
The Challenge of Creating Digital Content for Luxury Brands



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Digital media has given luxury customers more power than ever before to shape the image of the brands they follow. How can these brands translate their heritage and historical image into content that will resonate with the hyperconnected consumer of today?

Luxury brands are masters of inspiring their customers with the heritage, history and loftiness of their products. They do this with an almost unspoken code that only their loyal followers truly understand. People don't just buy handbags; they buy the heritage, the workmanship and the story of the brand. Yves Carcelle, former CEO of LVMH says in an upcoming INSEAD Knowledge interview with my colleague [Andrew Shipilov](#), INSEAD Associate Professor of Strategy that "the [fashion] houses have a soul. People say "DNA" in the industry but they really have a soul based on their history, what has happened around the house. You need to feel it, you need to live with it 24 hours a day and you need also for the company inside and for the outside world to represent that soul...You need to be passionate about it. Without passion, you cannot run luxury."

In a digital world, leaders of luxury brands will still play a significant role in building the brand dream. But they aren't alone anymore. As I wrote in the [first part of this three-part series](#), the digital revolution has brought a power shift, by giving consumers and other stakeholders a stage to express their views on brands. As a result, brands need to adopt a content strategy that responds to two questions: how to leverage new media and integrate them along the consumer journey? And how to encourage the creation of social content – i.e., customer-generated information?

How to integrate new media with the customer journey?

As guardians of the heritage, craft and history of a brand, it is often difficult to see how using digital media can bring value. Recent examples show it is best used either to create awareness among a new market, or to accelerate purchase behaviour. Often though, novel publishing techniques are required to create and curate the most relevant content for this audience – potentially leading to the hire of journalists or specialised story tellers.

While some channels are much more e-commerce driven and actively encourage purchase, other channels mostly aim to leverage existing content. For instance, [Net-a-Porter](#) has taken a more editorial route to shop via its in-house trend magazines with Net-a-Porter TV, along with an official hashtag (#THENETSET) on Instagram that encourages customers to post their latest purchases from the website. Half the “battle” of a luxury fashion purchase is usually won when a brand successfully plays the part of inspiring, educating and “wanting”, all before a consumer walks into a store.

Digital fits perfectly into this role. If the instant gratification of an immediate purchase online does not exist, a consumer will have to walk into a store to buy it. At the same time, digital content can increase customers' motivation to purchase products and services by offering customers another facet of the brand, more dynamic and often more playful. In other words, digital content can add a lot to the “soft sell”, in addition to more classic marketing

How to encourage the creation of social content?

A wide array of tools exist to help create social content. For instance, simple changes to search options like “best sellers” allow consumers to see what others in the community are also buying. [Modcloth.com](#) encourages social content by enabling consumers who bought a product to give feedback on the fit, quality and sizing on the product's landing page. Similarly,

intermediaries such as [Fancy.com](#) is a website that enables consumers to share products and then others to click and buy. Letting a consumer co-opt a brand into their lifestyle is a way of both identifying with the brand's persona and enviable cache, whilst still maintaining their own individual style and personality. These types of content interface platforms enable brands to be creative and flexible in seeking novel ways to interact with consumers.

Brands can also choose to directly leverage user-generated content. Consumers curating for consumers have been a huge trend, and whilst Ebay.com and Amazon.com's Marketplace were the first players to start the C2C market online, the luxury and fashion world have embraced these new forms of content creation. For instance, [Polyvore.com](#) enables consumers to curate products from any e-commerce website into a mood board or trend report, which others can then also click and buy. [Boutine.com](#) further enhanced this concept by enabling consumers who create such boards to earn a commission if it leads to a click and purchase. **Ador.com** enables customers to "adore" products, and then depending on how active the members are on their website in posting articles, earn PTZ points to drive prices of products they "adored" on the website down. They also get a notification when that happens to encourage an "adored" purchase.

These kinds of community-driven purchases engage consumers on a content platform that is interactive, self-driven and it is no wonder brands like Nordstrom, shopbop.com, Anthropologie, Neiman Marcus, and even Burberry, Fendi, Dior, Prada, are all part of Ador.com's product line up. Brands have to acknowledge that such platforms do give traction and visibility to their profile in the digital sphere and decide how far they want to engage to bring the digital consumer to their stores.

This is the second part of a three-part series on luxury in the digital world. You can read part one [here](#).



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