MULTICHANNEL

Maintaining the luxury image across all social media platforms

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By RACHEL LAMB

With social media becoming an increasingly important tool for high-end marketers, brands need to ensure that this strategy is as seamless as possible across all channels to achieve the maximum luxury experience.

Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, Instagram, foursquare, blogs and YouTube are all making it easy for luxury marketers to engage with consumers via portable devices such as smartphones and tablets, but some tactics are lost in translation. Therefore, when brands plan out their social media strategy, they need to ensure that it is a cross-channel reach so that they can reach affluent consumers on-the-go.

"After becoming digital and social, luxury brands have quickly embraced the importance of cross-platform presence and engagement," said Paul Farkas, cofounder of Shoe Week, New York. "Having multiple touch point presences for consumers weaves in choice, comfortableness and competitive edge.

"Luxury marketing innovation needs to design for what the affluent consumer wants today and will want tomorrow," he said.

Channeling the brand

Affluent consumers are more likely than non-affluent to afford smartphones and tablets, so it is important that luxury brands develop social media strategies to fit these devices.

Mobile applications and optimized sites for Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and YouTube make it easier for luxury marketers to interact with consumers.

Also, many brands put links to their social media sites on their mobile sites, advertisements and emails so that consumers can easily connect to more content.

For example, Michael Kors tapped its fans for a contest that lets consumers enter to win one item per day until Mother's Day via a Facebook app that, for the first time for the brand, was mobile-compatible (see story).
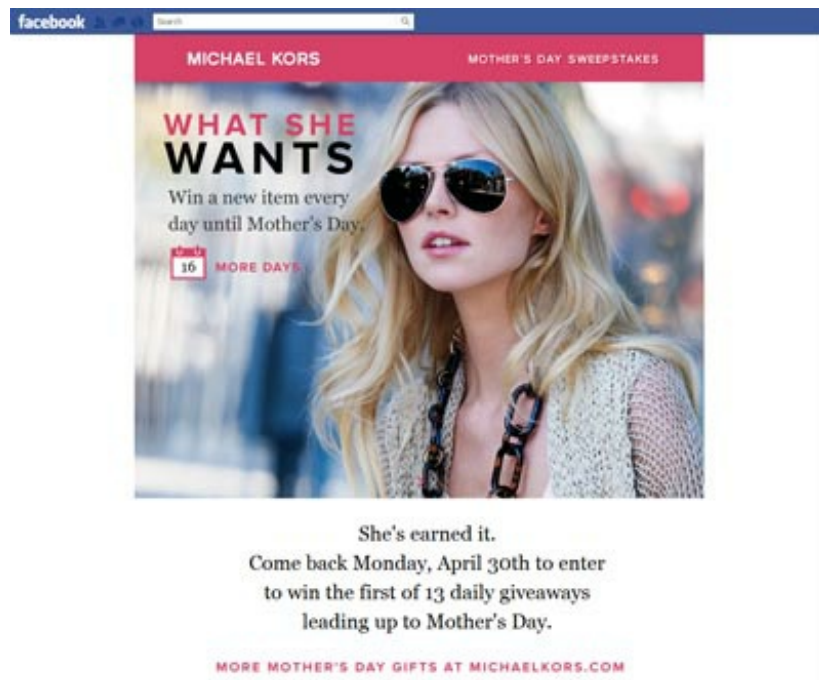
Michael Kors mobile Facebook app

Meanwhile, bridging the gaps between other media is just as important. Many brands use QR codes or calls-to-action to Facebook and Twitter pages on print ads.

For example, luxury real estate company One Thousand Ocean incorporated QR codes to its Facebook page in its print ads (see story).

One Thousand Ocean print ad

Using smartphones or tablets, consumers are able to interact with a brand on a multichannel level including both modern and traditional media.

Also, brands are using out-of-home efforts to connect via social media. Marketers including Burberry, Marc Jacobs, Rebecca Minkoff and Oscar de la Renta live-streamed their runway shows earlier this month.

These brands are also using Instagram to track the shows in real-time.

Bergdorf's Fashion Week Instagram pictures

"Digitally-advanced brands come up with an entire online strategy for their shows and use multiple platforms to engage their online fans, from custom show hashtags to live Facebook updates, video live streaming platforms and interactive chats," said Yuli Ziv, founder/CEO of Style Coalition, New York.

"Brands use these tools to amplify the online conversation across different channels and thus reach wide audiences, versus focusing only on the select group of editors and bloggers in the live audience," she said.

Cross-promotion
Like most new marketing tactics, luxury brands are typically slow to adopt to new technology.

Therefore, not many luxury brands are making a conscious effort to seamlessly transition across different media.

"The ties between social media and mobility are inextricable, as witnessed by the tremendous shift in social media activity away from the tethered desktop Web and toward

mobile and tablet devices," said Scott Forshay, mobile and emerging technologies strategist for Acquity Group, Austin, TX.

"Experience is not a product of technology, but it is a product of emotion, and there are unquestionable elements of instantaneous experience and inspiration that really distinguish social from other forms of unidirectional media," he said. "Savvy marketers in the social arena understand this fundamental truth and utilize it to create deeper connections with consumers who seek greater degrees of intimacy with the brands they most covet."

That said, high-end brands are good at combining the in-store experience – which is the cornerstone of the luxury industry – with other channels.

For example, Italian fashion house Gucci worked with Samsung Electronics to offer an immersive in-store experience devoted to the label's timepieces and jewelry that combines physical and mobile commerce. It also included all of the QR codes on the Gucci Facebook page.

Gucci QR codes found on its Facebook page

The label pushed its Bamboo and I-Gucci watch collections via an in-store display with Samsung's new transparent viewing screens and offer browsing opportunities with a digital shop-in-shop section (see story).

"Luxury brands are scratching at the surface of multi-platform digital distribution," said Ian Foley, a Redwood City, CA-based digital advertising expert.

In fact, one of the best first steps that a luxury marketer can take is to develop an HTML5 site because it can be used cross-platform and link to other mobile efforts, per Mr. Foley.

However, no two brands are alike. Therefore, brands that are looking to transfer their social strategies cross-platform need to first decide where their fans spend the most time.

"As social platforms become adopted widely by the masses, choosing one requires more specific targeting," Style Coalition's Ms. Ziv said. "It helps for the brand to analyze the demographics and make sure there is a match before jumping on the next big thing."

Final Take

Rachel Lamb, associate reporter on Luxury Daily, New York

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