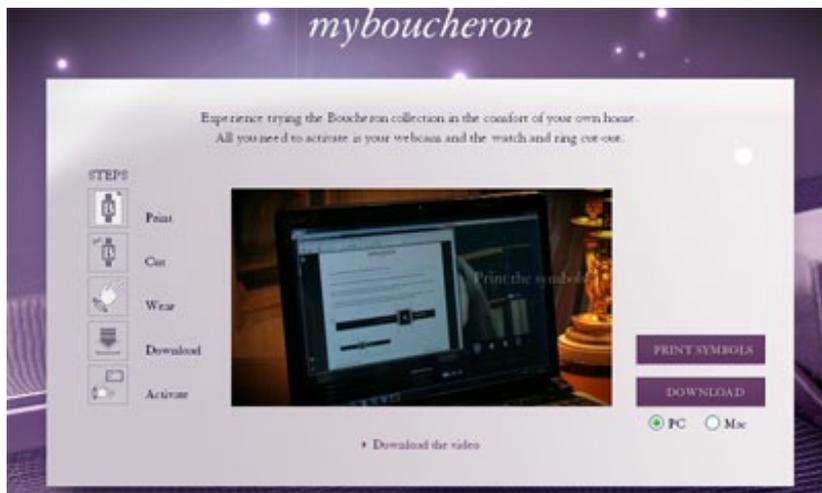
“They are actively looking for ways to ‘play’ with a brand’s products and if the Web site or app offers that ability then the brand has achieved its aim,” she said. “An augmented reality campaign can be set up to either drive traffic in-store or online.”

Holition has worked with luxury jewelers such as De Beers, Forevermark, Boucheron and Tissot.

Virtual jewels

Brands using augmented reality have been doing so in a number of different ways. One is to drive online traffic and, possibly, transactions.

For example, Boucheron's Web site has shoppers print out pieces of paper that they can wrap around their wrists, fingers or put next to their ears.



Using their Web cams, consumers can hold the paper up and the image of them wearing the brand product is reflected on the computer screen.

As a result of augmented reality, Boucheron saw a 50 percent increase in Web site traffic at the launch and sees a 10 percent growth year over year, according to Ms. Murray ([see story](#)).

In addition, De Beers Group's Forevermark used augmented reality with the launch of My Forevermark Fitting, a virtual try-on experience through users' computer screens, which used the same Holition technology as Boucheron ([see story](#)).

Tacori also has the same type of technology on its site using a printer and Web cam. It also set up an augmented reality booth outside of Bloomingdale's where consumers could move around with the jewelry.

"Just as a consumer is more likely to purchase a product if they have the ability to try it on in-store, a consumer is more likely to visit, browse and purchase online if the Web site has augmented reality functionality," said Scott Delea, managing partner at [Inflexion Interactive](#), Hoboken, NJ.

"Augmented reality provides an opportunity for luxury jewelers to meet the needs of their existing consumers who are becoming more and more tech-savvy," he said. "It also provides an entree to connect with younger consumers who expect marketers to provide information in the palm of their hand."

In-store driver

Boucheron and Forevermark's use of augmented reality is out of necessity, since

consumers cannot try on brand products if they are not in a store.

However, other marketers are using augmented reality for the fun of it, which could be to position the brand as a tech-savvy, forward-thinking label.

For example, Britain's Garrard, the world's oldest jewelry manufacturer, created augmented-reality windows that allowed viewers to wear a \$154,481 tiara on their head. This was extremely popular during the recent royal wedding craze ([see story](#)).

Also, Swiss watchmaker Tissot allowed window shoppers to try on its luxury watches from the sidewalk in front of Selfridges and Harrods.

The Tissot campaign was more successful than any other British campaign that the brand had done, according to Ms. Murray. Sales in the Tissot Selfridges boutique rose 85 percent.



Tacori augmented reality

The use of augmented reality could not only add value to the actual jewelers, but to retailers that sell products such as Selfridges or Harrods.

Reality check

Augmented reality can help consumers and brands become more acquainted, but only if the technology is done correctly.

Like any other marketing tactic, brands need to make sure that this strategy aligns with their image and that it will help the company drive sales or brand loyalty.

“Augmented reality will enhance the luxury experience as long as the technology works well,” Mr. Delea said. “Augmented reality can also have a negative effect and impact on the brand if it is a poor experience, so luxury brands should thoroughly test the technology with real buyers to see how well it is received by their customers.

“Augmented reality works particularly well for more simple uses such as rings,” he said.

However, augmented reality may eventually become a mainstay for luxury jewelers, according to both Mr. Delea and Holition's Ms. Murray.

Since augmented reality and other technological advances are used by younger consumers, those same shoppers will grow up and become the older, affluent, luxury-goods-buying generation.

Therefore, brands should learn to adapt to where technology is going.

“Diluting the luxury status is an old-fashioned view of digital technology,” Holition’s Ms. Murray said. “Digital is driving the affluent consumer.

“The luxury consumer is technology-savvy and is ever more demanding of the most advanced digital tools to match their lifestyles,” she said. “Augmented reality gets people closer to a product by building a relationship between the brand and the consumer.

“There is a two-way communication which makes the experience memorable and likely to build brand loyalty.”

Final Take

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