

COLUMNS

Ad agencies, consultancies react to the Apple Watch

March 10, 2015



Watch out

By AN AMERICAN MARKETER COLUMNIST

Four leading ad agencies and consultancies react to the Apple Watch released yesterday. Will it put other wearables out of business or drive a stake through the luxury watch sector?

Dave Rosenbaum, executive vice president and group account director for the LVMH account, [Havas Media](#) Right now, I do not see the Apple Watch as a replacement for high-end luxury time-pieces. There is a timelessness to a Tag Heuer, Hublot, Dior, or Vuitton, a certain staying power and longevity, a story that carries over from generation to generation that's hard to replicate.

Those pieces last forever, and there's something very special about the craftsmanship the excellence and precision and the generational aspect to those brands that resonates with consumers and will prompt them to spend that kind of money.

Wearables have a place in people's lives and can be part of the luxury repertoire, but technology moves so fast, and what's a wearable today will be different tomorrow and the day after. I predict the Apple Watch may be used alongside luxury timepieces for different reasons, but one doesn't replace the other.

From the moment Apple launched the iPod, they have benefited from a halo effect their ability to show they've always been on the cutting edge and that perception gives them a head start in this category. They benefit from an incredible brand story that has made them a part of the cultural Zeitgeist for the past 10 years.

When you think about the iPhone user, in particular, you already have someone who has a status-conscious outlook or persona.

It's not necessarily the case that people who would purchase a Rolex or who are willing to spend \$5,000 to \$15,000 will automatically purchase an Apple Watch. It's not that simple. People are more discerning than that they'll want to make sure they're buying into a brand and a craft, a piece that's beautifully made, will last a lifetime and can be passed down. It's not necessarily a mindless purchase. And for millennials, that's even more so the case.

What gives Apple a good chance with millennials is that the latter end of the millennial generation came up with Apple and it has a different place in their minds than a generation or two before them. That helps their cause, but this is not a direct replacement scenario.

I would make the argument that this is not actually Apple's first wearable. The iPhone is a sort of wearable. It might not be physically attached to you, but for all intents and purposes it is, especially from a behavior perspective.

This type of accessorizing with Apple products is something people have been doing for quite a lot of years now,

and this is just another extension of that with a different type of appeal.

Matt Powell, co-president, [KBS](#)

As someone that's been watching the evolution of wearable tech closely for the last few years, I know that if there's any tech company that has a legacy of successfully engaging a fashion-forward community, it's Apple.

I can't think of any tech company that's been able to so consistently create objects of desire cultural jewels right out the gate. Apple has repeatedly created technology products that consumers simply crave. Sure they have misses now and again, but their record overall is exceptional.

At the same time, this is the first new product category since Steve Jobs passed, so maybe that increases the risk that Apple misses the mark here. But I don't think so. Apple's Jony Ive is one hell of an industrial designer.

If I have any concern, it's the battery having to recharge multiple times a day would make even a beautiful piece of fashion too annoying to deal with.

Of course, people wear a Rolex for a whole lot of reasons and it's an open question if Apple can insert itself into the fashion status symbol space effectively enough to command a \$10,000-plus watch price. My money says that Apple will succeed.

I thought [yesterday's] press event was great and that the new MacBooks particularly the Gold MacBook may help drive a luxury/fashion feel for the brand that helps support a \$10,000 plus watch.

I was probably most excited to see good examples of the kinds of new potential interactions that the watch form factor facilitates.

Whenever barriers to interaction with technology go down, use rockets up and new use cases are created. Apple gets this, referring to the watch being built to enable "brief interactions that are only a few seconds long." These lighter, more ambient interactions should provide all kinds of possibilities in terms of utility and entertainment.

Shireen Jiwan, founder/CEO of brand management consultancy [Sleuth](#) (clients include Harry Winston, DeBeers and Microsoft)

Recently, tech nerds and style junkies alike came together in a rare moment of shared enthusiasm over the launch of the Apple Watch. The brand's 12-page spread in the March issue of Vogue was met with clucks of approval from the fashion crowd and smug, "yeah-we-did" pride from the engineering set.

The truth is that for several years now, brands in the watch category have been navigating a grey area. With phones replacing timepieces as scheduling tools, brands like Cartier and Dior have embraced the watch as jewelry, while Rolex and Omega use performance and engineering to tell a story about power and achievement.

Meanwhile Apple, a brand that's always used design to move technology into the style conversation, appeals to the world of fashion with its watch without ever straying from its authentic brand language.

Apple's decision to launch its watch in Vogue is no coincidence. After all, if tech wants to win in wearables it must play by the rules of fashion.

Angela Ahrendts, now Apple head of retail and formerly CEO of Burberry fame, knows that in fashion you're not selling a "device" Vogue is a delicious story about a girl, a girl everyone wants to be. By the time we've flipped those final glossy pages, we'll all want her shoes, her sofa, her boyfriend and, yes, her watch, too.

What's especially interesting and especially compelling about both the Apple Watch and its Vogue spread is their essential "Appleness."

Brilliantly simple, bright, elegant, devoid of unnecessary detail these ads, like the watch itself, are elegant, modern and perhaps truer to Apple cofounder Steve Jobs' original design vision than anything they've done in years.

Perhaps the watch's magnetic appeal has something to do with its authenticity so redolent is it of everything we've always loved about Apple's design (sorry Glassholes). Some will want it for all that it does. Many more will buy it for all that it says about us. As usual, what Apple engineers best is desire.

Jodi Sweetbaum, president and managing director, [Lloyd & Co.](#) (clients include Gucci, Oscar de la Renta, Bottega Veneta and Movado)

Apple always brings excitement to the design of their products via their advertising.

The Apple device tends to be the hero of each campaign, with the creative vision taking cues from fashion

advertising as we see the products photographed and positioned as fashion accessories themselves.

The brand clearly understands the significance of watches and how they serve as one of the most iconic personal fashion statements anyone can make.

To tap into that, making watches a priority and pushing the technology to the fashion category with their spread in Vogue Magazine was an extremely strategic move.

This isn't the first time we've seen technology intersecting with fashion.

Tory Burch's recent collaboration with FitBit brought a stylish refresh to the traditional unattractive fitness tracker.

We've also seen this in the sports world. Stella McCartney for Adidas is a hugely successful collaboration for sports and fashion.

Also, the recent Stan Smith campaign was very successful. Today, people are proud to wear the sneakers as a badge.

[Please click here to view the video of the Apple Watch keynote](#)

As told to Mickey Alam Khan, editor in chief of Mobile Marketer and Mobile Commerce Daily

© 2020 Napean LLC. All rights reserved.

American Marketer is published each business day. Thank you for reading us. Your [feedback](#) is welcome.