

Title: Integrated Marketing Communications for luxury hospitality

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Subheading: how the luxury hotels communicate at their selected target markets.

Abstract

The luxury brand is a universe, not a promise. The luxury brand is experiential first and foremost. Its language is mostly non-verbal: it is primarily visual, and sensory. (Kapferer J.N., 2009)

The hospitality sector is investing a lot of money in luxury hotels. The reason way is very simple: strong request by the market and very good profit for shareholders. As a matter of fact, this is a strong trend now, moreover in Asia.

The key points for the luxury hotel are: design, service, food & beverage, location, SPA, etc.

Communication has a very important role in this, and every luxury hotel has a multimedia gallery for communicating at the top their key points to an exclusive target market.

The important innovations about the communication of luxury hotel are: the new technology, the new media, the multisensory marketing, etc.

My speech will be directed of illustrating how the luxury hotels communicate their key factors with the new technology at their selected target markets.

Introduction

The reason why I have written this article is for communicating to marketing experts the kind of integrated marketing communications that we, marketing experts for hospitality sector, use for promoting our luxury hotel to the related target market. How the top brands in this specific sector promote their gorgeous facilities to this very sensible, international complex target market.

The best method for showing you this, it was to analyze the communication of some of the most important brands and this is the main part of this academic article. Obviously, this analysis is the result of 25 years of activity in the marketing sector, 8 years of activity of research at university level and a direct knowledge of these brands.

Main Body of Paper

The communication of luxury brands in hospitality is characterized by clean and elegant visual part. The images have strong emotional effect and they want immediately put the potential guest in an experiential mood. Like the new marketing trends, they treat the prospects in a holistic way. They speak to the heart, mind, and spirit of them. More the budget hotels communicate very practical things (i.e. cheap prices, services included,

location of the hotel, and telephone number for booking), more the luxury hotel free themselves from their value of use and move to the concept of experience. This happened moreover because of the guests of luxury hotels have changed a lot. The new customers, like Banyan Tree explain better, are different and this is the reason way they provide: *naturally-luxurious, ecologically sensitive, culture-aware experiences for the discerning, responsible traveller* (Banyan Tree 2013). This trend is well established in the luxury world because of the “democratization of luxury” (the use of luxury not only like extraordinary thing, but using the luxury like a marketing tool for improving the image of many products and services) bring this concept in many things and like Jean Noel Kapferer says “*its’ everywhere!*”(Kapferer J.N. 2009). It’s interesting analysing the philosophy of communication of Mandarin Oriental, they choose artist like Sa Dingding. Artist that writes in her biography “*I was inspired to get right back to the roots of life; to get close to the sky and the earth*”. With their advertising campaign they have chosen the claim of “She is a fan or he is a fan”. For showing us that this is the gender of guests that they have or want...not busy managers or noisy families. More or less, Dorchester Collection goes in the same direction showing us in their ads. many top artists together. The difference is that the artists of Dorchester Collection aren’t live, so this is for emphasizing the tradition, the history, and the heritage of this hotel chain. Another very symbolic communication is the ads. of One & Only. The naked woman in a nutshell has a strong power moreover for the male customers. There are many symbols inside. The woman in the net, sex, erotism, power, sweetness, need of protection, etc. all these signs push the prospect in a position of strong attractiveness of this image. But of the most complete ads. is the Shangri-la commercial “*It’s in our nature*”. In this video and it’s adv. Campaign on magazines Shangri-la speaks only about one concept, the USP of its campaign, it’s in their nature embrace a stranger like a one’s own. In all the commercial & the campaign there is no images about hotels, facilities, etc. they show only a concept. This is one of the highest expression of symbolic communication, so...luxury communication. This is one of the most advanced concept of luxury communication, because of it’s possible to find also now, some companies with old point of view that continue to communicate the luxury like precious quantity than symbolic quality. Also the image of Fairmont campaign and their claim “Places in the heart”, it’s another example of luxury “somewhere”. Ritz-Carlton in their campaign prefers to choose the way of sponsoring your happiness. Four Seasons says the importance of slow life. Everything is slow, it’s up now, like slow food, slow movements (yoga, tai chi, etc.) because of the most precious thing that a manager, an entrepreneur, an important political man needs is the time. So, if you have time you are rich and if you use slow, you are very rich. There are also many movie about this concept (i.e. In Time 2011). In any case after this short analysis of the communication of luxury hotels brands, one of the most interesting and complete is Banyan Tree and also its brand Angsana. This company puts the experience like the most important concept of their vacation and in all communications.

These analysis belong to a long period of semiotic studies. During the '80 Umberto Eco, Erving Goffmann, Roland Barthes, and many other authors started of analysing images (Barthes R. 1984) and advertising (Eco U. 1989) and (Goffmann E. 1979). And starting

from these point of views I have established some guidelines that I have updated with the studies of Prof. J.W. T. Mitchell (Mitchell J.W.T. 1986). One important point that I would like to put at the attention of the readers is that the big increasing of media, new technology, style, etc. haven't change so much the nature of luxury communication a lot. This is because of the luxury communication has a content that speaks directly to one part of our mind that it isn't changed a lot, because of it's the most traditional part of our nature.

Conclusion

My conclusions are that:

Luxury IMC in Hospitality Sector is different related to the IMC for budget hotels. I have noted that the communication of budget hotel is concentrated on the price and in what is included in that price. In luxury hotel, they don't speak about the price "if you ask the price, you haven't enough money". They show the facilities, they show the locations, but moreover they want to communicate you that care of their hotel you can experiment a different state of mind. The style of this communication isn't direct, but symbolic.

Luxury IMC in Hospitality Sector proposes different values respect budget hotels. The world of luxury in hospitality is the kingdom of intangible assets. Here the values are: time, beauty, and cool mood. Having time is the new concept of luxury. Beauty isn't only an objective state, but also show that the customers of luxury hotels are educated for appreciating the beauty and having pleasure from it. Cool mood is a state of mind that luxury hotels can create and stimulate.

Luxury IMC in Hospitality Sector is a useful tool for communicate in an appropriate way the premium prices of their services in this market share. Here the communication is very sensible, they show and communicate something in a so perfect way that it's the customer not the company that understand "oh that's the reason why the price is...!".

Luxury IMC in Hospitality Sector is empathic with its target market. The communication isn't a projective communication, i.e. we have a medium target and we communicate to the medium target that the product has a medium price, but a luxury image; for this kind of strategy we use a simulation about how the target market think of the luxury market in term of values, style, contents, words, etc.

No in this case the communication (words, images, values, style, etc.) is absolutely coherent with the target market, in one word "empathic". This is very important for the process of identification. They recognize that you speak, write, show, is a person that belong to the same target market of them.

This last thing is the most difficult target, because of this kind of customers have a smart capability of recognizing in a clear way if the communication is true or not. And, related to the prices, the capability of analysis is deeper.

So, communicating, promoting and selling a luxury product or a service to the related target market is very difficult, this is the reason why the profits are bigger than for products and services of other positioning. It's a big challenge, but if you are able to communicate your

luxury services to the related target market in a perfect way, without noise, your prize will be great.

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