

## Chief Marketing & Sales Officer Forum

# Back to basics: What luxury customers really want from digital



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### **Web sites: still the main point of customer engagement**

“Those of us in the luxury business spend a lot of time thinking about the how to offer our customers special experiences. But our perceptions of what customers want online often differ from reality. People often aren’t looking for something baroque and atmospheric. Shoppers for luxury goods are generally successful, time-challenged people—so they want a streamlined experience that minimizes the number of decisions they have to make. They also overwhelmingly go online with a very specific mission: to research products before making a purchase at a bricks-and-mortar store. In other words, they want information prior to purchase at the touch point they find most relevant. And in the vast majority of cases, that relevant touch point is the brand Web site. In a survey of interactive marketing executives, about 60 percent of respondents said that their company’s brand-owned Web site was still the number one way for them to engage customers. Nothing else—Facebook pages, blogs, YouTube channels—even comes close.”

### **Five simple rules for a great digital luxury experience**

“Getting five things right turns the Web site—a basic customer touch point—into an exceptional customer experience:

1. Make sure your brand—not fakes, discounters, or resellers—gets a “prime location” in search results.
2. Provide a site that works well on any device. While there’s little difference in how PCs and tablets present content, smart phones demand something quite different.
3. Ensure your site works fast. Research has shown that 57 percent of customers will abandon a site if it doesn’t load in three seconds. In fact, one of the major KPIs that the LVMH Group tracks is load times for our brand’s Web pages, and how they stack up to the competition.

4. Take people straight to your products, and their prices. Not listing prices on your site aggravates your customers.
5. Create a great store locator. It may seem simple, but it's neither easy nor common. For example, French brands often list their stores' opening hours in military time on their English-language page. But that's not helpful to Americans—in fact, the message they are likely to get is 'You don't understand who I am.'

All of these areas are fundamental, but over-delivering on the basics is what makes the experience special. Think of Apple: although we wouldn't normally consider it a luxury company, it provides its customers with a clean, intuitive, 'luxurious' experience online."

### **Delighting customers means surpassing their digital expectations**

"This emphasis on nuts and bolts may seem surprising to marketers used to hearing that they need to 'surprise and delight' customers. But customers are delighted when a site surpasses their expectations by being faster or simpler than they expect. For example, a site that is personalized to remember their preferences can be a boon to busy customers. Conversely, abandoning the established grammar of site design for the sake of being 'different' simply aggravates visitors. When they click, people expect something to happen. When it's not what they expect, you're in trouble. The classic work on Web design, *Don't Make Me Think*, hammers home this point, explaining that people come to your page with a 'reservoir of good will' that quickly drains if they face confusing options or other problems. Once a company has mastered all five basic areas, it can add e-commerce, social media, immersive experiences, and other more recent innovations as well.

Of course, luxury products have a special aura, and a luxury brand's Web presence can and should reflect these dreams and aspirations. But the best place for customers to experience this atmosphere is the product-level page. Imagine a live store visit that follows the pattern of a typical Web pitch. The customer comes in and says, 'I read about your XYZ bag and I'd like to see it.' The salesperson replies, 'We've been making quality bags by hand since 1887.' It would be completely frustrating. A good salesman would get the bag, check that it's really the one the customer wants to see—and *then* explain what makes it so special."

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