

EVENTS / CAUSES

## Core consumers shop 10 days per year, need to be engaged 350: Barneys exec

January 16, 2014



By SARAH JONES

NEW YORK - Consumers who are engaged with a brand across multiple platforms are the highest spenders, said a Barneys New York executive at Luxury FirstLook: Strategy 2014.

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The traditional consumer path to purchase needs to be amended to get results, and brands should instead focus on creating exclusive content that is of value to consumers. This strategy skews content more toward CRM than media to genuinely engage consumers.

"We live in a world where all brands are publishers," said Matthew Woolsey, senior vice president of digital at **Barneys New York**. "So to really understand what content can be from a luxury standpoint, we have to think about what is useful to the luxury consumer."

"High net worth individuals are not necessarily interested necessarily in single things, they want emotional experiences," he said.

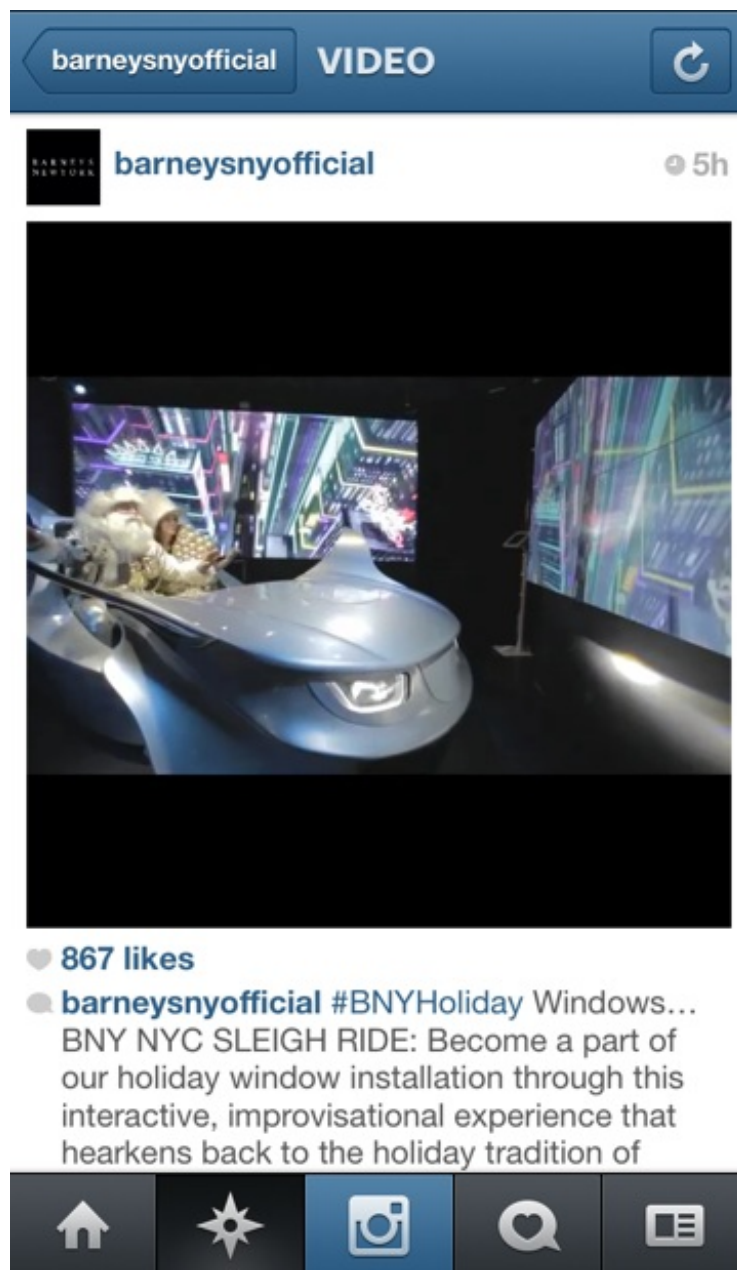
"From our standpoint with creative content, we want to think about the idea of what's new, what's unexpected, and pieces of knowledge and access. That's really the currency of the luxury class."

Luxury Daily organized Luxury FirstLook: Strategy 2014.

## Top tier

The luxury consumer does not make as many purchases throughout the year as a mass market customer. If an individual makes 10 purchases in a year, they are considered a core client.

This leaves a lot of time when a brand is not engaging with a consumer at point-of-sale, so brands need to find ways to stay top of mind without focusing on promotions or products. Since these consumers are constantly following the brand, this gives a brand an audience for quality content.



*Instagram post from Barneys New York*

Because fashion bloggers are pouring out beautiful images at a rapid pace, luxury brands need to keep up with their speed and surpass them in quality. In 2014, it is estimated that there will be 880 billion photos taken, accounting for 20 percent of the total 4.5 trillion photos taken over the course of human history.

In order to rise above the noise of so much content, luxury brands should offer

consumers content that delivers what only they can, an insider's look at their industry.

## Cultivating content

Barneys has adopted an omnichannel approach which tells both long and short-form stories to reach consumers whether they are viewing it on a smartphone in a taxi or on a tablet or desktop while sitting at home.

For its anniversary, the retailer explored its roots as a menswear store. Barneys drew up a list of style rules for men, and shared it with its followers.

The retailer then requested submissions from consumers, and incorporated the responses into its campaign.

To further the style series, Barneys interviewed a number of designers whose apparel it carries, asking them to share the items that every man can have, and divulge what they were coveting. The designers were not allowed to pick items from their own collections, which made it read less promotional and more genuine.

For a fun take on the series, Barneys filmed its men's sales associates and Simon Doonan talking about what men need.

In addition to its social channels, Barneys posts insider content to its Web site journal, The Window.

Leading up to its launch of the exclusive ecommerce for Dries van Noten, The Window featured an interview with the designer, who talked about his relationship with the store.

By having designers and personalities outside of the brand tell their own narrative, which allows the retailer to see itself from a different perspective and tell a varied history.

Barneys also asked its own team to speak about their early memories of Dries van Noten, having them share their favorite piece from the brand and spill what they would buy from the designer's latest line.

When the line did hit the Barneys ecommerce site, the important consumers were ready for it, having already read about it on one of the retailer's digital channels. The result was the retailer's most successful launch of a collection online.

To draw traffic to its Tumblr, Barneys created a .gif guide, which shows products animated. This gift guide did not focus on product links, but instead relied on the amusement the images created to drive store traffic ([see story](#)).



*Image from Barneys' GIF guide*

The GIF guide reflects Barneys' goal of having a conversation through merchandise.

"If we can make people smile for two seconds in a cab, we've won the battle," Mr. Woolsey said. "And they become brand advocates."

In-store, Barneys has incorporated content on screens in its men's lounge. Sales associates are encouraged to follow the brand on social media so they are aware of digital content produced, and what is happening in the store reflects what is happening online.

This strategy does not measure its success in terms of number of shares, but rather seeks to reach that top tier of consumers who are consistently engaged with the brand via a non-linear content path, since it is more likely to convert to sales.

"We don't know when that customer or that user is going to go to that store, or what content they have previously consumed, but if each touchpoint can become something that sort of subliminally puts something in their mind, and then at the same time drives them to our other content verticles, we know that they'll eventually follow that rabbit hole," Mr. Woolsey said.

Final Take

*Sarah Jones, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York*

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