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Do luxury brands need pop-up shops?

October 21, 2013



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Luxury Daily

I had the pleasure of visiting the Hermès pop-up shop in New York a couple of weeks ago and it begged a question: Are pop-up shops an effective retail strategy for luxury brands?

After all, many luxury brands have longtime and loyal customers who have been following their rich histories for decades. The answer was highlighted in many ways by the Hermès pop-up.

Hermès, a brand that has been around since 1837, is faced with similar issues to other heritage brands in trying to attract a younger shopper, regardless of their existing customer.

Younger shoppers and millennials are shopping differently than other generations. They like to shop socially and they are looking for a unique experience.

The Hermès shop most certainly fulfilled these objectives of reaching a younger target audience as well as hitting several other targets considered to be critical to an effective pop-up shop.

I will walk you through the highlights of the experience and I encourage you to take look for yourself.

All ties up

Hermès took over two spaces in Time Warner Center at Columbus Circle across from Central Park in New York, a shopping mall that caters to the surrounding high wealth demographic.

The neighborhood, coupled with the landmark location and mall setting, provides tremendous foot traffic. Right from the start it tackled the biggest issue of popping-up: location, location, location.

Hermès leased the retail merchandising unit at the mall's main entrance, a small footprint, but front and center. It was decked out to look like a diner with a wide selection of scarves, ties and enamel accessories.

Some scarves were featured on the Silk Bar Menu – continuing to play on the diner theme.

The main feature of the shop was the Maxi Twilly collection introduced earlier this month, which retails at \$290, itself a substantial price difference from Hermès' signature scarves.

The experience was supported by and promotes the company's new mobile application, Silk Knots, further improving stickiness and cross-channel communication opportunities.

Silk Knots, which also launched earlier this month, dispenses educational information on how to tie and create unique looks. The price point certainly speaks to a younger customer as did company representatives who were each wearing the Maxi Twilly line, each styled in a different way.

Food for thought

If you headed upstairs, Hermès also took the common area and continued with the kitschy diner theme, but also added in a mini golf course and hop scotch themes – both of which made use of Hermès scarves as golf flags and hop scotch squares.

The enamel jewelry was fabricated into life-size versions to enhance the area and details of the pieces are worked into the golf course.

A young woman attendant, appropriately adorned in country club attire, gets you set-up for a round of mini golf – a social, unique and somewhat unexpected adventure to be having in a mall and another criteria for a successful pop-up experience checked off the list.

Also on the second floor area, and the icing on the cake, was a photo booth where you could get your picture taken wearing a scarf of your choosing. You got to keep the picture, but the scarf stays – unless you buy it, of course.

Ultimately, the retail landscape continues to evolve, and brands and retailers regardless of prestige must change with it, creating omnichannel strategies at the bricks-and-mortar level.

HERMÈS is not the first luxury brand to successfully pop-up and it will not be the last.

Other luxury brands embracing pop-up retail include Louis Vuitton's pop-up travel shop

L'Aventure, Nordstrom's Pop-In series, Humbolt's pop-up shop in Singapore coinciding with the Formula One Grand Prix and Rick Owens' shop which closed a couple of weeks ago New York.

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