

EVENTS / CAUSES

## Ralph Lauren, Tiffany reinforce luxury image via US Open sponsorship

August 27, 2013



By ERIN SHEA

Ralph Lauren, Tiffany & Co. and other brands are reaffirming their luxury status as sponsors of the 2013 United States Open tennis championships Aug. 26 – Sept. 9.

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This year's US Open held at the Billie Jean King National Tennis Center in Flushing, NY, drew many big name tennis stars and big name luxury brands. Although not all of the attendees are the brands' target audience, sponsoring a large event of an upscale sport can help marketers boost their exposure and luxury standing.

"Association with prestigious events, such as the U.S. Open, provides luxury companies with an opportunity to reinforce their brand's perception," said Ian Foley, a Portola Valley, CA,-based digital marketing strategist.

"However, with the large number of in-venue brands competing for share of voice, these brands should start to consider extending the sponsored event to their digital platforms too," he said.

"For example, streaming behind scenes content from the event to their social media audiences."

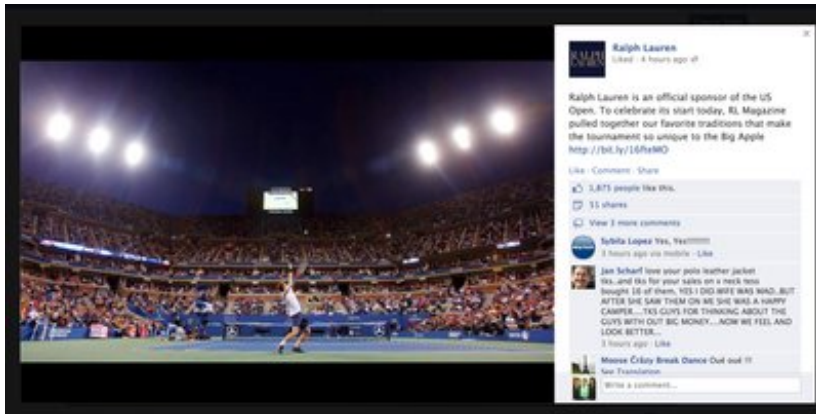
Luxury sport

The sponsors of the 2013 U.S. Open include Emirates, Mercedes-Benz, American Express, Ralph Lauren, Möet & Chandon, the New York Times and Tiffany & Co.

Most of the sponsors have a specific responsibility with their partnership.

For instance, Ralph Lauren is the official apparel sponsor, which it has been since 2005. This means that the brand is the outfitter of the match officials, umpires and ball boys, in addition to selling other apparel specifically designed for the tournament.

Ralph Lauren took to its social media to promote the partnership.



*Facebook post*

Also, the brand tweeted about its the new line of apparel for this year's U.S. Open.



*Tweet*

Furthermore, Tiffany is the official trophy sponsor as the jeweler creates the two trophies for the championship, one for the men's division and one for the women's division.

Each trophy is hand engraved and takes Tiffany approximately six months to create.



### *U.S. Open trophy tour of New York*

Also, Mercedes is the official vehicle of the 2013 U.S. Open and will help to transport players and VIP to and from matches and is offering complimentary parking to those guests who arrive in a Mercedes vehicle.

In addition, the automaker will have prominent vehicle displays and are encouraging attendees to take pictures of Mercedes vehicles to post on social media with the hashtag #BestOrNothing.

The brands involved with the U.S. Open are likely to gain exposure and reinforce their luxury status.

"First, these partnerships deliver tangible benefits by providing exclusive access and experience with the event itself," said Karen Creamer, president of **K2 Brand Consulting**, Overland Park, KS.

"Secondly, the partnership provides an opportunity to strategically align with the hallmarks of the U.S. Open, quality and performance," she said.

"Consumers of luxury goods value brands that perform to high standards and make ongoing commitments to excellence and quality, so this is a very credible and exciting sponsorship opportunity for these luxury brands."

### **Team players**

Many of the brands involved with this year's U.S. Open have previously sponsored other prestigious sporting events.

For instance, Mercedes extended its partnership with the Professional Golfers' Association of America through 2017 to elevate its position as the official vehicle of the organization.

The German automaker provides players, consumers and attendants with activities and promotions while educating interested fans about model features and technologies (**see story**).

Additionally, Ralph Lauren bought out a solo sponsorship of The New York Times iPad

application for the second time with content, shoppable items and player biographies in a move to flaunt its partnership with Team USA in the 2012 London Olympics

The ad was available on the Sports, Olympics, Home & Garden, Travel, Fashion and T Magazine sections on the Times app. It ran Aug. 1-12, 2012 ([see story](#)).

Before launching into a partnership, brands should determine if the sponsorship is worth the cost and if it will reach their target audience.

“The association with the U.S. Open increases brand recognition and also helps identify the brands as true luxury brands,” said Al Ries, founder and chairman of [Ries & Ries](#), a Roswell, GA-based marketing strategy consultancy. “Sponsorships can be helpful in building brands, but whether or not they are worth the cost is another matter.

“It all depends on the price that luxury brands have to pay to sponsor these events,” he said.

“The U.S. Open sponsors are certainly reaching part of their target audience, although there are many, many high-end consumers who are not tennis fans.”

Final take

*Erin Shea, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York*

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