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Luxury marketers can use 2D bar codes to make print ads more measureable

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An increasing number of luxury brands are using two-dimensional bar codes as a way to measure traditional advertising methods such as print, direct mail and out-of-home.



Marketers put these codes on static media to entice consumers into taking action and engaging with a brand in exchange for a reward. Brands send back videos, information on sweepstakes and other engaging digital assets.

"2D bar codes give brands an immediate link to more dynamic and engaging content from virtually any media," said Mike Wehrs, CEO of **Scanbuy**, New York. "Consumers are adopting this technology very quickly because it makes it easier for them to navigate in one-click."

How 2D codes work

Since there is no way to precisely measure the amount of attention an out-of-home advertisement like a billboard or bench ad gets, 2D bar codes are an easy way for luxury brands to ensure they are advertising wisely.

Brands set up these codes and ask consumers to follow the directions on the advertisement, such as texting a number or downloading an application.

“There are an endless number of applications, and it really [depends on] the brand’s strategy,” Mr. Wehrs said.

“Common examples include linking to a video or photo gallery of a new clothing line, driving to the store by displaying the latest styles and store locations, accessing promotions such as sweepstakes, or sharing exclusive content through Facebook or Twitter,” he said.

Ahead of the curve

Some luxury brands have already begun to use 2D bar codes to their advantage.

Department store chain **Neiman Marcus** puts bar codes in newspaper advertisements that link to its Neiman Marcus Gifts iPhone application ([see story](#)).



Neiman Marcus' 2D bar code found in the New York Times

Other retailers like **Norma Kimali**, **Bergdorf Goodman** and **Michael C. Fina** ([see story](#)) are using codes on their storefront window and in-store signage to link to their Holiday Blog and display some of the latest trends in fashion.



Norma Kimali's storefront

"Norma Kamali has done some exciting things like placing 2D codes throughout the store that actually linked to Lotto experiences," Mr. Wehrs said. "So someone could immediately win the product they are scanning, or they may just watch a video of Beyonce wearing that item."

Anna Kim-Williams, senior global media strategist for Microsoft Tag, Redmond, VA, said that this kind of advertising gives consumers an even deeper backstage pass into the luxury world.

"Acura is using highly customized 2D codes throughout their 2011 car brochure," she said. "Codes are displayed on each page, linking potential customers to additional information about the brand's features described throughout the brochure."

"This implementation allows Acura customers to go beyond the printed material of a brochure and actually learn about and interact with the brand in a unique way."

Beneficial for luxury brands

Most luxury brands do not yet understand how bar codes can be used to propel a marketing strategy.

"[Codes are] well suited to provide experiences associated with exclusive, luxury brands," Ms. Kim-Williams said.

"Brands can offer unique incentives, targeted content and certain privileges to their customers using the codes," she said. "When scanned, they can link to video, a mobile site that requires an unique pass code, product images, rewards or even enter the customer into a contest."

The exclusivity of bar codes are just another way luxury brands can make their valued consumers feel important.

Bar codes may seem like they are appealing to the mass media, but the majority of consumers able to use these are smartphone users who are already in a luxury brand's target market.

"[2D codes] can link almost anything in the real world to the online world," Ms. Kim-Williams said. "We're only beginning to scratch the surface of ways they can be used."

Final take

Acura shows how to scan the bar codes on its eBrochure using Microsoft Tag

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