

COLUMNS

Content marketing for luxury brands

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By **Tom O'Regan**

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Recent eMarketer research shows that marketing pros are latching onto the content marketing trend, and many have content strategies planned for 2013. However, content marketing is no easy task.

For one thing, marketers must have content to market – or be prepared to create it.

Another challenge: developing a channel strategy to reach affluent consumers with that content.

For luxury marketers, content creates a wonderful opportunity. Luxury brands have stories to tell, and it is something our industry frequently does well.

Just think of the beautiful images of the ads that fill the fall fashion issue of Vogue, the elegant ads for brands such as Movado, Mikimoto or BMW. Many of these ads approach the level of art, and new channels available for content marketing are engineered to showcase that masterful work.

Today, some luxury brands are already successfully exploring these new trends. Here is how they are doing it:

Think beyond the text box

Content is more than just text, it is every imaginable format: audio, video, games, photos,

surveys and more.

With smartphone adoption skyrocketing and newer social networks such as Pinterest and Instagram growing in popularity, image sharing is hotter than ever.

Pinterest is noted for attracting affluent women, in particular. Appropriately, Kate Spade, designer Peter Som, Cartier and other brands are using Pinterest's image sharing network to post product images and atmospheric branded images.

Meanwhile, Hermes, Tiffany, Gucci, Burberry and savvy Kate Spade are connecting with affluent audiences on Instagram with great success.

In particular, wealthy youths seem to be active on Instagram, and these brands are able to engage them on this platform.

While many brands such as Cartier focus heavily on product images, Burberry and others take their role of content creator a bit more to heart.

Burberry's Instagram libraries include backstage shots at fashion shows, clock towers of London in conjunction with their new "Britain" line of timepieces, and other local-to-London photos.

Kate Spade takes a similar approach, but gets even more casual, tagging staff members with their Twitter handles in relevant photos, and allowing aspirational followers to feel like worthy peers.

Images can capture stories in ways that words often cannot – that is why glossy print magazines such as Vogue and Robb Report have always been so appealing to luxury marketers and their audience.

Visuals make it easier for us to capture the essence of a brand, to "surprise and delight."

Visual social networks give affluent consumers the ability to share the surprise, delight and bragging rights with friends.

Of course, video one-ups static photos on this count. Where images can intrigue audiences with a captivating moment within a story, video can tell the story from beginning to end.

There is a tradeoff, of course: Static images can grab attention and make an impression in a heartbeat. Videos can deepen the engagement, but must be compelling enough to hold attention.

Elegantly telling stories with video

Gucci's shoppable videos made headlines earlier this year.

While few others have ventured to follow in their direct-response footsteps, many luxury brands have dived into shareable video.

A quick search through YouTube will uncover channels for Jimmy Choo, Longchamp, BMW, Kate Spade, of course, and Cartier, to name just a few.

Notably, Longchamp promoted its video-based “Oh, My Bike!” campaign in print at the beginning of the fall season.

The campaign, which features a slightly silly video of two models briefly cycling with several Longchamp bags in tow, of course, then climbing endless stairs in snow and in heels to meet an statuesque friend, is featured on the company’s YouTube channel. The campaign also has a prominent tab on Longchamp’s Facebook page.

And while the high adoption of YouTube is impressive, even more impressive is the use of video ads by some luxury advertisers.

In particular, both Nordstrom and Cadillac have run standard, expandable ad units featuring high-quality video. This approach covers the “paid” area of the media spectrum and allows brands to target the audiences they reach with strategic media buys.

Showcasing content with Rising Stars

The Interactive Advertising Bureau’s rising star ad units, particularly the Portrait, create another great opportunity for brands to market content to their audiences and strike a paid/owned/earned balance.

The Portrait includes three content modules that can be customized by the advertiser in a way that will showcase their unique content.

In the case of Range Rover, the modules included an HD video on top, a 360-degree viewer that allowed users to choose the color of their vehicle and view it from all angles, and finally a Google map that enabled users to find their local dealership.

An ad for the Hawaiian Islands featured a slideshow with island images, an interactive poll and an HD video. Other brands have pulled in Twitter feeds, resource links, and booking or purchase engines, the case of hotels and events.

The beauty of the Rising Star units is that they allow brands to showcase their best content, then carefully place that content in the path of their target audience.

At a time when more brands are taking on the role of publishers, it creates a perfect platform to showcase branded content to the right audience.

When mixed in with social media channels such as Instagram, YouTube and Pinterest – which can be shared on Facebook and Twitter – Rising Stars can be exactly what luxury brands need to surprise and delight affluent audiences online.

Tom O’Regan is chief revenue officer of [Martini Media](#), New York. Reach him at tom.o'regan@martini-corp.com.