

COLUMNS

## 5 tips for luxury retailers to maximize results online this Christmas

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By AN AMERICAN MARKETER COLUMNIST

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Every Christmas, there is a natural uptick in new and repeat customer traffic and sales for luxury brands.

For these brands, maximizing effectiveness at this key time of year is not about doing more it is about fine-tuning their marketing mix to capture more value from the increased traffic, through better communication and a more streamlined service.

Here are five key tips for luxury brands and retailers to remember when marketing online at Christmas:

### 1. Impact

Improved store impact is key to stealing the hearts and minds of new and returning customers in the festive period. This could mean the launch of a designated Christmas Shop, new gifting packages priced for the season only, or a site takeover with all the magic of Christmas.

When maximising impact, timing is very important.

Launch your activity early October is not too early with early-bird promotions and reminders.

Build your promotional activity incrementally with engaging content to give customers a reason to return to the store, and use tactics in the last days of rush before last-delivery day to make your brand a reliable, invaluable helping hand.

### 2. Be the source

As we know, customers often search throughout bought, owned and earned media arenas and on various devices to research gifting purchases.

Use your brand's online store or partner retailers online to place messaging relevant to this specific detail.

Social media also plays a key part in the purchase decision-making as it is where gifts can be discussed, shared and even requested.

At this time of year, when brand buzz is at an annual high, remember to invest wisely in the media you can best influence and control, while maintaining your relationships in more social arenas.

### 3. Personalization

We have a wealth of data at our fingertips online, and the festive period gives us a great opportunity to use it. So, who is the customer we want and how should we speak to them directly?

Christmas is the perfect time to try the latest marketing techniques to help you maximize your online sales.

Christmas is the perfect time to tempt back a one-time purchaser, to satisfy a loyal customer, or to win over a new target audience with a desirable, personalized and relevant offer.

Among luxury brands it is important to recognize and prioritize your loyal VIPs. One-to-one pricing, or tailored offers based on loyalty value, can be a nice way to make this customer group feel extra special among the Christmas crowds.

Surprise-and-delight plays a key role here. How will you mobilize your bespoke offerings to effectively recognise and reward loyalty at this time when so much of your stock may be offered at a promotional rate?

Think about using exclusive pre-orders, offers or limited product lines as time-limited shopping events to heighten top customers' online experience.

#### 4. Lean processes

It is called the Christmas rush for a reason, so do not hold people up while they are experiencing your site on the way to making a purchase.

Ensure the technical environment is ready, ahead of time, to deal efficiently with increased traffic to provide a reliable service.

Think carefully about the user journey through your site which may need to change to accommodate low-patience thresholds and reduced browsing time. Carefully plot search, gifting area user journeys and the checkout with this in mind and make changes if necessary well in advance.

#### 5. Specialized service

The one thing missing from the online experience compared to in-store is the customer perception that they are missing out on the full service. So, replicate that where possible in your online world.

Next-day delivery and ease of returns is almost a given, so make your operation Christmas-ready with free first-class delivery and returns if the budget allows. This is a great promotional message you can then use to encourage repeat visits.

Beautiful gift-wrapping, messaging and personalization options can be monetized. They will save your customers valuable time, and will also work well to bring a little of the magical in-store experience into the home.

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