

Synopsis of the Club e-Luxe Breakfast Seminar 2010

A Luxury Gels with Social Media at the Club e-Luxe Breakfast Seminar



The debate of 'why' and 'how' luxury brands should approach the social media has been going on for a few years now. Most of it has been centered on finger-pointing at luxury brands for being late, inflexible controlling and even arrogant in the social media world. Many have accused luxury brands of staying trapped in the illusive world of believing that inspite of the social media revolution, business was as usual. Okay, I was also one of the people that criticized luxury brands when it looked like many were oblivious of the change that was taking place in the cyberspace and also the real world.

Then the brands actually took notice. They stopped, listened and decided to act. But the 'acting' turned out to be over-zealous attempts at making up for all those lost years and somewhat for the shame of being left behind by both clients and other sectors. **Facebook accounts** were opened, **My Space pages** were created, **blogs popped up** at every click of the mouse and **Tweeting became a syndrome**. It seemed that the brands all decided to jump on the bandwagon of the social media somewhat blindly. It's no wonder that this led to a new height of confusion and yet a second bout of criticisms and finger-pointing.

When everyone accuses you but no one tells you how to avoid being accused, what do you do? You become defensive and angry. This is what luxury has become lately as it found itself in this new and unusual world of the social media. At **Luxe Corp** we saw all these and decided to do something to address them by organising the **Club e-Luxe Breakfast seminar** that took place last Friday 8th January at the **Four Seasons George V Hotel Paris**.



Forty of some of the most respected luxury companies and groups (**Gucci, Louis Vuitton, Chanel, L'Oréal, Pernod Ricard, Ritz Hotel, Vertu, LVMH, Gucci Group** etc) as well as several emerging fantastic luxury brands (**Ettinger, Sylvia Toledano, Analeena, Nalin Jeanne, La Favorite** etc) from multiple products and services categories gathered together to dissect this major challenging area.

With a line-up of speakers that included Luxury Veterans, Media Experts, Bloggers, Tweeterers and Strategists led by Luxe Corp's Business Analysts, the seminar addressed the deep-burning issues of the place of luxury in the context of the social media.

The event started off with my presentation which focused on raising the question of the relevance of the social media in luxury and the strategic approach of ensuring that each luxury brand identifies the right social media platforms for them and is well equipped internally for the required execution. The core message was the need of a strategy and the appropriate internal structure and resources, before adopting the tech tools. Uché Okonkwo of Luxe Corp took the audience through the evolution of media from 'mass media' to the social web, which is today based on 'listening and conversing'. Geraldine Dormoy, the renowned blogger behind Café Mode clearly revealed the world of blogging to the audience and enabled luxury brands to see the advantageous and the challenging sides of this aspect of social media.

The highlight of the seminar was however the Roundtable discussion on the topic of *"Traditional vs new media - Which direction for luxury brands?"*, in which both luxury veterans like Gucci's Worldwide Director of Communications Robert Treifus and Le Meurice's Director of Communications Anne Voigt-Bordure; as well as media experts and professionals, Jessica Michault of the IHT, Valérie Leboucq of Les Echos, Tina Isaac of WWD and the Author Mark Tungate, participated. This session touched on every aspect of the two media channels as well as the luxury world, including the changing model of luxury communications from 'text to images' and from 'mass to one-to-one'. Everyone agreed that the two channels could co-exist in harmony. There was also clarification of the perceived and real roles and credibility of bloggers as citizen journalists in the face of professional journalists. Specific social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter were highly discussed and the general consensus among t

he speakers was that it is better to have a strategy first before adopting and luxury brand should only adopt social media platforms when they're clear about their objectives and have a solid execution plan.



A few quotes and commentary.

"How do you make people dream with 140 characters on Twitter? You have to appeal to their minds and not their eyes" - Uché Okonkwo

"Bloggers are highly influential and can affect a luxury brand's bottom line" - Geraldine Dormoy

"The social network is very similar to the brain and its neurons and will eventually spread to become a stage of collective consciousness capable of reproducing thought. Will your brand be at the center of these thoughts?" - Uché Okonkwo

"Young people are now more concerned about having a Facebook account than about having an email address" - Robert Treifus

"Good bloggers and journalists can co-exist as one big happy family as each brings value to the media world" - Jessica Michault

"Luxury brands need a social media strategy before adopting the tools. They cannot open the toolbox without knowing what they need the tools to fix" - Mark Tungate

"News making costs money and advertisements brings in money, so news publications need ad revenues to make the news" - Valerie Leboucq

"Online ads are not suitable for every luxury brand, particularly in the luxury hotel segment" - Anne Voigt-Bordure

"Luxury brands need to focus more on overall value and less on selling, on platforms like Twitter. If a brand is funny on Twitter, people are likely to respond more" - Tina Isaac

The beautiful 'Salle Anglaise' overlooking the courtyard garden of the Four Seasons George V Hotel, where the event was held also served as a networking ground for exchanges at the end of a stimulating morning.