

How Luxury Fashion Brands Utilize YouTube to Engage Consumers and Promote Brand Identity

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Abstract

As the world becomes more technologically advanced, the demand for two-way communication between brand and consumer has become stronger. This study tried to develop a relationship between the rise in new media and luxury brands by content analyzing Chanel, Dior, and Burberry's YouTube channels that aims to categorize their video content into the following three categories: musical performances, historical narratives, and behind-the-scenes footage. The study found that as social media becomes more prevalent in today's society, these three luxury brands are steering away from brand advertisements and now promoting brand entertainment to engage consumers. Companies across all industries can utilize these findings to create advertising content that is entertaining, which will help them better reach their target consumer.

I. Introduction

The rise of new media has significantly shaped how society shares and receives information. Companies are now looking to social media as a means to engage and communicate with their target consumers. Online applications, such as Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, and Instagram, are taking over the social media world. As the traditional communication tactics of print media and pure word of mouth are slowly enfeebled, more and more companies are turning to social media to spread news about their company in an entertaining and engaging format.

This study focused on how luxury fashion brands are utilizing YouTube to communicate with high fashion consumers. According to Reyneke (2011), not only do luxury brands have a unique customer base with a set of specific characteristics, but they are also defined by a unique set of features:

“luxury brands evoke exclusivity,”

“they have a well known identity,”


“they enjoy high brand awareness and perceived quality,”

“they retain sales levels and customer loyalty” (Reyneke, 2011)

A recent article published in *The Wall Street Journal* supports the belief that luxury fashion companies are turning to YouTube to market their brand (Shields, 2014). A study by OpenSlate, a YouTube brand analytics company, revealed that the top three most influential luxury fashion brands on YouTube are (1) Chanel, (2) Dior, and (3) Burberry (see *Figure 1*). This research examined how the three brands utilize YouTube to engage with consumers. This study discussed what communication strategies these companies are using in terms of brand entertainment to connect with their audiences via YouTube.

Keywords: social media marketing, brand entertainment, luxury brands, Chanel, Dior, Burberry, YouTube
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This undergraduate project was conducted as a partial requirement of a research course in communications.

Data provided by **OpenSlate** 


	CHANEL	624 SlateScore	9.3 Influence	7.8 Engagement	7.1 Consistency	271,222 Subscribers	6,261,300 Monthly Views
	Dior	620 SlateScore	9.2 Influence	6.7 Engagement	7.0 Consistency	149,875 Subscribers	8,924,640 Monthly Views
	burberry	592 SlateScore	9.1 Influence	7.1 Engagement	7.0 Consistency	117,951 Subscribers	1,651,140 Monthly Views

Figure 1. OpenSlate Study on Luxury Fashion Brands and YouTube (SlateScore is out of 10 total points)

II. Background

To understand the impact that YouTube has had on how consumers now engage with their favorite brands, an individual must consider how drastically the demand for these interactive and entertaining social media platforms has grown over the past decade.

YouTube was started in 2005 with few followers as one of the many websites that introduced video sharing (Burgess & Green, 2009). The creators of YouTube—Chad Hurley, Steve Chen, and Jawed Karim—aimed to create a video-sharing interface that was extremely user-friendly for consumers with little to no technological knowledge. A year after it was launched, Google bought YouTube in 2006 for \$1.65 billion dollars. According to Burgess & Green (2009), just three years after its launch, website and data analytics companies deemed YouTube to be one of the top ten most consistently visited websites around the world. Today, YouTube is the second-most searched website in the world (Qualman, 2013). According to YouTube's "Statistics" page, more than 1 billion users visit YouTube each month ("Statistics").

The popularity of YouTube spread like wildfire due to its user-friendly interface and its ability to spread news in an entertaining format. Because it is so expensive to run commercials on television, companies rely on YouTube as a way to release video content for their target consumers and get people conversing about their brand (Burgess & Green, 2009). In terms of luxury brands, YouTube is a platform where companies like Chanel, Dior, and Burberry can post videos under the advertising strategy of brand entertainment that help build a special relationship between the company and the luxury consumer.

The luxury market is now in the maturity stage of the business life cycle, according to Kim and Ko (2010). They suggest that this stage is characterized by the ability to cater to a wide variety of consumers and a significant increase in the number of consumers. With the combination of platforms such as YouTube and the success of the luxury market, these brands have turned to brand entertainment to reach the consumer. This term, which is also referred to as "Madison and Vine," is defined as "a reference to continually converging advertising and entertainment coined from the names of two renowned avenues that represent the two industries, respectively," (O'Guinn, Allen, Semenik, & Close, 2012, p. 213). This marketing communications vehicle has resulted in a shift in how brands are choosing to market their product.

The author investigated how Chanel, Dior, and Burberry have utilized YouTube and brand entertainment to communicate, engage, and build long-term relationships with their consumers.

III. Literature Review

Although social media marketing and the luxury consumer have been researched separately, the direct relationship between both was rarely studied, especially between the platform of YouTube and luxury brands. The author examined studies that have examined social media marketing, YouTube/Web 2.0, luxury brands, and the luxury consumer.

Understanding Social Media Marketing

A study performed by Kim & Ko (2010) analyzed the use of social media marketing (SMM) and the impact it has on luxury consumers and overall brand equity. They specifically studied Louis Vuitton's social media platforms and measured their content against five separate categories related to social media marketing. The categories included "entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customization, and word of mouth" (Kim & Ko, 2010, p. 3). The study focused on how SMM affects specifically customer equity and the overall intent to purchase a luxury brand product after their social media marketing is viewed.

Through an in-depth study of Louis Vuitton's social media, these two authors found that SMM has an extremely positive effect on luxury brands. The results of this study uncover the following:

Luxury brand's SMM entertains customers because it is free and allows them to choose what information the consumer wants to process.

SMM allows for luxury brands to create interactive content that is often passed on through word-of-mouth.

SMM goes deeper than typical marketing as it focuses on making the consumer aware of the values of the brand and its products.

Luxury brands focus their SMM on more "hedonic and empirical values that can be reached by indirect brand experience" (Kim & Ko, 2010, p.1)

Kim & Ko concluded that a luxury brand's social communications positively impacts the consumer because it attempts to reach the customer in a way that is unique and more personal.

Another study published in the *Life Science Journal* explained that companies that do not have a social media strategy will not survive in the new, more digitally focused society of today (Saravanakumar & Lakshmi, 2012). The authors stated that this increase in social media has drastically changed how companies communicate with consumers because it has allowed them to "intensify" their engagement. Unlike Kim & Ko's study (2010), Saravanakumar & Lakshmi (2012) found that while SMM lets the corporation correspond with the consumer, it also allows for the consumer to communicate with the company. This open form of two-way communication allows for customers to communicate with the company and vice versa. This has many implications for companies, as their SMM strategy must be consistent with their brand identity.

Understanding YouTube and Web 2.0

Thackeray, Neiger, Hanson, and McKenzie (2008) chose to focus on how YouTube is an effective way for these brands to communicate and engage with their target audience. This study examined how brands can enhance promotional strategies through Web 2.0 and social media. Web 2.0 goes beyond the one-way communication of Web 1.0, allowing users to engage with the media through commenting, sharing, liking, etc. The study concluded that brands should use Web 2.0 to communicate with their consumers for two reasons. The first is that marketing via social media platforms allows the consumer to engage with the brand instead of passively a company's marketing efforts (Thackeray, Neiger, Hanson, & McKenzie, 2008). This makes consumers feel that they have a more personal relationship with the company. Second, marketing via Web 2.0 allows for a marketing message to spread more rapidly because it sparks word-of-mouth marketing. For example, Chanel published a short video for the No. 5 fragrance on their YouTube channel, entitled "The One that I Want," starring model Gisele Bündchen. Due to social media marketing and word-of-mouth effect, it had nearly 4.3 million hits on YouTube in just over two weeks. Although this study focused on applying aspects of Web 2.0 to health practitioners, the same idea can be applied to any brand in any field since it can benefit from incorporating social media marketing into its promotional tactics. As the world becomes more technologically advanced, the demand for two-way communication between brand and consumer becomes stronger.

A similar study published by Cormode & Krishnamurthy (2008), which compared and contrasted Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 to identify key differences between the two, showed how marketers can adapt to this new form of two-way communication. According to them, the consumer solely acted as a passive consumer in Web 1.0, whereas in Web 2.0, any individual is able to create, post, and share content that he or she has created. *Figure 2* depicts the paths in which content travels from the creator to the consumer in Web 2.0. YouTube is shown as the least intrusive way to distribute macro-content from the content creator to the content consumer.

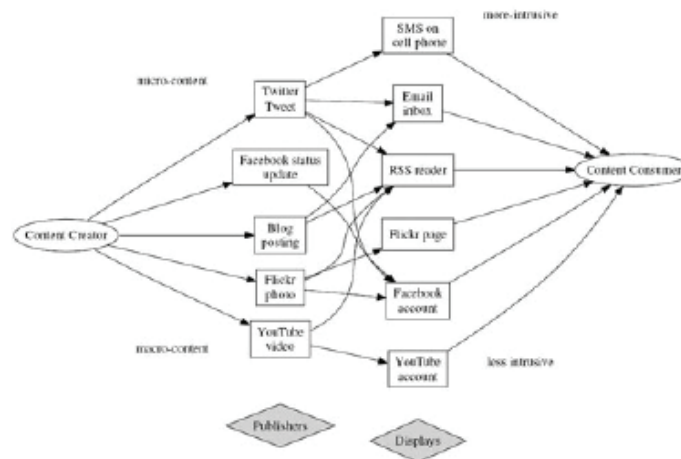


Figure 2. Paths from content creator to the consumer in Web 2.0

Luxury Brands and the Luxury Brand Market

As discussed earlier, luxury brands are defined by being exclusive and well known, having high brand awareness, and maintaining consistent loyalty among their customers and high sales levels (Reyneke, 2011). Luxury brands are also characterized by a need for omnipresence on a global scale. The demand for luxury brand goods is growing steadily as developing countries are becoming more industrialized because it produces more wealth for consumers to buy luxury goods.

Although luxury brands typically possess a secure sector of the marketplace, marketers must understand how to strategically engage consumers with their luxury brand to maintain luxury brand consistency (Reynke, 2011).

The Luxury Consumer

Hader's study examined the interplay of social media marketing, Web 2.0, luxury brands, and the luxury consumer. Marketing specifically to the luxury consumer requires consideration of their psychology, habits, and beliefs. Hader (2008) examined habits and desires of those individuals who are classified as luxury customers. The author found that the scope of the luxury market has widened significantly in the past decade because wealth has spread, and that the typical luxury consumer has a different set of needs and motivations, which has resulted in a restructuring of the luxury market. The article categorized luxury consumers into three main segments: 1) ultra- high net worth (i.e. Bill Gates), 2) wealthy (i.e. stars, actors, musicians) and 3) aspirational (i.e. typically affluent but not always).

Harder (2008) found that although luxury consumers are divided into three tiers based on the magnitude of their wealth, they share four different characteristics that influence their use of luxury items. First, buying luxury products is about "indulgence and expression." Luxury consumers vary their fashion choices in order to express their style as an individual. Because these individuals are engaging with multiple brands to put together a look, marketers must take this into consideration.

Second, consumers value the luxury "experience" more than the actual product. This is crucial in understanding how to market to the luxury consumer because it allows the marketer to understand that they don't just want a surface level advertisement of a new product. These luxury consumers want something that permeates the surface level advertisements and makes them feel as though they were getting an exclusive sneak peek or behind-the-scenes look into a luxury brand.

Third, Hader (2008) pointed out that for a luxury consumer to indulge or splurge, it must be "worth it." Although these consumers are in the upper tier when it comes to money, they still evaluate and weigh their purchases in their mind. This characteristic drives marketers to provide consumers with a reason to buy a luxury product.

Fourth, luxury consumers expect an "emotionally rewarding and affirmative experience" (Hader, 2008) with every single interaction they have with the brand. Marketers are shifting their advertising focus to content

that is interactive and allows for the consumer to feel as though they had a stake in or relationship with the brand itself.

Hader (2008) concluded that sales and loyalty will follow strategic brand engagement. The more luxury brands provide a consumer with an experience that elicits emotion, the more successful the company will be, and the more brand-loyal the customer will remain.

Based on literature review, this study aimed to answer the following questions:

RQ1: What is the overall strategy in which luxury brands communicate with their consumers via YouTube?

RQ2: What are the key differences among the three luxury brands' execution of these strategies?

RQ3: Is the brand's overall communications/SMM strategy consistent with the brand identity?

IV. Methods

This study used the content analysis to analyze Chanel, Dior, and Burberry's YouTube channels. Content analysis is a tool to guide research where something specific such as an article or case study is quantified and its meaning is related to the culture to which it belongs ("An Introduction to Content Analysis"). Analysis of three brands' channels showed the category of their content as brand entertainment. According to O'Guinn, Allen, Semenik, & Close (2012, p. 383), brand entertainment is defined as, "embedding one's brand or brand icons as part of any entertainment property in an effort to impress and connect with consumers in a unique and compelling way." Chanel, Dior, and Burberry's YouTube channel all have video content that aims to provide the consumer with a special experience. The most apparent ways in which the three brands chose to market their brand was through brand entertainment using three forms: musical performances, historical narratives, and behind-the-scenes footage.

This study analyzed the companies' YouTube videos to determine how effectively they used the three forms listed above to satisfy consumers with a unique brand experience. The category under musical performances is defined by videos that showcase a musician performing. The historical narratives content is defined by videos that are centered on promoting brand history through accounts of the historical significance of various attributes of a brand. Behind-the-scenes videos are defined by any video content that provides the viewer with a raw and intimate peek into the thought process of something the brand created.

V. Video Content Analysis

Review of the three luxury brands' YouTube channels put nearly all of the video content into the category of brand entertainment. The overwhelming majority of video content on these luxury brands' channels was not advertising any specific product or service, but was instead providing the consumer with entertainment-based footage. Whether it was a behind-the-scenes segment, a tutorial, a music video, or a mini film, each brand focused on making its YouTube channel a place for luxury consumers to come and feel as though they viewed something intimate about the brand.

Chanel, Dior, and Burberry all chose to convey their brand entertainment videos in relatively similar ways, with some variations in their levels in the three forms: musical performances, historical narratives, and behind-the-scenes videos. While the categories are different in terms of the tactic used, they are all belong to the bigger category of brand entertainment that helps to engage the viewer and foster a relationship between the brand and the consumer.

Brand Entertainment through Music by Burberry

While many of the brand entertainment videos on all three channels incorporate music, Burberry has an entire playlist dedicated to showcasing British acoustic artists. This page, entitled "Burberry Acoustic," is the largest *and* most viewed playlist on their YouTube channel with 85 videos and 1,195,962 views as of February 3, 2015, on this playlist alone. This playlist is a series of British artists performing a song, all while sporting Burberry attire. These artists do not directly advertise a specific product; however, at the beginning of

each video the artists name is depicted in the classic Burberry font. Introducing themselves, artists say they are playing for “Burberry Acoustic.” Besides that mention of Burberry, there is barely any direct advertisement of a Burberry product in this strategy.

By using music entertainment as a way to communicate and engage with their viewer, Burberry is not only marketing their heritage, but also the Burberry lifestyle. These videos communicate British heritage and the relaxed yet luxurious brand image that Burberry portrays. By showcasing Brits in the British brand’s clothing, the user is able to get a glimpse at the lifestyle that people who own the luxury brand’s clothing follow.

More than the other two forms of brand entertainment that luxury brands used to engage consumers, music has scientific implications on the brain and its processing of information. Because Burberry chooses to showcase its heritage and portray its lifestyle through music, the viewer is more likely to learn and remember these videos. Many studies have been conducted to reveal that music enhances one’s ability to learn. A study performed in 2002 by Campabello, De Carlo, O’Neil, and Vacek aimed to examine the correlation between music and students’ ability to learn. After conducting this study, they concluded that adding music to a stimulus not only increases students’ ability to learn information, but also increases emotional involvement with what they were learning (Campabello, De Carlo, O’Neil, & Vacek, 2008).

Burberry’s strategy of incorporating music into its brand entertainment videos is strategic because when one hears a song that is featured on the company’s YouTube channel, they will associate it with the Burberry brand. Even deeper than associating the brand with a song, the music allows the viewer to become emotionally involved with a brand, thus strengthening Burberry’s relationship with its target audience. Below is a screenshot taken from the Burberry YouTube channel that shows how popular this playlist is.

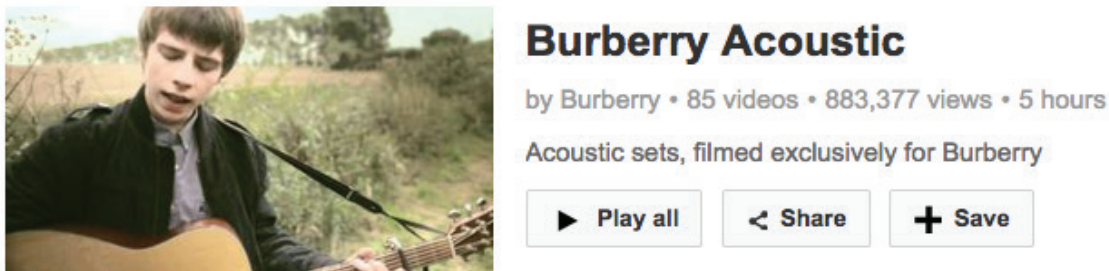


Figure 3. Screenshot taken from “Burberry Acoustic” YouTube playlist

Historical Narratives by Chanel

More than Dior or Burberry, Chanel emphasizes and illustrates the history of the company in its brand entertainment videos. The best example of this historical approach is their widely known “Inside Chanel” videos. Although this page is the third largest playlist in terms of number of videos it contains on their channel after No. 1 “Fashion” and No. 2 “Makeup,” the “Inside Chanel” playlist has more views than any other playlists. These short videos all document a specific aspect of the Chanel brand and link it to the company’s history. From the childhood of Gabrielle Chanel to what the symbol of the lion represents to this iconic brand, these historical narratives captivate the viewer. The “Inside Chanel” videos aim to provide the viewer with deeper insight into the historical aspects of this timeless brand. The image below is a screenshot of the header on the “Inside Chanel” playlist.

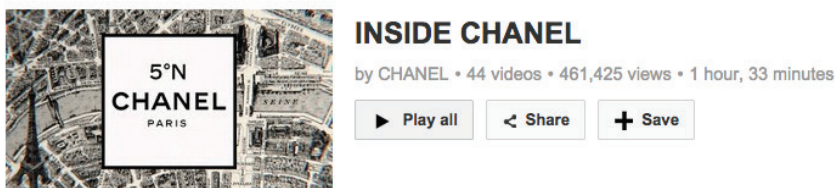


Figure 4. Screenshot taken from “Inside Chanel” YouTube playlist

While the “Inside Chanel” videos strive to entertain and inform the viewer, there is a deeper mean-

ing behind the brand's emphasis on history. By providing the viewer with meaning and history behind various symbols, colors, and famous icons of Chanel, the company aims to foster an emotional relationship and personal connection between the consumer and the brand. The "Inside Chanel" videos help to enrich and enhance the meaning behind details of the brand, thus making the consumer more aware of and engaged with Chanel's antiquity.

Neither Dior nor Burberry places the same emphasis on history that Chanel does on their YouTube channels. Because Dior and Burberry do not choose to highlight the history of their brands, the viewer is left not knowing how either brand came to be or what aspects of each brand represent.

The strategy of providing brand history to the consumer is extremely important because knowing the history of something enriches its meaning. Without knowing where a product came from, its consumer would feel hard to associate a greater significance with a product or brand. Because Chanel focuses on the history of the brand, the customer is able to understand the significance behind the product, thus fostering a deeper relationship with Chanel. This strategy of providing the consumer with historical narratives allows the consumer to gain insight into the true heart of the brand.

Behind-the-Scenes Videos by Chanel, Dior, and Burberry

The communication strategy under brand entertainment that all three brands utilize on their YouTube page is providing the viewer with behind-the-scenes videos. Chanel, Dior, and Burberry have all posted videos that give the viewer sneak peeks at what is happening backstage at one of their fashion shows, or the thought process used to create advertising campaigns.

Chanel chooses to focus its behind-the-scenes videos on two main subjects: advertising campaigns and fashion shows. To give the audience a peek at creating one of Chanel's mini movie campaigns, they provide the viewer with a video on each aspect of the ad. For a recent ad campaign for the infamous Chanel No. 5 fragrance, Chanel posted eight separate videos that all focused on a different aspect of the making of the ad. These behind-the-scenes videos included the subjects of "The Director," "The Costume Design," "The Cast," "The Film Behind the Film," "Making of the Film," "The Song," "The Fragrance," and "The Locations." Each of these videos contains interviews and behind-the-scenes footage that shed light on different aspects of the creation of a Chanel ad campaign. Chanel also provides ample footage on depicting what is happening backstage at their fashion shows. They show footage of the models going on and off the catwalk and often interview them. Both of these behind-the-scenes categories provide the viewer with a more real, intimate, and raw look into the brand instead of only viewing footage that has been edited.

Similar to Chanel's behind-the-scenes content, Dior also utilizes YouTube as a means to provide the viewer with a glimpse into the making of its advertising campaigns. Dior has multiple videos that start with "Making-of" and then reveal the creation behind one of their ad campaigns, such as the "Be Dior" campaign or the "Diorskin Star" campaign. They also share footage of a behind-the-scenes look at their fashion shows; however, they center these videos specifically on the creation and actual construction of the set. On the other hand, Chanel focuses these videos on the actual show.

In congruence with Chanel and Dior, Burberry also posts behind-the-scenes content to make the YouTube viewer feel as though they were getting an intimate look into the happenings of the brand. Burberry focuses their behind-the-scenes videos more on the company's fashion shows than on the creation of its advertising campaigns. They post videos on the inspiration behind their clothing lines. They also post videos that are centered on revealing their main guests of their shows including famous fashion models or editors in chief of the most famous fashion magazines.

Behind-the-scenes films are the one category of brand entertainment videos that Chanel, Dior, and Burberry all post on their YouTube channels. These videos are extremely important and crucial in establishing a relationship between the luxury companies and their luxury consumers. This type of video goes beyond the traditional and edited brand image of a company and provides the viewer with a story behind the product.

VI. Discussion

This study found that luxury companies are effectively using the interactive and digital platform of YouTube to engage their target audiences. The recent increase in social media marketing has led to a change

in video content to promote luxury brands (Burgess & Green, 2009). While Chanel, Dior, and Burberry all thrive in the category of engaging followers via their social media platforms, each chose to entertain their consumers through different means on their YouTube channels. When looking at the video categories of musical performances, historical narratives, and behind-the-scenes videos, one can find that each brand flourishes in their own way. Chanel places great emphasis on promoting the antiquity behind the brand through videos that document brand history. Burberry promotes its cultural heritage through showcasing British musicians donned in the luxury attire. Dior's sophisticated brand entertainment videos and behind-the-scenes footage reiterate the brand's concentration on refined elegance.

This study demonstrates that the tactics of music and historical narratives have high entertainment value. These videos are more production based than a behind-the-scenes video, and therefore are more aimed at captivating the viewer. While Chanel and Burberry focus on using music and history in their video content, all three brands, of course, do not forget to provide the viewer with a behind-the-scenes experience. Because all three brands are high-end luxury brands, documenting raw and more intimate footage makes them more approachable to the viewer. After analyzing each brand's YouTube content, the behind-the-scenes tactic appears to be the most effective in providing meaning to the brand.

This research also concluded that each brand stayed true to its brand identity in the way it showcased itself on YouTube. Chanel is famous for infusing brand history into its brand identity, while Burberry is known for displaying British customs and brand heritage. While the focus of Dior's brand identity is less blatant than Chanel or Burberry, Dior is known for representing sophisticated French luxury, remaining consistent through its behind-the-scenes videos that showcase the lavishness of the brand. Chanel, Dior, and Burberry all stay true to their brand identity in regards to image and the overall tone in which they communicate through YouTube.

This new marketing concept of brand entertainment has shifted the focus of what is being advertised and has placed the product in disguise (Hudson & Hudson, 2010). A study published in the *Journal of Marketing Management* concludes, "Branded products are no longer just 'placed'; they are woven into entertainment content making a stronger emotional connection with the consumer" (Hudson & Hudson, 2008, p. 1). This is why luxury fashion companies are redirecting the focus of their social media marketing efforts from pure brand advertisement to brand entertainment. This new tactic not only engages the consumer, but also deepens and intensifies the relationship and connection that the consumer has with the product or brand.

VII. Conclusions

As shown in this study, luxury brands are effectively utilizing YouTube as a means to engage their target audience and reiterate their brand identity. By breaking the mold of posting traditional product advertisements, and by instead creating clips that are rooted in brand entertainment, a company can leverage its content to absorb the viewer in a deeper and more compelling manner. Brand entertainment videos have the ability to go further and develop a relationship that a traditional advertisement cannot.

Future studies in this area may use human subjects to help categorize the content of these videos and see what they believe the most prominent brand entertainment categories among what luxury companies depict on YouTube channels. Future studies may also look at other markets beyond luxury companies to see if the former are utilizing brand entertainment in their advertising efforts as the latter have done.

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- Note: All YouTube images were taken as screenshots from www.YouTube.com
-