

MULTICHANNEL

Cross-channel experiences propelled luxury marketers this holiday season

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By ERIN SHEA

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Executives from iProspect, McCann Truth Central and MRL Communications who spoke during a Luxury Daily webinar said that luxury marketers who did not give in to discounting, but offered multichannel experiences did not lose out during the holiday 2012 season.

During the “Luxury Holiday Marketing Recap: What Worked, What Didn’t and Lessons Learned” webinar Jan. 22, the executives agreed that discounting during the holiday season is what U.S. consumers have come to expect when shopping. However, luxury brands should not give in to discounting products, but should provide their best customers with other exclusive offers so they do not lose sales.

“Discounting seems to be a necessary evil because it is such a key part of department and retail store business,” said Andrea Wilson, Fort Worth, TX-based director of digital strategy and luxury practice lead at [iProspect](#).

“Instead of having just a percentage off, luxury brands should focus on special offers that still keep that luxury component to it, such as free shipping or free gift-wrap,” she said.

“If a brand is not offering some kind of exclusive offer, then they are losing out.”

Boosting mobile and social

One topic discussed during the webinar was that luxury marketers have room for improvement in the mobile and social realms.

Although some brands are making strides in mobile and social campaigns, luxury brands overall seem to be falling behind compared to mass market brands.

“[If brands] are not taking full advantage of mobile and social then they are falling behind,” said India Wooldridge, vice president and deputy director at [McCann Truth Central](#), New York.

Some brands are making steps in the right direction. For example, Marc Jacobs has redesigned its digital platform and has a rich ecommerce platform.

Also, Louis Vuitton personalized its Facebook promotions and Gucci and Saks made use of Pinterest for holiday gift guides, Ms. Wooldridge said.

However, when luxury brands are putting themselves out there on social and mobile channels, they do not want to compromise the value of their brands.

This could be a reason why it takes luxury marketers so long to adopt to new platforms.

“The luxury market never expected its consumers to purchase luxury products online,” said Molly Leis, principal of [MRL Communications](#), New York. “We are seeing this slower evolution to strengthen their online marketing.

“Some of these luxury brands have an image and a heritage to hold intact,” she said.

Since mobile and social marketing was never accounted for by luxury brands, many of them have their social, digital and mobile marketing done by outside agencies.

Once brands create their own departments to manage these channels, then there will be more of a shift in voice so that it is coming from the brand itself, per Ms. Leis.

Multichannel mavens

Marketers that used multichannel campaigns that aligned with the brand’s identity likely helped keep them top of mind during the busy holiday season.

“The buzzword was multichannel,” McCann Truth Central’s Ms. Wooldridge said. “A credible approach certainly helps to keep brands top of mind in a crowded media environment, but there is still room for improvement.”

Brands should look to create a seamless experience that works across channels and have a message that is present throughout all points of the customer journey, she said.

One example of this was from department store Barneys New York. The retailer made the effort to sync in-store experiences with technology to take the stress away from holiday shopping.

Barneys gave in-store shoppers a more personalized checkout experience through a partnership with Infinite Peripherals that equipped sales associates with mobile point-of-sale devices at its flagship location ([see story](#)).

Also, French jeweler Cartier's use of online marketing through its Winter Tale video and advertisements along with its in-store experience and engaging, animated window display in its New York store made for a strong multichannel campaign.

The Winter Tale campaign started with the short animated video titled Winter Tale that depicted Cartier's holiday gift items as its signature panthers explored a tree filled with gifts ([see story](#)).

Overall, luxury brands should look to cater to the customer and promote a strong multichannel campaign to be successful during the holidays.

"Brands should develop a specific season campaign and embrace the multichannel marketing experience," MRL Communication's Ms. Leis said.

"They should focus on customer service in both ecommerce and in-store, and make sure that the consumers see themselves as the protagonist in the story developed across the channels," she said.

"A brand needs a strong strategy to take them across all channels so that their marketing endeavors are distinguishable even without their logo."

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Final take

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