

MOBILE

Ralph Lauren boosts Instagram impressions with promoted post

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Instagram post from Ralph Lauren

By SARAH JONES

U.S. fashion label Ralph Lauren is the latest luxury apparel brand to unveil a promoted Instagram post to expand its reach on the photo-sharing social platform.

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Luxury Daily

The ad featured an orange evening gown from the back, an image the brand had posted to its account a week before the promoted post appeared. Promoted Instagram posts are still fairly uncommon, but the reaction to Ralph Lauren's ad shows that consumers are starting to become more accepting of the sponsored content.

"While most consumers on Instagram will not be able to afford the dress, engaging with aspirational consumers now is crucial to luxury brand's successes," said Romey Louangvilay, senior social media strategist at [Syndicate Media Group](#), New York.

"I'm a strong believer that brands need to plant the brand messaging seed now and continue to engage with these consumers so they become brand loyal," he said. "As they age and advance their in their careers overtime, they will most likely be customers.

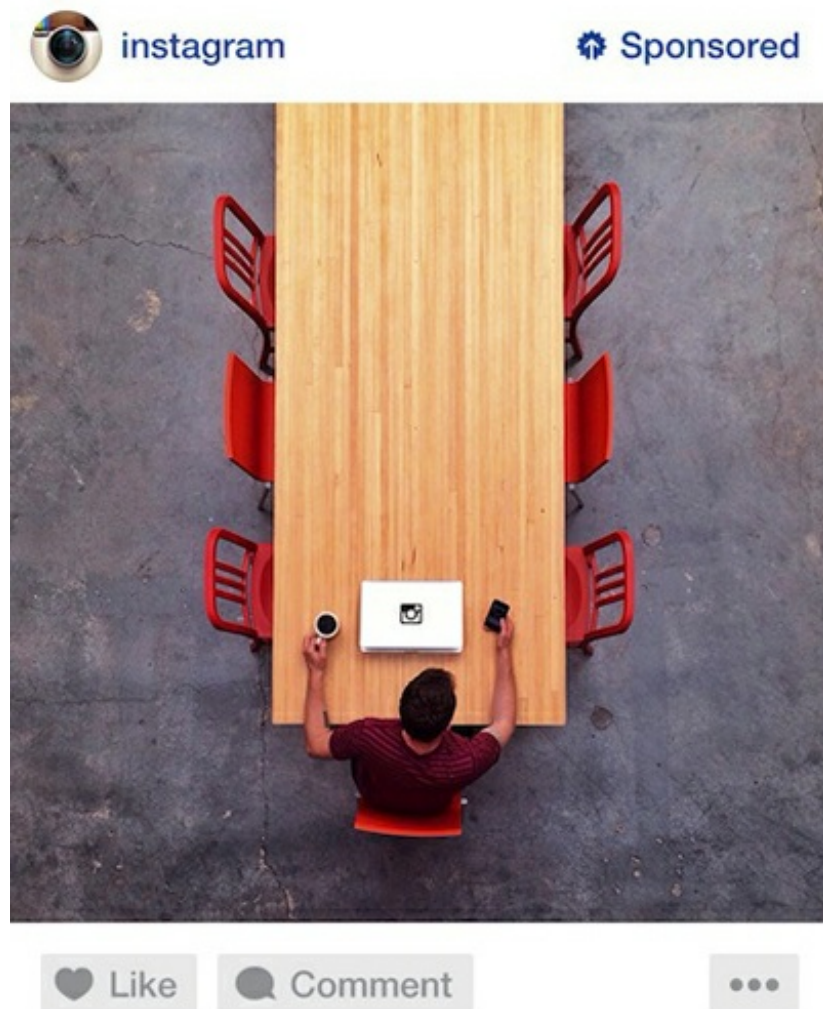
"Luxury brands need to engage with fans on social and think of it as a long-term strategy instead of a short-term tactic."

Mr. Louangvilay is not affiliated with Ralph Lauren but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

Ralph Lauren did not respond by press deadline.

Expanding reach

Instagram ads run organically in a user's feed. They look like regular posts except for a "sponsored" icon in the top right corner.



Instagram's example of a sponsored post

Promoted posts on Instagram are still a fairly new concept.

Instagram began testing its ads in November with a select group of 10 brands that included Michael Kors, Burberry and Lexus.

According to [AdWeek](#), Michael Kors was the first to run, with an ad that showed a square faced gold watch next to a plate of macarons. While the brand received a large number of likes for the post, the comments were resoundingly negative, with consumers complaining that a brand they do not follow was showing up in their feed and that Michael Kors products are out of their price range.

Instagram ads are not an inexpensive media buy, reports [AdAge](#). A month-long buy starts around \$350,000 and can go up to almost \$1 million, depending on the target, reach and

frequency of the ads.

Rather than focusing on an entry-level product, Ralph Lauren's ad shows a full-length image of the same gown that Sarah Jessica Parker wore on the March cover of InStyle Korea. The dress is shown on a model and shows the dress from the back.



The image shows a screenshot of an Instagram post from the account 'ralphlauren'. At the top left is the 'ralphlauren' logo, and at the top right is a 'Sponsored' badge. The main image is a full-length photograph of a model from the back, wearing a vibrant red, strapless, floor-length gown with a large, multi-layered ruffled flower detail on the back. Below the image, the post shows '38151 likes' and a comment from 'ralphlauren' that reads: "This spring, my heroine stands out in striking shapes and bold, bright colors" – Ralph Lauren. Below the comment is a link to 'view all 446 comments'. At the bottom of the post are three interactive buttons: 'Like', 'Comment', and a three-dot menu icon.

Ralph Lauren sponsored Instagram post

Compared to Michael Kors' original sponsored post, Ralph Lauren's ad has received less likes, at 16,500 as of press time. However, the comments are consistently positive, with consumers saying how pretty the dress is and asking the brand to post a photo of the front of the dress.



Ralph Lauren's Instagram feed

"That ad generated [more than] 16,900 hearts and several comments, which falls within the average of their other photos receive," Mr. Louangvilay said. "This type of engagement is a win in my book.

"In terms of the image's effectiveness, I would have used a different photo that was more aligned with the style and copy of their higher performing organic posts in order to optimize what the ad spend would be."

Visual engagement

L2 Think Tank's latest social media report makes the case that Instagram is beginning to outstrip veteran platforms because of its proliferating and attractive user base, high engagement levels and ecommerce conducive format.

Visual commerce company Olapic collaborated on the report with insights, such as user-generated images presented on brand Web sites increase conversion by 5 to 7 percent and boost average order value by 2 percent. Luxury fashion brands such as Michael Kors, Burberry, Louis Vuitton and Marc Jacobs have emerged as dominant Instagram players, suggesting that Instagram is ideal for an "evolved form of window-shopping" ([see story](#)).

For labels that already have a developed, active following on the social platform, promoted posts are a way to grow their community further.

Many fashion brands are just starting to build communities on Instagram.

French atelier Givenchy created its first Instagram account in December with a single post showing two spring 2014 advertising campaign images with singer Erykah Badu to entice its fan base to begin following its photo diary ([see story](#)).

Also, French fashion house Christian Dior welcomed a larger following to its newly minted Instagram account by promoting the platform on its more established Facebook page ([see story](#)).

In addition to fashion brands, beauty marketers regard Instagram as a quick and effective tool to attract busy, affluent consumers on-the-go. From brand announcements to product awareness and beauty tutorials, Instagram's cross-cultural format allows marketers to engage consumers on a level unmatched by other social platforms ([see story](#)).

Only a few luxury brands have used paid Instagram posts so far, but that number looks poised to grow.

"Over time, I definitely believe luxury brands will incorporate promoted Instagram posts into their media buys," Mr. Louangvilay said. "Instagram is one of the top social channels for fashion brands given its visual nature and promoted ads will just amplify that reach.

"In terms of best practices, I have just 3 simple rules: don't be scared to experiment and deviate from the norm in your ads, use your best performing organic posts as a basis on how to create ads in relation to copy and photography and engage," he said. "Luxury brands, in general, often do not engage, but to create a fan base now, it's best to do so."

Final Take

Sarah Jones, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York