

MOBILE

Injecting heritage into mobile games builds brand community

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By JOE MCCARTHY

Mobile gaming is rapidly becoming a lucrative advertising platform, and luxury brands across categories must learn how to effectively enter this arena.

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Luxury Daily

The pervasiveness of smartphones demands that luxury brands interject in the many interaction spaces that are being co-opted by brands across markets. Due to the concentration and sustained periods of time that consumers dedicate to mobile games, finding unobtrusive ways to enter this platform will help create lasting impressions.

"There is no doubt consumers are turning to mobile games," said Yichan Wang, marketing specialist at [Aurnhammer](#), New York. "The mobile ecosystem allows gaming to expand its arena to our fingertips.

"Smartphones have rapidly become a powerful gaming platform due to its portability and technological features," she said. "The mobile application markets also open up a direct distribution channel for innovative designers to provide beautiful gaming apps in great quality.

"Branded games are thus designed to work well both as an entertainment and as a marketing channel."

The periphery

Luxury brands have begun to plumb the potential of mobile games, but the room for growth remains substantial. Many brands have experimented with creating their own games that take consumers on branded journeys.

For instance, Swiss watchmaker Tag Heuer expanded its social media outreach with a new application available on its Facebook page that likely attracted the attention of younger consumers while promoting the limited-edition Tag Heuer Aquaracer Glacier Express timepiece.

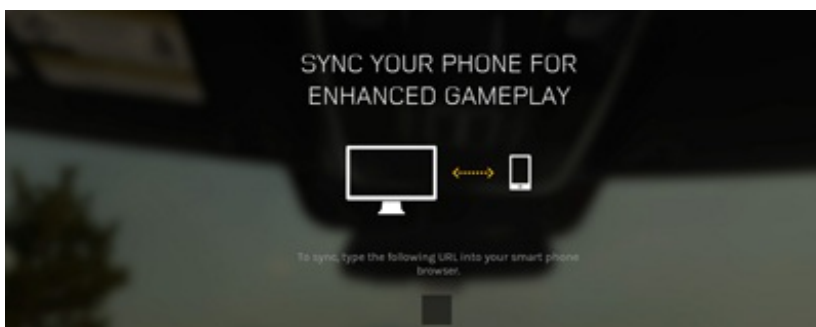
The watchmaker's "Mystery on Board" social gaming app, created by French social media agency KRDS, is available via Facebook for desktop, smartphone and tablet users ([see story](#)).



Tag Heuer's Mystery on Board Facebook app

Also, Land Rover North America is bolstering its Range Rover Sport "Drive to Another Level" campaign with an interactive, high-intensity film that lets viewers join the adventure with gaming options.

The "Race The Sun" film is equipped with WebSocket technology that allows viewers to sync up their smart phones and tilt, tap and swipe their touch screens to keep up with the ride. To maximize the reach of the film, viewers can participate in the film with their tablet and desktop as well ([see story](#)).



Video still for Race the Sun

The problem with these games, however, is that they generally reach a highly concentrated group of brand enthusiasts. Rather than engaging new consumers, these games typically strengthen existing bonds, since regular gamers are unlikely to be drawn in by a game saturated with branded references.

On the other hand, branded games can augment existing campaigns to extend fan interaction time. Additionally, these games are generally brief enough to let fans get satisfaction from an easy victory, a level of control that can not be reached when integrating into an existing game.

"Mobile is where consumers are, and gaming stands out as a star player in the rising industry," Ms. Wang said. "An established mobile game provides luxury brands an existing fan base to start with, which secures greater opportunity for the campaign's success.

"Besides, advertising within mobile games allows brands to drive engagement while developing their own forms of entertainment with a personality," she said. "It is an exciting and effective way to encourage consumer interaction and build a community."

The center

Brands are able to integrate into existing games by providing gamers with free content such as exclusive codes or by acting as a "hero" in a difficult situation. Brands that act as heroes typically allow gamers to circumvent a hard scenario in exchange for viewing a brief advertisement.

Automotive brands have the ability to set their models loose in racing games that are wildly popular, which allows for a deeper connection to develop.

For example, Toyota Corp.'s Lexus has secured a permanent spot for its IS 350 F Sport model in the popular Electronic Arts mobile video game Real Racing 3 that will reach a dedicated gaming cohort of car enthusiasts.

The IS model will be featured in two races within the game, giving fans time to observe the vehicle's traits and develop an interest. The immersive nature of video games gives automakers an unrivaled amount of time to form a bond with prospective consumers ([see story](#)).

While established games take a huge portion of control away from brands, they provide access to a significantly larger audience.

"An established mobile game is certainly a simpler platform for brands to build upon," Ms. Wang said. "But the most important factor to consider is still the brand itself.

"Games should incorporate brand heritage and brand personality to fully reflect the brand's value," she said.

"Understanding the target consumers' gaming habit is also crucial to develop appealing games that are hard to put down. The game should be fun without the brand."

Final Take

Joe McCarthy, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York

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