

INTERNET

Chanel challenges short consumer attention span with brand film

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By TRICIA CARR

Chanel's bold move to create an 18-minute brand film for its 100th anniversary signals that the French label is not only an innovator in fashion, but is also looking to break the rules with its digital marketing.

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The new film called "Once Upon a Time" with actress Keira Knightley, the longtime ambassador for Chanel's Coco Mademoiselle fragrance, starts in 1913 when Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel has opened a namesake hat boutique in on the Rue Gontaut-Biron in Deauville, France. The label's creative director Karl Lagerfeld produced and directed the film to show how the brand's founder revolutionized fashion by creating a new style concept for modern women.

"Anniversaries afford a unique moment of celebration," said Rebecca Robins, London-based director for Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Latin America at **Interbrand** and co-author of "Meta-luxury: Brands and the Culture of Excellence." "With a 100th anniversary comes, inevitably, a greater sense of occasion and, perhaps, creative license – one that Lagerfeld has elegantly embraced in Once Upon a Time.

"That Lagerfeld has chosen to disrupt the more concise standard of storytelling with a full 18 minutes of film – remember that Cartier's epic L'Odyssée was only three minutes long

– even seems fitting,” she said. “After all, Chanel disrupted the very standard and expectation of women's fashion.

“Those who remain charmed until ‘The End’ will surely share in a wry smile at the signature culminating words on the brand by Vita Sackville-West, ‘I wonder what it will be in 100 years.’

Ms. Robins is not affiliated with Chanel, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

Chanel declined comment.

Fashionable history lesson

Once Upon a Time starts as two women walk by Ms. Chanel’s hat shop and criticize the items in the window, saying the designer “has no taste” since the simple, lightweight pieces did not align with the fashion trends of the time.

After the opening credits, viewers watch as Ms. Chanel enters the scene with her Aunt Adrienne, played by Clotilde Hesme.

They unlock the hat shop for the first time. It opened thanks to financial support from her boyfriend of the time Boy Capel, played by Jake Davis.



Film still

However, the shop remains empty for most of the day.

But Ms. Chanel’s hopes rise as a stylish woman finally walks in who turns out to be actress Jacqueline Forzane, played by Ashleigh Good.

The designer also compliments Ms. Forzane's jacket and notices that it is made from men’s underwear fabric.

During the film, more women discover Ms. Chanel’s hats including Lady de Grey, arts patron and friend of Oscar Wilde who is played by Stella Tennant; Russian dancer Ida Rubinstein played by Caroline de Maigret; writer Vita Sackville-West played by Saskia de Brauw; and actress Eve Lavalllière.

Soon women all around Deauville, France, are wearing Ms. Chanel’s designs.



Film still

The video ends as Ms. Chanel revels in her success, as viewers know what is to come for her.

Embedded Video: <http://www.youtube.com/embed/0o9dTCI0hkY>

Once Upon a Time

Once Upon a Time premiered on the evening of May 8, the day before the Chanel cruise collection show at Singapore's Loewen Cluster on Dempsey Hill. The film was shown during a private screening at the Raffles Hotel, Singapore.

Consumers can access the full film on Chanel's news site at <http://chanel-news.com> and on the brand's YouTube channel.

"This visual strategy allows their clientele an opportunity to emotionally connect with Chanel and even the founder herself," said Dalia Strum, professor at the [Fashion Institute of Technology](#) and founder of Dalia Inc., New York.

"As a teaser, it was slightly lengthy, yet engaging," she said. "Therefore, it's not a deterrent for viewers to continue watching,"

How long is too long

Chanel is telling the story of its founder in a longer format than usual for the digital medium.

The label is likely to inspire its digital audience, since many consumers can relate to the story.

"This approach is a true example of brand storytelling filled with a rags-to-riches beginning, including the sources of inspiration that became staple pieces within Chanel's collection," Ms. Strum said.

"It's an inspirational approach that their direct target market will strongly synergize with, as they are strong women with a classic yet modern sense of style," she said.

However, the length could dissuade certain consumers from viewing the full film, per Rony Zeidan, president and creative director of [RO New York](#).

Chanel has released digital shorts recently that share the brand's history as well. For

example, the label is flaunting the timeless quality of its iconic jacket in a mini film that outlines the item's history from 1954 to present day ([see story](#)).

Fortunately, storied luxury brand such as Chanel will get attention no matter their marketing efforts, per Mr. Zeidan.

"The pillar brands in luxury always get attention, whether the creations they put out to the public are good or not as successful as initially intended," Mr. Zeidan said. "The video will get attention for its first three minutes, and may considerably lose appeal for the remaining 15 minutes.

"The video is a bit ambitious in length and in the choice of language switches," he said. "In my humble opinion, it might not have the positive effects on the brand that it was intended to have.

"I highly doubt that the Chanel consumer will sit through a branded promotion of Coco."

Final Take

Tricia Carr, associate reporter on Luxury Daily, New York