

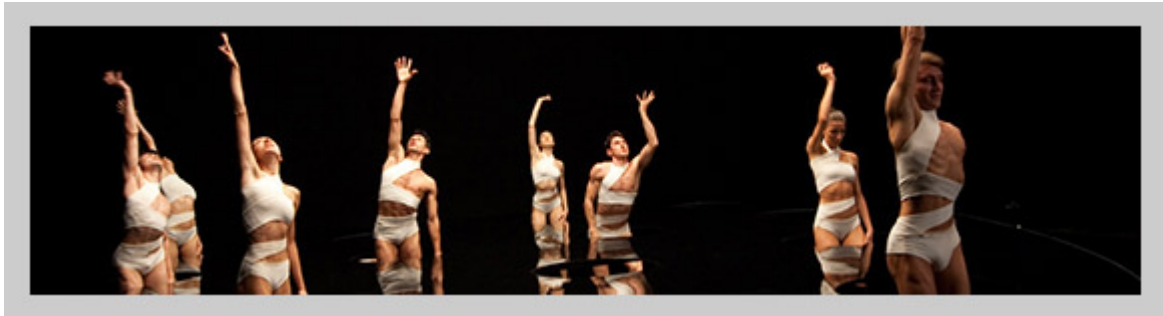


It's no surprise that a brand's digital presence (its website, its social media - especially Pinterest and Facebook) contributes a great deal to the way customers perceive brands and, if done successfully, will influence sales. Yet many marketers struggle with the way to do it, understandably wary of diluting the luxury brand's mystique and trying to meet the digital expectations of different affluent age groups. Here are eight top strategies for bridging the divide and telling your luxury story:



- **Communicate the vision, the dream of the luxury brand by articulating what the brand is passionate about.** (Four Seasons Resort Costa Rica used its Facebook presence and social media influencers to get the word out about its environmental and philanthropic programs. The effort helped raise \$140,000 in donations. Loro Piana is credited for saving the endangered Vicuna, their passion, from extinction in Peru to produce blankets, sweaters and pieces for the affluent).
- **Luxury is all about customization, so bring that personalized nature of social media to life.** (The Ritz-Carlton of Naples asked Facebook fans how they like their coffee. If they answered, then stayed with them, their coffee would arrive perfectly sugared—without having to ask).
- **Exploit the full range of possibilities of visuals (images and video) to show what the brand represents, and to showcase marketing content.** (Tod's produced a video 'An Italian Dream' to celebrate Italian

craftsmanship, where 13 ballet dancers from the Teatro alla Scala interpret the artisanal creation process of Tod's iconic D-bag and Gommino. It gave their marketing story an impactful, rich backdrop and texture beyond a simple video of artisans, just crafting shoes).



- **Be cultural tastemakers. Culture and the arts are an important part of the affluent lifestyle. Recognize and guide consumers to cultural excellence.** (Grey Goose Iconoclasts: sponsor *Grey Goose* and the Sundance Channel produced a series of episodes, which pair two "creative visionaries" who discuss their lives, influences, and art, most of whom are longtime friends with the other person featured).



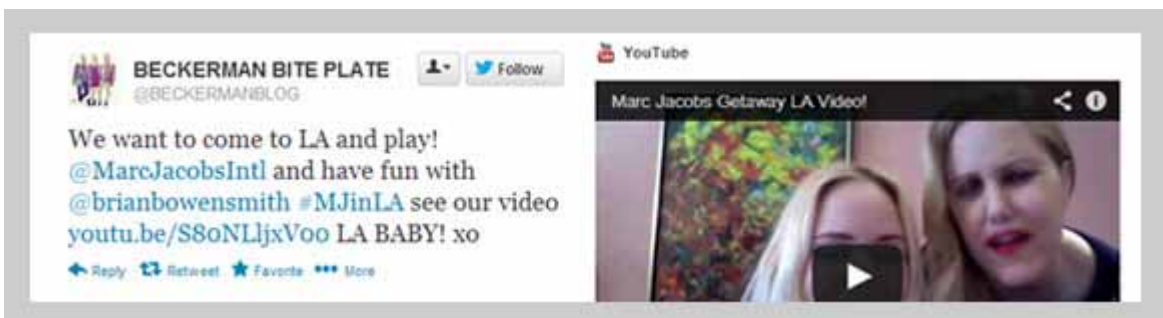
- **Use history to leverage luxury status in a new way, in a new format.** (Lamborghini's virtual museum online is a visual history of car models over the years; Burberry: An iconic British luxury brand and creator of the iconic trench coat, was a social media game changer bringing its trench coat into the 21<sup>st</sup> century with its [Art of the Trench campaign](#). They currently have the most number of Facebook fans and Twitter followers in the luxury sector. CEO Bailey described Burberry as being "as much a media-content company as a design company").



- **Make a concerted effort to reach out to affluent Millennials (ages 23 to 36), they're your future.** The most effective campaigns are those that engage followers in a conversation about the brand. (Mercedes Benz Generation Benz is a private online community that engages Gen Y in conversation and feedback about the brand. They also offer an M-B Advisors program where regular live chats and group feedback help tailor television spots and tweak product performance).



- **Millennials want to be "entertained and informed" and with increasingly sophisticated technology.** (Would you ever turn your brand’s Twitter feed over to a stranger? Probably not. But that’s what VisitSweden did. The tourism board gave its [@sweden](#) Twitter account to regular citizens for a week at a time, to showcase real local voices and true local flavor. And knowing that savvy Millennials are glued to their phones, A/X brand - the "Accessible Armani" - targets young consumers with in-store pickup to its mobile commerce site).
- **Encourage interactivity with gamification/competition.** (socially savvy Marc Jacobs includes its consumers in brand activities. Its ‘World of Marc’ social video contest asks consumers to create YouTube video and submit it via Twitter to enter to win an exclusive photo shoot with photographer Brian Bowen Smith in Los Angeles).



- **Use more sophisticated digital tools/higher touch technology to create a VIP environment for consumers.** (The Conrad Concierge app, in 8 languages, allows guests to book a wake-up call five days in advance, as well as let the property know when they want their coffee delivered each morning, or make sure that the valet is ready to pick up their clothes for pressing right after they check in).



The bottom line: Luxury brands need to expand the emotional experience with the brand online by providing highly visual, creative and engaging digital experiences. It is no longer a nice-to-have but an essential pillar of branding and marketing. Consumers are giving their time, trust, reputation and money to luxury brands; they

should receive more than simply the product or service they buy in return. Digital experiences have the power to deliver on that promise.

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Our innovative uses of social media won the top 2 social media [awards](#) in travel & hospitality: Travel + Leisure's 2012 SMITTY (Social Media in Travel + Tourism Award) & HOTELS 2012 SOHO (Social Hotels Award). In addition, agency President & Chief Strategist, Karen Weiner Escalera was named by Hospitality Sales & Marketing Association International (HSMAI) as one of the "Top 25 Most Extraordinary Minds" in hotel sales and marketing.

As thought leaders in the travel industry, we go to great lengths to identify emerging trends so clients can benefit from changes in the marketplace. We deliver the latest travel industry analysis and forecasts through our internationally syndicated Luxury Travel & Lifestyle Trends [newsletter](#) and [blog](#).