

Q&A

Transparency prompts online diamond sales: Royal Asscher exec

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By TRICIA CARR

Royal Asscher is turning to digital as the main marketing and distribution channel for its new man-made diamond line to help target consumers better understand the brand.

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The Dutch brand launched Rebel Chique to open up consumers' minds to the idea that diamonds are not a once-in-a-lifetime purchase, but a must-have for each season. The man-made diamond brand is looking to change the way that consumers shop for diamonds with pricing up to \$9,495 for a blue brilliant-cut man-made diamond ring.

"We aim at a consumer that is excited about new things in the world and that appreciates true beauty," said Mike Asscher, sixth-generation diamanteer and founder of **Rebel Chique**, Amsterdam, the Netherlands. "We believe that this clientele is modern and uses the Internet on a daily basis.

"Their world includes social media, and they are definitively open to new experiences such as our man-made fashion diamonds," he said.

In this Q&A, Mr. Asscher discusses the marketing plan for Rebel Chique and how the brand is sparking interest via digital. Here is the dialogue:

What was Royal Asscher's strategy for the new Rebel Chique line?

Man-made diamonds are opening the world of colored diamonds in an incredible way for all people.

Furthermore, man-made diamonds are finally available in premium quality and larger quantities.

We believe that as with pearls, man-made diamonds will soon become widely accepted and appreciated by consumers.

What is the marketing plan for Rebel Chique?

Rebel Chique focuses on the excited and unique consumer that is looking for special, cool and exciting pieces.

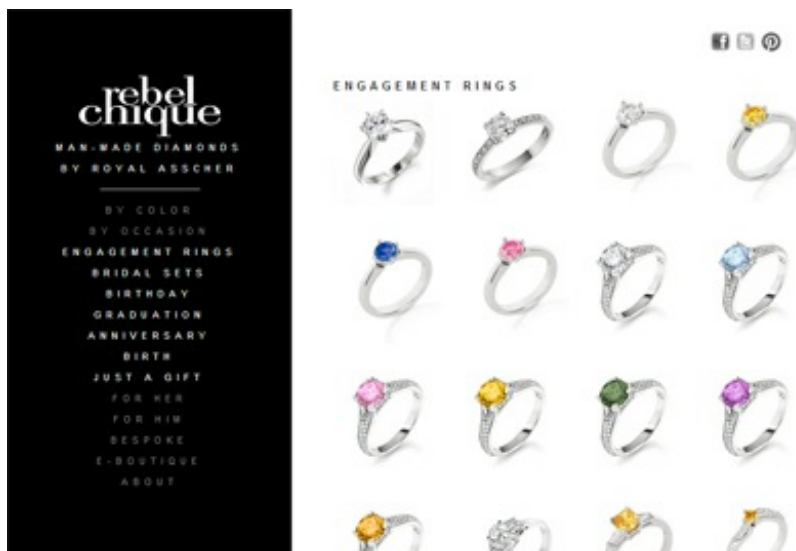
Royal Asscher will be launching more designs that are less traditional to capture these.

We will reach our customers by launching an online campaign on Web sites where we believe they are every day.

Currently, we are also working on a very exciting design competition specifically for designers, new and experienced, that have never had the chance to use these amazing diamonds before, as colored diamonds always have been only for the lucky few.

Which marketing channels are vital to reach the target audience of the new brand?

We believe that the product needs to be understood, so our Web site and the information part is very important.



Web site

However, once people understand the uniqueness of these diamonds, we plan to have a widespread ongoing communication with them through social media.

We also will aim for excited bloggers of fashion-related blogs, Web sites and media.

Why is digital such a key part of Rebel Chique's sales strategy?

We aim at a consumer that is excited about new things in the world and that appreciates true beauty. We believe that this clientele is modern and uses the Internet on a daily basis.

Their world includes social media, and they are definitively open to new experiences such as our man-made fashion diamonds.

What trends in the diamond industry are shaping Royal Asscher's Rebel Chique brand launch?

We see four trends coming together in our brand.

Man-made diamonds are rapidly gaining ground in the diamond industry.

We fancy colored diamonds. Traditionally, most diamonds are still colorless, as colored diamonds are very rare and thus expensive.

Making them purposely, instead of stumbling on one in a mine, can drop the price by up to 90 percent, making them affordable as well as available.

We see a trend that more and more jewelry is bought online, hence our start online as well. This helps in reducing the need of working capital significantly as well, further sweetening the prices.

Finally, we see more and more traditional diamanteers starting to sell complete jewelry.

We started in 2004 with our first jewelry lines, so for us, Rebel Chique further drives us to becoming a branded jewelry company.



Blue man-made diamond ring

What advice would you give to diamond marketers that are looking to increase their digital footprint?

Be transparent in all your steps, actions and words.

The diamond industry flourishes as a whole if we are all transparent and make clear to consumers what they get when shopping online with the 4 C's. Certification by well-established houses, such as GIA or AGS, and hallmarking are of the highest importance to

build trust among consumers.

Though the look and feel of the tangible product is often what drives sales, how can diamond marketers be successful on digital?

To many customers, a diamond is still a diamond, and like any trade, if you see the proper description – hence the importance of the certification – and you trust the maker, like in our case, a nearly 160-year-old company, you know what you get.

In the United States alone, an estimated 11 percent of all diamond jewelry is already purchased online.

Final Take

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