

INTERNET

The Waldorf Astoria unveils story-centric campaign to tour hotels

November 6, 2013



By SARAH JONES

Hilton's Waldorf Astoria Hotels and Resorts enlisted British author Simon van Booy to pen a short story with the hotel as both a setting and a player for its latest ad campaign that raises awareness about various properties.

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Luxury Daily

The story, titled "The Escape Artist," is set against the backdrop of the Waldorf Astoria's Chicago property, and follows fictional fashion designer Alexandra, played by actress Olga Kurylenko, who travels to the hotel to get inspiration for her latest collection.

"What we wanted to do is reach them at the various points where they're researching and exploring their travels," said Stuart Foster, vice president of marketing for **Waldorf Astoria Hotels & Resorts**.

The ad is part of a broader campaign of the Waldorf Astoria to raise awareness about the various locations of the hotel chain, many of which are modern.

"Most people are familiar with New York and they have a certain perception of the brand based on their experience with New York, being a more classic, legendary hotel," he said.

"What we wanted to showcase was a more contemporary expression of the Waldorf Astoria brand that lets people know that we're not an old-fashion brand. We are relevant to

today's luxury traveler."

A narrative unfolds

Actress Olga Kurylenko, who co-starred with Daniel Craig in "Quantum of Solace," plays Alexandra. Fashion photographer Bruno Dayan shot still photos of Ms. Kurylenko in various locations within the hotel that help to tell the story.

The marketing department chose to use a digital narrative format because the luxury traveler spends time researching their trips online, on both PCs and tablets, and they also still read magazines for travel inspiration.

As readers scroll down, the page is animated and brings up interactive elements that immerses them further in the narrative to learn more about the hotel. Users can play the ambient sound of a city street while reading about Alexandra's arrival, and watch YouTube videos of Ms. Kurylenko acting out small scenes of the story.

Information about the Chicago Waldorf Astoria is woven into the storyline. Alexandra has the concierge set up mannequins and fabric in her room, and she takes advantage of the spa and pool during her stay.

A YouTube video features Howard Harris, president and CEO of Rare Form Design Works, elaborating on the chandelier in the lobby after it is brought up in the story.

Howard Harris discusses the art of the Waldorf Astoria Chicago

The Waldorf Astoria has incorporated multiple social media links so that readers are able to share individual multimedia elements like YouTube videos, or share the entire story via numerous social media platforms. There is also a button on the side of the page that brings users directly to a page where they can book a stay at one of the Waldorf Astoria's properties.

Waldorf Astoria's Facebook page is also a part of the campaign, with similar content to the Web site. The hotel chain has grown its Facebook fan base to more than 90,000, but it is

using this additional content to draw more people who may not have visited its page before.



A Waldorf Astoria Facebook post publicizing the campaign

Sometime in 2015, the hotel plans to produce a second part of the series that will also feature Kurylenko as Alexandra.

Telling stories

Other brands have used the power of narratives to further their brand message and image.

For example, Switzerland's Jaeger-LeCoultre broadened its affiliation with the world of cinematography through a partnership with Elle magazine and filmmaker Ry Russo-Young that uses film to create brand mythology.

As part of Jaeger-LeCoultre's ongoing 180th anniversary celebration, the watchmaker is leveraging its affinity for film to reach new audiences. The "Leda & Zeus: A Trilogy in Time," directed by Ms. Russo-Young creates a context and narrative for the watch brand's Rendez-Vous Celestial that fosters a deeper brand connection by channeling a sense of otherworldliness ([see story](#)).

Additionally, online menswear retailer Mr Porter also created a travel-centric video series. They partnered with four apparel and accessory brands and bespoke travel agency

Black Tomato to curate a video series highlighting destinations around the world.

The “Insider Track” video series will be told through the perspective of men living in the featured destination. Using Mr Porter’s core demographic in the series will likely raise interest in Black Tomato’s services while generating purchases as those who book with Black Tomato prepare for their trip ([see story](#)).

In the case of the Waldorf Astoria, the narrative tactic is fitting, since luxury travelers go to hotels for the experience.

"We want to let people know about the unforgettable experience you can have," Mr. Foster said. "Everyone has a story when they stay at our properties.

"Our previous campaigns were more traditional," he said. "They didn't have the narrative aspects that this story has.

"They didn't have the rich, deep story intertwined with a digital aspect."

Final take

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