

IN-STORE

## Tom Ford exec: Successful luxury brands keep control of their product

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By TRICIA CARR

DANA POINT, CA – The chairman of Tom Ford International who spoke at the American Express Publishing Luxury Summit 2013 said that brands must create collections that resonate with luxury consumers before jumping into marketing, public relations and retail efforts.

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During the “Creating an Iconic Brand: The Strategy Behind Tom Ford” session, the Tom Ford chairman discussed how retail stores are the label's primary means to showcase its products. The executive and former Gucci CEO stressed that luxury marketers thrive if they develop design values for their products and do not sacrifice these through the life of the brand.

“Quality will be remembered long after price is forgotten,” said Domenico De Sole, chairman of [Tom Ford International](#).

When it all began

When designer Tom Ford left Gucci and started his own brand, fashion was at the core. Though he was a celebrity-like public figure at the time, the quality of the products was the defining factor in the label's immediate success, per Mr. De Sole.

The brand started with beauty and eyewear, but soon launched men's made-to-measure.

Mr. Ford wanted to design menswear with the concept of if a man were to shop somewhere, where would he go? He looked to create an exclusive luxury men's brand.

At the center of Tom Ford's strategy is to be the first true luxury brand of the 21st century. The label has continued to focus on superior design and products, attention to detail and its made-in-Italy roots.

The menswear grew dramatically as a result of this approach.

"The label has a unique fashion statement, which is key to a luxury brand's long-term success," Mr. De Sole said.



*Mr. De Sole*

Next, the first menswear store opened April 2007 in New York, followed by one in Las Vegas.

The brand was surprised with the success of its men's business since it began as the U.S. economy collapsed.

Tom Ford started from scratch with retail stores to push products and quickly realized how important Asian markets were, and still are, to luxury goods sales. It soon opened stores in Hong Kong and other Asian cities - a decision that can change a luxury brand forever.

"You cannot be a good luxury brand unless you are important and relevant to the Asian

market,” Mr. De Sole said.



### *Presentation*

For the women

The next step for Tom Ford was to launch women’s ready-to-wear.

In 2010, the brand had its first women's collection runway show. It was not meant to be a spectacle, but to exhibit the beauty of the collection.

The first unisex store opened in Beverly Hills, CA, after the womenswear launch.

Tom Ford went on to refurbish every retail store worldwide to appeal to consumers in each respective market and also opened a shop-in-shop.

The strategy for its shops within department stores is disciplined.

“We are unbelievably disciplined that there are no compromises,” Mr. De Sole said. “No matter where we are, we really present the brand in the appropriate way.”

The brand’s retail strategy is its core marketing channel. Each retail location is a representation of the brand and impacts the future.

Tom Ford is opening a store on London’s Sloane Street. It is also expanding in the United States to Dallas, Chicago, Miami’s new design district and Houston, TX, as well as in Asia with new stores in China.

“What we do now will impact the future of the brand,” Mr. De Sole said.

Final Take

*Tricia Carr, associate reporter on Luxury Daily, New York*

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